Roads to Asylum: Refugees' and asylum seekers' journeys towards exile in the UK

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by

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Abstract

Journeys are a key aspect of a refugeehood predicated upon the loss of place within a territorial state. Despite this, the long tradition of refugee studies has tended to focus on processes occurring either in the country of origin, or in the country of exile, with much less attention given to the in-between. Meanwhile, border control regimes have narrowed the avenues that refugees can take to travel safely, quickly and legally to states in the global North. While there has been a proliferation of public interest in refugees' journeys to Europe in recent years, these journeys are only just beginning to see the level of academic attention they deserve.

Contributing to this growing body of literature, this thesis uses a narrative approach to explore the journeys of asylum seekers and refugees now living in the UK. Narrative approaches have been vocally defended in forced migration studies, in particular as a way of better understanding refugees' experiences while simultaneously resisting a politics that has sought to silence refugees and deny their agency. This thesis offers an exploration of theoretical debates related to these assertions that have not been afforded adequate attention in forced migration studies. In doing so, it attempts to forge a path, via the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, amongst experienced-focused phenomenological approaches and the poststructural criticisms that threaten to discredit them. It advocates for an approach that recognises the expressive value of refugees'

journey stories, and considers them a contingent and ambiguous mode of 'singing the world.'

From this position, the thesis travels through the diverse routes that participants took to claim asylum in the UK, exploring the dynamics and embodied encounters of these journeys, and how they are remembered and made sense of. Speaking to people who have been at the coalface of policies to restrict their mobilities has provided significant insight into not only these intricate processes of border control, but how they are concretely lived. The narratives of participants also capture the blurred boundaries and complexity of journeys towards exile.

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Byways and bygone
And lone nights long
Sun rays and sea waves
And star and stone

Manless and friendless
No cave my home
This is my torture
My long nights, lone

'The Traveller'
Maya Angelou

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Abbreviations of Selected Works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty

PhP – Phenomenology of Perception [1945] 2002

SNS – Sense and Non-sense [1948] 1964

AD – Adventures of the Dialectic [1955] 1973

S – Signs [1960] 1964

VI – The Visible and the Invisible [1964] 1968

PW – The Prose of the World [1969] 1973

Other Abbreviations

EURODAC - European Dactyloscopy

EUROSUR - European Border Surveillance System

FRA - The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

Frontex - The European Border and Coast Guard Agency

MSF – Médecins Sans Frontières

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNRWA - United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Introduction

Journeys are a key aspect of a refugeehood predicated upon the loss of place within a territorial state. Despite this, the long tradition of refugee and forced migration studies has tended to focus on processes occurring either in the country of origin, or in the country of exile, with relatively little attention given to what happens in between. There has been a proliferation of public interest in refugees' journeys to Europe in the past three years, with certain forms refugee travel becoming especially visible and heavily scrutinised in the context of the so-called 'Refugee Crisis' in Europe. However, academic research on migration journeys remains in its nascent stages and the journeys of refugees and asylum seekers are only just beginning to see the level of sustained academic and theoretical attention that is required for a deeper understanding of the processes they involve. This thesis was developed in response to this relative lack of academic research on refugee travel and routes to asylum, and has since been inspired by this burgeoning set of literature on migration journeys. It has been shaped around the following research questions:

- How are refugees' and asylum seekers' journeys to the UK experienced?
- How are these journeys remembered and made sense of?

Coming into this project, I felt that I had identified a gap in refugee and forced migration research. Whilst there was a reasonable amount of discussion around the politics and policies governing refugees' capacities for mobility, especially with regards to movement from Africa and the Middle East to Europe, there was much less discussion focused on the intricate dynamics of these journeys and the experiences of those who undertook them. At that time the 'refugee voice' was less present in these debates. I therefore developed a project based on a narrative approach that sought to listen to and better understand the experiences of refugees during their journeys into exile in the UK. I wanted to explore the meaning and significance of these journeys for refugees, and look at how they remembered and made sense of these experiences. The project was initiated with the implicit recognition of that most ambiguous, but also ubiquitous, of terms, 'refugee agency.' It was also initiated with the implicit assumption that there is value and insight to be found in exploring experience through narrative inquiry.

Some of the most seminal scholarship in refugee and forced migration studies has been heavily influenced by critical and poststructural philosophies, especially in so far as it supports the quest of exposing the systems of power working to dehumanise refugees. There has equally, and sometimes simultaneously, been a drive to emphasise the agency of refugees, along with their 'narrative authority,' in the knowledge that current practices and politics often work to deny refugees' capacities for agency. However, there has not yet been a sustained exploration as to the tensions that arise in the simultaneous promotion of these two projects, which have been labelled by some

commentators as "logically incommensurable." This thesis engages precisely with this tension, taking its own detour via a complex and challenging set of debates in philosophy and social theory; a set of debates which has itself not been afforded adequate attention in refugee and forced migration studies. In doing so, it attempts to forge a path, via the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, amongst experienced-focused phenomenological approaches with their often-implicit reliance on narrative authority, and the poststructural and deconstructive criticisms that threaten to discredit them. With a considered reading of continental philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his contemporary proponents, this thesis offers an alternative to the either/or choice that creates an unbridgeable lacuna between poststructural and deconstructive philosophies and those philosophies that underpin experience-focused narrative approaches. I will argue that through Merleau-Ponty's philosophy we can find a compelling way of recognising the value of refugees' journey stories as an expressive mode of 'singing the world' that can shed light on both their embodied, relational experiences and how they are made meaningful, without relying on philosophical tenets that have been effectively discredited by poststructuralism. The approach taken in this project values these articulations of experience whilst acknowledging their inevitable and necessary contingency.

The decision to undertake narrative research with refugees is given further credence through a discussion of the ethics of listening, and responding to, others that is also drawn out of this engagement with the work of Merleau-Ponty and his contemporary proponents. Both of these elements, when taken

together, allow scholars who are sympathetic to the insights of poststructuralism, but who still feel that there is an implicit value to listening to refugees' voices and articulations of experience, to move forward both more confidently, and at the same time more cautiously, with narrative research. Engaging with this discussion endows the research with a theoretical purchase and bolsters it against both poststructural criticisms of phenomenology and the charge that to occupy a space between these approaches is to produce work teeming with 'lived-with contradictions.'

From this position, using a narrative approach I undertook 41 interviews with asylum seekers (12) and refugees (29) from 18 different countries over a period of five months in the Spring/Summer of 2015. Most of these interviews were carried out in the same asylum seeker dispersal town in the north of England, where I lived for a period of five months in order to carry out my data collection. However, a small number, thanks to contacts established through earlier participants, were carried out in neighbouring northern towns. The length of these interviews varied widely, from 20 minutes to three and a half hours. I asked every participant to go into as much detail as possible about their journey to claiming asylum in the UK, and the length of the interview depended on the nature of that person's journey and on the amount of detail they were willing to share.

Through the research, I engaged with participants from a wide range of nationalities, from countries with high numbers of refugees and high acceptance rates in Europe, like Syria, Eritrea, Iran and Sudan, to countries

with much lower acceptance rates, like Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and The Gambia, and countries with low numbers of applications and low acceptance rates, like Zimbabwe and Tunisia. Some participants had arrived in the UK only weeks prior to the narrative interview, whilst others had been here for many years. It is perhaps unsurprising given the wide range of participants, but it was the sheer diversity of trajectories and experiences that was most striking feature of the research interviews.

The mobilities studies literature has been assertive in reminding us that mobility regimes are deeply stratified, especially as new places and technologies "enhance the mobility of some peoples and places *even as they also* heighten the immobility of others, especially as people try to cross borders" (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006, 3). In recent years we have seen a proliferation of measures within the UK and Europe developed with the aim of restricting the access of asylum seekers to UK and EU territory. From visa regimes, to carrier sanctions, to increasingly sophisticated surveillance techniques, borders have become more diffuse and wide reaching. These regimes function to heighten the immobility of asylum seekers, and diminish their avenues for fast, safe and legal travel. As a result, asylum seekers' and refugees' trajectories are often diverted into a whole manner of cracks and crevices in order to find a way around these mechanisms of border control. However, what is masked behind this rather general assertion is a diversity of people who experience the systems governing their movement in differential ways.

What is offered in this thesis is thus a rich description and interpretation of the dynamics of these journeys, the interactional, embodied experiences of irregular travel, and how they are remembered and made sense of by those who have undertaken them. Speaking to people who have been at the coalface of these policies to restrict refugees' mobilities has provided significant insight into not just the intricate dynamics of these processes of border control, but also how they are concretely lived and experienced. It is vital to explore the intricate and wide-ranging mechanisms of control and the border processes that impress themselves upon the bodies of refugees and asylum seekers. But it is equally important to understand how this feels and what sort of embodied responses it elicits. The focus on embodied experience and on how journeys are remembered provides a novel contribution to refugee studies and adds an important perspective to emerging literature on migrant journeys.

This study thus travels through the many diverse routes that participants took to claim asylum in the UK, exploring the dynamics and encounters of these different journeys, and how they are remembered and made sense of. I hope to have organised and illuminated the words of participants in a thought-provoking way, and to have provided a compelling and creative collage of the experiences that can be glimpsed at through the stories of participants in this research, as well as exploring in more detail the ways in which these experiences are remembered and made sense of.

The manner in which stories can capture phenomena that traverse boundaries and borders is encapsulated in Michel de Certeau's assertion that "what the

map cuts up, the story cuts across" (1984, 129). Indeed, it is only by virtue of this approach that I have been able to capture such a diversity of stories, a diversity that remains elusive when research focuses on a particular travel route or set of routes. It has also enabled me to gain insight into some of the less heavily scrutinised spaces and routes of refugee travel. It is by virtue of the method taken, and by choosing to engage with participants at the 'end' of their journeys, rather than at a transit node or along a specific route, that I have been able to demonstrate the blurred boundaries, multifaceted nature, and complexity of "journeys towards exile".

Chapter Outlines

The opening chapter of this thesis aims to provide context to the research, in terms of both the policy landscape framing these journeys and their narrative articulations, and the academic landscape that the work is embedded in and will contribute to. This includes an outline of both UK and EU policy relevant to the experiences that are illuminated through the narratives, and also to the narrative production itself. UK and EU policy has gradually diminished the avenues that refugees can take to travel safely and legally to Europe, whilst simultaneously placing increased restrictions on asylum seekers who have managed to find their way onto UK soil. It is in this general context of restriction that both these journeys, and their narrative articulations, are situated. Following this, a review of the current state of literature is offered, covering contributions from the transnational turn in migration studies, to the mobilities approach originating in the field of geography, followed by a discussion of the relevant literature on transit migration and of those, mainly

more recent contributions that have engaged explicitly with irregular and refugee travel and journeys. The contributions of this thesis in relation to the existing literature are also elucidated in this chapter.

A note affirming the modesty of the thesis closes the chapter. This note considers the limitations of the approach taken in this research and acknowledges that in illuminating the experiences of some, it inevitably obscures the experiences of others. In line with the discussion that takes place later in the thesis around the notion of 'transparent reflexivity,' it does so whilst also acknowledging the impossibility of 'writing out' or accounting for every shortcoming, and as such the modesty of the thesis is mirrored in a more humble understanding of what can be achieved in practices of reflexivity.

The second chapter discusses the theoretical approach adopted for this thesis. In doing so, it delves into some of the key debates in philosophy and social theory around the concepts of agency, voice and experience, which are often used, but not often substantively theorised in refugee and forced migration studies. In this chapter, I argue that whilst it is vital to take seriously poststructural critiques of humanist approaches to knowledge/analysis, including phenomenology, a considered reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty can successfully co-exist alongside these critiques, and thus offers a powerful complement to deconstructive methods. By taking such an approach, we can recognise the value of refugees' journey stories, and consider them a mode of 'singing the world' that sheds light on both their embodied, relational experiences and how they are made meaningful. The approach taken in this

thesis, which is inspired by these debates in philosophy, values these articulations of experience whilst acknowledging their inevitable contingency. Along with this epistemological contribution, Merleau-Ponty's body of work also provides a lens through which to explore these experiences by emphasising the way that experience is sensual, affective, and "emerges through the symbiotic intertwining of one's own pulsing body, the overflowing, transcendent world of things, and the living bodies of others" (Hass 2008, 146). The influence of this 'embodied' understanding of experience is visible throughout the thesis.

Following this, Chapter III offers a extensive discussion of research methods and the fieldwork process. It begins by affirming the usefulness of narrative and dialogical methods for explorations of 'journeys'. It then provides a broad descriptive overview of the way in which the fieldwork was carried out. This is followed by a discussion on research ethics as it relates both to the research process and to the philosophical approach detailed in the previous chapter. This discussion explores what a 'research ethics' inspired by the work of Merleau-Ponty might look like, and how it could complement or expand upon the dominant research ethics requirements of universities like Oxford. After a brief note on the impossibility of a fully transparent reflexivity, the discussion then offers a more in-depth, but decidedly cautious interrogation of the context of the research interviews. Following this, an articulation of the analysis process is offered, along with a succinct presentation of the framing that has inspired the analysis of participants' narratives.

This chapter ends with another brief note, this time on the inherent chaos of the research process. This note discusses the certain fiction implicit to creating a linear, purposeful narrative and chronology in the write-up of a thesis that is almost inevitably nonlinear, fragmented and, at times, chaotic. I wanted to make this explicit somewhere within the thesis, especially since this fiction of orderliness is so pervasive in a lot of research that it can make new researchers, including myself, feel inadequate when they experience the 'internal disorder' of their own work.

Chapter IV is the first of three chapters that discuss the content of the narratives produced through the fieldwork process. The main aim of this chapter is to do justice to, and shed light on, the diversity of 'roads to asylum' taken by participants. It travels through the many diverse routes that participants took to claim asylum in the UK, exploring the dynamics of these different journeys. After offering an broad overview of participants' trajectories, the chapter then offers a lengthy discussion of the dynamics of those journeys corresponding to the much espoused 'odyssey' trope that has become synonymous with the 2015 'Refugee Crisis', where journeys are characterised by their length and difficulty. With the help of concepts from the mobilities literature, this chapter explores some of the vast and complicated dynamics of these journeys. The second section of the chapter focuses on the quieter, and often much faster trajectories that were taken by a number of participants but that have not been adequately captured by the existing research on migration journeys to Europe. Although UK and EU policy has without doubt significantly narrowed the avenues of safe and legal travel

available to refugees, this does not mean that those avenues have been entirely sealed off. And although these policies have undoubtedly been a catalyst for the long, fragmented and at times dangerous journeys undertaken by many refugees, some participants were able to travel relatively directly and safely, albeit using irregular means. Yet others had stories that called into question the notion of a 'journey into exile' altogether.

Whilst Chapter IV acknowledges that not all refugees and asylum seekers travel via irregular means, it is still the case that a majority of participants travelled using irregular means for part or all of their physical journeys to the UK. As such, experiences of the diverse spaces and mobilities of irregular travel and the encounters that this type of travel engenders are key components of many participants' narratives. The following chapter therefore turns its focus to irregular travel, to explore in more depth the ways in which the (im)mobilities of participants' journeys are experienced, paying particular attention to the sensual and affective dimensions of these experiences and how they emerge through embodied encounters with landscapes, spaces and modes of travel, and with the living bodies of others (Hass 2008, 146). This chapter explores the embodied performances of participants during encounters with the bodies of border control, as well as those violent encounters with the hostile apparatus of border control that can emerge when these performances fail or when participants are otherwise caught trying to travel irregularly. Through this, the importance of hiding, and of "non-encounters" with those hostile bodies at the borders transpires as a key practice in the narratives of participants. In these cases, when participants' journeys are diverted from the

spaces and routes of regular travel, encounters with the diverse bodies, objects, landscapes and mobilities of irregular travel emerge. These encounters are also explored in this chapter.

The final discussion chapter takes a step back from experiences of participants during their journeys and towards a discussion of memory and meaning as they relate to the narratives of participants. It explores the relationship that participants have with memories of their journeys, and indeed the ways in which these memories are themselves embodied, as well as the creative processes of remembrance and forgetting that participants are engaged in.

The stories produced in this research process are not artefacts providing unimpeded access to a static past. Part of their richness lies precisely in their capacity to shed light on the intricate imbrication of past, present and future that is implicated in their production and in the production of the meaning that they are filled with. This chapter engages with both the ways in which past experiences are remembered, articulated and made sense of by participants from the embodied perspective of the then-present, and the ways in which the then-present is only what it is with reference to this past. Following the discussion of these memory processes is a discussion of the ways that participants articulate the meaning and significance of their 'journeys' more broadly. Within this exploration as to how journeys are made sense of in the narratives of participants, there are two themes that resonated across many interviews: luck and God. These themes are explored, as well as how they have the potential to problematise and expand upon contribute to the ongoing

academic discussions around journeys. The discussion then shifts to an exploration of the meaning of 'the journey' as it emerges in the narrations of participants. It explores how in some cases participants' 'journey' narratives appeared to correspond fairly clearly to a definable period of travel between leaving home and arriving in the UK. However other participants' narrations of their journeys were much more diffuse, encroaching back into their lives prior to displacement, and/or forward into their lives in the UK, in particular encompassing their experiences of the asylum system.

The concluding chapter reaffirms the way in which the theoretical discussion offered in this thesis allows us to move forward more confidently but at the same time more humbly with research that privileges 'refugees voices' in one way or another. It asks, and answers the question: what has this approach allowed us to learn about refugees' journeys to the UK? It offers a final critical appraisal of the concept of 'the journey into exile,' bringing together the insights scattered throughout the thesis. This discussion argues that 'the journey' can function as a broad expressive trope that encompasses periods of travel, but that any attempt to clear define and delineate 'the journey' run quickly into hot water. It tentatively suggests that the term 'journeyscapes' may better encapsulate the diffuse contours of the narrative articulations of refugees' journeys that have been produced through this research. However, it also argues that even if experiences of travel cannot always be clearly demarcated in terms of their specific significance and impact in relation to the broader symbolic life journey of refugees, this does not mean that we should go back to neglecting them.

The final contribution of this thesis is thus to tentatively suggest some areas that could provide fruitful avenues for future research. Some of these suggestions are extensions of work that this thesis has already started, however others are based on issues that have become conspicuous through their absence in the current thesis, or that have been alluded to tangentially and indirectly during the fieldwork process. An approach inspired by Merleau-Ponty recognises that it is precisely the impossibility of closure that compels us to continually and unrelentingly interrogate the world and its contents. In this respect there will always be work left to be done.

Chapter I: Contextualising Journeys

The main aim of this thesis is to explore the experiences of participants during their journeys towards asylum in the UK. The spotlight has therefore been placed on participants' trajectories and interactions during these journeys, as well as how they are remembered and made sense of. That said, these experiences and their articulation cannot be understood without reference to the broader socio-political context in which these journeys take place, and indeed these trajectories and interactions are deeply imbricated within, and emerge out of this context.

The first section of this chapter provides a brief contextual overview of the political and policy situation that migrants and refugees travelling to Europe find themselves. This includes an outline of both UK and European Union (EU) policy relevant to the experiences that are illuminated through the narratives, and also to the narrative production itself. In this section we see how the avenues that refugees can take to travel safely and legally to the UK have gradually diminished, and that those asylum seekers who have managed to find their way onto UK soil are also faced with increased restrictions and worsening conditions. It is in this general context of restriction that both these journeys, and their narrative articulations, are situated. Following this, the thesis itself is contextualised in relation to relevant literature and research. This review of the literature covers contributions from the transnational turn in migration studies, to the mobilities approach originating in the field of geography, followed by a

discussion of the relevant literature on transit migration and of those, mainly more recent contributions that have engaged explicitly with irregular and refugee travel and journeys. The section will then continue with a discussion of how this thesis contributes to and enriches the existing scholarship.

The final section of this chapter provides a note affirming the modesty of the thesis. This note discusses some of the limitations that I have been able to tease out from my deeply embedded position within this thesis, and acknowledges that in illuminating the experiences of some, the experiences of others are inevitably obscured. It does so whilst at the same time recognising the impossibility of 'writing out' or accounting for every possible shortcoming. As such the modesty of the thesis is mirrored in a more humble understanding of what can be achieved in practices of reflexivity. That said, although these limitations are important to bear in mind, they do not invalidate the insight and importance of the narratives produced through this research project.

1. Situating Experience, Situating Narrative: A brief contemporary history of UK and EU immigration and asylum law and policy

The journeys of refugees hoping to reach countries in Northern Europe are embedded within enactments and contestations of power and politics that are deeply implicated in the nature of these journeys and the way in which they are experienced. In recent years, asylum seekers have been confronted with a series of policy developments resulting in the erection of a myriad of exclusionary barriers aimed at preventing them access to, or deterring them from, the asylum systems of European States. The assertion that refugees are 'disappearing' into

the category of illegal migration (Green and Grewcock 2002: 93) has its basis in the fact that, because of the policy developments of countries in Europe and the global North more broadly, more and more refugees are compelled to travel using 'illegal' means in order to reach these states to claim asylum.

This preoccupation with preventing access to the territory of the state is closely entwined with the "centrality of territorial presence" (Cornelisse 2016) for the enactment of rights in the state system. Once an asylum seeker is physically present on the territory of a state, that state is bound to act in accordance with their rights as set out in domestic and international law. This includes the right to seek asylum, and protection from *refoulement*.[2] States have therefore been especially inventive in developing ways to make it more difficult for asylum seekers to achieve this required physical presence on their territories so that these obligations cannot be triggered. There is thus a strange paradox as states like the UK "uphold differentiated regimes of refugee rights while at the same time engaging in costly and elaborate efforts to hinder persons from entering the territory where they can claim these rights" (Schmalz 2017, 28). These "efforts" have a deep and wide-ranging relevance to this project, as it is precisely these regimes that shape the trajectories and experiences of refugees travelling to the UK.

[2] The *non-refoulement* principle has been found to apply extra-territorially in contexts where a state is found to be exercising its exclusive jurisdiction, such as in the ECtHR case of *Hirsi vs Italy* The ECtHR found that the applicants subject to Italy's policy of interdiction of boats carrying migrants and refugees from Libya on the high seas fell under the jurisdiction of Italy for the purposes of Article 1 ECHR, and that the policy violated Article 3 because the applicants were exposed to the risk of ill-treatment in Libya and of *refoulement* to Somalia or Eritrea. However, state jurisdiction is most commonly synonymous with territorial presence, and there are no legal obligations that require states to let persons enter their territory in order to claim asylum. The range of legally permissible 'border control' measures that effectively deny territorial access to asylum seekers "remains remarkably large" (Schmalz 2017).

As Zaiotti (2016, 6) argues, these diffuse border control measures have had "limited success in stemming migration flows" but they have had a great impact on the trajectories and routes taken by migrants and refugees headed for Europe, and "[t]he more barriers governments have introduced, the more creative – and dangerous – the attempts to get around them." Indeed, the simple answer as to why many people, including asylum seekers, travel to Europe using irregular means, and often by undertaking difficult and risky journeys, is because of a lack of legal, safe alternatives (Cummings et al. 2015). To understand the dynamics of refugees' journeys to the UK, it is first necessary to explore some of the wide-ranging and diffuse measures that both the UK and the EU have established with the purpose of restricting refugee mobility.

1.1 UK Asylum and Immigration Policy and the Illegalisation of Asylum Travel

The post-war period in the UK was marked by the development of a dominant immigration policy model of control and restriction, which continued into the Conservative years 1979-1997. It was during this time that *asylum* in particular was established as a cause for concern, especially following the break-up of the USSR at the end of the 1980s and the onset of a number of conflicts in the early 1990s, including in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia (Clayton 2016). It was the changing demographic make-up of asylum applications, in particular the increase in applicants from Asia and Africa (rather than the traditional Eastern Bloc refugees) that saw the asylum system come under increased scrutiny during this time (Gibney 2004, 122).

Increasing restrictions under the Labour government in the late 1990s also arose specifically due to concerns about rising numbers of asylum claims (Clayton 2016, 12). Will Somerville (2007, 4) argues that the policy developments during this time saw a simultaneous liberalisation of the economic migration system *and* a rise in restrictionism with regards to asylum seekers, along with an increase in controls targeting unauthorised entry. These concerns around the numbers of people seeking asylum stoked the rapid growth of a visa regime that is now pivotal to the UK immigration system, affecting travellers from virtually all refugee-producing countries (ibid.). Visa controls increased significantly from the mid-1980s, and it was during this decade that the Conservative government began to use the visa system as a way to reduce the numbers of asylum claimants who would otherwise have been able to travel legally to the UK from their countries of origin. Removing this direct and unimpeded access to UK territory would significantly change the nature of journeys to the UK to claim asylum for many refugees. During the Labour government of the 1990s and 2000s, more visas were introduced specifically for countries producing increased numbers of asylum seekers.

Currently, the UK requires visas for many countries in the global South, including all the top refugee-producing countries, and all of the countries of origin of participants in this study.[3] Visas for airside transit are also required for nationals of the top refugee-producing states, presumably in response to the fear that asylum seekers would circumvent visa restrictions by purchasing tickets *via* the

[3] See UK Home Office (2017a) "UK Visa Requirements."

UK, only to claim asylum upon arrival at the airport. The most telling recent development in this regard, which illuminates the motivations underpinning these requirements, was the establishment of new visa rules including a requirement for airside transit visas for Syrians travelling to the UK in March 2012, just as Syria was descending into civil war and the numbers of Syrian asylum seekers in the UK began to rise.[4]

Along with the establishment of visa requirements for countries producing asylum seekers, another key facet of the UK's attempts to curtail asylum seeker mobility has been the delegation of responsibility for border controls to a variety of non-governmental actors. Carriers' liability is one such example that is pertinent to a discussion of journeys. 1987 saw the introduction of the Immigration (Carrier's Liability) Act, which made carriers liable to civil penalties if they allowed passengers to travel without valid visas. The 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act expanded the use of criminal and civil sanctions to restrict unauthorised entry, including carrier sanctions, which were extended to apply to road hauliers. The definition of a 'clandestine entrant' as established in the 1999 Act specifically refers to asylum seekers, stating that a person is a 'clandestine entrant' if he enters the UK or attempts to pass immigration control concealed in a vehicle, ship, aircraft or rail freight wagon, and "he claims, or indicates that he intends to seek, asylum in the United Kingdom, or evades, or attempts to evade immigration control."[5] This provision was meant to serve as a deterrent for lorry drivers crossing the channel, who were now individually liable for carrying

[4] See Morris and Hastings (2012) "Civil war prompts tenfold rise in Syrians claiming asylum in UK," writing for The Independent.
[5] Immigration and Asylum Act (1999 c. 33) "Part II: Carriers Liability" 32(1)(c)

'clandestine entrants' in their vehicles (Scholten 2015). Indeed, news reports of growing tensions between lorry drivers at risk of hefty fines for transporting 'clandestine entrants,' and migrants and refugees trying to reach the UK from Calais surfaced during the 'crisis' in 2015.[6]

Immigration (Leave to Enter and Remain) Order 2000 SI 2000/1161 allowed for the decision to grant leave to enter to be taken outside the UK, and a raft of measures to "export border control" followed on the heels of this order (Clayton 2016, 200). As Clayton argues, "[t]he power to grant or refuse leave to enter from abroad was not only granted for convenience of some travellers, but also for deterrence of others, namely asylum seekers" (ibid.). The reciprocal arrangement named 'juxtaposed controls', where British immigration officers work at ports abroad and foreign border guards work at UK ports, was first developed following the opening of the Channel Tunnel and was developed in response to fears that clandestine migrants would use the Tunnel as a route to the UK.[7] Following the controversy surrounding the Red Cross Sangatte refugee camp, these controls were extended in 2003[8] to encompass the seaports of northern France. Through these agreements, new border enforcement powers effected in the UK have been externalised, and "the network of border control is

[6] See, for example Moodley (2015) "Lorry drivers in Calais reveal frustration at migrant crisis: 'We need help, they are aggressive, they are stealing our goods'," writing for The Independent.
[7] See Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1993) "Protocol between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the French Republic Concerning Frontier Controls and Policing Co-operation in Criminal Justice, Public Safety and Mutual Assistance Relating to the Channel Fixed Link."
[8] See Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (2004) "Treaty between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the French Republic Concerning the Implementation of Frontier Controls at the Sea Ports of Both Countries on the Channel and North Sea."

established outside the actual territory, including new detection technology to find people hiding in vehicles"(Clayton 2016, 203).

1.2 The EUropeanisation of Border Control

As well as being situated within the UK policy context, is it also necessary to situate and appreciate the experiences articulated in the narratives in relation to the broader EU policy context, especially since many participants passed through and/or spent time in other EU countries prior to arrival in the UK, and many entered via the EU's external land and sea borders. Further, as with the UK's domestic policy, *non-entrée* measures, extending far beyond the EU's external borders, have also been a key facet of recent EU immigration policy. And although some participants stated that they always had the UK in mind as their intended destination, many participants said that upon leaving their country of origin, they were hoping to reach 'Europe' more broadly, rather than the UK specifically.

The 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam[9] brought asylum into "the 'first pillar' of European governance," allowing the EU to "make binding law in asylum policy" (Somerville 2007, 71). Similar to the UK's domestic immigration policy, EU asylum policy has been equally marked by a politics of restrictionism over the past 25 years. The liberalisation of internal borders has occurred in tandem with a reinforcement of the EU's external borders and an expansion of *non-entrée* practices and remote border control technologies (Zaiotti 2016). EU policy

[9] See European Union: Council of the European Union (1997) "Treaty of Amsterdam Amending the Treaty on European Union, The Treaties Establishing the European Communities and Related Acts." Although the UK opted-out of the Treaty as a whole, it had the option of taking part in certain measures, and it opted into all seven of the Treaty's asylum measures.

during this time can be said to have followed a similar pattern of diffusion that has seen border control extend outwards beyond its external borders, and fold inwards in ways that impact refugees' journeys *within* Europe. For example, the 1985 Schengen Convention, brought into EU law by the Treaty of Amsterdam, required penalties for carriers transporting 'aliens who do not possess the necessary travel documents by air or sea' to be adopted into Member States' domestic legislation.[10] Carrier sanctions are thus a EU-wide phenomenon. Further, visa requirements for the Schengen Zone, which apply to all EU member states except Ireland and the UK, are also similar to that of the UK, with visas demanded for nationals from many countries of the global South, and all the main refugee-producing states.

In 2004, intergovernmental cooperation on asylum matters was concretised with the establishment of Frontex, the EU border management agency, which was developed in order to bolster the external EU borders and provide operational support to Member States in the management of land, air or sea borders (FRA 2014). Frontex has been described as "the most visible representative of the militarisation of European borders," although its objectives are shrouded by the conflicting discourses of border control and human rights, humanitarian values and the concern for loss of life at Europe's external borders (Aas and Gundhus 2014, 1). European governments have also more recently attempted to recruit sending and transit countries to cooperate on migration issues as part of a process of 'externalisation' of border control measures (Zaiotti 2016). There are a number of instruments said to make up the external

[10] See European Union (1985) "The Schengen acquis."

dimension of EU migration and asylum policy. Regional dialogues, such as the Rabat Process, the Africa-EU Migration and Mobility Dialogue, and the Khartoum Process are key elements of this external dimension. These dialogues are driven by the EU's Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), of which the first pillar is 'prevention and fight against irregular immigration, strengthening border management and return.' The EU, through Regional (Development and) Protection Programmes, also supports third countries in the development their own asylum systems and protection capacities in the hope that this will decrease onward movement towards Europe.

EU border control measures have not just expanded geographically, they have also become more innovative and complex, making use of new technologies and information system infrastructures (Zaiotti 2016, 6) that allow for the diffusion of border controls both within and beyond its borders. EURODAC, the EU-wide biometric fingerprint database, has been operating since 2003 and was established in order to facilitate the application of the Dublin Regulation. Fingerprint evidence, that is, where an asylum seeker has his or her fingerprints registered by a particular Member State, is key to establishing the state responsible for an asylum claim under the Dublin Regulation. In essence, if asylum seekers are found to have had their fingerprints registered in another Member State, they are eligible to be returned there.[11] In addition, EUROSUR, the European Border Surveillance System established in 2013, uses a raft of technologies to monitor irregular migration, including drones and satellite

[11] Dublin removals to Greece have been suspended by all Dublin States since 2011 due to rulings by ECtHR in the case *MSS vs Belgium and Greece* and the CJEU in *NS and others C-411/10*. Further, in 2015 Germany enacted a complete suspension of the Dublin Regulation with regards to Syrian nationals, however the UK has continued to remove Syrians under Dublin during this time.

remote sensing, and facilitates the exchange of information across Member States.

1.3 Changes in the EU Migration Policy Landscape Since 2015

Since the research interviews were carried out there have been significant changes in the policy and border control landscape that undoubtedly affect those attempting to travel to Europe today, particularly those travelling from Turkey. The continual evolution of migration policy and mechanisms of control has been likened to a "game of cat and mouse," as States respond to the counterstrategies of people travelling irregularly, who in turn try to find new ways around these restrictions, and so on and so forth (Broeders and Engbersen 2007). The first, and arguably most important of these more recent policy developments is the EU-Turkey deal, which came into force in March 2016. This deal meant that anyone arriving irregularly to the Greek islands would be returned to Turkey, and in exchange Turkey would receive €6 billion to provide support to the country's refugee population, visa-free travel to the EU for Turkish citizens, and an as-yet-to-be-activated "voluntary" humanitarian scheme to resettle Syrians from Turkey to EU states. A year after the establishment of this agreement, the European Commission reported that irregular arrivals to Greece had dropped by 97%.[12] Also taking place in March 2016, the so-called closure of the Balkan route was the other key policy development that has significantly affected irregular trajectories in the Eastern Mediterranean. According to Weber (2017), this policy shift did not effect a total closure of the Balkan route, although it has resulted in a significant decrease in the numbers of people using this route. Those who do transit via the Eastern Mediterranean are now entering via

[12] For more information, see European Commission (2017) "EU-Turkey Statement: One Year On."

Bulgaria's land border with Turkey, and are again using the services of smugglers to assist their transit (Weber 2017, 3). Countries along this route, including most notoriously Hungary, have engaged in a series of physical push-backs, creating a bottleneck of refugees and migrants 'stuck' in Serbia and Macedonia (ibid.). It is important to note, therefore, that the trajectories of some of the participants in this study, especially those who travelled during 2014 and 2015 via the Eastern Mediterranean route, would no doubt look very different today. Indeed these same people may not have reached the UK or even Europe at all.

1.4 Restrictionism *Within* the UK: Situating journey narratives

The past 25 years has also seen a shift in the reception conditions afforded to asylum seekers in the UK, and a raft of restrictions has been introduced with the stated aim of deterring 'economic migrants' from using the asylum system as a route into the UK (Gibney 2004, 125). Whilst the previous government was already eroding the benefits entitlements of asylum seekers, the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act introduced by the new Labour government completely reformed the support system for asylum seekers. Asylum seeker financial support was cut to 70% of the income support level. And the provision relative to income support has only worsened since the introduction of the 1999 Act; between 2011 and 2015 the level of support for a single asylum seeker was fixed at £36.62, and in August 2015, when the research interviews were being carried out, was incrementally increased to £36.95 (equivalent to just 51% of the income support level). In 2002, policy allowing asylum seekers to work if they had been waiting six months or more was revoked, however in 2005 a new rule

was established allowing asylum seekers to apply for permission to work if they had been waiting for over 12 months for an initial decision (in line with the 2003 European Directive on Reception Conditions for asylum seekers). However, current policy dictates that even after the 12 month period asylum seekers are not allowed to set up a business or become self-employed, and can only apply for jobs on the shortage occupation list, which in reality means that employment opportunities for asylum seekers are extremely scarce. These punitive measures, and others, significantly affect the way that asylum seekers live once they are brought into the UK asylum system (Fletcher 2008).

Another key policy development impacting upon the lives of asylum seekers in the UK was the establishment of the national dispersal scheme. Another product of the 1999 Act, this policy was initially introduced with the aim of relieving pressure from housing services in the South-East and London, as asylum seekers requiring accommodation are 'dispersed' in towns and cities across the UK However, the scheme has been significantly criticised for its unfair distribution of asylum seekers, with 57% of asylum seekers housed in the poorest third of the country (Lyons and Duncan 2017). Further, the state of the accommodation provided for asylum seekers, responsibility for which has been sub-contracted to the private sector since 2012, has also been severely criticised. Housing for asylum seekers has been reported to be 'substandard, poorly maintained and, at times unsafe,' and the Home Office Home Affairs Committee has labeled the worst examples of such accommodation a 'disgrace.'[13]

[13] See House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2017) "Asylum Accommodation: Twelfth Report of Session 2016-17."

Although these measures relate to experiences after arrival onto UK territory, it is important to situate participants' narratives in this policy context. The narratives, though focused on experiences prior to arrival, are nevertheless deeply embedded within the present and for current asylum seekers, within this ongoing policy context of restriction and precarity. Indeed, the area in which the research interviews were carried out is one of the above mentioned dispersal areas, and is also amongst the most deprived areas in the country. The poor standard of housing for asylum seekers the area has also come under fire by local pro-refugee groups in recent years. This resonates with the criticism of accommodation provided for asylum seekers detailed above and gives some insight into the overall conditions in which participants are living or lived prior to receiving their refugee status.

This section provides a snapshot of some of the more prominent policies and mechanisms that can be said to make up the diffuse "borderscapes" of the UK and European Union (Rajaram and Gurundy-Warr 2007). Refugees' and asylum seekers' journeys are deeply shaped by these border practices. It is therefore vital to contextualise the experiences and narrative articulations of participants with reference to these often-hostile borderscapes. What follows in the coming chapters is a turning inside out of these regimes to "discover their significance for those who live them" (Coole 2007, 117). However first, the thesis itself must also be contextualised with reference to existing research and writing relevant to the topic at hand.

2. The Current State of Literature on Migrant and Refugee Journeys

This section offers an exploration into literature in refugee and migration studies relevant to this thesis. During the 1990s, the transnational turn in the social sciences made substantial waves in migration and refugee and forced migration studies, advocating for increased engagement with the networks and flows between the A and B of migration. However, references to journeys within this literature were often abstract and metaphorical, rather than being grounded in empirical research on processes of travel and mobility. More recently, research on transit migration has attempted to engage substantively with processes between origin and settlement, particularly with regards to migration into Europe. However this set of literature has come with its own limitations, including often reproducing the methodological nationalism that it initially sought to counter. Although there have been some attempts to focus more specifically on travel and journeys, especially within the literature on transit migration, it is only very recently that 'the journey' as a concept has been afforded sustained attention in migration and refugee and forced migration studies.

There has been a proliferation of public interest in refugees' journeys to Europe in the past three years, with certain forms refugee travel becoming especially visible and heavily scrutinised in the context of the so-called European 'Refugee Crisis,' or 'Migrant crisis,'[14] depending on what you are reading. Academics and researchers, in part building on this recent interest, have developed the topic of

[14] See, for example, Trilling, D. (2018) "Five myths about the refugee crisis" writing in The Guardian, compared with BBC (2016) "Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts."

migration journeys into a burgeoning sub-field that spans both refugee studies and migration studies more broadly. However, academic research on migration journeys remains in its nascent stages and the journeys of refugees and asylum seekers are only just beginning to see the level of sustained academic and theoretical attention that is required for a deeper understanding of the processes they involve. This section, and the one that follows, situate this thesis in relation to these existing contributions.

2.1 Between A and B: A brief history of scholarship on migration processes between origin and destination

The transnational turn in the social sciences made observable waves in the field of migration studies, with a raft of scholars seeking to understand the processes between, as well as within, the A and the B in migration. Transnationalism as a concept was popularised in cultural studies (e.g. Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988; Hannerz 1996) where it referred to flows of meanings and objects. Migration scholars expanded this to examine both these flows and, importantly, the social relations that accompany them (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1995). Within anthropology, it was the work of scholars in diaspora studies that brought the concept of journeying to the fore. In 1997, James Clifford posed the question, "…what would happen…if travel were untethered, seen as a complex and pervasive spectrum of human experiences? Practices of displacement might emerge as constitutive of cultural meanings rather than as their simple transfer or extension" (Clifford 1997, 3). Clifford celebrates the idea of journeying, and attempts to open up the concept of "travel" in order to ask how different populations, classes and genders travel (See also Clifford and Dhareshwar 1989).

Along with James Clifford, Paul Gilroy is the other prominent scholar in diaspora studies that uses the journey as a concept in his work. In his discussion of the 'black diaspora' he uses the images of the slave ship and the middle passage to symbolise the circulation of ideas and artifacts that fuel the diaspora (Gilroy 1993). Gilroy argues that narratives of journeying direct the consciousness of the black diaspora "back to significant nodal points in its common history and its social memory" (ibid, 198). However, even in diaspora studies, the journey has largely remained an abstract concept. Furthermore, the understanding of journeying put forward by Clifford came under significant criticism at the time. Indeed, bell hooks (1992, 343) problematised the "playful" evocation of travel and journeying by anthropologist James Clifford, arguing that "such an evocation would always make it difficult for there to be recognition of an experience of travel that is not about play but is an encounter with terrorism," which in the context of her work represents the terrorism of white supremacy. However, as Shapendonk and Steel (2014, 264) assert, whereas within the theoretical reorganisation of the transnational turn, emphasis has been placed on transnational engagement and networks, experiences of mobility and in particular the journeys between places of departure and arrival remained neglected in migration studies (See also, Burrell 2011; Schapendonk 2012).

That said, one of the ways that migration researchers have more recently attempted to prize open the space between the A and B of migration is through research and writing on 'transit migration'. Indeed, the work of various scholars on transit migration has, since the mid-2000s, aimed to dissect this literal and

literary lacuna between the A and the B through empirical research. There is already a small, but well-established body of literature on transit migration within, and at the fringes of, Europe. The recent scholarly focus on transit migration has engendered a whole host of research on the 'in-between' phase of migration in the European context, usually discussing migrants - including refugees and asylum seekers - originating from beyond Europe's borders (See for example Collyer 2007, 2010; Collyer, Düvell, and de Haas 2012; Collyer and de Haas 2012; Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008; Schapendonk 2012). These contributions make up the most robust attempt to explore migration dynamics in-between origin and destination, exploring previously unchartered terrain.

However, as Castagnone (2011) astutely notes, "methodological nationalism" still pervades the study of transit migration. This methodological blinkering is prevalent despite assertions that the term transit migration: "refers to certain forms of supposedly temporary immigration and to migrants who keep moving from country to country…And more generally, *it refers to real and imagined journeys and odysseys, which may be long in distance and time, they may continually change direction and at times they may be hazardous*" (Düvell 2008 emphasis added). Transit migration scholars concede, therefore, that the term can refer to great odysseys across space and time and yet much of the transit migration research, particularly in the European context, has done little to try and capture the spatially and temporally diffuse nature of the phenomenon. This is also hindered by the politicised nature of the term; a politics that has sought to nominate certain states as "transit countries", thereby re-nationalising the term

'transit' and encouraging research to situate itself accordingly. As Hess (2010) affirms, the study of migratory phenomena remains "a highly politicized field".

However, despite such admissions, studies of what Walters (2009) describes as "the time, space, economy and culture of transit" have often reproduced this same 'politics of transit migration', and knowledge and understanding of the entirety of 'real and imagined journeys and odysseys' taken by migrants and refugees who travel to Northern and Western Europe remained obscured. Those studying refugees and migrants en route to Europe have most often looked at a temporally and spatially delimited snapshot of the hardships and rights deprivations that occur in "transit countries", neglecting the temporally and spatially diffuse nature of the journey as a significant facet of refugee experiences. Indeed, Burrell argues that even migration scholars "have been slow to acknowledge the significance of physical time-spaces of migration journeys" (Burrell 2011).

'Transit migration' as a label has also more recently been criticised for reinforcing the assumption that all those migrants present irregularly in so-called 'transit countries' are headed for Europe, meanwhile empirical research with these populations actually shows a much more nuanced picture (See, for example Schapendonk 2012). Another related issue is that the label 'transit' promotes a linear vision of migration, which is again something that has been repeatedly problematised by empirical research. A (origin) to B (settlement) simply becomes A (origin) to B (transit) to C (settlement). The nuance of complicated migration life histories is therefore obscured. As Joris Schapendonk

argued in 2012, "…transit dynamics can be better understood by paying more attention to the logics of journeying" as it facilitates a move from the "linear connotation of transit migration" (Schapendonk 2012, 581–82).

In response to his own critique of the transit migration literature, Schapendonk has provided one of the most compelling and nuanced accounts of the complexities of migration journeys in an Afro-European context. Eschewing the tendency in transit migration studies to reproduce methodological nationalism in a different context, his work makes use of mobile ethnographic methods to allow for a more diffuse picture of the 'in-between' of migration (Schapendonk, van Liempt, and Spierings 2014; Schapendonk 2012; Schapendonk and Steel 2014). He was also amongst the first to integrate a 'mobilities' approach into the study of transit, something that has been taken up more recently by a number of scholars exploring migration journeys.

The mobilities approach developed by Cresswell, Urry and others in the discipline of geography also engages with the sedentarist critique of the transnational turn through *centralising the process of movement itself* as a key social and political process. This approach offers novel ways of theorising the ways in which mobilities lie "at the centre of constellations of power, the creation of identities and the microgeographies of everyday life." (Cresswell 2010a, 551; See also Baerenholdt and Granås 2008; Cresswell 2006). Cresswell argues that there are three aspects of mobilities: the physical act of movement, the representation of movement and how it is given shared meaning, and the experienced and embodied practice of movement. All of these aspects are

political in that they are implicated in the production of power and relations of domination (Cresswell 2010b, 21). This body of literature in particular has justified this shift in relation to a set of philosophical approaches that reject traditional philosophical tenets of foundation and continuity in favour of process and flux. This 'nomadic metaphysics' (Cresswell 2001) espoused by a contemporary generation of scholars and influenced by philosophies like those of Deleuze, Guattari, and Derrida, has focused on flow and flux, on the processual and mobile nature of the world.

It would not be fair, however, to say that there are no other examples of this more nuanced approach to transit migration that incorporates this 'logic of journeying' that Schapendonk affirms. Indeed, as early as 2005 Susan Coutin, in her ethnography of migrants "in transit" from El Salvador to the United States, focused explicitly on journeys and travel. Amongst other things, she argues that "[u]nauthorized migrants' accounts of their journeys to the United States emphasize the physicality of border crossings" and this demonstrates how migrants are made to "embody illegality" (Coutin 2005, 199). Michael Collyer is another researcher on transit migration who has engaged more substantively with the concept of journeys, in particular through his work on the 'fragmented journeys' of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco (Collyer 2007, 2010).

More recently, anthropologists Seth Holmes (2013) and Jason De León (2015) have also explored migrant journeys and travel across the US-Mexico border. Holmes' book, '*Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farm Workers in the United States*' provides what the author calls an 'embodied anthropology of migration'

that involved him berry-picking and travelling alongside migrants, including participating in a journey across the Sonoran desert with a group of migrants and being arrested alongside them before they were deported (and he was released). De León undertook a rich, multi-sited ethnography between Mexico and the United States. His work coalesces around the theme of 'violence,' and explores the structural violence of US border policies at a variety of analytical scales, from the discourses and infrastructure of border enforcement to the experiences 'on the ground' of those affected by these policies.

Beyond the transit migration literature, Kushner (2012) has also been amongst those who have more recently attempted to correct the relative neglect of migration journeys in the literature with his empirical and historical account of migrant journeys to Britain from the 17th Century onwards. He looks at the way in which migration journeys throughout history have been collectively remembered (or forgotten). Kushner's work exposes the fact that there are hardly any detailed accounts of migrants journeys, and those that do exist "have tended to conform…to a heroic or pitiful model with emphasis placed on the persecution and exploitation that were escaped from and survived" (Kushner 2012, 41–42). He argues that migrant journeys that do not fit neatly within this framework are rarely incorporated into collective memory and are either obscured entirely or else confined to "alternative, marginalized narratives" (ibid.).

2.2 The 'Journey' in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies

Like in migration studies more broadly, refugee studies scholars have also long been influenced by the 'transnational turn' in social sciences. Indeed, refugee studies has historically criticised the assumption that displacement denaturalises otherwise "rooted" populations (Malkki 1992); an assumption that reinforces a sedentarist bias and considers mobility to be aberrant. Despite this criticism of sedentarism, research on journeys within the field of refugee studies has historically been even sparser than in other migration scholarship, and the 'journey' has been decidedly absent in reams of otherwise exceptionally wide-ranging academic work on refugees. Indeed as Ben Ezer and Zetter (2015, 3) argued, "journeys scarcely appear in the indexes of books produced on the groups of people who underwent such experiences or in volumes of abstracts or references." The authors assert that research on refugees that does acknowledge journeys into exile has done so in a way that was largely fragmentary and often subsidiary to the main focus of the study. Indeed, historically, the concept of the 'journey' in refugee studies literature and discourse was often used metaphorically to represent the broader life history of a refugee (See, for example, Darbellay 1991; Galoumian 2004; Goff 2003). Processes of travel were most often subsumed, and often sidelined, somewhere within these narratives.

Whilst Schapendonk et al. (2014) were amongst those in migration studies decrying the enduring lack of attention paid to the 'in-between' of migration, Derulyn et al. (2014) and BenEzer and Zetter (2015) were lamenting a similar neglect in refugee and forced migration studies. Indeed prior to 2015, we see but a smattering of research dedicated to 'the journey' in refugee and forced

migration studies more specifically. That said, there were some, fragmented attempts to introduce 'the journey' as a legitimate line of academic inquiry in refugee studies that should be acknowledged (See for example, Arnone 2008; Dolma et al. 2006; Ben Ezer 2002; Hoffman 2010). One notable early exception was Gadi Ben Ezer's 2002 study on The Ethiopian Jewish Exodus: Narratives of the Migration Journey to Israel 1977-1985. This body of work was an exploration of the process of the journey itself. It focused on the individual as well as the social impact and meaning of the journey and demonstrates how the journey in this case "transcended the immediate physical event to be a profoundly life-changing experience of itself and in terms of the subsequent settlement and reconstruction of individual identity in Israel" (Ben Ezer and Zetter 2015, 5). Ben Ezer encourages us to consider the ways in which migrants and refugees understand the journey "as a period in itself, with specific meaning and significance for the rest of their lives" (Ben Ezer 2002, 9).

And although not specifically framed around the concept of 'the journey,' Shahram Khosravi, provides one of the richest and most diffuse accounts of refugee travel and border crossings in his 2010 book *'"Illegal" Traveller: An Auto-Ethnography of Borders.'* His contribution relates his own story, as an Iranian refugee who travelled to Sweden to the experiences of undocumented migrants that he met during the course of ethnographic fieldwork, and to discussions of border control and the nation-state system as they appear in the academic literature. However, as Ben Ezer and Zetter have argued, the term itself has not been conceptually framed or theorised substantively, and there is thus a limited

conceptual foundation upon which to explore the meaning and significance of the journey (Ben Ezer and Zetter 2015).

Despite this observed gap in the refugee studies literature more specifically, it is necessary to acknowledge that the transit migration scholarship engaged with in the previous section often implicitly and explicitly engaged with refugees in its empirical work. Indeed, transit migration literature is in some ways exemplary of the blurring of categories between economic migration and forced displacement in both empirical and academic contexts. It was investigations into migrants in so-called transit countries that brought to the fore the idea of 'mixed migration'[15] made up of both people intending to claim asylum (i.e. refugees), and those intending to live and work, often irregularly and without the intention of claiming asylum. Although work under the guise of transit migration would not fit discreetly into the category of refugee studies for this very reason, it highlights the ever-increasing need for scholars who situate themselves within the sub-field of refugee studies (c.f. migration studies) to be open to research, like transit migration research, that is not defined by these ever more blurred distinctions. Otherwise we risk neglecting important research involving refugees which is already doing significant work in fleshing out the gap in knowledge between A and B.

In addition, although not focused on 'journeys' per se, there have also been more recent discussions on mobilities and forced migration that have engaged

[15] For more information about the development of the concept of 'mixed migration' and its nuances, see "Mixed Migration: Policy Challenges" (Van Hear 2011).

specifically with the mobilities studies literature, and have explored the ways that "bodily, material, imagined and virtual mobilities and immobilities interact" to produce human displacement (See the edited collection by Gill, Caletrío, and Mason 2011). Importantly, scholars in refugee and forced migration studies have critically appraised the tendency for the philosophies underpinning the mobilities turn to romanticise mobility as the norm and as a positive virtue linked to freedom (Ballinger 2012). Scholars have argued that for some refugees, "there is as much un-freedom in mobility as there is in fixity" (Gill, Caletrío, and Mason 2011, 4).

Notwithstanding the important contributions outlined above, it is fair to say that at the beginning of this research project in 2013 there was still relatively little academic discussion on journeys in refugee and forced migration studies, and it was in response to this gap in the literature that this project was initially developed. However, there has been a recent surge of interest in migration journeys, particularly in the European context, and the corresponding publication of a number of research papers, both policy-oriented and, increasingly, academic which has brought about changes to the landscape in which this research is situated. What was previously a largely unchartered terrain is now a burgeoning sub-field.

2.3 Journeys and The 2015 European 'Refugee Crisis'

During the so-called European 'Refugee Crisis' or 'Migrant Crisis' of 2015, which saw an increase in the numbers of migrants and refugees travelling to Europe, journeys became the key focus of media coverage and political debate on

migration in Europe. As Mainwaring and Brigden (2016, 243) assert, "[t]he world has turned its attention to the long and dangerous journeys undertaken by migrants." Mediterranean sea crossings, and to a lesser degree the Balkans land route, were the main geographical foci of this explosion of interest in people on the move. This flurry of interest in migrant and refugee journeys to Europe was in part due to the relatively higher numbers of people travelling in the summer of 2015, which made this already well-established social phenomenon more visible. But the decision to label these arrivals a 'crisis' and present these events as unprecedented and 'from nowhere' has been criticised for ignoring both the recent European history of mass displacement from a crumbling Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, as well as the interaction of these movements with already established migration patterns in North Africa (Crawley et al. 2016). This is in addition to the fact that the number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean has actually been increasing since 2011 (ibid.).

Media coverage and political discourse around migrant and refugee journeys to Europe prior 2015 was relatively less pronounced, punctuated by specific, disastrous events like the Lampedusa boat tragedy in October 2013, and was preoccupied with the role of smugglers who were blamed for tragedies such as these (Sigona 2013). However, during 2015, migration across the Mediterranean came to dominate both media and political discourse (Crawley et al. 2016, 6). As Crawley et al. explain, much of the focus was "on the drama of the perilous journeys across the Mediterranean, the smugglers facilitating irregular crossings and the hardships endured by refugees and migrants during the journey and on arrival" which helped develop the perception that these events constituted a

'crisis' (ibid.). Popular understandings of 'refugee journeys' to Europe have arguably become synonymous with these perilous border crossings.

This 'crisis' has opened the gates to a significant number of policy and journalistic accounts of these journeys. There have been a large number of reports by NGOs and international organisations relating to developments in the Mediterranean region[16] (ibid.). Journalistic and other first-hand accounts have accompanied these reports, with books like Patrick Kingsley's *The New Odyssey: The Story of Europe's Refugee Crisis* and Wolfgang Bauer's *Crossing the Sea: With Syrians on the Exodus to Europe* appearing on the shelves of bookshops in 2016. Both of these titles provide interesting insight into the way in which these journeys have been framed in popular discourse. 'Exodus' is a Biblical reference depicting the arduous journey of the Israelites who are lead by Moses from slavery in Egypt across the desert to the Promised Land under God's watchful eye. 'Odyssey' refers to Homer's epic poems telling the story of Odysseus' eventful ten-year return journey to Ithaca following the Trojan War. It is a tale of marked by the heroism of its protagonist, whose bravery and intelligence allows him to succeed in his quest to return home.

The migration journey has also become prominent cinematic trope in recent years, and particularly in the wake of this proliferation of popular interest in migration journeys since 2015. In her 2006 study of European cinema on

[16] See, for example, Amnesty International (2016) "Trapped in Greece: An Avoidable Refuge Crisis"; Human Rights Watch (2015) 'The Mediterranean Migration Crisis: Why People Flee, What Europe Should Do"; MSF (2015) "Obstacle Course to Europe: A Policy-Made Humanitarian Crisis at EU Borders"; Townsend and Oomen (2015) "Before the Boat: Understanding the Migrant Journey" for Migration Policy Institute; UNHCR (2015) "The Sea Route to Europe: The Mediterranean Passage in the Age of Refugees."

migration, Loshitzky highlights an important genre in the then emerging cinema on diaspora and migration, 'journeys of hope', a genre that portrays the hardships endured by refugees and migrants 'along the way'. In her analysis, Loshitzky outlines an important aspect of 'the journey' in this genre of film, and argues; "the literal journey is also a metaphorical one necessary for the construction of a new world, a new self. These journeys, thus, become journeys in search of a new identity" (Loshitzky 2006, 750). Following the European migration 'crisis', films as diverse as Gianfranco Rosi's "Fire at Sea," Tonislav Hristov's "The Good Postman," and Navid Mahmoudi's "Parting" were all released, exploring different aspects of the 'crisis'. Renowned artist and activist Ai Weiwei also released a film in October of 2017 called "Human Flow," which follows "a chain of urgent human stories" across 23 countries from Afghanistan, to Germany, to Mexico. These films, along with the books and other journalistic accounts, appear to have the shared objective of exploring the human impact of these events, and provide rich detail about how migration journeys are experienced by those who undertake them, and capturing the drama and hardship that often accompanies difficult passage. These depictions in film and popular literature seem to resonate with Kushner's assertion that migration journeys that find a place in the collective memory conform to a "heroic or pitiful model" focused on hardship and survival.

In this context of increasing public interest in these dangerous journeys undertaken by refugees and migrants, scholars have also now begun to heed the call of Ben Ezer and Zetter, Schapendonk and others, and as such there has been a small but significant shift towards studies using the concept of the journey as a

framing for empirical academic research. Most notably, a 2016 special issue of the journal *Geopolitics* was based around the theme of clandestine migrant journeys. The editors state that the aim of the issue is to bring together scholars exploring the dynamics of migrant journeys in order to "provide a theoretically grounded and comparative analysis of clandestine migrant journeys" into North America and Europe (Mainwaring and Brigden 2016, 244). This timely contribution is undoubtedly influenced by the surge of popular interest in migrant journeys in the previous year. It is to these more recent publications and the key arguments presented within them that the discussion will now turn.

2.4 Key Arguments from the Contemporary Literature on Journeys to Europe

On the ambiguity of 'journey'

Almost as soon as the journey was proposed as a concept that could frame research, its boundaries were being deconstructed. Hagen-Zanker and Mallet, in their policy-focused research paper, confess that the journey's starting point is "hard to define" because migration begins as a "mental process" (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2016, 17). They also concede that their participants - migrants and refugees in four European cities – often lived mobile lives prior to their most recent journey, calling into question the idea that journeys are preceded and proceeded by settlement. Innes' (2015) article uses the single narrative case study of Ali, from Sudan who had got 'stuck' in Greece whilst trying to reach his wife and child in France. She describes the migrant journey as a "period in which a person in unavoidably outside of state jurisdictions," and the more time spent outside these jurisdictions, the more difficult it is to re-enter them, creating "a

'never-ending' migrant journey" (Innes 2015, 512). Mainwaring and Bridgen concede that, "…the need to talk of journeys as discreet moments is born from methodological necessity and, to some extent, potentially arbitrary decisions by researchers, not a preexisting logic of migration" (2016, 251).

Kaytaz attempts to transcend the traditional dichotomies that mar conceptualisations of the journey by conceiving of the journey as a form of narrative constituted of "long periods of immobility punctuated by shorter instances of travel" (Kaytaz 2016, 285). She criticises Ben Ezer's understanding of the journey as a 'distinct period' due to the fact that her participants did not experience the same sense of rupture that Ben Ezer recounts. As such she describes how it becomes difficult to separate the transformative potential of the journey from broader life histories up until that point. According to Kaytaz, "…it was not always clear to what extent my participants viewed themselves as being transformed by the experiences during the journey, or other life events that led the participants to their journeys" (ibid., 297).

Mainwaring and Bridgen provide the most comprehensive and thoughtful conceptual discussion of "the journey," conceiving it as having "indeterminate beginnings and ends," and "encompass[ing] imagined journeys before migration, journeys from countries of origin through countries of transit to destination, as well as deportation journeys" (Mainwaring and Brigden 2016, 244). They understand how beginnings are not clear, and are often embedded within a larger chain of events and arrival similarly does not necessarily equate to the 'end' of the journey, especially for those "who live under conditions of

questionable legality…in which a sense of settlement cannot be achieved" (ibid., 246).

On the non-linearity of journeys

It has now been very well-established in the literature, almost to the point of being overstated, that irregular journeys are most-often non-linear (Crawley et al. 2016; Innes 2015; Kaytaz 2016; Mainwaring and Brigden 2016). Crawley et al. identify three types of migration in their large-scale study of the "backgrounds, experiences, routes and aspirations of refugees and migrants" in Italy, Greece, Malta and Turkey: (1) One-off migration with relatively fast and direct journeys; (2) Longer migration trajectories made up of separate journeys linked together, punctuated by stops in one or more countries; (3) Serial migration separated by longer periods spent in one or more different countries "from which onward movement can be considered a separate migration experience driven by its own motivations, decision-making, planning and aspirations" (Crawley et al. 2016, 27). These "stops and stays" are common, can be forced or voluntary, intentional or not, and have a varying functions (ibid., 29). Irregular journeys to Europe are often 'fragmented' - a term coined by Michael Collyer in 2007 - and commonly involve longer periods of waiting or immobility punctuated by shorter bursts of mobility (Mainwaring and Brigden 2016, 247). Kaytaz uses the terms "zigzags" and "back-and-forth travelling" to describe her participants' experiences of non-linear travel from Iran to Turkey (2016., 295).

Routes, Risk-taking and decision-making

Risk-taking and decision-making were key tropes in some of the earlier literature on journeys (See, for example, Carling and Hernández Carretero 2012; Hoffman 2010). This tendency has continued into more recent research on migration journeys, in particular within the more policy-focused work (Cummings et al. 2015; Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2016; Kuschminder 2017; Mallett and Hagen-Zanker 2016; Townsend and Oomen 2015). This policy preoccupation with 'why' people decide to move is arguably in no small part linked to the enduring desire of receiving states to better understand people's reasons for moving in order ultimately to prevent that movement. Processes of individual decision-making are amongst the key foci of more recent attempts to study migration journeys. These studies have emphasised that decision-making processes are not static and 'one-offs,' but are iterative and shift in response to the changing contexts and circumstances that migrants and refugees encounter on the way.

On agency

The concept of migrant agency is another motif that crops up several times in the more recent research on migration journeys. Mainwaring and Brigden declare it to be one of the key themes of their special edition on clandestine migration journeys. Indeed, they go so far as to say the volume challenges the portrayal of "migrants as victims with little or no agency" and demonstrate how "[f]rom marginalised positions, migrants continue to negotiate and manoeuvre, exhibiting a degree of agency reflected in successful journeys despite barriers" (2016, 244-5). Innes describes how her participant, Sonny, "refused an identity

as a passive victim" and "assert[ed] agency over his circumstances" (2016, 277). Elsewhere, she discusses how migrants "assert agency and form routes and journeys that circumvent legal restrictions" (2015, 501). And one of the key policy recommendations of Katie Kuschminder is to "account for refugees' agency," an agency "that can still be exercised despite the structural constraints to their mobility" (2017, 17).

These understandings of mobility as the manifestation of agency, freedom or resistance jar with the earlier critique, made by both forced migration and mobilities scholars, of this very conflation. Also, and interestingly, it is also somewhat contradicted by Gladkova and Mazzucato (2017) in their paper 'Theorising Chance: Capturing the Role of Ad Hoc Social Interactions in Migrant Trajectories.' They argue that chance has been overwhelmingly overlooked in the social sciences in the search for structures, regularities, and lasting relationships (ibid.). Indeed, especially in migration and refugee studies there seems to be an enduring desire to fit everything into one of the two categories of structural constraint or expression of migrant/refugee agency. This is possibly attributable, at least in part, to what Gladkova and Mazzucato describe as the tendency in Western societies to emphasise individual agency and rationality, thus devaluing the concept of chance. The preoccupation with decision-making described above is also a manifestation of this. However, in their research with African migrants, life histories were full of references to 'chance,' intertwining notions of agency with "ideas of fate and a predetermined destiny" (ibid., 13).

On Narrative

Mainwaring and Brigden describe 'narrative' as one of the key themes of their special edition on clandestine migration journeys. Much of the scholarly research made use of a narrative approach for their empirical work on journeys (See, for example, Kaytaz 2016, Innes 2015, 2016, Gladkova and Mazzucato 2017, Hassan and Biorklund 2016). Two statements, the first by Innes, and the second by Hassan and Biorklund, hint towards the understanding of narrative held by these authors:

In accessing Sonny's narrative of security I acknowledge experiential knowledge and foreground Sonny's self-identity as a refugee (Innes 2016, 270);

…the first person account in the main part of the article…has been consciously chosen to retain the dignity, autonomy, and ownership of the research subject (Hassan and Biorklund 2016, 118).

However there is little by way of critical discussion of narrative methods in the current body of research on migration journeys, or indeed of the interaction between experience and narrative, or of the concepts of autonomy and ownership of narrative. There is work still to be done in this regard. Although the adoption of narrative methods for studies of journeys is intuitively appealing – as de Certeau astutely articulated, "What the map cuts up, the story cuts across" – there is an enduring need in this sub-field to have a frank discussion about what narrative can, and cannot provide.

3. Contributions of the Thesis

Mainwaring and Brigden end their discussion with the following plea: "We call on scholars to challenge narrative of the state with grounded empirical work alongside migrants at various points in their journey, and to collaborate to bring rich fieldwork into comparative perspective" (2016, 258). This project does precisely this, thus answering the call of scholars working on these issues who recognise the enduring need for research on migration journeys. But what specifically, in a now burgeoning sub-field of study, does this thesis have to offer?

First, It contributes to the ongoing discussion around journeys and mobilities, engaging more deeply with the mobilities literature, in particular Peter Adey's auto-critique of his own privileging of mobility in the 2006 paper 'If Mobility is Everything Then it is Nothing: Towards a Relational Politics of (Im)mobilities.' In this paper he describes an interaction during a conference where he was confronted with the realisation that to privilege mobility as an ontological absolute and apply that to studies of social life "subdues the differences between mobilities and the relations between them" (Adey 2006, 76). As he astutely ponders, if everything is mobile, "…how can we avoid rendering the whole world as a mass of unintelligible gloop…?" (Adey 2006, 82). As such, when we try to bring this metaphysical bent into explorations of social life, a certain mediation is required, lest we risk romanticising mobility, and "mobilising the world into a transient, yet featureless, homogeneity" (ibid., 91). He argues that it is possible to use the language of relationality that helps us to articulate how things and

people may be *more* or *less* mobile than each other. In other words, even if everything is mobile, some things are more mobile than others, or:

> *In other words, mobility and immobility are profoundly relational and experiential. The point I am trying to make is that while everything might be mobile, mobilities are very different, and they also relate and interact with one another in many different ways. This relatedness impacts upon what mobilities mean and how they work. It is also because of this difference and relatedness that illusions of mobility and immobility are created*
>
> (ibid., 83).

Taking particular inspiration from Craig Martin's (2012) study of the corporeal passage and violent mobilities of undocumented migrants, and in keeping with the more recent work on clandestine migration journeys by Brigden and Mainwaring (2016) which explores the "corporeal scenes" within migrant journey narratives, this project contributes to the discussion on mobilities with an intricate exploration of the embodied, and implicitly relational, micro-level experiences of (im)mobility, waiting and travel *en route*.

Schapendonk and Steel (2014, 51) describe journeys as "an embodied form of travel from one place to the other" but it is only Brigden and Mainwaring (2016) that really engage with the 'embodied' aspect of embodied experience in the European context. I hope to contribute to this understudied aspect of journeys, in particular the role of the body in experiences of (im)mobility and embodied interactions with spaces, landscapes and other bodies during travel. Whilst it is

vital to explore the intricate and wide-ranging mechanisms of control and the border processes that impress themselves upon the bodies of refugees and asylum seekers, it is equally important to understand how this *feels* and what sort of embodied responses it elicits. The focus on embodiment illuminates the many ways that refugees' and asylum seekers' experience these journeys, and thus the policies implicated in these journeys, sensuously and affectively at the level of their lived bodies.

Second, this project moves away from 'decision-making' and risk as the key tropes for understanding journeys and from the extensive discussions around the 'Why?' and 'By what means?' that dominates the policy-focused research. This focus on individual decision-making points to the desire to rationalise journey processes and search for patterns and regularities. Instead of focusing on the 'Why?', this project explores more broadly how these journeys are experienced, remembered, and made sense of, providing a richness of detail overlooked by the preoccupation with decision-making and 'drivers'. In doing so, it also engages with the related discussion of agency and critically assesses the way the concept of agency has been used in the literature to rationalise and explain 'successful journeys' in the face of the structural constraints of border control.

Third, there is an enduring bias towards studies in transit locations, even in the more recent research on 'journeys' to Europe (For example, Crawley et al. 2016; Innes 2015; Kaytaz 2016; Kuschminder 2017). This has its benefits, and has exposed some very important dynamics specific to migrant and refugee

mobilities at these journey nodes. This research has shed light on the experiences of stranded, stuck and settled migrants and refugees (Schapendonk 2012), and on the non-linear nature of their journeys. And as mentioned earlier, research in these spaces can encompass the blurring of migrant categories in these spaces, and avoids perpetuating sometimes-problematic distinctions between refugees and migrants who in reality often share spaces, modes of travel, and experiences *en route*. However, conducting research in these locations also comes with its limitations. It cannot, for example, capture the stories of the not insignificant number of refugees that do not follow these well-known routes, particularly to get to the UK. These stories are obscured by the enduring preoccupation with these transit nodes. This work contributes to the literature by exploring these less visible and less scrutinised stories.

Fourth, the existing scholarly focus on dangerous journeys and spaces of 'irregular' travel, such as the sea passage into Europe, is undoubtedly vital. But also important are stories of refugees travelling by regular means, as are the embodied experiences of refugees travelling irregularly, but using the spaces and modes of transport of regular travel. It is important to acknowledge that not all refugee border crossings and presence *en route* is irregular. Refugees and migrants often undertake a mixture of regular and irregular crossings (Crawley et al. 2016) such that journeys on a whole should not be labelled 'irregular.' Crawley et al. also describe how their participants reported following a diversity of routes prior to their arrival in Europe, "mostly making use of the same infrastructure (dirt tracks, roads, buses, ferries, planes) available to other travellers" (ibid., 21). However, a sustained exploration of this is missing in both

the literature and popular accounts, which has largely focused on those most dangerous of passages. Filling this gap, this project provides an in-depth exploration of refugees' bodily encounters with many different regular and irregular spaces of travel, not just the most perilous.

Fifth, while a number of the most recent academic research projects on journeys makes use of narrative methods, there is little discussion of this methodological approach in the current published work. This project, whilst itself using narrative methods, offers a robust and detailed critical appraisal of the method, something that is missing in the current literature. Chapters II and III provide an extended discussion of what narrative can and cannot offer to research on migration journeys. When recognised as a mode of 'singing the world' (Merleau-Ponty), it has exceptional potential. But framing this approach as a direct translation of experience (Innes 2016), or as a way to confer authority or ownership on narrators (Hassan and Biorkland 2016), remains problematic. This project addresses these ongoing debates around narrative methods in detail.

Finally, the decision to situate the research at what is at least hoped to be the 'end point' of participants' journeys allows for an exploration of journey memories and meaning-making that are missing in other accounts, exploring 'significance' from a novel vantage point. The project engages with an as yet underdeveloped aspect of research on migration journeys, that is, how they are made sense of and remembered by those who have undertaken them. This gap in the research is to some extent linked to the largely uncritical adoption of

narrative methods and a lack of engagement with the process of narrative construction itself. Through this exploration of meaning and significance, the thesis also contributes to the ongoing discussion around the concept of the journey. Despite Ben Ezer's assertions that the journey is a distinct period with its own significance, more recent research suggests that its contours are far more ambiguous. This project, with its diversity of respondents, is able to contribute rich insight to this debate.

3.1 A Note to Affirm the Modesty of this Research Project

A discussion of narrative methods and the relationship between experience and narrative is offered in the chapter following this one. This discussion affirms the modesty of narrative methods and admits that narratives are simultaneously obscuring and disclosing, but argues that this does not strip them of their epistemic value. In the spirit of exercising caution more broadly, however, before continuing I would like to discuss some of the limitations that I have been able to tease out from my deeply embedded position within this project. This list is not, and cannot be exhaustive, but it can hopefully go someway towards expressing the humility of this project and what it is able to achieve.

As the above sections (and hopefully the rest of the thesis) demonstrate, there are clear benefits to an approach to investigating journeys that relies on the retrospective production of narratives in a place of arrival like the UK. This is in part due to its ability to unearth dynamics and experiences that are left obscured by research located elsewhere, including the enduring preference to locate studies in the so-called 'transit countries' that have become hyper-scrutinised in

the context of recent refugee and migrant movements into Europe. This does, however, open the project to another set of criticisms that must be acknowledged, precisely the potential charge that there is a 'destination bias' to this project. It could be argued that engaging with participants at the 'end' of their journeys (relating to the justifiable assumption that the UK is most commonly, although not always, a 'destination' country) only engages with those who have 'successful' journeys.

It is important to note from the outset that in elucidating the experiences of some, the research carried out for the purposes of this project inevitably obscures the experiences of others. In order to shed light on the journeys of those present in the UK, a shadow is cast over other groups in other places that may also be subject to the same mobility regimes. For example, this research does not include those who are unable to surmount the obstacles limiting their capacity to travel to the UK despite the desire to do so, that is, those who are 'stuck' elsewhere. Relatedly, the research does not include the experiences of those, most commonly women and children, who are 'left behind' to await family reunification. The majority of asylum seekers in the UK, and the EU more broadly are men, even though globally there are more women who are refugees. In focusing on the experiences of the relatively mobile, and in geographically delimiting the research to a particular 'destination' that is only accessible for a privileged or 'lucky' few, the research thus inevitably takes on a masculine bias that must be acknowledged.

The focus on journeys to the UK is also vulnerable to charges of Eurocentrism, as it sidelines another important category of people: those many refugees who do not wish to move to Europe. Commentators have sought to dispel the myth that all those fleeing difficult situations are desperate to enter "the elusive European el Dorado" (de Haas 2008). In the context of migration from Africa and the Middle East to Europe there an enduring presumption that there is a tidal wave of people waiting in the wings, buffered only by those regimes that serve to stunt their mobility. However, research has shown that this is not the always case, and there are many reasons why refugees might desire to settle elsewhere than Europe that go far beyond simply not being able to.

Furthermore, the idea that the UK is always and necessarily an 'end point' for refugees must also be questioned. For example, failed asylum seekers who have been subject to deportation have experienced not simply a failed journey to exile, but also a deportation journey; a mobile experience that itself could be highly significant to those that have endured it. Indeed other forms of 'return' journeys, including those undertaken within the scope of voluntary repatriation, are also potentially highly significant endeavours within the lives of refugees. The phenomenon of onward or secondary migration of refugees within the EU is also indicative of the fact that the exilic journey is but one of numerous significant mobile processes experienced by refugees. A focus on the 'journey into exile' is at risk of assuming that this particular set of mobile processes are preceded and followed by emplacement and relative stasis, which is often not the case.

Finally, there may be people familiar with the mobilities literature that would question why the 'mobile methods' developed in the mobilities approach has not been adopted for this project. The authors advocating for 'mobile methods' encourage researchers to "track in various ways – including physically travelling with their research subjects – the many and interdependent forms of intermittent movement of people, images, information and objects" (Büscher and Urry 2009, 103). However, this advice has not been heeded in this project for a number of reasons. In his contribution, De León makes a compelling case to explain why such an approach is not necessarily suitable for research with people travelling irregularly, which is a sentiment that I share. He argues persuasively that the presence of a researcher in border crossings can: exacerbate risks for participants, reinforce the hierarchy between participant and researcher as the researcher inserts themself into a situation where participants are highly vulnerable (whilst the researcher remains protected by their citizenship status), and can be highly disruptive to the journey process (De León 2015). Furthermore, this form of participant observation, according to De León tends to focus on the researcher's experiences and thus diverts attention from the experiences of those actually crossing the border irregularly. The clear risk to my own safety, and my own potential vulnerability as a lone female researcher were also more selfish considerations of my own that should also be noted. Indeed in writing their recommendations regarding mobile methods, Büscher and Urry probably did not have in mind the often difficult and dangerous travel undertaken by people crossing borders irregularly.

Although important to bear in mind, these caveats do not invalidate the insight and importance of the narratives produced through this research project. The project's geographical delimitation has allowed for engagement with a diversity of participants that could not have been achieved otherwise, and has illuminated experiences that are overshadowed in the current research on migration journeys. However, whilst the scope of this work cannot cover these significant nuances, their acknowledgement is vital both to recognise the limits of this present project and also to demonstrate the ways in which work on refugee journeys could be expanded upon and developed in future research.

One last point to consider in this attempt at reflexivity is to reflect upon the topic chosen for this research and its potential political implications. There is clearly a risk with any research focused on the movements of people that states in the global North go to great lengths to immobilise, that information about these movements can be co-opted by these states in a way that could negatively impact people trying to travel in the future. However at the same time it is also vitally important, both ethically and politically, to understand the ways that these policies are encountered and experienced. Listening to refugees' stories and gaining a better understanding of how these policies are lived and negotiated is also crucial in advocating for change. And to ignore these topics, and by extension the people who experience them, arguably does more harm and contributes further to the alienation and mystification of marginalised groups.

Drawing attention to less scrutinised routes and experiences, in particular those travelling by relatively fast, and occasionally regular means was not an intention

of this research from the outset. Indeed, it is something that I had myself overlooked in the early stages of the research. However, to ignore or obscure the experiences of some participants in order to push the narrative that refugees' journeys to Europe are innately long, dangerous and difficult clearly raises its own set of ethical problems. To obscure the experiences of those participants whose journeys did not correspond to this popular assumption would be to do a disservice to both the participants in this study, and to the research process itself. That said, I have been very careful to make it clear that these quieter trajectories are not indicative of a broader trend, nor do they somehow invalidate the violence and difficulties faced by so many *en route* to Europe. Indeed if anything these experiences serve to demonstrate that long and dangerous journeys are not an inevitable part of 'the refugee experience,' but are the result of a specific policy regime. In this sense, they can actually help us to detach deservingness from the length and difficulty of a persons' journey, and help us to envisage alternatives.

In terms of highlighting the strategies used by participants who travelled irregularly for some or all of their journeys, the aim of this thesis has only ever been to better understand how these mechanisms of border control are concretely lived. Doing so has certainly shed light on the often-violent implications of these policies, but has also done justice to the nuance of these journeys and their encounters. It is also important to see what mechanisms of difference are at play in these experiences, as different bodies interact with these policies in varying ways.

Furthermore, as we saw in the discussion of policy in the first section of this chapter, policies to combat irregular migration are continually evolving at a variety of scales, and those strategies used by participants even as recently as three years ago, will very likely already be somewhat outdated. In this sense, this research is of little use for states who have likely already adapted to the routes and strategies discussed through this research. Indeed, we can see this manifest in the EU-Turkey deal.

It is ultimately difficult to know where to draw the line between censorship that is beneficial and censorship that is harmful in research, especially since it is impossible to know what the exact consequences of any piece of work may be and how it may be co-opted. I can only hope to have written this thesis in a way that is sensitive to these political issues, but also remains faithful to the narratives produced in the research process.

Chapter II: Intercorporeal Refugees: Embodiment, voice and agency

Narrative approaches have been vocally advocated for in refugee and forced migration studies, in particular as a way understanding refugees' experiences while at the same time resisting a politics that has often sought to silence refugees and deny their agency. Often, those undertaking research that relies on concepts of narrative, authorship and a sense of self speaks to other work that does the same, with these 'commonsense' concepts doing their job and making sense *just because*. Things like attributing a quotation to the person who uttered it, and using the pronoun, 'I,' are things we do every day, in almost every situation. They seem almost self-evident. But when pitted *against* poststructuralism and deconstruction, or even a postmodernism whereby all singularity becomes multiplicity, all stability becomes flux, then these taken-for-granted notions suddenly start to lose all purchase.

Those researchers sympathetic to the insights of poststructuralism, but who also appear to retain faith in narrative authority and subjectivity, have therefore been accused of working within a set of contradictions that are actually "logically incommensurable" (Squire, Andrews, and Tamboukou 2013, 4). In light of this, the following questions arise: are we forced to ignore these potential theoretical inconsistencies in order to promote the political project of exposing and addressing the suffering of refugees? Or can the claim to some sort of subjective

unity be more than simply a theoretically untenable 'strategic essentialism'? Is there a way to place renewed faith in the value of narratives to shed light on experience? These questions have been pivotal to the development of this chapter. By way of approaching these questions, I will first set out the relevant debates in philosophy, in particular outlining the postmodern and poststructural critiques of modern philosophy. I will then engage with contemporary discussions of the work of one philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to see what these renewed readings of his philosophy can offer to this debate. In this sense, I am engaging with the question posed by Watkins, who argues that it is not a case of "…asking what is left 'after' deconstruction" but rather "what sort of ontological claims can be made when deconstruction has (not) happened" (Watkins 2009, 6).

In this chapter, I argue that while poststructural critiques of humanist approaches to knowledge/analysis, including phenomenology, are fair and neccessary, a considered reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty can successfully co-exist alongside these critiques, and thus offers a powerful complement to deconstructive methods. It does so by moving beyond the humanist tendency to posit a rational and free subject devoid of context towards an understanding of expressive selfhood, which is contingent on the factors (such as temporality, spatiality, body, history and world) out of which it emerges. A narrative approach based on this reinvigorated phenomenological method is both philosophically justifiable and epistemologically valuable. By taking such an approach, we can recognise the value of refugees' journey stories, and consider them a mode of 'singing the world' that sheds light on both their embodied,

relational experiences and how they are made meaningful. Because however fragile, fleeting, illusive or indeed illusory the strings that bind mutual understanding are, there is still something there to cling on to. Furthermore, the approach taken in this project, which is inspired by these debates in philosophy, values these articulations of experience whilst acknowledging their inevitable and necessary contingency. It understands that it is precisely through narrative that a sense of personal identity comes together (*contra.* an immediate self-presence that thinks, and then speaks), and appreciates that narrative, as experience, and as personal identity, emerges from an intercorporeality which means that any account of myself is always simultaneously mine and not-mine.

Along with this epistemological contribution, which allows us to place renewed value and faith in linguistic articulations of experience, Merleau-Ponty's body of work also provides a lens through which to explore these experiences. In emphasising the way that experience is sensual, affective, and "emerges through the symbiotic intertwining of one's own pulsing body, the overflowing, transcendent world of things, and the living bodies of others" (Hass 2008, 146), the bones of analytical framing emerge which remains attuned to this carnal understanding of experience and indeed of memories and belated narrations of experience.

1. Refugee Studies, Refugee Agency and Narrative Authority

Refugee and forced migration studies has been heavily influenced by critical and poststructural scholarship, especially in so far as it supports the quest of exposing the systems of power working to dehumanise refugees. However there

has equally, and sometimes simultaneously, been a drive to emphasise the agency of refugees in the knowledge that current practices often work to deny refugees' capacities for agency in a manner which is detrimental and unjust. We can see this in the work of some of the more prominent scholars in the history of refugee studies. For example, Nevzat Soguk is one of the key figures in Refugee Studies who has relied heavily on poststructural theory and in particular, the work of Michel Foucault. In his 1999 seminal publication, *States and Strangers: Refugees and Displacements of Statecraft*, his main aim is to consider the effects of discourse on refugees, to ask how the refugee is produced as voiceless and agentless by this discourse, and what purpose that serves. Soguk heavily references Foucault in this work, and indeed you can see his influence throughout the entirety of the book, from the initial questions posed to the form that the analyses take. However, at the same time, Soguk spends most of the introduction to his book advocating for an understanding of "the complexity and multiplicity of refugee experiences", arguing for the need to "take seriously the powers and resourcefulness of these people to remake their lives", and indeed, maintaining "their capacity for agency against all odds" (Soguk 1999, 5). And importantly for the purposes of this discussion, he argues that, "the voicelessness of the refugee…is the *effect* of the refugee discourse, *not the refugee's essence* or the peculiarity of the refugee's existence in life" (ibid., 9 *my emphasis*). As Soguk argues, "the effect of the refugee discourse is a problematization of the refugee that both erases the refugee's agency and effaces the refugee's humanity" (ibid., 257).

Similarly, Liisa Malkki has written amongst the most seminal and influential work in the field, and has also been influenced by the work of Michel Foucault. For Malkki, the construction of 'the refugee' as "pure victim" represents a "dehistoricizing universalism" which "creates a context in which it is difficult for people in the refugee category to be approached as historical *actors* rather than simply as mute victims. It can strip from them the authority to give credible narrative evidence or testimony about their own condition" (Malkki 1996, 377). In an attempt to subvert these universalising processes, Malkki ultimately promotes a "historicizing humanism" that "insists on acknowledging not only human suffering but also narrative authority, historical agency, and political memory" (ibid., 398).

More recently, and in the context of research on migration journeys, we can see these same tropes of agency, narrative authority and autonomy being instrumentalised. A number of authors working on migration journeys made use of a narrative approach for their research (See, for example, Kaytaz 2016, Innes 2015, 2016, Gladkova and Mazzucato 2017, Hassan and Biorklund 2016). Innes describes how her participant, Sonny, "refused an identity as a passive victim" and "assert[ed] agency over his circumstances" (2016, 277). She argues that, "In accessing Sonny's narrative of security I acknowledge experiential knowledge and foreground Sonny's self-identity as a refugee" (ibid., 270). Similarly, in their contribution Hassan and Biorklund assert, "…the first person account in the main part of the article…has been consciously chosen to retain the *dignity, autonomy, and ownership of the research subject*" (Hassan and Biorklund 2016, 118, emphasis added).

As Cindy Horst rightly asserts, "the concept of refugee agency has played a central role in debates within refugee studies" (Horst 2006, 144). She argues that this concept spans not just theory and politics, but is equally embedded within research methods and epistemology, and as such, "If one accepts the fact that refugees have a certain level of power and choice in determining their lives and livelihoods, this surely also includes the power and choice to create knowledge about and give meaning to their own situation" (ibid). We can see this in the assertions above. Indeed, I believe the implicit assumption that there is value in listening to refugees is one that is shared by most, if not all, scholars in refugee and forced migration studies. Because, as scholars have argued, in a world where "refugees' stories are either not deemed relevant or credible or, increasingly, not heard at all" (Eastmond 2007, 261), we surely need to continue seeking ways of listening to and representing refugees' experiences? As Bassel argues, in the context of the global refugee crisis "a politics of listening is needed now more than ever" (Bassel 2017, 91).

As someone who, like many others, came to this field of study after a period of working with refugees in the UK, and after becoming ever more aware of the suffering, and related injustice, that befalls many refugees and forced migrants, both of the above aspects of the scholarship resonated deeply with me; those attempts to expose the systems of power that inform the condition of refugees, and the idea that one of the ways to resolve this is to acknowledge the agency of refugees and integrate that into our research in order to correct or counter these systems that serve to silence these often marginalised populations. In doing so,

as Horst reminds us, I was making a political choice, certainly, but I was also making a theoretical, epistemological, and research methods choice that seemingly relied on some notion of agency and narrative authorship.

I formulated this project on the basis of these assumptions, and was comforted by the knowledge that some of the most prominent refugee studies scholars have been vocal advocates of this approach, whilst simultaneously being inspired and influenced by the poststructural philosophies that I also found compelling and engaging. However, reading further into theory and philosophy, I encountered a set of debates relating to these notions of agency, autonomy and narrative authority, in particular as they relate to poststructural philosophies, that have not been extensively addressed within refugee and forced migration studies, and which threaten to destabilise or undermine this approach. The following sections engage with these debates and offer one potential way of moving forward in light of these issues.

2. Anti-humanism, Experience and the Death of the Refugee?

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed a proliferation - particularly amongst French or so-called 'continental' philosophers and social theorists – of broad-scale critiques of 'modern' philosophy. These approaches became subsumed, sometimes reluctantly, under the label of postmodernism, which was characterised by a radical rejection and deconstruction of the metanarratives of modernity[17] (Heartfield 2002). Amongst these criticisms was a wholesale dismissal of the modern concept of the 'subject' as developed by Decartes, Locke,

[17] In *The Postmodern Condition,* Jean-Francois Lyotard famously asserts, 'I define postmodernism as incredulity towards metanarratives' (Lyotard [1979] 1984).

and Kant, amongst others. Within the broad rubric of postmodernism is another slippery label, poststructuralism, which has been attached to the work of both Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, whose critiques of modern philosophy are engaged with in this discussion. Whilst Michel Foucault was famously declaring the 'death of man'[18] and arguing that "our task is to emancipate ourselves definitively from humanism"[19], Jacques Derrida was calling into question the entire project of metaphysics.[20] It is for this reason that commentators have argued that what seemingly remains is a 'subject' that is "wholly constructed within socially dominant discourses and practices" which thus "lack[s] the self-determination that has been thought traditionally to characterize the moral agent" (Bartky 2002, 5).

As part of the broad-scale critiques of 'modern' philosophy emblematic of poststructuralism, there was what Crossley describes as a sustained attack on 'the popular straw models of phenomenology' (Crossley 1993, 399). This is important for the present discussion because it is precisely this approach that has implicitly or explicitly informed many experienced-oriented approaches to research. Phenomenology is a continental philosophy that came to prominence in the early twentieth century. Pioneered by Edmund Husserl, it was taken up variously by his colleagues and students, including Martin Heidegger, as well as being adapted into the French philosophical context by Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Paul Ricoeur, among others. In the contemporary

[18] See *The Order of Things* (Foucault [1966] 2002)
[19] See "Entretien avec Madeleine Chapsal", in *Dits et écrits*, *vol. 1, 1954–1969*, (Foucault 1994, 516)
[20] See *Of grammatology* (Derrida [1967a] 1998) and *Writing and difference* (Derrida [1967b] 1978)

context of social science research, the work of phenomenologists has inspired the development of a diverse set of research practices, however, as Finlay argues, "[p]henomenological researchers generally agree that our central concern is to return to embodied, experiential meanings. We aim for fresh, complex, rich descriptions of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived" (Finlay 2009, 6). Indeed, it is this philosophy that has been called upon by refugee scholars advocating a 'return to human experience' (See for example, Eastmond 2007; Schweitzer and Steel 2008). However, despite some enduring interest in phenomenology amongst social science researchers, commentators have argued, "as a philosophical movement at the forefront of contemporary thought, phenomenology might be thought to have had its day" (Watkins 2009, i). Those philosophers that have been considered to fit within this rubric have arguably been outshone, and at times apparently discredited, by philosophers like Foucault, Deleuze, Lacan and Derrida (ibid.), whose influence continues to resonate strongly throughout the social sciences.

These critiques discredited phenomenology on the grounds that it was ultimately an individualist and humanist philosophy of consciousness that advocated a notion of the transcendental ego, 'centred' the subject, and allowed for the possibility of 'bracketing' the historical and cultural world to discover primal meaning. In other words, it implicitly relies on all those aspects of modern philosophy that we commonly consider postmodernism and poststructuralism to have rejected. In particular, the concept of experience - which has been considered to be central to phenomenology - has been subject to significant criticism from poststructural and postmodern scholars and their

proponents (Stoller 2009). Indeed, as Levin argues, "…a tenet of poststructuralism is that to rely on experience as a starting point for theorization is naïve because it assumes, wrongly, that it is possible to think *outside* of already existent discursive structures" (2008, 136). A key part of this alleged incommensurability is based on the critique made by Foucault and others that phenomenology "posit[s] the notion of a constituting consciousness" (Crossley 1993, 410). Further, philosophies of experience have been criticised for relying on the claims of subjects, which seems to require the notion of an immediate self-presence, and ignores the constitutive forces that have shaped these experiences (Coole 2007, 106). According to the poststructural critique, subjective experience is no more than "mere epiphenomenon and effect" (Alcoff 2000, 252).

The virulence of these critiques of phenomenology, along with the enduring popularity of poststructural approaches in the social sciences, left phenomenology looking very fragile, and saw its popularity wane. Given the assertiveness of critiques towards phenomenology by prominent poststructural scholars, it is little wonder that scholars have often maintained that these two approaches are incommensurable, resulting in an either/or choice that has seen phenomenology often lose out to a more dominant poststructural bent. As feminist scholar Linda Alcoff notes, social scientists are thus asked to choose "between an epistemology of experience, in which experience serves as the unproblematized authoritative foundation for knowledge, and an epistemology of theory, in which theory interrogates and seeks to explain experience" (Alcoff 2000, 254). Indeed Hass argues that Derrida himself perpetuated this binary

opposition between deconstruction and "the metaphysics of presence", at least in his earlier work, and the prevailing view seems to suggest that is a case of "take your pick and the other is wrong" (Hass 2008, 136).

As such, those unquestioningly using a broadly "phenomenological" approach in social science research in order to justify a focus that privileges experience risk appearing naïve, and out of touch with developments in theory and philosophy that have raised legitimate questions with regards to some of these assumed tenets of phenomenology. The result of this is that any method in social science that implicitly imputes value on experience is viewed with suspicion.

2.1 Living with "Logical Incommensurability" in Research

In exploring literature on narrative research during the course of this project, I came across a discussion that resonated with these issues. Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou argue that narrative research has the dual philosophical heritage of both humanism and poststructuralism. McNay identifies a similar dichotomised understanding of narrative in feminist scholarship, arguing that "…it is regarded as either a mode of imposing patriarchal order or as a repository of authentic knowledge" (McNay, 1999, 318). However Squire et al. also discuss what they consider to be recent attempts to synthesise this dual heritage, often through the "maintenance of a humanist conception of a singular, unified subject, at the same time as the promotion of an idea of narrative as always multiple, socially constructed and constructing, reinterpreted and reinterpretable" (Squire, Andrews, and Tamboukou 2013, 4). However, the authors concede that there is a general awareness of the "contradictions" engendered by this rapprochement of

theoretical approaches amongst narrative researchers, but that many researchers see greater importance in getting on with research and working across these contradictions, rather than trying to resolve positions that in their words are "logically incommensurable" (ibid.).

This glossing over of the tensions between humanist and poststructural approaches has often been justified through assertions of a 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1993), that embraces notions of agentive subjects but only in the name of political effectiveness. This mode of doing research has been characteristic of certain experience-oriented narrative approaches (Squire 2013, 54). Indeed, this 'strategic essentialism' is perhaps also what critical refugee and forced migration studies scholars have had in mind when arguing for the acknowledgment of refugees' agency. In other words, we know that 'the subject' shatters into a thousand pieces as soon as we try to grasp it, but for the sake of the broader political project that undergirds our research we will just brush that aside as part of a set of "lived-with contradictions" (Squire, Andrews, and Tamboukou 2013, 7).

Mitch Rose describes a tendency in Geography that we can see mirrored in the above discussion of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, that is, the dual response to poststructuralism through 'deconstruction as method' and 'deconstruction as theory'. The former sees deconstruction as "a tool that can be used to illustrate the arbitrary nature of certain 'taken-for-granted' truths" (M. Rose 2004, 462), that is, a method to expose the chaotic and the unstable that lies beneath these 'truths.' The latter, beginning where 'deconstruction as method' is

left off, endeavours to "find other practices, cultures, genders, ethnicities, etc., that have been lost, excluded, and/or silenced in the reductive search for the singular, the fundamental, the originary" (ibid., 463). It calls for an openness and an acknowledgment of difference and multiplicity, and even alludes to that well-known trope in Refugee Studies of 'giving voice' to the marginal and excluded. However, the issue that Rose identifies with the mode of geographical scholarship that seeks to find those voices that have been silenced is that "it reinscribes privileged knowledge on the new terrain it establishes" (ibid.) by simply relocating epistemic authority and truth claims.

However, the apparent contradictions in the work of scholars like Malkki and Soguk, and the dual response to poststructuralism outlined by Rose above, arguably reflect the contradictions *within* the work of scholars like Foucault, who have been passionate in their rejection of humanism, but have at times seemingly espoused humanist ideals. In an earlier publication Malkki calls upon one of Foucault's later assertions, where he engages with the concept of "international citizenship" (1995, 516–17). This "international citizenship" has rights and duties that call for us to rise up against abuses of power, to reveal human misery, and, Foucault argues, "it is up to individuals to become indignant and talk; it is up to governments to think and act" against this misery. Malkki cites this standalone passage in its entirety and uses it as a means to present an argument for new directions in work on the study of displacement. However, in doing so, she glosses over the potential conflict between this assertion and the earlier work of Foucault that much of her prior analysis is based on.

This declaration, cited by Malkki, was made by Foucault in the context of a 1981 conference on human rights in Geneva. However, scholars have argued that Foucault himself "systematically avoid[s]" the ontological bases necessary for such an assertion (Rodriguez 1994, 259). To elaborate, Rodriguez has argued that the above passage smacks of a humanist universal categorical imperative that Foucault spent his career denouncing. She sees this passage as either "a paradox due to his resorting to ideas his own theory has dismissed, or as a theoretical inconsistency as long as we accept that his thought fosters a total disregard of these concepts" (ibid). But this is not an isolated assertion, and the rebirth of the subject that this call to rights implies is paralleled in other political interviews, as well as arguably in Foucault's later work on ethics.

In one such interview, Foucault speaks of an "insurrection of local knowledges" that have hitherto been disqualified, buried or disguised. Foucault argues, "What this essentially local character of criticism indicates in reality is an *autonomous*, non-centralised kind of theoretical production…whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought" (1980, 81 emphasis added). In other writings, he describes power as something that is "only exercised over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" and affirms "the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom" (Foucault 1982, 790) at the heart of every power relationship. Coole argues that Foucault latterly seemed to have gained an awareness of the problems inherent in maintaining an account of power without some notion of agency. However, insofar as he made efforts to confront this, the 'rebirth' of the subject within Foucault's writings and interviews tended to invoke notions of agency and freedom in a way that was

"relatively conventional" and that "retain[ed] vestiges of Cartesianism" (Coole 2007, 230).

According to Gavarti Spivak, Foucault argues that "the oppressed *can* speak and know their conditions" (1988, 283). Referring to an exchange that took place between Foucault and Giles Deleuze in 1977, she quotes Foucault as asserting that "the masses *know* perfectly well, clearly", and asks, "What happens to the critique of the sovereign subject in these pronouncements?" (ibid., XX). She condemns Foucault (and Deleuze) for glorifying the oppressed subject in a way that is epistemologically untenable, and inconsistent with Foucault's earlier work, and argues that Foucault's usefulness is limited to his work on "the mechanics of disciplinarization and institutionalization, the constitution, it were of the colonizer" (ibid., 294).

2.2 In the Aftermath of the 'Death of Man'

The poststructural commitment to breaking down *a priori* epistemic assumptions and dominant discursive arrangements to consider how they are constituted has delivered important contributions to the field of refugee and forced migration studies, as the work of Malkki and Soguk demonstrate. However, as Spivak's critique of Foucault reminds us, with the 'death of man' surely comes the death of the refugee; if the subject is dead, then are we simply resigned to stating that 'the refugee' is discursively denied the assumption of agency vis-à-vis other categories of person who are discursively constructed as possessing agency? Can we simultaneously decry the denial of agency in discourse on refugees, and denounce agency altogether as a concept? The

assertion by forced migration scholars that refugees should be seen as 'agents' - as opposed to passive victims - is part of a political project that sees the enfranchisement of refugees as one of its fundamental aims. However, this privileging of refugee agency has not yet sparked a discussion of the fact that the concept of agency comes with significant baggage, and has been intimately connected to notions of subjectivity and individuality, along with the related ideas of autonomy, rationality and freedom (Coole 2005, 124), that is, all those tenets of a metaphysics and ontology that has been denounced by anti-humanism. This is important because ultimately we cannot consider the accounts of minority groups as any less susceptible to the ravages of deconstruction than any other account. To ignore this, as Rose argues, is to "reinscribe privileged knowledge" by simply relocating the epistemic authority and truth claims that deconstruction calls into question.

However, even amongst poststructural and anti-humanist scholars, the death of man has brought with it a sense of unease. What started out as a "a certain anxiety […] concerning the status of the modern subject" (Marratto 2012, 1), has given rise to a new set of anxieties as scholars can't quite bring themselves to part ways entirely with the human subject. We can even see this in Foucault's later work, as detailed above. The enduring feeling that "dropping the human subject entirely seems […] to be a step too far" (Thrift 2008, 13), along with a broader desire to cling onto a "minimal remainder of the self" (Wylie 2016, 111) continues to haunt poststructuralism and anti- and more-than-humanism. As Marratto (2012, 1) notes, it is precisely the ethical and political implications of this dismantling of the modern subject that has led the question, 'who comes

after the subject?' to be asked with a sense of urgency. This question seems even more pressing when it concerns research with marginalised groups; the task of dismantling and discrediting the subjectivity and narrative authority of those who have long been dehumanised, silenced and denied agency feels particularly unpalatable.

But what do these debates in philosophy mean for a field of study that has advocated for both deconstructive anti-humanist *and* agent-centred approaches, sometimes in tandem? And what does this mean for my own project, which has from the outset implicitly imputed value on the experiences and narratives of individuals in a way that echoes the tenets of much phenomenological research? In the case of my own work, despite acknowledging and respecting the insight brought by postmodern and poststructural theories, I still intuitively felt that there had to be some value in the "stuff of experience," in narrative articulations of these experiences, and also in that sense of self that seems to haunt even the most ardent critics of humanism. But I was left unsatisfied with the thought that my work could be vulnerable to the criticism that it was only politically, and not theoretically, justifiable. In the hope of finding a way around this apparent impasse, I looked to a set of scholars who have revisited phenomenology *in light of* those postmodern and deconstructive critiques, and have faced up to the legitimate set of questions that these approaches ask to consider what, if anything, they can offer in a world deconstructed. I did this with the understanding that if we retain a level of respect for these criticisms then surely it is better to see what we can learn from them and how we might begin to respond.

3. Rereading Merleau-Ponty: Anti-Cartesianism, embodiment and expression

More recently, a number of scholars in philosophy and the social sciences have endeavoured to reopen the vaults of phenomenology in light of the above questions raised by poststructural theorists. In particular, in recent years there has been something of a resurgence of interest in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty after years of relative neglect following his death in 1961 (Watkins 2009, 7). Indeed, as Watkins observes, "…his philosophy is increasingly being used both to question deconstruction and to talk about an opening and delimiting of phenomenology in a deconstructive register" (ibid). This is because although phenomenology, broadly-defined, has been criticised by post-structuralists for succumbing to the pitfalls of a humanistic modernism, these criticisms are considered by many commentators to "miss their mark" in the case of Merleau-Ponty (Coole 2007, 4; Crossley 1993; Evans and Lawlor 2000; Hass 2008; Reynolds 2004). It is important to note from that outset, as Madison astutely recognises, that we read Merleau-Ponty's work today not in the context in which it was written but "in the light of those writings which have appeared since his death" and through situating it relative to "what followed it in time and what now is" (Madison 1992, 119). In this sense, we do not (and indeed cannot) take his work "literally," but we can acknowledge its enduring "expressive power" and continue to learn from it (ibid., 120).

First, it is necessary to establish the reasons why scholars have argued that Merleau-Ponty provides a philosophy that does not succumb to the criticisms leveled more broadly towards phenomenology by its poststructural successors. The main criticism, as alluded to earlier in this chapter, is that phenomenology implicitly relies on the Cartesian mind-body dualism, that is, the position that the immaterial mind and the material body are ontologically distinct and that the mind enjoys an autonomy, and subjects enjoy an immediate self-presence, along with an ability to discover truth. This is a humanistic position that sees 'reason' as essential to human nature. Jacques Derrida has been one of the key figures to put this criticism to 'phenomenology' as a whole, arguing that Husserl, and by extension Merleau-Ponty, promotes an idea of expression that entails resisting or bracketing the world, history and culture in order to "reactivate" primal meaning. Derrida has argued that phenomenology relies on a subjective (and silent) self-presence. [21]

However, precisely against the residues of idealism that can be seen in Husserl, Merleau-Ponty offers a philosophy of expression that is entirely contingent, where the conditions of embodiment, history and world cannot be "bracketed" and indeed it is only from within these conditions that sense and meaning emerges (Hass 2008, 166). Merleau-Ponty actually goes to great lengths to try and shed his thinking precisely from the foundationalist dualisms of Enlightenment philosophy, which he rejects arguably as virulently as the poststructuralists that succeeded him. He refuses to equate experience with

[21] See *"Speech and Phenomena: And other essays on Husserl's theory of signs"* (Derrida [1967c] 1973)

immediacy (Coole 2007, 106), and powerfully asserts that to cling onto the idea of the "absolute spectator" and of disembodied knowledge or absolute truth is to perpetuate a fallacy, and that instead we only "define truth in situation" (S 109).

Key to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy are his notions of embodiment and perception, which are integral to both his earlier work and highly influential to his later, more ontologically-inflected work. His career can be characterised as an ongoing effort to carve out an alternative to the opposing camps of idealism and empiricism, including the remainders of idealism that persisted within phenomenology. As Vasterling argues, it is his conception of the body and embodiment that "overcome the onesidedness of traditional epistemology" (Vasterling 2003, 217) by emphasising embodied perception as the "primary form of human understanding and experience" (ibid., 221). Through this ontological resituating, he undermines the subject-object dichotomy and rejects the primacy of pure consciousness.

In opposition to those versions of perception that retain elements of Cartesianism, in particular the position that perception is located in the mind, and is thus best understood as a "subjective representation" (Hass 2008, 36), Merleau-Ponty proposes an understanding of perception as synergistic, interactional and as emerging between one's sensible body and the world (ibid.). In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty asserts that perception is a 'violent act' (PhP 361). This is because "…we never perceive just one object, or even just one scene, but always a background of indeterminate contours against which specific objects may appear" (Holland 1986, 113), that is, we only perceive

one thing by obscuring others. However the violence of perception is not destructive but is rather productive, since it is this violence that "*enables* perception" (Stoller 2009, 717).

As Merleau-Ponty asserts, "Already my body as stage director of my perception has shattered the illusion of a coinciding of my perception with the things themselves" (VI 8). It is precisely the role of the body in perception that creates the absence or difference that is inherent to experience (Holland 1986, 113). Merleau-Ponty's notion of the *écart* (translatable as gap, difference or disparity) in his later ontology refers to this "separation-difference that makes perception possible" without which "everything would blur into monochrome" (Hass 2008, 130). This *écart* is not the same as opposition, however, it is a much more subtle difference, or a "separation-in-relation" (Hass 2008, 129). Hass explains that for Merleau-Ponty, it is through this living perception that I open on to things and others that are not me, but nor are they totally opposed to me. Thus, "I see them "coiling back" around me" (ibid., 131). This "folding over" or 'reversibility' is thus "an ongoing interaction between the flesh of the body, the flesh of others, and the flesh of the world, a process in which corporeal boundaries are simultaneously erected and dismantled" (Weiss 2000, 204).

This interaction relies on movement. Indeed, according to Merleau-Ponty, "Man exists only in movement" (S 22). The 'self,' for Merleau-Ponty, is a living, moving body that is bound up with the world in a differentiated, yet reciprocal relation (Hass 2008, 79), and it is precisely because the body is a unity only by virtue of its mobility that "there is no self-contact, or even self-anticipation, that would not

presuppose movement, and thus an *exteriorization* and a *temporalization*" (Marratto 2012, 138). It is therefore also my body as a stage director of my perception that shatters my illusion of an immediate self-presence.

His philosophy unfolds from this understanding of experience through the twin concepts of embodiment and perception. Living experience, for Merleau-Ponty, is thus sensual and affective, and emerges in and through this interaction between body, others and world. This chimes with the assertion of certain scholars in mobilities studies who are keen to emphasise the corporeal dimensions of mobilities. As Büscher and Urry argue, "bodies encounter other bodies, objects and the physical world multi-sensuously . . . Bodies are not empirically fixed and given but involve performances to fold notions of movement, nature, taste and desire, into and through the body. Bodies sense and make sense of the world as they move bodily in and through it" (Büscher and Urry 2009, 102). We can therefore begin to see how the work of Merleau-Ponty can provide an illuminating lens through which to explore refugees' and asylum seekers' journeys and experiences of travel and (im)mobility.

However, once we grasp the primacy of embodied, perceptual experience in Merleau-Ponty's work, we are then surely required to consider linguistic expression and its relation to perception, particularly if we are claiming to take seriously the insights of poststructural scholars whose work forms part of the 'linguistic turn' in philosophy. Often, those undertaking research that relies on linguistic descriptions of experience, authorship and a sense of self do not stop to substantively question the relation between language and the world. However,

the idea that experienced world can be directly accessed through language is contentious at best, and has itself been the subject of extensive philosophical debate. These debates thus have significant implications for experience-oriented narrative research, and therefore for this thesis.

3.1 Engaging with the Language Debate

The representationalist view of language holds that "the meaning of a word is just the idea it represents," (Hass 2008, 174), or in its later permutations, that the meaning of a word is just the object or worldly thing that it represents. But neither of these positions succeeds in the impossible task of explaining *how* words directly correspond with ideas or things, and how communication is possible (ibid., 174-5). As such, representational theories of language came under sustained attack in the twentieth century. The distrust of language that has accompanied criticisms of representational theories has cast significant doubt on whether there is in fact any correspondence between experience and language. This has deep and damning implications for research based on storytelling, or indeed for any research that takes-for-granted the capacity for language to simply *represent* experiences, things, or ideas. As Csordas argues, this has led scholars to assert that "we can study only language, and never experience" (2008, 118–19) because reality is either entirely determined by language, or because language mediates (and therefore distorts) a true but ultimately inaccessible experience.

Merleau-Ponty also rejects the representation theory and its implications. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty himself engages in significant ways with this debate by considering the role of language in philosophical interrogation:

> *If we dream of finding again the natural world or time through coincidence, of being identical to the O-point which we see yonder, or to the pure memory which from the depths of ourselves governs our acts of recall, then language is a power for error, since it cuts the continuous tissue that joins us vitally to the things and to the past and is installed between ourselves and that tissue like a screen. The philosopher speaks, but this is a weakness in him, and an inexplicable weakness: he should keep silent, coincide in silence, and rejoin in Being a philosophy that is there ready-made. But yet everything comes to pass as though he wished to put into words a certain silence he hearkens to within himself. His entire "work" is this absurd effort. He wrote in order to state his contact with Being; he did not state it, and could not state it, since it is silence. Then he recommences. . . .*
>
> (VI 125).

Merleau-Ponty acknowledges the "power for error" implicit to language, if language is taken to be an unimpeded reflection of being. But he also refuses to frame this rejection in terms of a dualism between experience and language, or revert to a wholesale effacing of materiality whereby 'there is nothing outside the text'. When we dismiss narrative as an imperfect and incomplete translation (or indeed, transmogrification) of experience in order to discredit its value as a source of knowledge, we risk casting an untenable distinction between some sort of pure, pre-linguistic experience, and a language that defiles it. This reaffirms

the idea of an immediate self-presence that functions prior to, and outside of language, the rejection of which is integral to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy.

However, just as Merleau-Ponty denounces the position that language *just is* thought, so too does he contest the view that "thought *just is* language." Instead, he understands them as "reciprocally intertwined" (Hass 2008, 180), and as emerging from our carnal life. His philosophy helps us to understand how "the deep familiarity of already acquired words, terms, sentences, and phrases" – i.e. the 'invisible' social structure that is acquired language - "leads us to forget the expressive life of language," but it is precisely this process of expression that enacts meaning (ibid., 177). This expression is rooted in our embodiment because it is our bodies, and their entanglement in the world, that enables all expressive operations (PhP 451). In this sense, language is performed "by living creatures who open up and organize a meaning-laden perceptual field" (Hass 2008, 190).

Hass argues that there has been a general neglect of what he calls the "epistemology of expression" found in Merleau-Ponty's work (ibid., 148). This expression is "dramatically different from one of representation" that requires imitation or correspondence, it is rather a creative transformation of experience that generates a new sense without erasing or dissimulating that experience (ibid., 155). In discussing creative pursuits such as painting, speaking, and writing, Merleau-Ponty suggests that "there is meaning when we submit the data of the world to a coherent deformation" (S 54). He best explains this concept in the following paragraph:

> *When one goes from the order of events to that of expression one does not change worlds; the same circumstances which were previously submitted to now become a signifying system. Hollowed out, worked from within, and finally freed from that weight upon us which made them painful or wounding, they become transparent or even luminous, and capable of clarifying not only the aspects of the world which resemble them but the others too; yet transformed as they may be, they still do not cease to exist.*
>
> (S 64).

Even as early as 1945, Merleau-Ponty had declared that philosophical expression is ambiguous in the same way as literary expression "if the world is such that it cannot be expressed except in "stories" and, as it were, pointed at" (SNS 28) Hass adopts Merleau-Ponty's notion of "singing the world" and argues philosophy, when re-concieved in this way, ". . . is an endless task, but not a futile one" (Hass 2008, 9). As Merleau-Ponty himself argues, if coincidence can only ever be partial, then 'truth' cannot be defined by coincidence and "…if language is not necessarily deceptive, truth is not coincidence, nor mute" (VI 124-5). There is, for Merleau-Ponty, "a sort of truth" in linguistic descriptions, however this is a truth that is defined in situation, and "in an order that is no longer that of objective Being, that is the order of the lived or of the phenomenal which is precisely to be justified and rehabilitated as the foundation of the objective order" (VI 209).

3.2 Towards a 'Lived' Metaphysics

Simonsen argues that the work of Merleau-Ponty demands a reconfiguring of the widespread notion of phenomenology as transcendental, that is, "describing a

purified, intentional consciousness and its constitutive acts of giving meaning" (Simonsen 2013, 15). She calls his version of phenomenology a *genetic* phenomenology "that studies meaning in its genesis" and that insists upon the irreducible interweaving of "materiality and ideality, matter and meaning, body and mind" (ibid.). It is for this reason that commentators have argued that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology accomplishes a rupture with "metaphysical logocentrism," by taking seriously the notion of ambiguity and "resolutely seeking to overcome oppositional thinking" (Madison 1992, 120). As such, Merleau-Ponty has been praised by numerous scholars for having at least to some degree anticipated the anti-essentialist and deconstructivist tendencies of the postmodern turn. Indeed, Madison goes as far as to argue that Merleau-Ponty's work represents an attempt at "overcoming metaphysics" (ibid.).

I think the declaration that Merleau-Ponty "overcomes metaphysics" is ultimately untenable, although that is not to discount the lengths he does go to in trying to contest the dualisms inherent to classical metaphysics – those same dualisms that Derrida and the poststructuralists also reject. What he does achieve, however, is a resituating of metaphysics and ontology, which now emerge in the midst of the world. This is why Holland asserts that concepts like truth, consciousness and perception "are removed from their usual metaphysical significations in Merleau-Ponty" by virtue of the absence instituted by the situatedness of our bodies (Holland 1986, 115). What is rejected is the position that sees "full and immediate presence" as a fundamental requirement of ontology and metaphysics. However, as Watkins astutely argues, it is a mistake to end the discussion here. He charts the emergence of an ontology in Merleau-

Ponty that is not the same as the "ontological self-presence" that has been exposed and discredited by deconstruction. Watkins calls this "ontology otherwise" (Watkins 2009, 208) and describes it as follows:

> *There is a presence as passage, an ontology resituated in the relational and the pistic, in the mode of the interrogative and vulnerable attestation, an indirect ontology thought in terms of a mutual implication of 'subject(s)' and 'world' in a play of call and response, and this ontology destabilizes the dichotomy (justice and justesse; hospitality of justice and hospitality of law; the pure gift and the economy of reciprocal gift-giving) which deconstruction requires in order to ask its questions*
>
> (ibid., 207).

This ontology has been described elsewhere as "a radical ontology already at work within the flow of life" (Morris and Maclaren 2015), and is understood to be ambigious, contingent and vulnerable. Morris and Maclaren present a similar argument to Watkins when they assert that in Merleau-Ponty's ontology, identities are never fully present or determinate, but this "does not mean that there is no such thing as identity" and indeed his whole ontological project rests upon meaning, and meaningful identity (ibid., 8). Writing in response to Derrida's concerns regarding Merleau-Ponty, as laid out in 'Tangente III', Watkins (2009, 17) argues that it is not necessary to rely on the traditional dualisms of modern philosophy in order to claim that the world is meaningful, however in making this claim we must remain vigilant as to what this claim does, and does not imply.

In light of this, I choose to follow in the advice of Rose, who advocates for us to "recognise the abyss of deconstruction in metaphysics" and the fact that processes of deconstruction always ultimately overwhelm any attempt at metaphysics, regardless of what we do. But he equally calls for us to "embrace the dreams of presence with which we and others nonetheless invest the world; and . . . embrace those embracings as interesting representations" (M. Rose 2004, 467). In the essay *Metaphysics and the Novel*, Merleau-Ponty describes a "latent or lived metaphysics" (Maclaren 2017) that chimes with the version of metaphysics that Rose implores us to 'reembrace.' As Merleau-Ponty asserts, "Man is metaphysical in his very being, in his loves, in his hates, in his individual and collective history. And metaphysics is no longer the occupation of a few hours per month, as Descartes said; it is present, as Pascal thought, in the heart's slightest movement" (SNS 28). To be sure, for Merleau-Ponty as much as for Rose, this is not the same thing as classical metaphysics, based on an uncontested rationalism, which seeks to explain the world. This is a low-lying, everyday, lived metaphysics that emerges from our embodiment and that is thus inherently ambiguous.

Rose (2004, 465) argues that we need to appreciate the manifold 'metaphysical' practices that we undertake in the everyday, as "we situate identities, represent objects, diagnose problems, locate causes, and explain events." However he simultaneously asserts that at the same time, "deconstruction *happens*" and "[t]here is no theory, no representation, and certainly no power that can stand against the excess of life" (ibid.). However, where Derrida admits to these 'dreams of presence,' what scholars like Merleau-Ponty can provide, is a way to

'flesh out' these dreams, and to recognise the "solidity of myth" that is more than imaginary (in the sense of being without consistence) and it rather an "operative imaginary" which is "part of our institution" (VI 84). This is not, therefore, a return to the "metaphysics of presence" that has been effectively discredited by Derrida and others. It is "ontology otherwise"; it is a lived metaphysics, an ambiguous philosophy that is resolutely anti-humanist in any essentialist sense.

4. Narrative, Memory and Time in the Institution of a Bodily Self

Given this resituating of ontology and metaphysics, can Merleau-Ponty and his proponents provide us with a more elaborated vision of subjectivity that, as Coole puts it, avoids selves "from fragmenting like Lyotard's postmodern ciphers" (2007, 248) but that does not require slipping into the realms of a humanism that has been effectively discredited by both Merleau-Ponty himself and a plethora of other commentators? Processes of "holding together" a sense of self have been acknowledged by other commentators (Mol and Law 2002, 10; Wetherell 2012), along with the recognition that we need to consider how singularities emerge alongside multiplicity (Blackman 2008). However what we can look to Merleau-Ponty to help us with is in understanding *how* a sense of self emerges in a relational world.

The answer to this is also found in our (inter)corporeity. It is the "living cohesion" of the body (PhP 474) that "allows the personal self reflectively to identify with itself over the course of a life" (Antich 2017). Morris and Maclaren's edited collection provides an elucidation of the self in Merleau-Ponty's work, with particular reference to his set of course notes on 'Institution and Passivity'

from the *Collège de France* (1954 – 1955). They focus on how *memory* and *institution* are pivotal to the emergence of meaning, identity and selfhood that "arise in temporality." Morris and Maclaren, and the scholars contributing to their edited collection, argue that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology *is precisely not* rooted in an already given subject, but rather in a radical ontology in which selfhood is generated via time, memory, and institution (ibid., 9). Over time, embodied experiences or events well up into forms that acquire durable dimensions, and it is the temporal dynamics of experience that should inform our understanding of subjectivity (Marratto 2012, 118; Coole 2007, 248). As such, it is memory that "provides us with a dynamic pivot for our past and future; it is the living, breathing landscape of identity" (Jacobsen 2015, 28).

Merleau-Ponty insists that the subject emerges through expression enacted at the level of the body. Thus, "I hold together the sense of myself by experiencing it as carrying on the flow of my past," and this temporal coherence takes a narrative form (Russon 2015, 79). It is through the enactment of this narrative that a sense of self emerges, and as such the contingent establishment of a personal identity is only possible by virtue of language (ibid.). Muldoon argues that Merleau-Ponty's "ambiguous self" is an approximation of Ricoeur's narrative identity and that both of these "are attempts to avoid the "pseudo-alternatives" of either pure change or absolute identity," that is, the either/or choice between the humanist essentialisation of the subject and the post-modern aversion to stability and singularity that was introduced at the beginning of this chapter. Both Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur present alternatives that reject any form of immediate self-presence and foundational subjectivity with a sense of self that

gathers “over the cohesion of a lifetime” (Muldoon 2006, 248–49). However, this expressive, bodily self is “also haunted by an anonymous life that is the life of the sensorimotor body” (Marratto 2012, 167). The self, for Merleau-Ponty, is only itself “by being open to radical operations of time and institution that exceed [it],” because “selfhood and identity emerge out of non-identity” (Morris & Maclaren, 2015, 17). The account I can tell of myself, then, is subtended by an anonymous life I cannot fully account for. As Butler argues, “My account of myself is partial, haunted by that for which I can devise no definitive story” (Butler 2005, 40).

Indeed, in *An account of oneself*, Judith Butler repeatedly critiques narrative, arguing that the account I give of myself is susceptible to breaking apart and being undermined, and that narratives will always be lacking because “the account of myself that I give in discourse never fully expresses or carries this living self. My words are taken away as I give them, interrupted by the time of a discourse that is not the same as the time of my life” (ibid., 36). There is therefore an inherent fiction to narrative. Is this partial, opaque, relational narrative then useless? If narrative is “fabulous”, as Butler argues, does this strip it of any meaningfulness? Butler suggests that, “We can surely still tell our stories, and there will be many reasons to do precisely that” (ibid., 37), however she does not delve into what these reasons might be, and indeed her deconstruction of narrativity leaves little to feel optimistic about.

Later, in the introduction to a set of essays published together in 2015, Butler reengages with these questions. She argues that, given how contentious first-

person accounts are, "one might think that we should all remain silent on such matters, since the indexical function fails precisely at that moment in which we want to marshal its forces" (Butler 2015a, 2). However, Butler, not unlike Merleau-Ponty, now suggests that we should "accept this belatedness and proceed in narrative fashion" (ibid.). Marratto highlights how subjectivity, for Merleau-Ponty, is implicitly 'belated' in this same way; as a response to the pregnant silence of the world (2012, 189), this belatedness in turn "forms part of the structure of self-consciousness" (ibid. 101). This partiality, this loss, this belatedness, is in fact constitutive of a sense of self, which could not function without it. Merleau-Ponty's vision of personal identity is therefore not inconsistent with Butler's, because for him, although "…my life admits of personal articulation, even of narration . . . this articulation is founded upon pre-personal existence: this existence *norms* my definition of myself" (Antich 2018, 439). If my narrative of myself is belated, it is because my subjectivity can only ever be belated. However, this does not undermine my sense of self, indeed it is a condition of its appearance. It is in this way that our narratives are attached to an anonymous bodily life that they cannot fully recall and at the same time "that our personal identities are founded on our narratives" (ibid., 434).

4.1 Difference and the Feminist Critique of Merleau-Ponty

Merleau-Ponty has at times been chastised, in particular by feminist theorists, for his reliance on the concept of an 'anonymous body' which erases difference and amounts to a masculine solipsism (See, for example, Irigaray 1993; Sullivan 2001). This critique is pertinent also in considering the particularity of other lived identities, like immigration status that would also be erased or diminished

in this purported appeal to neutrality. Derrida has also directed criticism more pointedly towards the lived body and concept of the 'intercorporeity' in the work of Merleau-Ponty, which he believes occlude "the alterity of the other"(Marratto 2012, 117). Derrida's concern here is less that he succumbs to the same immediacy and interiorisation as Husserl, but that, in trying to imbue a sense of alterity within the interiority of the subject, he ends up "*los[ing]* the sense of the alterity of the other" (ibid., 140). This is evident, according to Derrida, in Merleau-Ponty's assertion regarding the manner in which I have access to my body: "It is in no different fashion that the other's body becomes animate before me when I shake another man's hand or just look at him" (S 168). In her book *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (2000), Ahmed relies heavily on the work of Meleau-Ponty in order to establish the theoretical justification for the privileging of encounters in her work. She engages with his concept of *reversibility* in order to argue that "'my body' is possible in its particularity only though encountering other bodies" and that embodiment is experienced in the "simultaneous mutuality of touch and being touched, and seeing and being seen" (Ahmed 2000, 47). However she too criticises Merleau-Ponty's approach, as other scholars have done before her, for its undifferentiated inclusivity.

Other scholars have responded to these criticisms to argue that the arguments made by Sullivan, amongst others, equate anonymity with neutrality, and that the anonymity of the body that Merleau-Ponty speaks of does not preclude, and indeed is productive of, an embodied subjectivity that is "always *at once* general and particular" (Kruks 2001, 37). This is because the sedimented and habituated

histories of our bodies help to form bodily horizons through which we experience the world and through which things are made meaningful to us, and as such we can each offer a relatively distinct perspective *on the same world.* Furthermore, contemporary philosophers have argued that Derrida mischaracterises Merleau-Ponty's notion of intercorporeity and is mistaken in concluding that his account erases difference. Merleau-Ponty does not gloss over the difference and non-presence interrupting subjectivity; indeed his position converges with Derrida on this matter (Marratto 2012, 117).

Judith Butler has more recently reengaged with the work of Merleau-Ponty in a rather substantive way. In her 2015 collection of essays, *Senses of the subject*, Butler dedicates two chapters to essays exploring the theory of Merleau-Ponty as it relates to questions of selfhood and alterity. Her analyses of Merleau-Ponty's work are both sympathetic and compelling. Indeed, she even forges a convincing rebuttal of Irigaray's famous critique of Merleau-Ponty. Butler argues that Merleau-Ponty's 'subject' starkly contrasts with the "atomistic individualism" of Cartesian-influenced philosophies (ibid.). However this rapprochement and mutual implication of subject and world does not require an erasure of difference. Against Irigaray, Butler argues that, for Merleau-Ponty, "[t]o have one's being implicated in the Other is thus to be intertwined from the start, *but not for that reason to be reducible to – or exchangeable with – one another*" (Butler 2015, 168, emphasis added).

Merleau-Ponty's 'body' is intertwined with the world and with other bodies, but this reversibility between body and world is nonetheless marked by a *non-*

coincidence, or *écart,* which allows for the emergence of a singular sense of self (Coole 2005, 134). As such, "If Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the bodily self is inherently open-ended, transactional, incomplete…then it will be difficult to reconcile this with the claim that his philosophy involves a neutral or universal body impervious to differences, since we find instead a bodily self that is always gathered out of open difference" (Morris and Maclaren, 2015, 20) and thus relies on alterity (Coole 2005, 135). When Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is understood in the way that Morris, Maclaren and colleagues propose, these criticisms lose their purchase. His approach, conceived in this way, is entirely attuned to an understanding of difference, and indeed his sense of self is precisely gathered out of difference. They reaffirm the idea put forward by Watkins, Madison and others that this is an indirect ontology, in which identities or singularities are never fully present or determinate, "but only emerge through ongoingly generative differences" (Morris and Maclaren, 2015). It is for this reason that scholars have argued that it is simply a mistake to suggest that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy eliminates difference (Hass, 2008, 133). Morris and Maclaren's position is that, for Merleau-Ponty, disparity (or difference) "is *ontologically constitutive* of the self" and "I thus find myself fundamentally inhabited and haunted by otherness – but this does not undermine me" (ibid., 9-10).

4.2 Instituted Subjectivity and 'Refugee Agency'

To close the present discussion, it is necessary to ask where does this leave the concept of 'refugee agency' that this chapter began with? In a Merleau-Pontian inspired approach, agency becomes diffused and is no longer the sole property of a rational, thinking subject. Coole, develops a theory of agency by thinking

through the implications of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy for this oft-used concept, and ultimately argues that *agentic capacities* can only ever be contingently (and not ontologically) "identified with rational, individual agents" (Coole 2005, 124–25). She argues that the human agency privileged by political thinkers cannot be founded upon an ontology of individual subjects (ibid., 132). However, Coole is aware that this resituating of agency in the phenomenal body risks reasserting another dualism, whereby "agentic bodies impos[e] their visceral intentions on an inert world" (ibid., 179). But in his later works, in particular, Merleau-Ponty argues that the world too is flesh, that is, as Coole suggests, when matter comes into contact with the body it acquires a degree of negativity. She elsewhere argues that Merleau-Ponty allows for a reconfiguration of agency, whereby it is no longer tied to essentialism and the rational subject, and nor is it simply a "vital force": it is understood as "those contingent capacities for reflexivity, creative disclosure, and transformation that emerge hazardously within the folds and reversals of material/meaningful flesh" (Coole 2010, 112).

Although Merleau-Ponty does seek to blur the boundary between body and world, he does not seek to dispose of it entirely (Simonsen 2010, 223). As such, with Merleau-Ponty, we can acknowledge the diffusion of agency into all manner of things, whilst retaining some sense of the specificity of the human body. Simonsen invokes a passage from Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* to argue that the "The flesh of the world is not self-sensing (se sentir) as is my flesh—It is sensible and not sentient" (VI 250). In this way, "there is still a contrast between the wild being (the flesh), that we share with animals, plants

and things, and the immediacy of our human existence; the cohesion of the self-sentient body and the sociocultural life-world" (Simonsen 2013, 21).

Merleau-Ponty specifically states that "we are not effects," and as such positions himself away from the determinism that haunts poststructuralism, but he does think it necessary to acknowledge "the passivity of our activity" (VI 221). In this sense, Merleau-Ponty's subject is not "active," but rather "enactive," and it "comes into being only in and through its world-embedded practices" (Talerno 2017). In other words, the body is simultaneously active and passive, inhabiting a material-symbolic world that is "alive with signs" that the body interprets and creatively responds to (Coole 2007, 175). Rather than acting as an independent power, our freedom is embedded in situation (Russon 2017). It is rooted in the giving powers of the body, objects, others, the world and the temporal sedimentation of our habits, such that "whatever we can describe as our own ability can equally be described as their affordance" (ibid., 37).

This allows us rethink agency as resolutely nonfoundational, emergent, and only partially and contingently anthropological. This vision of agency stands in stark contrast to its modern permutations and sits somewhat more comfortably alongside those anti-humanist, poststructural philosophies that leave no space for modern visions of agency. This gives the notion a renewed value, but *only* by resituating it in a much more modest order that, to paraphrase Merleau-Ponty, is not one of objective Being, but of the lived or phenomenal.

4.3 *Refugee* Agency, Embodied Perspectivity and Communication Across Difference in Merleau-Ponty

As feminist scholars have more recently argued, the anchoring of experience in the body is what leaves room for an interpretation of Merleau-Ponty that is sensitive to the lived differences of particular bodies whose identities and capacities emerge contingently in relation to the world and others. It is precisely because embodiment situates us that "each enjoys a relatively unique perspective" (Coole 2005, 134). This includes agentic capacities, which materialise contingently and in relation to the relatively unique perspective of each self. And it is in this sense that we can look to the ways that agentic capacities may, as Simonsen argues, be differentially distributed (Simonsen 2013). As Coole (2005) reminds us, it is precisely their emergence within an already-meaningful world that places limits on these singularities or selves. She describes the practically oriented body as expressive, dramatic and performative and argues that its "capacities materialize contingently through its interactions with others and with its environment" (Coole 2007, 16). So whilst "...on the one hand political agents emerge from, and are motivated by, diffuse experiences that are lived and communicated by the body . . . on the other, they emerge within and into a field of forces that incites, shapes and constrains their development" (Coole 2005, 135). Because, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, living experience has "an atmosphere: it is constantly enshrouded by those mists we call the sensible world or history" (VI 84).

Merleau-Ponty, in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, argues that the habitual body experiences harmony between intention and performance, which is

manifest in the phrase, "I can". This embodied action is practical, habitual, and spontaneous. However, as Simonsen astutely notes, "some bodies more than others experience crisis in their involvement in the world and with others. In such cases, Merleau-Ponty's hopeful utterance 'I can' will in these cases be better replaced by 'I cannot'" (Simonsen 2013, 20). Ahmed makes a similar argument when she assert that for migrants, encounters are often "site[s] of differentiation rather than inclusion: in such an approach 'my body' and 'the other's body' would not be structurally equivalent (even as impossible bodies), but in a relation of asymmetry and potential violence" (Ahmed 2000, 48).

In stating that I know the other *not only* in what I suffer from him but *also* as a witness, because "his views and my own are in advance inserted into a system of partial perspectives, refereed to one same world in which we coexist," Merleau-Ponty wishes to affirm the mutuality between body-subjects. For him, it is not sufficient and necessary that the other is "capable of crushing me with a glance into the dust of my world," however "[i]t is necessary and it suffices that he have the power to decenter me, to oppose his centering to my own" (VI 82) which is possible only because we are "two entries into the same Being" (ibid.). The other decentres me and thus can call me into question, but can only do so because we belong to the same system of being. The other *can* decentre me, and encounters with others *can* incite suffering in me, but not inevitably so. As Coole and Simonsen help us to understand, encounters with others and the world are differentially experienced and constrained by the mists of history and politics in which they are engulfed. Encounters with others and the world can be

disorientating, violent and shocking, as they can be comforting, reassuring and familiar.

It is thus necessary to be sensitive to the lived differences that emerge from within this atmosphere of history, culture and politics and the different ways in which the participants in this project, by virtue of their status as refugees - as well as by virtue of other, intersecting identities and lived histories - encounter (and are encountered by) others and the world. However, as Merleau-Ponty reminds us, it is also necessary to understand that these lived differences do not mean that others become radically alien to us, confining us to a solipsistic solitude, and rendering their expressions unintelligible. This is why, despite our differences and despite the ever-present threat of miscommunication, in conversation "[w]e come together with different backgrounds and experiences, but in that worldly space where ideas, meanings, and words are passed back and forth, we may become changed, informed, enriched" (Hass 2008, 181). Being attuned to these lived differences does not, by extension require that we give up trying to communicate across these differences. Hass is quite clear that for Merleau-Ponty, there is "no dualism between self and others in living experience and conversation" but that importantly, this does not mean there is *monism*, or total unity. His concept of *écart*, or separation, demonstrates that despite this embodied and dialogical reciprocity, there is an unbridgeable distance between self and others (Hass, 2008, 111). Nevertheless, "…participating in the world is making oneself answerable to the perspectives of others. This mean that at root, *the meaning of "things" in our world is always a call to communication"* (Russon

2017, 35), and it is on the basis of this communication that an ontology and a metaphysics can emerge (Low 2012, 74–75).

Merleau-Ponty asserts that communication is hazardous, but it is precisely the openness and ambiguity of language that makes it possible for us to learn from unfamiliar perspectives (S 77). The issue of transcultural communication – a pertinent issue for research across cultures and languages - is also afforded novel insight by this approach. The lateral vision of truth espoused by Merleau-Ponty, as opposed to both universalism and particularism, allows for the softening of cultural frontiers through cultural interchange and communication (Burke 2009, 231). As Merleau-Ponty argues:

> *If universality is attained, it will not be through a universal language which would go back prior to the diversity of languages to provide us with the foundations of all possible languages. It will be through an oblique passage from a given language that I speak and that initiates me into the phenomenon of expression to another given language that I learn to speak and that effects the act of expression according to a completely different style – the two languages (and ultimately all given languages) being contingently comparable only at the outcome of this passage*
>
> (S 87).

The contingent "lateral" universals (or transversals) that can emerge from the "convergence of two different styles towards a common meaning," are only possible by virtue of our shared corporeality. There is no essence or idea that is independent from a particular history and a particular geography but this does

not mean that it is imprisoned there, because communication across different constituted cultures occurs "through the wild region wherein they all originated" (VI 115).

5. Intercorporeal Refugees: A Merleau-Ponty inspired approach to journey experiences

It is no longer a question of trying to 'overcome' *either* the reductiveness of metaphysical thinking *or* the 'abyss of deconstruction,' but of recognising that both metaphysics and deconstruction are simultaneously at work in all that we do. As Rose argues, "[w]hereas poststructuralists like to indulge themselves in the world of play, it is equally important to indulge ourselves in the world we embrace" (M. Rose 2004, 467). One of the key achievements of Merleau-Ponty is that he provides an outlook that, unlike his postmodern successors, does not gloss over these 'dreams of presence' and can help us to understand how singularities, identities and meanings arise in spatiality and temporality. And importantly, it takes those singularities, identities and provisional stabilities that we cling on to seriously. It is one thing to believe that world is inherently chaotic, discontinuous and in a constant state of flux. It is another to consider how, despite this, our own worlds are held together, however provisionally, by a plethora of stabilities that are necessary for *living*.

If the social world is replete with identities and meanings that remain ambiguous and emergent, but that we nevertheless cling on to in the attempt to 'get on with life,' then studies of social life need to take seriously the singularities that arise in temporality, and the experiences (however contingent) of self, other, and all

manner of worldly 'things' that fill the everyday. Stabilities persist only relative to flux and we must recognise these stabilities whilst at the same time acknowledging their fragility (Whitmoyer 2017). These singularities are inherently relational, but this does not mean that they need, or ought to be reduced to the relations between them. Merleau-Ponty shows us how experience unfolds through this interlacing of "one's own pulsing body, the overflowing, transcendent world of things, and the living bodies of others" and is "sensual, affective, inter-dynamic, and inescapably carnal" (Hass 2008, 146). It is against these stabilities that experiences of rupture and chaos can seem so jarring. And *this* is vital to understanding the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers during their journeys.

Inspired by Hass, this project attempts to "illuminate the world by creatively expressing it" (ibid., 199). But more than that, it values and incorporates the creative expressions of the refugees who participated in this project, implicitly valuing the capacity of language and dialogue to point us towards the perspectives of others. We can listen to the stories of others in the understanding that language sublimates experience and 'sings the world.' We can learn something about the multi-sensuous, embodied experiences of refugees and asylum seekers and their encounters with other bodies, objects and the physical world in their narrative articulations of these experiences. We can grant storytellers a degree of personal authorship, in the understanding that the stories we tell are inevitably and necessarily partial, as well as being simultaneously ours and more-than-ours. And, we can allow the meanings and

identities that we all cling onto in order to 'get on with life' to have value, whilst remaining ever aware of their ultimate fragility.

Indeed, as Whitmoyer argues, if we must cling onto something in the midst of the chaos of the world, "the best we have is to cling to each other, even across the distances that separate us" (2017, 167). Merleau-Ponty therefore provides a way to value the "local knowledges" that Foucault alludes to, but which his ontology is unable to substantiate. This is not just a 'strategic essentialism' for politics' sake but a firm commitment to a lived metaphysics that can complement, rather than oppose, deconstruction. As critically-minded scholars working in the field of refugee and forced migration studies, this provides us not with another 'false exit' to the 'end of metaphysics' declared by Derrida, but of a reconciliation with deconstruction's omnipotence.

Seeing value in the narratives of refugees does not 'solve' the problem that deconstruction reveals by privileging the voices of a marginalised group that have been excluded and silenced "in the reductive search for the singular, the fundamental, the originary" (M. Rose 2004, 463). Ultimately, regardless of the political imperatives to do so, we cannot consider the accounts of minority groups as any less susceptible to the ravages of deconstruction than any other account. However, metaphysics and deconstruction exist as two relational sides of the same coin, and to emphasise one within the course of a given study does not require a rejection of the other. Lawrence Hass asserts that they can be "supplementary, yet fissioning" approaches, that is, "the rigorous, lyrical effort to articulate being ("singing the world"), and the rigorous, critical vigilance against

the hidden sediments of traditional concepts and binaries in ontologies" (Hass 2008, 136).

The lack of theoretical conversation around concepts of agency, experience and language in refugee and forced migration studies is, I believe, part of a broader lack of active discussion around key issues of social theory and philosophy in the field. What I hope to achieve through this chapter, and with significant assistance from scholars in philosophy and social theory, is to bring these debates into dialogue with refugee and forced migration studies. The contemporary reinvigoration of scholarship on Merleau-Ponty in philosophy and the resituation of his work within current debates is an excellent resource for social scientists, and forced migration scholars in particular, looking to engage more deeply with some of the key theoretical questions that continue to haunt critical scholarship. In a field of study that remains self-consciously preoccupied with the desire to remain 'policy-relevant,' I believe that a more robust engagement with those seemingly more abstracted domains of social theory and philosophy is *also* required in order for the field to flourish. Indeed, to paraphrase Grosz (2008), it might too be time to turn away from refugee and forced migration studies in order to see it "more indirectly and thus less instrumentally."

There may well be poststructural (and other) scholars who would push back against the arguments put forward in this chapter. I warmly welcome and look forward to the debates that the above discussion might open up. Indeed if anything, the key contribution of this chapter is precisely to incite further debate of these issues in refugee and forced migration studies. I cannot, and do not wish

to claim to have 'solved' this exceptionally complex set of issues. Indeed the idea of ongoing interrogation and a distaste for closure is itself arguably something that can be taken from a Merleau-Pontian approach. But I do hope to have acknowledged and articulated these debates in a compelling and thought-provoking way, and in a way that provides a useful framing for the rest of this thesis.

Chapter III: Research Methods/Process/Context: In search of ambiguous meaning

The previous chapter argued that language is able to point us to something in our worldly experience, to show us something, and, and that, as Hass (2008, 193) asserts, our linguistic expressions "sublimate" and "signify" our incarnate life and are "part of our ongoing, but highly conditional efforts to find and create meaning in an overflowing, overwhelming, intersubjective world" (ibid., 199). With renewed faith in the value of language and its capacity to show, but with respect also for the insights of deconstruction and the critical vigilance that it offers, we can move forward more confidently but at the same time more humbly with research based on creative expressions of experience. But now it is left to confront the question as to why narrative inquiry in particular is a useful research method, and more precisely why narrative inquiry is useful to studies of refugees' and asylum seekers' journeys.

As Maynes et al (2008) argue, narratives are especially adept at uncovering certain types of social-structural dynamics, allowing for the "documentation of the lifelong consequences of transformative experiences, or the operation of temporal logics that data from one point in time cannot capture" (Maynes et al 2008, 6). The collection of narratives in this study serves to transcend the propensity of those studying 'transit' to locate their research within one spatially and temporally delimited field site, or as Castagnone puts it, the conceptual

privileging of “analyses of separate segments of individuals’ migratory paths“ (Castagnone 2011). A narrative approach to studying refugee journeys emphasises the placement within a nexus of social connections, historical events and life experiences (Miller 2003) that are dispersed across space and time. The manner in which stories can capture phenomena that traverse boundaries and borders is encapsulated in Michel de Certeau’s assertion that "what the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (I984, I29). It also allows for an exploration of journey memories and meaning-making that are missing in other accounts, considering their ‘significance’ from a novel vantage point.

Expressive creativity is not the exclusive domain of philosophers or social scientists. The creative stories of the research participants, *as well as* my creative interpretation of these stories, hopefully allow their journey experiences to “come alive in new, powerful, culturally productive ways” (Hass 2008, 199). This expressive “singing the world” is entirely contingent, and never exhaustive, but that does not negate its epistemic value. And in this way, unlike his poststructuralist counterparts, Merleau-Ponty allows for “a turning inside out of historical details and structures of power, to discover their significance for those who live them” (Coole 2007, 117).

Once we reject the idea of a unified subject we understand that the idea of an uncontaminated, strictly personal narrative is equally impossible; this does not undermine the method, indeed it is a condition of its possibility. Nevertheless, I acknowledge the authorship of participants throughout this thesis in order to remain faithful to the powerful sense of self that is both created and affirmed

through the narratives we tell about ourselves. It is also with a view to afford participants the same degree of creative ownership and recognition that I afford myself when writing my own name at the top of an essay and using first person pronouns in my writing. In doing so, I do not wish to dissolve the "formative history" of the body nor its inherent relationality. Indeed I would argue that narratives, are both made possible only on account of this relationality, and, as we will see in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, are teeming with insight into the relationality of experience. I hope this project shows how narratives are pregnant with worldly meaning and, rather than ignoring, illuminate the inherent relationality of embodied experience.

This chapter explores and interrogates the research process. It first provides a broad descriptive overview of the way in which the fieldwork was carried out. This is followed by a discussion on research ethics as it relates both to the project and to the philosophical approach detailed in the previous chapter. This section explores what research ethics might look like once we move beyond the modern tendency towards a rational, disembodied subject that persists in the research ethics requirements of universities. After a brief note on the impossibility of a fully transparent reflexivity, the discussion then offers a more in-depth, but decidedly modest interrogation of the social (and spatial) context of the research interviews. Following this, an articulation of the analysis process is offered, along with a presentation of the analytical framing that has formed the basis of the chapters that follow this one. Finally, another brief note, this time on the chaos of research, is provided. In this note I try to communicate the disorder

that precedes and subtends the relative coherence and linearity of the final draft of this thesis.

1. The Research Process

I undertook 41 interviews with asylum seekers (12) and refugees (29) over the course of five months in the spring and summer of 2015. The length of these interviews varied widely, from 20 minutes to three and a half hours. I asked every participant to go into as much detail as possible about their journey to claiming asylum in the UK, and the length of the interview depended on the nature of that person's journey and on the amount of detail they were willing to share. Most of these interviews were carried out in the same town in the north of England, where I lived for a period of five months in order to carry out my data collection. However, a small number, thanks to contacts established through referral, were carried out in neighbouring northern towns. I chose to locate myself in one town and embed myself in the community in order to gain the trust of both the charity workers who acted as gatekeepers, and the broader refugee and asylum seeker community in that area.

For confidentiality purposes I will not be disclosing the name of the town from where I conducted my research. This is because in some instances participants were one of only a very small number of individuals from a particular country of origin in the area. Naming the town would thus create the risk of these participants being identifiable and so I have made the decision not to disclose the name of the town where the research took place. It is a large, industrial town in the north of England with relatively high levels of unemployment and a lower-

than-average percentage of residents from minority ethnic groups. The town is one of many northern towns designated as a "dispersal area" for asylum seekers, and it accommodates a high number of asylum seekers relative to its population size. I hope that this brief description will create an adequate enough sketch of the environment in which the participants were living at the time of the interviews, and in which the research interviews were carried out.

As my research was focused on the past experiences of participants (mostly their experiences before entering the UK), and because I was not seeking 'representativeness', I made the decision that I would be more successful situating myself in one area and trying to forge strong relationships and networks in that area, rather than spreading myself too thinly across two or three areas. Further to this, the largely randomised dispersal system for accommodating asylum seekers in the UK has the effect of creating a diverse pool of potential participants in dispersal towns like the one I was working in.

There are a number of charities and organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees in this town, and it is through these organisations that I first made contact with the communities I sought to work with. I initially reached out to an individual working in the charity sector with whom I have previously volunteered. He agreed to help me with my research by introducing me to potential participants and other people working locally with refugees and asylum seekers. I was introduced to several participants directly through him. At the beginning of the fieldwork he reached out to some of his contacts to find out if they would be interested in meeting me to talk about the project and see if they

would be willing to participate, and others I approached by attending community events and projects that he had organised. Through him I was also introduced to another charity worker whose charity ran a drop-in for asylum seekers and refugees at a local church, which I subsequently attended on a weekly basis to chat, drink tea, and introduce my research to potential participants. This charity worker also introduced me to a community member who spoke fluent English and Arabic, and who accompanied me to the drop-in on many occasions in order to act as an interpreter between the many Arabic-speaking attendees and myself.

After the first two and a half months of fieldwork, I realised that there was a marked imbalance in the numbers of male and female participants I had spoken to, with relatively few female participants. The gender balance of the research was inevitably going to be skewed, because of the broader gender imbalance between male and female asylum seekers in the UK.[22] However, the number of women I had spoken to after two and a half months was not even proportionate in relation to this imbalance. I would suggest that this is at least in part to do with the spaces that I was working in. The church drop-in, for example, was a masculine space where men dominated the social and spatial milieu with boisterous table tennis and pool tournaments. The fact that I was accompanied by a male interpreter was also potentially alienating for women. So at this point I decided to branch out in order to more actively engage with women in the community.

[22] In 2014 and 2015, women made up approximately 30% of asylum applications in the UK. For statistics, see Eurostat (2018) "Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data (rounded)."

In order to address this imbalance I contacted a local women's group for asylum seekers and refugees ran by a Christian charity, and asked if I could volunteer with the group. After introducing myself as a researcher, I spent the following month participating in the activities of the group, making crafts with the attendees and helping to clean up afterwards. As several of the women attended with children, I also spent time playing with, creating activities for, and looking after the children. After this time spent establishing good levels of familiarity and trust with the group, I approached a number of the women about my project, and small number of agreed to speak to me. One woman took my details and passed them on to her husband, who became another of my participants. Through another charity worker I was introduced to members of a group working on an anti-FGM project, which campaigned against FGM and provided to support to women who have been affected by it. Through this group I was introduced to two women who also participated in the project.

By attending weekly drop-ins, volunteering with the women's group, and generally being present in the area and in the office that three local charities worked from over a period of time, I was able to develop relationships with a number of individuals who subsequently agreed to participate in the research. Before continuing by exploring the dynamics and context of the research interviews, however, I would like to pause for a moment and engage in a brief discussion on the notion of reflexivity in research. I hope that this interlude will situate and add nuance to the discussion that follows.

1.1 A Brief Note on the Impossibility of 'Transparent Reflexivity'/On the Necessity of a Modest Reflexivity

> *We cannot know everything, nor can we survey power as if we can fully understand, control or redistribute it. What we may be able to do is something rather more modest but, perhaps, rather more radical: to inscribe into our research practices some absences and fallibilities while recognizing that the significance of this does not rest entirely in our own hands*
>
> (G. Rose 1997, 319).

Gillian Rose's (1997) paper on the impossibility of transparent reflexivity is a very useful contribution when considering the role of reflexivity in research. She problematises commonplace exercises in reflexivity that have proliferated in feminist research. The issue she identifies with the idea of transparent reflexivity is that it too relies on an immediate self-presence, and on notions of agency and power that are assumed to be 'knowable' (G. Rose 1997, 311). In this sense, what is labelled reflexivity can more accurately be labelled reflection, as it paradoxically requires a withdrawal from situatedness in order to expose situatedness. It requires a consciousness, a self that is able to detach from its position in order to reflect upon it. And it is resolutely anti-Merleau-Pontian in this regard. This is what Rose is arguing when she says that the idea of 'transparently reflexive positionality' is ultimately an illusion which is bound to fail, and that many feminist geographers concede this even whilst promoting it. The failure of never 'fully knowing' our position and its context is similar to Merleau-Ponty's assertion of the impossibility of "phenomenological reduction".

In Whitmoyer's interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, he argues that it is our belatedness, as temporal and historical beings immersed in a situation not of our making, which is one of the reasons why "positional relations tend to exceed their intentions and vascillate from their intended course" (Whitmoyer 2017, 128).

In assuming that we can somehow predict the impact that our position and power will have in our encounters with participants, we are perpetuating the same idea of immediate self-presence that we are also purporting to reject, granting ourselves the ability of privileged access that we have denied everyone else. Clearly this will not do. However, as the previous chapter has tried to establish, the inevitable failure of full self-disclosure does not compel us to throw the baby out with the bathwater and to give up on reflexivity as a research practice altogether. It is part of the never-finished "rigorous, lyrical effort to articulate being" (Hass 2008, 136). What follows is thus a much more modest, situated attempt to articulate *some* of the manifold factors that might weigh on the research process without claiming to know exactly what their significance might be. Contingent attempts at a situated reflexivity are not confined to the section below, however, and can be seen dispersed throughout this chapter, and indeed throughout the entire thesis.

1.2 Dynamics and Contexts of the Research Encounters

The research interviews took place in a number of different locations. I tried to be as flexible as possible in accommodating the location preferences of participants. My ex-colleague gave me a key to his office where there was a

private room in which I could conduct interviews. Many interviews took place there. Other interviews were carried out at the homes of participants. One interview took place in a café, at the participant's request. The interviews of the participants from the women's group largely took place in the building housing the charity that ran that group. I had no designated room to work from in those instances, and conducted the interviews at times in a private reading room/library, and at other times in a semi-private office-style cubicle. The particular spaces in which the different interviews took place may have had an impact on the way in which the narratives were produced, but it is difficult to say how. We might presume, for example, that conducting interviews in a public space, such as a café, would inhibit the participants' capacity to speak freely, for fear of being overheard. However, the interview I conducted in the café felt like one of the most frank and open conversations I had. Perhaps in the end the informality of the café setting was more conducive to a casual and unthreatening dynamic. Or perhaps this particular participant was just especially open and adept at storytelling.

Similarly, it is impossible to say exactly what kind of impact my own political, social and cultural position as a researcher had on each encounter. What I can say, however, is that there were some ways in which, by virtue of my positionality, I felt I had a relatively 'privileged access' to spaces where I could get to know participants. For example, one of the key advantages I believe I had was my identification as a woman, especially in the latter stages of the fieldwork when I was actively trying to engage with more female participants. The women's group I attended was strictly women-only; men, including partners,

were not even allowed in the room when the group met. Identifying and being identified as a woman therefore allowed me access to a group that a male researcher would not have had access to. Similarly, one of my participants, a survivor of SGBV, explained that she still did not feel comfortable in male company, and thus made it clear that had I been a male researcher she would not have spoken to me. Being an ex-colleague and friend of one of the charity workers was also of benefit in certain instances. He introduced me not just to potential participants but also to other charity workers, who then allowed me to gain access to further community spaces in order to meet potential participants. As someone who was well trusted in the local community, he was in a position to 'vouch' for me, which may have had a positive influence on the dynamic between certain participants and myself.

In each interview, after asking a number of introductory questions to establish how long participants had been in the UK and what their legal status was, I asked participants to tell me the story of their journey, in as much detail as possible, from leaving home, to arriving to the UK (See Appendix I). I used a number of prompting questions during the narration, which varied widely from participant to participant. Some participants spoke for several minutes with little need for intervention. At other times I intervened to ask for clarification, for example, to ask what town or city the participant was referring to, or what mode of transport they used. I also intervened at other moments to ask participants how they were feeling during a particular situation, or to ask why they thought they had made a particular decision. My desire was to foster a dynamic that was relaxed, informal and conversational. However, some participants required much more prompting,

and I was compelled to ask repeatedly, "What happened next?" along with other questions aimed to elicit more detail from participants. Following this 'narrative' portion of the interview, I continued with a number of questions about life in the UK, feelings about the future, and reasons for leaving the country of origin (if these had not already been addressed in the main body of the narrative). The questions were intended to contextualise the narrative. I finished with questions confirming the participant's age, nationality and marital status.

There are traces of me throughout these narratives, by way of the questions I asked, the interjections I made, and by virtue of my bodily presence as 'the listener' to the story as it unfolded. My desire to limit my interjections in the narrative production was not because I believed it to be a pure form of knowledge tainted by my presence, but simply in order to be a good listener. Relevant to this discussion is thus a consideration of the researcher-participant relationship and the co-production of narrative in the embodied encounter between researcher and participant (Finlay 2009, 13). If there is "a reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other" (VI, 138) then we must understand the inherent relationality of the research process itself.

Related to this is the acknowledgment that any form of dialogical research is "saturated by images of the social dynamics of the interview itself, projections of the social context in which it takes place, the roles and power dynamics of interviewer and respondent, and their respective agendas" (Briggs 2003). This is an especially relevant consideration for refugees who have already gone through the often-harrowing refugee status determination process (Hynes 2003; Sigona

2014). Eastmond recognises how power may impact upon memory and narration, as in "the violation of individual's bodies and minds, traumatic experiences tend to fragment memory, undermine trust, and inhibit expression" (Eastmond 2007, 258).

The potential for prior experiences in the asylum process to infiltrate the research encounter was alluded to most explicitly in my interview with Prudence. Prudence had lost her asylum appeal just days before our interview. At one point in the interview she became frustrated because she couldn't express her story as she wished to express it. So she took out her statement to the Home Office from her bag and asked her interpreter to read from the statement. She justified doing this by saying it was difficult to remember all the details. The way she wished to tell her story was to reiterate exactly what she had said to the Home Office. At the time I remember feeling discouraged that a participant was giving me a 'scripted' response, one that had been polished and packaged with the help of her solicitor to present the most persuasive case for asylum. I had got to know Prudence over a number of weeks by attending different community activities she was involved in, and I felt disappointed that perhaps this meant she didn't trust me.

Storytelling is integral to the asylum process, during which stories of events in the country of origin are told and retold. Sigona, in his discussion of 'refugee voices', examines places such as asylum tribunals "where refugees are expected to narrate their experience as part of the process of assessing the genuineness and truthfulness of their asylum claims" (2014, 373). I remember feeling that the

rest of the conversation was somehow tainted or lacking 'realness' because Prudence was simply repeating her testimony for the Home Office and because I wanted the 'real' story and not the Home Office script that was moulded by all of the stringent requirements of refugee law. But in doing so I was implicitly "demanding an analytical certainty that is as insidious as the universalizing certainty that so many feminists have critiqued" (G. Rose 1997, 318). And indeed this apprehension, this fear of 'getting it wrong' probably says more about the issues that Prudence has dealt with (including being repeatedly disbelieved by the Home Office) than anything else.

More generally, during some interviews I felt that participants were extremely open and candid in their narratives, even when discussing experiences of suffering and hardship. Some participants even thanked me for giving them the opportunity to tell their story. However, in others, I felt that participants seemed much more guarded and reluctant to go into a lot of detail about their experiences. The specific dynamic or set of dynamics that gave rise to these different kinds of encounters cannot be isolated and exposed. It is impossible to try and dissect exactly how and in what ways the relationship between researcher and participant is going to influence the dynamic of the research encounter, and it is in this sense that we can appreciate Rose's critique of transparent reflexivity. Sometimes, as in the case of Prudence, we can glimpse at how a person's embodied history might impact upon this dynamic, but never with any generalisable certainty. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we cannot endeavour, as part of a compassionate research ethics more than anything else, to try and establish ways of making participants feel as

comfortable and calm as possible. This is especially important when participants are – as is the case for asylum seekers and refugees – likely to have been subject to difficult and interrogative interviews in the past.

1.3 Dynamics of Interpreted Interviews

I used interpreters for a number of interviews. My initial contact working for a local charity also ran a local interpreting service, and I sourced professional interpreters from this service. Similarly to what was said above with regards to the researcher-participant relationship and the dynamics of the research encounter, the use of interpreters and the encounter between researcher-interpreter-participant must equally be understood as adding a further layer of complexity to the context of the research interview.

Most of the professionally interpreted interviews were translated from Arabic to English. The Yemeni woman who acted as interpreter for most of these interviews was well known and well respected in the local community and had a lot of experience translating different Arabic dialects. I also used professional interpreters to translate from Tigrinya and Lingala to English. In one interview, I had requested a female Tigrinya interpreter for a female participant, however the interpreting service I was using could only offer a male interpreter. Although the participant was happy to go ahead with the male interpreter (who she also knew personally as he worked for one of the charities that she was engaged with), in this instance I had the impression that this negatively affected the dynamic of the interview, and the participant was not as open as she otherwise might have been. However, although I tried to match female participants with

female interpreters, assumptions should not necessarily be made about the negative impact of gender dynamics in interviews where the interpreter is male and the participant is female. For example, one female participant chose a close male friend from her church to interpret for her, who also happened to work part-time interpreting from Lingala to English. During this interview she spoke extremely candidly about her experiences of rape, and seemed to be very comfortable in his presence.

Other participants decided that they wanted friends or family members to act as interpreters for the interviews instead of a professional interpreter that they didn't know. This will have undoubtedly changed the dynamic of the interview, but it is difficult to say how. Participants could have felt more comfortable and at-ease with a family member or a friend than they would have done with an interpreter they had never met before. Conversely, participants may not have wanted to divulge sensitive information in front of a friend or family member, but would have felt freer to speak in a more 'anonymous' setting. However, I think it is safe to assume those participants who themselves requested to involve family or friends must implicitly have felt comfortable having those persons present, and I therefore felt it necessary to accommodate this. At times, those interpreting interjected with their own reactions, to ask for detail or clarification, or in some cases to offer additional information to help give context to a story. For example, during an interview with a Palestinian-Syrian young man, the interpreter took some time to explain the political and historical situation of Palestine and Palestinian refugees to me.

Interviews undertaken in a language other than English are creatively transformed by interpreters, as they choose the words or phrasings that they feel converge most closely with the words and phrasings expressed by participants. There is clearly room for error and misinterpretation within this process. More generally, the use of translators in research has been the subject of some debate, in particular because of the potential for bias and inaccuracy in translated interviews (See, for example Jacobsen and Landau 2003). However, I took the decision to use interpreters where needed in the spirit of inclusivity, and had in mind critical and postcolonial discussions on the symbolic association of language that consider how language can become an object of oppression when majority languages are privileged over minority languages (Blackledge 2003). To exclude potential participants on the basis of their level of English proficiency, or, to put it another way, on the basis of my lack of proficiency in their native language, seemed to me to be more problematic than the potential limitations that came with using interpreters. Within the Merleau-Pontian ethics of mutual recognition outlined below, we find the contours of an imperative to listen to others. This mutual recognition should be extended to all with the understanding that, even when mediated through an interpreter, we can come together from different backgrounds and become informed and enriched through conversation (Hass 2008, 181).

Richard McCleary (who translated Merleau-Ponty's *Signs* into English) summarises Merleau-Ponty's contribution in his preface to the book, where he asserts that people who speak different languages are able to communicate by virtue of a "speaking power which lets them pass into the style of another

language which encroaches on their own" (S xxii). Interpreters, situated between two linguistic cultures, can provide a bridge and enable this "oblique passage" from one language to another. The same also rings true for participants speaking in English as their second language, as was the case for a number of participants. The contingency of interpreted narratives does not strip them of epistemic value. We can still appreciate the insight of these narratives and their capacity to illuminate experiences that would otherwise remain obscured, whilst at the same time being aware of this additional facet of their constitution. In order for readers to be made aware of the fact that some interviews were conducted using interpreters, those interviews are marked with an 'I' in the data analysis chapters.

2. Research Ethics

All of the institutional prerequisites were adhered to for the purposes of this project, including gaining clearance by the university ethics committee before research with 'human participants' could begin. The committee decides, on a case-by-case basis, if a project adheres to the ethical standards set by the university, and requirements vary depending on the perceived vulnerability of participants. Informed consent, confidentiality and privacy, and potential risks of participation are the key issues of interest to the university ethics committee, as made clear in the application form for ethical approval.

For this research, a process of iterative consent was used. First, each participant was briefed about the project and asked if they would be interested in taking part. In most cases, a meeting was then arranged in the coming days for the

interview to take place. An oral consent script, developed with reference to the requirements set by the university, was read at the beginning of each interview (See Appendix II). An oral consent script was chosen because: (i) potential English literacy issues of participants meant that oral consent was more appropriate, and (ii) requiring participants to sign their full names was not in keeping with the data minimisation requirement of the university's data protection guidance. The oral consent script is also considered to be a less formal way of obtaining informed consent where written consent forms are not seen to be appropriate. This oral consent script was drafted to be as clear and concise as possible, in the knowledge that for many participants English would be their second language, but was in keeping with the guidance set out by the university as to what needed to be included in the script.

Participants who spoke little or no English were initially briefed on the project with the help of bilingual community members, and were provided with interpreters for the meetings who translated the consent script prior to each interview. Verbal affirmation was requested at the end of each paragraph to make sure that participants understood each section of the script, and after I had read the script, participants were again asked explicitly if they were still happy to participate. I told participants that if at any time during the interview they wished to withdraw consent, or did not wish to answer a particular question, they should just let me know. Participants were also given a paper copy of an 'information sheet' detailing all of the elements outlined in the consent script (See Appendix III). As a number of the participants did not read English, I explained to them verbally that the information sheet included both my phone

number and the phone number of my supervisor and the ethics committee at the university, should they have any questions or problems that they wished to discuss. I pointed to or circled these numbers using a pen to make sure that those participants who did not read English knew where on the sheet these contact numbers could be found.

At the end of the interview I asked each participant retrospectively if they were happy for me to use all of the information that we had discussed during the interview, or if there was anything that they wished to change or add. I told participants that they could contact me by phone if they wanted to talk to me later about anything we had discussed, to give participants time to retrospectively change their mind. Throughout the fieldwork process, only one person declined to take part in the research after the oral consent script was read to them. Another person agreed to take part and went through the interview process, but later contacted me to say that she was worried about her information being used for the project, for fear of being identifiable. I told her that I could show her any part of the thesis that included her information before it was submitted, to make sure that she was happy for the information to be published. I explained that under no circumstances would I use any of her information without her checking and agreeing to what I had written. She agreed to this, but when I tried to get in touch with her later, her phone number was no longer working. I contacted the charity that ran the women's project where I met her, but did not manage to regain contact with her. As such, I withdrew her interview entirely from the project and did not use any of the information given by this participant.

With regards to upholding the privacy and anonymity of participants, I have used pseudonyms throughout the thesis with the aim of protecting the identity of participants. All data collected for the purposes of the project has been stored in accordance with the data storage requirements set out by the university. It is also with the assurance of anonymity in mind that I have chosen not to disclose the location in which the interviews took place, especially since some participants made it clear that anonymity was particularly important to them. Issues of privacy and anonymity also relate to the potential risks of participation in the project. For refugees and asylum seekers in particular, the mishandling of data in a way that makes them individually identifiable can have significant consequences, not just in terms of the personal distress that this may cause but also because of the possible risks to safety that could arise should this information fall into the wrong hands.

During the course of the research, however, there were some aspects of this approach to research ethics that did not seem to translate well into the particular context of a given encounter. For example, at times I felt that the formal language required by the university in the oral consent script was inappropriate, in particular given that I was trying to make the process as relaxed and comfortable as possible. It made the dynamic seem more interview-like than conversational, which is precisely what I was trying to avoid, particularly given the potentially difficult, interrogative process of refugee status determination interviews that participants had already been through. I thus found myself either trying to improvise by substituting the formal register of the script for a more informal

one that felt more appropriate and less abrasive, or by prefacing the reading of the consent script with a forewarning that it might seem quite formal but this was nothing to worry about and was just to make sure that participants know as much as possible about the project before agreeing to participate. This raises questions about whether there might have been a more context-appropriate way of informing potential participants about the project and how their information will be used that was more attentive to the sensitive dynamics of the research encounter.

As explained above, all participants' contributions were anonymised in line with the promise I had made to the ethics committee in the development of the project, and also because of the concerns outlined above regarding the risks in rendering participants identifiable. Confidentiality and anonymity are chief amongst the bioethical principles that have been imported into social science research, and indeed "it has become a default position that researcher from all disciplines must offer participants confidentiality and anonymity even though in practice this can be problematic to achieve" (MacFarlane 2010, 21). It also uncritically assumes that all participants ought to remain anonymous. However, whilst a lot of participants in this project did affirm a wish to remain anonymous, one or two did state that they would be happy for their names to be used. Part of the problem with anonymity is that can be seen to strip authorship from the person who has lived and articulated the story. There is thus a debate to be had about the legitimacy of anonymising someone that doesn't want to be made anonymous, and indeed wants to retain a sense of ownership of their narrative,

The same can be said about the rather paternalistic assumption that doing so is necessarily in their best interests.

2.1 Ethics of the Embodied Research Encounter

Critics of institutional research ethics have argued that its history is virtually synonymous with medical and scientific research, and that it is this 'principlist' version of 'research ethics' that is dominant even within the social sciences (Macfarlane 2010). Research ethics committees are thus seen as "part of an approach to research ethics that assumes that ethical issues are essentially predictable and may be 'managed out' of the research process" (ibid., 20). Macfarlane has argued that for qualitative researchers "front-ended 'ethical approval' will never capture the uncertainty and unpredictable nature of the research process itself" and that in the day-to-day of the research process, ethics "demands improvisation" (ibid., 26). Indeed, the above discussion exemplifies this. For Macfarlane, the answer to this lacuna between the principlism of dominant research ethics and the practical process of conducting research is found in virtue ethics. This approach has identified 'virtues' that are central to being a good researcher, such as: courage, respectfulness, perseverance, sincerity, humility and reflexivity. It is not a formulaic approach but one in which virtues are cultivated through practice.

However, to unquestioningly adopt a virtue ethics approach as a corrective to the more prescriptive research ethics that dominates universities' ethics approval processes is also problematic. A key contention of virtue ethics is that virtuous people fulfill their own rational nature, or come into harmony with

themselves and therefore answer to themselves and find integrity in their self-fulfillment (Maclaren 2006, 144). Criticisms of this approach recognise that "if being good is simply an issue of living up to our species' nature, it seems that there could be no justification for saying that this way of being is truly *good,* or the way we *ought* to be" (ibid., 145). To do this seems to require us to appeal to "some kind of standard beyond ourselves" (ibid.). It is again back to Merleau-Ponty that the discussion will now turn, to see what his work can offer to this debate.

Merleau-Ponty, perhaps in part due to his untimely death, never explicitly and extensively articulated an ethics. Those scholars who have subsequently spoken of a Merleau-Pontian ethics have done so by taking up and elaborating a position they consider to be *implicit* to his theory of embodiment, and to those allusions to an ethics that are scattered throughout his work. Without the space to do true justice to these conversations, which are deep and complex, I will nonetheless highlight their potential relevance to this project.

It is clear that, insofar as dominant research ethics coincides with a modernist ethics that is bound up in the idea of a rational, disembodied subject, there are legitimate questions to be raised if this version of research ethics is uncritically adopted by a researcher whose theoretical outlook precisely rejects this ontology. One of the main arguments put forward by almost every commentator is that the key achievement of an ethics drawn out of the work of Merleau-Ponty is that it resituates the ethical in the realm of the body, which provides an "important corrective against the modern tendency toward a disembodied,

coldly rational, calculating moral agent" (Perpich 2006, 127–28). Indeed, according to Mazis, the work of Merleau-Ponty has inspired accounts of ethics that, in contrast with an ethics based on transcendence, promote "an "ethics of enmeshment in the particular," which "locates the ethical moment within the beckoning of the body to specific positive actions in an immediately expressive way" (Mazis 2006, 187). We can see how this approach resonates with that of virtue ethics. Indeed, several scholars have discussed the ways that Merleau-Ponty's account shares elements of virtue ethics in a way that is potentially illuminating to discussions of ethics in research. Daly (2016), Hatley (2006) and Maclaren (2006) all argue that a Merleau-Pontian approach to ethics is to some degree "compatible" with virtue ethics.

However, whereas the virtue ethicist holds an internalist stance, for Merleau-Ponty "[o]therness is internal to the subject and it is this *insight* which drives the ethical motivation from a fresh starting point with each encounter" (Daly 2016, 9). Our mutual, living embodiment imputes upon us a susceptibility. Anya Daly argues that Merleau-Ponty's notion of reversibility can be applied to affect, whereby affective reversibility "renders us susceptible to another's gaze, to their voice, to their touch" and "establishes a basis of responsiveness and receptivity to others" (Daly 2014, 20). In the previous chapter I outlined the way in which subjectivity, or a sense of self, for Merleau-Ponty, relies on alterity. Butler describes how something resembling an ethical relationship emerges from this paradoxical process of subject formation, because I am "susceptible in ways that are radically involuntary" and am affected "by a world in which humans, institutions, and organic and inorganic processes all impress them selves upon

this me" (Butler 2015, 6-7). She credits Merleau-Ponty for recognising this relation to a field of alterity that is prior to the emergence of sense, and she argues that this relationality is "ethical" because I am obliged to respond to it. This susceptibility is "not the same as subjugation," but can be exploited, and it is this "condition of the possibility of my exploitation [that] presupposes that I am a being in need of support" (Butler 2015, 7), and thus that embodied others equally require support. An ethics articulated on the basis of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy thus diverges from virtue ethics, because virtue ethics is unable to capture this "primordial level of ethical susceptibility" (Daly, 2016, 9).

In both Hatley's introduction to the edited collection *Interrogating Ethics: Embodying the Good in Merleau-Ponty*, and in Maclaren's offering on Merleau-Pontian ethics, this divergence is further emphasised, and both authors see elements in his philosophy that seem more closely to link up with the Kantian principle of respecting the autonomy of the other and an imperative to answer to something beyond us. Merlea-Ponty helps us to understand how, through our embodiment we are "implicated in and have a duty to others" (Maclaren 2006, 159). Hatley (2006, 10) has asserted that "...ethics emerges explicitly in the moment where another approaches who expresses herself or himself to me." It is thus on the basis of communication that an ethics emerges. Within a Merleau-Pontian approach we can therefore understand how the 'good' is "articulated socially and politically in a coming into tune with others" (ibid., 23).

The renewed Merleau-Pontian approach that frames this project offers a way to rethink research ethics as emerging from the mutual reciprocity of the embodied

encounter with participants. We can say, then, that the encounter with participants as part of the research process is an ethical encounter in which I, as the researcher am bound to participants through the empathy or felt solidarity which characterises my embodiment. As Maclaren argues, "…knowledge of the right thing to do involves being moved bodily by an imperative we perceive within our particular situation" (Maclaren 2006, 147). To take an example from a particular interaction from my research, when Ida, a woman from the Gambia who had claimed asylum in the UK to protect her daughters from FGM, started to cry whilst talking about how difficult her life was in the UK, my reaction was to respond by saying, *"No, it's so brave honestly, it's incredible what you've done for your children, and you can be proud of that."* I felt immediately moved to console and encourage Ida. These sorts of moments are indicative of the ways in which we feel moved "to respond in a complementary way to others' expressions, to take up the position they lay out for us…If they behave sadly, with dejection, then we typically feel an imperative to be consolatory with them and find ourselves looking for the "bright side"" (Maclaren 2006, 153). It is clear that reacting 'well' in these sorts of situations is less to do with reflecting on, and then applying a principle, than it is cultivating good habits, which allow us to improvise in the course of a given embodied encounter.

2.2 Articulating an Ethics of Listening to Others

The previous chapter articulated a lived metaphysics and an epistemology of expression that can be found in the work of Merleau-Ponty, which imputes value on our linguistic articulations of experience, whilst acknowledging them as creative sublimations of carnal life. But also within Merleau-Ponty's philosophy

are the bones of an ethics that, when fleshed out, suggest a *responsibility* to listen to and respond to others that has its roots in our embodiment.

The mutual reciprocity inherent to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy "is about acknowledging the other and responding to this other as another self or person" (Hass 2008, 117). As well as summoning us to compassion for the others with who we are entwined (Mazis, 2016, 162), Merleau-Ponty also finds within our embodiment an imperative to listen to the expressions of others. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty articulates this himself when he says that I have an "obligation to understand situations other than my own and to create a path between my life and that of others" (S 75) because the other gets her life from me, just as I get mine from her (ibid.). Because I am implicated in the other, and the other in me, it is in the reciprocity of dialogue that "the other frees me to be myself, just as I likewise free the other to be him or herself" (Madison 1999, 180).

His vision of ethics is thus communicative, as well as embodied, and involves mutual recognition (Crossley 1993; Low 2012). The call to expression directed towards the other is a "recognition" of the other (Busch 1999, 172). However, as Butler argues, "The norms by which I seek to make myself recognizable are not fully mine…I live a vector of temporalities" (Butler 2005, 35) and recognisability is mediated through a temporal vector of social and historical norms and bodies are differentially situated, between unintelligibility and recognisability, according to these norms (Butler 2009). Refugees and asylum seekers, as many commentators have established, have often been excluded from the scene of recognition, which is why many academics have sought to redress this in

engaging substantively with the stories and narratives of refugees in their research. Any lauding of narrative methods as the savior of oppressed groups and as a way of extracting 'pure' experience and authentic knowledge must be critically appraised, as the previous chapter has established. However, this admission does not preclude an acknowledgment of the mutual recognition that we owe to others and the ethic of listening to others that is implicit to our embodied relationality. It is in this sense that we can argue - particularly with regards to communities and individuals that have been denied recognition – that we have something resembling a responsibility to promote this mutual recognition through our research. Listening to the narratives of refugees and remaining faithful to their complexity seems to be one good way of achieving this.

As well as asserting that we *can* listen to others, an approach influenced by Merleau-Ponty's philosophy therefore also begins to suggest that we *should* listen to others. In this sense, the position taken in this thesis converges with the work of Bassel and others, who have advocated for an ethical and political listening but who concede that outcomes of this process are only ever fragile and uncertain (Bassel 2017, 8; Bickford 1996). As Bassel argues, "Listening with humility and ethical care can provide a resource to understand the contemporary world while pointing to the possibility of a different kind of future" (Bassel 2017, 4). What Merleau-Ponty provides is a philosophy that is able to sustain and complement this position.

2.3 Research Ethics Going Forwards

Although a Merleau-Ponty inspired approach to ethics is thus less concerned about asserting principles than "the cultivation of a quality of attentiveness to and affirmation of the other" (Hatley 2006, 24), this does not preclude an acknowledgment of the fact that principles may be "essential to sustaining this attentiveness" (ibid.). However, as Hatley insists, they cannot be substituted for it and, furthermore, whatever principles are arrived at, they do not have the certainty of mathematical principles but "the urgency and palpability of a *lived* involvement in others" (ibid.).

In his reading of Merleau-Ponty, Low maintains that through communication and exchange we *can* move towards common ethical principles that are nonfoundational, and which remain open and contingent (Low 2012; See also Daly 2014). Whether or not the contingent principles that could emerge from this foregrounding of attentiveness and affirmation of the other would converge with those set out by the dominant research ethics practices of universities is far beyond the scope of this discussion. Indeed the possibilities for extending this conversation and interrogating more closely the implications of this reframing of ethics for research with people, and particularly refugees, is vast. I have barely begun to tease out its potential implications in this section. However, for now it must suffice to say that the work of those scholars who have articulated an ethics based on Merleau-Ponty's philosophy allows us to consider what "embodying the good" in research ethics might look like in a way that fruitfully expands the discussion beyond dominant research ethics standards. Furthermore, it provides fertile ground for debate on this topic in the future.

Engaging with a Merleau-Pontian approach to ethics expands, at the same time as interrogating, the prevailing approach to research ethics. This is a vision of research ethics that values practical wisdom, along with the idea that 'getting better' comes with practice, learning and adaptation (Macfarlane 2010) and through developing habits of responding well in a particular situation (Maclaren 2006). Rather than uncritically accepting the established standards – which I have arguably been somewhat guilty of during this project - I therefore hope to learn from the interactions of this project in a way that informs my future comportment as a researcher. It is also a vision of ethics that suggests an imperative to respond to the other's meanings and to acknowledge "the openness of my surrounding world to an infinity of other possible determinations" (Marratto 2012, 199). This 'ethics of listening to others' has the potential to reinvigorate the discussion on the ethical value of narrative methods, along with other methods that open us to perspectives other than our own.

3. 'Samplings and Probings': Analysing journey narratives

Merleau-Ponty, unlike other phenomenological approaches, and indeed unlike the phenomenological method in social science that has been established in relation to these approaches, rejects the idea of bracketing and insists that we must understand that the philosopher or social scientist can never detach herself from her *being-in-the-world*. It is a vision that privileges the body's situatedness and perspectivity in research. Indeed, the whole thesis can be read as the negotiated product of my 'own', yet always simultaneously relational, bodily

horizon and as the outcome of a complex, and not always traceable negotiation with the myriad encounters that make up the sedimented history of my lived body. The analysis of participants' narratives, which are themselves simultaneously obscuring/disclosing, and the creative cutting and pasting of participants' narrative fragments in the construction of a new narrative in the form of a thesis chapter is a further reinterpretation that brings in the "whole perceptible world" of the researcher. What results is just one way of organising and illuminating the experiences of the participants in this project, which could have been taken up and elucidated in many other ways. How it is engaged with and interpreted by the reader is equally a product of her own bodily horizon.

However to take from Merleau-Ponty, this does not preclude the emergence of shared meanings that emerge not from reaching the same idea by the same road, but because every experience contains "points of catch" for all others (PW 143). The "introspections and speculations" that make up the analysis of these narratives are always open and contingent, and should be read as such. However, it is my hope that through the following chapters readers will gain a meaningful insight into some of the complex and diverse roads to asylum in the UK. I hope to provide a coherent but contingent account of some of the patterns and dissonances of these journeys. Searching for common themes is not futile. Indeed, there are notes of accord that resonate through the experiences of many participants in this research. However, this should not obscure the dissonances, the diversity which does not lend itself to the reduction of information into patterns of consensus.

In describing the methodological resources of phenomenology, and taking particular inspiration from Merleau-Ponty, Coole (2000, 148) argues that whilst the social world is "inscribed with negativities", with ambiguity and contingency, this does not mean that it is "devoid of meaning" nor, therefore exempt from interpretation. So whilst interpretative analyses cannot claim to provide a pure translation of an objective, universal condition, it is equally not "a gratuitous imposition of meaning" and that "the invisible threads and traces of the real…support positive, albeit equivocal and provisional forms." However, the real and its interpretation must be continuously reassessed (ibid.,148-9). What can be taken from this in the development of a research project is that lived orientations and negations can be articulated in the form of interpretative analysis or theories, but that this analysis must: "articulate events in a way that theory resonates with the lived sense of those whose everyday acts make history" (ibid., 148); it must incorporate critique and evaluation of the (co)existential dimensions that give style to the social field; and it must itself be seen as provisional, contingent, partial and, importantly, open to reassessment. In line with his broader philosophy, Merleau-Ponty therefore declared himself to favour "samplings, probings, philosophical anecdotes, the beginnings of analyses, in short, the continual rumination which goes on in the course of reading, personal meetings, and current events" (AD 3), and it is a similar style of contingent analysis that is offered in this thesis.

As Coole argues, "The more perspectives are integrated in a structured yet open unity, the richer the opportunities for negotiating coexistence" (Coole 2000, 144). It is through the hazardous and intersubjective bringing together of

perspectives that a lived rationality can be forged, which "proceeds through communication, questioning and self-critique" (ibid., 148). This project has therefore aimed to listen to and learn from the perspectives of others, bringing together and interpreting these perspectives and identifying unifying elements whilst being faithful to the complexity that this integrating of diverse perspectives brings.

3.1 The Analysis Process

Long before any formal 'analysis' took place, I documented intuitive points of interest and glimmers of consensus and of dissonance in my fieldwork notes on an almost daily basis, and certainly after every interview. Of course, although seemingly 'intuitive', these informal analyses are laden with the baggage of my sedimented, embodied history, replete with encounters with books, theories, people and expectations. One of the things that struck me from early on in the fieldwork process was the diversity of stories that emerged through the interviews. I had entered this project with my own preconceptions about what kinds of journeys refugees were likely to have taken, fueled by media coverage of 'migrants' being rescued, or drowning, whilst crossing the Mediterranean in old, unseaworthy boats. I also had my own ideas as to what I wanted to encapsulate through a project about "refugee journeys", which I equated with periods of long and arduous irregular travel. However once I started asking people to talk about their journeys to the UK, I realised two key things: i) although many participants did describe perilous travel across seas, forests and deserts, an important number of people had quite different travel experiences, and; ii) despite trying to remain open to complexity and ambiguity of meaning, I had brought implicit

assumptions to the project that in some ways reinforced biases of linearity and sedentarism. However instead of understanding migration as A to B, with no thought given to the "inbetween", I assumed that the "journey" more-or-less encompassed this "inbetween". In my research interviews, I asked participants to tell me about their journey to the UK, "in as much detail as possible, from leaving "home" to arriving in the UK." Implicit in this question are assumptions about the singularity of "the journey into exile," about the contours of this "journey" and when I thought it should begin and end. Of course there is an accepted ambiguity in the notion of "home," which I was aware of when wording the question. But the ambiguity of the concept of a "journey" itself was something that I only really appreciated once I started speaking to participants. This acknowledgment was part of the iterative analysis process that took place on an ongoing basis as the interviews were being carried out.

Instead of only seeking out those from nationalities likely to have undertaken long and arduous journeys, or screening potential participants in advance to make sure they fit with my pre-conceived biases about what refugee journeys looked like, I took the decision to remain flexible and see where a more open approach would lead. This ultimately proved to be much more fruitful in exposing the breadth of different trajectories taken by asylum seekers and refugees in the UK, as will be elucidated in the coming chapters.

During the transcription of interviews, I noted down any interesting observations, or things that I thought resonated with theories or literature I had read. This formed the basis of a preliminary set of themes that I would explore

further in a more detailed analysis. These themes were produced as part of an iterative, relational process between theory and narrative. Many of the elements of interest resonated with theories that I was already aware of; indeed it is likely that my awareness of these theories is what drew me to these elements in the first place. However some elements of the narratives that I was drawn to could not be as easily linked up with literature that I was familiar with, and elicited a renewed foray into theory and literature to consider how they might best be interpreted. The approach I took was thus neither theory-driven nor completely data-driven, but can be best described as an iterative intertwining of the narratives collected, the theory I had engaged with in the development of this project and my broader intellectual history. Based on all of this, and with reference to the research questions set out at the beginning of the project, three main foci for the thematic analysis were established:

1) Dynamics of participants' journeys
2) Encounters with the spaces, bodies and landscapes of refugee travel
3) Memory and meaning/sense-making

Underlying these three points of interest were the core notions of embodiment and mobility.

After completing the transcription process, I then developed a spreadsheet where I allocated a pseudonym to each participant and detailed some basic demographic information about each participant (Appendix IV), along with information about the following: (i) length/speed of journey; (ii) modes of travel; (iii) means of travel: i.e. regular/irregular, (iv) route taken and; (v) flight from danger/refugee *sur place*. I then colour-coded the spreadsheet according to the

dynamics of each participant's journey, distinguishing those who travelled more-or-less directly from those who had undertaken longer, more fragmented journeys, and those who had travelled using regular means from those who had used irregular means and those who had used a mixture of both. This process informed part of the overview of participants' "roads to asylum" offered in Chapter IV, and was inspired in part by the surprising diversity of trajectories that had become clear early on in the fieldwork process, and which I wanted to do justice to in the write-up.

I then used NVivo software to collate the interviews and used the preliminary themes that I had developed during the transcription process to establish a flexible coding framework, which was adapted and added to throughout the process. I went through each interview transcript attaching codes to those words and phrases that I thought resonated with the themes I had developed, and adding new themes as they emerged during this more focused read-through of the interviews. As stated above, the analysis process was iterative and complex, not easily reduced to a polished analytical framework. However, for the sake of clarity, the below table presents each analytical focus, along with the main themes incorporated within that area of focus, and also examples of coding nodes used which correspond to the themes.

Table I: Analytical framing

Analytical Focus	**Main Themes**	**Examples of coding nodes**
Dynamics of travel	Fragmentation of journeys; Modes of travel; Mobile processes and "textured rhythms" of asylum travel	*dwelling, waiting, immobility, difficult travel, back-and-forths*
Embodied encounters	Encounters with other bodies; Encounters with landscapes and spaces of travel; Differing bodies, differing experiences	*visceral responses, hostile encounters, encounters with kindness, gendered experiences, racialised experiences, discomfort and unease, hiding (non-encounters)*
Memory and meaning	Processes of remembering; Processes of forgetting; Recollection and making sense of the past from the perspective of the present	*trying to forget, memorialisation, bodily memories, luck, God*

The narrative material I have collected, and the description and interpretation of experiences found therein, has been interpreted and abstracted in a way that speaks to the broader literature on mobilities and migration journeys, but in a way that also remains embedded within the lived experiences of participants. The narratives created through the field research recount a bewildering diversity of experiences, only some of which are highlighted in the particular collage of narrative fragments and corresponding interpretation that is offered in this thesis. Taking inspiration from John Wylie, the chapters that follow present something like a "mosaic of moods, incidents, introspections,

speculations about landscapes and bodies" (Wylie 2005, 237) during refugees' journeys. It has been written following a process of creative analysis inspired by a broad engagement with social and geographical theory, philosophy, and literature and research on migration and refugees that was undertaken not just in the year preceding the field research, but during both my masters degree in Refugee and Forced Migration studies, my undergraduate degree in Geography and in-between times.

3.2 A final note on the chaos of research

In his *Homage to Merleau-Ponty*, Paul Ricoeur (2009, 8) recounts the opening words of Merleau-Ponty's 1953 inaugural lecture at the College de France:

> *The man who witnesses his own research, which is to say, his own internal disorder, can hardly feel himself to be the heir of the accomplished men whose names he sees on these walls. If, in addition, he is a philosopher, which is to say that he knows nothing, how could he believe himself justified to assume this chair, and how could he even wish it? Is he able to desire this? The answer to these questions is very simple: What the College de France, since its founding, is charged with providing to its audience are not acquired truths, but rather the idea of free investigation.*

This "internal disorder" has haunted me throughout this project and it would be misleading not to acknowledge it.

There is clearly a certain fiction to creating a linear, purposeful narrative and chronology in the final write-up of a project that is almost inevitably nonlinear, fragmented and, at times, chaotic. It has been argued elsewhere in this thesis that

memory and meaning are 'produced' through the through the process of narration. Similarly, it is in the act of writing, in my embodied encounter with the blank page, that ideas take form. These ideas may emerge in the form of bullet points, disparate paragraphs or sets of notes, before being woven together in a narrative form that is then worked and reworked until at some point it (hopefully) resembles a coherent piece of work. This project has developed in just this kind of fragmented, belated and non-linear fashion. I want to make this explicit before continuing with the rest of the thesis because of the tendency to privilege the linear and orderly in the final collation and editing of academic work. I think it is important to raise this point, especially since this fallacy of orderliness is so pervasive in a lot of research that it can make new researchers - and more established scholars, if the words of Merleau-Ponty are anything to go by - feel inadequate when the development of their own work seems so much more chaotic. That said, I don't think that the development of a coherent and accessible piece of work is simply an exercise in academic deception the antidote to which is to write in a fragmented, incoherent and nonlinear manner. There is value to being honest about the messiness of research, but there is equally value in striving to create work that is coherent, accessible, and meaningful to others.

The following three chapters and conclusions are thus the culmination of this process.

Chapter IV: The Diverse Roads to Asylum in the UK

This chapter opens the discussion of the narratives collected through the fieldwork process. It travels through the many diverse routes that participants took to claim asylum in the UK, exploring the dynamics of these different journeys. After offering a broad overview of participants' trajectories, the chapter will then offer a lengthy discussion of the dynamics of those journeys corresponding to the much espoused 'odyssey' trope that has become synonymous with the 2015 'Refugee Crisis', where journeys are characterised by their length and difficulty. Borrowing concepts from the mobilities approach, it will engage with some of the aspects of these journeys that are overlooked or require nuance in the existing literature. Following this, an exploration of those quieter routes to claiming asylum in the UK will be offered.

Chapter I provided a sketch of some of the key elements of the vast and complicated UK and EU migration policy landscape in which both the experiences of participants and their narrative articulations are situated. This overview is by no means exhaustive, but serves to productively 'set the scene' for the discussion that follows. The mobilities studies literature has been assertive in reminding us that mobility regimes are deeply stratified, especially as new places and technologies "enhance the mobility of some peoples and places *even as they also* heighten the immobility of others, especially as people try to cross borders" (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006, 3). According to mobilities scholars, motility, or potential for mobility, is now "a crucial dimension of unequal power

relations" (ibid.). And the overview of policy and politics offered in Chapter I highlights some of the ways in which such regimes attempt to heighten the immobility of asylum seekers. However, there is a tendency, especially in the literature focused on the politics and regimes governing mobility, to consider refugees or asylum seekers collectively, as the target of these regimes and as excluded from regular travel. And to an extent this is justified. But what is masked behind this label is an enormous diversity of people who experience the systems governing their movement in differential ways. The following discussion prizes open this category and offer a glimpse of these vastly differing experiences of refugee travel to the UK.

The project engaged with participants from a wide range of nationalities, from countries with high numbers of refugees and high acceptance rates in Europe, like Syria, Eritrea, Iran and Sudan, to countries with much lower acceptance rates, like Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and The Gambia, and countries with low numbers of applications and low acceptance rates, like Zimbabwe and Tunisia. Some participants had arrived in the UK only weeks prior to the narrative interview, whilst others had been here for many years. It is perhaps unsurprising given the wide range of participants, but it was the sheer diversity of trajectories that was most striking feature of the research interviews.

Just over half of participants took journeys lasting more than three months from the time they left home and arrived in the UK. All of those who undertook these long journeys narrated experiences of danger and hardship faced *en route* and travelled by irregular means for at least some parts of their journeys. The vast

majority of those participants who undertook these 'odysseys' were male. Of those who were women, three were from Eritrea, and one from Syria. This imbalance is reflected in the statistics, as throughout 2015, around the same time that the research interviews were taking place, only 19 per cent of sea arrivals to Europe were women.[23] If we compare this with the 30 per cent of applications for asylum in the UK submitted by women in 2014 and 2015, a gap emerges that requires scrutiny. Indeed, of the participants in this study, it was much more common for women to have travelled relatively directly to the UK, with physical journeys lasting a matter of days. Of the 16 participants whose journeys to the UK lasted less than a week, 10 of those were women.

The length of journeys to the UK also seemed to be stratified by country of origin. Of the nine Syrian participants that took part in the project, only one spent less than three months between leaving Syria and arriving in the UK. Similarly, none of the six Eritrean participants spent less than three months between leaving Eritrea and arriving in the UK. Out of six Sudanese participants, five spent a minimum of six months between departure and arrival, and only one, who also happened to be the only women, took a relatively shorter journey lasting three weeks. All but three of the 21 participants whose journeys lasted more than three months were from either Syria, Sudan or Eritrea. 17 out of that 21 arrived to Europe by sea with, perhaps unsurprisingly, all Sudanese and Eritrean participants crossing from Libya to Italy, and all Syrians crossing from Turkey to Greece. Conversely, many of the participants from other parts of

[23] See UNHCR (2016) "Mediterranean Sea Arrivals - 2015 Data - by Location, Country of Arrival, Demographic and Country of Origin."

Africa, including Nigeria, The Gambia and DRC, had much shorter journeys to the UK, often travelling directly or from a neighbouring country.

This attempt to provide an overview of participants' trajectories does not serve as a basis to make claims about the wider patterns of refugee travel to the UK. This research was carried out in a specific locale, connecting with a small number of participants through charity and community projects and referrals without any intention of collecting a 'representative sample.' However what can be asserted with some degree of conviction is that the intense scrutiny surrounding the large-scale arrivals of refugees and migrants at the external borders of Europe, along with the tendency to locate research on journeys and transit in specifically designated 'transit locations,' occludes the quieter trajectories of refugees, and particularly women, who have travelled by different means and traversed different routes to the UK. It is to these diverse journeys, both loud and quiet, that the discussion will now turn.

1. The Mobility Dynamics of 'Odysseys'

The experiences of those participants whose journeys lasted longer than three months and who traversed a number of countries have been brought together in this section. However, although some similarities can be gleaned from the experiences narrated by these participants, attempts to subsume them under one label do not do justice to the broad diversity of stories and trajectories expressed during the narrative interviews. Although these journeys did tend to coalesce at particular junctures, for example the Calais *jungle*, or the boat crossing from Libya to Italy (for Eritrean and Sudanese participants) or Turkey

to Greece (for Syrian and Iranian participants), routes and experiences along these routes differed significantly amongst participants. This section will thus try to sketch out some of the "textured rhythms" (Sheller 2011, 3) of these routes to asylum in the UK, and the "friction, turbulence, immobility, dwelling, pauses and stillness" that accompany the speed and flow of travel (ibid.). However, the embodied experiences of these journeys are explored in much greater detail in the chapter that follows this one.

This section will be structured around the narrative of one participant, Yusuf, from Syria, but will be interspersed with insight from many other participants' narratives. Yusuf's journey has been chosen for this role because it encompasses many dynamics that are shared by other participants and therefore provides a good framing for the discussion. Before leaving Syria, Yusuf was a student at the University of Damascus. He left Damascus in 2012 after being expelled from university for his participation in the anti-government protests that preceded the Syrian civil war, and moved to Lebanon to continue his studies at the University of Beirut. However, after a year and a half, and before completing his course, Yusuf was forced to give up his studies because the devaluation of the Syrian pound meant that he could no longer afford to pay for his accommodation in Beirut. Following this, Yusuf started working, *"just to survive"*. During this time, he described encountering racism and poor treatment from Lebanese people, including being exploited in low paid jobs. It was the difficult living situation in Lebanon, as well as a sense of risk about still being within reaching distance of the Syrian regime, that made Yusuf decide to move on. From Beirut, he travelled to Brazil by plane, using his own passport and a valid visa. His

grandparents on his mother's side were living in Brazil, however he told me that it was never his intention to settle there, and that the reason he had travelled there was to meet a lawyer there who had promised to find him a way to get to the UK. As it turned out, the lawyer had been lying, and was just trying to get money from him. He left Brazil and travelled to Istanbul by plane, from where he hoped to find a way to travel to the UK.

1.1 Modes of Travel in the Borderlands

As Yusuf's narrative demonstrates, not all travel undertaken by participants who had longer journeys was irregular. Very occasionally participants were able to travel regularly, using their own travel documents, for at least a small part of their journey. Yusuf was able to travel to and from Brazil using his own passport and a valid visa. Hussain, from Syria, also had a long and eventful journey lasting over ten months, which took him from Syria to Lebanon, from Lebanon to Turkey, then from Turkey to Italy where he was caught by border officials after travelling by plane using an Algerian passport. After being apprehended for two days he was deported back to Turkey, and eventually travelled by boat to Greece, before moving onwards to Italy, then France, then Sweden via Belgium, Germany and Denmark, before flying from Sweden to the UK. Nearly all of this journey was undertaken using irregular means, by using stolen passports or I.D. cards, or by using modes of travel characteristic of irregular travel. However, both his voyages from Syria to Lebanon, and from Lebanon to Turkey, were carried out using regular means, that is, Hussain travelled using his own, valid Syrian passport. This was possible because, prior to 2016, Syrians were still able to travel without a visa to Turkey, before visa requirements were introduced at the

beginning of 2016.[24] Similarly, prior to 2015 (Hussain left Syria in the summer of 2014), Syrians from areas bordering Lebanon were still allowed to cross legally into Lebanon.[25] Sadly, both of these routes of regular travel have been substantially diminished since this time.

Other participants, with the aid of smugglers who provided them, for a hefty fee, with stolen or fake passports, were able to travel by plane for part of their journey, albeit irregularly. Most of the participants who were able to fly as part of these longer journeys were Syrian, though not exclusively so. One participant, Mariam, from Eritrea, after waiting for three months in Sudan, was able to travel directly to France by plane using a fake passport. She described her journey as follows:

"Yeah, okay me, thanks God, I will come from back home to here by safety, travel by plane. So, from Eritrea to Sudan, yeah I travel some by foot, some by car, you know. So I know it is very hard, you know, you scared, it is very dark place…we hide from…when we walk you go by silence, so you scared because maybe the police come to catch you something like that, so, every time you very afraid. And some day you went by car. It's three days from back home to Khartoum. I spend three days, and then Sudan three months to finish my process. Here, I came here through my agency, I pay money for my agency, and he used another name of my passport, you he take my picture…I came like that, the process, I came here like that […] Then I came to France. The agent he is with me, you know. When I…on the check time, the

[24] See Hürriyet (2016) "Turkey's new visa law for Syrians enters into force."
[25] Since the beginning of 2015, Lebanon's General Security Office has implemented a new set of entry requirements for Syrian nationals, making it much more difficult for Syrians to cross the border regularly (Janmyr 2016)

passport, I show to them, and he took from me the passport, and I went with them. From France, and we are coming by train to that jungle place"

(Mariam, Eritrea).

This way, Mariam was able to bypass some of the most difficult routes and travel with considerably less friction and turbulence than experienced by her fellow nationals. However, the restrictive policy landscape outlined in Chapter I of this thesis reroutes many refugees' journeys into a whole manner of cracks and crevices, with often lengthy and dangerous detours springing up in response to these restrictions. Indeed, Yusuf only travelled to Brazil because it was not possible for him to travel directly to the UK, and because he hoped that this detour, which was vast in terms of the miles travelled, would ultimately allow him to find a quicker and safer route to the UK.

However, much more often modes of travel specific to irregular journeys are used in attempts to circumvent the restrictions and exclusionary barriers erected for the purpose of stunting refugees' mobilities. Yusuf travelled to Izmir upon his arrival to Turkey. From there he travelled to a Greek island using one of the dinghies that have become synonymous with Syrian sea journeys in the context of the 'Refugee Crisis.' The narratives of a number of other participants made reference to these inflatable boats in describing their sea crossings from Turkey to Greece, or the rickety old fishing boats using in the crossing from Libya to Italy. These are modes of transport that have been co-opted to be used exclusively by those travelling irregularly for these crossings. They are also are some of the most highly visible, especially because of the danger and loss of life

that are associated with them. However participants also described often travelling using vans and cars, which were usually the property of smugglers. Again, this mode of private transport was shared exclusively with others travelling irregularly. These vehicles sometimes used the same roads and infrastructure as those travelling regularly, and at other times they carved out their own paths, out of view of those trying to police their movement. Yusuf travelled from the west coast of Turkey to Greece by boat, before crossing the border from Greece to Albania on foot. After narrowly escaping the police whilst trying to reach the point from which the boat would depart form the coast of Turkey, he describes being picked up by smugglers:

"He came with small van, the car, was even smaller than a small van, and we were 25, with the kids, and the women, and he came quickly, and we all filled, er… the back of the van, one over each other [Laughs]. It's just like the packed food. I stayed next to the agent, was driving. He was driving through the jungle and there wasn't any road or street there, and he used to go quickly, and even the car being smashed, or scratched…"

(Yusuf, Syria)(I).

However, alongside these modes of travel specifically set up to facilitate irregular movements, participants' narratives also described a variety of existing modes of transport and established travel networks that were adopted for use by those travelling irregularly. Many participants at times also used modes of regular travel, shared by other passengers, albeit often with an enduring fear of detection not shared by their fellow passengers. Upon arrival to Greece, Yusuf was taken to an area *"like a camp"* by the Greek police, where he was given a six-

month temporary residence permit. He was then able to travel regularly by ship to Athens, alongside the other Syrians who he had travelled from Turkey with, as well as locals and tourists who were making the same journey. After arriving in Athens, Yusuf said that he was advised by others to take a flight for the next part of his journey, because he *"looked European"* and could pass with a fake passport. However, he chose to take the land route via Albania because on the way he met a man with a thirteen year-old son who asked him to accompany him on this route and help look after his son. After spending a short while in Athens he described taking a local public bus to a town nearer the Albanian border. From there, he took another bus to travel to a village by the border, which he described as follows:

"When we left from Athens to this village, the bus took us to a village […] you need to take a bus from this village to get to the border. And if you need to take a bus there to reach the border, they won't give you a ticket if they felt like, from your accent or from your look, you are a refugee, you could be a refugee. So, we used to use guys who looked more similar to European people, and who can talk English, so they can get us a ticket."

In this village, he met an agent who agreed to help them cross the border. They travelled on foot for hours at a time, *"across mountains, up and down,"* stopping only at the orders of the agent. After a couple of days, they arrived at an old church that was known as a sort of *"station for refugees."* They stayed in the church for a number of hours, before being told to travel on foot to the road where they would be picked up. He described this as follows:

"The church was up on a small mountain there, we took, walk, like 30 minutes down the valley, it was a hard way, difficult walk. We couldn't walk, we just were, like, slipping on the rocks…30 minutes this way, and many are injured and suffered pain on the back, until we reached the cars."

He was then crammed into the back of a van with other travellers, and driven for 30 minutes before the van broke down and they were instructed to get out and go back into the hills to hide. They were there for another two days during which time they ran out of food and water. After two days, the driver returned and they were crammed once again into the van, travelling for ten hours before reaching the border with Montenegro. They were instructed to hide in a cave, and were sold food, water and cigarettes by the agents. After a brush-in with the Montenegrin border police after crossing the border, he travelled across Montenegro using taxis organised by the agents, before again trekking for eight hours across the mountainous terrain of the Serbia-Montenegro border on foot. Descriptions of arduous journeys on foot via little-chartered routes and across difficult terrain also peppered the narratives of other participants. In particular, land borders were often traversed on foot to avoid detection by border patrols. For Eritrean participants, the journey out of Eritrea was also done in part or entirely on foot:

"Well, getting out of my country, you have to go illegally. So travelling, you don't do it, you don't go by car, you have to travel by foot. And on the way, there are so many traps. If the government caught you, you are going to be in big trouble, so someone has to help you how to get out of your country. So usually, someone from family, or someone who has...they just ask someone that has done it before, and

then they just tell you, you can go this way, or this way […] But it's a matter of luck, some people get caught, some people are passing by chance. So, it's not, at that part, it's very sunny, and it's very difficult […] It's very hot, and you can't carry a lot of water with you, because it's going to be very heavy, and you have to travel a long way"

(Tesfay, Eritrea).

In Eritrea, there are severe restrictions placed on the right to leave the country, and there is a prohibition against those aged between 5 and 50 travelling abroad. Those caught trying to leave are subject to arbitrary detention, and there is a "shoot-to-kill" policy for those attempting to cross the border into Ethiopia.[26] It is for this reason that those trying to cross the border must do so via unofficial border crossings, travelling on foot to avoid detection by the authorities. All but one of the participants travelled to Sudan, rather than Ethiopia, possibly in response to this "shoot-to-kill" policy making it even more dangerous to travel to Ethiopia. Many forms of irregular travel therefore traverse difficult terrain, and occupy spaces and routes that either run parallel to, or otherwise provide detours around regular routes and modes of travel that are often unavailable to travelling refugees.

After arriving in Montenegro, Yusuf travelled using taxis arranged by agents, managing to cross the border to Hungary in a taxi, without being stopped by the border control. From there, he travelled by car directly to Vienna, Austria, benefitting from the lack of border controls between Hungary and Austria under the Schengen regime. He then travelled by train from Vienna to Milan, from

[26] For more information, see Amnesty International (2018) "Eritrea 2017/2018."

Milan to Ventimiglia, and from Ventimiglia to Nice, in France. Train travel within the EU was also a common mode of transport for participants, particularly for those travelling between Italy and France. However, despite the commitment to freedom of movement between EU states according to the Schengen Convention, border controls specifically targeting irregular movement on one of the main train routes between Ventimiglia in Italy and France were commonly discussed amongst participants who travelled via this route. Participants were thus required to find ways to remain undetected in order to make use of this mode of transport.

After spending the night in Nice, Yusuf travelled to Paris, where he stayed for a few days before continuing to Calais. In Calais, Yusuf was injured when attempting to scale a fence, and was forced to return to Paris while he recovered. Attempts to co-opt modes of regular travel can be equally as dangerous as the irregular modes of travel described above. For example, jumping into the back of lorries, which sometimes turned out to be refrigerated, or else clinging onto the axle on the underside of the lorry was the most common way that refugees who took these longer journeys arrived in the UK from France. These practices of hiding are necessary given the policy environment outlined in Chapter I which has seen the UK border extend its grasp onto French territory by way of juxtaposed controls. After his failed attempt in Calais, Yusuf travelled to Brussels, where he met an agent who took him to a spot somewhere in the Netherlands. From there he began attempting to cross into the UK by hiding in the back of lorries that were hopefully headed across the Channel. After eight days, he succeeded.

Embodied experiences of irregular movement in both these spaces and modes of regular travel, as well as the spaces and modes of irregular travel, are explored in much more detail in Chapter V. However these travel events, that can be faster or slower depending on the form they take, cannot be understood without reference to the periods of waiting that accompany them. Physical travel, even by these sometimes relatively slower modes of transport, and the diverted routes they must take, often takes a matter of hours or days. What accompanies these shorter bursts of travel is often prolonged periods of waiting and relative immobility, which extends journeys through time.

1.2 Waiting, Immobility and the Stop-start Dynamics of Irregular Travel

Waiting, during these long journeys, is one of the most commonly occurring themes across the narratives. It took many forms and occurred in many contexts. As other commentators have observed, irregular journeys often take the form of extended periods of waiting or settlement punctuated by short bursts of mobility (Mainwaring and Brigden 2016). For the participants in this study, this waiting lasted days, weeks, or even months. Waiting at the whim of smugglers responsible for organising travel was also common amongst participants. Ayoub, from Syria, describes a queue of people waiting their turn to get a place on a boat from Izmir, western Turkey, to the Greek Islands. This queue can be jumped, but only if you have the money to pay off the smugglers:

"Yes in house, with other people just want to go, many many people there in Turkey, just waiting their turn to go. Because he cannot send you the next day, there is people before me to go there"

(Ayoub, Syria).

I asked Ayoub if there was a sort of waiting list or queue system, to which he replied:

"Yeah a waiting list yeah, when your name…some people pay more and they can go […] I said I can wait, it's okay no problem. He said, he asked me, he offered me if you want to go quickly you can pay more, I said I don't have enough I just have this specific amount."

Yusuf also describes waiting in a hotel in Izmir for 20 days before it was his turn to attempt the crossing to Greece. These periods of waiting also interact with changes in the policy environment. Khalid, a Palestinian refugee who was born, raised and displaced from Syria, describes how a shift in policy by the Turkish authorities meant he was 'stuck' in Mersin for three months, unable to find a way to get to Italy:

"When I arrived to Mersin, the first day I sleep in hotel, but after that, I contact with my relative in Mersin. I met them, and my relative he told me, "We planning to travel to Italy, through the boat, you want to come with us?" I stayed there in Mersin nearly 3 months, and we stayed in the hotels where there is the agent people there to help us. After that, at this time, they make…control all the port. At that time, 3 months, they close everything. I paid for the agent, $5,000, and after that when I asked him to return the money, he told me at the moment, I don't have money to return for you, already I spend it"

(Khalid, Syria – Palestinian)(I).

After losing this money to the smugglers, his mother had to resend him more money before he could attempt to leave Turkey again. Waiting for relatives or friends to gather money to send to them was also another facet of this key feature of irregular journeys. Masoud, from Iran, was caught trying to board a ferry by hiding under a lorry in Greece. He was arrested and by the time he was release, he couldn't find the agent who he had given his money to:

"And I didn't have enough money from now to try again, and I couldn't find the agent to take my money back. For 40 days, around 40 days, I was in Athena. Then I got the money again. Then I went to another island, Igoumenitsa"

(Masoud, Iran)(I).

I asked him how he managed to get hold of the money, to which he replied, "*From Iran, my friend sent them. An Iranian friend."*

The notion of waiting can also encompass much briefer episodes of immobility, however. To return to Yusuf's narrative, in amongst the descriptions of travel and modes of transport were tales of waiting, not just in the sense of those longer periods of immobility endemic to fragmented, irregular journeys, but also *within* the context of a particular travel event. The hours and days he spent waiting in the mountains of the border regions of South-Eastern Europe are but one example of this. Both Habte from Eritrea and Hassan from Sudan crossed to Libya by car over the Sahara desert. They described a situation of waiting and extreme immobility whilst waiting for days in the middle of the desert for agents from Libya to pick them up. Habte explained that the six days he spent travelling from this halfway to Libya *"don't even count,"* but it was the 21 days they were

immobilised in the middle of the desert that were the most difficult. The vehicle Hassan was travelling in broke down four days into the journey, and they were left stranded and waiting for several days, not knowing if the agents would be able to find them. This experience of 'waiting' in the Sahara is explored in more detail in the next chapter. Once he arrived in Libya, Habte then spent two months waiting in some sort of warehouse or hangar by the sea in Tripoli along with many others hoping to make the sea crossing. When Habte arrived in Libya it was still winter, and too unsafe to attempt the crossing. He had to wait for two months in very difficult conditions, with nowhere to wash and very little food, until the agents put them on a boat. From there it took 48 hours to arrive in Lampedusa. These stop-start dynamics litter the narratives of these long journeys, demonstrating the fragmentation of mobilities on an even more localised scale.

1.3 Beyond immobility: the ping-pong mobilities of 'stuck' refugees

Kaytaz (2016, 295) discusses the non-linearity of the migration journey of one of her participants, which she describes as having four 'loops' that "started and ended in Iran and encompassed Turkey, Afghanistan, and, on one occasion, Greece." Yusuf's narrative is a clear example of this non-linearity, with his journey diverting him as far as Brazil. However, the narratives of participants in this project reveal these back-and-forth dynamics on an even smaller scale, even in places where asylum seekers would commonly be described as 'stuck,' or rendered immobile. Yusuf spent eight days going back-and-forth attempting to board the back of lorries in the Netherlands, but in other participants' narratives these 'ping-pong' mobilities were even more pronounced.

To take one example, Hashim, from Syria, boarded a lorry in Dunkirk, assuming it would be headed to the UK. After spending several hours hidden in the back of this lorry as it trundled along, not knowing where he was headed, he found himself in a farm somewhere outside of Lille. He then took a taxi and train to return to Dunkirk, only to try again the following day before being found hiding in a lorry by French police. The smuggler then took Hashim to a lorry park in Belgium to try their luck there. Once again, he found himself in a lorry that ended up travelling towards the Netherlands, rather than the UK. The lorry stopped somewhere near the border between the Netherlands and Belgium. From there, he had to take a train back to Brussels, and then onwards once again to Dunkirk to reunite with his smuggler. From Dunkirk they travelled back to Belgium, only to be caught, along with the smugglers, by the Belgian police. They were all arrested, but he was released after a number of hours. After this, he had to search for a new set of smugglers, who then took him to a lorry park somewhere near Paris, from where he attempted to reach the UK many times, most often being caught at the ports.

Finally, he decided to try by himself, without the help of smugglers, from Calais. He clung onto the axle on the underside of a lorry, waiting for four hours before the lorry set off for the port, and he passed the border controls undetected. Upon entering the ferry, he felt a sense of relief, thinking he had made it. After two hours, the vehicles start to disembark, at which point he thought he was in Dover. When the lorry he was hiding beneath reached a control point, he jumped down from the axle and presented himself to the authorities, only to be told that

he was still in France. There was some problem with the ferry, which meant that it couldn't set off and the vehicles were in fact disembarking in order to be transferred to another ferry. The police told him that if he had waited five more minutes, he would have reached the other ferry. At this point in the story, Hashim exclaimed, *"No chance, no chance."* After several more failed attempts, he finally got his chance. This day he decided to jump over the high wall of the port and then hide underneath a lorry. He did so successfully, but a worker on the ferry discovered him as he was fastening the lorries to the floor of the ferry. The worker left to inform management, at which point Hashim slipped away. He found a horsebox carrying ponies and hid himself in a narrow gap behind the ponies. The ferry staff came to look for him, but could not find him, and the ferry set sail with Hashim still hidden amongst the ponies. He attempted a total of 27 times with the aid of smugglers, and then more times on his own, involving a constant ping-ponging, or back-and-forth between these spaces of irregular travel.

Hassan from Sudan recounted a similar story. He spent a total of 39 days in Calais, attempting to travel to the UK by sneaking onto lorries and trying to remain undetected. He found a lorry marked GB, and, hoping it was on its way to the UK, hid on the lorry axle by one of the wheel arches. After a long journey, the lorry stopped and Hassan descended from his hiding place. The driver spotted him, and Hassan explained to him that he was trying to get to the UK. The driver laughed, informing him that they were in Belgium, and that he would have to make his way back to Calais. Hassan also describes the back-and-forth mobilities of everyday life whilst 'stuck' in Calais, going from the jungle to the lorry park,

climbing onto lorries, being discovered by drivers, climbing down, and trying again, and again over the course of the day. Sometimes he managed to get from the lorry park to the immigration control point, only to be sent back again after being discovered. These micro-level back-and-forth dynamics, even during periods that would be more broadly understood to be periods of relative immobility, are scattered across the narratives of many participants, not just in Calais but throughout many points of participants' journeys.

Amena's narrative also has a number of these 'back-and-forths' scattered throughout, interspersed by periods of waiting. Amena was a Kurdish woman from Syria, who was separated from her husband and thus was the sole main source of support for her children. She first left Syria along with her four children, but after encountering difficulties in securing accommodation for her family in Turkey, she returned with her family to Syria and decided to travel without her children and with the aim of bringing them to join her once she had settled in Europe. She again travelled irregularly to Turkey with her sister, crossing the Syria-Turkey border on foot via a tunnel to evade detection. When I met her she had recently received refugee status, and was intending to apply for family reunification. In trying to leave Turkey, she first attempted to cross the land border between Turkey and Greece on foot, but was apprehended by the Greek authorities and taken back to Turkey. She describes this journey as very difficult, traversing hostile terrain over seven days, travelling only at night for fear of being seen. During the last two days before being apprehended, they ran out of food and water, and were forced to drink dirty water from puddles, which made Amena sick. This failed attempt took a physical toll on Amena, and she had

to stay in Istanbul and take medicine and rest for a month before she could try again. After this difficult episode via the land border, she took her chance with the sea crossing from Izmir, western Turkey. She attempted the sea crossing to the Greek islands three times, before finally succeeding on her fourth attempt. She describes this back-and-forth as follows:

"The first time […] there were lots of coastguards, and we could not even attempt. We waited until the dawn breaks, and then we decided to go back to the hotel. The second time, the boat itself was not good, it was faulty. We tried to fill it with air, but we could not. The third time, they were about 115 people, but two boats, two small boats, but we could not manage. It was impossible for them to get all in two boats…The third time, not the successful one, the engine of the boat did not work, that's why the smugglers decided to change the engine, to bring another engine. They changed it in the water, when they switched it on, that water came on the boat, that's why people refused to get into the boat. He hit one of them, and at that time started a fight between the smugglers and the other people. Of course, the smugglers had weapons, they were armed. The smuggler was very angry because at that time it was the third time, and it cost him some money because he hired cars to take them, and return them, that's why he was very angry. We decided not to get in the boat, and insisted on this, that's why he left us, he did not return us, and it was of course, when you go with a smuggler to an isolated area. He left us in that isolated area, and then we managed to return to the hotel and look for another smuggler. The last time, the successful one, we managed to get into a large plastic boat, with other people […] We were a few, we were around 19, and the

engine was good, the boat was good. We got in the boat, and started the journey"

(Amena, Syria)(I).

Amena then waited in Greece for one month to get together enough money for a fake or stolen passport so she could fly onwards. She had family living in Cyprus who were able to send her some money, and she arranged for the gold that she had left in Syria to be sold and the money transferred to her. She attempted three times to board flights at Athens airport and was caught twice by security at immigration control and sent away. Twice she returned to the apartment she was renting in Athens before finding the resources to try again with a different I.D., finally succeeding on her third attempt and landing in Paris, from where she made her way to the UK. We can see in Amena's account how these localised back-and-forth mobilities finally give way to a surge that projects the traveller forward with some speed. However, this burst of mobility may then be followed by further periods of waiting. Amena, upon arriving in Paris, travelled to Marseille where she stayed with a Kurdish family who she had been put in touch with by her smugglers. She spent a short while waiting there whilst she searched for a way to move onwards to the UK.

Hassan and Hashim's stories also pave the way for a wider discussion which chimes at the very heart of the key debates around migration journeys, and which threatens to destabilise more rationalist accounts seeking to explain these trajectories. Although discourses of intention and decision-making seem to make sense in some contexts, in others they seem to unravel. On his successful attempt, Hassan explains that it was *"the weather"* that helped him pass the

British immigration control in Calais without detection in the back of a lorry: *"…when I arrived to the English gate, even it was, weather, raining, and they didn't control or check up, like careless, because it was raining."* This is a poignant example of the happenstance inherent to success or failure in irregular travel. On this day, it just happened to be raining. And this just happened to make the border guards less thorough in their checks, presumably because it's not very nice to be stood outside working in the rain. Similarly, whether or not a person boards a lorry marked GB that is heading back to the UK, or that has just arrived and is on its way into central Europe, is at least in part a question of chance.

1.4 Dwelling and Attempts to Settle

Yusuf's story draws our attention to another feature of the journeys narrated by a number of participants, that is, periods of dwelling or (attempted) settlement. Upon leaving Damascus in 2012, Yusuf spent nearly two years in Lebanon, first studying, and then working. A number of other participants also described prolonged periods spent in a particular place that can be best characterised as dwelling. Some of the experiences can be best understood as a sort of strategic dwelling *en-route* whereby participants live and work somewhere for an extended period of time, but express having the ultimate intention of moving onwards. Ahmed, from Syria, spent just less than a year in Istanbul living and working, but said that he always had the intention to move onwards to Europe. He needed to work to fund the next leg of his journey, and describes his time there as follows:

"The environment in Turkey, like, not allowed you to think about anything to do, just to concentrate on how to get the money. And also, it is difficult to find the

money, the job in Istanbul, or in Turkey in general. Even if you find the job, there is no rule, or law to protect your right. They eat our work, they take our money. They exploit us and they took our money, that means I work maybe one month, and after that I don't receive anything. Why? All the aim, it was how to gain the money, and how to leave Istanbul as soon as possible"

(Ahmed, Syria)(I).

What Ahmed describes is a very strategic form of dwelling-within-a-journey, undertaken only to earn enough money to leave. The precarity of Ahmed's situation during this time is evident from the above narrative excerpt. Dwelling is not always conceived as a stepping-stone to onward migration however, and for some participants periods of dwelling can be better understood as attempts to settle, even if that settlement is marred by its own precarities and instabilities. These attempts to settle can also occur before a person has left their country of origin, as a form of internal displacement. For example, Khalid was first displaced from *Al Yarmouk* camp in Damascus, once home to the largest Palestinian population in Syria. Although many people fled after the district became the site of intense fighting in 2012 between opposing sides in the Syrian civil conflict, Khalid's family did not want to leave their house and stayed in the area until extremist groups captured it in 2015[27]. They then left the family home and rented a flat elsewhere in Damascus, where he lived together with his parents for a number of months. After this initial displacement Khalid left school to start work so he could help to support his family, as his two older brothers had already left the country and his father's health was deteriorating. However

[27] For more information on the crisis in Yarmouk, see UNRWA (n.d.) "The crisis in Yarmouk camp."

because he left school and entered employment, after six months he got called up for national service in the Syrian army. It was at this point that his mother first suggested that he try to leave Syria. The initial, intra-city displacement that Khalid experienced gave way to a prolonged period of dwelling, during which time he lived and worked in Damascus without the intention of moving onwards. It was a period of relative stillness within the broader journey narrative.

Abdulaziz's narrative also provides a good example of how dwelling plays an important role in the journey experiences of some refugees. After leaving Darfur, Sudan in 2006, he spent over eight years in Libya before living conditions became unbearable for him following the civil conflict and he left. Abdulaziz initially dwelled in a shared house in Kufra, a region in the South East of Libya bordering Sudan, where he did housework in exchange for accommodation. During his time in Libya he moved around to find work where he could, dwelling in the cities of Benghazi, Sabaratha and Tripoli for months or years at a time as he found casual labour. He describes that time in Libya as *"good"* but explains how daily life worsened for him as the security situation deteriorated:

"Libya was good, but now they have problems. They take money from you. If you complain nothing happens. If you go out it's not safe. It's difficult when you are there without a family"

(Abdulaziz, Sudan)(I).

Indeed, when Abdulaziz began his story after I asked him about his journey to the UK, he started recounting his experiences from the moment he attempted to leave Libya, not from when he left Sudan. This points to the fact that he considers

this initial journey as separate from the subsequent journey from Libya. Hassan, also from Sudan, shared a similar story. He travelled to Libya and lived there for two years, working on a farm, and only made the decision to move onwards after civil unrest in Libya made it dangerous to stay:

"After that started the problem in Libya. All of the people have got a weapon, it is not safe. I still there, and the situation became dangerous, and not safe, because even when they know that you are not Libyan, they came, they took your mobile, they took your stuff, they took everything with you. After that, I don't have any, another chance except to leave Libya and to travel or migrate to Europe. The journey from Libya finished. Started the journey to Europe"

(Hassan, Sudan)(I).

I later asked him if, when he left Sudan, he had the intention of coming to the UK, and he replied*: "No, after the problem in Libya, because I used to live there for two years in Libya. If there is not a problem in Libya, I would continue living in Libya."*

Despite the Eurocentric bias of this research, the narratives of Abdulaziz and Hassan nevertheless serve to problematise the assumption that all those fleeing difficult situations are desperate to enter "the elusive European el Dorado" (de Haas 2008). Both participants were content to stay in Libya before civil unrest made it dangerous for them to stay. For some it was a more general sense of instability or inability to settle that was expressed as the reason for moving on. Haben's narrative depicts a similar sense of instability as hindering her attempts to dwell in Khartoum, Sudan. Haben is part of a branch of Christianity that is persecuted against in Eritrea. She left Eritrea initially with the intention of

settling in Sudan. She spent three years in Khartoum and describes her time there as follows:

"Hard, so hard. You have to hide, you can only work illegally. And it is a Muslim country, you have to cover your hair, cover everything. And people are afraid, because it is still near to our country."

(Haben, Eritrea)

Indeed, Yusuf also expressed that he had thought about leaving Beirut as soon as he had arrived, because he felt insecure and uncomfortable there:

"From the first moment I arrived in Beirut, I thought of leaving there, because it was hard for me. I want to go for a coffee, all Lebanese guys are just looking at me. I feel insecure, and no freedom there, that's why I wasn't feeling comfortable living in Beirut."

When Yusuf left Syria, it was not with the intention of settling permanently in Lebanon, but nor was it with the initial intention of moving to Europe. At the beginning, he hoped that the situation would improve in Syria and he would be able to return. It was only once he had *"lost any hope that the situation would be improved"* in Syria that he decided to try and move to Europe. Journeys that incorporate narratives of dwelling or settlement are not easily defined as one, singular journey and are further evidence of the often fragmented and non-linear form that refugees' journeys can take.

The dynamics of these long journeys echoes those elucidated by much of the most recent research on refugees' and migrants' journeys towards Europe. Their

fragmented, non-linear nature, the dangers and precarity that are often inherent to them, the relative immobility of periods of waiting or dwelling that make up the bulk of longer journeys, which are punctuated by shorter bursts of mobility, are features that are common to many of these journeys, even if the precise routes and rhythms differ widely. The above discussion both adds to and reinforces these attestations. And the chapter that follows this one aims to significantly expand upon the insights of the current literature by focusing on the *embodied* experiences of participants who travelled using irregular means. However, the discussion does not end here. Alongside the many narratives that resonated with the existing literature and popular discourse on refugees' journeys, the research process also shed light on a number of very different experiences that have not been afforded much attention in the current conversations around refugees' and migrants' journeys to Europe. It is to these 'quieter trajectories' that this chapter will now turn.

2. Beyond *Odysseys* and Crises: The quieter trajectories of refugees in the UK

The hyper-visibility of *certain* journeys, in particular those treacherous border crossings at the edges of Europe, paved the way for a series of assumptions made at the outset of this doctorate, which are mirrored by much of the academic and policy-focused literature, around refugees' journeys to Europe. The title of journalist Patrick Kingsley's book, *The New Odyssey: The Story of Europe's Refugee Crisis,* is emblematic of this recent focus on the 'epic' or odyssey-like nature of these journeys and their trials and tribulations. The suffering and difficulties faced by refugees along these routes, which until recently were

underexposed and under-researched in the academic literature, are clearly a compelling justification for research on this phenomenon. Indeed, it is partly what sparked my own interest in this topic. This research was thus initiated with the preconception that it was the 'long and dangerous journeys' endured by refugees that merited increased academic scrutiny, especially given that it is precisely the restrictionist agendas of European states outlined above that give rise to these difficult journeys. These assumptions are not baseless, and indeed the focus on experiences obscured by this dominant narrative is not meant to discount or belittle the suffering and precarity endured by the majority of refugees travelling to Europe. Indeed, these embodied experiences of irregular travel are covered in extensive detail in the chapter following this one. However, throughout the fieldwork process I met many participants whose stories did not fit neatly (or at all) into this 'odyssey' trope. I initially found myself feeling disappointed that these were not the extensive and eventful journeys that I had expected to find. But I soon realised that I was at risk of venerating these more dangerous and eventful journeys, whilst simultaneously obscuring less prominent experiences of travelling to the UK. These journeys are relatively more linear and less fragmented, adding nuance to the more recent insistence amongst scholars that "a single journey is very rarely linear" (Mainwaring and Brigden 2016, 248) and that the proliferation of migration controls mean that *all* journeys are necessarily now longer and more fragmented. This is true for many, but importantly not all refugees and asylum seekers who have arrived in the UK, and was certainly not the case for all participants in this study.

At a time when many other European countries were seeing huge increases in asylum applications, the UK saw its total applications increase relatively modestly from 21,843 in 2012 to 32,733 in 2015, with this figure decreasing in 2016 to 30,603.[28] Meanwhile, in the EU as a whole, applications quadrupled between 2012 and 2015, from 335,290 to around 1.3 million, and stayed more or less constant during 2016. The effects of the so-called migration or refugee crisis were therefore felt nowhere near as strongly in the UK, from its insulated position as an island state in Northern Europe. Most of those travelling during this time are thus elsewhere than the UK. And although many of the participants did cross the external borders of the EU via those heavily scrutinised routes, an important number did not.

2.1 'Linear' Routes to the UK

Despite the aforementioned argument that refugees are 'disappearing' into the category of irregular migration (Green and Grewcock 2002), one participant was able to travel to the UK legally and without the need for a visa, albeit in a specific historical context and just before the 'drawbridge was raised.' Joseph, from Zimbabwe, provides an interesting case study as the only participant to have travelled regularly and without a visa to the UK. He described having been in the UK *"at least 10 years,"* but his story indicates that he must have arrived in the UK before November 2002. The reason for this is that he describes very clearly the ease of entry to the UK facilitated by the lack of visa requirements for Zimbabwean nationals prior to this date:

[28] See UK Home Office (2017b) "National Statistics: Asylum."

"And, because it was easy to buy tickets to this country, didn't need a visa to come, to come to this country. Just go to buy a ticket, and that's it. And then just arrive at the airport and declare myself, and that's it"

(Joseph, Zimbabwe)

In November 2002, in direct response to an increase in the numbers of Zimbabweans claiming asylum in the UK, the Secretary of State declared that Zimbabwe would to be added to the visa list (Clayton 2016, 196). Joseph was the only participant who travelled to the UK via regular means *and* without the need of a visa. As outlined in the first chapter of this thesis, this policy of shoring up the borders with visa requirements can be understood as a direct assault on the mobility of asylum seekers. However, although the erection of barriers such as visa regimes acts to curtail the mobility of those likely to seek asylum, they are not always successful in achieving this. Beyond Joseph and the historic specificity of his case, the narrative interviews shed light on another little-discussed route to asylum: regular or 'legal' travel. Nine participants who took part in this research travelled to the UK relatively directly, either from their country of origin or a neigbouring country, and via regular means using their own travel documents and valid visas. Again, it must be stressed that these experiences are not necessarily indicative of a broader trend, but it is a route to the UK for at least *some* refugees, and one that is potentially obfuscated by the assertion that refugees have 'disappeared' into the category of irregular migration.

Nyima is amongst the small minority of participants who was able to travel to the UK 'legally' with a valid visa. Her mum and sister live in the UK and she would often come to visit them. In fact, prior to her displacement she had been on holiday to the UK, and it was only several days after returning to The Gambia that she was forced to flee. Prior to her displacement, Nyima lived full-time with her uncle who, upon discovering that she was in a same-sex relationship after catching her *"messing around"* with a female friend, beat her, bound her hands and locked her in a room of their house. Homosexuality is illegal under Gambian law and since new legislation was passed in 2014 a conviction for "aggravated homosexuality" carries a life sentence.[29] Nyima's uncle told her that she was going to *"disgrace the family"* and that in order to prevent this from happening he would force her to marry a friend of his, a much older man who already had two wives. Nyima was fiercely opposed to this, but she could not report this coercion to the police for fear that her uncle would then report her for engaging in homosexual activities. She was rescued from her uncle's home by the same friend she who her uncle had caught her with, and her brother, and fled to Dakar, in neighbouring Senegal by ferry before flying to the UK with only a short stopover in Istanbul. In its entirety, Nyima's travel took only three days. UK visitor visas for Gambian citizens are valid for six months, and Nyima's visa was fortunately still valid when she needed to travel, and so she was able to travel regularly from Dakar, Senegal, to the UK using this visa. She described her journey as follows:

[29] Since the electoral defeat of long-standing President and aggressive opponent to LGBTQ equality, Yahya Jammeh, in December 2016, there have been ongoing discussions suggesting that this anti-LGBTQ legislation, passed in 2014, may be repealed in the future. See HRC Staff (2017) "Political Leaders in The Gambia Support Repeal of Anti-LGBTQ Law."

"And that was it, basically. It was nothing interesting…you know my journey is not that long like other people go through…but that is, I think that is because I have a valid visa to come here […] Because if not, I don't know what I was gonna do […] that was the only thing that saved me. If not I was…I don't even want to think about what was going to happen to me"

(Nyima, The Gambia).

Nyima was a university student at home and was in the final year of her degree. She also describes living a comfortable life in the Gambia, and mentions the fact that her uncle has a maid working for him in the house, indicating that she is from a relatively wealthy family. She described being aware of the fortunate nature of the circumstances that meant she could travel relatively freely to the UK:

"And I was lucky because…I was, actually, because I just went back, I was having some money with me, to pay the fare, and to go to Dakar and to pay the hotel for that night."

Like Nyima, all of the other participants who travelled on a valid visitor visa had existing relatives or friends in the UK, and some participants specifically mentioned getting 'invitations' to help with the visa process. Invitation letters written by family or friends in the UK are a common accompaniment to a visa application, and are considered make an application more robust and more likely to be successful. Having these existing links to the UK thus appears to be a distinct advantage in navigating the visa regime.

One participant, Azar from Iran, travelled to the UK with her husband on a student visa. Azar and her husband are both educated professionals and her husband was able to get an 18-month student visa and was eligible to bring his family with him. Although things were becoming a little less safe for Azar at home when they left Iran, she assured me that they came with every intention of returning home. Her story is covered in more detail below in the section on refugees *sur place*. Tharindu, from Sri Lanka, was also able to travel because his wife had a bachelor's degree and was able to apply for a postgraduate diploma and obtain a student visa by this means. She travelled alone to the UK and he applied to join her soon after. UK student visa regulations stipulate that in order for someone on a student visa to be eligible to bring dependents, they must be enrolled on a Level 7 course (equivalent to a master's degree or postgraduate diploma). Tharindu describes having always intended to apply for asylum, and being given advice to use this route out of Sri Lanka:

"And I explained my situation, my real, and he understand. That's why he help. And […] explain my situation, my wife situation, so he understand we have, we are real problem, and I told, "Okay. I didn't complete my degree, and wife completed." And he told, "Okay, first your wife can go. Why? She is graduated. And she can apply post-graduate diploma. After two weeks, you can rejoin"

(Tharindu, Sri Lanka)

Some of those who travelled to the UK using valid visas did so because they were unsafe in their countries of origin and seeking safety in the UK, like Tharindu. However had the Home Office been aware of the real circumstances of their need

to leave, they would have undoubtedly been unsuccessful in their visa applications.

Five other participants travelled relatively quickly and directly to the UK, however they travelled via irregular means through the use of fake or stolen passports arranged by agents. They mostly used the same spaces and modes as those travelling regularly, in this case airports and planes, however they often travelled first to a neighbouring country. As was outlined above, plane travel, and other travel using the spaces of regular travel also features in the journeys of some of those who undertook much longer journeys. But for the participants travelling more or less directly, these relatively straight forward trajectories meant that travel was much faster and their travel narratives were therefore much more succinct. For example, after being beaten and imprisoned for her role in protests against the government, Adelina's family decided that she was no longer safe staying in Angola and arranged for her to leave the country with the help of an agent, who accompanied her for the entirety of her journey. She travelled first to Congo by car. Then from Congo she travelled to Nigeria in a van along with others, including her agent. After spending three days in Nigeria, Adelina, accompanied by her agent, took a flight to come to the UK using 'someone else's passport' that the agent had provided for her. Other participants, however, arrived in the UK via regular means, but without the intention of claiming asylum. It is to these 'journeys' that the discussion will now turn.

2.2 Refugees *sur Place* and the Absence of a 'Journey into Exile'

In a piece of work written at the beginning of this doctorate, I wrote the following: "Physical movement, or journeying, is an intrinsic aspect of a refugeehood predicated upon the loss of place within a territorial State." For a thesis based around the idea of the 'journey', which was implicitly understood to encompass, at least in part, a physical flight from danger, I had not considered the possibility of refugee experiences that did not have this linear threat-flight-asylum narrative. I was not alone in holding this preconception. Indeed, Derulyn et al. argue that there has been a dearth of research investigating "the flight itself" and flight experiences (2014, 2) and affirm of the importance of "a wider conceptualization of the issue of agency with respect to refugee flight, beyond prevalent ideas of a spontaneous rush from danger" (ibid., 3). Refugees' journeys seem to be understood here as synonymous with a flight from danger, even if the authors are trying to problematise the idea that this 'flight' is an entirely reactive process.

The first interview I had was with a Nigerian woman called Olabisi, a student who travelled to the UK 'legally' and on a visitor visa, after being invited by her mum's friend, who lived in the UK. At that time, Olabisi had not had a physical journey into exile, because when she travelled here she was in the middle of her university degree, and had no intention of claiming asylum. I asked her how she was feeling on the way to the airport and she replied:

"Actually that, that day would be the first time coming to this country, so I was really excited, like, wow, going to UK, really happy, but I didn't know it was gonna turn the other way around"

(Olabisi, Nigeria)

However, upon arrival the woman who arranged her visit confiscated her passport and Olabisi was forced into unpaid labour. Unfortunately, at that early stage of the research process, I thought that this route to refugeehood discounted Olabisi from the project, because she did not have the sort of journey story that I was expecting or that I was hoping to investigate. Her travel to the UK was not a 'journey into exile.' As such, I did not inquire further into the circumstances of her asylum claim and we ended the interview fairly swiftly. A little later in the fieldwork process, I met Azar, an Iranian refugee who had also travelled to the UK 'legally' on a valid visa, and without the initial intention of claiming asylum. It was only upon hearing her story that I began to recognise the way that the experiences of refugees like Azar and Olabisi were actually very important in highlighting and problematising commonly held assumptions (including my own) about refugees' 'roads to asylum.' To reject or ignore these stories because they do not fit the mould is to obscure the insight that they provide.

Azar and her husband had left Iran, not just because her husband wanted to study here, although that was part of the reason, but also because *"it was a good excuse to be a little bit far from that nervous, and full of stress situation"* (Azar, Iran). They already felt uneasy in Iran, and wanted to get away for a little while,

but had every intention of returning and as such had left their house full of Azar's office equipment for her job as a graphic designer. However, six months into their stay a change of circumstances at home lead them to claim asylum in the UK. Azar had been active in her support of Mir-Hossein Mousavi who stood against Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the 2009 Iranian elections[30]. She took part in the protests that followed Ahmadinejad's contentious re-election as Iranian president, during which she was arrested and spent 21 days in jail before being released. After she left Iran, her father and his friends used Azar's empty house as a safe space where they met to discuss politics. At one such meeting, the house was raided and they were arrested. After this event, the Iranian government sent a letter to her house, summoning her to court. After Azar's family contacted her and told her about this letter, she knew that she was no longer safe to return home, and would have to claim asylum in the UK.

Azar's story demonstrates the significant nuance that is required when discussing "journeys towards exile" and the problems with assuming that every refugee story will follow the narrative of threat-flight-asylum. Azar and Olabisi's stories both include a physical journey, and in this sense my original assertion that "journeying is an intrinsic aspect of a refugeehood predicated upon the loss of place within a territorial state" still makes some sense in this context. Displacement is commonly understood to involve an embodied movement from one place, usually 'home', to another. And intrinsic to refugeehood as it is defined

[30] Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was president of Iran between 2005 and 2013, and was the political leader of the Alliance of Builders of Islamic Iran, a coalition of conservative political groups. Mir-Hossein Mousavi is a reformist politician, who has been under house arrest in Iran since 2011 for his part the 'Green Movement' protests that accompanied accusations of vote rigging in the 2009 election. For more information, see Dabashi (2013) "What happened to the Green Movement in Iran?"

in international law is the notion that a person must be outside his or her country of origin. Although the non-linearity of asylum seeker journeys has been well-documented in the literature, there is nevertheless an enduring assumption that the threat that refugees face precedes their travel into exile. The verb 'to flee' is very commonly used when discussing refugees, and indeed implicit within the term 'forced migration' is the idea that the threat precedes the migration, in order for the migration itself to be 'forced.' However, Azar and Olabisi's stories call into question the assumed overlap between the physical journey and the symbolic journey into exile.

That is not to say that mobilities more broadly are not implicated in this symbolic journey. The threat and 'fear of persecution' is transferred via mobile technology as Azar's parents inform her via phone that she would be in danger should she return to Iran. It is this transfer of information, compounded with Azar's embodied history of arrest and mistreatment that engenders the affective state of fear that is inherent to the refugee definition. However Azar's physical journey cannot accurately be described as a 'flight', in the sense of a rush from danger. She travelled via regular means, on a student visa, without the intention of claiming asylum and with every intention of returning to Iran. It is only after receiving the information that she had been summoned to court that she felt unable to return home, and thus, six months into an 18-month student visa, submitted her claim for asylum.

To end this section on the absence of a journey into exile, I would like to return for a moment to the story of Khalid, a third generation Palestinian refugee who

was displaced from Syria. Khalid, like many other refugees in protracted situations, was born into exile. Although Khalid clearly did undergo a physical journey to the UK after being displaced from Syria because of the civil war, his story sheds light on another, sizeable category of refugees who have not had a physical journey into exile, nor indeed any physical journey at all, unlike Azar and Olabisi. The people I am referring to are the many refugees who are born into exile in protracted refugee situations. Those people born into exile are outside of their country of origin, but have not travelled to get there. Travel is therefore *not* an embodied experience shared by all refugees. Khalid's understanding of the historical "journey into exile" undertaken by his grandparents is not something that we discussed in detail. But clearly any memories of this journey would not be based upon his own embodied experiences but on those memories passed down from the older generations.

2.3 Mobile Lives and Notions of 'Home'

The non-linearity of journeys to Europe has been well established in the literature. It is also affirmed by many of the stories told by participants through the research process. What Crawley et al. (2016) call 'serial migration' i.e. those whose journeys to the UK are part of a longer migration history was elucidated in section 1.4 of this chapter by those whose had experienced prolonged periods of dwelling after leaving their country of origin without the desire to move onwards. However, there were two participants whose stories showed an even deeper level of complexity and disrupted further this notion of linearity in refugee and migrant journeys. Abrihet and Ayman both left their country of origin at a young age, and spent their childhood and adolescence in another

country. Abrihet left Eritrea when she was only two years old, and grew up in neighbouring Ethiopia. She describes Ethiopia as "her country":

"That's my country. Ethiopia is my country. Some country, I don't know it, so how I can say that's my country? But just because the policy change, and because people know where you are, so come back where you come from. But you feel like sometime, that's your place, nowhere else"

(Abrihet, Ethiopia).

A border conflict broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998, which lead to the deportation of around 70,000 people of Eritrean origin from Ethiopia.[31] Abrihet, age 16 at the time, was 'returned' to Eritrea with her family as part of these deportations. She describes having difficulty settling in Eritrea, especially because her principle language was the Ethiopian language Amharic, which marked her out and attracted hostility from others. However it was the threat of conscription that caused Abrihet to leave the country after only eight months. Her brothers had already been called up and Abrihet's mother advised her to leave the country before the same happened to her. From Eritrea she travelled to Yemen and then to Saudi Arabia, where she lived and worked irregularly for over eight years. She recalls feeling a deep sense of insecurity and sadness on arrival, especially as a result of being in a new environment without the security of her family:

"I haven't been without family before, I haven't sleep one day in neighbor house, or family house, other family house, I have been always with the mum and family. And,

[31] For more information on this series of deportations, see Southwick (2009)

when people get job for me, I go there, just cry. And people scared when I…No, and they return me back."

When she first was sent to work in the home of a Saudi family, she was so distressed that she couldn't stop crying and was sent away. However after time she found work with a family:

"…the last time I find women she is kind, and she is real woman, she have children, daughters and one man, one boy she have, she was understand my situation, and she was treat me like her daughter, one of her daughter. I work with her […] Like, I feel like family house. It was wonderful. It was. But when I wasn't employed, that time it was very difficult."

Her time in Saudi Arabia was marked by episodes of insecurity interspersed with the development of new habits, friendships and a sense of familiarity with the sociocultural environment and her position within it. But this did not stop Abrihet from feeling scared when leaving the house, and it was this sense of insecurity that was ultimately part of the reason that she decided to leave Saudi Arabia. She spoke of being stopped by police, of being followed home, and of the fear of arrest that she was plagued by throughout her time in Saudi. During her final year in Saudi Arabia, Abrihet was living with the family of a Saudi man who she was in a relationship with. It was the breakdown of that relationship that finally pushed her to leave Saudi Arabia. She left the house and went to stay with a friend, who hid her from this man and his family, and who assisted her in leaving the country. Despite considering Ethiopia to be her 'home', it is undoubtedly her Eritrean citizenship that helped her to successfully claim asylum in the U.K., and she would have had a greatly reduced chance of being

successful in her asylum claim had she had Ethiopian citizenship. But then again, if she had Ethiopian citizenship she would likely never have even made it to the U.K. When she was trying to leave Saudi Arabia, she said that she had actually wanted to return to Ethiopia but that there was no way for her to gain legal admission or to be granted legal status in Ethiopia. To summarise, Abrihet was displaced from Eritrea as a baby and lived until age 16 in Addis Ababa. She was then displaced from Ethiopia, the place she considers to be 'her country', back to an unfamiliar Eritrea, only to be displaced once again only months later under the threat of conscription. And after years living and working irregularly in Saudi Arabia, she moved to the UK.

Similarly, Ayman left his country of birth at a young age, and he moved to Belgium with his mother where he grew up before being taken back to Tunisia aged 17 and left to stay there with his grandmother. Ayman attended Catholic school in Belgium and identifies as Catholic. When his uncles found out that he had converted to Catholicism from Islam, they tried to kill him, and he was forced to flee the family home and travelled to Indonesia, where visas are not required for Tunisian citizens. From there he made it to Papua New Guinea, where he applied for asylum but was rejected. He spent a total of 15 years in Papua New Guinea during which time he got married and had four children. After being detained by the authorities for three months in Papua New Guinea, he left to come to the UK. He spent his first two years in the UK living irregularly, describing it as follows:

"When I come to the UK, I stayed like two years just lost. I've been living in the jungle for 15 years, I come to the UK after being lost. I don't like to go close to the police or the immigration. I have bad experience"

(Ayman, Tunisia).

During this time he was doing some casual laboring here and there, but also started drinking heavily. After two years Ayman claimed asylum in the UK, and was rejected. After his refusal he describes "giving up" on the UK system and travelling to Germany, where he lived for one year. However, he was ultimately caught by authorities in Germany who returned him to the UK. At the time of the interview, Ayman had submitted a 'fresh claim' for asylum, and was waiting to appear in court for his appeal.

The stories of Abrihet and Ayman also call into question the idea of emplacement or settledness in the country of origin prior to the events leading up to displacement that is inherent to many understandings of refugee experiences. To further engage with this issue, let's return again to the story of Khalid. When I asked Khalid about how he understands his 'home,' he explained that he did previously consider Syria 'his country', and he felt close to the Syrian people, but that the conflict had exposed *"the reality"* that people were not at sympathetic to the Palestinian case as he previously thought. Despite this, he told me that he still considers Syrians as brothers, and said that, *"We eat with them, bread and salt. Their pain, is my pain also."* However, he explained that if he had to choose a place to go back to, he would choose Palestine, because he knew the Palestinian people have a right to return. He described his feelings as follows: *"By the blood, I*

am Palestinian. By the heart, I am Syrian." Khalid's story thus further complicates the notion of home, particularly for people born into exile.

Mehmoud, also from Syria, previously worked as a travel agent and often travelled abroad as part of his job. However he told me that that he used to hate the idea of living away from his country, and that he would only ever travel for a few weeks at a time before returning home. Mehmoud's business was destroyed in 2012, but he stayed in Syria in the hope that the conflict would soon come to an end, and because Syria was 'still his country'. However, he explained that at the beginning of 2015 he reached breaking point and started to look for a way to leave the country. He said:

"I saw all the life destroyed, 'cause the war, and, er…I worry about my family. You know, bomb, and…it's very hard life. I look for another life, a good life, for future, for my family."

He told me that he left *"when I see everything become bad, people, weather, food, water, everything bad,"* and that now he was in the UK he wanted to forget Syria, and to build a new life. Mehmoud's narrative highlights the way in which relationships with 'home' can become complex and feelings of instability and alienation, for refugees, can begin long before their departure.

The complex, lifelong migration histories of Abrihet and Ayman also further disrupt the notion of linearity in refugee and migrant journeys. It is particularly difficult to distinguish the journey into exile or the flight from danger from the

broader migration histories of these participants. This alludes to a broader issue with the idea of 'the journey' as a discreet period with its own significance.

2.4 Journey's End?

This introduction to the journey stories produced through the research process has focused mainly on trajectories and travel. The complexity of these journeys, is demonstrated by the discussion above, and by the fact that for a number of participants there was not one journey into exile but two, or several as Abrihet's story attests to, or indeed none, as Olabisi and Azar's experiences demonstrate. This begins to drawn our attention to how contested the concept of 'the journey' can be. At times it is difficult to see where journeys begin and, as Ayman's description of his time spent living irregularly in the UK before claiming asylum demonstrates, where they end.

Ayman was not the only participant who did not claim asylum immediately upon arrival to the UK. Adel lived here irregularly for four years after arriving from Afghanistan, before he submitted his claim for asylum. He was only 15 when he arrived in the UK, and so would actually have been eligible at least for limited leave to remain as an unaccompanied minor. However he had no knowledge of his entitlements under UK law, was advised by others to avoid the police at all costs, and spent his time here under constant fear of being apprehended because he thought that would mean instant deportation. Yet other participants spent weeks or months in the UK before submitting claims for asylum. Routes to asylum in these cases extend beyond 'arrival' in the UK. Even then, the idea that the event of submitting a claim for asylum can be pinpointed as an end of the

journey is also contentious. Although it seems somewhat intuitive to assume that 'arrival in the UK' marks the end of the 'journey,' when discussing journeys towards exile or roads to asylum, it is clear that those journeys' edges can become blurred. Chapter VI explores this in more depth through a discussion of the production of the journey narratives and the oftentimes indeterminate contours of the 'journey towards exile' as expressed through the stories of participants.

3. Conclusion

This chapter has, with the aid of concepts from the mobilities literature, provided an overview of some of the diverse roads to asylum experienced by asylum seekers and refugees living in the UK. Those many participants who, like Yusuf, undertook long and at times dangerous journeys experienced travel by a variety of means, occasionally crossing borders regularly, but most often travelling using irregular means. This irregular travel may occur within established travel networks and using 'regular' modes of travel, or within the routes that have sprung up in the cracks and crevices of border control systems, using means populated exclusively by those travelling irregularly, like the rubber dinghies of the Greece-Turkey crossing, or the vans and trucks crammed full of people as they carve a route through the Sahara. All of these journeys were punctuated at times by periods of waiting, and were often fitful or fragmented. Some participants even described experiences of dwelling or attempts to settle, which further fractures any perception of a singular, linear journey. There are many more ways in which journeys are non-linear and fragmented, including at a more everyday, micro-level, as participants' experiences of the daily back-and-

forths of irregular travel demonstrate. These insights affirm and add nuance to the insights of the recent research on clandestine migration journeys.

However, it is necessary to assert that non-linearity, although very common, cannot be valorised as a 'condition' of refugee travel or indeed of irregular or clandestine migration. As has been established, there are cases where refugee travel is undertaken via regular means, and in such cases trajectories present as relatively more 'linear.' And there are instances of irregular migration, such as travelling by plane using a fake or stolen passport from origin (or from a neighbouring country) to destination that also appear relatively more linear. Although many commentators have spoken about the non-linearity of clandestine journeys, the narratives collected through this research therefore both affirms, problematises, and adds nuance to this assertion.

Alongside those many refugees who undertake these 'odysseys' to arrive in the UK are others who have not had this kind of experience. From those who travelled regularly but with the intention to claim asylum, to those refugees *sur place* who did not have a 'journey into exile' in a traditional sense, to those with infinitely more complicated lifelong migration histories, there were plenty of dissonant experiences that did not fit the mould of the 'odyssey' trope that has become somewhat synonymous with refugee journeys to Europe. These experiences, and their narration, also begin to highlight the often-blurred contours of 'the journey' as a concept.

In exploring and highlighting the ways that some refugees' journeys do not correspond to this "'odyssey' trope, I do not wish to diminish or brush aside the long and eventful journeys that are experienced by many. I only wish to *also* appreciate and shed light on other routes into asylum that are not encompassed by the focus on "odysseys," and to present the stories of participants in their rich diversity. This is what I hope to have achieved in this chapter. And as was argued earlier in this thesis these experiences serve to demonstrate that long and dangerous journeys are not an inevitable part of 'the refugee experience,' but are the result of a specific policy regime. In this sense, these alternative narratives can actually help us to detach deservingness from the length and difficulty of a persons' journey, and help us to envisage alternatives.

Suffering *en route* is not a constituent part of refugeehood, but it is unfortunately something that has become increasingly common in the face of contemporary border control regimes of states in the global North. The next chapter turns the spotlight back onto experiences of irregular travel, in order to also do enough justice to the at times exceptionally intricate and detailed travel narratives articulated by those many participants who travelled irregularly for some or most of their journeys to the UK.

Chapter V: Irregular Refugee Travel and Embodied Encounters "on the way"

Made famous by Erving Goffman in his studies of interaction,[32] and made critical by Sara Ahmed in her post-colonial offering, *Strange Encounters*, the concept of encounters has been crucial in establishing a relational understanding of the world. But encounters are also inherent to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of embodiment. Gail Weiss, using Merleau-Ponty's concept of *intercorporeality*, argues that ''to describe embodiment as intercorporeality is to emphasise that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies'' (Weiss 1999, 5). Journeys towards exile are thus replete with embodied encounters. To explore the dynamics of refugees' journeys towards exile is to understand the experiences of these journeys as emerging from a myriad of encounters between lived bodies, things and spaces. This chapter uses the framing of 'encounters' as a way of bringing to the fore the relationality of experience and by demonstrating how it can be applied to enrich our understanding of the microprocesses of refugees' journeys towards exile. These encounters refer to the lived experience of embodied interactions as they emerge during irregular travel. However, these encounters are always inevitably historically and geographically mediated (Ahmed 2000; Simonsen 2013, 12). A

[32] See, for example, Goffman's (1959) seminal work *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

majority of, participants travelled using irregular means for part or all of their physical journeys to the UK. Although the ambiguity of the concept of "refugee journeys" has been critically assessed in the previous chapter, experiences of the diverse spaces and mobilities of irregular travel and the encounters that this type of travel engenders are key components of many participants' narratives. This chapter is therefore dedicated to exploring the embodied encounters of refugees during irregular travel.

The first section of this chapter explores the embodied performances of participants during encounters with the bodies of border control. There is a dramatic element to these performances, as refugees attempt to orient their bodies in such a way as to shift, if only fleetingly, into the category of regular traveller from which they are excluded. However, this (re)orientation is often ineffective, or impossible, as the constraints of refugees' socially mediated bodies overwhelm or threaten to overwhelm these attempts. The following section details those violent encounters with the hostile apparatus of border control that can emerge when these performances fail or when participants are otherwise caught trying to travel irregularly. Through this, the importance of hiding, and of "non-encounters" with those hostile bodies at the borders transpires as a key practice in the narratives of participants. In these cases encounters with the diverse bodies, objects, landscapes and mobilities of irregular travel emerge, some of which are explored in the final two sections of this chapter.

Embodied encounters are often considered as encounters between human bodies. And often they are encounters between human bodies. Clearly, this thesis retains a focus on the human body and lived experience, and in this respect could be criticised for being anthropocentric. This is a mediated and critical anthropocentrism, however, that relies on a multirelational understanding of the body and of lived experience. To explore embodied encounters, therefore, is not just to explore encounters with other human bodies, but to explore the spaces, things and bodies that emerge in a mobile world. As Ahmed argues, "meetings do not have to involve the face-to-face encounter of at least two subjects. Meetings do not even presuppose the category of the human person. More generally, a meeting suggests a coming together of at least two elements" (Ahmed 2000, 7).

Whilst interactional and practice-based approaches affirm the primacy of everyday, mundane encounters, and whilst theorists have pointed to the emergence of a "nomadic metaphysics" (Cresswell 2006) which tend towards the assumption that everything is mobile, it is also necessary to consider mobilities as relative to one another[33] (Adey 2006), and to appreciate the particular kinds of encounter, and especially the proliferation of strange, violent and disorienting encounters that are thrown up during journeys towards exile. Using the lens of embodied encounters allows for an in-depth exploration of the microprocesses of journeys towards exile. The focus on interactions that this chapter privileges sheds light onto those micro-level encounters between refugees' mobile bodies and the many things, landscapes and other bodies that

[33] Adey argues that if mobility is everything, then it is nothing, and that "if we explore mobility in everything and fail to examine the differences and relations between them, it becomes not meaningless, but, there is a danger in mobilising the world into a transient, yet featureless, homogeneity" (Adey 2006: 91).

emerge "on the way". Whilst imperative to understanding the processual nature of the world, micro-level, interactional approaches to social science often tend often to focus on the habitual, the repetitive and the mundane, that is, those iteratively (re)produced norms and practices that are sustained in everyday encounters. What Ahmed reminds us, through her discussion of migration, is that certain contexts engender *strange* encounters that are out-of-the-ordinary, and it is this acknowledgment of the extraordinary as well as the mundane and habitual occurrences at the micro-level that is especially compelling when exploring irregular travel. I would expand Ahmed's argument to say that rather than conflicting with or refuting practice-oriented theories, these moments of unfamiliarity, or feelings of discomfort and strangeness, are *made possible* only through the habitual sedimentation of other, familiar encounters. The extraordinary can only be understood in relation to the mundane. All experience is embodied, and perhaps especially those often-visceral processes of movement, stillness, encounter and violence that take place during journeys towards exile.

Whilst the concept of home has been variously critiqued by feminist scholars and scholars of migration alike, I would like to take from Iris Marion Young's measured discussion of the concept in order to see what can be retained of it and what its relevance might be to the study of journeys. Young simultaneously questions essentialised notions of home, whilst also recognising the symbolic richness of "home-making". At "home," things and spaces become imbued with meaning and memory over time, and identity, though never fixed, becomes anchored to a physical space (in Felski 1999, 25). Deborah Thien uses the term 'resonance' to describe the emotionality of space and the *feelings* that emerge

through embodied encounters with spaces (Thien 2011, 320). Feeling 'in place' is often tied to notions of 'home'. However, feelings within or towards particular places are not static, and, for refugees, the feelings of unfamiliarity, dissonance and fear at 'home' that were alluded to in the previous chapter are crucial examples of how spaces previously experienced as familiar and harmonious can transform into sites of fear and instability.[34] Whilst some participants described a complex and a times fraught relationship with the notion of home, many did see their 'home', *prior* to the events leading up to their displacement, as a place imbued with stability and habituality, associated with feelings of happiness and memories of a "good life." Some participants informed me that they had never left their country of origin prior to their journey to the UK. Relative to this, we can consider how journeys into exile have the potential to throw up new encounters with unfamiliar landscapes, things and bodies.

1. Border Performances and the Constrained/Enabling Body

I am starting this chapter with an exploration of one of the less visible and certainly less common sites of irregular refugee travel: the airport. When we imagine the spaces of refugee travel, we might think of crowded boats in the middle of the Mediterranean, perhaps the Calais 'jungle', the shores of Lampedusa, or the Serbia/Hungary border, and certainly these *are* some of the key spaces of refugee travel to Europe and the UK. But as the previous chapter has established, there are many, diverse spaces and modes of refugee travel, and

[34] Feminist and post-colonial critiques of 'home' are also important here; to presume that 'home', even prior to conflict or acute episodes of disruption, is harmonious is not unproblematic, and as Ahmed argues, "…there is always an encounter with strangeness at stake, even within the home". However, that doesn't mean we should argue for the non-opposition between home and away and we nevertheless need to find ways of understanding the difference between feeling "at home" or "away" (2000, 88-9).

at times the spaces of irregular and regular travel intersect. In saying this, I do not want to risk overstating the importance of sites like airports in irregular travel, which as is discussed further below are often reserved for a relatively privileged minority. However, the experiences and encounters of refugees travelling irregularly by plane is an interesting and under-studied facet of refugee travel, which has most often focused on the more *visible* and intensely scrutinised sites of irregular travel such as those listed above.

1.1 'Acting Legal' in Sites of Regular Travel

Participants travelling irregularly by plane did so through the use of fake or stolen passports. What was most striking about the stories that emerged about these experiences was the narration of theatrical performances, and of the intentional reorientation of the body that participants attempted in order to fit, if only momentarily, into the category of 'legitimate' traveller from which they had been excluded. Diana Coole describes the practically oriented body as expressive, dramatic and performative and argues that its "capacities materialize contingently through its interactions with others and with its environment" (Coole 2007, 16). This practical orientation is closely tied with the idea of the body's reversibility and the notion of flesh that is developed in the later work of Merleau-Ponty. According to Merleau-Ponty, the body "is passive-active (visible-seeing), mass in itself and gesture" (VI 271). The practical doings of refugees travelling irregularly emerge as a result of this reversibility, as they creatively react to the gaze of others - in this case the bodies of border control - and the broader context in which they find themselves. Participants' narratives

articulated how they productively responded to the socio-political space of the airport and other bodies that inhabit this space:

"…we try to fool them. We have lots of ideas to fool them, but sometimes we cannot, because the smugglers are not very clever, they are not, let's say, gifted…."

(Adnan, Syria).

"'cause the security… if he saw some exotic behaviour from any passengers, strange behaviour, he will get doubt about him, he will suspect about him. Any exotic behaviour. So the security was like this. It's easy for him to pick up all of us, alright?"

(Hussain, Syria).

Participants told me of many strategies used to try and convince the onlooker that they are a legitimate traveller. The following is a narrative fragment from Ayoub, who describes his encounter with airline staff in Attaturk airport, Istanbul:

"The people was going out to the bus, and the bus going to the aeroplane. I wait there, I just wait, wait, the peo-, all people finish. They just calling me, calling, person called like this, "The last calling, come to the gate we will close we will-". I just wait, wait, wait, wait. And after that, just one woman stay at the gate, yes, nice woman. I saw that it will be good for me. I can pass, maybe, this […] And she start looking for me, she calling the person. I didn't remember the person, hard name. Just, calling, calling, calling and, "I am, just wait, I am", "Where have you been?" "Sorry I'm sorry I just come." They bring special bus for me to get there [Laughs]. She said, "Okay, come! come! Where is your boarding? Quickly, quickly!" "I am sorry

for that." "Give me the passport." She take the passport. "Oh it's not like you." She said, sh- I don't know, I was very confident. "What is up? Quickly, quickly, what is the problem?" She said, "What's your name?" I said the name. So, after that she said, she ask the place where born in Sweden, she ask me, "Where this place locate in Sweden?" "South of Stockholm." I didn't, I don't know where is it! I just say, "It's south of Stockholm what's the problem with you I have to catch…?!" "Okay, go! go!" [Laughs]"

(Ayoub, Syria).

Ayoub describes how he waited until the very last minute so that the airline staff would be rushed when checking his passport and that would give him a better chance of passing undetected. He also recounts performing with a confidence and assertiveness that helped him to appear legitimate. Other participants recalled learning particular phrases in the language that corresponded to the passport they were given, or memorising the name and date of birth on the passport so that they could appear convincing to airport staff and border control.

1.2 Objects of Performance

Amena, from Syria, was instructed by the smugglers to remove her headscarf in order to try and 'appear European' and pass undetected through the airport. I met Amena many times over my five-month fieldwork period, and had never seen her without a headscarf. She explained to me:

"The smuggler, to sell the passport, he tried to convince me, "You can pass, you look like Europeans, just uncover your head, and everything is going to be okay." I was convinced, I don't have another way, this is the sole way, so I bought the passport and was caught in the first control. ***No scarf, yeah.****"*

The fact that she reiterates in English (her English was extremely limited) that she had to remove her headscarf suggests that it was significant for her. This perceived need to uncover in order to perform convincingly as a European woman and as a legitimate traveller is indicative of the ways in which women's bodies are adorned with cultural markers that identify them as same or other. In doing this, the smuggler is conveying his practical understanding of what 'European women' look like, and how a 'normal' European female body is presented. Amena must perform to this standard, rather than enacting the sociocorporeal standard that is more familiar to her, of women covering their hair.

This is also not to say that the more familiar sociocorporeal practices are somehow essential, less performed and more 'authentic'. However, taking up unfamiliar practices in an unfamiliar context *is* experienced differently, precisely because of that unfamiliarity. Amena's headscarf and the practice of wearing it is a routinised, everyday performance of her identity as a Muslim woman. It is only upon being confronted with a strange context and with the gaze of unfamiliar others does this everyday object become a marker of difference and a potential threat to her mobility.

In other contexts, female travelling bodies must perform within different sociocorporeal settings, with different sedimented practices that mark them as either legitimate or suspicious. Abrihet, who identifies as Orthodox Christian, used the fake passport of a black Saudi woman in order to fly to France, and travelled with a Saudi man who she told me could easily obtain travel visas

because he works for the Saudi royal family. She covered her body and face as is common for women in Saudi Arabia and travelled with a male companion, performing as his wife. She describes the experiences as follows:

"Er, in that flight it was nothing, normal. I am very confident of something, if I start doing something, I'm ready for what's gonna happen as well…I'm ready for good and bad. But I wasn't really scared, anything, just, I speak Arabic very well…I was… Even the accent it was like black Saudians […] I just come, and…you know some people go to take off their abaya, see them, but that's my chance was no one seen me, and just cross there, you know know when you give passport? The man who fake my husband…I just call him the businessman, he just give them my passport, his passport. In Saudis, like wife…always give something do for his wife [to the] man, not woman. Should I hold my passport, no, he just give them to. He is businessman, he know what he doing. I just come

(Abrihet, Ethiopia).

Abrihet's sense of confidence expressed in this passage also perhaps demonstrates her familiarly with precarity, having spent nearly nine years in Saudi Arabia as an irregular migrant. The embodied performances expressed by Abrihet and Amena are especially interesting because the particular engagement with material objects (or the conspicuous absence thereof in the case of Amena), in this case the head scarf or *abaya*, in the context of these border performances. We can see this in other instances where material objects, saturated with cultural meaning and significance, are mobilised in order to lend legitimacy to a border performance. On the train from Italy to France, Adnan tried to act as if he was sleeping in order to avoid being asked for his documents by the border

control officers. However this was ultimately unsuccessful and he was taken into detention in France before being returned to Italy. He explained:

"Our mistake was, we pretended to be asleep. This is not a good way. The policeman came back and caught us together, and caught about six or five Afghans. They…and there were lots of Syrians in the train. But you have to fool them. You have to have either a newspaper, or a novel, or listen to music with, like, a kind of headset, a big one"

(Adnan, Syria).

Learning from this experience, he and his friends interacted with objects as props – headphones, a water bottle, a book – and used these objects in their performance as legitimate travellers:

"*And I went to the train. This time would not pretend to be asleep. The control came back again. I pretend to be drinking water and my friend, one of them, reading a novel, another listening to music, yes…They went down. And we knew that we were now in Nice."*

These mundane, everyday objects, in this context, serve a dual function: (i) in their mundaneity as commonplace objects of travel, they help to render banal the presence of the strangers that are occupying a space that they are not supposed to occupy, and (ii) they 'make busy' these bodies so that they are not exposed by their idleness to unwelcome interactions. To focus on the body as the site of performance is therefore not to discount the important role of 'things' in performance acts. These 'things', like the bodies they interact with, are replete with contingent meanings in a material-discursive world. Indeed, in this case it is

precisely in interacting with these props that these refugee bodies are able to shift, if only for a few moments, between the categories of 'legitimate' and illegitimate' traveller. However, as these experiences demonstrate, these performances are often unsuccessful, as participants fail to successfully (re)orient themselves during these strange encounters. It is to these failures, and in many cases, the impossibility of "acting legal" that this discussion will now turn.

1.3 "Looking European" and Failed/Impossible Performances

The above examples offer a compelling glance at the ways that embodied performance acts can allow certain travellers to shift, if only fleetingly, between the categories of 'illegitimate' and 'legitimate'. However, in the narratives collected, this privileged position was often reserved for wealthier, "European-looking" Syrian refugees. Wealthier because air travel is the safest, fastest, and therefore most expensive option offered by smugglers, according to my participants. And "European-looking" both because the stolen passports of white Europeans were more readily available, and because "looking European" was seen as a pre-requisite to being able to convincingly pass as a legitimate traveller. A number of participants who travelled in this way expressed that this intimately corporeal and seemingly immutable characteristic was integral to their capacity to travel by these means:

"My face, maybe look like a European face"

(Mehmoud, Syria).

"I been told that my face looks more than others, like European, because I am blond, and they advise me to take a flight to get my way there"

(Yusuf, Syria).

However, for many participants, the capacity to perform as a regular traveller was simply impossible. Compare the above examples with the following excerpts from my discussions with two black Sudanese men:

"From Italy to France there is also control point. Every time when we used the train, immediately when we enter the train, we go to toilet, and we close the door because the control they don't go to the toilet. We are hiding in the toilet that's it. I can't sit because they control will find them, because I am immigrant and I doesn't have any documentation"

(Hassan, Sudan)(I).

"I went to the toilet and hid in there whilst they were doing passport checks. People would try to open the door but when they saw me in there they would just say sorry and shut the door"

(Abdulaziz, Sudan)(I).

This is again not to say that the categorisations of race are somehow essential characteristics. Being associated with materially perceivable bodily attributes, much like sex (See Butler 1994), does not precede the concept's existence *with-the-world* nor does it precede the normative and evaluative judgments that are implicit to such categorisations. Race is not essential. However, its association with materially perceivable bodily attributes, such as skin colour, can make it *feel* immutable. These Black Sudanese participants cannot perform away their

blackness. They do not have the same privilege of being able to "act legitimate" in this context because their socially (re)produced bodily difference marks them out as illegitimate in this context.

Material, bodily attributes such as skin colour are differentiated only through meanings that are socially (re)produced and sedimented over time. But this does not negate the lived experience of racial difference. Structures of meaning are sedimented through repetition to produce enduring styles that inform, directly and indirectly, our own discursive interventions and bodily expressions. These structures are never entirely closed, however, and offer opportunities for reconfiguration. In some instances, the openness of these structures creates spaces of innovation and reorientation, such that sometimes, "European-looking" Syrians are able to convincingly reposition themselves, if only fleetingly, as 'legitimate' travellers. However, when these structures of meaning are so deeply embedded and correspond to materially perceivable attributes like skin colour, scope for performative subversion becomes diminished, hence why Hassan and Abdulaziz were compelled to eschew encounters with other bodies entirely in order to subvert border controls in spaces of regular travel. Performing legality, as the narratives of participants demonstrate, is only possible in a small number of circumstances, and in most cases refugees must find other ways to creatively respond to the constraints of their irregularity and its practical manifestations in context. The practice of hiding that Hassan and Abdulaziz describe above is widespread in irregular refugee travel, and will be discussed further in section three.

As I hope I have demonstrated in this section, the idea of embodied performances provides an interesting insight into some of the encounters that are thrown up during irregular travel. However, to take embodiment seriously is to consider the ways in which the body and bodily activities also expose the limits of refugees' capacities for subversive performance during their journeys. To begin with, there are many examples, some of which are detailed above, of failed performances, where participants describe unsuccessful attempts to "act legitimate". Simonsen understands this as "situations of failed orientations where bodies inhabit spaces that do not extend their reach, where they live with social experience of restriction, uncertainty and blockage" (Simonsen 2013, 20). Failed performances, when bodies orient themselves in one way, but are perceived in another, demonstrate the contingency of bodily orientation during strange encounters. But just as important are those many situations where refugees are unable even to attempt to "act legal", where they feel unable to orient themselves in a way that is convincing to the gaze of the bodies of border control. The absence of those most important objects of regular travel, the passport and visa, makes refugees more vulnerable to the symbolic and functional violent excesses of border control, and it is to the physical and affective encroachment of the politics of border control on the bodies of refugees that this discussion will now turn.

2. Vulnerable Bodies: Affective encounters at the border

A number of participants described diverse experiences of the bodies and contexts of border control encroaching violently upon their bodies "on the way". The sensibility of the body is what renders it vulnerable, because as Vasterling

argues, "…sensibility is also…a condition of unmasterable and vulnerable openness to excesses of affection" (Vasterling 2003, 216). However, this vulnerability is not homogeneously experienced, and certain bodies are more exposed than others to the "excesses of affection" in particular contexts. This section explores participants' experiences of these affective encounters that encroach violently upon their bodies.

2.1 Below Performance: Biomarkers and reading emotion off suspicious bodies

Both Adey (2009) and Martin (2010) have explored the biopolitics and securitisation of mobile bodies at airports in the context of the perceived threat of terrorism in contemporary societies. Bodies and their affects are increasingly scrutinised in airports using behavioural profiling techniques that police "intentions and emotions displayed in facial expressions" and other bodily movements and postures (Adey 2009, 280). Affect, then, becomes an object that can be known, and 'involuntary' movements of the face and body are considered to be "evidence of affective states" that "[render] passengers' internal, hidden intentions and desires as visual information" (L. Martin 2010, 26). These 'affective micro-expressions' (ibid., 30) are bodily manifestations associated with particular emotions. Both Adey and Martin's accounts focus on those tools and techniques of detecting affect, but equally interesting is how certain categories of persons experience these embodied, relational emotions. Descriptions of experienced micro-expressions during the process of irregular travel emerged in the narratives of participants:

"It's hard to do, but I don't…er…forget what happened with me before I go to gate to catch the plane to UK. I'm very… [touches palm of one hand with the fingers of the other] sweating, and give paper to…I'm very fear about this. I don't use this way in my life. It's first time I do this. This my feeling. Even I am sitting in my chair, in plane. I'm sitting, look if security come to me, asking me…no, I'm very nervous"

(Mehmoud, Syria).

Mehmoud's body responds to feelings of fear and anxiety by starting to sweat, a physical manifestation of the emotions that emerge through the experience of trying to travel irregularly using a fake passport. The unfamiliarity of the situation for Mehmoud is apparent when he asserts, *"I'm very fear about this. I don't use this way in my life. It's first time I do this."* However, he is not unaccustomed to travel and airports, indeed he worked for a travel agency prior to the civil war in Syria and would often travel abroad as part of his job. It is not, therefore the space of the airport or the process of passing through border security *per se* that incites these feelings of unease, but the practice of doing so irregularly. This visceral sensation emerges in response to this strange encounter with a previously familiar setting. There are both discursive and material elements that can be linked to the constitution of Mehmoud's changing sense of vulnerability and the emotions that emerge in this scenario. The discursive labeling of "illegal migrants" creates categories of legitimate and illegitimate travelers, and Mehmoud's newly established position within the latter category is clearly implicated in his corporeal experiences of passing through border security in Sao Paulo airport. But in conjunction with this discursive categorisation, the material presence or absence of regular travel

documents transforms the whole scene from one of habitual and trivial encounters (how we might expect a frequent flyer to feel) to one of characterised by strangeness and fear. Being part of this category of "illegal migrants" does not, in Mehmoud's case, prevent him from travelling altogether. However, it does inscribe particular vulnerabilities on the persons that are categorised in this way, which in Mehmoud's case, provokes an emotional/visceral response that risks exposing him as "out of place". Other participants described a similar response to crossing borders in a variety of different contexts. Estelle tells of her experience crossing the border from Côte d'Ivoire to Ghana:

"Even if someone just hold my, my, my hands, you can know what is going on because it's like, when…when I get some problem or some bad feeling, I shake. Like…even if you are there you trying, you know with that things. When you put long dress no one can see"

(Estelle, Côte d'Ivoire).

Estelle articulates an awareness of her body's ability to 'give the game away', and even tries to negotiate this visceral response by wearing a long dress so that no one can see her hands shaking. Elsewhere, Adnan recounts the experience of hiding in a lorry whilst attempting to pass the border security at the Eurotunnel in Calais:

"I covered my face, first, because I don't want to know where I am? Why? Because when you know where you are, you feel like afraid, and your body started to, let's say, have…I don't know the name of the hormone…okay, the dog would smell that hormone…"

(Adnan, Syria).

Similarly, Adnan expresses an awareness of how his body can act against him in this context, and tries to practically mediate this by covering his eyes so that he can't see when he was passing border control. By doing this he is able to mediate the sense of fear that he believes would put him at risk of being discovered.

There is a well-established body of literature discussing the biopolitics of border control (See for example Ajana 2013; Lodge 2007; Muller 2010), and the numerous ways in which techniques of reading the body and its identity markers are mobilised in order to police and prevent unwanted mobilities. The EURODAC fingerprint database is one of the most well known and widely discussed of these techniques in the asylum context. As explained in Chapter I, EURODAC is a centralised fingerprint database used for the effective application of the Dublin III Regulation, which determines the state responsible for an asylum application. What this means in practice is that, if an asylum seeker's fingerprints are taken in another EU member state, once they have arrived in the UK and try to submit an asylum application that person is then liable to be deported to that EU member state in accordance with the Dublin III Regulation. This policy is also well known amongst refugees travelling irregularly as indicated by Abdulaziz:

"We all agreed on the boat that no one gives fingerprints. We knew from Libya that you shouldn't give fingerprints or you get left in the streets"

(Abdulaziz, Sudan)(I).

"Actually, the police of Italia are liars. They told us that, "We will take your fingerprints not for asylum, it is just to show that you have crimes? Are you members of the IS [Islamic State]? Just. If you are not, we will release you!" Even we

rejected. All immigrants know they are liars. So, at 10 p.m., they violently, and forcibly, they took my fingerprints. They hit me on his nose, and broke my glasses, because we rejected to give our fingerprints. One man, they broke the arm of one man. They hit us on the face, on the arms, and some people had broken teeth. And finally, they took our fingerprints forcibly. They put our hands on the scanner and took our fingerprints"

(Hashim, Syria)(I).

Hashim was caught in this situation, and at the time of our interview was waiting to attend court for a judicial review of his removal order under Dublin. He expressed an ongoing feeling of worry about the threat of removal, saying that after exerting so much effort towards reaching the UK being sent back to Italy would be *"catastrophic"*. He explained:

"I was taken once to the airport to be sent back to Italy, but I refused, I rejected to get in the plane, and made a problem or confusion in the airport, because I was not taken in a decent way, it was like a criminal, and if I had known my fingerprint would have done such a thing, I would have cut my fingers, because I can never imagine living in Italy after that bad experience."

In the first set of examples, participants' bodies react - through shaking or sweating - to an environment or event in a way that is beyond the stated will or desire of the narrator, and which is in fact potentially dangerous or damaging to their mobilities. In the example of Hashim, parts of the body - even something as seemingly inconsequential as the tiny friction ridges of fingers - become imbued with such negative symbolic and material importance that this invokes feelings of alienation and contempt towards those body parts. Hashim now feels so

imprisoned by his fingerprints that he feels that he would have been better off inflicting physical bodily harm on himself in order to try and free himself from the constraints of his body. In this way, his "body itself becomes the source of suffering" (Ataria 2016, 225).

Bodily fluids, body parts, and bodily activities (Weiss 1999) take on particular meanings in the examples given above, and participants express a desire to suppress or hide these elements of corporeality that threaten to expose their bodies as "out of place". Merleau-Ponty, in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, argues that the habitual body experiences harmony between intention and performance, which is manifest in the phrase, "I can". This embodied action is practical, habitual, and spontaneous. However, as the above discussion shows, disorientation is not evenly distributed between bodies, and "some bodies more than others experience crisis in their involvement in the world. In such cases, Merleau-Ponty's hopeful utterance 'I can' will in these cases be better replaced by 'I cannot'" (Simonsen 2013, 20). "I cannot" stop my palms from sweating because of the fear I feel in response to being "out of place" in a given context, and it threatens to give my body away. "I cannot" perform away my blackness and how it is perceived in a European cultural context.

As feminist scholars have argued, 'normal' body images, such as those associated with a legitimate traveller, are only sustained through a disavowal of those bodily processes that do not fit within this body schema. Gail Weiss argues that those bodily sensations that are excluded from the realm of "normal" behaviour are *not eradicated*, however, and they continually "erupt", disrupting those

privileged sites of inclusion (ibid., 90). This can be evidenced at the level of the practical, interactive body, where attempts to behave like normal bodies in a given context and to exclude those bodily doings that are "out of place" are overwhelmed by the body's habitual, affective response to feelings of fear, or of anxiety. And indeed, in the case of irregular travel, these 'abnormal' bodily sensations are incorporated into the technical apparatus that helps to identify which bodies are 'normal' in the context of border crossings. These techniques of border control anticipate these "eruptions", such that these bodily transgressions risk exposing refugees as "out of place".

As was discussed above, embodied performances can be unconvincing and ultimately unsuccessful because of the simultaneously constrained/enabling nature of the relational and socially mediated body. But the habitual, affected body and how it responds to perceived threats below the level of performance and at the level of bodily sensations can act as another form of embodied constraint in this context. However, Hashim's encounter with the Italian police also draws our attention to another common experience felt at the level of the body that was articulated by a number of participants who attempted to cross borders or transit countries irregularly, that is, those experiences of bodily violence and abuse *en route.*

2.2 Fear and Violent Encounters at the Borders

Beyond the symbolic violence, felt affects and creative responses to the above techniques of bio-control, there are many examples of the use of excessive physical violence and abuse at the hands of the bodies of border control that

emerged in the narratives of participants. Stories of failed performances with the various bodies of border control in these spaces of regular travel at times give way to stories of violent encounters as refugee bodies were discovered as "out of place". The following passage narrated by Hussain exemplifies the physical and emotional violence inflicted on refugees' bodies by these hostile bodies of border control. Hussain attempted to fly to Italy from Turkey, but upon arrival in Italy was apprehended by border guards who detained him, along with other Syrians who had been caught, before deporting them back to Turkey. He articulated the events as follows:

*"…And after six hour, they told us again, "Hey we going, we got your tickets, and you have to go to Turkey." We told him, "No, we don't want." And, after two days, oh, yeah, yeah 48 hours we stayed there, alright? Er, They sent us, I dunno what, I dunno if they are police or something, but, absolutely it's police. They came and forced us to get the plane***,** *by hitting, they hitting us, hitting us, we all scream, scream, "Ahhhh!" Hitting us, hitting us, to get the plane. And they hit us in the plane, before, no, in the plane they didn't hit us, but when we reach the plane they told us, "Okay, everything okay, we will go to Turkey, don't 'fraid, we will, we won't send you to Syria." So, yeah…When we get a plane, I know the aeroplane rules, so if we don't want get the plane, the captain of the plane will come and ask you, "You don't want this trip?" And I said, "No." He will let me get off, from the plane. So I, wait, for peoples get in the plane. When they are, get the plane, I started screaming, "Help! Help! I'm from Syria and the police here hits me. Help me! Please help me!" Something like this. And, "I will complain to United Nation, and please take a photo and pictures for me, please take videos." And I was like this you know [puts both*

hands behind back to gesture that he was restrained], in the back seat of in plane…So, er, I started screaming, and two Syrians, er, was afraid [laughs]. I was dealing with them before we get in the plane, "We have to scream in the plane, captain of the plane will come to us and ask us if you don't want to travel." And I so…I screamed for 40 minutes, until I lose my voice, and everybody was like this, all passengers was like this [makes gesture]. And this 40 minutes, was hitting us in my stomach, and trying to…to…they have like, erm, like soft papers you know like this [gestures over mouth], and wants me to sleep. They want me to sleep, yeah. But they couldn't do that with me. And after this 40 minutes I became, I was calling for captains, and he didn't respond, 'cause the plane was Italian aeroplane, was Italian aeroplane, yeah.

So that's what happened. I was lost, very lost. I crying [nervous laughter], everyday I was crying. And I got depressed all the time. In home. I don't go out. All the time I smoke. I smoke about three to four packet per day, and crying…'cause, 'cause, erm, I felt my dignity hurt. okay? And I'm, I'm not this kind of people, alright? I didn't expect that I would reach to this level, someone don't want me, and want me to go out of his country. 'Cause other time, other time, how can explain this? It was difficult for my feelings, my dignity. My dignity is broken. 'Twas, I wasn't scum in my country, I was civil engineering… So that's what happened. And I stayed, after this accident, about three month"

(Hussain, Syria).

Hussain recounts in detail the physical violations inflicted upon his body as he resisted deportation from Italy to Turkey. He showed me photographs of the

injuries he sustained during this encounter. He suffered blows to the head, was forcibly restained and, by the sounds of it, sedated after attempting to prevent the deportation by screaming to draw attention to himself. The violence and brute corporeality of this encounter is palpable. However what is also notable is the powerful emotional response, and feeling of total disorientation that this interaction engendered. Hussain describes himself as "*lost*", *"depressed"* and ashamed by what has happened, which manifests itself physically through tears and lethargy. He later tells me, "*I didn't care about travelling, or my future, or… I just want eat, smoke and sleep"*. The violent events that transpired were thus powerfully affective, significantly encroaching on Hussain's physical/emotional body and disorienting his sense of self and of purpose. There were several other participants who described violent encounters with border guards or police during their journeys and many more who felt a strong sense of fear at the prospect of interacting with these hostile bodies of border control.

Another poignant story of violence emerged during discussions with Amena, a Kurdish Syrian woman who described being apprehended by the Greek police after crossing the land border with Turkey. In this instance, it was a failure to hide from these arbiters of border control that engendered this violent encounter. Upon encountering the Greek authorities in the mountains after crossing the border, Amena tried to escape by running away. However, she was caught. She recounts being taken to a set of buildings along with a number of other people who had been caught crossing the border irregularly, where they were *"checked and inspected"*. She described the event as follows:

"They asked one man, "Put your things on the table. And then get stripped off." Completely nude. And they started to check even the hair, even the private parts, everything […] They used bad, foul names, and mocking their shapes and their faces and their bodies. They used bad words just to describe their bodies."

Amena had explained to me earlier that she speaks some Greek because she has relatives living in Cyprus, and spent time there prior to the outbreak of war in Syria. This is why she could understand the police when they were speaking disparagingly about the bodies of the refugees they had apprehended. She continued:

"They checked all men, even there was one man in particular who has a broken leg, it was swollen, and they did not accept that, they checked him. When they came to our turn, to the women, only two women, I was about to faint. What will we do? We cannot tolerate the same way like men. When they were just two women, there were three policemen. One of them was a little bit lenient. He noticed that I could speak Greek, he signed to me with his eyes, "No, don't speak Greek, just save yourself." When they approached me, I defended herself, I said, "Don't touch me." We were crying at that time, and the lenient one, asked the policemen, the other two policemen, "Please, let's bring a policewoman to check them." One policewoman checked me, and she discovered that I had a mobile phone, that's why she got angry and tried to strip me off, to get my clothes off, but I refused […] The other woman had a policeman, not a policewoman in a room, and she was crying very, very loudly. And, she had two pairs of trousers together. They noticed there was two, they said what is this? We want to see what is there? And they tried to take one of the pairs of trousers off, and they managed to do it. They took the two

pairs of trousers off, just because…she was crying very loudly. We were simultaneously being checked. I had a policewoman, and the other woman had more than one policeman, because the first policeman asked her to get her clothes off, and she refused, and he started, he tried to get her clothes off, but she refused and started shouting and cursing him in some Kurdish words. Then, they managed to get the two pairs of trousers off, but she had underwear. I was, at that time, I was being checked, and the one policeman approached. I was…some of my body was uncovered, and he saw some parts of my breast, but the policewoman got angry because I started to cover herself, and took my mobile phone, and threw it on the ground."

(Amena, Syria) (I).

She described this event in detail, recounting how their bodies were scrutinised, mocked and violated by these hostile bodies of border control, explaining how she was reduced to tears at the prospect of being stripped and searched by a male police officer, and the discomfort she felt from her female body being subject to the gaze of a strange male body. She later described the events as "*like a horror film"*, indicating the fear and shock that these experiences invoked in her. The violence inflicted at the level of the body that this story depicts is striking, and this account from Amena demonstrates how these violent practices are felt by those experiencing bodies that are subjected to them. However, in the narratives of some participants these episodes of violence were interspersed with a more complex affective engagement with the bodies of border control, which I will discuss further below.

2.3 Beyond Hostility? Nuancing Encounters with 'Hostile' Bodies at the Border

Section 2 focused on the dramatic performances of irregular travellers, however we can equally understand the role of the border guards or other 'hostile bodies' as performative. This is a more habitual performance, however, where border guards perform their assigned role as arbiters of restrictive politics. They are taught, and learn through embodied experience, how to interact with travellers, and how to perform the techniques used to identify and prevent irregular travel. We have seen this above, both in the section on hostile encounters, where border guards enact serious physical harm on those who try to subvert those controls that they are meant to be policing, and also in the section on performing at the border, where participants recount the habitual behavior of border guards as they use learned techniques in order to try and identify the *"exotic behavior"* of irregular travellers. However, although many participants recounted hostile encounters with police and border control officers, and acknowledgment of these violent interactions is vital to a study of refugee journeys, in some cases a more nuanced picture is necessary in order to understand the complexity of these embodied encounters. Ayoub recounts an interaction he had with border guards after being caught trying to board a flight with a stolen passport at Istanbul Attaturk airport:

"He just, small laugh, smile like this and he said, "Okay." I said to him I was afraid, because it's security you know, it's airport. I said, "What will happen?" He said, "Don't worry, don't worry. It take maybe one, two days to let you go." I said, "It's

okay." And he sent me to the other room after that he just want me to wait, wait, wait. They are, was enough good with us, really"

(Ayoub, Syria).

Adnan also described a story of being apprehended, along with two friends, by the Italian police after being returned to Italy by the French police in France:

"I told them, "Why are you doing like that, why are you treating us like that? We are human beings, we are not animals." They said, "Okay, we are sorry, this is our job. We cannot leave you, we cannot…release you without having your details. So what's our job if we release you?""

(Adnan, Syria).

After they refused to give their fingerprints for fear of being registered on the EURODAC system, the police officers tried, using violence and physical force, to get them to register their fingerprints before being released. However at the same time as exhibiting aggressive and seemingly callous behavior the police were in fact apologetic when challenged by Adnan about their behavior. Elsewhere Adnan recounts the experience of being apprehended by the police whilst trying to sneak onto a boat in a Greek port: *"…one of them told us, he said, before his friends, "I wish you all go to Europe, but this is my job."* Hassan, from Sudan, also describes an interaction with the French police in Calais:

"There is some control point in France, sometimes they find us before they get to England, and take us out. They say, "You have to go, today no chance. Go, come back"… The police they tell us, "This chance is not, no luck"

(Hassan, Sudan)(I).

The interpreter who I worked with during Hassan's interview was so surprised to hear that the police had been so candid in their interaction with Hassan that she stopped and said, *"Really?! Did they actually say that to you?"* There is an interesting glimmer of sympathy that can be drawn from these excerpts. Even though the police officers are in many ways performing and conforming to their roles as arbiters of restrictive border policies and the norms that correspond to these policies (*"This is our job"),* within this intimate interaction emerges a hint of sympathy, even a playfulness in the case of Hassan's experience. To see the bodies of police and border guards as simply vessels of border enforcement and restrictive politics is to ignore the material complexity of *their* encounters with refugees and other irregular travellers and the sometimes conflicting or surprising emotional responses that can emerge during these interactions.

3. Hiding and Encounters in the Detours of Irregular Travel

Despite this necessary nuancing of these encounters, the threats to bodily integrity and the sometimes equally affective sense of immobility that interactions with the bodies of border control engender nevertheless create a context where refugees are driven/drawn to ways *around* these encounters. This is alluded to in the previous chapter where it is argued that refugees' journeys are often diverted into a whole manner of cracks and crevices by virtue of being excluded or at risk in spaces and modes of regular travel. Attempts to avoid these hostile bodies and the spaces of regular travel that are oftentimes inaccessible for refugees without the 'correct' travel document, engender embodied encounters with a whole host of spaces, bodies and things, some of which will be explored in this section.

In the development of this chapter I began to critically appraise the privileging of encounters that I had made so central to my analytical approach. This is because, for many participants who do not have the privilege of even attempting to perform as 'legitimate' travellers, it is the non-encounter, rather than the encounter, that is the key component of their irregular travel. Through avoiding encounters with the bodies of border control, participants were able to bypass confrontations that may impede their mobility or, as the above section shows, threaten their bodily integrity.

3.1 Hiding and the Importance of Non-encounters in Irregular Travel

Stories detailing the necessity of the 'non-encounter' are scattered throughout the narratives of many participants. As such, the privileging of encounters that this approach has advocated for is naïve if it does not also take into account the significance of non-encounters between particular bodies during irregular travel.

"So I know it is very hard, you know, you scared, it is very dark place…we hide…when we walk you go by silence, so you scared because maybe the police come to catch you something like that, so, every time you very afraid"

(Mariam, Eritrea).

"This journey was, of course, in night, just to hide ourselves from the police, and when we crossed the river, we walked, we tried to go away from the river, and when the dawn broke, we hid ourselves because the road was very close to us, and we could be caught, and then we would be returned back"

(Amena, Syria)(I).

Dramatic performances and mediated engagements with the bodies of border control, form but one small, and in many ways privileged method of irregular border crossings. What was certainly a more common occurrence for the participants I spoke with were attempts to hide and therefore avoid *any* encounter with the hostile bodies and objects of border control. These encounters were considered at worst to be dangerous to their bodily integrity and safety, and at best a frustration of their attempts to move. In a discursive and material environment constructed to immobilise, or at least decelerate refugee travel, and with the many hostile bodies and objects of border control functioning to serve the purpose of restriction, it is unsurprising that practices of hiding were commonly expressed amongst participants travelling irregularly. Of course, these 'non-encounters' with the obstacles of border control engender a plethora of other encounters, as travellers are pushed/drawn to other spaces, things and people in order to move. More generally, many of the encounters with harsh, unfamiliar landscapes, uncomfortable and dangerous modes of travel and many of the other things and bodies of irregular travel occur *because* irregular travellers have to avoid encounters with those hostile bodies, things and spaces that form part of the apparatus that inhibits their mobility. So whilst I would still argue that journeying is replete with encounters as bodies move through time-space, the potential violence of encounters with other, more powerful bodies means that non-encounters, or to put it more simply, hiding from others, emerges as a key practice in the mobilities of many participants who travelled irregularly for a part, most, or all of their journey.

3.2 The Many Encounters of Irregular Travel

To facilitate these non-encounters, refugees travelling irregularly often interact with agents who they pay to assist them in moving irregularly. This was certainly the case for participants who travelled irregularly for part or all of their journeys. The violence inflicted upon the bodies of refugees by smugglers or those working for smugglers is well-documented in research on irregular migration.[35] And indeed, stories of bodily harm inflicted upon their own bodies or other refugee bodies by smugglers were also prevalent in the narratives collected, as was a sense of fear that emerged in response to these threats of violence. The particular threat to female bodies by smugglers, or 'agents' as they are more commonly referred as by participants, was also alluded to in the narratives of a number of participants, who had heard stories of or had witnessed episodes of sexual violence towards women. Yohanna describes a situation with Libyan agents that occurred whilst she was crossing the Sahara:

"So, when we got into the smaller cars, the Libyans insisted that they had a few females that they wanted to have them in the front seats. And it was a clear indication that they wanted to rape them"

(Yohanna, Eritrea) (I).

Later, when she spent time under the watch of smugglers in a large hangar where she lived for two months whilst waiting to travel from Libya to Europe, she recounts the sense of fear that she felt:

[35] See, for example, Amnesty International (2015) ""Libya Is Full of Cruelty": Stories of Abductions, Sexual Violence and Abductions from Migrants and Refugees."

"I was totally terrified, so I did not even get up from my position. But I have witness lots of people who were beaten up with plastic rubber, who had major scars in their bodies."

However, although many encounters on the way were marked by feelings of strangeness and dissonance and were oftentimes violent and disorienting, between these encounters glimmer stories of encounters with others marked by kindness and friendship. Strangeness or unfamiliarity does not always equate to unease or hostility, and not all encounters with 'other' bodies and spaces result in "failed orientations" and social experiences of "restriction, uncertainty and blockage" (Simonsen 2013). As well as the many violent and threatening encounters with other bodies that participants experienced on the way, there were also many stories exhibiting the "kindness of strangers". These encounters often arose with people of the same nationality who participants connected to via extended social networks or who they happened upon by chance, and who provided some form of help and assistance:

"I had a friend of a friend meet me at the station in Napoli. He bought a ticket for me and him to go to Roma. I don't know how long the train lasted. I sat for five days in his house. He was kind to me"

(Abdulaziz, Sudan)(I).

"…we went to Paris first. There we met one person. They could give us food and help us, but they couldn't take us into their homes, they themselves had no papers. They really helped us, too much, they gave us money to go from Calais"

(Evariste, Burundi).

The person that Evariste met was himself living irregularly without papers in France, and yet provided what assistance he could. One of the participants, Yusuf, described his own role in providing assistance and friendship to a fellow traveller. Yusuf agreed to travel by land through Albania to reach the EU, even though he had the option and financial resources to travel by plane, because a fellow traveller that he had met on the way who was travelling with his 13-year-old son asked him to travel with them through Albania. This fellow traveller told Yusuf that his son had become attached to him and asked him to travel with them to provide support and assistance to them both. Yusuf describes feeling a desire to help this boy and his father and explains that this is why he took this longer and more difficult route and rejected the possibility of travelling by much quicker and safer means. There were also a number of participants who recounted interactions with members of charities or organisations that provided food and other assistance to refugees "on the way". For example, Musa described the 'love' he feels towards the members of French charities that he interacted with during his time in Calais:

"*Yeah. The French people, they are beautiful. They are awesome. They help to, to the people, as a…give them money, give them everything, they are very kind people. I love them"*

(Musa, Iran).

Participants also spoke of encounters with local residents who provided them help during difficult situations. Amena recalled an encounter with a local Turkish man after spending days travelling through forests and mountains by foot and subsequently being caught and sent back over the border by Greek police:

"…when we arrived on the Turkish house, we knocked on the door, and there was an old Turkish man came out and understood everything, because that area, you know, lots of immigrants pass that way. And he got a knife and released the hands of all. He helped us for water, he brought us water, and he brought me a new pair of shoes"

(Amena, Syria)(I).

Encounters with strangers that emerge during travel are not always and inevitably threatening, and can provide a source of familiarity and support during events that are otherwise marked by turbulence and unease. Amena's thirsty, tired and bound body found brief relief in this strange encounter. That is not to say that interactions between travellers and between travellers and other bodies are always harmonious and never violent. Indeed, earlier in her story Amena narrated witnessing a fight that broke out between refugees who were cramped together in the back of a police van. However, these experiences echo with the assertion made earlier in this thesis that encounters with others and the world can be disorientating, violent and shocking, as they can be comforting, reassuring and familiar, even in situations where participants are seemingly 'out of place.'

3.3 Encounters with God

For a number participants, in amidst these encounters with strangers and unfamiliar places were encounters not with another material body, object or landscape, but with God. Although this thesis has advocated for a renewed focus on the lived body and its interactions with the world, the prevalence of the themes of God and faith in the narratives of participants requires that this focus

be nuanced with an understanding of 'lived religion', encounters with God, and of the integral role that spirituality can play in the emergence of meaning. The latter is explored in more detail in the chapter following this one. Indeed it could be argued that studies of embodied experience with their material focus on the visceral, the affective and the sensory risk overlooking spirituality as a potentially key facet of experience precisely because of its perceived immateriality.

References to religious practices or God were more strikingly present throughout the narratives of almost half of all participants. Interactions with God *during* journeys towards exile, often through the embodied process of prayer, are also present in the narratives of several participants. These encounters are embodied in the sense that they are mediated through the body's situatedness, and emerge as a result of the routinised and habitual performances of spirituality in everyday life. However, these 'encounters with God' during these journeys are distinct from the other forms of encounter explored in this chapter because they do not emerge in the relations between the lived body and the material world but rather in the relation between the lived body and the 'immaterial' entity of a divine presence. We can see this in the narrative of Amena as she describes her experiences on the sea crossing from Turkey to Greece, and in the narrative of Haben as she discusses her experiences during the journey by boat from Libya to Italy. Both women recount performing prayers and asking God to help them through dangerous events:

"I can't even explain it, it's a little hard. We are praying, because of the wind, because we are finishing the petrol"

(Haben, Eritrea)

"When the waves started to rise, some water got into the boat, and we started crying, and we tried to fasten themselves, or not to move, we tried to keep ourselves without moving, and starting the same, praying for God to save us"

(Amena, Syria)(I).

Adel left Afghanistan aged 15. His father's friend took him to an agent who helped him leave the country and then passed him over to another agent, telling him, *"If you don't listen to him, [he'll] just kill you."* He then recounted his journey by lorry to the UK:

"Yeah, just that people just tell me just "Shhh." I just, nothing, just quiet and pray all the time, like, "Please God, save me""

(Adel, Afghanistan).

In these situations of extreme desperation and bodily insecurity where participants express fearing for their lives, performing prayer and supplication, or interacting with God, appears to be a way of trying to gain a modicum of purchase on an incredibly unstable situation. Pleading with God to spare them from that most material of experiences, death, demonstrates how spirituality and materiality can be deeply enmeshed in experience.[36] Situations of uncertainty and bodily discomfort other than perilous travel can also invoke

[36] Carling and Hernández Carretero observe a similar mediation of risk through the lens of religion in the case of Senegalese migrants undertaking boat journeys across the Mediterranean (Carling and Hernández Carretero 2012, 414–15).

encounters with God. Mariam narrated her experiences of staying in the Calais 'jungle' as follows:

"Even at that time, there is some rain, do you know, that place it's not clean…ugh…two days, I never sleep, I sitting in there, because too much people, there is no place even for sleep, you know….Just we are at that place, I prayed, you know? That place, God, where, where am I going? Even I don't know anything"

(Mariam, Eritrea).

If we must take seriously the myriad relations and encounters that make up embodied experiences then we cannot discount encounters with those 'things' traditionally considered to belong to the 'immaterial' world of spirituality but that are in fact intricately connected to the lived world. Although common understandings of spirituality, especially in Western societies, consider it as dichotomous to materiality, more recent scholarship has explored the intricately embodied nature of spirituality and 'lived religion' (McGuire 2003). 'Lived religion' is that which is practiced and experienced in everyday life. McGuire argues that spirituality and the material body are often fundamentally imbricated (ibid., 1). The concept of 'lived religion' resonates with the broader theoretical approach of this thesis, and allows us to consider both the embodied practices that are critical to the phenomenon of spirituality, and the way in which understandings of spirituality fold into experiences and the sense people make of these experiences (which will be further explored in the next chapter). The role of faith in forced migration has also developed in recent years as an important area of study (See, for example, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; Gozdziak and Shandy 2002). And whilst this section cannot do justice to the complex

entanglement of spirituality and lived experience in the lives of refugees with religious faith, it can hopefully serve to demonstrate the potential significance of spirituality and its role in lived experience and in the emergence of meaning during journeys towards exile.

4. Navigating the Landscapes of Irregular Travel

As I outlined in the introduction to this chapter, not all encounters involve "face-to-face meetings" with other human bodies, and in understanding experience it can be equally fruitful to engage with embodied encounters with the mélange of landscapes, people and things that all interweave in the emergence of experience. Although exploring dyadic encounters with other human bodies has exposed some interesting insights into the ways in which refugees experience irregular travel, it is also important to consider how the body is immersed in and responds to different physical environments during journeys to the UK. Because, as Merleau-Ponty argues, **"**this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world reflects it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world" (VI 248-9), and as Vasterling argues, the sensible/sentient body is "capable of being affected and moved by its surroundings" (2003, 213-214). Many of the narratives of irregular travel highlighted not just encounters with other bodies but also with the diverse landscapes and modes of travel of irregular journeys. The narratives of experiences in these contexts possessed an often striking viscerality. Indeed, in harsh environments, or during dangerous travel, visceral and emotional distress emerge as key facets of experience.

4.1 Encountering the Sahara

Hassan, a young man from Darfur, recounted with intricate detail his experience of being stranded in the Sahara desert with a group of other travellers between Sudan and Libya after the car they were travelling in broke down. The rich, descriptive detail of this account is illuminating of the corporeal experiences that emerge in this harsh, uninhabitable landscape. What follows is an extended except from Hassan's narrative. I have included the excerpt almost in its entirety because in this case I don't think breaking it down into fragments could do justice to the many nuances and glimmers of embodied interaction that emerge during this event.

"When the food finished in the desert, and you know in the desert there is nowhere to sit, everywhere is hot, sunny. The temperature is very, very, very high. Some people they lose their balance because there is no water, no food. Approximately eight people passed away, from the heat and the no food. It takes, after four days the car broken down, and after that the agent contact some person to bring help to us, like emergency, and after these four days, we have to wait three days for the agent to bring to them the support. After three days their people, the agent, they came. And because we waited three days in the heat, not even there is shadow, and when they came, they arrived after three days, the agent to help their people, they bring with them food and water. Some people, because for three days they didn't eat anything, they didn't drink anything, they started to drink water and to eat, these things affect their body organs, and they die. Like here there are some people they didn't immediately take food and drink, no, step by step, first, they try to make themselves wet, their body, and little, little, until their organism restart."

I then asked Hassan who he felt when the car broke down, to which he replied:

"Definitely fear. It is fear because you are in a numb place, there is nothing in the north or in the south, nobody there, even there is no car can pass through. Because already we covered long distance, four days. After four days, the car broke down, that means we stop in the area, there is nobody there, no life. And also, because when they contact to their people, even those people to come to help us, to support us, they took also three, four days, until to arrive this distance. Of course, fear, but also, all the people, after two days, we are unable to think, or to imagine what we have to do, even…"

At this point I interjected to ask if this was because they were so tired, to which Hassan responded:

"Yeah, we can't talk to each other, we just…everyone look to each other by the eyes, and everyone we know what this person thinks, what they got in their mind at this moment, because we can't talk because everything is dry, the lungs the throat…The agent, they told me, because without food, without water, without anything, the agent, they told me, you have to sit together because each one, they will give the warm from his body to another one. Still there is water, but not a lot of water, like, enough for us. From the morning they give us small cup, inside little water, and they told us this is the water that you have to drink now, and until the night, all day. Why they give us small amount of water? Because they don't know how long another car takes. They want to keep this water, to save this water as much as they can. People who drive the car, the driver, they just want to drink water. After three days, we all, and the drivers, in the same situation. They same we all being in the

same level, no one better than the other. Even the car, the water inside the carburetor, they drink it. At the same time, an agent, they have their thuraya[37], to call another agent to tell them where they are exactly, to find them. After two days, even nobody unable to talk, even the talk maybe one or two, all the people like that, including me. I have seen four people pass away, and also, those people who passed away still with us, nobody can move them or put them in the grave. Even the driver, an agent driver, even they are unable to talk because no more water, and I took this thing to talk to people who will support or help us. Still I talk with the people, guide them […] I tried to check up all the people who already lose their mind to check their bag to check if there was any documentation or any things. Why he check the people, because I think, maybe we will die, nobody knows, at least I wants to collect all documentation or all passports for all people to put in a safe place at the end, when, if it happens and they all die, if someone will pass through the area, they will find those people from where, because different nationalities, they will know from their passport. Even because why? This documentation is not destroyed, will not die the same as a human being […] To guide the people, who is in this place…Eritrea, Somalia…from their passport. Because they put the passport in the car. The third day, at night, they called, an agent, and I answered the phone, but even it is difficult for me to talk, like my lips moving, but no words. Then, at night I have seen a light from far, because it is night, dark, but even I can't stand up and to raise my hand or something to show them that we are here because I was very tired…The driver…also, I, like dizzy and I feel numb…but I want to tell him to go to the car, and take the gun, and you can shoot, but because I am dry, my mouth, I

[37] 'Thuraya' is the brand name of a satellite phone, made by a mobile satellite service provider of the same name.

can't talk. What I did, I pulled him, because the car here, and he was four metre far from the car. I pulled him to the car, and after that, I show him what he has to do. Because he thinks I want the telephone, he give me the telephone, I said no. After that, I point him to gun. When I put him near to the car, he opened the door of the car. I told him, open the door, and he opened the door, and I told him about the gun, about the weapon. After that when he shot to make a sound, and they saw the fire, and they understand, okay, the people they there. After when we shoot the fire, they know the place, they came the same time. Those people who came to help them only two, driver and the one next to him. Only there is two men, and how they have to help 36 people, all in the desert. When they came they found that I was the only one who can move. When they arrive I asked them, "Please, give me the water, because now, I am unable to explain, give me the water to…after that I will explain." They refused to give me the water. They told me, "If you drink the water, you will die." They refused to give the water, just they put the water on my body, my face. They refused to give me the water to drink, just to make my skin wet. After when they put the water in my face, I found the balance back again in my body. After that when they put the water in my body, they gave me hot water to drink. After that when they, also they made the same thing, put the water on all the bodies of all the people, including those four people who passed away. I tried to tell them, explain, there is no point to put water on them, already they are passed away, and they didn't understand, they thought he told them, continue, put more water. Until the morning, some people they got their balance back, some people when they drink the water, because for long time, after barely drinking the water, they, like, they sick, and they vomit"

(Hassan, Sudan) (I).

The viscerality of this narrative is striking. The searing heat, the complete isolation, the lack of shade, food and water all fold into Hassan's body and the bodies of his fellow travellers creating powerful visceral responses that are narrated in this passage. The feeling of severe thirst, of hunger and bodily weariness, the dizziness and numbness, losing the ability to speak, stand, or even raise his hand are described by Hassan as the extremes of the environment encroach upon his body. An initial sense of fear becomes clouded by the fogginess of bodily tiredness, whereby Hassan expresses that he is no longer able to even think. Other travellers' bodies are unable to withstand the severity of the environment, and they perish. Because the environment has encroached so severely on their bodies, those habitual practices to relieve the bodily symptoms of heat and dehydration become a threat to their bodily integrity, as Hassan explains when he describes others vomiting and even dying after ingesting water when someone finally comes to their rescue. For Hassan and his fellow travellers, it is the involuntary immobility of being stranded in this strange and extreme environment that creates such a powerful, and in some cases overpowering, bodily impact. Experiences of 'waiting' in such an environment take on a whole new significance.

Later Hassan alludes to the resilience of objects and their purposiveness as he discusses collecting the passports of his fellow travellers during this time spend stranded in the middle of the desert, because "*this documentation is not destroyed, will not die the same as a human being*". The passports are able to

express the identities of bodies beyond their death, allowing for information about these bodies to be transmitted to families back home.

4.2 Embodied Encounters with Other Landscapes and Modes of Irregular Travel

Earlier in the chapter, we saw how context encroached upon the bodies of travellers via the techniques of border control. However, in the narrative of Hassan provided above, it is rather the hostility of the physical environment that emerges and encroaches Hassan's body. This is not to say that the mechanisms of border control are not implicated in these experiences, however. Indeed, it is precisely the lack of safe, legal routes that make travel through these environments and via these means necessary. There are many other examples of unfamiliar and hostile environments associated with irregular travel that were articulated in the narratives of participants. These spaces, and the particular modes of travel that are made use of in these environments were often that are articulated with reference to discomfort and physical stresses felt at the level of the body. Osman describes the experience of crossing the Mediterranean in a boat from Libya to Italy:

"I am feeling dead. No other feeling, dead. At any moment. Right side, water. Left side, water. People feel sick. Many problems. When water came inside, we took water out, but we did not have [gestures as if to scoop water with a cup and pour it out]. Women, they took their hijabs, you know hijabs? And… [gestures as if to remove hijab, put it in the water, then wring the water out of the headscarf]"

(Osman, Sudan).

Boat journeys are important because of their capacity to highlight how specific experiences of mobility, or movement, can elicit strong visceral responses that are significant to those narrating these events. Visceral feelings of nausea or "seasickness" were common amongst those who travelled using this means, a feeling which relates directly to the experience of movement, to the particular mode of mobility and the physical bodily sensations that travel in often unseaworthy boats or plastic dinghies engenders. Emotional feelings of fear, or of being close to death, were also common in this most precarious of interactions with this space of irregular travel.

The embodied activity of walking, as the previous chapter asserted, was common when crossing land borders and wishing to remain undetected by the bodies of border control. Walking, often in difficult terrain, is another mobile process that is remembered acutely by a number of participants, and in particular with reference to sensations felt at the level of the body in this process. For example, Masoud describes crossing the border on foot from Iran to Turkey as follows:

"From one place to the other place that we had to go to, it was very hard for us, and we felt we'd die. And the third day, I thought I'm dying, I saw death in front of me. When we got there, there was a little garden, and we saw some food, and we ate it"

(Masoud, Iran) (I).

This bodily feeling of physical exhaustion because of the long time spent walking through challenging terrain demonstrates the toll that irregular journeys can take on refugees' bodies. Indeed, Yusuf, following his extensive journey from Turkey to France via the Southeastern European land border, explained the toll

this journey, which included many episodes trekking on foot over treacherous, mountain terrain, had on his body and his overall well-being. He described needing to rest when he arrived in Paris, recounting, "*I was upset and felt broke inside, I stayed in hotel in Paris for 3 days. I lost 13 kilograms from my weight, and I felt stressful."* Wylie (2005) argues that practices of mobility like walking, especially in difficult, mountainous terrains over many hours and several days create an awareness of self and mortality in relation to the power and hostility of the landscape. He describes this as "be[ing] 'in' the landscape, but also up against it" (Wylie 2005, 240) and in these contexts "the landscape emerges as malignant" (ibid. 244), invading and yet never quite engulfing the lived body. The hostility of the landscape and its encroachment on the body somewhat paradoxically, enacts a "certain corporeal sensibility", which "twists forth in ach, ennui and enervation" (ibid. 242). This feeling of exhaustion, of proximity to death transpires from the intimate interaction between the lived body and the living landscape, and can be glimpsed at in the narratives of participants, like in the case of Hamid above.

Even those modes of travel assumed to be less dangerous in terms of the risks involved can evoke feelings of fear and physical discomfort. Mariam expresses the feelings of fear, and related chest pains she experienced whilst in the airport trying to travel from Sudan to France using a fake passport:

"That time even you are scared, you are scared, you are not legal person, you know? So maybe one police catch you, they took….like, that on my mind, you know.

Even at that time I have a pain to my chest, you know. So, I have pain, so I am covering my clothes, so I, just go straight"

(Mariam, Eritrea)

Asima was the one woman from Sudan that I spoke to. Asima was one of just three participants whose periods of travel spanned the middle ground between a faster, more linear trajectory, and a more stop-start, non-linear trajectory. But her story was quite different from the Sudanese men I interviewed, whose journeys are detailed above. Asima fled from an abusive, violent husband who threatened to kill her and take away her children, and tried to forced her to have an abortion against her will. Her uncle paid an agent to help her leave the country. The agents found her a passport, and she was able to travel from Sudan to Turkey with her two children. From there, she was taken somewhere, although she wasn't sure where, to a house where she stayed for just over two weeks before boarding another flight to the UK. Asima was pregnant with her third child during her journey, and described the struggles that came with this interaction between her pregnant body and the travel she undertook, saying, *"When I was in the plane it was very tiring and painful because of the pregnancy."* I asked Asima if she was feeling unwell whilst she was travelling, to which she replied, "*Yes, I was feeling like I was gonna die."* During her time waiting in Turkey, she was also struggling and worried about her pregnancy. She explained that she wanted to go to the doctors, but wasn't able to because it was too risky since she didn't have papers, and said that she told the agent if they had to wait any longer she would just ask for asylum in Turkey. Fortunately, the following day she was taken to the airport and travelled to the UK.

Periods of time spent 'stuck' in a particular place, often whilst waiting or making attempts to move onwards, like the Calais *'jungle,'* were also described in terms of the embodied response they invoked by some participants. Osman describes his time in the *'jungle'* as follows:

"Weather is very, very, very, very cold. In Africa, weather very hot, so big change. Everyday I have problem with cold. I can't sleep I can't do anything"

(Osman, Sudan).

Abrihet describes her experiences attempting to boards lorries to the UK in a place in northern France, the name of which she was unsure of, but she assured me it wasn't Calais although she called the camp where she was sleeping the 'jungle':

"I remember it was very cold, when we try. And once, my leg…sleep. I can't move it, because of cold. Train, is time, we catch…police they catch us and say go back. You walk, yeah, to get jungle back. And I'm tired, I have to wait until train come, and we sit down on train station, sitting on stair, and stair it was cold, and my one leg it sleep, and just no wanna cry and people come massage, to wake up. I can't stand, it's frozen! Then it come, and I walk"

(Abrihet, Ethiopia).

Sara Ahmed argues that the experiences of migration are felt at the level of embodiment, or at the level of the lived body as it inhabits/is inhabited by particular spaces. She references a story about migration by Ameena Meer called 'Rain', in which the pain of feeling "out of place" is expressed through her

description of skin sensations. Ahmed concludes that, "Migration stories are *skin memories*: memories of different sensations that are felt on the skin" (Ahmed 2000, 92). This assertion resonates with the narrative excerpts introduced above. The skin sensations of being in an unfamiliar place with a strange climate, the coldness of Calais or the searing heat and lack of shade in the middle of the Sahara, and the corporeal responses to this, are some of the main ways in which participants narrated their experiences *en route*.

4.3 Habit and Happiness "on the way"

Similar to encounters with the diverse bodies of irregular travel, encounters with the spaces of irregular travel were not always experienced through sensations of unease and unfamiliarity. In particular contexts, especially in those moorings where bodies are often (relatively) immobilised for a period of time, for some participants a sense of familiarity and habituality was expressed as emerging in amongst the feelings of strangeness and insecurity. At the same time as being places where participants are rendered immobile, however, these spaces are also often zones of heightened mobility, as participants go back-and-forth in their repeated attempts to cross borders (See Chapter IV). One example of this would again be the Calais 'jungle'. Yohanna describes the Calais jungle as *"very volatile, so there is a great sense of insecurity"* where *"anything can happen to you".* But she also describes the *"window of hope*" that being so close to *"the end of the mission"* provides. As well as this sense of hope that being so close, geographically and temporally, to the end of this physical journey brings, there is also a routinisation of day-to-day life that emerges in a place like Calais, which is experienced as simultaneously volatile but also as a place where

routinised/habitual patterns can develop as time passes and as newcomers learn from those already there. Yohanna talks about the *"daily routine"* of going to the lorry park, trying again and again to board lorries for as long as physically possible, then once you succumb to tiredness, returning to the jungle to sleep. Other participants articulated this same routinisation of life in Calais:

"We started to learn the routines of the police, if they came at 6pm one day we would know when they were coming next time"

(Abdulaziz, Sudan)(I).

"When I reached the jungle, I said "Wow, is this Africa or what?". I said "Oh my gosh". So then I take trees and I build I little house there. I spoke with other people, some people said I've tried three times. Every morning I would leave my wife and go to see what the situation is. I saw the guys jumping on the backs of the lorries, and I start to understand"

(Evariste, Burundi).

Hashim recounts the experience of learning over time that many of the lorries, even those marked 'G.B.', parked in Calais do not go to the U.K., and in fact have come *from* the U.K. and are headed for central Europe:

"Now, by this time, we got acquainted that this is the normal way, it is not easy, Some have been to Belgium, others to Germany, others to Italy, some…so we got experience, some kind of experience"

(Hashim, Syria)(I).

Alongside these elements of routine or habit that are forged in moorings like the 'jungle,' there were other interactions with the landscapes of refugees' journeys that participants described in terms other than strange and disconcerting. Indeed, there were instances in the narratives where new places were met with a sense of intrigue, and a very small minority of participants recounted arriving in new places that they perceived as 'beautiful' and 'interesting'. For example Yusuf said the following:

"It was very beautiful architecture in Vienna, and I liked the culture there. It was like, since long time, through my journey, it was like, oh now I reach a civilisation"

(Yusuf, Syria)(I).

Despite being in a new place, the feeling that emerges from Yusuf's interaction with the cityscape of Vienna is one that is positive and even familiar, as he expresses reaching somewhere that he can understand and appreciate, *"a civilisation."* To focus on the many experiences of hostility, fear and discomfort that emerged during participant's journeys should not completely overshadow the brief moments where positive affective engagements with landscapes can emerge. Indeed, one participant, Musa, expressed his boredom at the mundaneity of life in the UK, saying that his *"life is like a machine."* Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, along with feelings of fear, the freedom to explore and encounter new landscapes during his journey brought Musa a sense of happiness, and even feelings of nostalgia that emerged during our discussion:

"Er, I would go back to that journey again, but I don't want to go back to my country, that's dangerous for me [laughs]. I wanna start from Turkey again. […] In my journey, I had everything. I had forest, lives in forest, mountain, climbing

mountain, lived in coastline, lived in desert, er desert sorry. Lived in the hill, sea, everything! It's scary and happy. You have to be scared, but I was happy, because I can visit everything, I can visit everything. I can make friends from other countries, I can learn foreign languages"

(Musa, Iran).

Less surprisingly, participants also recounted experiencing feelings of intense relief after successfully completing a period of difficult travel. In particular, feelings of happiness and satisfaction were very common upon arrival in the UK although they were also at times were entangled between feelings of apprehension and unease.

"So, it's says, "Welcome to London." Ahh, we are in London! Then we start to shout, all the people hug and kiss, like that. We are happy, so…"

(Mariam, Eritrea).

"Yah, yeah, like, my feeling was…I can't describe it. I was highest happiness"

(Hussain, Syria).

"Because, how to explain about the dream, it's not that you arrived in England just, because you have, let's say you have finished that trip, you have finished that long journey…You would not get in that bad psychological state again. That's enough, you have finished. So the dream, the ecstasy is doubled, because you arrive, and you are done now"

(Adnan, Syria).

After spending around two weeks in lorries travelling from Iraq to the UK, Hamid describes the feeling of stepping down from the lorry once he had arrived

in the UK with his family saying, *"And on the street, it was delicious moment…I feel the street….the ground, yes."* It is the physical sensation of feeling his feet touch the ground that Hamid remembers of his arrival to the UK. Hamid felt unable to even speak about his time spent inside the lorries, but it had clearly been a very difficult and uncomfortable time for him. The 'delicious' feeling of his feet meeting the solid ground is indicative of the relief that the feeling of physical stillness, and this opening out onto the landscape of his arrival brings him, which happened in his case to be a small village in rural southern England. These intense emotional responses to 'arriving' also help us to appreciate the instability of irregular journeys, notwithstanding those brief moments of relief that a kind encounter or a beautiful landscape might provide, or the semblance of familiarity and routine that might emerge provisionally and in conjunction with feelings of instability in certain contexts. The feeling of having *"finished"*, as Adnan recounts above, of arriving but also of no longer being exposed to the instabilities of irregular travel, enacts an *"ecstasy"* that is *"doubled."* However, as was detailed in the previous chapter, for asylum seekers and refugees, feelings of instability and disorientation may continue in differing forms and to differing degrees well beyond arrival, such that the 'journey towards exile' is much more complex than investigating what happens between A and B on a map.

5. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has offered an exploration into the embodied encounters of irregular travel that range from performative and violent encounters with other bodies within border spaces, to visceral, sensory and emotional interactions with unfamiliar spaces and forms of travel. Giving primacy to the concept of

encounters, this chapter offers a novel insight into the lived experiences of refugees during their journeys towards exile. A focus on encounters between bodies and other bodies, spaces and things adheres to a more relational understanding of how lived experiences emerge *en route*. These experiences and their mediated articulation in participants' narratives are understood to be inherently embodied and thus intercorporeal, in line with the broader theoretical approach to this thesis.

The acknowledgment of habit, practice and repetition in the everyday helps to contextualise the potential disruptions of displacement, the uncertainties of irregular travel and the embodied responses that familiar and unfamiliar encounters can engender in these contexts. This is because every encounter is mediated, "it presupposes other faces, other encounters of facing, other bodies, other spaces, and other times" (Ahmed 2000, 7). In other words, "each encounter reopens past encounters" (ibid., 8). Incorporating this spatial-temporal dynamic to encounters helps us to see how bodies are oriented through these sedimented histories and can thus equally experience moments of *dis*orientation during strange encounters, that can be both destabilising and productive (Ahmed 2006; Simonsen 2013).

Failed performances, when bodies orient themselves in one way, but are perceived in another, demonstrate the contingency of bodily intentionality during these strange encounters. This is because encounters with other bodies always take place within "sociocorporeal hierarchies", and thus always involve techniques of differentiation as "some others are designated as *stranger than*

other others" (Ahmed 2000, 6). We can see stark examples of this in the interactions between refugees' bodies and the bodies and mechanisms of border control that are examined above.

As has been described throughout this chapter, irregular travellers often use dangerous means of travel and take difficult routes, which produce encounters with a whole manner of strange and hostile environments that are bypassed by regular travellers. There are occasions where the spaces of regular and irregular travel intersect, but as this chapter has demonstrated, the embodied experiences of these shared moorings and means of travel are often very different for those without 'legal' documents. Experiences of hostility, of unfamiliarity, discomfort and violence that emerge in interactions between with other bodies and landscapes are interwoven through the narratives of some many participants who traveled irregularly to seek refuge in the UK. The narrative fragments and discussion above shed light on the many ways in which strange encounters are felt at the level of the physical/emotional body, and how participants experience and respond to these diverse moments of disorientation. In displacement, and during journeys towards exile, there can be a proliferation of strange and violent encounters that mark out this period as one of disruption and change. However, interwoven between these hostile, disorientating interactions are fleeting moments of familiarity, and even of comfort and kindness that also emerge in the narratives of those participants who have travelled irregularly.

Chapter VI: Refugees' Journeys: Exploring memory and meaning

Elsewhere I have argued that narrative expression provides a mode of 'singing the world' that is simultaneously disclosing and obscuring of experience. The previous two chapters have explored those facets of experience that have been illuminated by the stories offered by participants. This has been done with the explicit conviction that these narratives, and the collage that I have produced using these narratives can "direct our attention to something in our worldly experience, to show us something, to help us notice and see it" (Hass 2008, 5). Merleau-Ponty's "commitment to *lyricism*" (Hass 2008, 135) endows narrative research with a renewed value. The previous two chapters have taken these narrative articulations seriously and have provided what I hope to be a compelling and creative presentation of the experiences that can be glimpsed at through the stories of participants in this research. However, it is also important to understand how this narrative articulation of past experience is situated within the ongoing temporal flow of the lives of participants, and to explore both the relationship that participants have with memories of their journeys, and the meaning and significance that emerge in relation to these memories.

Indeed, these stories are not artefacts providing unimpeded access to a static past. Part of their richness lies precisely in their capacity to shed light on the

intricate imbrication of past, present and future that is implicated in their production and in the production of the meaning that they are filled with. In narrating 'past experience,' what is actually produced is a narrative in which there is a mutual encroachment of past, present, and also future. Merleau-Ponty himself has argued that there can be no coinciding with the past because "I am separated from it by the whole thickness of my present; it is mine only by finding in some way a place in my present, in making itself present anew" (VI 122). As such, this chapter moves on from looking at the experiences of participants during their journeys and towards a discussion of memory and the ways in which participants make sense of their experiences from the embodied 'present' perspective of the research interviews.

Scholars like Morris, Maclaren, Mazis, Russon and Jacobsen have explored the notion of memory with reference to the work of Merleau-Ponty. As Russon, inspired by Merleau-Ponty, argues, "In recognizing the past as my past, the way I identify elements of this past will already be shaped by how I define "me," which will involve a sense both of where I was going then and where I am going now" (Russon 2015, 78). He goes on speak about life events, arguing that "I will remember them from the perspective of where I am now, with my current future directedness: I will be remembering them as "history," as part of a narrative of the coming into being of the present. In other words, the very form that the temporal coherence of my experience takes is a narrative form, a storytelling" (ibid.). Russon declares that this storytelling "is constitutively shaped by my sense of who I am," and that this identity is itself "dependent on a temporal unification" (ibid.). In other words, my present and future turn backwards to

shape how I understand past experiences, and at the same time this past wells up in the present and spills out into the future. My body memory "carries its own past into the surroundings" which "permeate the environment like an invisible net" connecting me to the world (Fuchs 2012). Just as the embodied histories of participants encroach upon their experiences *en route,* so too can the memories of these journeys encroach upon the present. These twin processes are vital to the following discussion, which will engage with both the ways in which past experiences are remembered, articulated and made sense of by participants from the embodied perspective of the then-present, and the ways in which the then-present is only what it is with reference to this past.

Following this discussion of memory, and the creative processes of remembrance and forgetting that participants are engaged in, the chapter will then turn to the ways that participants articulate the meaning and significance of 'journeys' more broadly. Within this exploration as to how journeys are made sense of in the narratives of participants, there are two themes that resonated across many interviews: luck and God. These themes are explored, as well as how they have the potential to problematise and contribute to the ongoing academic discussions around journeys. The discussion will then shift to an exploration of the meaning and significance that are attributed to narrative articulations of 'the journey' as a concept.

1. Embodied memories and the past/present

> *…memories are gifts bestowed from beyond the self: memories are found primarily in the ways in which the experienced world holds and unfolds meanings for the embodied person and in our bodily responsiveness to those meanings*
>
> (Morris and Maclaren 2015, 20).

As the brief discussion above demonstrates, processes of remembering and forgetting are vitally important to an exploration of experience through narrative research, and how participants relate to their journey experiences. At first sight the concept of embodied memories may seem somewhat odd, given that memory is most often considered to belong to the realm of the mind, rather than that of the body. However, as has been established in the theory chapter of this thesis, this separation of body and mind has been decisively rejected, and the position that mind and body are irreducibly interwoven has been privileged. Experience is fundamentally embodied, and remembering and sense-making are equally embodied. Indeed, the narratives of participants shed light on the ways that we remember (and forget) in and through our bodies.

1.1 Remembering in and Through the Body

The first and most direct way that participants demonstrated this through their narratives was in their descriptions of their visceral responses to memories of their journeys:

Yes I get flashbacks all the time […] I feel nervous when I think about it

(Yohanna, Eritrea) (I)

The sea, Libya, if I could I would delete. If I remember I can't sleep

(Osman, Sudan)

Sleeplessness, nightmares, stress and anxiety were some of the visceral, bodily responses to memories of a difficult past that participants described. But there are many other ways in which the embodied past weighs upon an embodied present, and indeed vice versa. Participants also articulated how embodied interactions with the lived environment can also elicit an encounter with a difficult memory. Masoud explained to me that sometimes, when he sees a lorry on the road, it reminds him of the ten hours he spent underneath a lorry whilst trying to reach mainland Europe from Greece. He hid for ten hours whilst the lorry boarded a ferry and was carried somewhere, although he doesn't know where, before being caught whilst the lorry was passing through the border control of the unknown country, and sent straight back to Greece on the same ferry. He told me:

"Sometimes in the street when I see a lorry, I am thinking, how could I go under this…This situation, it's very hard. Ten hours I was under the lorry"

(Masoud, Iran).

His interpreter, who is a refugee volunteer at the charity where we met, interjected at this point to explain to me that he, too, was confronted by bad memories when he saw lorries in the street because he had been through a similar experience. Valeria[38], who has her refugee status, articulates a different way in which her and her husband experience the interactions with their present

[38] During our discussion, Valeria made it clear to me that anonymity was particularly important to her. She told me that there were very few refugees in the UK from her country of origin, and we therefore agreed that I would not disclose the name of the country she had fled from in order to try and protect her anonymity.

lived environment by virtue of a past spent hiding from government authorities and pro-government supporters in their country of origin:

"…I have to adapt to this new environment, but sometimes it takes time to change, and I say, I need to be more relaxed. I need to understand that here, we are in a different place, we are safe, and I don't need to be so scared. Sometimes we are scared about neighbours […] Maybe my husband get into a little bit of panic, when he sees people very close to our garden, or something. I'm like, "No, relax, they won't do anything. They are just in the park."

(Valeria, Latin America).

Jacobsen (2015) articulates how a particular place, person or event is able to suddenly take her back to "a self she once was." It is by way of the body, and the body's situatedness in the world, that memories surge up even when they are not wanted. Indeed, some participants expressed wanting to forget, but feeling unable to. This can be the case in moments of quiet and bodily stillness: it is when Osman is trying to sleep that memories of the sea crossing surge up to stop him from sleeping, or in an encounter with a thing or situation, as in the case of Masoud, that invokes a past memory.

The embodied encounter of the research interview itself perhaps unsurprisingly invoked for some an encounter with memories that were suppressed in the every day. Asima said that she never thought about her journey, but regarding telling her story during the research interview she said, "*Yes, when I was saying every word I was really remembering everything."* This process of resurrecting the past through the research interview was difficult for some, especially those who

were working hard to forget in the everyday. For example, when I asked Hamid, a participant from Iran, how he was feeling during the time he spent seven days in the back of a lorry from Iraq, after crossing the Iran/Iraq border by foot. He replied, *"Don't ask about that. We don't want…"*

Adel left Afghanistan when he was just 16 years old. He told me he never spoke to anyone about his journey because it brought up bad memories. We conducted the interview over two sessions and during the second session he conceded to me that he had thought about cancelling because he had found the first session very difficult. He explained:

"Because if you are talking something like that, I talking there, after I go to bed, I always thinking for that thing, I thinking my family. Sometimes forget, that's good time. I use medicine help me sleep, sometimes I thinking about my family, just eating medicine, sleep. So I'm thinking all night I'm thinking, not all day, all night thinking what's happened, what's happened my family, 'bout journey, blah, blah, blah. That's too much pressure."

(Adel, Afghanistan).

I explained to Adel that he did not have to continue with the interview if it was too difficult for him, or speak about anything that he didn't feel comfortable speaking about. However, in the end he decided to complete the interview.

1.2 Working at Forgetting

The way in which a particular place can elicit memories was also illuminated by Khalid's discussion of why he decided to leave Syria and embark upon his journey to Europe:

When I decided to leave Syria, I already left my heart. And I continue my journey. Because the date when I left Syria […] this date, it is something special memory for me. I lost my friend, female, she passed away. And I was, because why I decided to leave. I decided, or I chose this date, because I want to leave all my memory in Syria, because I don't want to continue remembering about this, and I decided to start a new life

(Khalid, Syria – Palestinian)(I)

In her discussion of memory, Jacobsen (2015, 29) asserts that, "places from the past can indeed hold on to us so strongly that we may find it necessary to uproot ourselves from a particular place if we wish to leave behind certain ways of thinking and behaving." This passage resonates intensely with Khalid's articulation of his decision to leave Syria. This also opens the discussion to the creative processes of remembrance and forgetting that participants' narratives shed light on. Jacobsen discusses a context in which she is told a story about herself by another person that she had completely forgotten, positing that it was "…perhaps even an event I somehow worked to forget" (Jacobsen, 2015, 29). But through the encounter she is suddenly made aware of a memory that she felt she had forgotten. This idea of 'working to forget' resonates with the ways in which some participants articulated their relationship with the past. Several participants expressed that they were trying to forget their journeys:

"Definitely still this in my mind, because this is part of my past, but I try not to remember it. I try not to return to all memories about this journey. I try not remember, not think about it, I try to forget it"

(Ahmed, Syria) (I).

"Try to put it in the past, because it brings you sad memories, and reminding, remembering everything, sometimes is like you are being put in again, in the same thing. No, no, it's not experiences that you want to live again […] I look…I look back to the time, but not that particular time. It's like I erase it, so I look back, for example, situations that happen during April, July, August, September, so I will erase these months, and look January, and after that. And even before. Because, this line will bring boiling things to me, that, if I allow to come out, then I won't be able to function, and to help others, and to be the way I decided to be, now. So it's a way of closing what is not important, what doesn't make me who I am […] It's a tactic that you learn. You don't boil with it"

(Adelina, Angola)

However a number of participants outlined in more detail the practical ways in which they were engaged with the process of 'working to forget.' Indeed, this idea of 'working to forget' helps to illustrate the creative, embodied processes that participants are engaged in in order to mediate their relationship with their past:

"I really like work. I don't like to stay and, I always, when I'm busy I don't think about anything. I'm tired I just go home, sleep or watch TV. If I don't, if my body not tired I can't sleep. That's my problem"

(Abrihet, Ethiopia).

Keeping busy is one of the key ways that participants described 'working to forget.' Abrihet's admission that she likes to work both because it keeps her busy so that she doesn't have the time to think about the past, but also because it is only by tiring out her body with work that she is able to sleep on a night,

demonstrates how bodily inactivity can act as fertile ground for the intrusion of memories that participants wish to forget. It also demonstrates how Abrihet mediates this interaction with her past through the embodied act of 'keeping busy.' Asima was another participant who described the way that she was working to forget her past saying that she was keeping busy, because "*if someone's brain is busy, they are not gonna remember the past."*

Not speaking about the past was also a way in which a number of participants worked to forget. Some participants were very specific in saying that they did not like to share their stories with friends or members of their communities because it reminded them of what happened. For example, when I ask Estelle if she ever talks about her journey to others, she replied, *"never."* She then elaborated:

Because, it's like, I don't want to feel in bad mood, when you…something you are trying to forget, and whenever you talk about that, keeping coming in your mind. And, it's…I'm trying to don't be destroyed about what has happened, I'm trying all my best

(Estelle, Côte d'Ivoire).

Memories are also supressed for the benefit of others, as Khalid explains:

All what happened with me, that adventure, and all the process, stories, I didn't tell my family. I don't want it to affect or to feel sorry about me, or to worry, because already finished everything, but they will say, "Oh, if he died in the sea, if he…"

(Khalid, Syria – Palestinian)(I)

Adelina and Estelle demonstrate a desire not to be defined, or destroyed, by a difficult past. Practices of forgetting have long been discussed by those scholars of collective memory, in particular with regards to "forgetting as repressive erasure" (Connerton 2008) by tyrannical States. But through the narratives of some of the participants in this research we can see how practices of forgetting are also carried out by embodied individuals, often as a way of coping with difficult or painful past events. However, these practices are not always effective, and all of a sudden, upon seeing a lorry in the street, a neighbour walking close to the house, or when laying down to sleep, these memories can burst through once again into the present. Indeed, several participants expressed explicitly that they could never forget this past:

"Yes I think about it. I can't forget it. It is a history that can't be erased. When you are 50 or 60 years old, if I live 50 years, you will still remember it"

(Abdulaziz, Sudan)(I).

"I remember every step of the way, just like yesterday it happened. Yeah, because it's dangerous"

(Ayoub, Syria)

Although in this section I have used the work of Jacobsen as a way to frame the discussion, there are certain ways in which her articulation, and perhaps romanticisation, of memory that jar with the relationships that some participants have with their memories. For example, Jacobsen argues that "…memory, like a home, provides us with a dynamic pivot for our past and future; it is the living, breathing landscape of identity" (Jacobsen 2015, 28). She

refers to memory as 'a gift' that holds together a sense of self. Although she does concede that the desirability of a particular gift of memory is uncertain, this idea that we should feel 'at home' in our memories, or, as the notion of the 'gift' implies, be grateful for them, begins to look problematic when brought into dialogue with the narratives of participants in this research. Indeed, as the above discussion demonstrates, the expressions of some participants describe a much more antagonistic relationship with their embodied past. These expressions show how remembering can be painful and invasive, which is precisely why some participants are 'working to forget'. We can also see this in Adelina's assertion that if she allows certain memories to resurface, rather than affirming, they will in fact disrupt her sense of self: "*I won't be able to function, and to help others, and to be the way I decided to be, now. So it's a way of closing what is not important, what doesn't make me who I am.*"

1.3 Remembrance: Transporting memories, sharing stories

Not all participants articulated these creative processes of forgetting and a broader desire to forget the past, however. Indeed there were a number of participants who were engaged in active processes of remembrance or memorialisation of their journeys. Some participants spoke of sharing their stories with others. Others spoke about stories they had heard from others, often remembering particularly traumatic journey stories that they had been told. So although some participants said that they did not share their journey stories with others, other participants described processes of sharing stories, particularly amongst people who had been through similar circumstances.

One important way by which a few participants memorialised their journeys was by taking photos and videos on their smartphones along the way. Four of the Syrian participants, and one Sudanese participant, mentioned or showed me the photos that they had taken as a way of memorialising their journeys. All of these participants undertook long and at times difficult journeys. Hashim showed me a particularly amusing video that he took whilst hiding amongst horses in a horsebox on a ferry from Calais to Dover. I asked Hashim why he took photos and videos during his journey, and he replied:

"This just was, like, reminders, and to show my kids, my wife, what suffering I experience, what suffering I went through, how I managed to get to this place, no just for them, to show them that life is not easy"

(Hashim, Syria)(I)

Hussain, from Syria, showed me pictures that he had taken during a difficult event where he was forcibly deported from Italy to Turkey, and was assaulted by members of the Italian authorities. He had tried to take photos of the men who assaulted him, and also took pictures of the head wound that he sustained during this encounter. For him, these photos served as evidence of the injustice he had faced.

Another Syrian participant, Adnan, described taking selfies in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris with fellow travellers. As well as participating in the research, Adnan also interpreted for two fellow Syrian participants, Amena and Hashim. During Amena's interview, she told a story about how she had tried several times to pass the border control at Athens airport. After she had finished telling

this story, Adnan took out his mobile phone to show both of us a photo of the security area of the airport. Upon seeing this photo, Amena burst out laughing. I asked Adnan if he had taken the photo, and he said that he had not taken the photo but had downloaded it from Facebook. However he assured me that he had been in the very same place many times himself. I then asked him why he thought someone had put that particular photo on Facebook, to which he replied:

"Because Syrians who are living in Greece, they know this place. It was like a mocking picture, just to make fun, because security always stop us!" [Participant and interpreter laugh]

(Adnan, Syria).

Yusuf, who was working as a journalist in Syria alongside his studies, extensively documented his journey with photos and videos, even tracking the entire route by saving his GPS locations. He showed me videos that he had taken during his sea crossing from Turkey to Greece, and photos he had taken with other people travelling to, and through, Europe. For Yusuf, it was important to document his journey *"not only because this is memories, important memories,"* but also because he was hoping to use this footage as part of a documentary. As well as 'working to forget,' some participants therefore carried out processes of remembrance and memorialisation, including through the recording of events by taking photos and videos along the way.

1.4 Journey Memories and the Policy Present

The narratives of other participants expressed how the socio-political and policy environment, and their position within it, weighed upon their memories of the

past, whilst others alluded to the ways that uncertainty in the present is made meaningful with reference to the past. At the time of the interview the Home Office had recently started refusing asylum seekers in Eritrea based on Country of Origin information widely-held as flawed and inaccurate[39]. Haben was acutely aware of this fact and describes how because of this she would feel stress thinking about everything she had been through to get here, and said she could only start to relax once she had received her Leave to Remain.

"After you have passed all of these things, how can you go back? […] Yes, the journey is a strong journey, but also the thought of going back to hell. The policy is wrong. The Home Office has some informations, and they refuse people"

(Haben, Eritrea)

We can see here how the journey and all of the effort exerted in the process of travelling to the UK took on a deeper significance for Haben after she was faced with the prospect of being refused asylum. Masoud also expressed that his current situation as an asylum seeker, and the lack of things to do, prevented him from being able to forget about the difficult experiences of his journey. His initial feelings of happiness on arriving to *'a safe place'* had subsided, and after his refusal he described feeling very sad and unable to forget his troubled past:

[39] For more information see ECRE (2016) "UK Home Office fails Eritrean asylum seekers using flawed Country of Origin Information."

I can't forget, I don't have anything to do, I'm always thinking. It comes and goes. I was thinking when I go to the interview, 'cause nobody knows, first I was thinking about that…and now, I'm not feeling very free here. 24 hours I have to stay in the house. I cannot work, I cannot do anything.

(Masoud, Iran).

Like Haben, Evariste also looked back at his physical journey and relativises it with reference to what has come since, in particular his later experiences of navigating the asylum system after arriving in the UK. Evariste left Burundi in 1994 following the outbreak of civil conflict in the previous year. He was living in a refugee camp for a while before moving on to Uganda and finding work there before moving again and settling in Guinea, where his family was originally from. In Guinea he found work and settled. After some time he met a woman who he got to know, fell in love with, and asked to marry. The woman's father would not accept the marriage and threatened to kill his daughter, so the pair fled, travelling first to Libya before crossing to Italy. And although Evariste and his wife had gone through a long, arduous and difficult journey these memories were overshadowed by his experiences of the UK asylum system, which for him was a more difficult process because of the waiting, uncertainty and stress that it engendered.

"My journey to come here was easier than the asylum system. When you travel at least you know where you are going. I didn't know anything about the asylum system. I was not well prepared and that is why they refused me the first time"

(Evariste, Burundi).

Hashim, conversely, felt that he could not even begin to look back at his journey because of his uncertain status in the UK. Hashim was fingerprinted in Italy, and at the time of the interview was still under threat of deportation under the Dublin system. However he expressed the same feeling as Haben by saying that after all of the effort to reach the UK, the prospect of being turned away seems even more difficult.

"I don't think of the journey, I don't reconsider the journey, because I am not settled here. I am still worried about my decision, the tribunal because, you see after exerting such an effort to attain such a place, and then you go back to Italy, this would be, like, catastrophic"

(Hashim, Syria)(I).

We can see in this excerpt how this then-present uncertainty is made meaningful with reference to the past struggle of the journey, and the idea that after all he had been through, the prospect of being deported was even more painful. For Yusuf, the desire to memorialise his journey outlined earlier had been replaced by a desire to avoid thinking about it. His journey had been particularly long and difficult. He told me that he didn't like to be reminded of his journey, but that he was forced to think about it because there were so many people *'back home'* asking for advice on how to travel. I asked Yusuf what he tells those people asking for advice on how to leave, and he replied:

"I'm not showing the way, it's just a horrible way to take to reach wherever in the world, I'm not giving advice for that. The thing is, the most important thing about the advice I am giving to people is, it's not heaven in Europe, just try to cope with the situation, the way is very bad, to get in, and it's not heaven, I'm not giving any

more than this advice […] It isn't worth, in the end you are abnormal life, stranger, trying to start from the beginning."

(Yusuf, Syria)(I)

Yusuf's words demonstrate how his present situation, as a 'stranger' in a place that is perhaps not the *'heaven'* he was hoping it would be, when pitted against the difficulties of the journey, give the journey a renewed meaning, as something that in hindsight was not worth it. It also shows how a desire to forget in the everyday can co-exist with a desire to memorialise and to share these memories with others. Through this discussion we can begin to see how the meaning and significance of these journeys emerges within the context of the present. How experiences are remembered and the meaning they are given are intertwined with each other, as well as being intertwined with the present context.

1.5 A Note on the Obscurity of Memory and the Excesses of Embodied Experience: "How can I explain to you the salt taste?"

It would be remiss to end the discussion of memory here, however. Before ending this section, and moving on to a more explicit discussion about meaning and sense-making in the context of participants' narratives, I would like to stop for a minute to consider how participants' narratives also speak back to the literature on memory, as well as the relationship between language and experience. When I asked Evariste if he thought that his journey had changed him, he responded: "*Yes, yes! My eyes can forget, but my heart, never. I keep it here" [gestures to heart]*. Evariste's emotive use of language points us something important about the dynamics of memory and its narratability. Evariste cannot conjure all those visions of his past, but he nevertheless feels their obscure

presence. His words help us to understand what Morris and Maclaren allude to when they say, "…we are dealing here with a past that is itself reconfigured (re-membered, as it were) by the advent of new ways of being, whilst also exceeding in significant ways our conscious grasp or memory of it" (Morris and Maclaren 2015). Mazis adds to this discussion by arguing that "…past and memory are fundamental to our anchorage in the world and our sense of self, but this weight of the past and memory is also obscure" (Mazis, 2015, 49). In this sense, it is impossible to illuminate all of the ways in which participants carry the weight of their journeys, or indeed all of the ways in which the weight of the present projects itself back and reconfigures these memories.

There were also instances during interviews where participants expressed that they felt unable to successfully articulate aspects of their experiences. Relatedly, then, it is important to remember that there is a certain opacity to the past and thus "what is resumed in expression never manages to be fully elaborated" (Whitmoyer 2017, 88). Hamid from Iran, came to the interview with his son Omeed, to help him in case he needed anything translating, although his English was actually very good. What resulted was something of a group interview dynamic as Omeed also contributed his own narrative to the discussion. During the conversation with Hamid and his son Omeed, after Hamid had expressed his disinclination to be brought back to the memory of their time spent locked in the back of a lorry, Omeed interjected to say, "*It's hard to explain. How can I explain to you the salt taste?"* Whilst Hamid expressed an unwillingness to be confronted by those difficult memories, for Omeed the issue was rather a feeling of not being able to articulate how he felt during such a difficult situation. There are

memories that are not easily served by storytelling, whose grasp seems out of reach. Haben also alludes to the limits of narrative in articulating experience. Haben was one of the participants who required a lot of prompting during our interview. She was quiet and often replied with one-word or one-phrase answers when I asked her a question. When I asked her if she spoke about her journey with other people she said she didn't like to talk about it because it made her feel stressed. She then said: '*All the things, I can't explain. When we are talking, it is half of these things, when it is practical, it is much more.'* I then asked her, 'So it's difficult to explain?' to which she replied: '*Yes, so many problems. I say one problem from one million problems.'*

2. Exploring Sense and Significance in Participants' Narratives

This section will address in more detail the processes by which participants' experiences were made sense of and how this was articulated by participants during the research interviews. Making sense is closely tied to this discussion of memory, as it is from the embodied position of the present that we also find meaning within, and attribute a particular significance to, past experiences. The living body, or our incarnate being, open as it is onto an overflowing world with multiple meanings, is a sense-making power that "makes sense" and finds meaning through expression (Hass 2008, 83/152). We can see this within the narratives of participants; through their expressions in the context of the research interview, new sense emerges in relation to past events.

In particular, this section will explore how participants made sense of the 'success' of their journeys in ways that can speak back to the academic literature on migration journeys.

2.1 Pride, Shame and Growth: The mixed significances of journeys

Towards the end of each interview, I asked participants' specifically how they felt when they looked back on their journeys, as a way to try and tease out in more detail the significance that these events may hold in the lives of participants. Yusuf's conflicting relationship with his journey was highlighted once again during our conversation. When I asked him how he felt when he thought back to his journey, he responded:

"By getting through all this horrible journey, it's a special thing for my generation, and I feel that I am different from the other generation, or the other that will be coming in the future, for the Syrian people to go through this, and history will always remember us, this generation, been through the migration issues, as refugees, and the conflict, I feel special. And, kind of distinguished"

(Yusuf, Syria)(I).

Like Yusuf, other participants expressed a similar sense of pride, achievement or strength in relation to their journey:

"I feel proud of myself because I feel that I achieved something. I did not, for example, stay in Syria, just crying and shouting, "What a bad luck, what a bad fate," or something like that. No, no, no. I did not accept, let's say, my status quo, and I, let's say, revolted against it. And went out. So, I, I feel that I achieved something"

(Adnan, Syria).

Adnan was studying and working as a lecturer at a university in Syria. After expressing the pride he felt looking back at his journey, he went on to express that he felt like he had lost everything, and he had *"become nothing"* after he was forced to give up his job and his studies because of the war. All the years he had spent studying meant nothing if he stayed in Syria, because his qualifications and knowledge were now worthless. Leaving Syria for Adnan, is understood as the regaining of what has been lost. Asima also described the sense of strength she felt when thinking about what she had been through. When I asked Asima how she felt when she thought back to her journey, she replied:

"I am a very strong woman. There were times when I was struggling I feel it deep, but now it has passed. I don't feel it. I am very strong. All the struggles I have been through, a man couldn't do it. Even the decision to leave, it was very difficult. For anyone, women, in Sudan, it is very difficult […] I just think that no one change me. I just live with my freedom. For my kids, anything I can do, I do for them. It's very important for me to give my kids any chance"

(Asima, Sudan)(I).

Amena also expressed a sense of achievement in relation to her journey:

"When I think about the journey, I think, "I am that one who achieve it, who made it. I did all of those things for the sake of my children, so I can do more and more." It was not easy. I came to the conclusion that, "Once man has the will, he can achieve. He just has to have faith in God, and God will help him."

(Amena, Syria)(I).

Amena's articulation of the significance that she attributes to her journey is interesting here. There is part that feels decisively agentic in tone, as she says *"I am the one who achieve it, who made it."* But the second part of Amena's statement allows for some of her achievement to be placed in the hands of God. This will be explored in more detail below.

Musa expressed what he saw as the mundaneity of his every day life in the UK, working long shifts in a restaurant and living a very routinised life. He told me that he loves travelling, and likes to visit different UK cities each month to explore new places. At different points in our conversation he expressed something of a longing for the time he spent travelling to the UK, saying things like *"I miss that travel,"* and describing the places, cultures and landscapes he had encountered in great detail. He even articulated a desire to return to Turkey and to repeat his journey on foot. When I asked him if he was happy to have Leave to Remain in the UK, he replied, *"I don't care about the leave to remain, I care about the excitement."* When I asked him how he felt when he remembered his journey, he first replied, *"Happy!"* before continuing to say: *"Scared and happy. It's scared and happy. You have to be scared, but I was happy, because I can visit everything."*

Adel who was forced to leave his sister behind on the orders of his family, who told him she would join him later, expressed a feeling of shame in relation to his journey:

"I'm sorry about that, that's my thing, because I feel so shame I leave my family, I running because I safe. Somebody…sometimes I feel so shame myself because I leave my sister that situation"

(Adel, Afghanistan).

Yohanna said that she felt nervous when remembering her journey, and described her travel between Sudan and Libya as *'horrible'* and *'terrifying.'* But she also made sense of her journey as follows:

Yes, it is […] a big lesson for me. When you are someone who was not exposed to outside environment, and you have always been home, and then all of a sudden your are exposed to this harsh and cruel world, it make you think the various situations out there, but as Yohanna, it makes me think of the value of life, outside home, and it makes me care more about other human beings that may be exposed to similar situations

(Yohanna, Eritrea)(I)

Other participants also looked back on their journeys as a period of growth and learning. Also, similar to Yohanna, some participants expressed that they had a sense of empathy for those who were going through similar situations. Another woman from Eritrea, Habte, explained that she wished that no one else would have to endure the journey through the desert from Sudan to Libya. Similarly, when I asked Khalid how he feels when he thinks about his journey, he replied:

"When I remember every time, I pray to God, nobody face the same, or pass the same problem as I have, because it was difficult, hard"

(Khalid, Syria – Palestinian)(I).

There were frequent references to God and religious faith in the narratives of a number of participants, as was detailed in Chapter V and as can be seen in the words of Khalid, above. There were also a number of participants who made sense of their journey, and particularly its successes, with reference to God. It is to these practices of meaning-making that the discussion will now turn.

2.2 "God put Angels in our Path": The role of God in making sense of journeys

There were two themes that came up most commonly when participants were "making sense" of their experiences: God and luck. It is the first of these themes that will be addressed in this section. The previous chapter alluded to those encounters or interactions with God over the course of participants' journeys, most commonly through prayer. The concept of 'lived religion' discussed in the previous chapter allows us to consider the way in which understandings of spirituality fold both into these experiences *and* into the sense people make of these experiences. Embodied experiences during times of instability, for those whose everyday lives are rooted in the processes and practices of religious faith, are at times mediated and made sense of through the lens of religious faith and in relation to God. This is evident in the way that God is referred to in a significant number of narratives, not just in terms of the religious practices that played a role in journey experiences, but also in terms of the way that God or religious faith as an institution can be pivotal to the way that meaning is forged within the narratives. In 1960, Merleau-Ponty asserted, "In truth, the question for a philosopher is not so much to know if God exists or does not exist, if the

proposition God exists is correct or incorrect, as to know what one understands by God, what one wishes to say in speaking of God."[40] This section therefore represents an attempt to take faith seriously and to explore how meaning and understanding emerges in relation to religious faith and God within participants' narratives.

From escape, to surviving dangerous travel, to making sense of difficult experiences since arriving in the UK – particularly with regards to navigating the UK asylum system – a number of participants made sense of past events with reference to God. Praise or giving thanks to God for keeping them safe in times of difficulty was a common theme amongst participants, and in some narratives explicit responsibility was attributed to God as a way of making sense of fortuitous events. Valeria's words articulate this beautifully; as she was describing her arrival to the UK, she stated, *"God put angels in our path."*

Mohammed, an academic from Iraq, had been working in Libya before the fall of Gaddafi, but returned to Iraq after Libya became unstable. He was forced to escape Iraq for expressing views in front of a council about Iraqi ancient history and what he called *"our civilisation of Babylon."* His views were strongly rejected during this meeting, and soon after he realised that he was being pursued. He recounted one such event where he was being followed:

"*…when they tried to take me to kill me, just I had been saved by God. The killer, who took me to kill me, he was looking, this and that, and he hit a car, a narrow*

[40] See Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1992, 66) 'Phenomenology and Analytic Philosophy,' in *Texts and Dialogues: On Philosophy, Politics, and Culture*.

street, where parked, where cars are parked on both sides, and the people of the car that they hit came to him, and this way I was able to escape! [Laughs] So, it's all by God. It's all, it's through that"

(Mohammed, Iraq).

After finding a note stuck to the door of his home, telling him and his family to *"go where [they] came from,"* they left Iraq. This notion of being 'saved by God' was present in a number of narratives. Ahmed, from Syria, describes the stolen passport he was given that had a photograph which looked remarkably similar to him as being *"from God."* Masoud, from Iran, describes feeling worried about getting lost without food or water, and dying in the forest during his journey on foot to cross the land border between Turkey and Greece. In making sense of his ultimately successful crossing, he decides, *"I think God helped us that we would get there."*

Tharindu, who spent six months internally displaced and in hiding in Colombo, converted to Christianity as a young man in Sri Lanka. References to God are pervasive in his narrative, both in terms of his interactions with God during his journey, and also in the way he made sense of and re-created this past in the then-present:

"I know God protect my life, God helped me. Some things, still I not understand, some things is miracles. It's true […] Some things I cannot believe. When I, before I am a Buddhist, when I, I didn't believe God, my life is lost. […] I walked through the fire and through the water. Very hard time. I walked…through the death. God helped me, God protect me. You know. I like to share in Gospel. Still, I'm sharing, I

try to continue strongly, sharing my personal testimony […] I understand, we are Christian people, we are living end of the time, we are living in the…I will try and ready for that, and I will share in Gospel for Sri Lankan community […] I have good testimony, that's why I have evidence, I can show. I have the life evidence. I have life testimony, I can share it"

(Tharindu, Sri Lanka).

Tharindu explained that, with the help of the pastor at his church, he shared his testimony both at church and for members of the Sri Lankan community. He spoke to me about how through this testimony he could provide evidence of how God protected him through his hardships and show people why they needed to accept God into their lives. In the above excerpt from Tharindu's narrative, he uses the metaphor of walking through fire and water to express the hardships he has experienced. The references to walking through fire and water are especially pertinent here, as they resonate with Biblical discourses, in particular the following verse: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you…When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you. For I am the Lord your God" (Isaiah 43:2). There is a visible link here between the scriptures or discourses of Christianity and the way that Tharindu makes sense of the difficulties he has faced.

2.3 "I am One of the Lucky Ones": The role of chance in making sense of journeys

Alongside this sense-making with reference to God was another prominent way in which a number of participants made sense of their journeys: through the prism of luck. The concept of luck is referenced in a number of articles on

migration journeys, either in the quotes of research participants, or in passing by researchers, however it is rarely engaged with in any substantive way (See, for example Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2016; Hassan and Biorklund 2016; Innes 2015; Khosravi 2010; Mainwaring and Brigden 2016; Mallett and Hagen-Zanker 2016). Indeed Khosravi goes as far as to assert that, "Information, payment and networks are crucial and necessary components of an 'illegal' border crossing, but it is, after all, always *a matter of chance*" (2010, 62 emphasis added).

The two exceptions to this are recent contributions by Belloni (2016) and Gladkova and Mazzucato (2017). Belloni discusses refugee decision-making during dangerous journeys using a 'gambling framework,' which engages with understandings of perceived luck as playing a major role in peoples' decisions (Belloni 2016). Gladkova and Mazzucato argue that chance has been overwhelmingly overlooked in the social sciences. However, in their research with African migrants, life histories were full of references to 'chance,' intertwining notions of agency with "ideas of fate and a predetermined destiny" (ibid., 13). We can see a similar tendency in the narratives of a number of participants in this study.

Tesfay was one of only two Eritrean participants who did not take the land route from Sudan to Libya, and then the sea crossing from Libya to Italy. His brother, who lives in the USA, was able to arrange and pay for him to take a flight from Libya to Italy using a passport provided by an agent. He was very keen to impress upon me that his story was unusual, and that he did not face the same difficulties as most of his fellow nationals. He spent a long time speaking about

the problem of Eritrean nationals being held hostage and extorted by smugglers during their journeys to Sudan. He spoke of the rape of women, torture, and the risk of being killed if your family is unable to pay the ransom. In making sense of his own journey, he expressed the following:

"Well, to be honest, I could say I am one of the lucky ones. I haven't gone through too many troubles compared to people who get it to here. I don't think you will see so much troubles on my way. Of course, there are some, but comparing to…all the majority of people get, mine is, I haven't been through so many troubles. So I cannot represent…"

(Tesfay, Eritrea)

When we discussed the fact that some people had longer journeys, whilst others had much shorter ones, he told me it was just *"a matter of luck."* And again, when he was talking about crossing the border between Eritrea and Sudan, he said that "*it's a matter of luck, some people get caught, some people are passing by chance."* I asked him how he feels when he remembers his journey, and he replied: *"Well, I just, think of myself, that I am one of the lucky ones, and just recognise that I am very lucky."*

Other participants made sense of their successful border crossings in terms of luck. Amena made sense of her sea crossing from Turkey to Greece, during which time the sea became rough and the boat began to take in water, in the following way:

"We were fortunate, we were lucky. The police boat was very fast, if they were late, 10 minutes, we would have drowned. After 20 minutes in the police boat, they managed to get us to the island"

(Amena, Syria)(I).

Now, I don't believe I arrive here! Because I have been through difficult situation. I am lucky. Alhamdulillah. Lucky. Other person died in desert, and in sea

(Osman, Sudan)(I).

Osman's articulation of how he understands his success incorporates *both* notions of luck and of God; the term '*Alhamdulillah'* means 'Praise be to God' in Arabic. When considered together, these twin notions of luck and God call into question the idea that we can explain successes and failures during refugees' journeys solely in terms of the agentic capacities of wayfarers. They give meaning to circumstances that participants perhaps cannot explain in rational terms, or in terms of their own intentional actions. This adds nuance to the assertion that migrants' agency is "*reflected in successful journeys* despite barriers" (Mainwaring and Brigden 2016, 244-5). Successful journeys are, for some participants at least, understood as a mix between an individual sense of achievement or pride which has agentic connotations, and the surrender of individual responsibility to a higher spiritual power, and/or an understanding success or failure to be brought by chance rather than through one's own actions.

2.4 Narrative Understandings of 'the Journey'

To close this discussion I would like to return again to the concept of 'the journey' or 'journey into exile,' and to consider how the narratives of

participants make sense of this concept. What becomes clear in the above sections is the diverse spectrum of memories that are drawn into the concept of 'the journey' by participants. Indeed, the term itself was met with some confusion by participants, who after being asked to speak about 'their journey,' responded by asking whether I wanted to hear about why they had to leave home. Yet others simply began their narratives by discussing those events that had led to their displacement, or even long before then. For example, when I asked Hassan to "tell me about his journey to the UK to claim asylum," he replied:

"My name is Hassan from Sudan. Darfur. I left Sudan because I can't find a stable life there, in Sudan. I belonged to tribes who doesn't have any rights in Sudan. They don't have any freedom, they don't have any rights for education, for health. I belonged to a tribe called A Zaghawa […]"

(Hassan, Sudan)(I).

Hassan went on to describe in detail the events leading up to his displacement. This was common amongst participants and arguably reflects the entanglement between the period of travel, and the reasons why that travel was necessary. When I asked Ife if she thinks about her journey, and she answered:

"It always gives me nightmares. Sometimes when I sleep its like I am back in Nigeria, and I wake up and I think thank God, I am in the UK. I dream about the guy beating me again and again and again, and […] I can't forget. I have tried. I can't"

(Ife, Nigeria).

When asked about her 'journey,' it is the events leading up to her travel that are what Ife refers to. And for those who were in the midst of an as-yet-unresolved asylum process, or for those who had a difficult or uncertain time during their application for asylum, the 'journey into exile' was narrated as extending beyond arrival in the UK. The period of physical travel might be over[41] but the journey towards exile can be ongoing, especially when participants face enduring hardship and instability during the asylum process.

Nyima spent just a few days travelling by plane to the UK from The Gambia. When I ask Nyima whether she still thinks about 'her journey', she makes it clear that for her, the journey includes the specific incident that lead to her fleeing her country. When I asked her if she still thinks about her journey often, and she said that she used to think about it all the time, and she would never forget it because it made her *"learn a lesson."* She described the stress of waiting in the time between her asylum interview and receiving the decision on her application, fueled by the fear of being refused. She describes this time waiting for a decision to be made on her asylum application as "*the hardest time.*" Nyima describes the stress of waiting in the time between her asylum interview and receiving the decision on her application, fueled by the fear of being refused:

"I was waiting for my results, and that is the most…that is the hardest time, d'you know? Because I was thinking, if I don't have it, what am I going to do? […] so I am just stressed all over, sitting, being in my room, thinking…"

(Nyima, The Gambia).

[41] Not withstanding the potential for further onwards movement, including the possibility of a deportation journey.

When discussing the difficulties she had faced, she reflected on her ability to talk openly about these experiences:

"Now I can say it freely, 'cause, like, a load is off my head, so I can be, like, I'm good. But, it was never like that, I never, ever wanted to even sit and talk about the story, because I can't even talk, I keep crying, yeah […] But now it's all alright. [Laughs] I just thank the immigration office."

Nyima received her refugee status just days before our discussion, and she considered it to be a pivotal moment. She said that '*everything changed*' after she received leave to remain because now she could stop reliving the past and look to the future. Asima expresses a similar sentiment:

"When I got my UK status I felt much better, because it was stressing me. Because after all I went through, all the travelling, I still didn't have status. In Sudan I was not happy, travelling I was not happy, and in the UK at first, I was not happy. The day I received my status, the same day I start to sleep well."

(Asima, Sudan)(I).

Evariste told me that he remembered some things about his journey better than others, and that some things would *'remain always in [his] memory.'* When I asked him what things in particular would remain in his memory, he responded as follows:

"The first thing is when I first left Burundi. I left everything. I used to have my own shop, and I had to shut it up and leave it with all the goods still inside. The second thing is the UK asylum system. How long we were waiting. Every time you get a letter it gives you more stress. That is why I try to help other people what are going

through the same thing. I tell them, don't lose your mind. You can lose your mind. In the asylum system you never sleep. You worry every time there is a knock at your door. That is how they do it. We have friends, they knock at their door and then they take them, and we haven't seen them since. They are back in their country now."

(Evariste, Burundi)

The memory, all those years ago, of leaving everything, was the most poignant for him. And those memories of the UK asylum system that came after Evariste's long and eventful period of travel were more significant to him than the period of travel itself. This resonates with, and expands upon Innes' idea of the "never-ending journey," as experiences of restriction and instability during the asylum process are incorporated into the journey narratives of participants. The boundaries of 'the journey' become blurred in these narratives, and 'the journey' comes to signify more than the period of travel.

However, for others, and indeed mostly those who undertook long and difficult journeys, the journey did appear to be understood as more of a distinct and delineated period of time. Some participants began their narratives from the day they left home and concluded on their arrival to the UK. This was especially the case for those who had not experienced difficulties at the hands of the UK asylum system, in particular those who had received refugee status relatively straightforwardly. For example, all of the Syrian participants concluded their journey narratives more-or-less upon their arrival to the UK, at which point I had

to intervene to ask about their experiences in the UK. Ayoub ended the long and detailed narrative of his journey the following way:

"I go to the transit at Heathrow and wait some time, and go to…I spend about 6 hours at the airport. But they were very nice, they were very good with me… And that was the journey, that was a big journey"

(Ayoub, Syria).

However, in several cases, rather than being understood as a discreet period and easily demarcated and distinguishable from a broader life history, understandings of what made up part of 'the journey' were often complex and spanned a much more diffuse period of time than just that period between departure and arrival. The discussion of memory and meaning as it relates to participants journeys in this chapter should not, therefore be understood to unproblematically represent participants' articulations of the memory and meaning of their travel. Indeed part of the difficulty in conducting a discussion of the meaning and significance of 'the journey' for participants is borne from this ambiguity as to what is actually incorporated within the idea of 'the journey' for many participants.

3. Conclusion

Processes of remembering and forgetting are vitally important to an exploration of experience through narrative research, and to how participants relate to their journey experiences. This chapter has therefore sought to explore the relationship that participants have with memories of their journeys, the ways in which these memories are themselves embodied, as well as the creative

processes of remembrance and forgetting that participants are engaged in. Whilst some participants 'worked to forget,' others articulated processes of memorialisation and expressed a desire to pass on their stories to their children and others.

This chapter also offered a discussion of the ways that participants articulate the meaning and significance of their 'journeys' more broadly, allowing us to explore how 'successful' journeys are made sense of in the narratives of participants. There are two themes that resonated across many interviews: luck and God. These themes sit alongside notions of pride and individual achievement, and have the potential to problematise and expand upon to the ongoing academic discussions around journeys. This appeal to chance or fate surrender agency to at least some degree and are ways of making sense of events or outcomes that participants cannot explain completely explain in terms of their own autonomy and will. It also gives a worldly, lived resonance to Merleau-Ponty's notion of ambiguity. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty uses the notion of probability not in the sense of statistical forecasting but to articulate the indeterminacy of the world, the unknown, the "maybe" (Whitmoyer 2017, 127). In an interview with Maurice Fleurent in 1946, Merleau-Ponty affirmed that reason is only ever *de facto*, not *de jure*, and we must recognise the "mixture of chance and reason" that defines human experience (in Toadvine and Lawlor 2007). We can see this echoed in the narratives of participants. The implications of this are engaged with further in the concluding chapter.

The exploration of the meaning of 'the journey' itself as it emerges in the narrations of participants indicates how in some cases participants' 'journey' narratives appeared to correspond fairly clearly to a definable period of travel between leaving home and arriving in the UK. However other participants' narrations of their 'journey' were much more diffuse, encroaching back into their lives prior to displacement, and/or forward into their lives in the UK, in particular encompassing their experiences at the hands of the UK asylum system. Again, the implications of this for discussions around 'the journey' are engaged with in more detail in the conclusion.

Finally, as the note on the obscurity of memory and the limits of narrative demonstrates, there is clearly a critical vigilance necessary in any study that attempts to provide what is essentially a lyrical articulation of lyrical articulations of experience. This vigilance requires that we remain attuned to those instances where the capacity of expression breaks down and participants feel unable to do justice to their experiences in the stories they tell. Vasterling argues that the body's vulnerability, which is a product of its affectability, "implies that the capacity of expression may break down. To be overwhelmed by what affects me more often than not means that I am incapable of expressing or articulating what affects me" (Vasterling 2003, 214). All that these narratives can offer, that is, all their worldly meaningfulness should not lull us into a false sense of security. Haben and Omeed's words are vital in drawing our attention back to the way in which we can at times feel unable to articulate or successfully point to something in our experience. They reaffirm the contingency of any effort to articulate experience. As the discussion draws to a close, it seems apt to remind

ourselves of this, and to once again reaffirm the sense of modesty and humility that has been insisted upon from the outset of this thesis.

Conclusion

This thesis has travelled through the many diverse routes that participants took to claim asylum in the UK, exploring the dynamics and encounters of these different journeys, and how they are remembered and made sense of. I hope to have organised and illuminated the words of participants in a thought-provoking way, and to have provided a compelling and creative collage of the experiences that can be glimpsed at through the stories of participants in this project, as well as exploring in more detail the ways in which these experiences are remembered and made sense of. However as Coole (2007) argues, any analysis must itself be seen as provisional, contingent, partial and, importantly, open to reassessment. This has been affirmed in the continual reference to modesty that can be seen throughout this piece of work. It is in this sense that it is necessary to acknowledge and embrace the fact that there are many different ways in which these narratives could "come to light and life" (Hass 2008, 199), and that this offering is just one of them.

The thesis provides a contribution to refugee and forced migration studies in terms of the ontology and epistemology it tentatively offers. It enriches and adds substance to concepts like voice and agency that are often used but rarely theorised in refugee and forced migration studies. It also offers the beginning of a discussion about what a Merleau-Pontian research ethics might look like that could have significant implications for research with refugees, and indeed for qualitative research more broadly. The theoretical discussion articulated in this

thesis allows us to continue with narrative research with renewed faith in the value of language and its capacity to show, but with respect also for the insights of deconstruction and the critical vigilance that it offers. We can listen to the stories of others in the understanding that language sublimates experience and 'sings the world.' We can learn something about the multi-sensuous, embodied experiences of refugees and asylum seekers and their encounters with other bodies, objects and the physical world in their narrative articulations of these experiences. We can grant storytellers a degree of personal authorship, in the understanding that the stories they tell are inevitably and necessarily partial, as well as being simultaneously theirs and more than theirs. We can allow the meanings and identities that we all cling onto in order to 'get on with life' to have value, whilst remaining ever aware of their ultimate fragility. And we can cling on to each other "even across the distances that separate us" (Whitmoyer 2017, 167). In this way we can move forward more confidently but at the same time more humbly with research that privileges 'refugees voices' in one way or another.

However, to some degree, the proof is in the pudding. The question to be engaged with is thus: what has this approach allowed us to learn about refugees' journeys to the UK? In other words, how does it contribute to and expand upon current discussions?

The decision to undertake narrative research in the UK with people who have already submitted a claim for asylum, although not without its limitations, has proved fruitful in shedding light on some of the less visible and less heavily

scrutinised journeys towards exile. Although the avenues of safe and legal travel available to refugees are ever-more narrow, this does not mean that those avenues have been entirely sealed off, as we can see through the narratives of a small number of participants in this research who were able to travel via regular means to the UK. And although these policies have undoubtedly been a catalyst for the long, fragmented and at times dangerous journeys undertaken by many refugees, another minority of participants were able to travel relatively directly and safely, albeit using irregular means. Yet others had stories that called into question the notion of a 'journey into exile' altogether. Acknowledging these quieter trajectories is one of the key contributions of this work; one that would have remained obscured if the research has been situated along the main routes of irregular migration to Europe. These experiences demonstrate that long and dangerous journeys are not an innate or inevitable part of 'the refugee experience,' but are the result of a specific set of policy decisions. To be a refugee you do not *have* to have suffered *en route*, although this is unfortunately the case for many refugees. In this sense, these stories can actually help us to detach deservingness from the length and difficulty of a persons' journey, and allow us to recognise that long and dangerous journeys are not innate to refugeehood.

In terms of the many participants who did travel irregularly, speaking to people who have been at the frontline of these policies has provided significant insight into not just the intricate dynamics of these processes of border control, but also how they are concretely lived and experienced. It is exceptionally important to explore the diffuse and complex mechanisms of control and the border processes that impress themselves upon the bodies of refugees and asylum seekers.

However, it is equally important to understand how this *feels* and what sort of embodied responses it elicits, that is, to affect "a turning inside out of historical details and structures of power, to discover their significance for those who live them" (Coole 2007, 117). This is precisely what the approach taken in this thesis has been able to achieve. The focus on embodiment has been able to illuminate some of the many ways that refugees' and asylum seekers' experience these journeys, and the policies implicated in these journeys, sensuously and affectively at the level of their lived bodies. It has also shed light on the way that memories of these journeys are also embodied. In doing so these narratives also speak back to the theoretical literature to affirm the primacy of embodiment in experience. The narratives have demonstrated some of the practical ways in which the body is simultaneously enabling and constraining and how this emerges in the study of lived experience.

Furthermore, it is the narratives of participants that point us to both the obscurity of memory and the contingency of narrative articulations of experience. It is by virtue of the words of participants that we are reminded of the impossibility of illuminating all of the ways in which participants carry the weight of their journeys, or indeed all of the ways in which the weight of the present projects itself back and reconfigures these journey memories. And they draw our attention back to the way in which we can at times feel unable to express something in our experience and thus reaffirm the contingency of any effort to articulate experience. They remind us that all that these narratives can offer should not lull us into a false sense of security, and that we should acknowledge the ways in which we can be overwhelmed by what affects us, in a

way that prevents us from being able to successfully express how we feel (Vasterling 2003, 214).

Another way in which the words of participants have been able to speak to broader theoretical debates is through the notion of chance and its implications for discussion of agency, particularly as it has been articulated in recent literature on clandestine migration journeys. The odyssey trope used by journalist and author Patrick Kingsley invokes imagery of the cunning and intelligent traveller who is able to tackle and surmount the obstacles he faces through his quick-wittedness and sharp judgment. This is somewhat mirrored in the assertion by Mainwaring and Brigden that "[f]rom marginalised positions, migrants continue to negotiate and manoeuvre, exhibiting a degree of agency *reflected in successful journeys* despite barriers" (2016, 244-5, emphasis added). However, the problem with associating successful journeys with 'agency' is that it does appear to romanticise mobility and attributes agency only to those who are successful in their attempts to move. It also has the effect of attributing a sort of 'bonus value' to the global North, which is something that, despite its admitted Eurocentrism, this thesis has sought to avoid.

Clearly, then, a greater degree of nuance is required when making this assertion. Indeed, both the notion of 'luck' and the appeal to a higher power, or God, to make sense of successful journeys have the effect of problematising this assumption. If those who are successful see it as at least in part the result of luck, or fate, rather than 'agency,' then this notion of successful journeys being the product of 'agency' must be questioned. Both of these notions, in different ways,

surrender agency and are ways of making sense of events or outcomes that participants cannot explain completely explain in terms of their own autonomy and will. Chapter IV also alludes to the ways in which luck or happenstance, like the weather, or a traffic jam, can make the difference between a successful or failed journey. This is not to say that there is no creativity and resilience to these journeys, and indeed alongside these references to luck or fate were articulations of personal achievement or pride that do assert a sense of agency. But it is clear that, despite efforts to mitigate risk, sometimes the success or failure of, for example, a sea crossing from Libya to Italy, can be much more aptly articulated in terms of luck, not agency.

As was noted in the previous chapter the concept of luck is referred to in a number of articles on migration journeys, either in the quotes of research participants, or in passing by researchers, however it is rarely engaged with in any substantive way (See, for example Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2016; Hassan and Biorklund 2016; Innes 2015; Khosravi 2010; Mainwaring and Brigden 2016; Mallett and Hagen-Zanker 2016). Those who have engaged with the concept of 'luck' have argued that it has been overwhelmingly overlooked in the search for structures, regularities, and lasting relationships (Gladkova and Mazzucato 2017). It is also arguably overlooked both in the preoccupation with rational decision-making in research on migration journeys, but also in the assertion that successful journeys can be best characterised by an Odysseus-like heroism, or 'agency despite constraints.' Indeed, it precisely destabilises the enduring desire in migration and refugee studies to fit everything into one of the two categories of structural constraint or expression of migrant/refugee agency, along with the

broader tendency in Western societies to emphasise individual agency and rationality, thus devaluing the concept of chance (Gladkova and Mazzucato 2017). What this recognition of luck can achieve, then, is to affirm the indeterminacy of the world, the unknown, the "maybe" (Whitmoyer 2017, 127), that is, the "mixture of chance and reason" that defines human experience (in Toadvine and Lawlor 2007). The appeal to luck or fate in the narratives encourages us to face up to the indeterminacy of successful journeys that cannot simply be explained away in terms of structure or agency. As Coole has argued, any interpretative analysis must "articulate events in a way that theory resonates with the lived sense of those whose everyday acts make history" (Coole 2007, 148). Any analysis of successful journeys therefore must also take seriously those notions of luck and God that participants use to make sense of their experiences.

Blurred Boundaries of Journeys: Towards journeyscapes

In concluding this thesis, it is necessary, especially given the insights drawn from the narratives of participants in this research, to dwell for a while on the issue of "the journey" as a concept. At the very beginning of this project I wrote the following on the definition of a "journey into exile":

A journey into exile, for the scope of this study, is understood to be the time between departure from 'home', broadly defined, and arrival in the State of asylum, characterised by periods of physical movement though often interspersed by episodes of stasis. This definition of a 'journey into exile' represents a definition 'in progress'; its scope will be developed throughout the course of the study, taking inspiration from the ways in which refugee participants conceptualise and

understand their own journeys in order to refine the concept of the journey as an analytical tool.

Behind this statement is the idea was that I could somehow 'solve' the mystery of what a "journey into exile" was by talking to people who had been through it, that I could develop one, singular definition from the consensus of my participants. But if anything, speaking to others only compounded the ambiguity of the concept, and this ambiguity must be acknowledged in any attempt to theorise journeys. The concept of 'the journey' is perhaps especially ambiguous because of the duality of meaning inherent to the word; it is the act of travelling from one place to another, but it is also a "long and often difficult process of personal change and development."

Kaytaz (2016, 293) was faced with a similar situation in her research on Afghan journeys to Turkey, writing that whilst some of her participants "merely described travel between two countries, others embedded the journey in broader narratives about their lives." Kaytaz engages with the idea that journeys are transformative in and of themselves, and that the journey can be understood "as a period in itself, with specific meaning and significance for the rest of their lives" (BenEzer 2002, 9). She recognised that, in her research participants often did not present a "defined journey period" and that "it was not always clear to what extent my participants viewed themselves as being transformed by the experiences during the journey, or other life events that led the participants to their journeys, such as the loss of family members or experience of persecution" (Kaytaz 2016, 295). Kaytaz's words resonate with the insights of the present

study. Both the dynamics of the journeys experienced by participants, as well as the ways that some participants narrated and made sense of their 'journeys' destabilise the idea that 'the journey' is a singular, discreet period with its own meaning and significance that can necessarily be neatly bracketed out in the broader life histories of participants.

When does the journey begin? On 'departure from home'? Does this mean the house that a person lives in? Or the town? Or upon crossing the state border? Does it begin at that first feeling of instability, of fear that may compound over months or years before a person takes steps towards departure? For many it is not one specific event that can be pinpointed as the catalyst for leaving, although for some this is certainly the case. Many participants lived through months or even years of instability prior to leaving home.

The idea that the journey 'ends' on arrival is also contentious. What about those cases where participants are living in the UK for a period of time before submitting a claim for asylum? Is that not part of their 'refugee journey'? And for those who felt an enduring sense of instability when their claim was being assessed, those whose claims were refused in the first instance, or those who were still desperately trying to get their claim accepted, is this not part of their 'refugee journey'? Indeed, the title of this thesis has been adapted to encapsulate this ambiguity, and to do justice to the fact that for some participants, particularly those still going through the asylum process, their journey is ongoing. The 'journeys into exile' that I referred to at the beginning of this doctorate, has thus become 'journeys towards exile.'

The idea that there is one, singular journey into exile is also clearly problematic given the fragmented journeys of many participants, as well as those participants who had life histories marked by numerous migrations. By being situated in a 'destination country,' this research has been able to expand upon the problematisation of "the journey" that Kaytaz offers. It demonstrates that as well as extending back into the period prior to departure, 'the journey' also, in some cases, appears to extend far beyond arrival. The narratives of some participants therefore give further credence to the argument made by Mainwaring and Brigden that arrival similarly does not necessarily equate to the 'end' of the journey, especially for those "who live under conditions of questionable legality…in which a sense of settlement cannot be achieved" (2016, 246).

Both Kaytaz's and my own research thus chimes with the assertion by Mainwaring and Brigden that the desire to talk of journeys as discreet and specific periods "is born from methodological necessity and, to some extent, a potentially arbitrary decision by researchers, not a preexisting logic of migration" (Mainwaring and Brigden, 2016, 251). As such, I would suggest that 'the journey' is not suitable as an 'analytical category' in the sense that it has clear and definable parameters that function at a level of generality. The best I can offer is to suggest that the journey can function as an expressive, literary trope that incorporates an understanding of the symbolic journey of disruption and change that the notion alludes to, but that is also comprised, in the vast majority of cases, of one or several periods of physical travel that can be long or

short in duration. Better still, I would like to put forward the concept of "journeyscapes" to describe the narratives produced in this project and as a possible way to frame future research on this topic. I feel that this more aptly encapsulates the blurred boundaries and diffuse contours of participants' journeys towards exile.

Like the term borderscape before it, the term journeyscape is used here in analogy with the term landscape. It does so in ways that both conform with, and diverge from the ways that the term borderscape has been used in migration studies. Borderscape is a term that has been used to emphasise the culturally constructed nature, dynamism and fluidity of borders. However, unlike common articulations of the term borderscape, implicit to the idea of a journeyscape is also the notion of a "view from somewhere." This is in accordance with the definition of landscape that describes it as a section or expanse of rural scenery, usually extensive, which can be seen from a single viewpoint. It thus lends itself to an appreciation of the embodied perspectivity of the journey narratives. "My perceptual experience of the world is not a view from nowhere but is always a view from the place where I am standing or sitting or walking. My view-point is embodied" (Marratto 2012, 15). Further, the suffix '-scape' denotes "an extensive view, scenery," or "a picture or representation" of such a view. The idea of a "journeyscape" has a dual function: it suggests an overview also has an artistic, expressive quality. The term "journeyscape" highlights the blurred boundaries of journeying and the processes of creative construction inherent to journey narratives. As with a landscape, as some elements of participant's journeyscapes

are brought into focus through the narratives, others fade into the background. But, importantly, those elements in focus are subtended by this background.

We can, and arguably should, continue to pay attention to the experiences of travel that *are* part of the life histories of many refugees and that have been historically sidelined in refugee studies. And this work can probably successfully take place under the broad descriptive rubric of 'journeys.' However, we run into difficulty if we seek to establish a well-defined framework for the concept of 'the journey' in refugee studies, which corresponds with a clearly delineated period of time with a discreet and observable significance. This discussion and critical appraisal of the concept of 'the journey' is not intended to undermine the contribution of this project, or the contributions delivered in the research of many others who have recognised and attempted to address the gap in knowledge about refugees' experiences between countries of origin and countries of settlement. Even if experiences of travel cannot always be clearly demarcated in terms of their specific significance and impact in relation to the broader symbolic life journey of refugees, this does not mean that we should give up on trying to better understand these experiences. However, it does require acknowledgment as we move forwards with research on journeys. The messiness and complexity of real-world research perpetually bites at the heels of any attempt to create neat and tidy conceptual frameworks. It is in this sense that we find substance to Mitch Rose's assertion that processes of deconstruction always ultimately overwhelm any attempt at metaphysics.

Refugee Journeys Going Forwards

Moving forward, there are a number of areas highlighted over the course of this thesis that I feel would benefit from further exploration. Some of these suggestions are extensions of work that this thesis has already made a start on, however others are based on issues that have become conspicuous through their absence in the current project, or that have been alluded to tangentially and indirectly during the fieldwork process.

Although I spent a lot of time during this doctorate trying to forge a path through a extremely complex set of theoretical debates, I feel that what is presented within this thesis and indeed what I was able to explore is just the tip of the iceberg. This is the beginning of what ought to be a long and extensive dialogue around not just the tension between poststructural philosophies and experience-focused approaches that value 'the refugee voice,' but also around the role of social theory and philosophy in refugee and forced migration studies more broadly. In particular, the discussion of research ethics that was afforded in this thesis is something that I feel could benefit from much more sustained attention. It would be interesting to see what forced migration researchers could learn by engaging more substantively with the debates around morality and ethics in philosophy, and how this engagement might impact upon the way we talk about and 'do' ethics in research with refugees.

Relatedly, and in one last attempt at reflexivity, I would like to raise a point that has weighed on my mind throughout this thesis, which I will continue to

consider in any future research, and which I would encourage others to also consider. That is, the ethical issue of appropriating and institutionalising the stories of others (Bassel 2017) by chopping them up into sound bites that fit the demands of a DPhil. I hope that the way in which I have organised and interpreted participants' narratives in this thesis is compelling, allows the reader to better understand the diverse experiences of refugees and asylum seekers during their journeys, and remains faithful to the complexity of participants' experiences. However, there is still room to question whether this method of collating and presenting these stories was the best way of 'listening to others,' which is an approach I advocated for in my discussion of research ethics in Chapter III.

Again, this is not an attempt to romanticise the narratives of participants as authentic and pure, and as sullied by my own interventions. In listening we take up the expressions of others according to our own, embodied perspective and in this sense, there is always a degree of appropriation and encroachment within practices of listening. Indeed it is precisely this mutual implication in one another that forms an ethical relationship. The susceptibility that is characteristic of our mutual implication is "not the same as subjugation," but can be exploited, and it is this "condition of the possibility of my exploitation [that] presupposes that I am a being in need of support" (Butler 2015, 7). However, acknowledging that an element of appropriation is implicit to all practices of listening does not give researchers a free pass to exploit the words of others, nor does it mean that we are automatically listening well simply by virtue of using narrative and dialogical methods. At a minimum, being a 'good' listener in

research surely requires that the work we produce resonates with the expressions of those who have told their stories and interprets their articulations in good faith. However, future research on refugees' journeys could benefit from engaging more deeply with the question of *how* we listen to others (Bassel 2017), what really constitutes 'mutual recognition' in research, and how we can be better listeners in the future. The potential for more participatory and collaborative approaches to answer some of these questions and to invigorate research on refugees' journeys, or "journeyscapes" is certainly something that I will consider carefully in future research.

Beyond the aspects of theory and methods that merit further exploration, there was one avenue for further research in particular that emerged by virtue of the conversations I had with participants. Through this project I have become increasingly aware of the stories that have been sidelined by the current preoccupation with the long and dangerous journeys that were emblematic of the 2015 'crisis'. Such journeys plainly warrant significant attention, which they have duly been afforded in this thesis, however to understand the diverse experiences of refugees in the UK, it is also necessary to turn to those quieter trajectories that have been hitherto overlooked in the literature. One particularly significant example that I have not been able to engage with through this thesis is the lack of attention paid to the experiences of thousands of mostly women and children who arrive via the family reunion process. During my research, a number of participants explained to me that they had left family members elsewhere and had journeyed alone, with the aim of bringing those family members to their place of asylum later through family reunion. Since my

research focused on those claiming asylum in the UK I have not incorporated such narratives into the thesis. However, these insights drawn from the encounters with participants have since sparked an interest in the experiences, and in the separate journeys, of those left behind.

Thousands of refugees engage in the family reunion process each year: in 2017 it was reported that there were 5,128 family reunion visas issued to partners and children of refugees in the UK.[42] These persons are not included in the statistics on grants for asylum. Families are frequently split up during displacement, in particular when one family member travels ahead to another country in search of safety and stability. Furthermore, those 'left behind' at various stages of the journey are overwhelmingly women and children[43]. Journeys to the UK, asylum processes and family reunion processes can last months and even years, resulting in protracted periods of waiting and relative immobility for those left behind. A fruitful area for future research would therefore be to engage with those who were 'left behind' either in the country of origin or elsewhere along the way to await family reunification whilst their partners, spouses or parents travelled to the UK to claim asylum, and to explore the experiences, meaning and significance of these periods of waiting and of travel via family reunion. The notion of "journeyscapes" could be useful in framing this discussion of those, mostly women and children, who experience these journeys from the perspective of being "left behind."

[42] See UK Home Office (2018) "National Statistics: How many people do we grant asylum or protection to?"
[43] For more information, see CARE international (2017) "Left behind: How the world is failing women and girls on refugee family reunion"

As well as suggesting that some of the quieter trajectories of refugees arriving in Europe could benefit from further scrutiny, this project has also, albeit rather indirectly, drawn my attention to other groups of refugees for whom a physical journey is conspicuous by its absence. The early stages of this research, I had not considered the possibility of refugee experiences that did not follow a threat-flight-asylum trajectory, and that were not marked by their own physical 'journey into exile.' Indeed, as the story of Khalid, a third-generation Palestinian refugee born and raised in Syria, draws our attention to, there are whole swathes of refugees who have not themselves undergone any sort of physical journey or travel that is, those born into exile in protracted refugee situations. As has been acknowledged, this problematises the preconception that journeying or travel is intrinsic to refugeehood. However to acknowledge this is not to suggest that 'the journey' has no relevance at all in the lives of those born into exile. Indeed, it raises the question as to how the collective memories of refugees in protracted situations incorporate (or omit) narratives of travel, and what the significance of these historical journeys is for those born into exile. There have of course been many important contributions exploring collective memories of flight and homeland for 'nations in exile' (See, for example, the special issue of the Journal of Intercultural Studies on 'Refugee and Diaspora Memories' edited by Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013). However, work on refugee journeys may benefit from engaging in dialogue with this area of refugee research.

The approach taken in this project has been inspired by Merleau-Ponty's favouring of "samplings, probings, philosophical anecdotes, the beginnings of analyses, in short, the continual rumination which goes on in the course of

reading, personal meetings, and current events" (AD 3), alongside his distaste for closure. Such an approach compels us to continually and unrelentingly interrogate the world and its contents. Those ideas for further research suggested above are just some of the ways in which we could continue with this endless task of interrogation. In this respect, there will always be work left to be done.

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