

“On Our Way”:
Identities and Representations of African women
Seeking Asylum In Ireland

by
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Abbreviations

DJE	Irish Department of Justice and Equality, responsible for overall law and order in Ireland, including the justice system, state security, asylum strategy and development of the National Immigration policy
DP	Direct Provision and Dispersal System providing full board in 34 centres across 16 counties which including former hotels, guesthouses (B&B), hostels, former convents, nursing homes, a holiday camp and a mobile home site.
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
EURODAC	European Dactyloscopy is a centralized database of fingerprints of asylum applicants and illegal aliens that assists in determining which Member State is to be responsible for examining an asylum application under Council Regulation (EC) 343/2003
GNIB	Garda National Immigration Bureau. State Police responsible for implementing the law in all matters pertaining to immigration, including registration of immigrants and carrying out deportation orders issued by the Minister for Justice and Equality.
INIS	Irish Naturalization and Immigration Service, governed by the Department of Justice and Equality. All non-EEA nationals require the permission of the Minister for Justice and Equality to reside in the State. The principles of entry, residence and removal of non-nationals from the State are set out in The Aliens Act 1935 and the Aliens Order 1946 as amended, together with the regulations implementing the EU Rights of Residence Directives and the Immigration Act1999.
NAPR	National Action Plan Against Racism.
ORAC	Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, responsible for determining refugee status at the first instance.
RAT	The Refugee Appeals Tribunal decides appeals of applications of asylum seekers deemed unsuccessful by the Office of the Refugee Applications. A statutorily independent body, it was established October 2000 to cater for increased numbers of applicants and exercises a quasi-judicial function under the 1996 Refugee Act.
RIA	The Reception and Integration Agency is the functional unit of the INIS, and manages the Direct Provision and Dispersal system, provides full board accommodation and works with health, social services, welfare and education agencies to co-ordinate the delivery of services. Established between November 1999 and April 2000 to implement the Direct Provision system

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Irish office provides protection and assistance to refugees, monitors government compliance with international legislation, raises public awareness of the plight of refugees and works towards their integration.

Local and National Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

ADI Anti-Deportation Ireland. A national, multi-ethnic grassroots network/alliance of activists, asylum seekers, refugees, community workers, trade unionists and academics who oppose forced deportation and the Direct Provision system

AkiDwA Akina Dada wa Africa. Swahili for “Sisterhood of Africa”. The only successful national minority ethnic-led network of migrant women living in Ireland, with over 2,250 individual members from 37 countries and 34 affiliates. Promotes gender-specific integration, training, consultation, information provision and research on racism, health, violence and abuse, economic participation, asylum.

CADIC Coalition Against the Deportation of Irish Children, initiated by AkiDwA and co-founded by Ronit Lentin in 2003, in concert with Irish and migrant organisations to campaign against the withdrawal of residency rights for migrant parents of Irish citizen children.

COIS TINE Church Based Organisation, providing pastoral care, therapy and a drop-in centre for people in asylum.

INTEGRATION IRELAND National NGO network of over 250 organisations to promote for integration and inclusion of immigrants through information, training, advocacy and research.

ICI Immigrant Council of Ireland. Provides support, advice, information and independent appeal service for immigration decisions, race discrimination. Lobbies to end sex trafficking. Popular information point receiving 80,000 contacts per week on social media.

IRC Irish Refugee Council. Provides legal support to asylum seekers, builds public awareness and capacity among key players in the asylum system, policy reform, and protection of children and youth in the immigration system.

Nasc Immigrant Rights NGO. Provides legal advice and advocacy for migrants and minority rights in areas of integration, anti-racism, naturalization and policy change.

NCP New Communities Partnership. National network of 175 immigrant led minority groups focused on training, capacity building, empowerment, self-representation, training and awareness of the policy context within which services are planned and delivered. State and EC funded.

NWCI National Women's Council of Ireland. Representing over 160 women and women's groups across a range of gender equality issues, including political participation, economic independence, care work and health.

Key Definitions and Asylum Regulations in Ireland

ASYLUM SEEKER: In countries with individualized refugee status determination procedures, an 'asylum seeker' is a person seeking asylum from persecution who has yet to be recognized as a 'refugee' as defined in Art. 1A(2) of the Refugee Convention (UNHCR 2013).

CITIZENSHIP REFERENDUM 2004: Held in 2004, when by 79.17 percent of votes, the Twenty Seventh Amendment of the Constitution Act was approved, denying automatic citizenship by birth (Jus Soli) unless one parent is an Irish citizen or entitled to be an Irish citizen.

DUBLIN CONVENTION: The predecessor of the Dublin Regulation, signed in 1990 and replaced in 2003.

DUBLIN REGULATION: The criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged, allowing for the transfer of an asylum applicant to the first country of arrival

ECONOMIC MIGRANT: A person who voluntarily leaves their country to take up residence elsewhere and who is moved exclusively by economic considerations. A refugee who is also an economic migrant is not deprived of refugee status.

EEA NATIONAL: A national of a Member State of the European Economic Area, constituted by EU 28 Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway

EMPLOYMENT PERMIT: Permit generally required by non-EEA to work in the State of three types: Green Card permits for skilled labour need a valid job offer from an Irish employer, are not subject to labour market assessment test and allow movement within a specified sector. Work permits do not allow family reunification or mobility within the sector and employers need to prove an EEA national cannot be found to fill the vacancy.

IRISH BORN CHILD (IBC): Anyone born in the Republic of Ireland before 31 December 2004 entitled to be an Irish citizen under the IBC/05 scheme.

IRISH BORN CHILD SCHEME 2005 (IBC/05): Administrative Scheme for Immigrant Residency allowing immigrant parents of children born in the state prior to 1st January 2005 to apply for a renewable form of residency. This was a successful outcome of CADIC's campaign.

LEAVE TO REMAIN: Permission to stay in the State on humanitarian grounds, and takes into consideration the person's employment prospects, character and conduct, and any representations.

NON-REFOULMENT: Principle that prohibits expulsion or returning a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his/her life or freedom would be threatened.

REFUGEE: A 'refugee' is a person who comes within the definition in Art. 1A(2) of the Refugee Convention, and is, relating to the Status of Refugees, Geneva a person who demonstrates a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail herself/himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of her/his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

REFUGEE CONVENTION: The Convention relating to the status of refugees defined at Geneva on 28 July 1951, as amended by the New York Protocol of 31 January 1967, in force 22 April 1954, 1989 UNTS 137 (Refugee Convention) and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, New York, 31 January 1967, in force 4 October 1967 (UNHCR 2013; Kneebone 2009:19).

SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION: Can be granted to a person in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned would face a real risk of suffering serious harm if they return to their country

Abstract

This thesis provides the first explicit Postcolonial study of asylum in the Irish context that integrates Black Feminist analyses of intersectional identity with Postcolonial Feminist theories of representation. African women seeking asylum in the Republic of Ireland were key political instruments used by the state to re-draw racial lines. The study examines how, for a group of African women “On their Way” through asylum, identity and representation work hand in hand to force identities, subaltern spaces and bodies to occupy them. Rich biographical data is gathered through mixed art and drama methods over two intensive participatory research projects conducted in a small Irish city. Data analysis critically examines the poetics (practices that signify) and politics (the powers that govern these practices) and affective economies of global and local NGO visual representations, exposing how they consume, fragment, and appropriate African women’s identities and bodies. Though hypervisible, the women themselves “cannot speak”.

The women in the study reported feeling “tired” and “used”. Asking “What work are they doing as they do asylum?” the study finds that black female identities and bodies are forced to perform *political, cultural, emotional* and *material* labour on their way through this context of Irish asylum. The author argues that *Postcolonial Asylum* is a performative encounter that re-scripts colonial race/class/gender discourse through a *humanitarian alibi* to naturalize European/white supremacy, re-inscribe patriarchal power and justify racialised incarceration of bodies seeking asylum in the North.

Four features distinguish this thesis from other Irish studies: An interdisciplinary approach, the centralization of Black and Postcolonial Feminist theory, innovative applications of Participatory Art-Based Action methodology, and deconstructive analyses. The study demonstrates how Black and Postcolonial feminisms can recognize, theorize and replenish black female political and intellectual agency, and that Participatory Action research, if grounded in Black feminist epistemology and ethics, succeeds in allowing participants to “speak back” to what is already said about them in de-colonised spaces of convivial self-representation.

KEYWORDS: Asylum, Drama, Identity, Intersectionality, Ireland,
Feminist, Participatory, Postcolonial, Race, Representation.

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Above all, this work is dedicated to my sisters and brothers in asylum in Ireland and everywhere—those who made it, those who didn't, those now free and those still detained in deplorable conditions or deported. To the women who took part, I could never thank you enough for your sisterly love and talents as actors, writers, mothers and activists. Giving your time and energy to this project was both a political act and one of merciful compassion for others still trapped. You took the risk of naming, framing and speaking back. I hope I did justice to your stories as much as I hope your stories "do justice". May you and your children remain blessed. May we work together again, further On Our Way.

KEY DEFINITIONS

COLONIAL DISCOURSE: According to Bhabha (1983), colonial discourse hinges on the recognition and disavowal of difference (racial/cultural/historical), whose main discursive strategy is stereotypes. Reliant on race and gender differences, colonial discourse vacillates between what is already known but needs to “anxiously repeat” these meanings; this ambivalence gives colonial discourses its currency and ensures its repeatability in various formations.

COLONIALISM: One of the technologies of European imperialism. A systematic practice of direct domination and subjugation of its existing occupants through permanent settlement of European populations taking place from the 16th-20th centuries (Smith 1999).

DECOLONIZATION: 1. The dismantling of territorial colonial rule of European colonies following insurgency and resistance of the colonized, marked by a series of UN General Assembly debates between 1946 and 1960.
2. Dismantling Eurocentric, sexist and racist representations; forms of ‘discursive colonization’ (Mohanty 2003: 19) of Third World women; decolonizing the mind (Sandoval 2000; Fanon 1952) and decolonizing epistemology and research methodologies (Smith 1999).

DIASPORA: An interpretive frame referencing the economic, political and cultural dimensions of contemporary forms of migrancy and intersections of alliance among people classed differentially in a specific diasporic space. To fully address diasporic space, we need postcolonial theory, border theory and a politics of location, and intersecting analyses of colonialism, imperialism, class and sexual politics (Brah 1996: 622-631)

DISCOURSE: A group of statements that provide a language for, constructs, defines and governs how a topic is talked about or how knowledge about a particular subject at a particular historical moment is represented. A discourse involves practices and conduct, not only language, and produces (not simply describes) and regulates the way of thinking or state of knowledge (episteme). Discourses are configurations that produce subject-positions and meanings of what is represented (Hall 1997).

EPISTEME: *Episteme* means knowledge/theory, in contrast to *techne* (craft/practice) or *doxa* (common belief or opinion, Parry 2014). I understand discourse to encompass all three.

EPISTEMIC APARTHEID: Coined by Sandoval (2001) to address the segregation of non-Western knowledges in academia.

EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE: The violence of Western imperial knowledge production and law that ‘worlded the world on a supposedly uninscribed territory’ (Spivak 1990:1), thus overwriting and re-inscribing the colonial space.

GLOBAL: Relating to the whole world, worldwide.

IMPERIALISM: European territorial, economic and political expansion, domination and control of large areas of the Americas, Asia, Africa and Australia through direct and indirect means (Kohn 2010). Imperialism was justified by Liberal political theory and ideology of the European Enlightenment, whose project was ushering its others from barbarity to civilization (Smith 1999).

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES: Addressing a topic too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline, with the goal of integrating insights to construct a more comprehensive understanding (Repko 2012).

INTERNATIONAL: Existing, occurring, or carried on between nations.

NATION-STATE: The structures of the nation.

NATION: An imagined political community, limited with finite, if elastic boundaries; a community with a deep horizontal comradeship, despite actual inequalities and exploitation that prevail (Anderson 2006: 6).

NEOCOLONIZATION: For Nkrumah (1965 ix), it is simply ‘imperialism switch[ing] tactics ... to accomplish objectives formerly achieved by naked colonialism. It is not just “colonialism all over again”, but political, military, ideological and cultural domination operating across material, psychological, discursive and epistemological levels and used to justify Western political and military force over other non-Western cultures (Spivak 1991: 2).

POST-DISCIPLINARY: Suggests that the organizing structures of the disciplines themselves will not hold, and that activist-related feminist research is already in this mode (Sue-Ellen Case 2001 in Buikema et al. 2011).

THIRD WORLD: Introduced in Nehru (1955) speech at the Bandung Conference to distinguish twenty-nine African and Asian nations wishing for their non-aggressive coexistence apart from the capitalist superpowers and communist block. The Fourth World is used to refer to Indigenous Peoples.

TRANSNATIONAL: Existing or operating across national boundaries.

Terminology

AFRICAN FEMINISM: refers to Continental and diasporic African women's movement based in African thought and histories. A dynamic site of academic and activist-based debate that engages with all fields of feminism, it draws from women's political, military and social leadership and uprisings spanning from the earliest epochs of human civilization, which exceed the terms of western feminism (Mama 2005).

AFRICAN WOMEN: is used to signify the particularity of the women in the study to acknowledge their Continental origins, histories and socialization and specific forms of gendered racialisation in Ireland.

ASSEMBLAGE: My use of the term refers to 'a gathering of things or people' (OED 2015) and refers to discourses, ideologies, bodies, images and texts that represent Third World/Black female bodies.

BLACK FEMINISM: refers to US Black and Third World Feminisms and includes UK Black feminism that encompasses diasporic women of colour's political solidarity.

BLACK: I capitalize "Black" in direct reference to the African American and/or UK feminist identity, but not when referring to visibly dark-skinned women of colour.

FEMINISMS: It is widely accepted that many feminisms exist. In this thesis, I use different types of feminisms to signify theoretical focus from the geographical locations of origin of the women.

POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM: Simultaneous critique of both racist and patriarchal structures to address the "double colonisation" of women through exclusion by both white imperial colonisers as well as indigenous patriarchies during colonialism, decolonisation and nationalism. Also critiques the tendency of Western feminism to speak in the name of all women and deconstructs homogenising discourse of universal gender oppression to address cultural/contextual difference (Spivak 1988, Mohanty 1988, Gandhi 1998, Dhawan 2005)

REPRESENTATION/S: Cultural representation (rather than political representation) refers to the practices/activities/strategies of representation through signs and signifying systems to produce meaning. I consider the *poetics* (practices that signify) and *politics* (the powers that govern these practices, Lidchi 1997) of representing raced/gendered bodies in asylum, and the resultant entities or products/objects—representations. Meanings are made by the regimes (the whole formation) of representation (discourses), including visual and cultural practices, products and bodies themselves. Self-representation is the activity—the subject of the discourse (those in asylum) speaking for themselves—through words, actions, creative arts or bodily actions.

THIRD WORLD FEMINISM: refers to theorizations from Third World and diasporic locations, including Chicana, Indigenous, Global and Afro-centric African Feminisms.

THIRD WORLD WOMEN: refers to women in and from the South, to retain a sharp focus on neocolonialism and to acknowledge differences in their cultures and socialization, which may differ from diasporic women.

TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM: refers to cross-border north/south feminist praxis and solidarity. I note that UN-led projects do not share the same feminist politics as non-UN transnational projects.

WHITE: White is not capitalised.

WOMEN OF COLOUR: is used instead of “migrant” women to collectively refer to non-Western women of various origins who are othered under the gaze of whiteness.

- ❖ All names of people, places and organisations have been changed
- ❖ Multiple citations are arranged in order of recency, highest relevance and/or genealogy of thought regarding the topic.
- ❖ Quotes from data transcripts follow conventions from Discourse Analysis.

1. Introduction to Thesis

1.1 Asylum in the Irish Context

Globalisation [is] the establishment of the same system of exchange all over the world (...) if the colonial subject was largely a class subject, and if the subject of postcoloniality was variously racialised, then the subject of globalization is gendered.

Spivak 2000: 123

The absence of a sustained postcolonial or feminist critique of Refugee Studies is conspicuous.

Hyndman 2010: 454

A key contribution of this study is to provide the first explicit postcolonial study of asylum that explores relationships between “identity and representation” for black female bodies in asylum. Through the case of a dedicated group of African women “On Their Way” through different stages of Irish asylum in a small rural city, the study draws from data gathered using art and drama based methods over two intensive participatory projects: *Borders, Barriers and Bridges* and *On Our Way*. Most of the data in the thesis are drawn from this second, longer-term drama project (see pp. 16-17). The women in the study reported feeling “tired” and “used”. I ask: What are they being “used” for?

This study contributes to Irish feminism, asylum, refugee and migration studies, and sociology, and more broadly, to Black and Postcolonial Feminist studies at the International level. Its transnational focus makes the study pertinent to other white First World nations such as Australia, Canada and the United States, which host people of colour seeking asylum from the South. These countries share histories of European settler colonialism, yet tend to profess neutrality, disavow or erase their colonial histories.

Interdisciplinary studies are typical of asylum scholarship and the knowledge produced in the thesis also intersects with fields such as Feminist International Relations (which addresses women in conflict zones), Critical Race and Whiteness studies, Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, Community Development and Intercultural Arts. Exemplary of Activist Scholarship, this study bears relevance outside the academy, containing knowledge of use to asylum-seekers, activists, advocates, migrant groups in addition to policy makers who work with and/or on behalf of women in asylum.

The study attempts to de-colonize (Sandoval 2000) academic interventions across three aspects of scholarship— theory, methodology and practice—and address five gaps identified in asylum/refugee studies (see p.13). The theoretical contributions of the study are, first, a four-armed theoretical framework that centralizes Black Feminist theories of intersectionality (Collins 2000) and Postcolonial Feminist theories of subaltern space Spivak (1998, 1990) and the representation of Third World women (Mohanty 1984, 2003). I purposefully return intersectional theory to its epistemological roots, which lie in Afro-Centric philosophy and deep-seated material understanding by Africana women—through Trans-Atlantic slavery—of the *inseparable* links between race, gender, capitalism and imperialism.

Second, I attempt to theorize asylum as Postcolonial Encounter (Ahmed 2000). To my knowledge, just one other study—*Postcolonial Asylum* by Farrier (2012)— takes this approach, via a primarily legal critique that addresses the exclusionary practices of host nations that cast the asylum-seeker as an “infrahuman, irredeemable other”. In contrast, this study explicates the geopolitical shift from *political* to *humanitarian* asylum in the Post-Cold War period (Chimni 1998; 2002; 2003) to re-articulate *postcolonial asylum* as a “humanitarian alibi”— an ideological consortium of Universal Human Rights, International Law, Development

discourses, and Western assertions of peace and democracy. I contend that the humanitarian alibi elides the legacies of colonialism and re-iterates a contemporary “white saviour” discourse, which dissuades examination of the root causes of contemporary forced displacement—neocolonialism and necropolitical intervention (Nmurkha 1965, Mbembe 2003) in the South, by the North.

Third, I draw on race and colour lines to situate postcolonial asylum as contiguous with colonial technologies of racialised incarceration by forcing bodies of colour into illegality and conditions of detainability and deportability. Reaching towards theorizing a transnational asylum industry (Fekete 2000, Davis 1997, Perera 2006), I conceptualize policies and spaces of asylum as *non-performative* of the promise of protection, safety, and justice, but performative of the legal categories and laws and discourses that produce them. In other words, asylum discourse produces subaltern spaces and raced/gendered bodies that perform labour—ideological, political, cultural, affective and material. Fourth, I avoid the methodological nationalism of many Irish and other country-based asylum studies to address how global representations of Third World women operate through *transnational* circuits and impact the *local* everyday lives of women in asylum.

I ultimately argue that postcolonial asylum, for this group of women, forces political, cultural, affective and material labour “On their Way” though one context of Irish asylum. I further contend that the work postcolonial asylum does for White/Western host nations is to reiterate the “white saviour” discourse.

Data is analysed through intertwining visual cultural theory (Hall 1980,1997), performativity (Butler 1990,1993), non-performativity (Ahmed 2012), and affective economies (Ahmed 2004 a,b). I address the visibility and intertextuality (Sandoval 2000; Ponzanesi 2005; Barthes 1973) of gendered/raced

regimes of representation (Hall 1997a)¹ that speak about, image and imagine African women across multiple political and cultural transnational economies of representation (Fernandes 2013). Discourses are performative—they “do things”; words and images act intertextually to produce meanings and emotions about identities, and bodies. Moreover, meaning-making is an intersubjective affective process that interpellates (Althusser 1971) both the speaker and listener as subjects (Ahmed 2000: 23). I expose the performative power of photographs that circulate black female bodies in multiple political/cultural circuits (such as UN Refugee representations, NGO websites, integration projects, feminist activism) to produce meanings and identities about material bodies through audience readings.

Moving back and forth from figurative, represented black female bodies to the real en fleshed bodies of the women in the study, the findings of the study elucidate three relationships between *identity* and *representation*: First, that identity—far from being a ‘psychological artefact or cultural consumable’—is used to “‘rethink different enactments of power’ (Mama 2002: 67). Identity is not simply an ontological category; subject positions and meanings about others are made and re-made *through* representation (Hall 1997a) and *proximal* encounters (Ahmed 2000:11). I configure an Irish ‘matrix of domination’ (Collins 2000: 278-285) to expose how race/class/gender “identities” are performative of the interlocking powers that produce subaltern spaces, and bodies to occupy them.² Second, that representations of the postcolonial woman of colour—whatever the intention and irrespective of her portrayal as victim and/or agent—is made to ‘*appear and*

¹ That is to say, the whole formation inside which the black subject is produced (Hall 1997a)—in this case, I examine humanitarian, refugee/asylum and feminist discourse formations and their gendered/raced regimes of representation.

² Collins (2000) contends that interlocking structural, disciplinary and hegemonic powers “organize” oppression at the interpersonal level; I add to the performativity of these powers. *Structural* “top-down” power (e.g. UN, State and EU laws) produces bodies/identities, *disciplinary* power “manages oppression”, *hegemonic* power can ‘shape consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies’ (ibid.p285); all impact on the interpersonal power of the women (discussed in depth on pages 65-67 of the thesis).

disappear as she is needed [and] produced and created for the sustenance of the patriarchal colonial and now postcolonial discourse’ (Mirza 2009: 62, my emphasis). Third, that black women are ‘embodied subjects that exceed the texts and representational frames that seek to contain them’ (Fernandes 2013: 68). When women of colour try to represent themselves and “speak back” outside the terms of discourses that represent them, my analyses explicate how cultural preconceptions, ideology and structural powers disallow, misrecognize, or appropriate their “speech” to make it unintelligible (Spivak 1988).

Self-representation is key to this work, and I explore the potential of art and drama to create autonomous, de-colonized, safe, convivial spaces of encounter. Writing, art and drama have long been used by intellectual women of colour worldwide to magnetize their ‘psychical and intellectual resistance’ and theorize their insurgency and survival of imperial domination (Sandoval 2000: 6). I attempt to re-articulate women of colour’s bodies in asylum as “insurgent texts”— that is to say, bodies and knowledges that speak back to dominant discourses³ — and which recognize their agency, power and intellects. Such texts resist fetishizing or appropriating their differences from white women and neither pathologize nor erase their suffering (Boyce-Davis 1994: 34).

Research texts are stories formed from other stories. This thesis is a Postcolonial feminist story, an alter-narrative (Chimni 1998) that resists the overarching story of asylum as a benign form of humanitarian generosity of the North towards the impoverished, war-torn South but tells it as a “*A handshake in the front and a slap from behind*” (Yoh, research participant).

³ For example, hate and fear of asylum seekers, post-race, post-feminist discourse and neoliberal discourses of empowerment, diversity and equality.

Background to Twenty-First Century Asylum in Ireland

Twenty-First Century conditions situate African and other women of colour who seek asylum in First World nations in super-diverse (Vertovec 2007) geographical and cultural locations where their identities are gendered and racialised in specific ways in relation to ‘other others’ (Ahmed 2000; Trinh 2011). Not only do their contested legal status as refugees affect identification processes, but asylum encounters also provoke meanings about race and gender assimilated (Ahmed 2000) through earlier phases of encounter between ‘the West and the rest’ (Hall 1992) — trans-Atlantic slavery, European colonization and post-World War II migration. These meanings circulate through an assemblage of discourses, and in this *fourth* phase of globalisation, converge on refugees and people seeking asylum.⁴

In the Republic of Ireland, Luibhéid (2004) shows how pregnant African women seeking asylum were targeted in media and political discourses. Constructed as willfully “Childbearing against the State”, their bodies and identities were used to reconstitute citizenship rights in Ireland and re-racialise Ireland (see also Lentin 2004, 2007). The Irish asylum encounter offers an intriguing counterpoint to study the relationships between *figurative* identities of African and women of colour — how they have been represented in discourse—and their *enfleshment*, how bodies materialize as performances of those representations.

Large-scale immigration is relatively new in the Irish Republic. Formerly an emigrant nation, The Celtic Tiger economic boom (1995-2005) brought transnational capital to Ireland and with it, skilled and unskilled labour and

⁴ In 2014, developing countries hosted over 86% of the world’s 19.5 million refugees worldwide, compared to 70% ten years ago. See Appendix A: Table 1 for EU acceptance figures.

increasing numbers of (predominantly) African people seeking asylum.⁵ Despite a large number of economic migrants being “white”, including Irish returning from the UK and USA (Garner 2004; Mac Éinrí 2007, 2001) and a relatively small percentage originating from Third World locations, excessive media and political attention was paid to African asylum seekers, fostering “new” forms of pernicious race/gender identifications.

Racism, sexism and xenophobia are not new to the Republic, as Irish race scholars carefully point out. The cultural shift accompanying the arrival of immigrants was mediatized by a large-scale “public exercise of othering” (Breen et al. 2006 :17) which switched initial *concern* for the welfare of people in asylum to stir racist *hostility*. Significantly, the bodies of pregnant African women became targets of a political battle that culminated in the Citizenship Referendum of June 21st 2004. Discursively constructed by politicians and the media as maternity/citizenship/welfare tourists who drained public resources— unsubstantiated claims— an overwhelming 79.4 percent of the Irish polity voted to deny *jus soli* (citizenship by birth on Irish soil) for children of non-EU mothers. These rights had been in place since the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922. The moment racially branded migrant “(m) others” (Lentin 2004, 2013a,b)⁶ and constitutionally sanctioned biopolitical control of migrant women, designating who was *not* to reproduce the Irish nation (Lentin 2004; Luibhéid 2004; Gray 2006). For Lentin (2006), this moment transformed Ireland from what Goldberg (2002) defines as a *racial* state (“race” and “nation” are defined in terms of each other) to a *racist*

⁵ Ireland had no refugee policy from Independence in 1922 and refused to admit more than 60 Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe between 1933 and 1945. Gaining UN membership in 1956, it accepted ‘programme refugees’ until the late 1980’s. From then on, official policy was marked by a change in attitude to refugees, largely as a result of European integration and harmonisation of policies across the EU that, after 9/11, coupled asylum with anti-terrorist border control mechanisms. The Refugee Act (1966) was the first explicit piece of legislation to deal with refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland (Goldstone 2002; Lentin and McVeigh 2002).

⁶ For Lentin (2013: 54) the mothering role always carries a component of othering, which is doubly so for migrant m/others.

state, governed by biopolitics and immigration/asylum regimes that ‘dictate the discursive and practical construction of Irishness and of Ireland’s (“new”, but also “old”) racialised populations’ (Lentin *ibid.* p189).

The Republic of Ireland now has one of the strictest immigration regimes in Europe and the lowest acceptance rate of refugees of just 6.8 percent in 2012, compared with the EU average of 11.6 percent (Irish Refugee Council 2013). Numbers of people seeking asylum in Ireland were relatively small in 1992, peaked in 2002, and have steadily fallen from 32,000 new applications in 2003 to 597 new applications in 2014 (ORAC 2014). Nonetheless, about 4,360 people are confined in the Direct Provision (DP) system, introduced in 2000 to replace the basic welfare and housing allowance formerly granted to asylum applicants. The Refugee Integration Agency (RIA) provides full board and accommodation in (mostly) privatized hostels dispersed across sixteen Counties of Ireland.⁷ Almost seventy-five percent of residents are from the African continent; the majority are aged between twenty-five and thirty-four years, and sixty-three percent live in family units, of which 529 are lone mothers (RIA 2014).

Processing of cases can take from six months up to four or five years or more.⁸ Sixty-five percent of those in the system are in the working age bracket but are denied the right to work or attend tertiary education. From 2001 to the present, adult asylum seekers receive a personal allowance of € 19.10 per week and € 9.20 per child, a sum that has *never* increased.

⁷ See Appendix A: Table 1 for detailed statistics. In 2010, there were 42 centres contracted for 7040 occupied by 6107 residents, and have consistently run under-capacity since. Seven centres are state-owned, and the rest privatized; many are set in rural locations and include hotels, guesthouses, convent/nursing homes, mobile home sites, and a castle. In 2014, 34 centres remain, contracted for 5046/ 4336 residents (RIA 2010-2014).

⁸ In accommodation intended for six months, the average length of stay is over four years (53 months); 66.7 percent of people have lived there for more than three years, and 21 percent for more than seven years (RIA 2014) and one person for nearly 10 years (FLAC 2009). See Appendix A (Fig.5 and 6) for details.

The Irish asylum encounter exhibits most features commonly criticized in other First World states: the proliferation of crisis narratives by politicians and the media of asylum seekers as illegal, undesirable, undeserving threats to the nation arriving in “floods”; increasingly restrictive legislation; lengthy confinement in securitized, dispersed accommodation; and denial of work and welfare entitlements. Unique to the Irish context, however, are two features salient to this thesis: Ireland’s own postcolonial status, and the unfinished business of decolonization. As Britain’s first settler colony, Irish people were both coloniser and colonized, racialised as black *and* white in the UK and USA. At home, a homogenous Catholic nationalist identity constructed racial hierarchies to subjugate its own ethnic ‘others’, like Traveller groups and Jews (Mc Veigh 1992; Lentin 1999; Lentin and Mc Veigh 2002; Hickman and Walter 1997; Mac an Ghail 2002; Garner 2004).

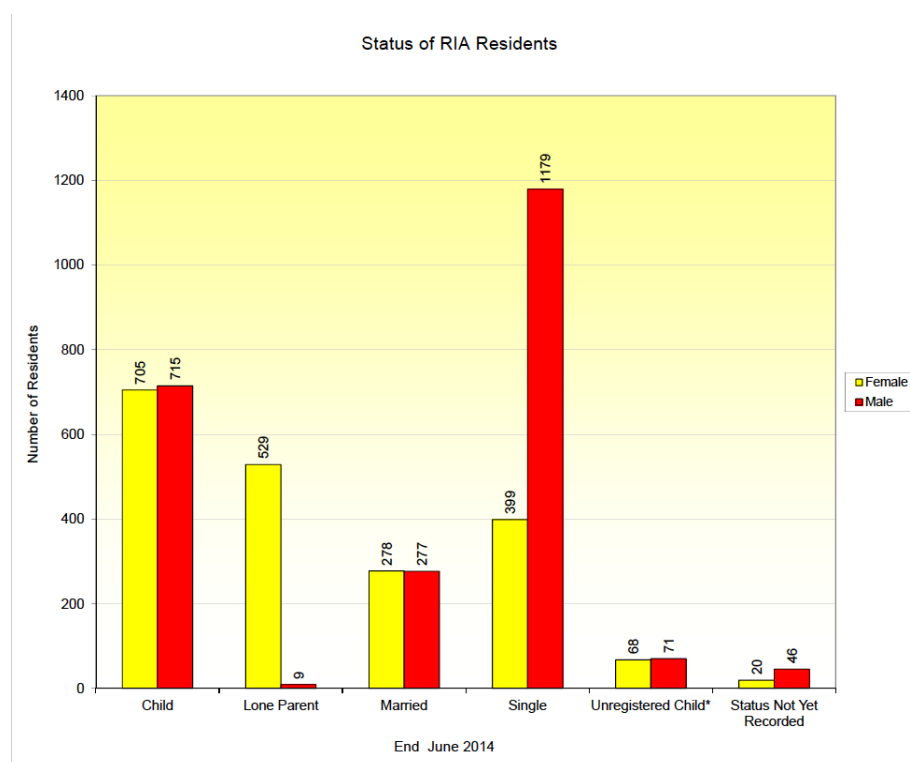


Figure 1: Age and Gender Profile of DP Residents, R.I.A 2014: 6

One of my contentions in this thesis is that Irish asylum studies have not strongly enough addressed the legacies of colonialism, and in particular, failed to

bring together in a sustained analysis, the links between the “civilizing mission” of colonialism and the humanitarian imperative in contemporary asylum discourses. A second is that Irish postcolonial studies have excluded women in general and feminist analyses in particular, to the detriment of both academic fields.

Explicit *feminist* postcolonial perspectives are scant, appearing mostly in Irish literary studies (for example, Coughlan 2004; Nolan 2007; Sullivan 2008 , Malloy 1998; Moloney 2007; Flannery 2007). They are, however, largely absent in feminist sociological and political studies with the exception of scholarly work at the asylum/migration/race nexus (Coulter 1993, Ryan 1995; Thapar-Björkert and Ryan 2002; Connolly 2003, Connolly 2004, Connolly and O' Toole 2005; Lentin 1999, 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007; Reilly 2007a, b, 2008b, a). If, as Connolly (2004) has argued, Irish female texts have been subalternized, what happens to women of colour's texts when their material bodies appear in the postcolonial scene in this fourth phase of North/South encounter? Is it a case that neither can speak, or that one speaks through the other? In this thesis, I contend that both have taken place, and that Black and Postcolonial Feminist theories *taken together* can address these gaps. I attempt this by conceptualizing asylum as *a postcolonial encounter* (Ahmed 2000) between two post-colonies whose shared colonial pasts collide in the postcolonial present. A core concern in this thesis is, how, in this collision, the co-constitutive colonial fictions of race and gender were re-scripted in the bodies of African and women of colour to serve capital/class.

Gaps in Knowledge

The analyses that follow in this thesis aim to fill five gaps across the Irish and international asylum and refugee literature: The first is domination of the field by quantitative, top-down legal studies, Eurocentric thinking, and “epistemic apartheid” (Sandoval 2000: 70) —that is, an absence, segregation, under-utilization, and subjugation of theoretical perspectives from the South and intellectuals of colour. This has led to a failure to address the geopolitics of knowledge production (Chimni 1998, 2000, 2004, 2009)⁹ and attend to the legacies of European colonialism. The second is the absence of feminist perspectives in asylum and refugee studies, which leaves the *agency* of subjects under-theorized (Lentin 2003; Lentin and Moreo 2012), particularly from Black and Postcolonial feminist perspectives. The third is the lack of attention to the *visuality* and *intertextuality* of discourses (Ponzanesi 2005; Rose 2012) and their *performativity* (Butler 1990, 1993) via mass-circulation through transnational circuits of representation (Fernandes 2013). Fourth is a lack of analysis of *affective economies*; that is to say, how asylum discourse scripts bodies and images with emotions. For Ahmed (2004 a, b), emotions such as hate and fear circulate like capital; bodies become signs (a thing plus meaning) and the more they are circulated, the more “value” these emotions accumulate. And fifth, *material* analyses of the effects that discourse has on the bodies and lives of women of colour, but also the *work* these bodies do for *capital* (each of these are explained on pp. 61-64).

A core question in my thesis is how asylum discourse is made legitimate by humanitarian ideals, which “image and imagine” woman from the Third World

⁹ Chimni (2009: 17) notes that the major centres for refugee studies are located in the North, and major publications ‘do not appear to carry a single article by a third world scholar’ including: a special issue of *Methodologies of Refugee Research*, *Journal of Refugee Studies* (2007, 20:2); the subsequent issue on *Forced Migration Studies* (2007, 20: 3) and UNHCR’s publication *Refugee Protection in International Law* (Feller et al. 2003).

through visual and discursive assemblages that force their identities and bodies to “do asylum” in specific ways. Although these scripts serve patriarchal power within the bounds of the nation state, they always dance to the tune of *transnational patriarchy* (Patil 2013, 2008), *transnational whiteness* (Moreton-Robinson 2004, 2008) and *transnational capital* (Spivak 1988, Mohanty 2003).

Patil’s (2008, 2009) discourse analysis of transcribed Verbatim Records¹⁰ of the UN decolonization debates (1946-1960) exposes postcolonial nation-state formation as a transnational *patriarchal* affair, consisting largely of ‘contentions between differentially racialized masculinities and patriarchies’ (2013: 861) as colonialists and anti-colonialists renegotiated geopolitical power. In this study, I explore intersecting transnational patriarchies — International/EU Asylum Law, State Immigration and Juridical power, and the Catholic Church— in court hearings and abortion legislation in Chapter Five. These patriarchies are sites of gendering, but also the reproduction of white supremacy. Moreton-Robinson (2008), writing from an Indigenous feminist perspective, contends that transnational whiteness is a process of racialisation that relies on virtue; claiming moral authority for whites while denying it to its others functions as a usable property/currency to perpetuate white dominance. Technologies of virtue were integral to colonial patriarchal power. I forward the argument that the virtue of humanitarianism itself is a colonial continuity and in the study, examine its effects within asylum/migrant advocacy in the Irish NGO/Charitable sector (see Chapter Four).

10 Records of statements, speeches and actions taken during General Assembly meetings containing discussion of submitted committee reports, draft resolutions, and first-person accounts of proceedings of a meeting (unlike UN Resolutions or other policy documents). Both colonists and anti-colonists relied on hierarchies of masculinities— the paternalist masculinity of colonial rule was decried by anti-colonial resistance aiming to restore masculinity of the colonised (Patil 2009: 195). The language of “tough” border control against refugees and immigrants “penetrating” the state bears similar masculinist overtones. See also Oxford’s (2005) discussion of masculinist discourse pertaining to asylum and gender-based violence.

Spivak's (1988, 1990, 1995) interrogation of the international division of labour and exploitation of Third World women as key to producing the wealth of the First World is a continuous thread woven through global feminist literature addressing the international sex trade; domestic and care work; sweatshop labour; militarism; and structural adjustment policies and agriculture.¹¹ For Mohanty (2003: 235), 'it is especially on the bodies and lives of women and girls from the Third World ... that global capitalism writes its script'. In this thesis, I address how asylum detention makes docile, dependent bodies, which also provide labour for transnational capital (see Chapter Five, pp. 225-234).

Addressing the aforementioned gaps aims to decontaminate analyses of asylum of methodological nationalism (that is, uncritical acceptance of the nation state as a neutral unit of analysis), and pay sufficient attention to unrecognized remnants of European imperialist and colonial patriarchies that "haunt" how we talk about gendered power relations (Patil 2013: 847) in intersectional analyses in neoliberal globalisation, through the Irish case. My analyses, taken as a whole, illustrate how patriarchy, capitalism and whiteness are transnational, co-constitutive of the other, and intersect vividly at the site of female bodies in this context of asylum.

"Representation" in this thesis refers to cultural representation (rather than political representation). My concerns are the poetics (practices that signify) and politics (the powers that govern the practices) of representing raced/gendered bodies in asylum. The resultant entities or products/objects I call "representations". Meanings are not restricted to language but *discourse*—understood as groups of "texts"—visual images, words, bodies, symbols—which are intertextual— every text related to other texts, and connect author to reader, as well as to other texts

¹¹ I return to these issues on pages 29-33 and refer to them in more detail throughout the thesis.

(Kristeva 1980: 69) and meanings are altered when read in the contexts of other texts (Hall 1997a: 232). The whole formation or *regimes of representation* includes visual and cultural practices, products and bodies themselves, which are regulated through discourses and are represented to make meaning (Hall 1997a). Audiences read each representation according to prior codes and other texts that produce *preferred* meanings (Hall 1980) and evoke affective exchanges (Ahmed 2000, 2004a). *Self-representation*, then, is the activity—the subject of the discourse (those in asylum) speaking for themselves—through words, actions, creative arts or bodily actions. Self-representations include paintings, discussions and drama scenes. All aspects of each process/product are saturated with power, and my primary concern is how raced/gendered bodies in asylum are represented *as difference*.

It is rare for feminist analyses to attempt to bring *visual and textual/discursive* representations together with *material bodies*, a gap this thesis aims to fill. Taking an inter-disciplinary theoretical approach, my dual analysis of identity and representation aims to show how an assemblage of raced and gendered scripts are reanimated in one specific context of asylum to contribute to the “double colonization” (Gandhi 1998)¹² of black women through race *and* gender together.

Four key features distinguish this thesis from other studies of asylum in Ireland (and elsewhere): inter-disciplinary theory and transnational intersectional analysis of power that force identities/bodies in asylum (Chapters Two and Five); methodological innovation using Participatory Action Research through art and drama (Chapter Three); addressing visibility and intertextuality of discourses (Chapter Four); and poststructural analyses that en flesh or embody the figurative and bring the political and cultural together with the material (Chapters Five and

¹² For Gandhi, colonial women were doubly colonised through Western imperialism and both ‘native and foreign’ patriarchies (ibid.p83).

Six). I ultimately show how black bodies in asylum do “labour” for capital (Chapters Five and Six).

My empirical data is drawn from two intensive feminist action-led participatory arts-based projects, run between 2011 and 2012 in a small Irish city. The first engaged with ten women and men in a six-week project (Borders Barriers and Bridges, BBB). I went on to conduct a twelve-month project with five women from different African countries (On Our Way, OOW) at various stages of seeking asylum in Ireland. The projects were run between 2011 and 2012 in a small Irish city.¹³ The data produced were biographical and participants’ lived experiences were gathered using multiple methods (visual art, theatre performance, discussions and individual interviews). These methods captured material, affective and embodied data that “spoke back” to the assemblage of visual/textual discourses that “spoke about” them.

Data analysis took an overall deconstructive and poststructural approach (Spivak 1998; Butler 1993, 1998; Alcoff 1999; 2000; Anzaldúa 1987), and employed Situational Analysis (Clarke 2005), intersectional analyses (Collins 2000; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Yuval-Davis 2001, 2011; Mohanty 2003, 2013), theories of performativity (Butler 1993, 1998; Ahmed 2000, 2012) and visual/cultural analysis (Barthes 1973; Hall 1980, 1997a; Sandoval 2000; Rose 2012; Leavy 2009).

In the rest of this introduction, I sketch a history of refugee protection and trace limitations within refugee/asylum studies in the North, from the perspective of the South. I then review the general and feminist Irish asylum literature and underscore the value of studying asylum as a “postcolonial encounter”. To conclude, I outline the remaining thesis chapters.

¹³ Two Irish volunteers participated in the first, six-week project, “Borders, Barriers and Bridges” (BBB). Two of the women had acquired full Refugee Status and Irish citizenship but remained active in the asylum community. A women-led, migrant-led theatre collective emerged through the research, which also provided drama workshops with women in the asylum system and (at the time of writing) continues to write and perform.

1.2 Twenty-First Century “Postcolonial Asylum”: Political versus Humanitarian

Once the Cold War ended ... refugees were no longer welcome in the North, the myth of difference was invoked to justify the institutionalization of the non-entree regime (elements of which, such as visa requirements, were already being put in place before the end of the Cold War). By producing the image of a ‘normal’ refugee—white, male, anti-communist—a clear message was sent to the population with regard to the ‘new asylum seeker’: that asylum seekers were here for no good reason, that they abused hospitality, and that their numbers were too large.

Chimni (1998: 357)

The UN Refugee Convention (1951) was drafted in post-War Europe to resettle less than five million persons; it did not disband at task’s end, but expanded its reach to the South through the 1967 Protocol to “manage” displacement impacted by anti-colonial struggles, civil wars and nationalist movements.¹⁴ It was in the aftermath of colonialism that humanitarianism—the conflation of Universal Human Rights and International Law—attained greater prominence. Precisely at that time a “myth of difference” (Chimni 2001) was constructed to differentiate European refugees (politically motivated individuals, fleeing barbaric communist and socialist governments to the democratic west) from African and Asian refugees (masses of victims fleeing civil wars and poverty). Furthermore, as (Mamdani and Leys 1997: 9) contend, a distinct drive to “globalise” and de-regulate the world economy from the 1970s overthrew dominant social-democratic cultures and values of the post-World War Two era. They argue that international development had the “rug pulled from under it” and was forcibly overtaken by West-induced neoliberalised economic governance. Since then, militarism, coercive

¹⁴ The UNHCR subsumed its predecessors, the League of Nations (1920) and the International Refugee Organization (IRO) in 1947. The 1967 Protocol does not specify how signatory states apply or enact their commitments, bestowing sovereign power to Euro-American signatory states to develop stringent immigration legislation and increasingly punitive and hostile treatment of those seeking refuge in the North.

underdevelopment, and neocolonisation of the South all became root causes for forced displacement. Anti-colonialist Nkrumah (1965 *ix*) defines neocolonialism as:

Imperialism at its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage [...] [F]aced with the militant peoples of the ex-colonial territories in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, imperialism simply switches tactics [...] ‘giving’ independence to its former subjects, to be followed by ‘aid’ for their development. Under cover of such phrases, however, it devises innumerable ways to accomplish objectives formerly achieved by naked colonialism.

(Nkrumah 1965: ix)

In the 1970s and 1980s, refugee protection also became *racialised*; added refugee flows from wars in Indo-China and Central America were “managed” by switching refugee protection from *exilic* bias (the presumption of permanent resettlement) to *source control* bias (preventing refugees leaving the South). This was executed via containment and temporary protection policies in the South in tandem with restrictive entry to the North (Aleinikoff 1992; Chimni 1998, 2001; Castles 2003; Fekete 2000, 2005; Hathaway 2005; Kneebone 2009, Kneebone et al. 2014). By the end of the Cold War (1991), numbers of refugees had peaked at eighteen million, and, no longer holding political value, were instead constructed as the problem of our time. The paradoxes and anomalies we see in contemporary asylum laws are, in effect, due to the gradual erosion of refugee protection through the myth of difference. Political manoeuvring by individual (and collaborative) state powers dictate who enters the West and delimitate how the UN Convention is enacted (Kneebone 2009: 15; Mertus 1998; Chimni 1998, 2001, 2009).

In Ireland, itself a post-colony, the reproductive bodies of African women seeking asylum were appropriated as key instruments to re-racialise and gender Irish Immigration regimes in 2004 (Luibhéid 2004, 2006; Lentin 2004, 2007). An elementary examination of *visual images* of Third World women can expose which meanings about African women might already been assimilated (Ahmed 2000: 177) and explicate how their bodies were so appropriable. Johnson’s (2011) analysis of

Images of Exile, a publication commemorating fifty years of UNHCR, brilliantly illustrates the “scopic regime” —specific, historic combinations of images of asylum— deployed to *imagine* refugeeism in this era. She traces the geopolitical shifts discussed above through *visual* discourse, illustrating how Cold War (1950s and 1960s) photographs portrayed refugees as heroic, individual White European male with political agency, but from the 1970s, re-imaged (thus re-imagined) them as “masses from the South” (Figure 2 below).

By the 1980s, gender played a pivotal role in constructing the refugee as vulnerable. From the 1990s, images zone in on close-up photographs of the Third World mother and child (Figure 3) in abject, impoverished settings of refugee camps in the South.¹⁵ These shifts describe how the figure of “the refugee” became racialised, victimised and feminized (hence, de-politicized). In Johnson’s chronology, women’s images appeared well before the UN drafted a gender-specific refugee policy in 1990; when enacted, Third World women were “added” in terms of their reproductive/domestic roles. Third World women have ‘been front and centre in the representations and the images of the international refugee regime, and have done much of the ‘work’ that the discourses of victimisation and depoliticisation demand’ (ibid: p1032).

Humanitarianism re- emerged just as neocolonial structures were being installed in the South (through aid and development), thus transmogrifying the ‘civilising mission’ of colonialism. For Chimni (2004: 244), humanitarianism

¹⁵ Johnson (2011: 1025-1027) found that, of images dated between 1950-1970, only 2 of 16 European images convey messages of sheer numbers and 1 of undifferentiated masses, in contrast with 11 of 26 images from Asia, and 8 of 18 images from Africa. Of those portraying individuals, only 5 from Europe depict women and/or children, but 8 from Asia, and 12 of 18 images from Africa do so. She convincingly aligns the “female victim” narrative with the preference for humanitarian prevention policies (rather than protection in the North), to argue the refugee lost its political value after the Cold War.

Manipulates the language of human rights to legitimize a range of dubious practices, including its selective defence. It has a dual essence: the justification of the use of force, in particular interventions and wars, and the amelioration of painful local conditions engendered by globalization through a neo-liberal political and economic package whose objective is to restore and extend the reign of transnational capital.

“Postcolonial asylum” then, can be re-articulated as a humanitarian (not political) form of asylum—an ideological consortium of Universal Human Rights, International Law, and First World development discourse and Western assertions of peace and democracy. Neatly avoided in humanitarian discourse are the legacies of colonialism and neocolonialism of the South—the root causes of contemporary forced displacement.

From the 1980s on, refugee studies proliferated exponentially (Adelman 1995 and Goodwin-Gill 1996 in Chimni 1998: 351) and were dominated by legal analyses that, by now, have (exhaustively) traced permutations that have delimited international asylum law in practice (Hathaway 2005; Kneebone 2009; Goodwin-Gill and McAdam 2007; Farrier 2013). Chimni (2009) argues this legalistic legacy hampers critical Northern thinking about causes and solutions of refugee flows in this era; knowledge ‘is always a potential object of co-option’ and ‘power can simply dissuade the production of critical knowledge’ (ibid. p15). As in colonial times, knowledge and power operate together to regulate subjects. This epistemic and disciplinary domination with its positivistic, Eurocentric roots has helped legitimize the containment of refugees in the South and shape policies that limit entry to the North (Chimni 1998).

Figure 2: Representations of Refugees (UNHCR 1951 - 1968)



1951
European Refugees Single families or male
Political exiles, heroic



1967 Protocol: Racialised Masses Eurocentric gaze
Policies: Repatriation, preventative, protection

Figure 3: Feminising Asylum



1968
Close up images of victims



1992



2005



2001

Images from the South affect policy in North

North	Migration in Europe becomes securitized. Asylum seekers are made illegal so detention is justifiable and seen as less deserving than “camp refugees”
South	Humanitarian Ideology: Apolitical, Eurocentric Elides roots of economic/ geopolitical inequalities or neocolonialism Justifies Western Intervention

Sources: Mallki (1996), Nagar (2002), Bigo (2002), Mountz (2011), Hyndman (2011). Images reproduced from Johnson (2011: 1030-1034)

The UN is a prolific global producer and disseminator of knowledge about the Third World, and a major transnational circuit of representation that disseminates discourses of foreign aid, development, sex trafficking, gender, war, peace and conflict. If ‘every regime of representation is a regime of power, according to Foucault’s power/knowledge theory’ (Hall 1990: 225), then the UN is a major world political player as Spivak avers:

If the economic arms of globalisation are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, then the political arm is, increasingly, the United Nations. The UN and the powerfully collaborative Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) form ... ‘international civil society’ — to distinguish it from states ... The target of this international civil society is Woman.

Spivak (2000: 12)

The UNHCR proliferates not only knowledge and images, but also legal *identity categories*; the identity “refugee” was created not through social-cultural links, but through governments and intergovernmental humanitarian agencies. Such categories are ‘not merely devices for inclusion but also of exclusion’ (Zetter 1991, 2007). In this period, *de-labelling* strategies by governments in the North “fraction” the previously homogenized refugee label into sub-categories, many of them pejorative, exclusionary or aimed at containment *prior to* accessing the “refugee” identity (Zetter 2007: 201). Malkki (1996: 385) avers that the figure of the refugee is imagined and produced through discourses that silence and cage them into imagined geo-spaces, where they are deprived of personhood other than as victims and are represented as “speechless emissaries”. Instrumental in this imagining, then, are the imaged bodies of Third World women.

These four features of asylum studies in the North—domination by legal/ethical critiques, unproblematised raced/gendered identity categorisations of the other, the production and circulation of visual and discursive representations of women of colour, and an unproblematic deference to humanitarianism—premise my

argument that *humanitarianism is very much a colonial ideology* that abets the asymmetrical geopolitics of power/knowledge production about refugees and their identities. The traffic of representations of women from the South flows into Ireland via multiple circuits: the mass media, academics, activists, transnational feminists, NGOs and aid agencies. All of them reproduce images, bodies, identities, and, as I argue in this thesis, contribute to how African women seeking asylum are received in the North.

The historical alter-narratives above shaped the theoretical framework in this thesis to purposefully *include*, rather than subjugate or dismiss, histories and perspectives “from below”. I listen to feminist scholars from the South as well as subjugated knowledges of South-in-North people in asylum themselves, which facilitates participants to name and frame their own life worlds (Aleinikoff 1992; Zetter 1991, 2007; O’Neill 2010a).

It is my contention in Ireland, and elsewhere, asylum/refugee studies have not closely enough interrogated its roots in *colonial ideology*. Irish asylum/refugee studies bear out Chimni’s thesis in that they have not addressed the geopolitics of knowledge production. Inadequate critique has been made of the colonial continuities between the civilizing mission of historical colonization and the “humanitarian mission” in contemporary neocolonization of the South. Put differently, the *coloniality of humanitarianism asylum* (versus political asylum) has not been exposed. Together these foreclose or subjugate alter-narratives that can tell a different story of postcolonial asylum—from below. However, Chimni himself neglects *feminist* perspectives and Black and Postcolonial feminist perspectives in particular, gaps this thesis aims to address.

My interest in researching the intricate colonial chains linking representation, identities, bodies and material power is rooted in my own experiences of gendered racialisation, discussed next.

1.3 Development of Research Interest: Where are the black women in Ireland?

A Sri Lankan-born Australian with British citizenship, I lived in the Republic of Ireland during the Celtic Tiger period with my child and Irish partner, from whom I separated some years later. In the Irish Family Court, I experienced first-hand how racism and sexism operate together—the violence of adversarial court processes, practices and patriarchal attitudes of the legal and “experts” shredded my identity through disparate and paradoxical gendered constructions to undermine my power. I was deemed on the one hand an educated, “highly intelligent” and “brilliant mother”, on the other, demanding, difficult and racist (against Irish professionals) for challenging race and gender prejudice in court hearings and parenting reports. Dismayed, I entered the MA in Women’s Studies in 2009 to make sense of where feminism, especially Black feminism and intersectional thinking had disappeared to, as I urgently needed it.¹⁶

Progressing to doctoral research in 2010, I initially engaged with Irish feminists working under the UNSCR 1325 rubric of “Women, Peace and Security”(WPS) in post conflict Ireland, intending to study asylum within transnational feminist advocacy (TFA) in relation to “Women and Conflict”.¹⁷ At a series of conferences, I observed that African and Third World women’s images appeared in photographs, films and stories, but their bodies were strikingly absent in

¹⁶ My role as primary breadwinner was disregarded, my mothering scrutinized (unlike fathering) and the child (7) was given more power than I. My solicitor was given to outbursts of anger and shouting, and excused the Judge’s casual use of the word “nigger” at my court hearing, withdrawing legal support when I complained of racism/sexism. My MA Thesis (‘What Makes You Not a Feminist’, 2009) indeed found a distinct post-feminist period after a backlash against Irish Feminist gains of the 1980s, and generational differences in disavowal of the feminist identity.

¹⁷ United Nations Security Council Resolution, mandated in October 2000, includes women and girls in all stages of conflict—prevention, protection, recovery, and participation in post-conflict governance. Since the “War on Terror”, significant focus has been placed on the “protection” aspect, co-opting pseudo-feminist justifications of US-led invasions (for example, in Afghanistan), in the name of “liberating oppressed Muslim women (Abu Lughod 2002, 2006; Eisenstein Z. 2007; Eisenstein H. 2009).

the room. Where were the real women in asylum escaping the very conflict zones being discussed? Colonialism, race and capitalism were conspicuously absent in feminist analyses of conflict and anti-militarism. This overall detachment from Black and Postcolonial Feminist perspectives deprived UN-styled feminist peace-making agendas of intersectionality and strong anti-racist and anti-capitalist critiques.¹⁸ Only half the story was being told and Western/hegemonic feminism and the UN were doing the telling.

I made a third observation—again, about “representation” and images—at an event at Trinity College on war crimes in Sri Lanka (my homeland), then emerging from a thirty-year armed conflict.¹⁹ While the screening of graphic video footage of naked, dead, violated bodies of Tamil women soldiers was difficult enough to watch, what intrigued me were the *affective* shifts of the audience (largely white, young undergraduates and a handful of Tamil women and men). The lights came on and an immediate call was made for funds and signatures for petitions, to which outraged white Irish audience members flocked to comply. I witnessed the power of “war pornography”—dead, raped brown bodies—to arouse affective responses in white audiences and enlist them on a humanitarian quest to “to save brown women”. Absolutely no feminist analyses entered the stage and race/gender essentialism reigned. Sri Lankan women’s political/military agency—as soldiers, freedom fighters, activists or peacemakers was smothered under the blanket of sexual fetishism. Only rape mattered in the hegemonic, West-centric “human rights” discourse. The keynote speakers framed the event as Ireland and UK’s

¹⁸ Efforts to include these women were made by the NWCI and Hannah’s House, and an excellent report was produced following consultation with over 200 women in of needs of women in asylum from conflict zones (Graham 2011). I was involved in this process but (to my knowledge and apart from this research) there has been no further involvement with these women since, either in terms of UNSCR 1325 or as regards changes for them in the asylum system.

¹⁹ The event was a joint venture of the International Peace Studies program at the Irish School of Ecumenics at Trinity College Dublin and the Irish Forum for Peace in Sri Lanka in January 2010, whose People’s Tribunal found the Sri Lankan Government guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the final phase of the civil war in 2009. See www.pptsrilanka.org and www.tcd.ie/ise/peace/.

humanitarian role in “peace-keeping” (without mention of their role in “war-making”). North/South economic disparities, the root causes of war and the international arms trade and militarism were all omitted (the Sri Lankan army were trained in Israel, arms supplied by Russia, Indian peace-keeping forces had attended). Gender analysis, here, was reduced to “saving brown women from sexual violence” and deployed to attribute “war crimes” along nationalist and ethnic lines (Tamil versus Sinhalese).²⁰

I wondered about the paradoxical links between hypervisibility and “voice” in testimonies and life stories, and began to envision an “assemblage” of discourses in feminist and humanitarian campaigns, academic texts, NGO integration projects and so on through which women of colour’s images and stories emanated. They appeared everywhere—sex trafficking, citizenship, diversity, FGM, the veil—as a figure nearly always produced as a victim needing to be saved, whilst the mass media produced them as hyper-sexualised in advertising, hip-hop and rap music and pornography. How could we expect the public to view women of colour as equals in the context of asylum when overwhelmingly, they are hyper-sexualized, hyper-victimized, fetishized, and eroticised everywhere else? How can we speak back to the proliferation of pictures and stories when real brown and black bodies are rarely in the room?

I initially thought a corrective would be to “add” women from conflict zones in asylum into the 1325 fold; however, to separate out just those women in Direct Provision meant ignoring the interlocking effects of poverty and environmental decimation. Would that add anything new? Women were compelled to highlight gendered abuse in order to claim asylum, which might foreclose other important

²⁰ I am not denying the “truth” of these images or war crimes, but speak from my own affective responses as a racialised, ethnically Sinhalese audience member, viewing the ‘evidence’ of dead, naked brown women’s bodies. I was dismayed at the glaring omission of well-founded feminist perspectives on gender/race/nationalism.

issues. I noted the political purpose of framing and grew conscious of what was being left out, and how research itself can limit or shape our understanding.

Aligning my disparate observations together, my formative research “puzzle” (Ackerly and True 2008) was that despite graphic media and feminist exposure of “wartime” sexual abuses of women (in Bosnia, for example) and the UNSCR Resolution 1325 mandate, Third World women had not sat at the “peace table” and their theoretical perspectives had not materialized beyond rhetoric (Anderlini 2010, Ward 2005). Dead and mutilated bodies of brown/black women (and TFA) it appeared, have tremendous political utility. It was here that I “clicked” about the power of transnational circuits of representation to produce identities and affects, and how Black women’s bodies serve numerous socio-political functions when *hypervisible, but not speaking*. Despite the best efforts at reflexivity and ethics, I was seeing, over and over, the re-inscription of colonial discourses —of brown women needing to be saved—this time by white feminist and non-feminist women (Spivak 1988: 32).

The questions for me became: What makes black female bodies so easily appropriable? How might the seemingly benign, unrelated discourses of feminism, humanitarianism, and geopolitics be connected? What did this mean for women of colour doubly marginalized in asylum? Black feminism was yet unborn in the Irish Republic; not only did I need it, but without it, we women of colour would matter in exceptionality, “over there” but not here, in the everyday, in the flesh. We would remain outside feminism, only to appear if caged into white, West-centric hegemonic feminism’s concern for us. Without it, our corporeal, speaking bodies have little intellectual or political legibility.

Out of curiosity, I browsed the web for images of African women in Irish organisations and found the images below from Irish Aid (2012) and the Irish Red Cross (2012), both allied with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

of the Irish Government. All three images (below) represent African women as “brown women in need of “saving” (Spivak 1988:33) and co-opt pseudo-feminist “Women, Peace and Security” or “Women in Development” discourse. In each, images, signs and texts work together to code African women’s bodies with meanings. Hall (1980: 136) explains that preferred or dominant meanings are dependent on the shared cultural codes of the audience (in this case, white Irish metropolitan). These codes seem ‘natural’ and readers are guided towards meanings already formed through earlier (colonial) representations.²¹

These meanings accumulate in affective value (Ahmed 2004a, b). In each image, African women’s identities have been differentiated and re-assigned with newer, more feminist meanings—as both “victim” and its opposite, “shero”. Seemingly gender-conscious, one female body in the Red Cross photograph connotes “victim” and the other “agent”. This disrupts the victim trope, but as the black medic tells this newer story, the Red Cross symbol proximal to her body neatly displaces her (acquired) agency, and reminds us of who is the real hero—the Red Cross, which empowers African women to “save themselves”. Thus, the dominant preferred reading is ensured to make the white humanitarian saviour the real hero. Being the quintessential INGO standing for political neutrality and Western humanitarianism, these poetics legitimize readers to gaze at African women as exhibits.

The Irish Aid image calls for (Western) volunteers. The older white woman is central, facing the audience, and the image differentiates black and white women’s bodies through age and spatiality. The older woman is used to tell a new gender story about African women—they are not abject passive victims but strong,

²¹ See Appendix C for examples of colonial images that differentiate across race/gender lines and contemporary versions. A more detailed semiotic analysis of the Red Cross image is available in Appendix D.

joyful agents, but their agency, however, is stripped away by the *preferred* reading that it is a white female benefactor who will empower them.

The Irish Red Cross and the ICRC are delighted to invite you to visit a brand new photography exhibition 'Women and War' at the **Powerscourt Gallery**, Dublin 2, May 23rd - June 30th 2013.



Irish Red Cross
**WOMEN AND WAR
PHOTOGRAPHY
EXHIBITION**
May 23rd – June 30th
POWERSCOURT GALLERY, DUBLIN 2

This moving and challenging collection portrays the many ways in which women have experienced war over the last two decades. It also comprises a vivid expression of the Red Cross' continued commitment to care for those who have been affected by armed conflict.

**IRISH AID
VOLUNTEERING FAIR**
12.10.13





**Ireland's National Action
Plan for Implementation of
UNSCR 1325, 2011 - 2014**

AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTACHAILE TRÁDAILA
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE
October 2011/2012

Figure 4: "Exhibiting" The Other & "Feeding" the Other

Although passive or sexualized figures are reversed across these images, they are nevertheless ‘idealized and sentimentalized’ so remain stereotypical (Hall 1997: 245) and simply provide more ways to “be black/African”. The abjected “brown woman in need of saving by white men” is merely split into two subject positions—some become agents when they have been empowered by the West. These representations re-signify African women’s bodies to “do the work” of reiterating the “white saviour” script, not through the colonial civilising mission but a humanitarian one, now re-scripted as “security”. Read intertextually with asylum discourse, the message is that African women are best off staying in Africa, she can be made happy there; this reiterates Northern “source control” policies of refugee containment in the South discussed earlier (see p. 35). The mature class-privileged Irish woman can travel abroad to share her accomplishments with the less fortunate other, but the reverse seems inconceivable. These images exhibit much more than Third World women’s “vulnerability and singular resoluteness”— they exhibit (and reproduce) myths of white/Western supremacy. No longer a victim, the African woman’s inferiority is re-assigned by “fixing” the old inferiority to a new figurative body. They also falsely represent “sisterhood” and over-invest in the black woman’s agency and power (to end poverty, to make peace, to save the world). Meanwhile, humanitarianism empowers “us” not to save (or civilize) the other, but to secure for her, *the gift of life itself*, through white compassion (from a safe distance) for black female suffering caused by (unavoidable/inevitable) war. Starkly absent are neocolonial structures of Western military power and the global arms trade that fuel military conflict in the Third World, *those histories are not declared* (Ahmed 2004b: 47).²²

²² The non-declarative, or ‘histories which are not declared’ (Ahmed 2012:) are critically important, as the maintenance of white mythology occurs through erasure of what has produced it (Derrida cited in Yegenoglu

I found these histories emerge largely in *feminist* globalisation studies, where feminist geographers in and from the South argue that global discourses “fix” refugees from the South into a Eurocentric gaze to represent “mass migration” as a new crisis, an intercontinental migratory phenomenon of unprecedented levels related to globalization and industrialization.²³ This is an ahistorical view; “mass migration” is not new, and net in-migration to the OECD region only been experienced in the last two decades.²⁴ Feminist analyses, by placing women in and from the South at the centre of their analyses, rearticulate globalization (promoted in the West as a good thing), as having legitimized neoliberal policies and destructive Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and NGOs in the South. This form of “grassroots imperialism” (Chimni 2000) is not unlike the primitive accumulation phase of capitalism, in which

[T]he African body, especially the female body, has been attacked ... in ways similar to those in which the European proletariat in the “transition to capitalism” was terrorized by witch hunts, plagues of syphilis, famines and war ... [S]tarting in 1982, there has been a reversal in the post-colonial decline in African mortality.

(Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa 1993 in Nagar et al. 2002: 273).

Third World economic progress through “development” has sacrificed women’s lives in a Malthusian equation, and latterly co-opted pseudo-feminist notions of “saving Muslim women”. This has justified militarized “humanitarian intervention”, for example, in Iraq and Afghanistan in the War on Terror (Abu-Lughod 2002, Eisenstein 2004, 2007; Enloe 2007; Butler 2010). This humanitarian “harm”

1998: 38). Some non-declared histories are SAPs, microcredit (Roy 2012); population control (Bandarage 1997); contraception (Wilson 2013); clinical trials and the “vaccination industry” (Rawlinson and Yadavendu 2015) and biopiracy (Shiva 1997).

²³ Malkki (1996); Nagar et al. (2002); Mountz (2010, 2011); Hyndman (2000, 2010); Hyndman and De Alwis (2003); Hyndman and Giles (2011).

²⁴ Between 1820 and 1914, fifty-five million Europeans or a fifth of the population of Europe in 1820 moved to the colonies (Mohanram 2005: 252). In comparison, approximately 15 million Africans and Asians moved (or were moved as seven million slaves) during the period 1500-1960 (Widgren 1990 in Chimni 1998: 358).

becomes helpful to international capital—UNHCR not only ‘cleans up after NATO’s wars, but also helps to prepare the devastated economy for the invasion of international capital’ (Stevens 2006: 65).

The above accounts illustrate *how* the humanitarian alibi has been effectuated—victimization tropes of humanitarian NGOs in the South remove agency, fix messages of vulnerability, abjection and victimhood onto Third World women’s bodies—to achieve sustained support for a politics of humanitarianism. These views *gender* Chimni’s theoretical arguments, outlined earlier. Decades of UN, NGOs and refugee settlement agencies calls for gender mainstreaming, however, have not penetrated the field of refugee research:

[S] ince the inception of the Journal of Refugee Studies in 1988 until March 2009, 497 articles were published in the journal ... just under 10% – contained references to feminism, feminist, gender or women in the abstract or title. Three ... were explicitly about masculinity ... but this is still a very poor showing ... [T] he absence of a sustained postcolonial or feminist critique of Refugee Studies is conspicuous. (Hyndman 2010: 454).

Most of us socialized in the West have been flooded with images of humanitarian/victim tropes of “abject Africa women and starving black children”. In Ireland, images of “little black babies” (Lentin 2001, 2004; Fanning 2002; Fanning 2002; Moriarty 2005; Mac Éinrí 2006) were printed on Church collection boxes and continue to appear in fundraising literature of charitable organisations.²⁵ Indeed, Dalikení (2013: 5), the only black person in her Social Work Doctoral programme and one of three on campus, illustrates how “pre-conditioning” affects how Irish people make meanings about Africans. She reports a fellow student saying to her: “Pennies for black babies”; how did I ever know that you would come here to thank

²⁵ See Appendix C for some examples.

me?” White (2009: 69) notes a continued reference to Irish missionary work in Nigeria in contemporary political discourse that reiterates Africa as a ‘place to which ... Irish charity is to be directed’ but is discordant with restrictive immigration policies when Africans are bodily present.

Both cultural studies and postcolonial studies have tended to privilege the textual and somewhat overshadowed the visual (Ponsanezi 2005; Rose 2012). This is problematic when addressing gender and race identity, because African women are hypervisible across multiple *regimes of representation*—which assume the power to construct the topic and tell us how we may talk about it (Hall 1992). Foucault’s (1980) theory of power/knowledge is a relational dynamic reliant on visibility. In postcolonial encounters, Ahmed (2000: 24) contends that it is the recognition or “knowing again” itself (not the recognition as or of the subject) that constitutes the subject. Strangers already “fit” into what we (the community, or nation) have decided are strange, and this recognition operates on a visual economy, through the skin that also feels (i.e. creates emotional meanings and responses). If, as I suggest, racial and cultural inferiorization of Africa and Africans are re-signified to fit contemporary neocolonization, preceding meanings overdetermine and “produce”, or materialize the identities and bodies that arrived in Ireland. Hence, discourse needs to be understood as not acting separately from the legal/structural/material machinery that keeps refugees out, but as *performative* of it.

If the gaps in the international refugee and asylum literature I identified earlier—Westcentricism, inattention to geopolitics, androcentricism—and too little critical attention paid to the “humanitarian” role NGOs play in the South, this proves also to be the case for NGOs engaged with asylum in Ireland, discussed next.²⁶

²⁶ I situate global/national/ local NGOs in the Irish matrix of domination” (Collins 2000) in Chapter Two and analyse some website images of women of colour in Chapter Four.

1.4 The Irish Asylum Literature (Feminist and Non-Feminist)

The early Irish asylum literature mainly fell under the doxa of “crisis immigration” featuring top-down “number-crunching” approaches in spite of minimal or “notoriously unreliable” statistical information as Mac Éinrí and White (2008), in their meta-analysis of migration research and Gilmartin (2012) state.²⁷ The corpus includes NGO, policy-based literature, with academic studies focussing on social identity, belonging, exclusion, signification and power. Legal studies criticize increasingly restrictive policies on immigration (Mullally 2001 a, b, c; 2002a, b; Cotter 2004; Bacik 2004; Garner 2004; Mac Éinrí 2001). These expose the built-in ambiguities in International /EU Asylum laws, which don’t specify what *level of humanity* is considered “humane” and delineate the illegality of the DP system (Thornton 2014a,b).

NGO reports have scandalised social and living conditions in the Direct Provision system (FLAC 2009; ICI 2011; Nasc. 2007) and the health needs of people in asylum (Manandhar et al. 2006; Fanning et al. 2007; Dibelus 2001 and others). However, the ample evidence base of academic /NGO research on nutritional and social deprivation of families in asylum appear to hold little value in court. One telling legal case, reported by Thornton (2014 b) epitomizes the dubious calibre of asylum hearings and entrenched prejudices within the legal system and RIA.²⁸ The Judge hearing the case dismissed a woman’s claims that DP had negative effects on family life since no “expert” reports verified them. He compared Irish conditions to reception conditions in Greece (using transnational legal

²⁷ Glynn, Kelly & Mac Éinrí (2013) found that the largest number of people who left Ireland between 2008 - 2009 were from the EU12 ascension countries, *not* indigenous Irish, suggesting that the moral panic surrounding both immigration *and* emigration have not been supported by statistics. See Mac Éinrí and White (2008) and Cotter (2004) for a thorough discussion.

²⁸ I explore courtroom experiences in Chapter Five.

precedents). The applicants' own evidence of human rights deprivation was contested by Noel Dowling, Principal Officer in the RIA, who stated the applicant's family had a

generous and nutritious selection of food ... [were] housed in a very large ensuite room measuring 35ft. x 12ft [with] no bills to concern themselves [nor] heating the premises [or] paying for food and domestic goods [...] The allegations demonstrates a startling lack of appreciation for the daily realities of many other non-protection seekers, particularly given the difficult economic circumstances unemployed individuals and low income families currently face the facilities are designed to be suitable for a genuine protection seeker...[who would] welcome the quiet and peaceful enjoyment of the Eglinton Hotel on the seafront in Salthill, Galway

(Thornton 2014b: 4-5).

Racism and anti-racism are a strong area of focus in asylum taken up by Mc Veigh (1992, 1996, 1998), Tannam et al. (1998), Loyal and Mulcachy (2001), Lentin and McVeigh (2002); Rolston and Shannon (2004) and Rolston (2006). Race scholarship in Ireland has carefully avoided limiting "Irish racism" to the black/white dichotomy and addresses indigenous multi-racisms, such as anti-traveller racism and anti-Semitism (Mc Veigh 1996, Lentin 2001; Lentin and Mc Veigh 2002; Guerin 2002; Mac an Ghaill 1999; Garner 2004). Since the 2004 Referendum, tenacious critiques of Ireland as a racist state have been made (Lentin and Mc Veigh 2006; Lentin and Lentin 2006; Garner and Moran 2006, Garner 2007b, Garner 2009).²⁹ Nevertheless, juxtaposing "racism" and "refugees" in the media and politics has framed out and overdetermined important historical contexts, giving 'Irish society an excuse not to examine and challenge its racism in the wider and historical contexts' (Tannam 2002: 216), particularly those of slavery and colonization.

²⁹ Asylum "virtually disappeared" off the political radar (Lentin 2009:1), but returned to the spotlight in 2014 through a series of direct protests by people in asylum and demands by ADI, an academic/activist initiative to end deportation.

Nuanced analyses have become more difficult as post-race, post-feminist discourses abound; following the economic recession, anti-racism has become conflated with State-generated categories of interculturalism, integration and diversity (Lentin 2007, 2009, 2012). Kitching (2011:11) finds that a politics of *representation/misrepresentation* or *recognition/misrecognition* ‘continues to hierarchize bodies, names and biographies ... with insufficient attention to the racialised and gendered positionings that are developing’. For him, a ‘historical lack of vocabulary around difference’ has led to a narrow recognition of identity, and the use of ‘confusing, homogenising, depoliticised terms for recognising/ including the constitutive Other’ (ibid.p294).³⁰

Overall, the qualitative asylum research employed surveys, questionnaires, and interview based methods that focused on needs analyses, done by Irish *on* minorities (Mac Éinrí and White 2008; Coakely and Mac Éinrí 2007; Moreo 2012: 76). Feldman et al. (2005) identify a lack of proactive participation by target groups and “burnout” among respondents, echoing Cotter’s (2004: 8) meta-analysis. “Participation” was limited to interviews (not as paid researchers) and respondents grew tired of answering the same questions, only for research findings to continuously “fall on deaf ears”. These scholars call for more collaborative and multi-method participatory research; Cotter notes that earlier reports were valuable but ‘general, predictable and repetitive’ (ibid.)³¹, and that research, when commissioned and funded by agencies that set and implement policy, hamper radical critiques of organisations. Furthermore, taking racism as “incidents of discrimination” dissuades critiques of institutional racism in state structures, and re-inscribes DP residents as objects of abjection and vulnerability.

³⁰ This is an important focus across my data analyses in Chapters Four to Six.

³¹ See Nasc (2007); FLAC 2009; ICI (2011); Amnesty International (2011). The Irish Refugee Council (2012) report on behalf of the NGO Forum on Direct Provision argues exclusively through human rights and racial discrimination policies, calling for reform, not abolition of the Direct Provision system.

Specific studies of maternity and employment needs of migrant women and women in asylum provide important insights into the realities on the ground (Kennedy and Murphy-Lawless 2003, Murphy-Lawless 2013, 2014; Hegarty 2007, Mbugua 2012). Nevertheless, Cotter's (2004: 61) bibliography finds a complete absence of "being white in Ireland", gaps in women's experience of racism, highlighting the need to link high-level academic research with everyday realities. Call for more views of minority and black communities through research carried out by these communities have been addressed latterly (for example, in Feldman et al 2008; Lentin and Moreo 2012). Notably absent are feminist research ethics and methodology that advance collaborative design, privilege personal narratives— and crucially—regard such data not as 'merely experience but also as theory and analysis' (Lentin 2003: 321) and avoid re-colonizing identities. As Goldstone argues, to colonize "the images and experiences of blacks, Jews, Muslims or any group outside the golden circle of Western Eurocentricism ... contributes to continued subjugation" (ibid). The purely "bottom-up" qualitative studies were commissioned by AkiDwA (2010, 2012) and unlike the policy/migration literature, contain vivid, embodied narratives of everyday gendered social and economic deprivation, sexual harassment and racism. AkiDwA's CEO writes:

Women may not benefit equally with men when looking for asylum. Their experiences in their countries of origin often differ from those of men. For example women's involvement in political protest and action is not as widely publicized as that of men and their inability to produce evidence, both oral and documentary may alter their asylum claim ... Many women, mostly parenting alone have made long journeys to arrive in the hope of safety and security. Recently however women and children in the asylum system have been made to feel like criminals and constantly feel under threat.

(Mbugua 2012: 1)

The bulk of the immigration budget was funnelled into asylum, in a hasty and ad-hoc way (Quinn et al. 2008), neglecting policy and infrastructural needs of other migrant populations (Cotter 2004, Mac Éinrí and White 2008). These trends, amid crisis narratives that conflate asylum with migration, flatten differences in reasons for migration and by isolating people in asylum from the public, state-prescribed research agendas quarantine radical alter-narratives and dissent. How can scholars (and/or detainees) then oppose injustices in state asylum regimes, when the law *itself* limits “the right to have rights” for asylum seekers? If race and gender are unproblematized? Cullen (2009), Lentin (2012), and Moreo (2012) each fault the lack of self-representative migrant/asylum activism combined with appropriated/weak pro-migrant NGO activism. Lentin (2012: 51-55) meticulously documents two cases where attempts by strong migrant organisations to represent themselves were foiled—ARASI and CADIC. The UNHCR deemed ARASI to be becoming ‘too aggressive’ and ‘too African’ (Moshengwo 2008, *ibid.* p53), while CADIC, initiated by AkiDwA (the most successful National migrant-led women’s network) was taken over by Irish NGOs. Grassroots activism, the main option open for ethnic minority communities (Ejorh 2006) becomes smoothed out partly due to the exigencies of funding, integrationist policies, appropriation, and favouring by majority-led NGOs of migrant-led work that stem from their own agendas (Cullen 2009: 123, *ibid.* p56). Moreo (2012: 76) faults a lack of critical engagement by researchers with ‘the way objects of analysis are constructed and criteria of authority and legitimacy are accorded’; this mutes their presences and reinforces their ‘liminal and regulated status within the institutions and circuits where dominant knowledge is produced, legitimated and consumed’. Landy (2014: 938) argues, through the case of NGO pro-migrant activism regarding the Immigrant Protection and residence Bill (IRP), that even the limited effect of migrant-led activism still relied on reproducing

the dominant discourse of migrants as victims and (burdensome) economic units in need of management by experts.

The surge of legal/academic/NGO asylum studies in Ireland comprehensively describes the penalties meted out to non-Europeans through citizenship and residency, and highlights the double-edge of representing “others” when institutional racism and xenophobia remain untroubled and self-representation is co-opted by NGOs. Academics have stressed the link between demands for immigrant-class labour and a two-tiered labour market (Loyal 2003: 81-82), and state desire to racialise immigration borders. This is a common, un-surprising strategy of postcolonial states, which Farrier (2013: 5) notes: ‘borders were always obstructed to arrivants to the self-proclaimed colonial centre’, and it is the same forces that proscribe asylum.³² To study race and gender *together*, there are *epistemic* politics particular to asylum that more assiduous postcolonial analyses can raise. These are yet to appear in mainstream feminist or asylum studies.³³

Irish Feminist Asylum/Migration Literature

The feminist literature pinpoints the indubitable crux of Irish asylum politics as the Citizenship Referendum of June 12th 2004, when an unprecedented 79.8 percent of Irish citizens voted in favour of the removal of *jus soli* citizenship to children born to non-national parents. This small but solid body of literature exceeds theorizations of asylum solely as “migration”, showing that gendered, racialised discourses were politicized on the “childbearing” bodies of migrant/African women in asylum (Luibhéid 2004; Lentin 2001, 2003, 2004, 2009,

³² Ireland adhered to the British Aliens Act (1905) that deterred East European Jews (Lentin 2001; Mac Éinrí 2006). The ‘White Australia Policy’ restricted Chinese immigrants in the 1850s gold rush, and was officially passed through the Immigration Restriction Act (1901-1972) to prevent non-European immigration (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2012).

³³ Such analyses are emerging in Education (see Kitching 2013) and in Geography (see Linehan 2014).

2013; Gray 2004, 2006; Mullally 2009). At the time, pregnant Black women were assaulted outside maternity clinics, as media reports linked crime, welfare abuse, cultural dilution and so on to asylum seeking women's bodies, articulated through sole reference to their 'sex organs and reproductive capacities' (Luibhéid 2004: 340).

[A] sylum seeker women represented a threat to the sovereignty of the nation-state, in fact, their presence has allowed the state to refashion the national imaginary, reinvent itself, and implement new strategies of sexualized racialized governance. (Ibid.p344)

Lentin and McVeigh (2006), Mullally (2009), Gray (2004) and Garner (2004) diagnose patriarchal, racist and hetero-sexist structures that embody women as cultural, biological and symbolic "reproducers" of national collectivities (Jayawardena 1986; Yuval-Davis 1997). Adding richness to the corpus, recent ethnographic studies by Shandy (2008), Vanderhurst (2007) and Conlon (2011a, b) examine everyday lives of women in asylum (notably, all these scholars are from outside Ireland). They attend to women's diversity of origin, reasons for immigrating to Ireland, experiences of racism, obstacles to access integration and maternal services (e.g. Shandy 2008). Yet, these accounts are largely depoliticized, and "research on" (rather than research with or for) women, and tend to 'concentrate on legal entitlements, and experiences of exclusion' (Lentin 2003: 317) and less on the racialisation of gendered boundaries and the agency of women asylum-seekers themselves. Feminist research methodologies that attend to power differentials between researchers and researched seem to have "gone unheeded" (ibid. p321). Feldman et al. (2002) report that some asylum seekers were not aware of the existence of projects aimed at them or couldn't afford the transport and childcare costs, while others refused to participate as they felt the invitation was merely symbolic and 'empowerment' and 'participation' empty rhetoric. Hence, "research

on” can be incomplete, inaccurate or misleading (in Ugba 2005: 32; Lentin 2003: 320).

An exception in the field is Conlon (2011 a, b; and collaborators 2011b, 2013, 2013, 2014) who critically interrogate the *asylum/security* nexus and add *transnational* links between racialised detention, the securitization of migration, and activist/advocacy/humanitarian technologies (such as quasi-educational activities in detention) that offer “release through subjection”. These inform my analyses in chapters Four and Five.

One overall omission is *a sustained explication* of the visuality of discourses, or how an image and its meanings influence the cultural and affective dimensions of identity and representations of the other. Lentin (2004a: 303) notes that the majority of demonstrators at a protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2003 were migrant Eastern European women but that the sole photograph representing the event in the media focused on an African baby, thus ‘telescoping all migrant parents into the category “black” and all their children into the category “black babies”’.³⁴ Even a single photograph, as Berger (1972) reminds us, is a powerful means of constructing a total view of reality, particularly when read intertextually with already-assimilated meanings. When assembled with Johnson’s (2011) images and Figure 4 (above), we glimpse the constellation of images of women of colour through multiple circuits of representation. *How* to dissemble these, however, is an under-developed area.

Also under-developed are analyses that elicit economies of fear (Ahmed 2004a, b) that circulate hyperbolic political discourses through the media and whip up racism, as happened in the 2004 Citizenship Referendum. Discourse analysis of tabloid and broadsheet newspapers from 1990 to 1999 by Breen et al. (2006) shows

³⁴ Also see Lentin and McVeigh (2002: 21) for the use by the Catholic Church of images of “black babies”.

that the media shaped attitudes and emotional responses of the Irish public. They found a specific rejection of immigrants and foreign workers from 1981 to 1999 (rising from 5.42 percent of negative responses, to 12.52 percent).³⁵ In this “public exercise of othering”(ibid.p17), sensationalized print media representations used five negative frames—including illegitimacy, threat to integrity of the nation, economic threat, contamination and criminality—to discursively produce the “asylum seeker”.³⁶ Notably, positive and supportive frames (e.g. contribution made to society; opposing racism and exclusion) resisted depicting others as “anonymous masses” and were found mostly in opinions, features and comment items written by NGOs, religious groups or political figures, not in “authoritative” news items.

Uncannily, these findings mirror those emerging from the UK, Australia, Canada and other European nations, suggesting that the threat to the (imagined white) nation (Anderson 1983/2006; Hage 1998)—of being swamped by non-white Third World-looking “others” is *transnational* between First World nations—and representations, whether cultural or political, embed emotions, which, like capital, have economies of value that accumulate (Ahmed 2004a, b). What is more, analyses of discourses of otherness ought not be limited to black bodies and identities; attention needs to be paid to parallel discourses that uplift, re-whiten and reinstate whiteness as supremacy.³⁷

Irish-ness itself as an identity became re-racialised, commodified and marketed to boost Ireland’s entry to the globalized economy. The Irish Pub,

³⁵ Comparing their data with older survey data, their statistics match Irish data of the European Values Study (EVS 1999), and show this to be the largest increase in intolerance recorded in comparison to other groups (Haynes et al. 2006: 2).

³⁶ Their examples include “O’Donoghue Agrees Nigeria Deal to Kick Out Bogus Refugees” (29/09/01); “War on Refugee Menace” (21/02/02); ‘Refugee Cheats cost State Eur.16M: Welfare Scams are Rife’(01/04/01).

³⁷ In Australia, refugees and asylum seekers are constructed as invading “waves, tides or hordes” and their “deviancy” described in terms of race and disease (Pickering 2001: 169-170). UK newspapers similarly use words like: “crime, dirty, thieves” (Tyler 2006:191). In Canada, Watson (2007: 109) detects a shift in humanitarian discourses about refugee arrivals pre-1986 to a securitized discourse in 1987 through added qualifiers (“illegal”, “economic”, “bona-fide”) to differentiate “new” asylum seekers.

Riverdance, U2, Irish films and high technology link the ‘cultural’ element and the ‘political economy’ element as reliant on each other (Fagan 2003). Carby (2001) addresses the erasure of the “racial” element through disavowing African American hybridity to ‘re-whiten’ representations of Irish dance. “Whitening” works hand-in-hand with “othering”; asylum discourse circulates a view of white nations as liberal and safe spaces that protect human rights (Gray 2006) while simultaneously constructing others-of-colour as deviant, bogus and dangerous. Cultural products like songs and films, while producing new racialised identities for the Irish that uplifted earlier (negative) stereotypical constructions also re-frame and sanitize memory, and “numb us into forgetting” darker histories of displacement and diaspora (Gray 2004). In this case, the affective economies circulate happiness, prosperity, wealth (versus fear and suspicion of immigrants) and also collective grief and mourning—that can disavow and subjugate legacies of lived experiences of Irish colonial occupation, poverty and emigration.

The cultural ascension of Ireland into privileged entitlement of whiteness (Lentin and McVeigh 2006) went along with capital and class ascension, and was effectuated through re-racialisation. This is not unlike how the Irish in America ‘became white’ following emancipation of African-Americans from slavery (Ignatiev 1995).³⁸ Conjunctural discourses—the arrival of “bad, black others” and the uplifting of whiteness did not simply differentiate between white Irish and others, but also produced binaries between good and bad “others” in racial terms (Garner and Moran 2006) and thus incorporated “blackness” into existing Irish racisms.

³⁸ For a discussion of the whitening of Irish in India see Mohanram (2005).

However, feminist analyses of asylum seem caged within the “asylum/migration” nexus and the “gender/nationalism” intersection. Garner (2007) contends that feminist theories of gender and nation cannot fully account for the specific type of racist and sexist hierarchization effected through black women’s bodies, which I agree with. For me, one difficulty is methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), which deflects attention from deeply embedded circuits of *transnationalized* whiteness and *global* neocolonial capitalist expansion. Feminist analyses lodged at the gender/nation fail to consider race and class (so whiteness/capitalism become invisible). This link between race/class/gender together, as intersectional theory proposes, is continuous with colonialism and Feminists have troubled this intersection (Gray 1998, 2002a,b; Walter 2001, 2011) through gendered/racialisation of Irish women in *diaspora*, but this work is yet to take place in Ireland in relation to Black Irish women.³⁹ For this, as Gandhi (1998) argues, a *synthesis* of poststructural critiques with material politics is necessary in postcolonial studies.

In this thesis, I take a corrective approach to explore the ‘transnational economies of representation’ (Fernandes 2013: 64) that circulate “whiteness” through asylum discourse. I also read “identity” as co-constitutive and conjunctural: when identities of self/other appear in the data and expose how uplifting positive identification for Irish people relies on negative constructions of others, which circulate as distorted “urban myths”⁴⁰ that accumulate not only *political but affective* value (Ahmed 2004a, b) and inflame emotional discontent among the Irish public. As one woman in OOW identifies, the Irish public tell the story about

³⁹ The complexities of race, gender and class differences in UK and US emigrant Irish populations have been brilliantly addressed (see also Hickman and Walter 1995).

⁴⁰ The most sensational of these is a comment made by Michael Martin (a government minister) to Lentin (2013: 53) that he knew of a Nigerian woman pregnant with quintuplets who “had the first one in Nigeria and hopped on a plane to have the other four in Ireland”.

how they are taking care of asylum seekers...give even gold and silver... give food and cook for them and all the facilities, they have Internet and they are given a weekly allowance, not knowing how much. That is why most people, they are like racist to us they feel that you are here to take over when we don't have enough for ourselves ... they don't know.

My broader discussion above suggests that visual and cultural representations and their affective economies operate together with—not in isolation from— legal and political representations. I contend that *visual*, *cultural* and *affective* analyses need to be united, in order to fully grasp their *material* effects on the lives of African women in asylum. My analyses attempt to connect some of the un-connected points in the Irish literature in one context. This task requires postcolonial feminist theory, which deconstructs homogenising discourse of universal gender oppression to address cultural/contextual difference (Spivak 1988, Mohanty 1988, Gandhi 1998, Dhawan 2005). I discuss this in Chapter Two, but first, I summarize my research aims, strategy and knowledge-gaps.

1.5 Research Aims Strategy and Questions, and Intended Contribution of Study

Four vexatious issues alerted me to existing gaps in academic literature on asylum and radicalized my thinking. Why do wealthy developed nations embrace the Refugee Convention (UNHCR) but shun asylum seekers and refugees when they materialize (Gibney 2014)? Why is it that “migrant women” are key actors in migration and globalization studies, but not in asylum? How does white/hegemonic feminism screen out its own “white saviour” scripts? Why has it been so difficult to bring together strong anti-capitalist, anti-racist critiques with poststructural analyses in mainstream feminist sociological studies of identity? The gaps in knowledge I identified earlier (pp.11-22) are threads woven into the very fabric of academic

feminism, and my research aims and questions intend to address them in terms of the above contradictions.

Research Aims

My aims are to:

1. Explore how Postcolonial theories of cultural representation and Black feminist theorizations of gender, race and diasporic identities apply to African women's experience in one context of Irish asylum.
2. Explore performativity and affective economies of identities, bodies and spaces in one context of Irish Asylum.
3. Through the empirical data derived from the lived experiences of a group of African women, to reveal which interlocking powers and practices at the local level create oppressive conditions that obstruct their agency and power.
4. Illustrate what might be the cultural, political, affective and economic "uses" raced and gendered bodies and identities have to the Irish state.
5. To theorize Irish Asylum as a Postcolonial Encounter

Research Strategy and Questions

My overall strategy is dualistic—to bring cultural analyses of colonial and contemporary representations of Black women together with their performativity—or their material effects on African women's lives and identities in a specific setting. I first listened to women (and men) in asylum and to local NGO advocates, exploring ideas and pertinent issues. I then gathered empirical data through two projects, each conducted with different degrees of autonomy (see Chapter Three). Secondary data include website images from global/national/local NGOs featuring Third World women.

My overall research questions were:

Which representations of black women are produced and circulated in the Irish context? Where? How? Through which discourses? What is silenced or absent?

What are the relationships between cultural representations and identity or subject-formation?

What function or “work” do black female bodies “do” as they wait in asylum?

What are the material/cultural/political/affective consequences? Who benefits? How?

What work are women in asylum doing? What work does “seeking asylum” itself do?

As discourses operate intertextually, I assembled and analysed data across visual, textual, speech-based, and embodied modes and asked the same question: what work does this mode of representation do?⁴¹ By inter-connecting the effects of the cultural on the material, I also provide a concrete material analysis of capital in “postcolonial asylum”.

Scope of the study

Gender and race are generally understood as individual characteristics rather than constructions (Zuberi and Silva 2008, Harnois 2013). This is a problem in large-scale quantitative studies in migration and asylum, where Phillips (2013:1) notes that much ‘academic and political speech ... employs ... relatively essentialist or ‘common-sense’ notion of gender’. In this thesis, I opted for rich, in-depth data.

⁴¹ I understand “insurgent texts” as those that speak back to dominant discourses but recognize the agency, power and bodies of women of colour at sites of oppression. They enter the frame without having their differences from white women fetishized, or their suffering erased or “disappeared” (ibid.p34)

As an exploratory study in a relatively new field, I initially borrowed from Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967/2012) the approach of entering the field without a preconceived theory, to ‘avoid unduly influencing the pre-conceptualization of the research through extensive reading in the substantive area and the forcing of extant theoretical overlays on the collection and analysis of data’ (Glaser and Holton 2004: 3.4). Working from the “bottom-up”, the women’s immediate concerns and experiences within existing NGO/Charitable agencies generated concepts from the data, such as the “coloniality” of specific NGO representational products and practices that affect everyday processes of identification, inclusion and exclusion, which I went on to theorize.⁴²

Case studies offer both depth and contextualization. Though empirical data is gathered from small groups of participants, sustained, deep participatory engagement in their lives experiences provided insights that may apply to how “identity and representation” operate in other sites. The methodology of this study is applicable across various Irish contexts and beyond. My broader analysis examines global discourses through which African women are represented; I then explore how they might be *performative* in one context of Irish asylum. In other words, I study how bodies and identities are produced through top-down, global regimes of representation at the local level. Situating this small-scale study within global postcolonial processes makes it generalizable to other Western first-world nations, as I triangulated my data with international studies. This heeds the call for intersectional analyses to take a global focus, but retain particularity (Patil 2013; Mohanty 2013). In this view, “postcolonial asylum” is viewed as a transnational phenomenon, avoiding the methodological nationalism of other asylum studies. This

⁴² I provide a detailed explication of my “Emergent” Methodological processes in Chapter Three, which departs from classic Grounded Theory procedures.

approach enables me to examine how race and whiteness as embedded in contemporary asylum discourse are transnational phenomena (Moreton-Robinson 2008).

Explicit Postcolonial and Black Feminist frameworks are relatively new in Irish asylum studies, so I chose an exploratory approach to inspire new spaces for feminist and asylum scholarship. This thesis aims to act on critiques already made and provide an alternative register through which to understand and theorize the links between identity and representation for African women in one context. Moving beyond description towards politicized readings of everyday practices, I advance praxis of self-representation and autonomy, which may usefully inform marginalized groups, activists and advocates as well as academics.

Thesis Outline

Having given a background to asylum in Ireland and detailed the main knowledge gaps and research questions, the chapters that follow develop my theoretical framework, methodology and analysis of empirical data drawn from a specific group, in one Irish context. In Chapter Two, I outline four key theoretical debates from Black and Postcolonial feminisms used to analyse the data:

Intersectional identities (Moraga and Anzaldua 1981, Anzaldúa and Keating 2002, Crenshaw 1989b, Crenshaw 1991; Moya 1997; hooks 1982, 1992, 1994; Lugones 1990, 2003; Collins 2000, Brah and Phoenix 2006; Yuval-Davis 2006; Lewis 2009; Puar 2011; Bilge 2013; Patil 2013; Mirza and Gunaratnam 2014); *Postcolonial theories of subaltern locations and representations of the Other* (Spivak 1998; Mohanty 1998; 2002; Alcoff 2000; hooks 1982, 1992, 1994; Loomba 1998; Ahmed 2000; Hall 1992, 1997) and *Poststructural theories of embodiment and affective economies* (Butler 1990, 1993; Ahmed 1998, 1999, 2004a,b). I finally theorize asylum as a postcolonial encounter (Ahmed 2000).

Chapter Three models my “emergent” research methodology that bridges (Black) feminist epistemology and research methods (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2008: 1) to make ethical, response-able choices. The issue of self-representation is key to this thesis, and I use a feminist Participatory Action Research (PAR)-infused model. Post-feminist and post-racist discourses abound in state policies of human rights, diversity and integration (Braidotti 2005; Lentin 2009, 2012; Mc Robbie 2009; Ahmed 2007, 2012), so methodology becomes critically important charting ground for the ‘un-learning’ (Spivak 1990:9) necessary to unravel the historical, political and cultural interconnections between racism, imperialism, colonialism in contemporary asylum encounters.

My data analyses over three chapters broadly ask: “How are African/Black women represented? What work do these representations do?”(Chapter Four). “What happens when they try to speak? What conditions of power, in which spaces of asylum, disallow, make illegible or appropriate their “speech” (Chapter Five). When conditions are de-colonized and convivial, like in the theatre space, what happens? Is self-representation achieved? How? (Chapter Six).

In Chapter Four, I analyse transcripts from both projects, BBB and OOW to critically examine representational products and practices of two local NGOs that participants engaged with. I illustrate the “work” NGO representations do to fragment and re-colonize extant “public identities” (Alcoff 2000) through neoliberal discourses of integration and empowerment, and how they differentiate between “other others”. I contrast these with analyses of collages (made by participants in BBB where they self-represent asylum). I ask: What discourses appear? What do subjects shifting positions show? What is silenced? What are the spaces of encounter? How do they “speak back” resist, negotiate and navigate the identities “forced” onto them through asylum?

In Chapter Five, my analyses explore biographical narratives of the women in the second project, *On Our Way* (OOW) to illustrate the inner, intersubjective and embodied aspects of identity and subjection (Butler 1990, 1993). I focus on “bodies”, and the interlocking powers and practices that “produce them” and end with exposing the “labour” they perform in three interred spaces of asylum encounter:

—“Illegal, lying bodies” produced in the courtroom, through punitive white patriarchal power of the judiciary. This has been addressed in the Canadian and UK contexts (Razack 1998, Razack et al. 2010 ; Macklin 1999, Oxford 2005; Simm 2005) but only recently emerging in Ireland (Conlan, Waters, and Berg 2012).

—“Docile, dependent and deportable bodies” in Direct Provision, which I address as contemporary technologies of racialised incarceration.

—“Sacrificable bodies” or *femina sacra* (Lentin 2004b, 2013) which I examine as an *affective encounter* (Ahmed 2004a) in a space of birth, death and mourning in the context of migrant maternal deaths, feminism pro-abortion activism and Ireland’s necropolitical (Mbembe 2003) abortion laws. I explore the “slippery” empathic encounter between postcolonial women of colour and white/Irish postcolonial woman as an embodiment of “postcolonial suffering” (Nayar 2006) where one form of social suffering (Das 2000; Kleinman and Kleinman 1997, Butler 2010) is imposed on another.

In Chapter Six, I analyse a theatrical performance of the women’s asylum journeys and examine the elements are brought into the “fourth space” where convivial (not re-colonizing) public conditions prevail, where self- consciously scripted narratives re-represent asylum. I take conjunctural analyses (Gillman 2007) of audience responses as they “witness” to trauma and suffering (Salverson 2001, 2006) to examine how essentialised identity constructions are shifted and negotiated by the women.

In the concluding chapter, I evaluate the study and the effectiveness of Participatory drama and art as decolonizing, ethical research methods that foster embodied self-representation. I also suggest ways forward for stronger feminist solidarity between Irish and migrant women in scholarship and activism.

2. Re-Framing Postcolonial Asylum: North and South

[S]ubaltern bodies are not simplistic figures of resistance but embodied subjects that exceed the texts and representation frames that seek to contain them
Fernandes 2013: 68

This chapter draws together the four key theoretical frameworks used to analyse the data in this thesis: Intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) and the Matrix of Domination (Collins 2000); Postcolonial theories of subaltern locations (Spivak 1988, 1990, 1999) and representation of women of colour (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, Anzaldúa 1987; hooks 1982, 1992; Loomba 1998; Bulbeck 1998; Collins 2000; Carby 1982/1997, 2004; Mc Clintock 1985; Hall 1980, 1997a,b,c; Moreton-Robinson 2004); and the performativity (Butler 1990, 1993), embodiment and affectivity of identities (Brah 1996; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Ahmed 1998, 2000).¹

I first address how Collins (2002) theorizes intersectionality as interlocking power domains in her Matrix of Domination model, then enter the debate over the misappropriation of intersectionality as it “travels” to the European context, and contest charges that it is ‘ineffective’ in terms of challenging state apparatuses

¹ Embedded in these theorists work are Foucault’s (1978, 1980) theories of discourse and power/knowledge, Althusser’s (1971) theories of ideological interpellation, Gramsci’s (1971) concept of hegemony, and Fanon’s (1952/2008) seminal theories of black colonial subjectivity. Butler showed how normative hetero-sexualised interpellated identities are performative, and made so through the violence inherent in social identity categorization. Though critics have troubled Butler’s earlier work for reducing embodied reality to language individualism and ignoring structural powers and agency and race, such “troubling” of her theories has fruitfully increased attention to subjectivity (see Schwartzman 2002; Boucher 2006).

(Mullally 2009). I then foreground postcolonial theories of representation that align identity with the politics and practices of representation (Spivak 1988, Hall 1997a; Ahmed 2000, 2012; Alcoff 2000). Poststructural perspectives consider affective and material concerns as always implicated in one another (Ahmed 1998). The uses made of African women's literal and figurative bodies in Irish asylum politics is, I contend, part of *global* use of gendered and raced bodies in representational circuits that produce the "asylum seeker" as a menace. Threaded through the chapter is Ireland's implication in neocolonial relations and transnational whiteness (Moreton-Robinson 2008), which I examine through the lens of a specific Black/Postcolonial feminist study of asylum to introduce perspectives not previously used in this context.

To sidestep the limitations of top-down, state-centric NGO and 'humanitarian' frameworks, I conceptualize African women in Irish asylum as *black female bodies* moving through asylum spaces—such as the courtroom, Direct Provision centres, NGO/charitable organisations and public events—under the gaze of whiteness (Yancy 2009). This strategy addresses lived experiences without gazing *at* or *into* the women's identities, but outward, to the forces that make and re-make their bodies to fit existing and new categories. Thus, the story of raced and gendered domination can be told 'across different landscapes and time lines through counter memories of black/ethnicised women' (McKittrick 2006 in Mirza 2009: 2).² The framework considers identity to be socially and discursively constructed, rather than essential, yet fully necessary for 'realist' or 'strategic' politics to form recognisable bases of struggle (Alcoff 2000, Moya 1997, Spivak 1990). If we look at the powers that produce

² The Hijabi Monologues is a good contemporary example of this approach to tell a multivoiced story of a single issue that disrupts universal stereotypes and "speaks backs" through various geographic locations using local actors (see <https://www.hijabimonologues.com>, accessed 15 February 2016).

representations, we see more clearly how identities are forced or ascribed *through* discursive representations. This exposes how the complex agencies that the group of women can exercise when seeking asylum become buried or misrecognized.

2.1 Intersectionality: Doing Identity or Undoing Ideology?

We regard the concept of ‘intersectionality’ as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts. The concept emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands.

Brah and Phoenix, 2004: 76

[W]e do need to take matters of identity very seriously, not just as some kind of psychological artefact or cultural consumable (...) Identity is all about power and resistance, subjection and citizenship, action and reaction ... *[R]ather than simply passing over identity to rethink power, we need to profoundly rethink identity if we are to begin to comprehend the meaning of power.*

Mama 2001: 67, italics in original.

Mama (2001) tells us there is no word for “identity” in many African languages; in English, the word implies a ‘singular, individual subject with clear ego boundaries’(ibid. p63) . In contrast, identity is understood in this thesis through African and Afrocentric feminist perspectives not fixed ontological entities. Black feminists have theorized identity as borderland¹ spaces of exile, multi-axial diasporic belonging (Brah 1996) and places of reference that involve uprooting and regrounding (Ahmed et al. 2003; Gray 2004; Sinha, 2004; Lentin 2004; Luibhéid 2004). Women of colour

¹ ‘A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip ... a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition (Anzaldúa1987: 3). I also adopt Perera’s (2006) theorization of bodies as borders.

enact “migrating subjectivities” (Boyce-Davis 1994: 22-37); though we may be constituted differently as subjects at various diasporic locations, we use our agency to draw from multiple identities and occupy myriad locations, places and times from where to write for the specific aim of *refusing our subjection*. Seminal literary works by Jean Rhys (*The Wide Sargasso Sea*, 1966), Ama Ata Aidoo (*Our Sister Killjoy*), and contemporary film scripts like Meera Syal’s *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) and Gurninder Chadha’s *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002) all illustrate the “migrating subjectivities” of authors and characters alike. We need an identity for political struggle, even as we know the risks of essentialism, to recognize the “felt significance and cultural meaning” of one’s identity, and name specific social locations from which to engage (Acoff 2000: 341).

Intersectionality then, is a theory, conceptual tool and a standpoint epistemology derived from the lived experiences of African American and other women of colour in the US context (Beale 1970; Davis 1981; Combahee River Collective 1977; hooks 1982; Carby 1982/1997, 1985, 1987; Crenshaw 1989; Collins 1997, 2000; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981; Anzaldúa and Keating 2002; Lugones 1990, 2003). Spanning through slavery (Truth 1851; Cooper 1892; Wells 1892 in Carby 1985),² colonialism, and into the contemporary period, feminists of colour in the USA have used intersectional thinking to challenge their exclusion from constructions of “womanhood” and white women’s alliances with the ‘racist patriarchal order against all black people’ (Carby 1987: 6). Intersectionality emerged through women of colour’s activism and academic production in 1980s to ‘confront the racism and heterosexism of

²The term “intersectionality” itself was introduced by Crenshaw (1989) in a legal context, used as a metaphor to illustrate how anti-discrimination legislation based on either “gender” or “race” was inadequate to deliver legal justice to women of colour. See Carby (1985, 1987), Collins (2000) and Guy-Shetfall (2003) for thorough documentation of the active continuum of black women’s intellectual/activist tradition, 150 years before the “second wave” in the USA.

White-dominated feminism, as well as the sexism and hetero- sexism of antiracist movements' (Bilge 2013: 418).

In the UK, women of colour diasporized through post-colonial migration *also* defined the simultaneity and multiplicity of social locations that cause their collective exclusion and exploitation (Anthais and Yuval -Davis 1983; Brah 1996; James 1986; Grewal et al. 1988; Essed 1991 and others, in Yuval-Davis 2011: 4-7; Brah and Phoenix 2006). African, Africana and Indigenous feminists engage with intersectionality from their various diasporic, continental and still-colonized western locations (Moreton-Robinson 2004; Lawrence 2003; Gray 2003).

What these feminist variants *commonly* assert is that living *as* black women, race, (heterosexed) gender and class³ are not separate or separable “categories” of oppression but operate together through power-saturated hierarchical social relations that position them on the lowest scale through race (in relation to white men *and* women), and through gender (in relation to black *and* white men). Postcolonial feminist theory, in a similar approach, critically addresses the “double colonization” (Gandhi 1998) of women of colour by imperialism and patriarchies, in postcolonial nationalism (Yuval-Davis 1997) and in Western feminisms that misrepresent or silence their specificities. Together and in common, these perspectives *deconstruct* universalizing, essentialist and Eurocentric discourses of womanhood, feminism, and a global “sisterhood” (Spivak 1998; Mohanty 1991; Anzaldúa 1984, Loomba 1998).

Intersectionality has been ‘extraordinarily generative of feminist critical inquiry’ (Lewis 2013: 869) and is used widely in Western feminism, sociology, queer

³ Black women fell between the gap in race/gender in discrimination legislation (Crenshaw 1989, 1991) and were invisible in both race and gender politics where “all the men are white and all the blacks are men” (Hull et al. 1982). Although specificity is important, I have not included sexuality as a category, as it is contained in “gender”, which is constructed to naturalize heterosexuality. Similarly, race includes whiteness. In neoliberalism, “class” is identifiable as corporate capitalist power (Harvey 2005), and I use class and capital interchangeably.

studies, postcolonial studies, education and economics (Grabham 2009) and policy development of major organisations like the UN and EU (Yuval-Davis 2011; Carastathis 2014)⁴. Despite this, European feminists have recently scrutinized its theoretical usefulness, transferability and potential (Conaghan 2008; Mullally 2009; Lykke 2010; Lutz et al. 2011) while others defend it (Lewis 2009; Davis 2008; Knapp 2005; Carastathis 2014, 2008; Bilge 2013; Mohanty 2013; Patil 2013). Recent publications, conferences and cyber-debates⁵ have troubled its core tenets, its methodology and enactment, which units of analysis categories, intersections ought to be used and which power differentials prioritized in which contexts (Lykke 2010).

This has led to two problems salient to this thesis, each relating to identity and representation in asylum in different ways: First, the misuse or unproblematic uses of identity categories in intersectional analyses as if they were individual fixed essences, not constructed. This disappears the “differences that differences” make within and between individuals. Second, the disappearance or whitening of women of colour’s theories by Western feminist academics through rhetorical and/or weak engagement, and the scrutiny, misrecognition and devaluation of intersectionality (Floyd-Alexander 2012; Bilge 2013). The “categorical” approach⁶, if adopted in feminist analyses, homogenizes women of colour’s identities, collapses differences and disappears their speaking locations, intellectual and political labour and agency, as I explain next.

⁴ For example, the United Nations’ Beijing Platform for Action (2000), the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2000), and the UN Commission on Human Rights (2002, in Yuval-Davis 2011: 193).

⁵ I refer to the series of cross-Atlantic “twitterstorms” between black feminist and white journalists, spurred by black feminist criticism of the TV series, “Girls” for excluding women of colour (see Adewunmi 2012). See also Black Feminist critiques of Slutwalk in Bilge (2013).

⁶ Mc Call’s (2005) taxonomy categorises three methodological approaches to intersectional analyses: inter-categorical” (that is, referring to the way race-class-gender etc. affects social behaviour or determines the distribution of resources), “intra-categorical” (that is, a focus on the boundaries of the categories themselves, for example, by asking if Black women included in the category “women” and anti-categorical, which refuses categorisation).

Critique 1: Mis-using intersectionality through the additive, categorical method and detaching race/class/sex.

Most strongly contested in the USA and UK is the trend to detach race, class and sex (despite their *intersectionality*) into pre-supposed *singular fixed axes*, on which each individual is presumed to be located. This method fixes identities, discounts marginal members of the same grouping and/or erases how ‘some differences have devastating effects on some peoples’ lives while others do not (Yuval-Davis 2006: 195)— more important are the “differences the differences make” (Harding 1997:385; Ahmed 1998). Categorical methods lead to an *additive style* of identity categories, most commonly used in intersectional studies in sociology, which endlessly fragment ethnic or sexual differences (Yuval-Davis 2011), often ending with the “embarrassed *etc*” (Butler 1990: 129) at the end of a long list. First, identities, as Brah and Phoenix (2004: 77) explain, are ‘not objects but processes constituted in and through power relations’. Second, more categories do not ‘yield a greater truth about the experiences of multiply-marginalized subjects’ (Nash 2010: 3). Both trends prohibit deeper interrogation of the technologies of power/knowledge that construct these identities and hide the specificity of differences that *materialize* for these subjects (Ahmed 1988) in different contexts (Yuval- Davis 1998). As Collins (1997) explains, intersectionality is a standpoint theory of group oppression, never designed to be argued as a theory of truth or method, but a knowledge/power framework—it attends to the social conditions that construct such groups. The group ‘Black women’ is not a collection of individuals but is systematically targeted through race/class/gender identities.

Butler’s (1990: 143) quip—that the additive “*etc*” at the end of a list of identity categories is a ‘sign of exhaustion as well as the illimitable process of signification itself’— has proven pre-emptive. The language of intersectionality, mainstreamed, co-

opted and “cooled out” in the smooth dominant terms of multiculturalism and diversity now pave the way to “managing difference”, where difference is seen as difference from white feminists (Mirza and Gunaratnam 2014: 129). The irony for Puar (2011: 1), is that the rhetorical *invocation* of intersectionality can substitute for performing intersectional analysis itself.

The “additive *etc*” is evident in Irish academic texts. Reilly’s (2007a; 2008a,b) model for Cosmopolitan feminism, for example, strongly argues for intersectional approaches within a human rights model using the additive “etc.” variant as one strand of her model (cross-boundaries dialogue, networking, and social criticism being the others (2007a: 184). This version does not address “the difference the difference makes” in scale or points of location along the axes of categories (of race, class, gender) nor the politics (power) underlying the *formation* of such categories. Social divisions are ‘constructed by, intermeshed with, each other in specific historical conditions’ (Yuval-Davis 2006:199), not simply “there”. Intersectionality seems to come “undone” when attached to “women’s rights” models, which, as Yuval-Davis (2006: 199) argues, suffers from

analytical confusions that have already been tackled by feminist scholars ...
working on them for longer, outside the global feminist networks of the UN
and Beijing Forum (ibid. p206)

She is critical of policy measures at the Center for Women’s Global Leadership (a major voice in advancing women’s right at the UN level, and where Reilly was a scholar), that prescribe “disaggregat[ing] data of various social, legal and identity categories of women” and probing beneath “the single identity to discover other identities that may be present and contribute to the situation of disadvantage”. This approach simply ‘re-inscribe[s] the fragmented, additive method of oppression and essentialises specific social identities’ (ibid. p205). Why further dissociate “ethnicity”

when everybody has an ethnicity? Evoking Anderson (1991), Yuval-Davis reminds us of the devastating effect that the introduction of census categories had in colonial societies, where previously, it had been ‘categorical opaqueness’ that led to peaceful coexistence with difference. Colonial power in Africa, as Mamdani and Leys (1997: 17) explains, reproduced two distinct identities ‘a racial identity amongst citizens, and an ethnic particularism amongst victims. Race was the identity that united beneficiaries, and ethnicity the identity that fragmented subjects’.

Reilly accepts Yuval-Davis’s critiques regarding the legalistic, top-down biases of the human rights discourse, admits global feminists *vehemently* disagreed with Western feminists approaches (2008b), yet continues to advocate for *reform*— not deconstruction— of this very mechanism. She favours a Cosmopolitan model over Yuval-Davis’ *transversal* model (1997)⁷ for the reason that the latter ‘understates the centrality of human rights discourse in making such politics possible in the first place’ (2008b:9). This, for me, signals how tightly UN- style “human rights” are interwoven with identity categories; this forces the additive style and cannot help but mis-enact intersectionality. The statement also disavows women of colour’s histories of local and transnational political mobilisation long before the UN conferences— the First Conference of Women of African Descent was held in July 1960 in Ghana (Guy Sheftall 2003). UN /White western formulations of “transnational” and “international” fail to question “capitalist neocolonisation” in globalization and foster “free-market feminism” (Alexander and Mohanty 2010: 23).

⁷ ‘Transversal dialogue is based on the principles of rooting and shifting—being centered in one’s own experience while being empathetic to the differential positioning of the partners in the dialogue . . . the boundaries of the dialogue would be determined by the message rather than its messengers’ (1997: 88).

Reilly (2008b: 4) also worries that feminist ‘deconstructive analyses of discursive practices [make] little or no reference to concrete sites of struggle’ and yearns for the “old style” feminism. Black feminism emerged *because of racism* in this “old style” white feminism—it disappeared them. If we, as transnational feminists, move directly into a Cosmopolitan civic space as a basis of cross-border solidarity as Reilly suggests, we neatly avoid the unfinished business of the legacy and implications of colonial history (Dhawan 2007b). We omit a crucial step—to expose how hegemonic, UN-style feminisms are grounded in white western patriarchal capitalist ideology and do not serve women of the South. For me, poststructural and deconstructive cultural analyses do not necessarily “avoid” material action—the black female identity and body *is* the “concrete site of struggle”. In light of my introductory discussion on the exclusion of scholarly perspectives from the South and the epistemic violence of colonial knowledge production, I wonder how and where people in asylum (or migrant domestic or sex workers) might fit in Cosmopolitanism.

In asylum studies, the potential of intersectional analyses is “undone” by reliance on discursive identity categories created by state migration regimes; these construct asylum seekers as legal/illegal and become conflated in media and policy. Legal categories are devices for inclusion and exclusion both (Zetter 2001).⁸ They become imbricated with differences that precede and define African women’s identities (Puar 2011) well before their material arrival in asylum. Lentin and Luibhéid (2004: 295) and Lentin (2004a) have criticized the trend in feminist social research on migrant women to adhere to state-created legalistic identity categories (e.g. “non-national” and “Irish-born child”), which they argue naturalize and reproduce the differences these

⁸ Zetter (2001) found that refugee identities, once *homogenized* and imposed through NGO processes in the South, are now *fragmented*, this time by governments in the North (Zetter 2007: 210).

categories imply. Difference itself has become the central and only way feminists write, talk about or relate with regard to migrant women (Gray 2004). If discursive identities reproduce “difference”, my aim is to explore interlocking powers that produce such representations and circulate them. So, I enacted intersectionality in the way it was intended— to address asylum as *structural group oppression*. As Mohanty (2013) and, Patil (2013) argue, we need material analyses of structural oppression more than ever in these post-race, post-feminist neoliberalized times when to speak about race, class and gender is difficult. I (re) turned to Collins’s (2000: 18) definition of intersectionality and the matrix of domination:

Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions ... In contrast, the matrix of domination refers to how these intersecting oppressions are actually organized.

Following data collection, and during the early stages of data analysis, I mapped the matrix of domination (Table 3, below) that I will develop in this thesis to illustrate how powers intersect to create systems of oppression as experienced by a group of women in Irish asylum. Collins identifies four domains of power: *structural*, *disciplinary*, *hegemonic*, and *interpersonal*, which reappear across different forms of oppression regardless of which particular intersections are involved. In the *structural* domain, global structural powers (UN Refugee convention, International human rights laws, EU directives) intersect with national migration regimes and state agencies (e.g. RIA and DP, INIS police, civil service agencies) to organise oppression. Immigration policy, as Sassen (2005) avers, is (wrongly) seen as state-controlled and autonomous from globalized economic powers. My map acknowledges a *transnational* power matrix in asylum and circulation of hegemonic representations of black women (see

Introduction), but focus on how they operate at the national/local level. Collins (2000: 278) considers transformations at this level as grudging, partial and the slowest to change; wide-scale social movements, war and revolution are what transform them, not gradual reform.⁹ The *disciplinary* domain “manage oppression” and control populations through bureaucracy and surveillance (ibid. p280) at the *meso/national* level (such as NGOs, health and welfare workers, the academy). I then collated and mapped the main themes and concerns the women themselves raised onto the matrix, and conducted a “situational analysis” (Clarke 2003) to identify *the main agents and organisations* that intersect to dominate the everyday spaces of asylum.

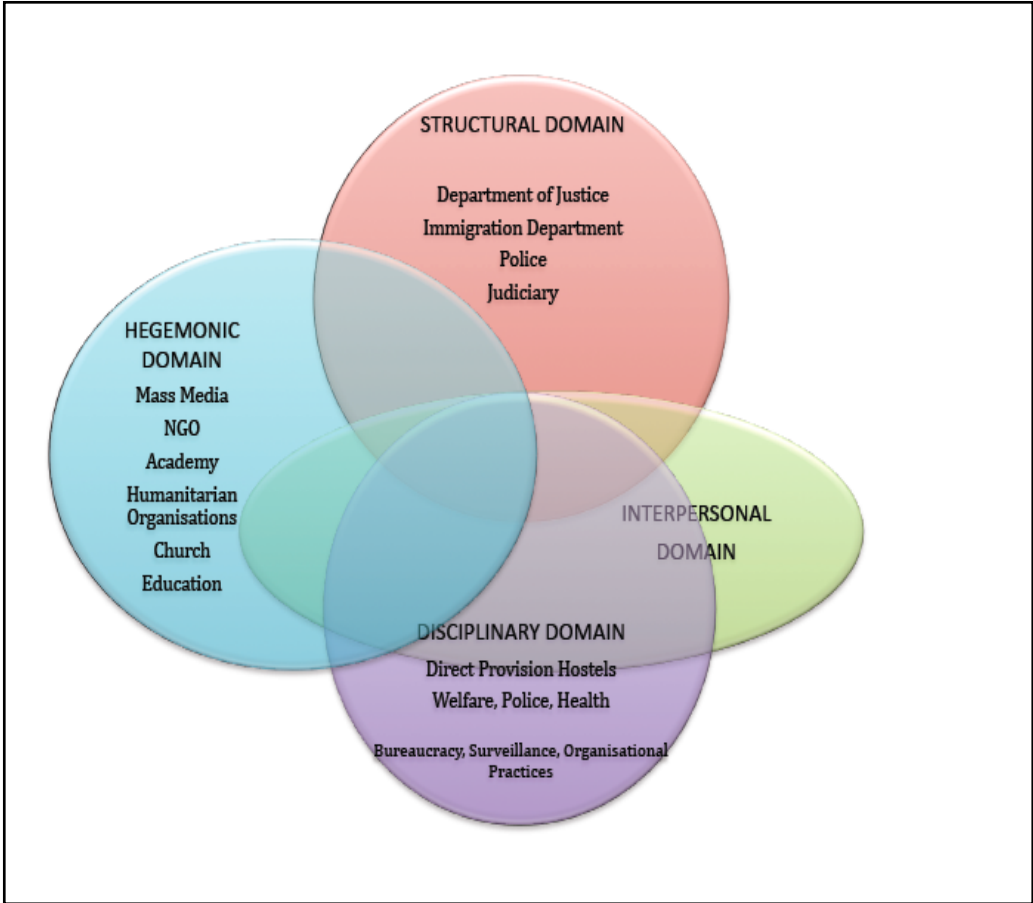
The *hegemonic* domain vividly emerged as a critical site that ‘shapes consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies’ (Collins 2000: 285). Here, organizations and agents that produce and re-produce discourses (policy makers, NGOs, academics, feminists and activists) are key sites where *hegemonic* power flows through the global/national /local. Not quite political, not quite cultural “humanitarian circuits” circulate ideologies, beliefs, values and affects through their “representational products”—campaign materials, media articles and a widely accessible knowledge and information base. Third world women are the “currency” in many of these “transnational economies of representation” (Fernandes 2013: 61) that produce and circulate discursive identities in asylum. Also critical is the intersection between this domain and *disciplinary* power—here, ideology/culture justify the bureaucracy and surveillance that manages/organises structural power.¹⁰ Everyday practices within this intersection impact greatly on the *interpersonal* domain, where,

⁹ For example, in the US context, the civil war preceded the abolition of slavery.

¹⁰ See Appendix B (p.317) for a detailed tabulation of actors and actants in each domain.

for Collins, the women’s resistance is most possible. My data analyses in chapters Four and Five are focused at these intersections.

Table 1: Matrix of Domination in Irish Asylum



Discursive identification categories, as they circulate, become conflated through their *proximity* (Ahmed 2000). In the UK, the term “asylum seeker” or “refugee” is increasingly conflated with “immigrant” (Baker et al. 2010), removing important differences *between* others and giving rise to a form of ‘xeno-racism’ (Sivanandum 2001; Fekete 2001). Managed migration policies in Europe and First World nations permit entry for Third World skilled labour, while demonizing and denying entry for people displaced as refugees. This type of racism does not specifically discriminate along colour lines, but poverty lines. When some “others” are objects of mistrust and suspicion, all “Third-World looking ethnics “ (Hage 1998: 116) become suspect in

terms of economic and social security and cohesion. Meanings also become metonymic—a thing is called by the name of something associated in meaning, not by its own name.¹¹ In Ireland, Loyal (2003: 90) contends that the word “immigrant” has come ‘to stand for black and minority Groups ... and more recently [for] refugees’. Breen et al. (2006) further verify that the media conflated “asylum seekers” with “refugees” and also with people who had overstayed their visas, while (Haynes et al. 2009) confirm that media discourses negatively influenced Irish public’s attitudes to immigrants.

My matrix model draws focus not on categories themselves, but the intersecting power of migration regimes, NGO organisations and projects, systems of surveillance, and legal machinery that label and produce the women’s extant “public identity” (for example, as “African women” or asylum-seekers”). In Chapter Five, I explore the subjective, interpersonal spaces where the women resist, negotiate and navigate these “forced” identities.

Critique 2: Whitening Black feminist theories and women of colour

A second criticism of the enactment of intersectionality is weak/rhetorical engagement, and/or its “metatheorization” to “disappear” black women and/or whiten their theories. In the US, Alexander-Floyd (2012) charges McCall (2005) with citing black scholars in her widely read article, without deep enough engagement with their work to avoid *direct contradictions* of their core tenants and caveats—that race, class and sex cannot be severed apart. She detects a “bait and switch” strategy that *mentions, but erases and decentres* the black woman subject and race, thereby appropriating

¹¹ An example is the Orientalist metonymic linking of “Muslim” as terrorist (Puar 2007), which is implicit in one Muslim/Christian interfaith project I observed (see pp.180-181)

black women and their theories that render Black feminism “post”. In Europe, Bilge (2013) has made an analogous charge, regarding the academic exercise of “metatheoretical contemplation” and “whitening” intersectionality in recent German conferences. Two related strategies that “undo” intersectionality she detects are: to claim intersectionality as “the brainchild of feminism” (white, mainstream feminism, not the feminists of colour who created it in direct opposition to it) and then attempt to “repackage” it by calling for a “broader genealogy” as Lykke (2010) does by naming a range of socialist feminist and White feminist scholars (e.g. Zillah Eisenstein, Donna Haraway, Iris Young and Rosi Braidotti) as ‘overlooked key contributors to intersectionality’ (Bilge 2013: 416). No overlooked *feminist of colour* were discovered, even those racialised scholars and activists in Germany who articulated intersectional thinking in the 1980s, long before its takeover by academic white feminists in 2005.¹² This “metatheorization” whitens intersectionality (ibid. p411), removes the racial location of Black feminists, and fosters a false history that, once published, repeated the misrepresentation. It is indeed a “grim irony” that

a tool elaborated by women of colour to confront the racism and heterosexism of White-dominated feminism, as well as the sexism and hetero- sexism of antiracist movements, becomes, in another time and place, a field of expertise overwhelmingly dominated by White disciplinary feminists who keep race and racialized women at bay (ibid. p418).

These debates echo earlier concerns about white feminist academia’s “race for theory”. As Christian (1988: 76) states, women of colour have not ‘rushed to create abstract theories’ but this does not mean they are not theorizing. They do so in more nuanced and complex ways that are from reflections of their own lives (ibid. p70) and

¹² The first book by Afro-German women, ‘Showing Our Colours’ (Schultz et al. 1992) was published in 1986 and translated in 1992, inspired by Audre Lorde’s visit. See also the documentary film Audre Lorde – The Berlin Years 1984 – 1992 (Dir. Dagmar Schultz), and Kraft (2014) for many other works.

refuse to “exalt” monolithic theories because they too easily become prescriptive and elitist (ibid. p74). Neoliberal knowledge production, professional pressures, reward structures and metatheoretical approaches can inadvertently displace and supplant previous knowledge in the current race for intersectional theory. ‘Critics assume that their task is to critique intersectionality, not to foster *intersectionality’s ability to critique subordination* (Tomlinson 2013: 996, *italics in original*). Theory becomes “trafficked” as a commodity and detached from its ‘activist moorings and social justice commitments’ (Mohanty 2013: 972). Black women’s theorizing is misrecognized at times, by judging experience as not-theory, as Lewis (2009) found at a recent conference:

anything that emerged from within the structural experience of marginalised women (in this case African American and other US women of colour) was always already incapable of being understood as theory, always only a category describing experience.
(Lewis 2009: 5)

I raise the critique of “metatheoretical contemplation” because it appears in Mullally’s (2009) contribution to an international volume that “tests” the ability of intersectionality to support politico/legal engagement to improve migrant women’s lives in Ireland.¹³ Mullally finds intersectionality useful as a tool that revealed ‘the ways in which migrant women were positioned, reduced and essentialised in the citizenship debates of 2004’ (ibid. p252), exposed the deep structural injustices of the Irish State’s denial of migrant women’s reproductive autonomy, and turned ‘debates on reproductive rights on their head’ (p.251). Yet, the article concludes that

¹³ Intersectionality is understood in Mullally’s paper as axial, overlapping, categories and adopts an “additive” approach: ‘migrant women, crossing borders are potentially at the intersections of many overlapping axes of discrimination’. It also “detachs” race and gender as distinct categories (‘neither the category gender or ‘race’ adequately capture the obstacles, the multiple forms of exclusions experienced’ (ibid. p252).

intersectional analysis failed *as a theory*, because it failed to provide resources that could

- propose legal and political reforms to challenge the normative underpinnings of border controls (p.257)
- build a feminist praxis on citizenship (p.266)
- move beyond explaining and describing albeit in more nuanced ways mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination (p.266).
- provide an ‘emancipatory feminist politics that challenges the enduring structural inequalities experienced by migrants and assist in bringing about systematic changes in the gendered regimes that regulate migration’ (p.266).

The central paradox (and a very useful one) is: How could intersectionality be seen to have “failed” when it delivered a rich and brilliant exposition of state control of migrant women’s reproductive bodies? In contrast to (Mullally’s liberal feminist reading, my Black Feminist reading points to the failure of decades of hegemonic white feminism to successfully challenge Irish patriarchal State control of women’s reproductive rights, migrant and otherwise, through legal reform and challenges.¹⁴ It is not a failure of intersectionality. Intersectionality *explains domination*. Its praxis is available when aligned with Black and Postcolonial feminisms, not liberal feminism (though it may achieve some of its aims). Mullally’s expectations (listed above) are best addressed by the question Mirza and Gunaratnam (2014), Bilge (2013) and Davis (2008) ask in different ways: *What is it we expect a theory to do?*

If intersectionality is taken for an abstracted, Utopian, catchall theory and method of liberation (as Western feminists might be inclined to do through discussions that simultaneously “hail and fail it”) it is removed from practice (Lewis: 2009: 2). Davis (2008) rightly finds intersectionality a theoretical *success* —it addresses the most

¹⁴ European states are required to admit refugees, but obstruct their entry through immigration policies; universal human rights are manipulated and reconfigured as the nation state invents new ways of justifying and enacting the detection, deterrence, surveillance, dispersal and deportation of asylum seekers.

central theoretical and normative concern of feminist scholarship— *the acknowledgement of difference*. Rather than settling the problems conclusively, a “successful” theory thrives on ambiguity and ‘generate analyses, critiques and ... opens up a political imaginary’ (Butler and Scott 1992, in Davis 2008: 78). However, it cannot end there. Mullally (2009) is right that the reproductive autonomy and agency enacted by migrant women *anything but* empowered their *human rights*, provoking instead a series of unfolding legal restrictions to their entry. This vivifies Alexander-Floyd’s (2012) contention: the point of intersectionality is to reveal the narrowness and *ineptitude of the law (and human rights)* in addressing the realities of Black women’s lives. It proves ‘all categories are indeterminate’ as are ‘the fictions of identity that they produce’ (Lewis 2013: 870).¹⁵ It is from this revelation that we must theorize, but not from the top-down, or the potential of intersectionality is undone. Moreover, it is undone differently in different matrices of power (Collins 2000). In this thesis, I aim to enact intersectionality as a *deconstructive theory* to ‘undermine essentialist and reified constructions of subjects’ (Yuval Davis and Kaptani 2008a: 10) and disentangle many knots in west-centric theories of identity.

Ireland, like other European states, follows neoliberal state policies of post-race interculturalism.¹⁶ Euphemistic terms such as “culture” and “diversity” replace and hide the structural and material effects of race and racism (Lentin 2009) and render ‘ideologies of interculturalism and integration actually ... racist, functioning to protect the operation of state racism (Lentin and McVeigh, 2006: 178). In the case of African women in asylum, already subalternized, it more deeply buries the effects of *race and*

¹⁵ I respond to this critique in greater depth in chapter Four (p. 249).

¹⁶ The darkest side of multiculturalism in settler colonies like Australia and Canada has been to wipe structural racism against Indigenous peoples and their knowledges from the frame entirely (See Smith 1999; Moreton-Robinson 2004, 2008; Grey 2003; Lawrence 2003; Razack 1997, 1998).

gender together on their lives, as racism is not gender-neutral but always a gendered phenomenon.¹⁷ A “post-race” feminism is a very real threat in Europe as race is “unspeakable” (Lentin 2009: 1) either through colour-blindness or white solipsism—thinking, imagining and speaking “as if whiteness described the world” (Rich 1979, in Spelman 1998: 116). Mainstreaming intersectionality sanitizes and depoliticizes it, weakening its critical potential (Carasthesis 2014). If compromised as it travels to Europe, appropriated to minimize race (“race is not relevant in Europe”), or if race and gender are separated as analytic categories, Black feminist theories also disappear and women of colour are left with no subject position from which to speak in feminism. This is what Black feminists have long laboured to transform (Davis 1981; hooks 1981; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981; Lorde 1984; Collins 2000; Anzaldúa 1987; Sandoval 2000; Crenshaw 1989; Yuval-Davis 2006; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Brah 1996).

To “name ourselves” amid the noise and traffic of neoliberal power/knowledge and complex social encounters, we must first examine the ground already laid and from there, enact intersectionality accordingly. What has already been assimilated (Ahmed 2000: 177)? Which representations of our identities have preceded us? Postcolonial theories of representations trouble the original double colonial violence of biopolitical identification and processes of signification, and show us how the black female body has been ripened for political co-option, feminist or otherwise, discussed next.

¹⁷ For example, Black women in slavery were constructed as having masculine traits and able to do hard labour in contrast to white women; colonial men in India were feminized in contrast to British men (Davis 1981, hooks 1982, Carby 1982; Mani 1987; Ware 1992; Brah 1992, 1996).

2.2 Postcolonial Feminism: Deconstructing Subaltern Spaces and Representations of the Other

If the black woman is traced in history what we see is how she is permitted to appear. We see glimpses of her as she is produced and created for the sustenance of the patriarchal colonial and now postcolonial discourse [...] *She appears and disappears as she is needed.*

Mirza 2009: 62 (*my emphasis*)

Irish women are located at a unique point of intersection —not only in their confounding status variably described as colonial, decolonizing and postcolonial, but in their history, one which with all its Celtic images of women and revolutionary constructions of a feminized national identity is unable to fully escape the oppression of colonial rhetoric.

Malloy 1998: 9

Spivak's (1988) canonical essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' remains central to my understanding of colonial representation and continues to invigorate feminist critiques of representation. Early subaltern studies and postcolonial theory addressing the subaltern woman's speech (not her voice)¹⁸ remains critical to reveal the complicity of Western hegemonic feminism in "doubly disappearing" subaltern women of colour. We still need to find ways to deconstruct the mind-set, philosophical bases and academic and representational practices of Western knowledge, as Spivak (1988: 306-307) contends:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears ... There is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak.

For her, simple repudiation is counter-productive if we lack vigilance of our own situational practices of reflexivity, and hence fails to interrupt essentialising and universalizing discourses (Spivak 1990: 11). This demand for "hyper-self reflexivity" (Kapoor 2004) is not easily achieved, but vital in any study of

¹⁸ Here I refer to Parry's (1997) charge that Spivak fails to recognize colonial women's agency. In my understanding, Spivak's article does not misrecognize agency but argues that this agency is not legible.

representational practices concerning Third World women. Intellectual practice becomes representational when ‘texting, textualising, a making into art, a making into an object to be understood’ (Spivak 1990: 1)—the maker becomes authoritative in knowledge production. For her, the primary task of postcolonial discourses is to deconstruct what counts as “knowledge”; to expose the specificities of political power and violence in creating “knowledge” about the “Other”; and unclothe those who authorize the production of such knowledge. The aim of postcolonial studies is to “re-world the world”, which Imperialism has “worlded” through the supposition that it was “un-inscribed territory” (Spivak 1990: 1). Today, the cartographic worlding of the past is achieved through *discursive regimes*—that is, when the same episteme (way of thinking or state of knowledge) appear across multiple texts, practices, institutions and sites (Foucault 1972, in Hall 1997: 44). The remedy is to ‘undo’ the subaltern spaces manufactured through epistemic domination, and to see these spaces as co-constitutive (i.e. both discursive and material); they trap the subaltern in ‘a position without identity ... where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognizable basis of action’ (Spivak 2005: 476). Rather than “giving voice”, the imperative of postcolonial theory is to work for the subaltern ‘against subalternity’ (Spivak 1992: 46) and dismantle conditions that create subaltern locations.

We need identities (and bodies) for politics and social mobility. Rather than do away with them, Postcolonial, Black and Third World feminist theories demand more nuanced and contextualised analyses that decipher and deconstruct universalizing and Eurocentric discourses of “womanhood” or “feminism” and global “sisterhood” that subalternize bodies and knowledges.¹⁹ For Spivak (1988), the subaltern “cannot speak”

¹⁹ This is a very different politics from unearthing *more* categories to describe identity, which additive/axial/categorical modes of intersectional analyses tend to do.

because in the speech act, a transaction between speaker and listener, the hegemonic listener does not hear them. They speak, but are silenced because their speech is illegible in dominant discourses (Dhawan 2007b: 279). To listen to silences, therefore, gives important clues to the subaltern's displacement (Chow 1993); however, in an era where identities of "others" are fragmented, re-signified and proliferated, and where "difference" precedes and defines identity,²⁰ Puar (2011) questions whether

the marginalized subject is still a viable site from which to produce politics...Subject X may be different in content, but shows up, time and again, the same in form (Puar 2011, np. citing Chow 2006)

I attempt to show *how this happens* by "undoing" meanings already sedimented in the space through preceding representations (Brah 1996; Ahmed 2000). This task of "learning to learn from below" (Spivak 2004: 546, 2006) requires a step-by-step questioning of situational practice. The unusual broader situation is that when African women entered Ireland, they entered a space in which postcolonial Irish women themselves have been subalternized and African identities deeply embedded through the "civilising mission" of the Church. This study will explore these processes in relation to the experiences of one particular group of women.

Limits of Irish Feminist Postcolonial Studies

Postcolonial perspectives, when they appear in Irish feminist studies, are mainly found in literary studies (for example, Coughlan 2004; Nolan 2007; Sullivan 2008; Malloy 1998). Only Coulter (1993), Ryan (1997) and Thapar-Björkert and Ryan (2002) explicitly align Irish Women's mass participation in nationalist struggles of decolonization with those of Third World colonial sites such as Egypt, Algeria and India.

²⁰ NGO led "women's empowerment" projects under the banner of interculturalism fall into this crack, as I illustrate in Chapter Four.

In the main, scholarship has theorized at the gender/nationalism intersection to thoroughly critique the Irish nation-building project as gendered and exclusionary; one that constitutionally constructed Irish women as “Virtuous Mothers and Dutiful Wives” (Valiulis 2008).²¹ The second wave of Irish feminism in the 1970s shattered those essentialist notions, as feminist scholars re-claimed Irish women’s movement as revolutionaries, reformers and activists involved in suffrage, armed conflict in Northern Ireland in the Anglo-Irish war (Connolly 2003; Connolly and O’Toole 2005). In the 1970s and 1980s, vociferous demands were made for reproductive autonomy along with critiques of the sexual division of labour and patriarchal control. The punishment of pregnant women’s bodies through the abortion issue is extensively critiqued in the Irish feminist literature (Smyth, A. 1993, 1992, 1995; Smyth, L. 2005). In Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church historically controlled institutional state apparatuses such as health, education and social welfare, and continues to do so in contemporary Ireland (Bacik 2004, 2013).

However, Connolly (2005) forcefully argues that this significant corpus has been subalternized within Irish Postcolonial Studies and History (see also Nolan 2007). Confronting the androcentricity of Irish postcolonial studies, its submersion in Irish Studies, and its sanctioned ignorance of Irish feminism’s transcendence of nationalism in the 1990s, she contends that Irish women:

are mentioned in individual texts and volumes [but] poor scholarship (such as no evidence or inaccurate use of sources when women are referred to) and essentialism are often the outcome [...] Analytic certainty about Irish women’s lives has frequently been arrived at without any reference to their diverse, often

²¹ See also McAvoy (2004, 2013), Cullen-Owens (2005); Hayes and Urquhart (2004); Ryan and Ward (2004); Smyth, A. (1988,1993); O’Connor (1998); Valiulis and O’Dowd (1997); Ward (1995, 1983).

conflicting, voices and agency. Of equal note is a tendency to essentialise or totalise all Irish women as a group [as] culturally and socially backward, effectively overwhelmed by Catholicism and clerics.

(Connolly 2004: 149)

Re-visiting Ireland's unique and ambiguous status in colonialism²² *vis a vis* the omission of women's texts is crucial to understanding how race and gender politics were shaped in Irish postcoloniality. Garner (2007a, b; 2008) avoids the methodological nationalism and reliance on the gender/nation intersection in many feminist studies, and takes a transnational (intersectional) view. By centralizing race/gender in relation to capital and colonialism, he interposes *colonial Ireland* (not Enlightenment and/or the New World) as the crucible of both colonization and "race" as a political category. Here, those "unproductive" for capital were relegated to the bottom rungs and this served as prototype for plantation and settler colonization in the New World. Filling this 'colossal disciplinary gap in both Irish and international scholarship on race and coloniality' (2009: 41), Garner reveals the tight link between race, gender and capital in this era. As Spivak (1999: 274) avers, subalternization is less a matter of 'female participation in insurgency' (which the gender/nationalism literature focuses on), nor the 'ground rules of the sexual division of labour' (which women/globalization literature covers). There is "evidence" for both; for her, it is that 'both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant'.

A missing link in the feminist postcolonial and asylum/migration literature is, I suggest, the avowal of the links between (white) patriarchal power and *capital*. Gendered racialisation was instrumental for colonial capitalism. This domination not

²² This is an emerging theme in the sociological literature on racism (Garner 2007a,b, 2009), race and education (Kitchin 2013), and cultural geography (Linehan 2014).

only objectified women's bodies, but used their labour (sexual and economic) to "feed" the colonial machine, a pattern that remains continuous in postcolonial nationalism and development in Africa (Mama 2005). We too easily forget that patriarchal power in decolonization was white, and not always concerned with female empowerment or the labouring subaltern, but propelled by class and capitalist interests (Patil 2009). White women in the colonies were differently gender-oppressed through moral/sexual purity and domestication (Stoler 1989, 1991, 2000; Mc Clintock 1995), even if privileged through race/class. Yes, feminist scholarship exposed the Irish Nationalist patriarchal domination of women by privileging gender, but we cannot easily see the *whiteness/race* of this patriarchy and its links with capitalism. Said differently, Irish "anti-colonialism" did not automatically mean anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism or anti-racism, as it might have done in Third World revolutions, but quite the contrary.²³ Ireland asserted its 'whiteness ... in solidarity with other white-ruled dominions including Canada, Australia and New Zealand' (Mac Éinrí 2006: 5) and had capitalist interests. These colonial continuities shape state, public and organisations attitudes and interactions with black women in asylum.²⁴ Ireland's alignment with white transnational capital is rarely critiqued in the asylum/migration literature (apart from Lentin's and Gray's work) and totally absent in the NGO literature, if not actively disavowed.²⁵ This is possibly a result of male texts dominating postcolonial studies, and textual/cultural deconstructions being privileged at the expense of material

²³ See Rolston and Shannon (2004), Fanning (2002), Mac an Ghaill (2002); Lentin and Lentin (2007); Lentin and Mc Veigh (2006); Tannam (2006).

²⁴ I note that patriarchal capitalism impinges on white Irish women also, awarding class privilege to some while penalising others. For Irish feminism to be more critically aware of the class/race privileges of white femaleness would be one point of solidarity with anti-capitalist, anti-racist critiques of women of colour. Though outside the scope of this thesis, this would be an important area for future research.

²⁵ The Immigrant Council of Ireland disingenuously proclaims a "bilateral" movement of trade and people between Ireland and Africa, and states that Ireland "never went to conquer or colonise"(see press release 2012, available at <https://www.facebook.com/ImmigrantCouncilOfIreland/posts/>).

analyses (Parry 1997; Chrisman 2003), which has skewed asylum/refugee studies accordingly (Farrier 2013). This, in my understanding, is why intersectional and postcolonial analyses refuse to separate race/gender/class in analyses.

If we bring them together, we see gender and race as ideologies that force race/gender/class identity locations, to serve white patriarchal capital. I attempt to bring them together in this thesis and look at the political, material and the cultural performances of race/class/gender ideologies in this context of Irish asylum. By “material” I refer to capital in a Marxist sense, as well as the material body—both have been difficult to bring into intersectional analyses. What connects them, I believe is the labour black female bodies do, as they do asylum, which I trace in different spaces of asylum (Chapter Five).²⁶

2.3 Postcolonial Encounters: Embodied, Affective, And Performative

If, as I discussed earlier, feminist energy is directed towards UN and state-led agendas, and funding priorities place pressures to publish and come up with something “new”, feminist research and activism moves *away* from bottom-up theories that women of colour find necessary and *back into* the arms of the master and his tools (Lorde 1984). How then, may we find ways to more usefully inform feminist political strategies that make space for women of colour to lead their own way towards their futures? This is a question that Lentin and Moreo (2012) ask, and an answer Mullally (2009) also seeks. One route, I contend, is to embrace Black feminist “theory in the

²⁶ I examine the bodies produced and their labour in spaces like the DP centres, and the courtroom, which is a relatively unexamined racist, patriarchal space (Razack 1998; Oxford 2005; Simm 2005; Macklin 1995, 1999, 2009).

flesh”, theory born ‘out of necessity’ (Moraga 1981: 23) aimed at ‘survival and more, and allows practitioners to live with faith, hope and moral vision despite all else’ (Sandoval 2000: 7). The Irish feminist literature has brilliantly identified how the State and media scripted African women’s bodies; I build on the literature, but take a different route in this thesis to ask: Where to now? What next? My aim in this thesis is to go further to ask: If these bodies speak for themselves, how might they inform feminist praxis?

Ahmed’s (2000) encounters methodology in combination with Collin’s (2000) articulation of interlocking powers best address these questions. Encounters methodology settles many criticisms of postcolonial theory²⁷ and contentious debates on intersectionality. Rectifying Pratt’s (1992) “contact zones”, Ahmed’s (2000: 12) theorization does not assume a linear distance-to-proximity; in contrast, ‘colonial encounters involve, at one and the same time, social and spatial relations of distance and proximity’. It honours its genealogy in Black feminist thought, and deconstructs the binaries between margin/centre, self /other, past/future, distance/proximity binaries, and allows us to talk about race and gender outside of human rights discourse. Understanding the body as a signifier of difference (1999: 101), constructions and re-constructions are placed in *reference to one other at the moment of encounter*, removing the fixity of intersecting locations or essentialised identities. Ahmed (2000, 2002b: 558) theorizes difference as a co-constitutive, intersectional space of “becoming”, which best suits work that seeks to account for current conditions of “hyper-diverse” (Vertovec 2007) societies in the West, where “other others” (Trinh

27 Parry (1997:18) contends that the term “postcolonial” has overshadowed anti-colonial movements from the South, which was a decolonization project to find alternatives to dominant western values, and that concepts such as “hybridity” have become romanticized. Ahmad (1992) has been critical of the obsession of postcolonial theory with cultural/literary criticism. Chrisman (1994) finds it detaches the material and political. Lazurus (1993) argues that it disavows the differences between imperialist and anti-imperialist nationalist struggles (in Parry 1997: 18).

2011) are hypervisible (Mizra 2009) and “disappeared” at the same time (Bilge 2013). It attends to performativity and non-performativity both. While Collins (2000) matrix of domination usefully identifies the main agents and organizations of concern to them, bringing it together with “encounters” methodology broadened my thinking to include spaces, powers and intersubjective affective exchanges within those spaces that bear on processes of identification and representation in terms of the women’s main concerns, as my analyses in Chapters Four and Five detail.

2.4 Theoretical Framework: Black female bodies as South-in-North *Bodyborders*

In this chapter, I developed an intersectional conceptual framework of asylum as an *embodied, affective postcolonial encounter* (Ahmed 2000) to encompass multiple modes and registers that link identities and representation. Historical representations of (distant) black female bodies have preceded the material arrival of African women in Ireland, and take effect in the present proximal encounter—here, dualisms between North and South, self and other, past and present, collide and are in flux. I re-conceptualize a dedicated group of African women seeking asylum as occupying a South-in-North location, and their material bodies “reincarnate the ban”, as Farrier (2013) puts it. Forced to materialize or incarnate specific identity categories they perform as *bodyborders*—they circulate (and are circulated) through the “everyday exceptional” spaces of asylum, and used to reanimate crisis, to justify a state of emergency. I trace colonial continuities between the “uses” of Black female bodies as establishing Western Imperialism (Mc Clintock 1995; Stoler 1998; Newman 1999; Sharpley-Whiting 1999; Lugones 2003), and their contemporary “uses” to do the “dirty work” of boundary maintenance (Crowley 1999 in Yuval-Davis 2006: 204).

The construction of race and gender identities and the performativity of figurative representations are often ignored in asylum and migration studies as Phillips, from the Australian context, bemoans:

All too frequently [academic and political speech] it reproduces banal clichés about men, women and children and power, and seems uncertain about its purpose or underlying political basis. Where other strands of contemporary feminist analysis employ a post-structuralist understanding of gender and power, research on gender and migration often falls back, implicitly, on uncritical notions of universal patriarchy and female oppression.

(Phillips 2013: 1)

In this thesis, my concern is to show how different domains of power operate through such constructions. Contemporary Irish media and policy discourses have paid incommensurate attention to African women's bodies and sexuality, for example, childbearing (Luibhéid 2004), campaigns on FGM (AkiDwA 2014) and sex trafficking (Immigrant Council of Ireland 2011).²⁸ These make them re-appear as fetish objects (Ifekwunigwe 2004; Tyler 2006; Ponzanesi 2005), hypervisible in some ways but invisible in others. Migrant activism in Ireland is limited by integrationist approaches that can appropriate or "disappear" their intellectual labour, agency and political activism through weak pro-migrant NGO activism and appropriation of self-representation (Ejorh 2011, Iroh 2010; Feldman et al. 2008; Lentin and Moreo 2012). Hence, I privileged participatory action methodology (discussed in the next chapter) to dismantle colonising spaces and foster self-representation.

My study does not ask the participants who they are or why and how they came to Ireland, but "What are the obstacles that block their agency? What stalls self-

²⁸ The ICI was funded by the UN Global initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (GIFT) to provide Legal services to Migrant Women Victims of Sex Trafficking in Ireland.

representation? If, indeed, as Ahmed (2004) argues, it is an increase in circulation that increases the accumulation of affective value, then it is precisely the production and circulation of signs and objects, along with the practices they incur that must be analysed. Without this, the “economic” dimension of the affective economy loses its theoretical significance, and leaves ‘untheorized the relationship between affective economies and the transnational economies of cultural production’ (Fernandes 2013: 16). In this thesis, my data analyses in chapters Four and Five attempt to tease out technologies and practices of representation that halt the women in one context from “speaking back” and how their burden of “representational labour” has uses for the state. This can tell us what work their bodies (real and represented) do, in asylum and who benefits.²⁹ I work back and forth from the global/national/local to unravel the interconnections between the performative, embodied and affective elements of broader regimes of representations that can block self-representation in the local context.

The debates outlined above discussed in detail a range of theoretical perspectives and contentious issues which informed the theoretical framework I applied to a group of African women (and some men) “On Their Way” through one context of Irish asylum. The steps I took to “think through” theory, gather, and analyse the empirical data are summarised below.

²⁹ Fernandes (2013) refers to films, music, literary texts and so on as “translational cultural products” which I propose are analogous with NGO, feminist and political discourses, as they breed equivalent “transnational” effects.

1. INTERSECTIONALITY

Contrary to a categorical approach, I adopt Collins' (1998: 207) articulation of intersectionality as 'a group-based theory [used] to attack structural power differentials'. I use it as a *deconstructive* tool (Yuval Davis et al. 2008 a: 12-13) by mapping an Irish matrix of domination (Collins 2000) schema to decipher and trace the interlocking *powers* that dictate and organize spaces of domination in asylum. Thus, I enhance the model to show how these powers are *performative of* identity, affects, bodies and spaces (Chapters Three and Five)

2. CRITICAL INTERSECTING SPACES

Using the matrix, I located the hegemonic/disciplinary power intersection as most critical in the women's everyday lives. I gathered the primary data in these spaces and in analysis ask: Which NGOs produce/ reproduce photographs, life-stories, and testimonies of women of colour? In which spaces? Through which practices? Which categories and identities are ascribed/forced/denied? Working outwards, I identify specific circuits (e.g. humanitarian, feminist, UN, NGOs) that produce and circulate African female bodies in global and space (Chapter One), and examine their re-colonizing impact on the women as they participate in local NGO projects and campaigns (Chapter Four).

3: BODIES (as "evidence")

I cast the black female bodies of the group of women in the study as sites of concrete struggle that "give evidence" (Perera 2006). I enhance Butler's (1990, 1993) theories of performativity with Ahmed's (2000) theories of postcolonial encounter to extricate how immigration categorization interpellates subjects, force identities but also *produce*

bodies. Bodies and identities, whether embodied (real people) or representative (figurative, imaged, imagined) are re-made at the moment of “re-cognition” through already assimilated stereotypes (Ahmed 2000) which is an *affective* process. In Chapter Five I show how emotions of hate, fear and grief in this context

do things and work to align individuals with collectives — or bodily space with social space ... how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective.

(Ahmed 2004: 26-29).

By studying the *bodies and affects* asylum regimes produce, I reveal how they are they “put to work”.

4. CONJUNCTURAL READINGS OF REPRESENTATIONAL DISCOURSE

Identificatory processes are intersubjective; representations foster /disallow different sorts of “selving” and othering, which accumulate in value through their reiteration. As the figures of women on colour are circulated *simultaneoulsy* in an assemblage of humanitarian, feminist, refugee, security, integration, trafficking representations, my strategy is to read various discourses against each other. As Loomba (1993: 209) avers, ‘the astounding circularity of language, arguments and even images’ requires analyses that examine how the colonial past shapes power in contemporary society ‘in the context of the specific cultural moments and inter-cultural tensions in which they are produced’. I trace some metonymic and intertextual effects and emotions circulated through representations of African women in the local context (Chapters 4 and 5), how these operate, but also how they are resisted and challenged in the theatre space, where conditions for self-representation have been “decolonized” (Chapter Six).

5. EMBODIED DATA: Images, actions, speech, texts, practices that speak back.

Data is gathered from a range of expressive modes to capture embodied, affective accounts of asylum framed in participants own terms, and within (relatively) safe, decolonized research conditions. This allows the data to “speak back” to the intertextual effects of visibility, texts and affects in political, media and humanitarian discourses that have represented them in various forms.

By juxtaposing cultural representations with the material bodies they represent, and listening to these bodies as they “speak”, it becomes clearer how the *figure* of the black female has been severed from her body and made to “work” through representation. When analysis refuses to detach, but tightens the intersectional triad of race/gender/class, we can see the “representational labour” black female bodies do in this context, to serve capital. Postcolonial asylum “from below”, in this context of Irish asylum, quashes the putative notion of asylum as “humanitarian”. Instead, it is alternarrated as a symptom and product of transnationalized neocolonial capitalism, with people in asylum providing new forms of “labour” that capital opportunistically feeds on.

These understandings are compacted in the naming of the project by Sanle as “On Our Way”, which puts to bed any notion of final arrival; asylum journeys (and indeed, that of the woman of colour in whiteness) is a perpetual *movement* through several spaces and gendered/raced borders and terrains, journeys that are never completed, never safe.

It's not easy for a woman to experience domestic violence, running and coming where you think that you can get help, on your way, and again men ... again when you are on your way make you suffer rape you and ... you come ... they give you house ... and again your experience with a bad [racist male] neighbour make you suffer again ... you are not free in your house ... because the neighbour doesn't like you... doesn't like your children when you go out you don't know what is going on.

(OOW Sanle, Tr 2b: 6-9)

Hesitations

Black feminist epistemology and black feminist researchers are highly uncommon in the Irish context. I worry that speaking back the whiteness of Irish (liberal/western) feminism might risk sabotaging my ambition to enhance feminist solidarity across race, but also risk personal and professional ambitions by talking about race at all (Lentin 2007; Lewis's 2013:884). For those who embody racial differences, to speak out individually³⁰ is difficult (Ahmed 2009) and decidedly safer from the collective standpoint. This led to another worry—was I too afraid to simply speak for myself? Was I myself speaking through others? This dilemma was somewhat resolved through Lorde's (1978: 31) guidance:

[W]hen we speak, we are afraid our words will not be heard nor welcomed, but when we are silent we are still afraid. So it is better to speak remembering we were never meant to survive.

We survive longer and go further in coalitions (Collins 2000: 38).³¹ Representing others is always vexatious and always risks essentialism, whether speaking as, speaking for or speaking through (Spivak 1990; Alcoff 1991; Chow 1993; Najmabadi 1997).³² I found myself constantly weighing these risks against my desire to fight the erosion of anti-racism through interculturalism. Black women's issues cannot be unproblematically "added" onto white feminism without engagement with theory and perspectives of racialised women themselves. It is not enough to think of "race" as

³⁰ I was penalized for this in my Family Law case (rather than protected/accommodated). Through independent research, I found many parenting studies were androcentric and culturally/gender insensitive and had been debunked, but on requesting a court psychologist attuned to gender/culture issues, I was accused of being "racist" against Irish people. (See Mother's Rights and Legal Research database at www.the.lizlibrary.org),

³¹ Black women develop dialogues from a "commitment to principled coalitions, based not upon expediency, but upon our actual need for each other" (Smith 1983 in Collins 2000: 38) and the recognition that groups can neither define themselves in isolation nor resist social injustice on their own (ibid. p247).

³² Invited to speak "as" a "Muslim woman" on Postcolonial studies, Najmabadi traced a double misrecognition—she is neither Muslim (though Iranian) nor a Postcolonial Theorist (though a non-White/Western feminist); this illustrates how existing categories are hybridized and new categories produced through demands to "speak as".

meaningful only to racially minoritized women—this perpetuates the notion that whiteness is not “race”, and that race can be detached from gender and class.

However, as Dhawan (2007: 281, through Spivak) explains, postcolonial feminists “intimately inhabit” the very structures she wishes to critique, and stand at a dangerous ‘crossroads between the responsibility of representation and “permission to narrate”. The “licence/honour” of being the voice of the “silenced” is a double-bind that can only be attended to through the politics of her praxis—to persistently interrogate her ‘complicity in the re-colonizing of “counter-spaces”’ (ibid.).

Like Lewis (2013: 884), I attempt to critique white feminism from my situated gaze, without being seen in academic circles as “too emotional” or “being re-inscribed as knowing only about race”.³³ As a researcher of colour working with other women of colour in a First World space, *all of us are* under the constant gaze of whiteness (Yancy 2008). Furthermore, the philosophical paradigms underlying social research itself subject Black feminist theory and methodology to European epistemic domination (Dhawan 2007b: 35). In this thesis, my case is not the same as, for example, a white, middle class researcher studying women of colour. A whole different set of privileges and penalties result from my social location that sometime aids and sometimes stalls progress (see Chapter Three).

My second concern is how well Black feminist theory might ‘travel’ in the Irish context; however, that Irish feminist analyses of nationalism successfully integrated Black and Third World feminist theory (Jayawardena 1986; Yuval-Davis 1997) promises a fertile ground for the introduction of Black and Postcolonial feminist epistemology, particularly at the site of asylum. New frameworks must be devised that

³³ See the special issue on emotions and feminist researchers by Sylvester (2011); Saedi and Trucote (2011) and Parashar (2011) which untangle these issues.

can include the heterogeneous ethnicities of the population within a “multi-ethnic Irish identity” (Sinha 1998; Lentin 2004, 2007; Luibhéid 2004). This thesis attempts to carve what Najmabadi (1997: 67) calls “unavailable intersections” — speaking spaces and identities outside pre-conceived frames that cage women of colour. The enactment of my aims requires ethical research engagement with women who are racialised, marginalized, and come from a population that is over-researched by white researchers. This task demands critical methodological choices that traditional research practices may not offer. The next chapter will outline how theoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter informed my methodological design, its enactment, and choices of methods to gather and analyse data.

3. Research Methodology and Design

The feminist research ethic is a commitment to inquire about how we inquire.

Ackerly and True 2009: 695

My fieldwork was conducted in a small Irish city between April 2011 and August 2012. I gained access to the field through two local NGOs offering legal advice, advocacy, training¹ and befriending to people in asylum. Following an exploratory phase of three months— to orientate myself and recruit participants—I conducted two separate projects to gather my empirical data. The first, *Borders, Barriers, Bridges* (BBB) was a structured program of drama and art-based creative/expressive activities held over six three-hour weekly sessions with seven women and three men participating. The second longer project, *On Our Way* (OOW), was a drama-based participatory action research project (PAR) run over twelve months between September 2011 and August 2012, in collaboration with five women from different African countries. Analysis and writing up took place between January 2013 and October 2015.²

The majority of data in this thesis was gathered from OOW, through extensive discussions, meetings, rehearsals, performances and individual interviews, though I also draw from BBB. Through sustained engagement with the women and immersion in the asylum community, I accumulated critical insights and insider information that richly enhanced the data. Contact time amounted to ten or twelve hours per week,

¹ Courses were aimed to develop leadership and facilitate integration. Internet access and opportunities to socialize and volunteer for the organisations were also available to people in asylum.

² Please refer to Table 3, p.125 for demographic details.

sometimes more. Formal *group* sessions produced compelling data about *collective* concerns and powerful *affective* exchanges, while *individual* meetings (formal and informal) accessed in-depth, sensitive and intimate data. For Collins (1987) standpoint methodology is a group perspective—we cannot gather individual data but then consider the group a collection of individuals. In this case, the individual was not a proxy for the group, but differences *between* women revealed their unique issues and distinct facets of power/knowledge at various stages of the asylum process that overall enrich understanding about how African women are systematically targeted as a group. If standpoint is a collective frame, then heterogeneous biographies (instructively) en flesh it.

In this chapter, I first discuss feminist research methodology and *epistemologies of the oppressed* (Sandoval 2000, Collins 2000), then Participatory Action Research and arts-based methods used within that framework. I conceptualize “participation” as a dialogical encounter of *call-and-response* (Collins 2000: 261) and re-articulate my researcher location and positionality as *mestiza consciousness* (Anzaldúa 1987: 77-83). I detail each project, outline access, recruitment, and fieldwork encounters in NGOs spaces. I then explicate my analytical procedures, and finally discuss strategies for writing, representing and disseminating findings.

3.1 Feminist Research Methodology

Of the four major paradigms associated with academic research—post-positivist, constructivist, transformative and pragmatic (Plano Clark and Creswell 2008), this work is underpinned by a transformative (feminist) paradigm based on a critical feminist methodology grounded in Black Feminist standpoint epistemology. *Epistemology* is the fundamental ground on which a feminist methodology is built; it

defines how we know and what is to be known (Stanley and Wise 1993: 189).

Methodology is a theory of how research should proceed and forms a bridge between epistemology and *methods*—how data or evidence is gathered or constructed (Harding 1987; Stanley and Wise 1990; Fonow and Cook 2005; Hesse-Biber 2007). A spectrum of feminist epistemological positions exist in an abstract sense; in practice, there is no *a priori* or correct one but a combination of plausible and sensible elements of a number of positions to fit particular projects and types of knowledges sought. Feminist methodology is not a prescriptive set of tools or methods but a commitment to a set of research ethics and practices that attend to power during all stages of the research process (Ackerly and True 2010; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Byrne and Lentin 2000; Wolf 1996; Cancian 1992, 1993).

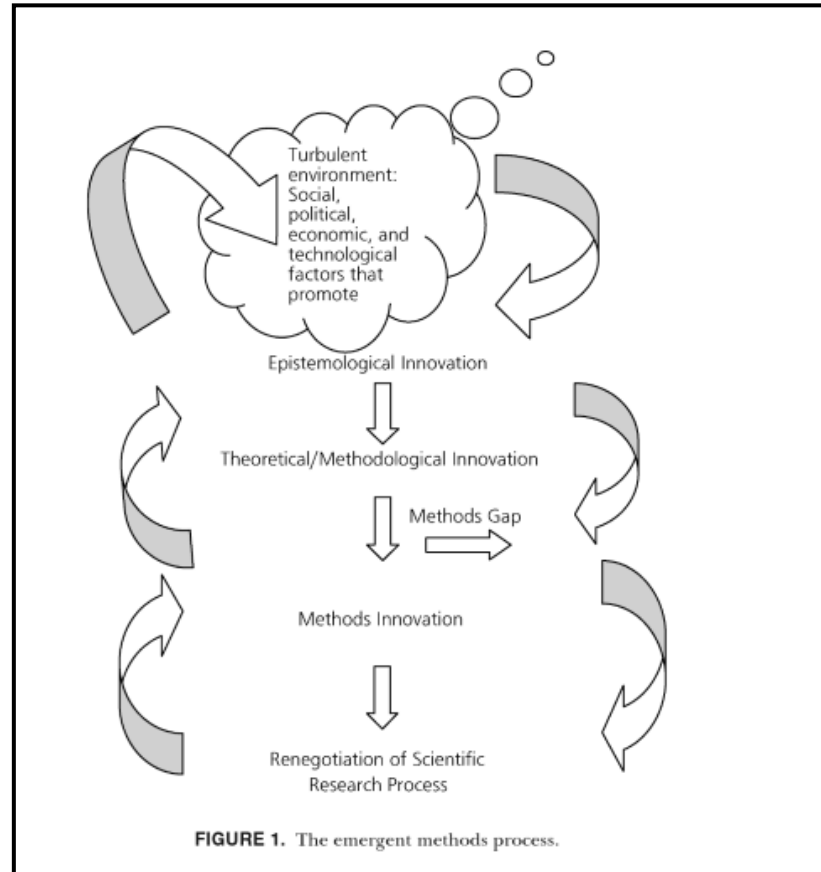
Second Wave academic feminism transformed androcentric, positivistic research paradigms but conceptualized and enacted *feminist consciousness* in ways that have limited and obstructed women of colour (Sandoval 2000: 52), making it “practically impossible” for new feminist paradigms to emerge (hooks 1984).³ Critical feminist research methodology encourages new lines of inquiry; the need to address gaps in both feminist *and* asylum research led to a choice of “emergent” methodological design (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2008, see Table 2)⁴. I wanted to move beyond description, needs-based studies or legal approaches and respond instead to the dearth of transformative self-representative studies (Lentin and Moreo 2012, Feldman 2008 et al.). For this over-researched, fetishized population, at complex South-in-North locations, studying inter-relationships between identity and representation “forced”

³ For example, Jaggar’s (1983) typology confined feminism into Liberal, Marxist, radical/cultural and socialist advanced which reproduces Anglo-European cultural imperialism.

⁴ Emergent methodologies stress the inter-dependency of epistemology and methods and invite multiple meanings and inter-paradigmatic contradictions. It suits researchers who intuitively feel they’re ‘*onto something*’ that traditional methods cannot reach or represent; methods innovation is needed as it typically falls behind epistemological innovation (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2008: 4-7).

innovation at each stage— design, sites, data production methods, analysis and representation of findings.

Table 2: The Emergent Methods Process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2008: 3)



Three key principles of refugee research are interdisciplinarity, bottom-up approaches, and the harmonizing of scholarship and advocacy (Voutira and Dona' 2007; O' Neill and Harindranath 2006; O' Neill 2010; O' Neill et al. 2010). *Ethno-mimesis* (combined ethnography and arts-based practice developed by O'Neill 2010: 22) and biographical data (Eastmond 2007, 2011; Cederberg 2013) are germane for eliciting subjugated knowledges of social complexities in forced displacement (O'Neill 2010, Yuval Davis & Kaptani 2008a, b). According to Farrier (2013:12), competing

legal, literary and ethnographic narratives are *forced onto* asylum seekers and erect divisions between discursive formations.⁵ To interpenetrate these divisions, we must cross intellectual, territorial and socio-political boundaries and “redraw lines of engagement”. I used arts-based tools to “decolonize” methods, in addition to traditional qualitative methods of observation, semi-structured interviews and discussion.

3.2 De-colonizing Feminist Epistemology for 21st Century Conditions

As a researcher of colour in rural Ireland examining identity with of a group of relatively newly arrived Third-world women in newly diversified white Ireland, I needed to navigate an uncharted web of complex race/class/gender locations. My methodology also needed to “bridge” the postmodern present, the legacies of traditional positivism/post-positivism, and the realities of neoliberal globalization (Denzin & Lincoln 2011: 15). According to St Pierre (2014: 3), qualitative social science research in Twenty-First Century conditions has returned to “neo-positivism” and employs conventional humanist qualitative methodologies but ignores well-established poststructural/postmodern critiques of the subject and power (by Foucault and Deleuze for example). Braidotti (2005: 171) also bemoans a resurgence of biological essentialism that “vampirises and consumes” difference, promoting ‘multiculturalism as a marketing strategy, while reiterating racialised stereotypes’. Furthermore, post-feminist discourse — claiming feminist is dead, outdated, unnecessary, and class-less (Mc Robbie 2009; Faludi 1991)—is replacing feminist activism with non-confrontational “gender mainstreaming” whilst promoting corporate, finance driven,

⁵ Discursive formations become evident when the episteme (state of knowledge) appears across multiple texts, practices, institutions and sites (Foucault 1972, in Hall 1997a: 44).

ethnocentric feminist practice as the norm (Mohanty 2003; True 2003). Women are ‘being disempowered through the very discourses of empowerment they are being offered as substitutes for feminism’ (McRobbie 2009: 49). Interlocking post-racist discourses of integration and diversity also clutter the scene (Lentin 2009, 2012; Ahmed 2007); in current “post post” conditions, radical anti-racist anti-capitalist feminist praxis is challenging, but crucial to counter the depoliticization of antiracist, women-of-colour and transnational feminist projects that attack systemic processes of violence and subordination (Mohanty 2013). Straddling these demands requires reflexive, experimental research which produces “messy, uncertain multi-voiced texts” and intertextual representations of data (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 30).

There is an “alarming” gap between theory and methods practice (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2008:10); this gap is evident in debates about intersectionality and white privilege aroused in contemporary academic feminism (see Chapter Two) but also in social activism and media.⁶ If epistemology is ‘the means by which competing knowledge claims are adjudicated and some rejected in favour of another/others’ (Stanley and Wise 1993:188), I propose that “undoing intersectionality”, white/androcentric/Western “equality” and “women’s human rights” discourses are all exemplary of epistemic violence. Those frames restrict full analyses of lived experiences of gendered/raced subjects. They disappear or misrecognize Black feminist theory, which impacts epistemology and methodology in *practice*. Human rights discourse is based on equality, and for Brown (1995), aspires to go beyond politics but is implicitly *anti*-political. Liberal formulations of “equality”, for Brown (1995: 153), connote a condition of *sameness*:

⁶ See Bilge (2013) for a critique of the absence of intersectionality in global movements such as Occupy and SlutWalk, and blogs (Maxwell 2011, Slutwalk NYC Website (<http://slutwalknyc.com/>)).

Humans share the same nature, the same rights, and the same terms of regard by state institutions ... [If] equality is cast as a matter of sameness, gender [and race] consistently emerge ... as a problem of difference, or simply as difference: there is human equality on the one hand and gender [and race] difference on the other.

Human rights proffer a solution of equality-as-sameness, but in practice, equality-as-sameness excludes women of colour, so *difference becomes the problem*. The opposite of equality is not inequality, but difference; liberal models of justice-as-equality don't care about ontological difference. Moreover, "equality" (as sameness) is the term that *maintains difference* for women and other others of liberal humanism (ibid. p153).

Equality is always already gendered —its *lack of gender* is a mark of its masculinity; in multiculturalism it *reduces* feminism to liberal discourse (Ahmed 2000: 109). Liberal individualistic forms of empowerment can be 'tactics and vehicles of governance and domination' that offer a type of protection for individuals that may 'trade' one form of subjection for another (Brown 2004: 459). This, I propose, is what happens to asylum seekers, which I illustrate in Chapter Five.

Methodology is a vital strategic site where epistemological 'apartheid of academic knowledge' (Sandoval 2000: 70) can be contested. By asking different questions, in safe conditions, different forms of data may be constructed that sketch routes to un-learn (Spivak 1990) what has already been assimilated (Ahmed 2000) as we 'take an inventory' of baggage (Anzaldúa 1987:82) carried about (and by) African women. To enact this, I used "strategic essentialism" (Spivak 1990, 1995), standpoint epistemology, and heeded the four attributes of Black feminist epistemology defined by Collins (2000: 263):

1. Concrete experience is used as a criterion of meaning, with the understanding that "experience" is discursively constructed through dominant ideological structures (see Scott 1999).
2. Meanings are constructed through dialogue, not adversarial debate.

3. There is no knowledge that has an objective existence apart from lived experience.
4. Ethics of care grounds research relationships, with no binary split of the intellect from emotion, but where 'emotion indicates that a speaker believes in the validity of the argument'.

Ahmed's (2000) "encounter" methodology most cogently accounts for recent paradigmatic shifts in epistemology—it "playfully world-travels" (Lugones 1990, Sylvester 1995)⁷ with intersectionality across the Atlantic, as it does with post-feminist, post-race and post-postmodern and post-structural critiques *without undoing* black feminist theory and knowledge *or disappearing embodied* women of colour.⁸

Researcher Positionality: Identity, location or "Mestiza consciousness"?

[T]he feminist-informed researcher's commitment to self-reflection is not merely a commitment to reflecting on his identity as a researcher but rather, to noticing and thinking through silences in epistemology, boundaries, and power dynamics (of the research process itself) from a range of theoretical perspectives as [s]he does his research.

(Ackerly and True 2009: 695)

A thrice-removed Sri Lankan, I hold dual Australian and British citizenship and moved from London to Ireland in 2001 as a "free and legal" migrant. I bring to this work an array of positive and negative experiences and insights into transnational migration, racialisation, in/exclusion, belonging/non-belonging. On my way, my "identity" has been ascribed and chosen, negotiated and forced, avowed and disavowed. Various social policies have melted-in-a pot, tolerated, embraced, celebrated or diversified my difference. As a "blow in" to Twenty-First Century

⁷ That is to say, adopts a loving and open perception to change when engaging with women of colour and disloyal to those who "ignore, render invisible, ostracize, stereotype" us (Lugones 1990: 393). See also pages 125 and 276 of the thesis.

⁸ Poststructural and postmodern perspectives (e.g. Weedon 1987; Lather 1991; Sandoval, 2000) reject grand narratives and dismiss notions of a representational, one-to-one relationship between reality and text-based accounts (where texts include written, spoken and visual forms).

Ireland, first world citizenship grants me *insider privileges*: mobility, employment/welfare entitlements and social and cultural capital accrued through English language proficiency, higher education and professional qualifications. However, along racial and ethnic lines my skin colour and gender doubly mark my *body* as “other” and subject me to exclusionary and discriminatory practices, which I sharply felt across a gamut of social locations in my decade in Ireland. I am black (politically and skin colour), but not “as black” as the African women in the study. As a Sri Lankan, I don’t belong to immigrant or African communities; outsider of both dominant and minority social groups, I was an “other foreigner” (Trinh 2011) or “other other” (Ahmed 2000, 2002) but under the same gaze of whiteness. My enhanced awareness made attuned me to the ‘highly contingent and constructed dynamic positionalities’ (Nowicka and Ryan 2015: 57) of disparate ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups forced into communities in Direct Provision hostels.

I found building sisterhood and solidarity with the African women relatively easy, but my “knapsack” of privileges (Mackintosh 1989) *forced* me into a migrant intellectual location. Spivak (1999: 284) has said that diasporic metropolitan postcolonials ought not “claim innocence” and “celebrate” our postcoloniality but ‘unlearn our privilege [and] articulate our participation in that formation—by measuring silences, if necessary— into the object of investigation’. It is not enough to scandalize race or critique the inadequacy of Western feminism for Third World women—we need to address our sanctioned ignorance and complicity (Dhawan 2007a, para.20) in propogating it. In the Irish context, my challenges were to understand and extricate “postcoloniality” from an Irish nationalist identity re-made at the expense of

subalternizing Irish women's texts (Connolly 2004) *and* without reference to race and Ireland's First world/white status in relation to blackness.⁹

I understand identities 'are not objects but processes constituted in and through power relations' (Brah and Phoenix 2004: 77), migrating and contextual (Boyce Davis 1994), public and private (Alcoff 2000), ascribed and/or disavowed through internalized and external discourses. My intersectional identity location illustrates how two interrelated complexities I discussed earlier operate in a border location: "the difference the difference makes" and "passing". In Ireland, the everyday impact of ethnic difference is unequal for different groups. Sub-Saharan Africans, particularly asylum seekers, experience the most discrimination and violent attacks of racialised minority groups and find it more difficult to make Irish friends (ICI 2011, Nasc 2012). Their recognition is read through skin—its blackness, visible at a glance is "shorthand" for meanings of race (Mohanram 2005). Asians are least likely to be discriminated in institutions, but migrant women most likely to face structural discrimination as a group (Mc Ginnity et al. 2006; Loyal 2007).¹⁰ In terms of "nationality", children of Irish-Americans are automatically eligible for citizenship rights through Irish parentage, but not children of Africans born in Ireland who have lived in Direct Provision for years.

Racial "passing for Ahmed (1999), is a transgressive, politicized, disruptive or survival act in which people *pass as/for* another (more privileged) identity; it is a cultural, embodied practice. The dominant receiver can shift the readings of blackness through mental processes to legitimize ambiguous bodies like mine.¹¹ As an Asian

⁹ As Garner (2009) states, the Irish have been "relentlessly racialised" in diaspora, but little historical work has been done in studying race in Ireland itself. I do not address the gendered racism against the Irish in diaspora (see Walter 2011: 1295; Gray 2002a, b), or *class* analyses of hostility towards blacks in Ireland, which would be an interesting area for future research.

¹⁰ I examine differences between African and Asian women through cases of foetal deaths of migrant women in Ireland in Chapter Five.

¹¹ In "Passing through Hybridity" Ahmed shows how a policeman shifted his initial reading of her as Aboriginal by calling her dark skin a "sun tan".

professional, I pass without explicit comment in mainstream Irish society (though I may not always intend to) but this passing is not visible to others (Ahmed 1999). During fieldwork, I consciously disavowed some privileges; for example choosing *not* sitting at the “head table” at NGO celebratory events.¹² However, when my identity was ascribed, I lose that choice. I was invited to speak or facilitate discussions at a number of “integration” events but could speak either as a “migrant woman” or feminist academic (but not at the same time), so my speech as *Black feminist* is illegible or mis-recognized. My identity as a Black/feminist/researcher is rare in Ireland if compared to UK, USA or Canada. The above inconsistencies typify how identity-based categories like race are *ideologically co-constructions* that shift over time and contexts. Privileges afforded through identity categories can be withdrawn in regressive social conditions and vary in different social spaces.

Conversely, white bodies can *pass through* the other’s blackness; I examine this in the context of attempts by NGOs to foster racial/gender solidarity through intercultural and diversity projects. These try to “fix” the race problem by training people to pass in cultural terms, but don’t address racism or white power (see Chapters Four and Five). At times, my migrant status (and race/gender discrimination arising from it) has been misrecognized when I would have liked it to be through *colour-blindness* (e.g. a colleague saying “I never think of you as a migrant woman” or a solicitor advising against “playing the race card” in court).

It is conclusive that researcher positionality is mobile, relational and multi faceted—*emotional and psychic* strata need to be conceptualized for researcher and participants alike. But how might I enact it? And write about it?

¹² The women and I shared or re-distribute some privileges and penalties (e.g. my academic status was used to gain funding, their community networks gave me access to insider knowledge).

Positionality as Mestiza Consciousness

To corral these methodological demands, I used Anzaldúa's (1987: 79-80) "new mestiza consciousness"—to conceptualize researcher positionality as a non-dualistic *state of perception* that is neither a spatial location (such as insider-outsider), nor a liminal space (for example, subaltern, or heterotopic or hybrid). The "new mestiza" appears in one other Irish study, by Nititham (2009), a US born Filipina in Ireland who persuasively argues for the use of Anzaldúa's (1987) borderlands theory to carve new ontological and theoretical spaces in identity and ethnic diversity studies. She deploys her "forever foreign-ness" in Ireland *strategically* to unsettle identity locations as I do mine, to carve 'unavailable intersections' in Irish society and academic feminism. For me, mestiza consciousness is an encounter between my feminist intellectual, spiritual and artistic autobiographies (Stanley and Wise 1993:18).¹³ I read this consciousness as an embodied, agentic perceptual awareness of '*continual creative motion*' that breaks down subject-object duality as it arises; a "moving through" and choosing of the best viewpoint for the purpose. Rather than "lens", I developed a conceptual tool to capture this type of perception based on a Buddhist philosophical concept of "diamond mind"—this locates the holder of awareness as present and radiant (not absent), but empty of conceptual or essential identity. In practice, I used mestiza consciousness/diamond mind in research situations to "tune in" to plural mind-sets, to allow and tolerate pain (mine and others), consider all that comes into the space as data and "turn the ambivalences" into useful insight (Anzaldúa 1987:79). It was through adversity that I *recognized* potential spaces for collaboration and resistance in the triad

¹³ I encountered philosophies of "becoming" and non-essentialised identities before entering academia; they are foundational concepts in Buddhist philosophy and ontology. The mind changes to "take on" multi-faceted identities or perspectives—or the "colour"—of the subject/object under investigation depending on the contextual "cloth" on which it rests.

of research relationships between researcher, participants, and host organisations (Ackerly and True 2010b: 32-35). This tool worked brilliantly with intersectionality and Ahmed's (2000) "encounters" methodology, and was highly compatible with deconstructive analyses. It fostered many important insights during fieldwork, but also in data analysis, where I used it to conceptualize multiple shifting subjectivities in texts, artwork and live performances. Poststructural theories consider identity locations as inter-active and intra-active processes of "*becoming*" (Brah 2006), not frozen or flat "categories" or axes. The mestiza consciousness/diamond mind concept speaks strongly to Nowicka and Ryan's (2015) proposal that we ought to abandon notions of inside, outside or even in-between researcher/researched positionalities as these are highly contingent and propagate methodological nationalism or reliance on the ethnic lens. Abdicating identity-as-category for both researcher and participants avoids essentialising or reifying stereotypes—instead, 'the subject comes into existence as an entity only *through encounters* with others' (Ahmed 2000: 7, *my emphasis*).

3.3 Participatory Action Research: Call and Response, Safe Spaces and Data Production

[The] call-and-response discourse mode among African-Americans illustrates the importance placed on dialogue. Composed of spontaneous verbal and nonverbal interaction between speaker and listener in which all of the speaker's statements, or "calls," are punctuated by expressions, or "responses," from the listener, this Black discourse mode pervades African-American culture. The fundamental requirement of this interactive network is active participation of all individuals.

Smitherman 1977 in Collins 2000: 261

Guided by the ethno-mimetic arts-based methods of O'Neill (2010, 2006) and drama based research by Yuval-Davis (2008, 2009), I configured my approach as 'call

and response’ (Collins 2000: 261)¹⁴ to foster dialogical, reflexive negotiation between participants and researchers needs and desires, but also to account for rapidly changing conditions. In Ireland, the *call* I heeded was that “interculturalism” derails and/or co-opts migrant-led activism (Feldman 2005; Erjoh 2006; Lentin and Moreo 2012) and “participatory” projects in the NGO/community development sector generally fit top-down needs analyses and funding criteria. My *response* was to attempt Participatory Action Research (PAR), so my research could benefit participants in some way and to focus on structural power and whiteness.

PAR emerged in developing countries across the world in the 1970s as a critical, transformative and praxis-oriented research committed to finding practical solutions for people and their communities. Like feminism, its pioneers disassembled the positivist epistemological framework and de-constrained modernist, scientific research paradigms (Lincoln and Guba 1985) governing academic research to innovate new paradigms and tools that directly address the mounting social injustices against marginalized peoples (Reason and Bradbury 2001). PAR investigates reality in order to change it (Fals Borda 1979) through three key attributes: the shared ownership of research projects; community-based analysis of social problems; and an orientation towards community action (Kemmis and Mc Taggart 2008, 2000: 560). Its processes are collaborative and spiral through cycles of planning, acting and observing, and reflection (Rahman 1991 in Gaventa and Cornwall 2001). It shares with feminism an avowed intent to ‘change the world, not only to study it’ (Stanley 1990 in Maguire

¹⁴ I was already grounded in the egalitarian processes and polyvocality of the African call and response through my own practice of African drumming. Each song has a set *call* and an agreed base rhythm, announced by the Master drummer. Each player responds with different instruments and levels— from a simple clap or beat to extended solos of supreme mastery, *each sound matters in the soundscape*. Several drummers, each playing a part of the rhythm summons melodies and rhythms that exceed the sum of each. Jazz music also follows this idiom, and each musician performs a solo within the collective group.

2001: 61) and to honour the lived experience and knowledge of the people involved (Reason 1994 in Gatenby and Humphries 2000).

Throughout the decades, PAR has incorporated black feminist and postcolonial perspectives (though not always overtly acknowledged) to contest power relations across three dimensions: *knowledge, action and consciousness* (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001). However, when applied without *equivalent focus on all three aspects of power*, it's emancipatory potential is unfulfilled. In community participation, too strong a focus on knowledge creation (to the exclusion of action and reflexive consciousness) masks gender and race (Maguire 2001) which silences certain groups or individuals. The myth of a cohesive “community” which can arrive at a “consensus” can also blot out difference and disallow the emergence of more pluralist and equitable solutions (Mouffe 1992 in Gaventa and Cornwall 2001: 75). Over-focus on action might simply represent the voices of others but reiterate dominant discourse or reflect the internalization of dominant values and views (Friere 1970). During fieldwork, I observed that even if knowledge had been created through democratic participative processes (like surveys or questionnaires) and grievances aired, the power structures that create and reproduce oppressive conditions remain untouched. This creates an “illusion of inclusion” that grants moral authority to experts, which is difficult to challenge (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001).¹⁵

Eubanks (2009) contends that Twenty-First century neoliberal regimes in the North have effectively “hijacked” liberatory practices and left activists in a “double bind”—the state withdraws funds from community development and displaces its

¹⁵ In Ireland, Lentin and Moreo (2012) identified that many migrant-led associations do not define themselves as antiracist, but emphasize state-inspired concepts of integration and interculturalism—these silence discourses of racism and antiracism.

responsibilities onto the most vulnerable in society under the guise of empowerment.¹⁶ In Ireland, social justice strategies have been replaced with neoliberal renditions of “participation” and flooded with rhetoric promoting diversity, integration and interculturalism (Lentin and Moreo 2012). I found many NGO and Community Development had been exposed to Freirean thinking, but applied it with limited degrees of reflexivity or consciousness. It was certainly not the case that NGOs were “assisting people in asylum to reclaim the ‘primordial rights’ denied to them to name their world” (Friere 1970: 69). To the contrary, what I observed was a case of ‘dialogue between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming’ (ibid.). At the root, as I maintain in my Introduction, lies the humanitarian imperative—intent on rehumanizing asylum-seekers—but which dismally fails to recognize that (authentic) *dialogue itself* is the ‘way by which they achieve significance as a human being’ (ibid.).

What then is the remedial action, if one exists? For Kesby (2005: 2038), it is a more ‘theoretically aware participatory praxis’ along poststructuralist lines. For (Eubanks 2009:109), since grassroots participation is a practice of democracy in itself, a return to its feminist and liberatory roots can salvage the production of academic knowledge if we ‘reframe participation as a practice, not only as a concept’. Her most helpful suggestions include:

Embeddedness in the community ... facilitating but not dominating discussions
... handling all the administration and minutiae so that the participants can
address the larger issues ... staying involved for a longer time while being
uncertain of the outcomes [and] moving beyond good intentions or friendliness
... to aggressively demonstrate reliability. (Eubanks 2009:122-124)

¹⁶ See also Eisenstein (2007,2008); Power (2009) and Cockburn (2007, 2008, 2010) and others who expose the co-option of feminist ideas and gender to promote “just wars”.

Collins (2000) argues that ‘safe’ black women spaces offer longer-term commitment, while Pain et al. (2007) argue that the prioritization and valuing of relationships and alliances that form through research (though ethically challenging) are ultimately rewarding and personally transformative.

Despite well-founded critiques of the “tyranny” of PAR in development (Kesby 2005, Kapoor 2002), I trusted Eubank’s remedy—to return PAR to both its feminist *and* political roots— in Black /Indigenous/Third World feminist epistemology. This might reveal useful data about how the “world is worlded” for black and Third World women in postcolonial asylum. I drew courage from O’Neill’s (2010: xiv) project to *renew methodologies* through interdisciplinary research, and to clear methodological spaces for marginalized/subaltern groups for *self-definition*, a vital requisite to contest exclusionary and hateful discourses surrounding refugees/asylum seekers. This speaks to Anzaldúa (1987: 79) notion of bringing together the ‘severed parts’, and Lorde (1984: 120-121), who maintains that integrating ‘all the parts of who [she is] openly’ can fully concentrate her energy, and allow ‘power from particular sources of [her] living to flow back and forth freely through all [her] different selves, without the restriction of externally imposed definition’.

In practice, however, this “action” part of the work entailed hard work and slow progress. In the early phases, we needed to develop a *common vocabulary* through which to communicate political and academic languages and views, linguistic differences and concepts about drama. Substantial elucidation was done through presentations, watching videos of similar examples, visits to the theatre and attending

conferences and workshops.¹⁷ We strategized to share privileges and cultural and social capital (through not always equally, and risking essentialisation). For example, participant demographics “fitted” criteria for arts grant that prioritized integration/ethnicity/culture and “domestic abuse” while my academic status added credibility to funding applications. My attempts to reciprocate were less a matter of feminist prescription but organic process; I partook in christenings, birthdays, graduations and events where the women were dancing or speaking and became an “official” photographer who turned up whenever asked and distributed pictures in a timely fashion. As Eubanks (2009: 110) advises, we conduct our feminist selves in an ethical fashion ‘while maintaining a steadfast commitment to the fact that people are basically *smart, understand their own problems, and have agency in their own lives* (my italics)’.

I next outline the mixed data production methods that I needed to innovate in order to respond to some of the demands noted above.

Arts-Based Methods Within a PAR Approach

Subjugated knowledge are the secret knowledges generated by oppressed groups ... Such knowledge typically remains hidden because revealing it weakens its purpose of assisting them in dealing with oppression ... Subjugated knowledges that aim to resist oppression constitute oppositional knowledges.

Collins 2000: 301

My choice of arts-based data production methods responded to Spivak’s (1996: 22) call to ‘clear space from where to create a perspective’ (rather than “give voice”). I used three methods of data production: Mixed media collage, Participatory Drama and Theatre of the Oppressed (TOP), and devised drama and performance. These follow

¹⁷ We attended two feminist conferences together in 2012: *Women in Politics* (Jan. 20th) and *Feminist Truth Recovery*, Jan 26th). We also did joint panel presentations (*AkiDwA*, Sept 2011) and attended workshops in Documentary Film Making (UCC, 2011) and Theatre of the Oppressed (ALA, March 2012).

Sandoval's (2000: 139) "methodology of the oppressed"; for her, accessing subjugated knowledges and developing 'differential consciousness' is not achieved through words, but

through poetic modes of expression: gestures, music, images, sounds, words
that plummet through signification to find some void- some no-place- to claim
their due. (Sandoval 2000: 139)

Collins' (2000) theorization of *subjugated knowledges* differs from Foucault (1980: 82), who considers them 'present but disguised ... disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges ... beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity'. Black feminist knowledge is not "naïve", nor has it been disqualified for its *inadequacy* to the task, but it has been made to *appear so* by those controlling knowledge validation procedures (Collins 2000: 301). Black women's knowledges are derived from centuries of independent thought and steeped in Afrocentric influences. As hooks (2000) points out, consciousness raising in the white Second-Wave feminist movement is entirely different from Black women's consciousness—the women in the study did not need to *raise* their consciousness, but to *speak* about what they already were conscious of on a daily basis. Black feminist consciousness has a deep-seated, material understanding of *capitalism* and *imperialism* through slavery, which white feminist consciousness-raising alone does not facilitate. It is also *revolutionary*—it embeds a vision to *break down* (not reform) oppressive structures, and move beyond individual or race oppression, but address multiple oppressions (and hence includes men and children).

Data production, hence, then is not gathering experience (as if is simply there for me to gather), but *constructed* through dialectical engagement. To circumvent some of the "perils of participation", I engaged my own subjugated knowledge of the

dialogical process of call-and-response (Collins 2000: 261) that has (tacitly) influenced my work in any group venture.

The fundamental requirement of this interactive network is active participation of all individuals. ... For ideas to be tested and validated, everyone in the group must participate. To refuse to join in, especially if one really disagrees with what has been said, is seen as “cheating”.

(Kochman 1981, 28 in Collins 2000: 26)

Safe, De-Colonizing Research Spaces: The Interpersonal domain

I conceptualize “space” in this setting as *encounter* between interior/affective/psychic space, external, physical and geographical space, and social space in which people in asylum system move through as they wait. Arts-based methods provide a way to transcend linguistic and cultural borders and inherently afford a degree of emotional and psychic safety and freedom in the *interpersonal* domain. They are one way to give ‘name to the nameless so it can be thought’ (Lorde 1984: 36).

A broad range of literary, performance and visual art forms —creative writing, photography, dance, drama, music and film— are used as research tools for qualitative inquiry across the disciplines. Such arts-based methods are applicable and adaptable for diverse populations and provide a direct, inclusive, egalitarian and holistic engagement between researchers and participants at all stages of the research process from data production, through analysis, interpretation and representation (Leavy 2009).¹⁸

Typically, however, the researcher is a practising artist who *creates art forms* as methods of investigation, representation and dissemination. For example, visual artists

¹⁸ I did not (in the research phase) collaborate with practising artists, although this took place later. Community arts are increasingly being used in local integration projects with established “lead” artists. See *Hungry Tea*, an installation, at <http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/areas-of-work/hungry-tea.aspx>. However, these are not *research projects* that can study their transformative potential and/or political effectiveness.

like Rolling (2005) and Finley (2002, in Leavy 2009: 236) re-make existing images using collage to study racial and gender identities. Ethnodramatist Saldana (2003) uses qualitative data to write play scripts, which may or may not be performed. In this study, participants use what Leavy (2009: 227) categorizes as visual or drama-Based “Participatory Arts Based Methods” (PA), with a focus on self-representation. PA is popular in social research and activism across disciplines from education, health, social sciences, to development, geographical and environmental studies (O’Neill 2010; Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2009; Denzin and Lincoln 2011).¹⁹

Early in the fieldwork, prospective participants and I discussed their interests, ideas and experiences of the arts and viewed online artworks created by asylum seekers/refugees, attended local exhibitions and also a theatrical production of freed slave, Fredrick Douglass’ visit to Ireland in 1845.²⁰ After reviewing the literature, I selected three main art forms – collage, movement, and drama games— as “do-able” forms that I was well versed in and which held with greatest analytic/representational potential to study identity construction. All three forms were used in BBB, whereas the OOW used drama and performance only.

Mixed Media Collage: BBB

In the first project, collage was used construct biographical narratives of asylum, using magazine images, colours and other textured materials. “Research through art” was new to participants and organisations alike, and as Leavy (2009) points out, aesthetics do play a part in participatory art— amateurs cannot be expected to produce results of the same quality as practicing artists. I knew from my work in

¹⁹ Examples of O’Neill’s (2010) interdisciplinary art projects include city walks, photography, biographical life writing, sculpture and fabric art.

²⁰ “The Cambria” written by Donal O’Kelly and directed by Raymond Keane. Douglass has referred to his paternal ancestors as being Irish.

mental health institutions that aesthetically deprived and highly controlled environments such as DP centres can “numb” people’s imaginations and risk-taking. To mitigate, I always began with an energetic warm-up and stressed that *process* was more important than products, provided a wide selections of stimulating, *high quality* materials for pleasing results. A loose semi-structured theme of “crossing borders, meeting barriers and building bridges” still left ample freedom for choice of materials and techniques. Once “started off”, participants interpreted the themes individually.

Each of the six sessions began with introductions (of people and content) and group discussion; emergent themes were worked into the following session. I prepared the room to create a safe, stimulating and inviting atmosphere and displayed art books and magazines for inspiration. Instructions and facilitation took time, and a volunteer at Arden House with an art background assisted me. The design progressed from “words” into “pictures” into “movement/action” (Leavy 2009). Each “making” session closed with (optional) verbal sharing or showing/performing of work to the group. Participants declined to showcase their work to the organisation. I provided journals for feed-back and reflection, but quickly realized this recommended technique was totally inappropriate since random room searches were regular occurrences for DP residents—participants simply did not write. All participants agreed to the rules of confidentiality of the group. All artwork was stored in a locked storeroom between sessions, and at the end of the project, pictures were either left with me or taken by the participants. I photographed the collages and analyse them in Chapter Four. I provided a cooked lunch at the end of the session, a lovely opportunity to share Sri Lankan food (and other requests) and eat together in a relaxed, sociable atmosphere.

Participatory Drama/Movement and Theatre of the Oppressed (BBB and OOW)

A London study by Yuval Davis and Kaptani (2008a,b) with Kosovan, Kurdish, and Somali refugees found Boal's (1979) Theatre of The Oppressed (TOP) highly productive in deconstructing the homogenized notion of the 'refugee' as well as 'the Muslim'. Their data was gathered through two sessions of Playback Theatre (Fox 1986) and five sessions of Forum Theatre (Boal 1979) plus post-group interviews. Playback Theatre (Fox 1986) is done by professional actors, who perform on stage stories told to them by audience members. In Forum Theatre (Boal 1979) the participants themselves act out their personal stories, and other group members may step in and replace protagonists to test out various strategies. The authors found that intersectionality used as a *deconstructive* (rather than categorical) tool through drama, produced "rich, illustrative, embodied and dialogical" sociological knowledge (Yuval Davis 2008 a: 12-13). Unusual ways of disseminating research results were also discovered, and they found refugees grew empowered as a collective. Participants reported that the researcher/researched relationships were more egalitarian, reciprocal and educative than other forms of research. In Sweden, Österlind (2008) argues that TOP techniques can prompt awareness of, and change of habitus; in Canada, Perry (2012) successfully used Image Theatre as "a system of de-colonization" in a study with Mexican agricultural workers.²¹

In both projects, I drew elements from Boal's (1979: 121-130) "Poetics of the Oppressed" where the first stage in overcoming oppression is to know the body and its habitual postural distortions. Postures reflect the work or status people *perform* in daily life— by testing the body's entrenched limitations, possibilities for "rehabilitation"

²¹ This is a silent exercise where participants collectively form a tableau of a generated theme using bodies. See Appendix E for examples of this in BBB..

arise. I used “professions”, a game where people acted out their own occupation, then, experimented with upper/lower hierarchies of “authority”(for example, doctor, judge, farmer, student, musician and so on). This exercise led to a spontaneous energetic enactment by one woman of daily life in her African home. Other joined her, and the scene ended joyfully with the “Irish” participants being taken in to an African home to share a meal.²²

I also used *mirroring* as a regular warm-up exercise and *group image sculpture* to form an impenetrable “border”, which each person took turns to breach. In another drama exercise called “maps”, participants physically located themselves in the (large) room representing “the world” and replayed their journeys to Ireland, first silently, then using words. In this rich and particularly evocative session, Nigiri dramatized her harrowing three-month journey, crossing the Sahara desert, the Mediterranean Sea and passing through several European borders to finally arrive in Ireland (see Chapter Four). The group built the boat with their bodies, and on her arrival, spontaneously stood, lifted her up, comforted her and welcomed her to “Ireland”. Her trauma evoked powerful affective shifts from fear and shock to warm, embodied empathy within the group.

Insights from BBB helped me move confidently into using drama in the next project (OOW) as a method that ‘produces embodied knowledge ... not ... communication of abstract ideas and perceptions’ (Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008a: 9).

²² Boal’s techniques are widely adapted in many fields; all exercises are available in Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) and *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992). Jennings’ (1985) manual of psychodrama exercises is particularly useful. Many scenes and discussions from BBB gave rise to metaphors during analysis and writing up.

Drama and Performance (OOW)

On our Way began soon after BBB, and the “action” component of PAR developed over three phases. First, we discussed options for the outcome of our research engagement over a series of planning meetings until a collective vision emerged. Sanle and Mamu had already been trying to form a drama group and it was eventually agreed that we would establish a women’s community arts collective. Considerable time and effort went into obtaining bank accounts and formally registering the organisation. Second, we decided to devise a stage play over six weeks, meeting once a week with extra time when necessary. Due to childcare and transport, not all could arrive at the same time, so we agreed to start work with whoever came first and late arrivals would join in. The women brought ‘scenes’ from their own lives. In the third phase, we took these into performance as the first act of a Three-Act play at a Community Arts Festival in March 2012. A post-performance discussion (analysed in Chapter Six) engaged the audience, culminating in a Forum style re-play of one highly contentious scene. In this part of the discussion, I took on the role of The Joker—who in Boal’s (1979: 152-154) system is a multi-faceted moderator, provocateur and facilitator—like a master of ceremonies, she interprets for, and focuses the audience. Within this period, the group also conducted two funded outreach workshops for women in a rural DP centre to encourage and uplift them.²³

This project used TOP techniques initially as exploratory/training tools; Mamu alone had previous experience of TOP, and all but Yayah had performance experience as singers, dancers or public speakers. They shared an interest in telling their stories, and nurtured a clear vision of educating and informing audiences about asylum and their experiences. Scenes and images that were “in their heads” were broadly framed

²³ See footnote 27.

within the metaphor of “journey”. The title “On our Way” proposed by Sanle reflected the on-going struggle of belonging and the obstacles the women encountered.

It's not easy for a woman to experience domestic violence, running and coming where you think that you can get help, on your way, and again men ... again when you are on your way make you suffer rape you and ... you come ... they give you house ... and again your experience with a bad [racist male] neighbour make you suffer again ... you are not free in your house ... because the neighbour doesn't like you... doesn't like your children when you go out you don't know what is going on.

(OOW Sanle, Tr 2b: 6-9)

My role was flexible; I borrowed the “artist-researcher-teacher” (A/r/t) model used in education research, where the researcher plays an integrated role in a ‘third in-between space...that merges knowing, doing, and making’ (Pinar 2004 in Leavy 2009: 3). Altering this configuration, my (emergent) role became “academic/activist/artist” and, in performance, the “Joker”.

3.4 Fieldwork: Access, Recruitment and Research Projects

After an initial exploratory/recruitment period of about three months, I ran two distinct projects, one within the asupices of Arden House and the other at an independently rented Arts studio. Initially, I had hoped to invite participants into the academic environment as co-creators of knowledge, but workspace at my institution was unavailable. A safe, affordable space to work was my first priority. My search itself, as well as obstacles and compromises encountered “on my way” through the fieldwork, proved instructive. I realized that the walls that obstructed us in the local NGO/charity sector were the very walls obstructing self-representation for those they served.

Project 1: Borders Barriers, Bridges

The first, shorter project ‘Borders, Barriers and Bridges’ (BBB) was an arts-based program run over six weekly three-hour sessions at Arden House. A total of six women and three asylum-seeking men aged between twenty and fifty plus three Indigenous Irish volunteers participated. One woman left after three sessions due to her unhappiness with the organisation, but agreed to an interview. The project was designed as a “training course” to fit the requirements of the organisation, which overdetermined my desire for a freer model (akin to a arts-based research residency or *ethno-mimetic* model (O’Neill 2010). It would have been difficult to introduce experimental work in this tightly controlled setting, where constraints like opening times (three days a week, from 10am to 4pm), competing activities and lack of privacy all mattered. As it turned out, staff commonly walked into my sessions; as time progressed, I learned from attendees of breaches of confidentiality in other groups, lack of autonomy and other dissatisfactions of attendees. I witnessed (and was personally subjected to) some highly dubious comments and attitudes by individuals in charge (e.g. that African women are “difficult” “demanding” “aggressive”) and felt troubled by the racism, sexism, misogyny and paternalism beneath them. My methods (art, drama, discussion) became critically important means of creating safe ways for participants to name and frame their life worlds.²⁴

Interested women from AW who wanted to engage with me preferred a small group (as one woman stated, “too many voices” hinder progress); they wished to seek independent funding (which was paradoxically encouraged, but then obstructed by Arden House). Two were in higher education themselves and wanted to support my education (“you are our sister”, “you’re doing big study and I want to do big study so I

²⁴ Data from BBB are analysed in Chapter Four.

will follow you”). Thus our strategic alliance formed. As Ahmed (2000: 180) puts it, ‘alliances are not guaranteed by the pre-existing form of a social group or community ... collectivities are formed through the *very work that we need to do* in order to get closer to others’ (emphasis in original). My choice to extend my fieldwork beyond BBB to the long-term project OOW was driven by need, ethics, conscientization and syncretic with my own “displacement” from Arden House.²⁵

I scoured the city for cheap artists studios; one Community Arts space claimed to “welcome” asylum seekers but then placed bureaucratic, artistic and financial demands on me that I could not meet. Eventually, a major arts organisation I approached generously offered us free meeting space, which we used for some months before privately renting a small studio space in an artists’ collective that strongly supported the work. The project flourished and remains there, though struggling for funds. On reflection, I saw how these obstacles were challenging, but also forced innovation and fruitfully opened doors in the arts community and valuable support that otherwise might not have been accessed.

Project 2: On Our Way

The second project, “On Our Way” took a PAR approach. Sanle, Yoh, Yayah, Edith and Mamu, aged between twenty-three and fifty years, generously contributed their time and energy to this twelve-month study. Different circumstances and various reasons brought them from various African countries to Ireland, where they have lived from two to ten years. All were all keen to work with drama. Sanle had worked on local

²⁵ I was severely castigated for various elements of my personality and working style (e.g. using the “wrong” language, lack of structure, taking too much time, being a feminist) by the Director, who weeks later repeatedly apologized for his “terrible behaviour”. I concluded that research and “Charity” styled advocacy are incompatible, though the experience was invaluablely instructive. If this was how I was treated, as an academic professional, what domination and control might women in asylum, far less privileged, be subject to?

NGO documentary films and media projects to highlight conditions for asylum seekers. Some years previously, a drama project she designed through a national immigrant leadership initiative was selected as a finalist for a prize, but she was unable to get local NGO support to implement it.²⁶ Mamu was a former broadcast journalist with dance and theatre experience; she and Sanle had recently discussed setting up a theatre/performance group. Yoh was a community leader, experienced in public speaking and appeared in NGO films. Edith was a singer, inspirational speaker and self-employed hair stylist who previously formed a Gospel Choir and wished to write her life story. Yayah had no previous experience in the arts. The bulk of the empirical data for this thesis is drawn from their individual/collective experiences and interactions in the legal, social and cultural spaces “on their way” through the asylum migration-integration continuum.

Expenses for the BBB project were met through my own funds; I offset travel expenses, provided lunch and refreshments and supplied art materials. For OOW, I paid for studio hire, printing and materials, but also received in-kind support (photography, choreography, musicians) from other studio artists. Part-way through OOW, we obtained two grants—one for a Theatre of the Oppressed training workshop and outreach work at DP hostels, and another for ongoing post-project drama training. These funds covered transport, childcare and facilitator fees.²⁷

²⁶ Sanle was rather disenchanted that she first offered it to SIMA, who did not support it but soon after, started its own drama group, which she was not invited to.

²⁷ We received a once-off grant of €1000 by The Community Foundation (<http://www.foundation.ie/>) for Outreach Workshops, and a €2000 grant from the City Council for an Arts in Context project (see my discussion on pp.167-168 for related issues).

Table 3: Projects and Participant Demographics²⁸

TIMELINE	PROJECT	SITE	PARTICIPANTS	TIME IN DP
Mar 2011-July 2011 Access/Recruitment		Arden House SIMA Public Intercultural Events	Directors Attendees Volunteers Staff	
Project 1 September - October 2011	Borders, Barriers, Bridges Methods: Discussion, Collage, TOP	Arden House City Centre 6x 3hour sessions	7 women/3 men Age: 23-45 years 9 in asylum 1 citizen. 9 from African Continent 1 from Latin America	4 months to 4 years.
Project 2 October 2011 – September 2012	On Our Way Methods: Drama and Performance	Private Art Studio City Centre 10 hours weekly.	5 women Age: 23-50 years 3 in asylum, 2 Irish citizens All from African Continent	2-4 years 2 in rented homes.

Access and Recruitment

Access to the key research sites was facilitated through a Community Development worker²⁹ who introduced me to the two main organisations serving asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in the area: Arden House, a Church-based charitable organization offering pastoral care, training, and counselling to (predominantly) African asylum seekers; and Sonas Immigrant Advice Centre (SIMA)— a medium sized NGO providing legal advice and advocacy to migrants and asylum seekers. State funding for refugees and migrant organisations (particularly for women’s groups) had rapidly diminished due to austerity measures after the Global

²⁸ More detailed demographics are omitted to prevent identification.

²⁹ This contact was facilitated through Shirley Graham of Hannah’s House, who ran a series of consultative groups with women in asylum displaced through conflict and gender-related abuses as part of the National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 (see NAP 2011 and Graham 2011). I also networked with AkiDwA, and a local feminist group.

Financial Crisis in 2008.³⁰ Both NGOs relied on partnership funding from US philanthropic foundations, Catholic Church groups and European Union (EU) “integration” funds, and worked closely together to avoid duplication of services.

I started with Arden House, where Director approved access after several one-to-one meetings and a written proposal. Over three months, I attended the centre two or three times a week as a volunteer/participant-observer in group activities and celebrations,³¹ as well as public intercultural events (i.e. Africa Day, Diversity Day, St Patrick’s Day). My starting point was to adopt a transparent, dialogical approach and stress my wish to do research of some use to participants. I was open about my limited power to influence legal cases, or alter policy or legislation, but pointed out the possible benefits—participating in academic feminist research could increase attention to gendered aspects of their lives ignored in NGO projects, and give access to a politicized, creative space, which might be enjoyable and satisfying.

My recruitment process was not linear or straightforward (see Table 4, p.139). I got to know people (and they me) through informal discussions and formal meetings. I approached two women (both gatekeepers) from a grassroots African women’s organisation (AW) who I had previously met via a global migrant women’s social network, which had since (sadly) dissolved along nationality lines (e.g. Eastern European, African, Polish). Sanle facilitated access while the other woman declined (hinting that my research might duplicate her own project).

³⁰ See also Ejorh (2006); Feldman et al. (2002; 2008) and Lentin & Moreo (2012) for the impact of recession on migrant organisations and strategies of survival.

³¹ In-house “celebrations” such as award ceremonies for courses and training completed, farewells, visits from church dignitaries and media events, which the women in OOW refer to in the data (Chapters Four and Five).

Overall, four major factors determined the recruitment processes for both projects: environmental constraints; status of asylum claims; language and communication; and organisational constraints.

Organisational Constraints and Status of Asylum Claims

According to directors of SIMA and Arden House, the African women's group was "struggling" due to funding cuts and had dissipated through recent re-location at Arden House. I was invited to "help get the group going" and recruit participants that way. I made three slideshow presentations (two for AW and one open session at Arden House) to communicate ideas and examples of what participatory feminist research might look like. At the general presentations, some men in asylum expressed interest in art, drama and gender. Bearing in mind my participatory focus and the difficulties of recruiting *only* women, men were invited to participate in the first project BBB.³² People seeking asylum were housed in DP hostels, some located in urban and suburban areas and others several kilometres out of the city. Location, costs of transport and timings of meals (among other factors) meant that attendance at Arden House was sporadic, especially for women with children. A free bus ran daily from hostels to the city centre, but its timing would mean missing lunch for those living further out, unaffordable on a weekly allowance of 19.10 euro per week.

Access to DP hostels required a written recommendation from Arden House and/or an invitation by a resident. I received both, but felt intensely uncomfortable going into their "home" space during meals to solicit for participants as advised. I also

³² This compromise was not difficult to make; as I understand it, feminist research places women at the centre but does not necessarily exclude men or their presence in women's lives. Women of colour maintain strong racial and class solidarity with men of colour (which is sometimes but not always reciprocated). Their inclusion proved instructive in data analyses of gendered racialising of a Muslim man (Chapter Four) and post-performance discussion with two African men (Chapter Six).

decided against running a project in one of the hostels—an insider warned that people weren't free to speak out under surveillance by staff and security cameras and preferred to get out. I later visited hostels through invitations from participants from OOW and workshops.

Initially, several women from AW expressed interest in my research but didn't feel able to participate in BBB for a number of reasons: childcare, language classes and training sessions demanded their time, as well as concerns that participating might undermine their legal cases if seen to be "making trouble". After some weeks, Sanle approached me to suggest that we work as a women-only group at a later stage, which led to the creation of OOW, the second project.

All final recruits for BBB apart from one woman (a full Irish citizen), lived in DP hostels, and were a mix of new "arrivals" and those who had been in the system from two to four years. In OOW, Sanle and Edith were full citizens living independently; Yoh and Mamu lived in hostels but moved out towards the end of the research period, while Yayah lived in a hostel for the entire period. Importantly, all the women in OOW felt secure enough to speak out.

I met individually with each participant of both projects to clarify confidentiality, potential risks or threats and how I proposed to avert them (e.g. anonymity, adhering to individual conditions regarding pseudonyms and uses of photographs and artwork). I waited until mid-way through each project to obtain signed consent to ensure people felt certain. For OOW, I approached a highly experienced Art Therapist/Academic with expertise in intuitive work to support participants in case traumatic memories or grief were re-evoked. She kindly offered her services free of

charge.³³ Participants were free to leave the project, or stay but not be part of the research at any time. All names and other identifying information (e.g. nationality, age) have been removed or disguised.³⁴

Language, Symbols and the Unspoken.

Participants spoke several African languages and dialects, Arabic and French (none of which I spoke, apart from basic French). English, of varying degrees of written/spoken proficiency, was considered the common language. Translation was declined as people welcomed the chance to practice and improve their English. It was challenging to explain complex ideas and accurately understand everything people were telling me; considerable time and effort went into devising a “common language” and making space for clarification of terms like “identity”, “representation” and “gender”. Communicating through African Irish-English was reminiscent of my transcultural work in the health service in London and my close associations with musicians in the diasporic/refugee African community there. I also employed strategies used in my travels in many non-English speaking parts of the world, including my country of origin. Speaking slowly, avoiding jargon and technical terms, using their terminology, miming, gesturing and writing things down and highlighting similarities rather than differences all helped. I “spoke” not only through words but also by creating an attentive, non-judgemental listening space and heightened perceptual receptivity to shifts in affects, body language, gestures, silences, spatial arrangements and so on. Unlike paid NGO staff, I was not obliged to “help”— as a researcher, I

³³ Though counselling support was offered at Arden House, three different insider attendees reported breaches of confidentiality by counsellors there. The Art Therapist was located close to our Studio and easily accessible.

³⁴ The women in “On Our Way” chose their own pseudonyms; those in BBB are my own. A sample consent form is found in Appendix B.

could listen. My mestiza consciousness was open to recognize (without collapsing, denying or categorising) class/religious/educational and other power differentials.³⁵

Art and drama as non-verbal non-textual forms of representation were highly applicable because they offered a way through language differences. However, “literacy” in art and drama were also needed to communicate technique, concepts and staging methods. Photographs and You Tube video clips were helpful to share ideas and example of similar projects.³⁶

Unlike many community migrant groups in Ireland that form through linguistic/cultural connections, the main research group OOW was formed through a *coalition*. Trust was central; this relied on potential participants’ assessment of me—who I was, my “spirit” or the “the condition of my heart” (Smith 1999), what I could possibly offer. My professionalism, qualifications, ethical conduct and transparency undoubtedly mattered, but unspoken affective exchanges and love were equally important. Sandoval (2000: 140), in common with hooks, Fanon, Anzaldúa and many others) considers love a ‘hermeneutic, a set of practices and procedures ... that can transit citizen-subjects ... toward a differential mode of consciousness’. For Anzaldúa (1987: 41-43), love is a source of empowerment and *movida* (movement), a “*coatlicue* state”(rupture). As *practice* rather than an emotion, I understand love as embodied solidarity, respectful engagement, warmth and equanimity. This practice included providing (and accepting) food, making time and space for special events outside of the research agenda; this was challenging but rewarding. Nonetheless, strong research

³⁵ Lugones’ (1990) theorisations of cross-cultural and cross-racial loving are useful here. Playful “world-travelling” is to enter and inhabit the “worlds” of others with neither erasure nor fusion, but through loving perception. Plurality can exist with a playful openness to surprise and understanding of oneself in relation to others ‘devoid of the arrogant need to demonize and invalidate other experiences’ (ibid.p393). See also pp.98 and 276 of the thesis.

³⁶ I also produced a leaflet, which the Arden House Director kindly emailed to over thirty local organisations. Nevertheless, nine out of the ten final participants of BBB and all of OOW were recruited through personal contact and “snowballing”.

ethics do not detract from the power differentials between researcher and participants, nor overcome the limitations of language and social differences; as a novice, this was a process of learning and un-learning. Undoubtedly, some misunderstandings or superficial meanings took place both ways, some of which became ironed out through on-going dialogue and long-term engagement.

Organisational Power

Hierarchies of power in the “triad” of researcher—participants—host organisations/gatekeepers need to include the University and National research institutions, where power inequalities manifest (Ackerly and True 2010b: 32-35). Research organisations tend to prioritize medical, technological and scientific research; Women’s Studies in Ireland has been a marginalized academic discipline and “feminist” research is doubly marginalized through limited understanding of it’s tenents by others, or disavowal of research being explicitly “feminist” by its practitioners (Lentin and Byrne, 2000:13). As a diasporic researcher of colour in Ireland, doing explicitly “feminist” and “participatory” research with asylum-seeking women of colour situated me even further outside mainstream Irish Academia.³⁷

Reflexivity, Ethics, and Boundaries.

Power differentials and dynamics between researcher and participants can be made more equitable through reflexive practice and dialogical engagement (Mohanty 2003; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Stanley and Wise 1993). Throughout both projects, I maintained three separate journals to aid reflexivity: a chronology of

³⁷ I might have made easier choices than PAR, but the overdetermining advantages were that I could address glaring issues, utilize my specific positionality and frame research according to participants needs—rare opportunities in a climate of funding restrictions.

engagement; a research journal; and a “shadow” journal that captured my own ‘transgressive data’ (St Pierre 2000), or emotions and creative writings that surfaced (Gunaratnam 2007) which I drew on in analysis.

My relationships with participants in each group were distinct. In BBB, my engagement was consciously “non-political” while on site, knowing people couldn’t speak freely of dissatisfaction and problems. In contrast, relationships with participants in OOW were formed at the borders of womanhood, politics, epistemological beliefs and personal goals. Interpersonal dynamics shifted between sisterhood, friendship, and collegiality. My political, pedagogic and creative/artistic *facets* shone through at different times. Collins’s (2000) ethics of care (see p.143) equipped me to work across a range of standpoints, and I maintained transparency by regularly “checking in” about decisions taken. Not being white, I didn’t encounter the well-documented dilemmas of white/black or North/South research relationships but navigated a different set of power dynamics.

Accounts of research encounters between women of colour (Henry 2007; Johnson-Bailey 2008; Maylor 2009; Parashar 2011) helped when I found myself “on my feet” shifting between roles as artist/academic/activist and a more privileged woman of colour.³⁸ Henry (2007) argues that feminist fieldwork methodologies ought to account for the ‘multiplex subjectivities’ of both parties rather than the typical powerful/powerlessness dyad—this can (mis) shape one’s approach in the field. Johnson –Bailey (ibid.p138) considers power issues a ‘balancing act’, where there is no “righteous ground” in terms of the race or gender of the researcher/researched. In particular, the ownership of the “products”—their stories— was thoroughly discussed,

³⁸ Meztiza consciousness eventually settled my approach to a politics of “intercultural perception” (Ong 1995 in Henry 2007:2) rather than positionality.

and fresh negotiations prompted with each publication/presentation, particularly regarding the use of recorded speech, film and/or photographs.

Power is not monolithic (Phoenix 1994); a degree of objectification through the researchers gaze cannot be avoided and the researchers idea of empowerment is not necessarily that of the participant (Nagar and Ali 2003). My experience mirrors Parashar's (2011:13)—for researchers of colour who *know colonisation*, emotions are critical sites of 'affective politics'. Trust and safety were greatly enriched by timely and appropriate disclosure of my academic interests, political stances and personal circumstances when "border-crossing". For example, my talking about sexism and racism freed the women to speak about it, binding us, as Collins (1998) avers, through the *insider* political stance we shared as women of colour in contemporary Ireland, under the gaze of whiteness. This is the beauty of standpoint methodology—each group produces distinctive partial, situated knowledge, which better equips us to consider other minoritised groups' standpoints (e.g. black men; Travellers, working class women, GLBTIQ people)³⁹ 'without relinquishing the uniqueness of our own or suppressing other groups' partial perspectives (Collins 2000: 271). This approach usefully advances a transversal feminist politics (Yuval Davis 1997: 88, Collins 2000: 245).

I took *volte-face* readings of the Irish academic literature on migration and grew more confident and explicit about my choice to be in the "Black feminist" camp. I more critically questioned the "help" I was given in "dealing with this vulnerable community" by NGO gatekeepers and also top-down explanations of what intercultural work was about. Told that the African women made "high demands" for childcare and expenses but "refused" to cooperate with requests to register by email for outings, I re-

³⁹ People who identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Queer.

articulated these charges— so readily attributed to gender/culture—through a Black feminist reading. These “problems” became legible as realities of living in DP, in poverty with young children, having limited Internet access and transport difficulties. Such charges are commonly made against black women who “speak back” or who refuse to be controlled or “fit” into Western cultures, widely referred to in the US and UK Black feminist literature.⁴⁰ “Culture” (instead of race) de-politicizes and de-intellectualizes women of colour’s struggles.

The closer I drew to Black feminist ethics, the stronger the trust and solidarity developed with participants. I deviated from macro-level research discourse (organized by *structural/disciplinary* power) towards a focus on everyday practices and the performativity of micro-power within the *interpersonal* domain. For Collins,

Whereas the structural domain of power organizes the macro-level of social organization with the disciplinary domain managing its operations, the interpersonal domain functions through routinized, day-to-day practices of how people treat one another... Such practices are systematic, recurrent, and so familiar that they often go unnoticed ... resistance strategies within this domain can take as many forms as there are individuals.

(Collins 2000: 287)

Friendships, solidarity, sisterhood

I was warmly embraced as a sister and highly respected for my academic status and knowledge; yet, at times I was considered “European” (weaker, less resilient, more naïve, needing gentle handling). I was sometimes expected to do things I felt were unreasonable. For example, at the final dress rehearsal, I was exhausted having spent

⁴⁰ I was told by a senior worker that one Nigerian woman who initially “presented as hostile, aggressive and difficult” was “worked with” to obvious improvement, but every once in a while, “she turned all Nigerian on me”. I wondered about other possible reasons for her demeanor, such as trauma or sexual assault but all was dismissed as “culture” —and “being Nigerian” became the problem. See also Ahmed’s work on “black feminist killjoys” and embodying diversity (2009; 2010).

all day building the set, preparing specific foods, putting up posters and so on. I sat down to take a break with the women, when someone demanded I fetch something for her. I declined. On another occasion, I was lobbied by one participant lobbied to change a group decision and felt I was biased towards mothers when reimbursing funds for childcare and transport (see pp.176-177), which I didn't act on. Despite the high level of trust, a register of unknown and unknowable feelings and views from the participants' perspectives remain, to which I concede. As Eubanks (2009) assures, the researcher must, having done their professional and ethical best, also trust that participants are able to know if they are being exploited and be open to "learn from below" (Spivak 2004: 546, 2006).

Nevertheless, this reality led to an impasse some months into the fieldwork, when I struggled with the unequal benefits to me and the futility and limited "usefulness" of doing more research with an over-researched population. Which-ever way I looked at it, research seemed exploitative and self-serving; my doctoral qualifications would grant me an even higher reach, but bring little material change to participants' immediate needs—to gain refugee status, access education or paid work and build a viable life. To claim research can influence policy and educate the public seemed tired and ineffectual; material conditions were worsening for asylum seekers in Ireland and elsewhere. Though relatively privileged, I was *not privileged enough or in the right ways* (financially, academically, socially) to effect change.

Navigating through this "deliberative moment" (Ackerly and True 2010b: 258) my supervisor helpfully led me to O'Neill's art-based models (2010). An Occupational Therapist in my early career, I was well versed in music, creative writing, drama and therapeutic arts-based interventions as well as my own performance practice. More recently, I worked as an artist-researcher at an aged care facility and taught activity-based group work for undergraduate Occupational Therapists. Forced to face the limits

of what I *could not* offer encouraged me to reconcile *as best as I could*, the tensions between ethics and power in feminist research. Taking stock of myself *wholly* rather than solely in terms of “identities” and “privileges” (commonly found in the literature) helped reclaim my previous work *outside* of academic feminism, “disciplined” into a separate compartment. By making the *most ethical* choice I could make, I was also gifted permission as a woman of colour to push for Black feminist space in male-dominated discipline-bound academia. Academic qualifications in Western feminism would permit me to speak back on terms that included my own (subjugated) knowledges. This rather painful moment shared with my supervisor inspired me to explore how to “put the power back” into participation (Eubanks 2009)— by returning research to its feminist roots and Black feminist epistemology, which for me, addressed the need for *and* the paths to materialize solutions. It kick-started (rather than dismissed) and united my intellectual, spiritual and artistic autobiographies (Stanley and Wise 1993). To enact this, I set about re-articulating Black feminist epistemology for this context.

Evaluation of Projects

Evaluation of BBB took place throughout the six weeks; each activity/session ended with a “cool down” period and discussion. Few participants wished to express their feelings in words, and others felt the activity complete in itself and did not require “explanation”. Again, I found a reluctance to *write* comments and verbal feedback, which I respected. A final session was dedicated to evaluation and presentation of an individualised collage of photographs I made that highlighted each participant’s significant moments. I used a drama therapy technique called *sociograms* (Jennings 1986) to obtain embodied/live feedback: people placed themselves on an imaginary line choosing a point to show how they were at the beginning of the project, then at the

end of the program. The lines referred to categories of their “hopes and fears” reported at the first session, as well as “confidence” “enjoyment”; “learning”. I followed up with individual interviews with five participants, as others were not available. See Appendix B (Figure 23) for comments from BBB participants from the final evaluation session.

In OOW, evaluation and member checking took place as the project went along. At the end of the formal research period, a dedicated evaluation session was held to rate fourteen main themes derived from transcripts over the twelve- month period. Each participant was given a full transcript of her main contributions (sent ahead by email); using a simple cut-and-paste rating exercise, each prioritized issues of importance, which I later collated (see Appendix B). Following this was a closing activity, also art based, of writing/drawing a gift each would like to give other members. We ended with lunch.⁴¹

Data Storage and Organisation

All meetings, sessions, discussions and interviews for both projects were digitally audio and/or videotaped by myself using my own equipment.⁴² All participants agreed to have the camera on a tripod and a digital audio recorder on the table running throughout the sessions; this allowed me to concentrate on facilitating. I transcribed the audio recordings myself, verbatim, mostly on a week-by-week basis between sessions to allow continuity of themes and write up play scripts (which I handed back in the next session). For confidentiality, secure storage and ease of reference, all personal and place names were changed at the time of storage, and

⁴¹ Edith was absent as she had just had a baby. See Chapter Six for participant feedback from OOW.

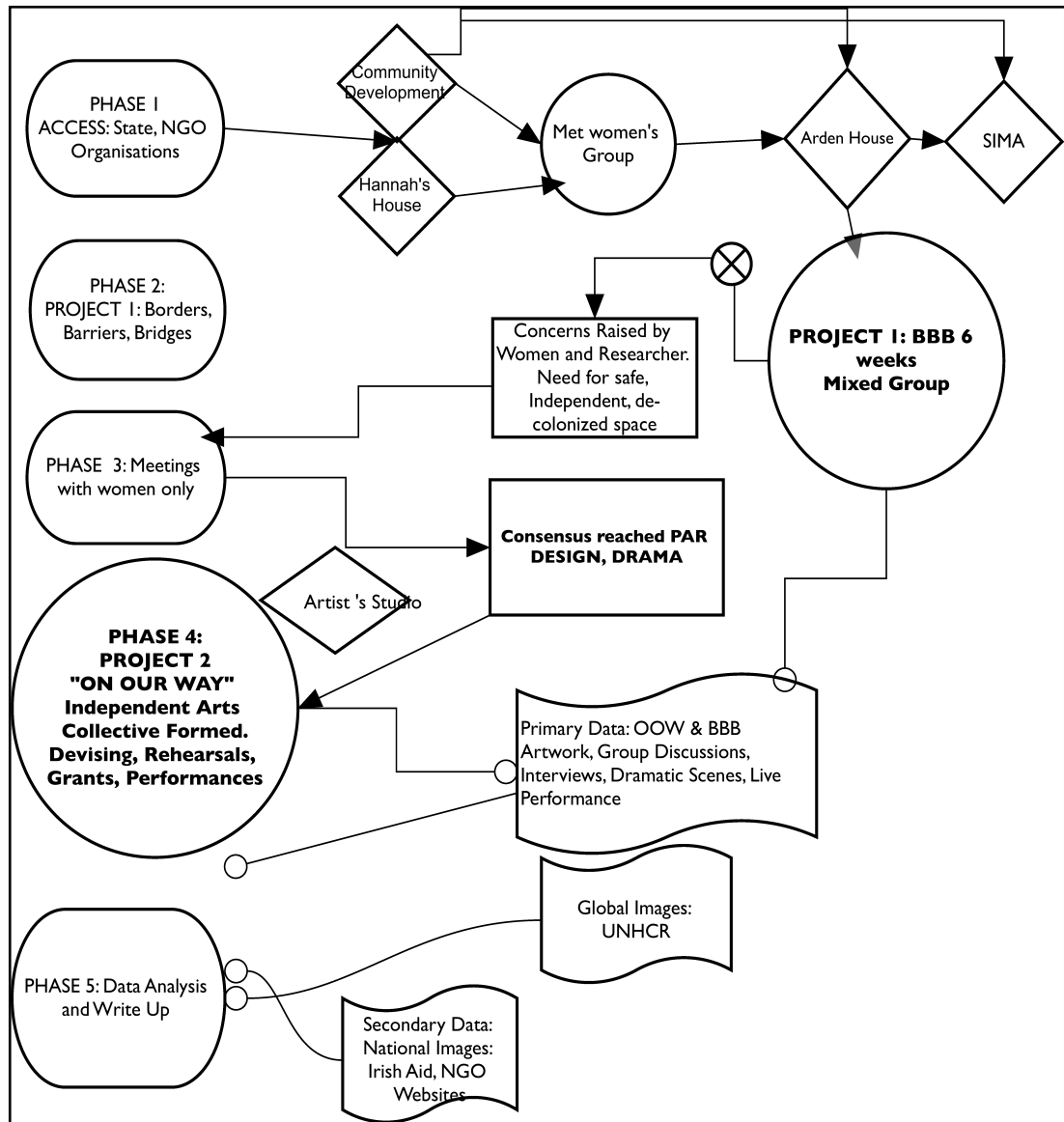
⁴² I used a medium priced Sony digital Camcorder with a sound card with large memory capacity, and an Ipod with a high-quality microphone for separate audio recording. Though the video equipment was not of broadcast standard, it was more than adequate for producing short films for conference presentations, when enhanced with the separate voice recordings.

documents were labelled with filenames to correspond with project, dates and content of sessions. All data were stored in electronic files on my personal computer, backed up on password protected portable hard drive devices and stored in my home office. Likewise, photographs of artwork, workshops and performances were taken with written consent and participants specified varying degrees of disclosure for publications and presentations of the research. Photographs and a video submitted with permission for examination have been redacted for publication of the thesis.

Primary Data included recordings of sessions and interviews, artwork, play scripts and photographs. These were arranged into two data sets of twelve Audio/Video recordings for BBB, and thirty-six Audio/Video sessions and interviews for OOW. Secondary Data includes documentary information given to Asylum Seekers by RIA, extracts from NGO and State websites, promotional material for cultural events, video recorded live events and celebrations and newspaper/media articles. It also includes three interviews from staff and managers of three organisations, two academic/activists, and two insider informants.

Below is a flowchart outlining the four main phases of data gathering during my fieldwork, followed by a discussion of the fifth phase—analysis and representation of the data.

Table 4: Stages of the Research Process



3.5 Analytic Procedures and Methods

Feminist research ethics attend to power all stages of the research process (Reinharz 1992; Stanley and Wise 1993; Wolf 1996, Nagar 2003). Determining what is “found” and how findings are represented exemplify this power. I earlier troubled power in Western academic theory-making in refugee/asylum studies (Chapter One) and abandoned the UN-led extant frame of “Women, Peace and Conflict” (pp.27-30).

How was I to work with the data in ways that bring to light to power differentials in concepts and languages? To be able to represent “difference” differently? I initially followed a Grounded Theory (GT) approach (Glaser and Holton 2004; Glaser and Strauss 1967/2012) where preconceived theory is not brought into fieldwork, but generated during analysis. “All is data” (whether audio recorded or not) across art/drama based, textual, narrative, field notes, conversations, secondary documents, photographs, trips, home visits and cultural events. Having gathered data from BBB this way, I departed from the GT approach for OOW, but took some major insights and themes about representation and decolonised spaces into praxis, and drew them together in final analysis to develop into theory.

During final data analysis, I returned to the two sets of transcripts (BBB, OOW), and began line-by-line coding, again borrowing from GT the technique of identifying and coding incidents or events of interest using participant’s own words or phrases, actions, affects, references to historic events, people or places. I developed memos from descriptive codes to form conceptual codes. I felt, however, that I was imposing frames and theory on the data, and gazing *at* participants rather than allowing the *data to speak*. I didn’t wish to “flatten” the art-based data and forfeit its full potential. Committed to a standpoint epistemology, I questioned how I might interface and reconcile traditional qualitative data analysis techniques with postmodern theories of subjectivity. Standing back, I tried re-categorizing the data into *Visual* (images); *Discursive* (discussions, interviews) and *Performative* (embodied speech acts, cultural and theatrical performances). Although all instances in the data are performative, visual and intertextual, separating them provided some analytical clarity. Nevertheless, the challenge remained—to find a way to draw them together, to deconstruct power

dynamics and intersubjective relationships. I explored diffractive analysis (Lenz Taguchi 2012)⁴³ and explored Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) method of "thinking through" the same data set (in their case interviews) using multiple theoretical frameworks.⁴⁴ This inspired me to try reading my various forms of data through Black feminist theory and *mestiza* consciousness and "make theory in the flesh". But I still felt I needed a robust method to operationalize the complex, varied modes of data sets and then write/speak about what I found. A breakthrough came after several weeks of trial and error, when I consulted Saldana's (2013) coding manual for qualitative research. There, I discovered a reference to Clarke's (2003) procedures of Situational Analysis—a method she innovated to supplement GT that *maps and situates* the data to 'elucidate complexities [and] the key elements and conditions that characterize the situation of concern' (ibid.p554).⁴⁵

Inspired by Clarke, I sketched a rudimentary "messy map" of a Situational Analysis of "Irish Asylum".⁴⁶ This then triggered the idea to try overlaying this onto Collins' (2000) matrix of domination, where I had already mapped the interlocking powers operating in this context (see p.67). This exhilarating moment unlocked the puzzle of how to move back and forth across theory and mixed data sets. Working from instances and references in my corpus of data, I identified which spaces, which levels, which actors, which actants (human and non-human) were of most concern to the participants. I then went on apply specific analytic methods to examine the three types

⁴³ I am grateful to Karl Kitching for introducing me to this body of literature; although I did not rely on Deleuzian theory, it did lead me to feminist "post-qualitative" methodology (Lather 2006, 2013; St Pierre 1997, 2014) and heed the demands of the data. Black feminist epistemology grounded the data in the material lives of people they were derived from.

⁴⁴ The authors "plug in" various theorists and their concepts—such as Derrida's deconstruction, Spivak's marginality, Foucault's power/knowledge and Butler's performativity—to the same data set of interviews with black female academics.

⁴⁵ Here, I developed my "diamond mind" metaphor, to lay the diamond on each "cloth" or intersection, and data set, and see what shone through as most relevant to the participants lived experiences in terms of power.

⁴⁶ I applied only the "messy map" stage of the Situational Analysis, then overlayed that on the matrix of domination model to conduct an Intersectional Analysis. See Table 9 in Appendix B.

of data (Visual, Discursive, Performative). For each instance of “doing asylum”, I asked, *what work* was taking place, and *which powers* were in operation (discussed in the next section).

The women’s everyday concerns were located at the intersection between the disciplinary and hegemonic domains of power. Here, the structures at State disciplinary level impact local NGO work, which play out at the micro/local level of everyday experiences and individual consciousness (Collins 2000: 276). I centralized this intersection, and worked in and out to theorize the macro/Structural domain. According to Collins (2000: 284-285), the hegemonic realm links all the domains. Global (macro) level asylum discourses enter the national (meso) spaces through NGOs, health, welfare, education institutions and the academy. Hegemonic power naturalizes or “justifies oppression” through continually manipulating and refashioning ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies to shape group and individual consciousness to uphold state domination. The interpersonal domain then, is a critical site where change is most possible; if we can alter our consciousness and perceptions of our experiences, we can resist, subvert, and produce counter-hegemonic knowledge. While this may not directly transform structural or disciplinary power, or remove oppressive actors, agents and spaces, it validates and re-empowers people and works within oppression to re-think it and finds spaces to mobilize.⁴⁷

Having developed an analytic framework, I used slightly different methods to analyse each data set, discussed next.

⁴⁷ NGOs can be seen as modes of social organization that use ideas and ideology to absorb (and depoliticize) oppressed groups’ dissent through humanitarianism. Roy (2014: para.4) considers them “secular missionaries” that ‘defuse political anger and dole out as aid or benevolence what people ought to have by right ... [and] turn people into dependent victims and blunt the edges of political resistance’.

Analytic Methods

Discourses are

a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure or group of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs which provide a language for talking about -i.e. a way of representing- a particular kind of knowledge about a topic...[and] the production of knowledge through language...[which]... is itself produced by a "discursive practice" ... of producing meaning.
(Hall 1992: 2).

Meanings and affects are “read” in the context of other texts (Hall 1992) which circulate and accumulate in economies (Ahmed 2000) through *citation*, or an endless chain of repetition that accumulate the authority of the sign. The practice of deconstructive readings of data are aimed not at the ‘exposure of error ... but to ... constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced (Spivak 1996: 27). Discourses are intertextual; that is to say, images, words, symbols, bodies, organisations, professions, practices are all assigned with ideological, political, affective or cultural meanings and values (Hall 1997a,b; Ahmed 2002, 2004; Barthes 1973). Under Ahmed’s (2000) framework, my encounter with the data needs to account for spatial, temporal and affective elements of discourses *and* counter-discourses.

The greater content of the data is biographical. Despite their high applicability in asylum research (O’Neill 2010), neither narrative nor art-based approaches are immune from essentialising and homogenizing identities (Eastmond 2007, 2011; Cederberg 2013). We lose the critical import of biographical research if we don’t consider the discursive constraints that shape our accounts; all stories are produced in a social context and marginal voices are not necessarily counter-hegemonic (Cederberg 2013: 2). I traced ‘which identities are ascribed, resisted, or embraced, and which processes themselves are unremarked and achieve their effect because they are not noticed (Scott 1991: 791). To take deconstructive readings of the *self-representational* data, I combined cultural, visual and poststructural analyses using methods pertinent to

each mode of data to elicit affective exchanges, discursive formations and so on. For *textual* data—transcripts of discussions, interviews, play building, performed scenes and audience discussion—I did not ask “what does the person mean” but traced identity positions taken, ascribed, resisted. I needed to *recognize agency* but also to consider if this agency was ‘individually chosen or structurally produced because this is only possible in specific conditions and contexts’ (Cederberg 2013:13). Butler’s (1990, 1993) theories of performativity were used to trace “bodies as evidence” (Perera 2006) that are produced in and through asylum.

To analyse self-representational images-based artwork of participants in BBB, I asked the picture to “evaluate itself” (Leavy 2009), asking of each artwork: Which “bodies” are produced through which discourses? What are the affective flows? How do they circulate? Accumulate? The collages are considered “cultural products” made in relatively de-colonized spaces of creation, and can show how participants “make meaning” in contrast with “how meanings are made about them” in promotional and informational material circulated, for example, on State and NGO websites.

My analyses attend to three elements—performativity (Butler 1990, 1993; Ahmed 2000), affective economies (Ahmed 2004) and coding/decoding of representations, whether discursive or visual. I consider the identity locations of audiences/readers and take conjunctural readings to explicate ‘the discursive operations of white power as they are differentiated by other categories of identity’ (Gillman 2007: 129).

When analysing the sample of photographs and NGO website images, I used semiotic analysis—a reading of signs, which are not simply a text, image or object, but one that has been *coded with meaning*, or “a thing plus meaning” (Chandler 1994; Hall

1997a; Barthes 1973).⁴⁸ These “top-down” representations circulate knowledge ideas, beliefs, values, affects and are saturated with hegemonic power that direct audiences towards “preferred” or dominant readings (Hall 1980, 1997a). I don’t ask “What does the representation mean” but “How might it frame difference in ways that “disappears or mis-recognize difference itself?”⁴⁹ What work does it “do” in this place, at this time? Who benefits? Open to collective expressions. I asked: Which constructions matter more than others? Why? To whom? How are meanings conveyed through images/art different from narratives/textual data or when dramatized? What happens when the data speak to each other? What is the data “doing to/with me” across sensory, intellectual, emotional levels? To read the data like this, in the present encounter avoids re-essentialising identities.

My final method used was to analyse live performance in the theatre space, which is different from other spaces of asylum. In this “fourth space” space of *convivial encounter*, conditions have been purposefully transformed for the women to autonomously determined what is to be presented to public audiences and how.⁵⁰ Self-representation is embodied, hence visual, speech, textual and affective expressions take place simultaneously. My analyses of scenes draw from Africa anti-colonial literature that regards orature, song and art as vital texts of resistance and decolonization (Wa Thiong'o 1986: 95).⁵¹ In this analysis, words, song, dance, and affects *all matter, as processes and products* of self-representation. I use theories of spectatorship from Participatory Theatre (Boal 1979), Popular theatre (Salverson 1999,

⁴⁸ These appear in Chapters One, Four and Five and Six.

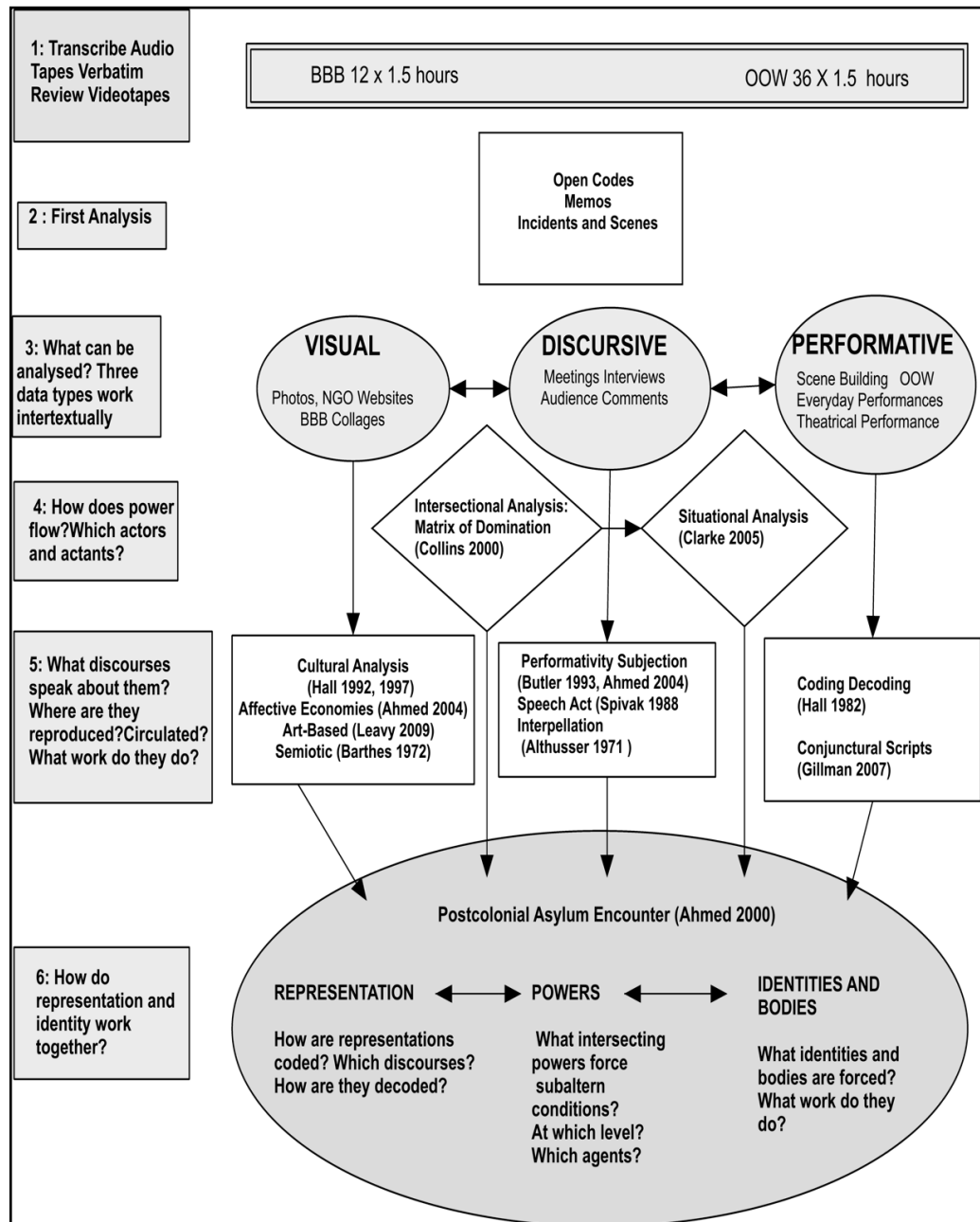
⁴⁹ I am grateful to Karl Kitching for clarifying this point.

⁵⁰ My reading alludes to Bhabha's (1994) “third space of enunciation” interwoven with Sandoval's ‘oppositional consciousness’ and methodologies of the oppressed (Sandoval 2000).

⁵¹ Sanle, Yayah and Yoh all sang spontaneously during devised scene. Yayah asked “Is it ok to sing?” which illustrates my point.

2010) and Refugee drama (Aston 2003) together with the emotional flows on stage and between actor and audience in real-time, live post-performance transactions

Table 5: Analytical Procedures



3.6 Representation and Dissemination of Findings

The only book that is worth writing is the one we don't have the courage or strength to write.
The book that hurts us ... Writing is writing what you cannot know before you have written it ...
a book stronger than the author

Helen Cixous 1993 (in Lather 2007: 4)

Addressing the circularity of modes and registers of representation while also accounting for emotion made the writing-up stage challenging. I needed to represent the other *by deconstructing* how they have been represented *as others*, to unshackle the data from essentialised identity categories. I also needed to attain analytical rigour and re-present subaltern stories as sophisticated theory (Kapoor 2004: 636; 2002), to make it intelligible for academic audiences. Whilst the performed stories had strong public appeal, I noted that the deeper contentious issues I critique in the thesis were not yet spoken. To reach wider audiences, one approach I hope to take is to fictionalize the data for confidentiality and draft scenes to produce a full-length play script or film (with consent and/or in collaboration with the women). Aspects of the work have been presented at academic conferences (with consent); one successful strategy was to divide the presentation into a short video of process along with a live dramatic performance. This “brings the women along with their stories” and theory into the present, they enter the room together.⁵² Two refereed papers are also forthcoming.⁵³ Importantly, I never let myself forget that as a diasporic postcolonial subject, I

⁵² See Appendix E3 for a video presentation at UCC Women’s Studies Arts and Activism Conference, June 2013 (redacted) and Appendix B (Table 23) for audience comments. One academic stated that the performance “affirmed the theoretical perspectives” and another that it “broke the familiar racist circuit of audience-performer” where the presenter absolves the guilt of the (white) audience who go away feeling better about themselves. It would be useful to formalize a method to collect such comments for future performances.

⁵³ Australian Race and Whiteness Studies Association (2014); Monash University & Institute of postcolonial Studies (2014); Researchers For Asylum Seekers, Melbourne University (2014); Australian Women’s and Gender Studies International Conference (2014). Invited chapters/articles include “The Necropolitics of Irish Asylum”, Special Issue of Journal of Postcolonial Studies (Forthcoming 2016); Wahala! African Women Troubling Irish Borders,” in Irish Migrant Adaptations, Eds. Charlotte Mc Ivor and Matthew Spangler (Forthcoming 2016).

“intimately inhabit” the very structures that I seek to critique (Dhawan 2007: 201); that I am in a position that makes me visible as a producer of knowledge about the other and that this knowledge can be (mis) taken as the “subaltern having spoken”. I may own the theorizing, the writing, the intellectual production of the participants’ stories, *but I am not them*. Women in asylum need to speak and this work charts an anterior step—to open space in feminist praxis for this to occur.

Having discussed the background to asylum in Ireland, my interdisciplinary feminist theoretical framework and participatory research methodology, the following three chapters contain my data analyses. The empirical data examine the relationship between identity and representations in terms of performativity— that is to say, how discourses (discursive and visual representations, practices) “produce” bodies, identities, ideas, and affects through power/knowledge—and how these bodies “do work” (or labour) on their way through asylum. The data analyses follow a broad progression from the visual, abstract figurative representations of African women to “real” embodied proximal bodies on their way through Irish asylum. Over three chapters, I broadly ask: How are African/Black women represented? What work do these representations do? in Chapter Four, then in Chapter Five examine: What happens when they try to speak? What conditions of power and spaces does asylum create that disallow, make illegible or appropriate their “speech”. In Chapter Six, I ask: Do the relatively de-colonized, convivial conditions of the theatre space better facilitate self-representation?

4. NGO Projects, Practices, Products: Performativity/Non- Performativity and Affective Economies

The postcolonial woman of colour appears and disappears as she is needed.
Mirza 2009: 7

4.1 Introduction

The next three chapters examine “identity” and “representation” through data gathered using mixed methods in three domains: the visual (Chapter Four), the discursive (Chapter Five), and the performative (Chapter Six). The identities and bodies of Black/Third World woman have been spectacularized and fetishized through global regimes of representation throughout trans-atlantic slavery and European colonisation.¹ In the postcolonial era, I contend that the “humanitarian” gaze has re-coded and “fixed” newer messages of vulnerability, abjection and victimhood onto Third World women’s bodies. I demonstrated one example of this through UNHCR and other aid/humanitarian representational circuits in Chapter One.² The African female body in particular has become an integral sign— “a thing plus meaning”— that re-iterates the “white saviour” discourse to achieve sustained support for a politics of humanitarianism. My analytic framework seeks to examine links between these cultural representations and their performativity to understand how the material bodies spoken about are affected. In the Irish context, photographs of “little

¹ The figure of the African woman was constructed as lazy, simple, domestic, servile, sexually available, animal-like (hooks 1982, 1992; Sharpely-Whiting 1999; Collins 2000) through pseudo-scientific evolutionary and anthropological discourses flowing back and forth between Europe and its colonies, establishing the gendered ‘racial grammar’ (Stoler 1995) that persists today. The Irish were similarly racialised in the USA and UK but “became white” (Mc Clintock 1995, Ignatiev 1995, Hickman and Walter 1995; Walter 2001, 2011; Carby 2001; Garner 2004; Mac an Ghaill 2002).

² See my earlier discussion on “Gazing at Asylum” (pp. 20-26.). In Ireland, Africa itself is consistently represented as a ‘disaster area [of] starving people ... poverty-stricken...wars [justaposed with] benevolent white (preferably Irish) experts’ (Aniagolu 1997: 49).

black babies” were represented on collection boxes of Irish church missions as abject victims in need of saving (Lentin 2001, 2004; Fanning 2002; Moriarty 2005; Mac Éinrí 2006; White 2009; Dalikení 2013).³ So, when real African female *bodies* (and their babies) arrived in numbers in Ireland, the meanings already *assimilated* by the Irish public clash in the proximal encounter of differences that had previously been ‘fetishized away’. As White (2002: 111), an African American researching in Ireland⁴ asks, when black women ‘assert a contrary representation of self ... is it the case that the real person cannot fully live down the representations that preceded her?’

I contend that this is indeed the case. In this chapter, I propose that global discourses of refugees are performative—they reclassify identities and bodies of colour in specific ways that “do work” for neoliberal states in the North. I demonstrate this through the case of products and practices of local pro-migrant/asylum advocacy NGOs. Regimes of representation assume the power to construct the topic and tell us how we may talk about it (Hall 1992). For Ahmed (2000), Foucault’s (1980) theory of power/knowledge is a relational dynamic reliant on visibility; in postcolonial encounters, it is the re-cognition or “knowing again” itself (not the recognition as or of the subject) that constitutes the subject (ibid. p24). Strangers already “fit” into what we (the community, or nation) have decided are strange and this recognition operates on a visual economy through the *skin* that also *feels* (i.e. creates emotional meanings and responses). Discourse does not act separately from the legal/structural/material machinery that “keeps out” refugees but is, I contend, performative—it produces

³ The “little black babies” syndrome is not unique to Ireland and was entrenched in my own Catholic childhood in Asia and in Australia both. See Appendix D for contemporary Irish examples.

⁴ White gives an account of jogging in Dublin street and being “held up” by two white Irish boys, one with toy gun who shouted: “Hands up, nigger bitch!” This highlights the universal influence of American culture on the Irish public; my son, born in Ireland with a white Irish father, was frequently called “nigger” in the playground and football field.

identities, bodies and subjects (Butler 1990, 1993)—through intertextual visual, affective and discursive (text, language) modes.

The first two sections contain data extracts from OOW, which highlight how the women’s “pseudo-participation” in courses and campaigns—cloaked in neoliberalized discourse of diversity and integration—incur technologies that re-signify, re-colonize, consume, and appropriate black bodies and identities. I concentrate on visibility and across all data, ask: What cultural, political and affective “work” do representational practices and products do? This expose how power creates meanings *through representation*—by directing audiences towards “preferred” readings that differentiate and fragment non-white identities and ultimately re-iterate the NGO as the “white saviour”.

Sustaining focus on the visual domain, I then analyse some *visual* self-representational data (collages) created by participants in BBB. This data explicates what discourses those in asylum are “speaking back to” and how their artworks contest and challenge the narrow, hegemonic “top-down” representations of asylum. They tell a bottom-up, more complete alter-narrative of asylum “from below”. This data also includes perspectives of a white Irish female volunteer and a black male perspective on racialised identity.

The circularity of representation makes analysis tricky, as if jumping onto a moving merry-go-round. As an entry point, I present first a series of transcript extracts from early formation meetings by the women from OOW where the issue first erupted. As the women and I discuss how they would like things to be in this project, many previous (unhappy) experiences of “being represented” by a local NGO are purged.

I generally identify the speaker in data transcripts through pseudonyms, but in specific segments use “A, B, C” or no identification at all to avoid revealing identities and organisations, in accord with the women’s wishes. Not all the women were present

at every meeting, with late arrivals joining into discussions. Transcripts have been edited, and major cuts (repetition, inaudible or irrelevant, confidential) are indicated thus (...) to differentiate from pauses in speech or interrupted speech, which are indicated thus: ... Most extracts are presented as sequences to illustrate the dialogical research processes.

4.2 “Ask before taking pictures”: Establishing non-colonizing practices

Taking a Black feminist *and* participatory orientation in OOW was pivotal in unlocking critical insights into representation that might have otherwise remained subjugated. At our first formal meeting, we discussed the vision, format, content, intended audience and ownership of the project.⁵ The first issue raised was communication; living in different hostels/houses, the women relied on mobile phones and Facebook as means of communicating and organizing events,⁶ which was sometimes too exposing.

Yayah If I go to Facebook ...I know how to ... I check something...as I'm checking I put a mask that I'm not online (...) so many people don't like Facebook because... too much talk...too much expose...expose you too much. Any meeting that happened...like today, tomorrow morning people are putting on Facebook and people don't like (...) I go on Facebook, I check what I want to check, I close it, I go back, then I chat if I see you, I can ask you to go to your room ... yea ... it doesn't really matter you should be there 24/7.

(OOW Tr1a: 21-22)

Yayah is clearly conscious of the need to combat the double-edged sword of visibility/hypervisibility. Her strategy is to don a “mask”, to have the account to keep

⁵ The decisions to work outside NGO spaces for the second project OOW and its drama-based focus had already been made due to environmental constraints and desires, which I discussed in the previous chapter (pp.121-128).

⁶ The Internet is a significant means of civic engagement for migrant groups in Ireland and while media access to print publications is developing, access to radio and television have been less accessible to them (Ugba 2005: 21).

informed but claim she is offline; to not have “friends” but instigate chats in private when necessary. Spinning off this discussion, the women discovered that a photograph of their group in a St Patrick’s Day parade in their *local* town had appeared in a *national* newspaper, which was then posted on a local NGO website and Facebook page. This was clearly an established practice; consent was not sought and those who did not use Facebook or read the national newspapers were unaware that their pictures were appearing. In this project, the women wanted to establish a new practice, to “ask people before putting the pictures”.

- A. Yes...ask people...
- B. Before putting the pictures...group pictures should be inside... because we don’t put individual pictures ...we can put them but with the person’s consent
- A. All the pictures are already in [SIMA webpage] or Facebook or whatever so it’s just the match
- C. Tag
- D. Including the Patrick’s Day Parade?
- A. Hah! (*shock*) Go to [SIMA] Facebook, it’s all about our African parade!
- B. I saw, it’s even in the paper. I saw the paper in Dublin.
- A. Even the woman who was not in the march ... she was just checking her mobile phone...they put her in that Facebook... (*ironic laughter*)

(OOW Tr1a: 4-6)

A second concern arose in the context of a visioning exercise⁷ in the following session, at which we hypothetically discussed making a documentary film, clarified the format, intended audience and ownership of the project.

- NF Who do you think is going to watch this...who would you like to watch this
- Yoh Irish community...
- Sanle Irish community...everybody
- NF So the Irish community is your first audience...and is it just this area, do you it to go further?

⁷ Drawn from Aston (1999).

Sanle Ireland.

Yoh Irish community

Sanle/Yoh National...everywhere in Ireland

NF And what sort of people can you see in the audience?

MT When we talk of the Irish community it doesn't only mean the Irish...it means everybody who lives in Ireland...who has a story or who has something in mind...so watching it will reflect on them...so it's not only the Irish...because everybody living in Ireland is a member of the Irish community...For example...the millionaire... [a reality TV program which recently featured asylum seekers]... it wasn't only the Irish who watched it...it was watched by everyone...those who has a chance to see at that time...because it stays on the record...if possible it can even out...if possible it goes worldwide..

NF Have you imagined it on YouTube?

Yoh Yes

NF Is that something you've considered?

Sanle Yes (OOW Tr2a: 1-2)

The paradoxes of representation thus appear—the women want visibility and voice but must also consider exposure and surveillance and navigate these conflicting needs. Making safe space for consent and dialogical collaboration encouraged *collective* reflection and shaped new strategies. I went on to introduce the notion of ownership of the work we will do in the project. This question and Yoh's comment about "worldwide" triggered off an incident for another woman, who disclosed in more detail later that meeting (and on numerous other occasions) her previous involvement in a short film for a NGO advocacy campaign. One unhappy outcome was that this campaign film replaced the scarce opportunities available for asylum-seekers for *direct* self-representation and they lost control of the campaign product.

A That is what they did for the [campaign] film...before we were going to schools or university to give a talk...since they get the film they don't need us anymore...what they do is just show the film to the student and the student themselves...they made the announcements.

NF How do you feel about that?

B That's what they are doing!!

A They are not supposed to do that...what you are saying is very good because I was waiting for that...that is what I ...

- NF so you weren't very happy about it...
- A No...the way you are explaining is very good...if we own the film...then everywhere...if somebody takes the film to show...
- NF They pay for it?

A second outcome was the shock when discovering, purely by chance, that the film was uploaded on YouTube and screened on a satellite channel without consent.

- A Let me give you an example...I made a film (...) I have a friend in [Brazil] ...one day she ring me... "Oh I saw you in TV ...in Discovery TV" (...) When she told me I said "ok get the time, the date, the name of the channel"...she emailed me all this...I went to [NGO] because I know that two people from [there] made the film...I want to know who gave the film to Discovery TV...
- B Discovery show to other countries...
- A ...all the world...They asked the two... they said no...they asked the [filmmakers]...they don't do it...so it just stay like that...no one made a call to Discovery TV
- B but they know how it went...it's not Discovery channel didn't get it
- A That was last year...so it just stayed like that...If they are support [ive] they will go, give a call, write a letter...that so and so on that day... in Brazil...they showed...
- B The discovery channel is not only for Brazil...so those who watched Discovery at that day... every person who watched Discovery at that period saw it...in the world ...not just [Brazil]
- A I went to see a solicitor...but I didn't have money to tell the solicitor to go through with it...so it just stayed like that...its not fair...to take people's life or film and go and get money...I don't know how much they get from Discovery TV...I don't know how much they sell that film.

(OOW Tr2a: 3)

The discussions on "hypervisibility" and participation in NGO campaigns, projects and courses in these early phases of fieldwork were highly emotional; years of waiting with no change had left the women disillusioned, depleted and angry and they vented deeply hurtful feelings of "being used" and betrayed. Empathizing, I mentioned that just the previous week I had made an oral presentation at an Integration Ireland⁸

⁸ National NGO funded by philanthropic organizations committed to the integration and inclusion of people from immigrant backgrounds.

conference, then found it published on the local NGO website, without credit or consent. I requested its withdrawal as it contained personal matter and resubmitted a revised paper (which wasn't put up). Those women experienced within the NGO sector were aware of healthy budgets available for such events and said I ought to have been paid.

- A All the people who did speech on that day they give them ... why they don't give to you? There's money for that...
- B So for others...and you nothing? They take advantage of people
- A There's money for Integration...The Minister of Justice gave...they have *big money*...

(OOW Tr2a: 5)

I became conscientized about my own co-option into the “migrant scene” and needing to choose between “speaking for” others as an academic and “speaking as” a migrant woman.⁹ On that occasion, I spoke about my own life, as my preferred audience was other women of colour, to whom I wanted to communicate theoretical understanding of identity in everyday language. Speaking as a volunteer, however, I forfeit the fringe benefits (e.g. hotel accommodation, travel expenses). The women concluded that session stating they didn't want to be “a second fool” and be used again. Over several following meetings, we decided to form a new arts-based collective, register as a not-for-profit community group and apply independently for funding. Their vision was to develop an autonomous but inclusive project, migrant-women led, but open to others (including Irish people) who wished to work together.¹⁰

Over the next three extracts, I explore these issues more deeply, as they re-emerged in later meetings in the context of specific projects, practices and products of

⁹ This illustrates the “difference the difference makes” in my intersectional location—unlike other academic or NGO speakers at the event, I wasn't on a salary. It also illustrates Najmabadi's (1997) point, that my “double-location” hybridizes new categories, produced through demands to “speak as”. This is where I learned to be wary of taking on the “metropolitan migrant intellectual location”.

¹⁰ De Tona and Lentin (2010: 498) find that migrant women's preference for multi-ethnic rather than exclusivist groupings a successful strategy to resist separatist and communitarian politics.

local NGOs. Aimed at participation, integration and tolerance of diversity, the end results were often “non-performative” but instead likely to fragment identities, break solidarity and cause “humanitarian harm”.

4.3 The Non-performativity and Affective Economies of Pseudo Education, Pseudo-Participation and Cultural Celebrations

People in the asylum system are encouraged to “participate” and “integrate” into Irish society through a number of NGO-led (pseudo) educational training courses, community development and integration activities. When issues of belonging and advocacy for rights are mediated through charitable organisations, an industry is built around activism (Lentin 2010), which incurs the expenditure of much energy and time for the women who attend meetings, projects and cultural events. The following transcript extract—from our third meeting deciding what stories to tell in their drama—led to a heated discussion about delays in receiving their certificates of attendance for courses (important evidence for asylum cases) and being tired of being “rounded up” as a “standard black person” for campaigns which they had not initiated.

C Everybody...I believe...er...all these NGO'S...all these things... they're there for their own benefit. I don't believe...if you really see...I really don't know what they are doing...if you have some strong problem and this organisation help me out...it's very difficult...For example they always say...SIMA, SIMA, SIMA (...) let me just say...if you have a deportation...what will they do?

B Mnnn

C They won't do anything!

B Of course.

C Not only deportation...Like now, if you are looking for a transfer, for example like for an accomodation centre that you living...maybe you don't want and that place you don't feel to stay there...if you go there, they will just say (...) they can't help you in anything...like now, somebody just rang me now from SIMA telling me...they know I'm from [DP Hostel] and (...) they want me to see if I can come there and

- complain about the food...I tell them...I feed myself not the accomodation centre feeding...that I don't have time for that
- B That's the same thing that lady said...what's her name again?
(*referring to a participant in BBB who she met at a play we all attended*)
- A They phoned me yesterday
- C To do what? What will you do for me? I don't like to be... your standard black person
- A They want me to complain.To complain for what?
- B For what? What will they change? What will they *do*?
- A (angry) And tomorrow when they change, they say its *we* who work(*they take the credit*)
- C We who work...
- A We tell them to complain, they complain, and...now it's our name
- C Ahhaa! (OOW Tr3b: 8-10)

The women felt their participation was largely framed to suit campaign criteria and agendas (even for relevant issues like food), and the NGO takes the credit for their work. Serious complaints such as deportations, on the other hand, garner a weak response. They recounted the case of a Nigerian board member of an NGO, whose deportation went unchallenged by the organisation (Tr 3b: 19-20). At this point in the discussion, the women grappled with conflicting feelings of gratitude for help they had received from several Irish people and organisations. They explicitly stated that not all NGO were doing this, pointing to differences between them and mentioning by name highly principled individuals within these organisations. The discussion turned to that of delays in receiving their certificates of attendance for courses.

- C All those things! People are tired! When we do any course give our certificates. Don't be looking for something else.
- B [*angry*] They have funding let them Respect it! Respect people! (...) I came *three times* to remind them
- C ...all those courses
- B I do it to keep myself busy!
- C you go to Arden House, you do your course you have your certificate...you go away...and you have your certificate photocopied and you send it to Justice [*Department*] (...) proving you are doing something ...but while you wait four months...

- B When it happens once it's an error.
- C [*sucks teeth*] Ah ah! [*expression of agreement*]
- B But when it happens twice, its not an error (...) How many do I have in my box there? (...) I'm just having them...it's even a bore to me now those certificates (...) they don't even help you sometimes...all those course course course!
- [*A tried to reassure B, as she was a facilitator on part of that course*]
- B and they claim that they are working for immigrants...I'm an immigrant but you don't work for me...You work for yourself...don't put an immigrant ahead of you [*don't hide behind us*] it's what I don't like. SIMA...but Arden House...
- C Ah-Ah! [*agrees*] Arden House
- B even that cup of tea that you drink, it gives you a smile...they way you are taken care of...but when you come in [*to SIMA*] they greet you as though you're coming to take their post of duty..."Hi. You're welcome! you're welcome"... [*mimics*] I'm an African and I know what a welcome looks like....don't give me handshake on the front and a slap behind.!
- C People are tired
- B I like when they respect... people
- C That I should come and talk about food! What will they do for me?
- B They'll give you 3:50 [*Euros*] for transport.
- NF [*to C*] You have said you are tired many times. Can you tell me more about that?
- C Ahh...I'm saying tired because you waste time going to school and at the end you don't have certificate...you know...with the hard times you are having in the hostel, being bored, you come out (...) at times you go to school to keep busy (...) at times you see these things ... not proper...we know why we are coming for our certificates...we are immigrants...we don't have papers...if things don't work out you can go back to your country of origin and use that certificate for something...if today, God forbid, if I have a deportation letter... I can use it to work in my country of origin...so I know the importance of my certificate.

(OOW Tr3b: 9-13)

Conlon and Gill (2013: 252) in UK context articulate participation in pseudo-educational activities as “subjection through release”. The authors contend that Immigration Detention centres represent “classes and courses” as benign, quiet, self-reflective and self-development activities, but that these are technologies of discipline and surveillance—immigrants not only ‘lay bare their inner thoughts’, but are subject to ‘compulsory visibility’ (Foucault 1979, *ibid.*). I consider these classes, courses,

certificates, films and art projects all cultural products, through which organizations represent their own goodness through the production and performances of “good asylum seekers”. Without devaluing the tremendous benefits for recipients of these activities or denigrating the NGOs and advocates that help and support people in asylum, the point I wish to make is that projects, practices and products might work well for the organization, but in the long term, re-produce and cage migrants as supplicants and themselves as “saviours”, subject locations from which neither party can easily escape. Raza’s (from BBB) experience with a “counselling course” illustrates how discourse produces and inferiorizes the subject it names:

Oh the titles are always appealing you know (*laughs*) “counselling course”. I thought I would get an accredited certificate...it would help me get a job or enrol in a course in [University]...The first part was about counselling...but the second part was just a mixture of topics...about Islam...AIDs...trafficking...drugs (...) I asked. “Did you pick topics randomly or did you have an objective?” They said those topics are “multicultural “ point of view. I don’t understand. For me all those topics...most of them negative...we always look at them negatively...AIDS and things...and Islam for some people is terrorism and things...so they are linked to Africans, to ignorance, so its all negative, negative. (...) Yeah...and that people who are Muslim, or who are trafficked or are HIV they should be attending to a counsellor...if you are a counsellor...if a Muslim is coming to you as a patient you have to know how to deal with them.

(Raza Ind.Int. Nov. 2011)

According to Ahmed (2012: 117), if Butler (1993: 2) contends that the performative produces the effects that it names, then discourses of integration/diversity can be seen as “non-performative” because they ‘*do not produce* the effects that it names’. Here, the claim to bring about integration, the naming of itself, comes to *stand in* for the effects. Participation, if conditional, leaves no space to express the stress and frustration of living in asylum hostels; ironically, it instead requires “affective labour” from service-users, who are expected to exhibit happiness and gratitude.

What annoys me is that they give the funding for this purpose... you are collecting money for asylum seekers for immigrants (...) keep us busy instead

of being stress up in the asylum hostel (...) people take their time ... take that frustration from the hostel ...come there thinking that by being busy by doing something ...positive, improve your knowledge ... *then somebody tells you you do it and you have no smile!*

(B, Tr 3b: 13)

The women want to complain but have no proof other than experience and bearing witness. Despite the stress of living in hostels, they are expected to be cheerful—to make the organization feel useful—when they attend. The subject position carved for them is one of *just enough* of a victim—the conundrum is, should they present either as too happy or complain and expect too much (such as paid work), they risk losing the support altogether. From where they stand, the greater proportion of funds is spent on staff salaries; no immigrants in the organisations are employed as salaried staff and nepotism reigns.

How many immigrants work there? Let them work! Let them use the name of immigrants and feed their homes, have job opportunities amongst themselves...because it's become a circle among friends...I know people who have been employed there... who came...this you friend, boyfriend, husband, wife...all now working...Is it a family union? (*All chuckle knowingly*)

(OOW Tr3b: 13-14)

The women requested that I “say it but without saying any name of the organisation—when they watch the film they will know it”. They *did want* the organisation to realise what they are doing wrong but not to single them out and identify them because of the dangers of telling the truth.

Sanle And also of the complaints of the hostel...for about more than ten years people in the hostel are complaining ...nothing changed...so why do they want to continue to complain...so if they really want to help us, they can help us...doing themselves...making a complaint (...) the same organization now today are asking me today to complain about the food...when my certificate is more more important that food.

NF Is there anything that you think that can be done about it?

Sanle Except waiting it's ... difficult...because...after ten years what I learnt is that when you want to say the truth you get people against you...so it's very difficult to say the truth...and I don't even know how to say the truth...there are a lot of things going wrong and...if you want to say it you get people against you.

Yoh *They turn against you...*

Sanle and it's difficult because ...I can say...we are in their country...

Yoh that's true...

Sanle we can't do anything...it's difficult to do something...very difficult...because when you are *one*, you will see that million of people will be against you...

Yoh the people the origins will be against you...

Sanle they will be against you...

Yoh so You who is a visitor, you want to come and fight..?

Sanle yeah. It's like we are a visitor

Yoh Yeah. Even though those words are true or not, you remain a stranger

Sanle still stranger, even though you have an Irish passport (...) you have your naturalisation- you are still a visitor...it's very difficult...I don't even know if something will change in this case one day...I don't know...

Yayah can't change...

Sanle They are doing things the wrong way...when you want to talk they are against you

This discussion ended on a subdued, weary note as the women's anger subsided; they felt used and bitter that job opportunities for locals were created on the back of immigrants. It is here that I began to pick up the overarching themes "we are tired ...we feel used", and how dangerous "speaking the truth" is for them. Lorde (1984: 131) states that 'when we turn from anger, we turn from insight'. When listened to, the women's anger productively steered my analytical attention towards the affective "labour" their identities and bodies might be doing when "doing asylum". It also affirmed the importance of uplifting, replenishing methods of self-representation when working with them.

Getting Close: Consuming, Becoming and Passing Through the Other through Cultural Celebrations

Multicultural or intercultural celebrations such as Africa Day, Diversity Day,¹¹ World Refugee Day and St Patrick's Day all offer ways to "get close" (Ahmed 2000: 28) to Ireland's others. Such events are positive on a collective level—ethnicized groups can honour cultural traditions, dress, sing and dance in a celebratory, convivial atmosphere. This platform allows African children to learn and practice their traditions, re-define themselves, network and support each other (De Tona and Lentin 2010). Increased visibility is also an important aspect of being accounted for, and publicly demonstrates willingness to work towards integration, to be "good migrants". Nevertheless, to whatever extent "cultural" solidarity is built between and within migrant ethnic groups, *political* solidarity with the Irish public and its translation into *civic participation* is far from equitable. Erjoh (2006) found sixty-three percent of Africans he surveyed were strongly engaged in community activities but just twelve percent engaged in political activities or public forums, although ninety-eight percent indicated they would like to.¹²

Beneath the cheer and "colourful migrants" who brighten the grey Irish landscape, performances of culture, song, dance and cuisine as "exceptional" events can exoticize others and minimize "everyday" racism and discrimination. As Ahmed (2012: 143-144) contends, organisations can enact diversity 'as a form of public relations ... a means by which organisations establish and maintain good will

¹¹ Africa Day is held by Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to celebrate African Unity and highlight the 'cultural and economic potential that exists in Africa' (<https://www.irishaid.ie/>). Ours was the first grassroots theatre group to perform at such an event, in 2012.

¹² Stated reasons for non-participation included racism, intolerance, lack of inclusion, language and a sense of insecurity. The research led to the initiation of a task force on active citizenship, but none of the 20 members were from immigrant/ethnic minority communities (Erjoh 2006).

[mobilizing] organisational pride ... in defense of its reputation'. Worryingly, photographs of individuals at protests or demonstrations can threaten their legal cases or mark them "trouble makers", but also locate them geographically "away" from their Direct Provision hostel.¹³ In this case, images of African women do the work of "performing cultural diversity" but also of surveillance.

What is silenced is the *added unpaid labour* for women. Smaller NGO's act as intermediaries of the State and dispense nominal funds to migrant groups (about €150 per group), but these are *conditional* on successful written proposals. These must outline "skills / cultural activities that your group proposes to showcase, such as drumming, dancing, hair braiding, *etc.*" (Africa Day leaflet 2014). This sum might cover the costs of ingredients and materials, but not the cost of women's labour, unacknowledged and unrewarded. I witnessed the women shop, cook and carry food to the venue, all heavy weights on public transport and work until late into the night between caring for small children. On the day, they dress in traditional attire specially sewn for the occasion (at their own cost and often unsuitable for open air events in a cold climate), dance and sing to entertain and serve the public, who "consume" or "eat" the other's otherness (hooks 1992).¹⁴ Another annual event, *Diversity Day*,¹⁵ has latterly become inclusive of Eastern European and non-black migrants, who also "perform culture" through crafts, dance and share food. At one such event, an Irish-Language contingent made a presence, signifying acceptance that Irish-ness is also an

¹³ Residents are not permitted to be absent from their accommodation (without permission) for more than three consecutive nights (House Rules and Procedures RIA 2009).

¹⁴ I had met Sanle a year before the research at a migrant women's Christmas party, and commented on her stunning regalia. She quietly told me that she had been dressed in everyday clothes, but one (Irish) community leader had telephoned her en route, asking her to dress in "traditional clothes". She returned home taking considerable time and trouble, dressed up and travelled back.

¹⁵ *Diversity Day* is a European charter that Ireland adopted in 2012, to "promote diversity and equal opportunities in the workplace and showcase good practices" (http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/diversity/charters/ireland_en.htm).

ethnicity. However, as one African woman ironically commented, “at least a cup of tea would be good” on that cold day; the Irish didn’t wear costumes or bring their traditional food to share. This lack of reciprocity points out that the burden of “performing culture” or ethnicity falls on the marginalized. This “cultural” work is also materially exploitative— of bodies and emotions—as I next discuss.

“Passing Through The Other”

The Black Feminist literature on racial “passing” (Larsen 1992, hooks 1992) is re-articulated in the contemporary postcolonial encounter by Ahmed (2000: 137) as *getting closer* to others by “becoming and passing through” the other. An article in a National broadsheet (Heffernan 2013) exemplifies how this might operate in the Irish context. Headlined “It wasn't quite the searing heat of the African sun, but in Ireland it definitely qualified as summer,” the article features a close-up photograph of the a group of African women dancing at the Africa Day parade, centralising a white Irish woman in full traditional Igbo dress.¹⁶ In “passing” Ireland’s summer for African sun, the Irish woman’s body in African clothes can also be read as racial *passing through* ‘adopting or assuming *their style*’ (Ahmed 1999: 101, original emphasis). The photograph commands the article and is deployed to represent a happy conviviality and tolerance and unity across race and gender. If the intention for “passing through” is to model race/gender solidarity through refusing difference to matter, then what happens *through representation* is that a single, isolated act of transgression can be used to stand for the collective. However, what this representation silences are the vast disparities in social, cultural and economic capital between African and Irish women. It

¹⁶ The Independent, 27th May 2013. <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/thousands-savour-sunny-africa-day-celebrations-29298358.html>, accessed July 4 2014.

becomes all too easy to mistake “sisterly cultural solidarity” for anti-racism or political gender solidarity, which then makes it difficult for the racialised to speak about race and class oppression. The intention can easily slide into a way of protecting whiteness by what Ahmed calls ‘become without becoming’, which appropriates and fetishizes the African women’s identity of the other, ‘rendering it an object that can be known, seen and approximated’ (ibid. pp 98-100). Racial passing of this type is not worrisome or dangerous for the white/transgressive individual since whiteness is unmarked, but cultural performances that “pass through the other” can reiterate and solidify difference and otherness under post-racist policy discourses and substitute (or pass) “diversity” for anti-racism. Transgressing norms does not transform them. Such cultural performances are not *racist*, nor are they *anti-racist* but are *non-performative* of anti-racism, as Ahmed (2012:116) might say.

Diversity and integration are statements of commitment that both report on a commitment *and* make a commitment; but make this commitment seem as if both racism, and anti-racism are single acts. Performances, according to Butler (1993: 2) are ‘reiterative and citational practices’; performances of cultural solidarity are *not reiterated* in other instances, for example, deportations, accessing services and civic participation (Ugba 2005; Ejorh 2006) as substantial data on reported racist incidences verifies.¹⁷

Indeed, as I have mentioned, I also “pass” in Irish society. On the one hand, white feminist contemporaries have remarked that they don’t “think of me as a migrant” but on the other, the African women (when I asked them) said that they think

¹⁷ See Chapter One (p158).

of me as “European”.¹⁸ In each case, the privileges and penalties of my “double otherness” went unacknowledged; two illustrative incidents during my research come to mind that exemplify both the usefulness and difficulties of this location. First, a feminist group contacted me asking me to find a “migrant woman” speaker for their event. Part of me felt angry, hurt, ignored because it didn’t occur to them to invite *me* to speak: Wasn’t I a migrant woman *and* a feminist researching *this precise issue*? Furthermore, that individual was a feminist academic “expert” on migrant women; ought she not know better? Though uncomfortable, I took courage and raised this with the organisation. Lengthy apologies followed with reasons like they thought I was “too busy” and they didn’t think of me as a migrant woman. Finally, I used my agency and privilege to ensure *two* women of colour were at the table—one academic and one activist (I spoke at the event along with Yoh). On another occasion, a journalist approached me to “talk about direct provision”, so I referred him to two women in the group (with their consent). In contrast, a (white feminist academic) artist of some standing working with the research group was approached for an interview on a series of protests at DP; none of the women she worked with were invited to speak (personal communication) and she spoke “for them” adding *further* privilege to her “basket” (McIntosh 1988). These anecdotes illustrate how privileges as advocates/allies might be *shared through reflexive agency* or earn further privileges for ourselves through unreflexive practice that turn into missed opportunities to “lift as we climb” (Davis 1989: 5), to share the platform with women of colour. What I learned was that the stronger solidarity between women of colour is in politicized terms—as a Black feminist—not as a migrant woman or a liberal/hegemonic feminist.

¹⁸ For example, they made special efforts to speak English to include me in their conversations and believed they had “be gentle” with me in case I mis-read their direct style of communication.

It is not only *white Irish* NGOs whose practices might halt solidarity and a collective vision; State-led discourses and policies of “integration” also infect and fragment migrant networks. In a different discussion, the women were unhappy about a fellow member of the local collective who had done research on FGM under the auspices of an NGO. Yoh and Sanle had been tasked with bringing women to a “conference” which turned out to be a launch of the FGM project. The contentious issue was that this leader focused on her ethnic group but excluded women in asylum, despite an identified need for such research in DP centres. Yoh felt the vision—for African women to be a collective—was betrayed and she and other women were being used as “numbers”, which Yayah concurred. Focused campaigns such as FGM carve much needed space for women of colour to speak; however, the worry is, for Lentin (2013), the ambivalent position it forces “professionalized” migrant women networks into. On one hand, they re-articulate women of colour as agents of resistance and transformation, but on the other, ‘reaffirm emphasis on integration’; in reality, they lack power to subvert racist State immigration/asylum regimes (ibid.p67). Their voices heard only through *victim* narratives risks re-fetishizing non-Western women and their co-option into integrationist agendas. Migrant-led NGOs compete for restricted funding; what limited effect they have reproduces dominant discourse that represent migrants as victims and (burdensome) economic units in need of management by experts (Landy 2014: 938; Moreo 2012).¹⁹ In their intersectional location in asylum, the more marginalized members of an “identity category” can be discounted (Yuval-Davis 2006: 195). In marginal groups *within* larger NGOs, dominant leaders can

¹⁹ This is not to say that migrant organisations are acting naively; they are well aware that this is a necessary step in the longer reaching project of carving civic and political space in Ireland.

assume more authoritative speaking positions and act as gatekeepers. Yoh concluded with the realization that:

Everybody wants to do his or her own project and look for support (...) I know in every group...even our own group it will one day happen (...) Not me, No. I don't look for praises...I look for victory, what have we done. If you want to be ahead [lead] and we can follow you and you can do it good, tell us, and we will join you, we do it well.

Though accepting the vulnerability of working at the grassroots level, she personally refuses to surrender her principles of collectivity and argues that authentic “victory” is achievable only when each surrenders individual agendas. She points out how individualism creates interpersonal and intra-psychic effects that can break solidarity and cause tension and insecurity in groups.²⁰

NGO- style “participation” dictates terms from the top-down towards a pre-determined goal, but the women’s lived experiences exceed many mainstream policies and projects for their social inclusion. Individualistic, (supposedly) gender-prioritized categories and bureaucratic practices of funding bodies can paradoxically differentiate and divide women, even as the intention is to unite them in productive coalitions. Worse still, cultural products made through asylum/migrant organisations, compelled to fun-raise and in some cases, appropriate and re-colonize their identities. Below, are two website representations of “integration and diversity”, which illustrate how visual practices of local NGOs can differentiate *between* others, to the benefit of the organisation and state.

²⁰ I discuss two such incidents on pp.177-178; in both cases, participants directly addressed the issue with the leader concerned and found solutions, which would not be the case in non-participatory projects.

“Investing in the Other”

In Figure 5 (below), photographs of the Webpage contain close-up shots of different “types” migrant women: three Asian women (dressed in “smart” office-like clothes) and a veiled black African woman in an art-and-crafts setting. The first group represents studious, business-like “good” migrants, while the African woman is represented as encultured, traditional, her gaze inward not out toward the future. In proximity, meanings are produced that differentiate between African women of colour—already coded through colonial discourse as traditional, naïve, encultured—and the “educable, progressive” Asian women of colour, who are readily legible in neoliberal discourse as ‘entrepreneurial subjects for neoliberal capitalism’ (Luibhéid 2013:119). What the representations *frame out* are African women’s political, intellectual or professional skills; through the proximity of images, women of colour can be re-racialised, essentialised and re-signified through gender/nationality into different hierarchies of “usefulness”, productivity and capability.

The processes I wish to point out are how (white) viewers—guided by visual codes but also through *affective economies* (Ahmed 2004) of happiness, fear, suffering—decode the images according to preferred meanings (Hall 1980, 1985, 1997a). First, the Irish public are reassured in uncertain times by a message of transnational equity/harmony (signified by flags, happy celebrating “multicultural” bodies in Figure 5). However, the promise of this imagined, integrated Ireland in the future is threatened because the NGO has been “hit hard” by the State’s austerity measures. In this second move, the NGO appropriates the *victim* position (“we receive no government funding”) displacing the true victims—the migrants whose rights it advocates for. Thus, the *more valuable* subject position—the “white saviour” role of generous, humanitarian, responsible citizenship—is occupied by the NGO, and by proxy, the “ordinary” Irish people. The *preferred* reading is ensured, but the bodies of

colour and their suffering are *silent* vehicles used to re-make whiteness/humanitarianism in much the same way as the Red Cross and Irish Aid website representations I examined in Chapter One do (pp.26-29).

Invest in our Future

Nasc does not receive any government funding, and relies on the generosity of people like you to protect human rights. We welcome all investments and offers of fundraising. Recently, we have been hit hard by funding cuts. Your help is vital for us to continue to support and advocate for immigrants in Ireland. **Click on the image to the left below to set up a monthly payment or on the right-hand image to make a one-off donation to help support our work.**



Set up a monthly payment

How Your Gift Can Help

- €5...can provide transportation enabling a separated child to access education
- €6...per month for a year will cover the cost of a legal consultation
- €10...will allow us to pay for an asylum seeker to attend an accredited course
- €21...provides emergency food and subsistence funds for a destitute migrant
- €50...pays for a caseworker to carry out an initial client assessment
- €100...will help us campaign for a fairer and more transparent immigration system
- €500...brings the spouse or partner of a refugee to safety
- €1000...covers the cost of bringing the entire family of a refugee to safety





Make a one-off donation

Figure 5: "Investing in the Other" Nasc 2012

The second (Figure 6, below) is a flyer for an annual wine-tasting event that deploys a marketing gimmick of pricing tickets at €19.10 (the paltry weekly allowance for an adult in the asylum system). At the event, a (white male) activist interviewee reported that an African man in DP, having volunteered all day to set up the event, went back to his hostel to dress, but on his return, the (white/Irish) volunteer at the door didn't recognize him and refused him entry as he didn't have a ticket. Needless to say, the doorman could easily have verified his identity, but chose to enact his power this way; this illustrates how inclusion/exclusion is policed through ordinary citizens.

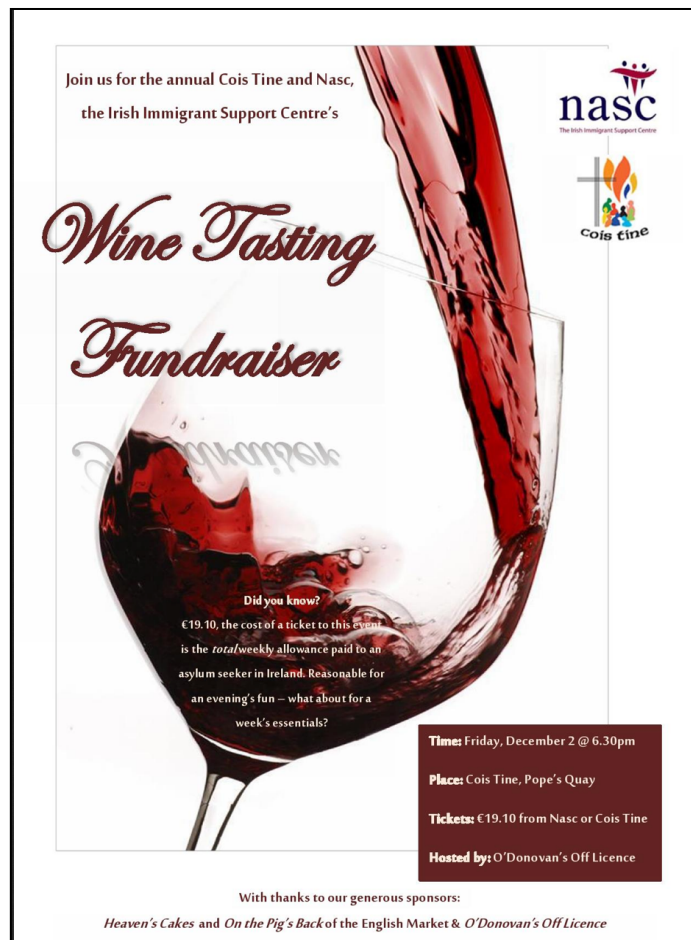


Figure 6: Tasting the Other

The [African] men serving were dressed in white shirt and bow ties (like the minstrel show, minus the make-up!) They were instructed how to serve: bend slightly (toward the predominantly 'white-European' guests) whilst pouring wine and rotate the bottle to prevent drips, ask if they'd like some food, be polite and respectful. (Interview, Activist)

My analyses suggest that African women are used as a form of representational labour to re-racialise good and bad "others" through gender. Already coded through colonial discourse, their imaging in the local context reiterate the semiological chain of colonial discourses that have 'petrified' colonial women's bodies in 'essentialized and fixed otherness' (Ponzanesi 2005: 16). If she appears as an "empowered /empower-able shero"(Mama 1997) in global circuits, as I suggested through the Irish Aid image in Chapter One (Fig. 4, p.32), her figure is used in national and local circuits to market "diversity". Photography was a powerful medium that gave visual form to colonial

culture, and forged a link between Empire and domestic imagination, a “portable space for displaying the imperial spectacle” (Ponzanesi 2005: 174). If colonizers used the African woman’s image to market commodities such as coffee and cleaning products in Europe (Mc Clintock 1995), now she is used to “sex up” war in foreign locations (e.g. the Red Cross exhibition, p.32).

I stress visibility in my analyses to address colonial continuities circulated through humanitarian/feminist visual discourse on women of colour. As Carville (2007: 229) notes through Gibbons (1986), Irish Studies has focused largely on oral and literary narratives and less on popular visual culture. Irish feminist criticism, through sole focus on gender and influences of white western feminism (Connolly 2003: 34), also ‘sidesteps the question of Ireland’s white-centeredness, not to mention its empowerment and hegemonic position as a Western European state’ (Chan 2006: 2). Remembering that discourse operates intertextually, the contemporary black female body is hypervisible in multiple feminist/humanitarian campaigns (refugeeism, sex-trafficking, FGM) that reproduce her as hyper-sexualized exotic “Black Venus” (Ifekwunigwe 2004). Re-signification as both “victim” and “shero”—evident in the foreign aid as well as NGO websites—“do” the cultural/political labour of uplifting white Western humanitarianism. One detrimental outcome of this re-signification in diversity policy is to fragment identities and fracture minority solidarity.

Representational regimes of the local NGOs discussed mirror global regimes (see Chapter One) and co-construct whiteness and humanitarianism to perform a neoliberal “civilising mission”. Such policies are transnational; they are structurally controlled by the EU, and implemented by the state in concert with NGOs and agencies in the disciplinary domain. Not only do they circulate and uplift white humanitarianism, they incur serious *material* outcomes for African/black women in Irish asylum.

Interlocking Structural and Disciplinary power at the NGO level

Mapping the agents and actants in the Irish matrix of domination (see Table 1), I found the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI) nested within the Department of Justice and Equality, who is the ‘responsible authority’ for the European Investment fund (EIF). This fund is managed by Pobal, the OPMI’s ‘delegated authority’ who disburse it to local and national organisations for integration, intercultural and inter-faith projects that support the active “participation of Third-Country nationals” in Irish society.²¹ From the outset, asylum seekers are structurally excluded from the funding ladder—the OPMI work for *migrants*.²² According to the annual report of Nasc (a major immigrant organisation), the EIF granted them €203,368 for “Third Country National Women’s” project—seventy-five percent of its total cost—yet the NGO claims that it receives no funds from the state. Structural power excludes asylum seekers from policy, while disciplinary power of NGOs enacts and implements it, but the funding chains of command are hidden. The EU, via the state, thus controls what women of colour “need” for them to integrate into Ireland,

I encountered this “default” discrimination and presumption that migrants will carry the heavier burden of integration when applying for an Arts Council fund for a professional theatre artist to work on our project after the formal research. The stated objectives were “mutual sharing and learning” and “intercultural arts practice”, but to fit the criteria, I couldn’t say the work would *purely* benefit women in asylum; it *had to* benefit the Irish artist *and* the Irish community. The artist needed a track record, which logistically, eliminates recently arrived non-Irish artists. The artist gets paid (and rightly so). My point is that the “cultural diversity” focus neglects gendered and raced

²¹ I refer to one such project on pages 186-187.

²² See www.integration.ie/website/omi/omiwebv6.nsf/page/aboutus-structures-overview-en

barriers to participation of migrant artists *and* participants both. Women with no income, no extended families to help with childcare, or who lived in hostels far away—perhaps most in need—were most disadvantaged.

Growing wiser in a second application to a (global) philanthropic organisation, I sequestered childcare fees under other categories and shared the task (leading workshops) with women in hostels *and* the facilitation fee (for my professional services) equally between us all. This power sharing and skill-development is vital in PAR (Maguire 1997). However, other problems, also to do with intersectional locations, emerged.

We agreed to give mothers with children an *extra* childcare payment on top of their share of the facilitation fee and reimbursement of transport costs if a ticket was shown. At an evaluation meeting, Yoh objected that this was discriminatory of her; she was also a mother (albeit with older children, but sent money to them). She lived within walking distance, but only recently moved out of DP so had to pay rent, an expense others did not have; she lost out on both counts. Yayah, also a mother with two small children in Africa, was sending money for their schooling. Sanle argued back that having young children was different and even offered to forgo her share to recompense Yoh. But this was not acceptable to Yoh, who fought for a *principled* solution. In her individual interview, Yoh said she felt her contribution was devalued, that I was biased because I was a single mother, and that I ought *not have differentiated* according to the category “childcare” or “transport”. I initially defended the decision because the *group democratically arrived at it*, plus the conditions of the grant were already stretched. Two mothers couldn’t come at all without childcare and transport. Yoh strongly criticized my leadership, arguing that it would have been more responsible to override the group decision and share the funds equally, as she would have done.

I am the chairlady of [different group]...when I take the money I don't look at distance, I look at their input. I don't say "You have children"...Even when you talk of who has children, among those of the group who have children, they don't have the same number of children, the same ages. I thought the childcare will be shared to everybody...not every woman has a child but every woman participates...Are these all women or not women? That's what I want you to understand.

(Yoh Individual Interview: pp. 5-12)

Yoh's critique echoed Sojourner Truth 1851's (1851) *crie de coeur*, Ain't I a Woman? Just as I was upset that I wasn't considered a "migrant woman", she illustrates how imposed categories that differentiate *between* women can become hierarchical and divide solidarity. Here, I emphatically stress the difference between equality and solidarity and illustrate two of Collins' (2000) points: that intersectional theory concerns group oppression (not individual locations), and that gender/race/class locations need to be studied under specific matrices of dominating power to see the differences difference make (Yuval-Davis 2011; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Lewis 2013). In this case, the group as a whole suffered severe structural economic deprivation—each needed that money as much as the other, albeit for different reasons. Though I did not revoke the group decision, I had been wrong. In a later Arts project (which I was not leading), a budget for €10.00 was agreed, but attendance dropped off and tensions arose between the women and the lead artist. Sanle negotiated for more expense money, suggesting that some of the budget allocated for "lighting" be re-directed to meet participants' expenses. Initially reluctant, the artist conceded when presented with Sanle's logic: "If you want the lights, they can be there but they will be shining on nobody on the stage" (Sanle, personal communication). In both cases, Sanle and Yoh came up with *solutions*—to share the money equally with all women and prioritize participation over equipment.

Yoh's vision of collectivity, collaboration and leadership is a far cry from NGO-style "participation", financially driven from above and complicit in (supposedly)

gender prioritized State and EU directives. The lion's share of "doing ethnicity" falls on the marginalized and women of colour are forced into performing "representational labour" through products and practices of pro-migrant NGOs. Importantly, the interpersonal and intra-psychic effects of the "cultural labour of doing diversity" incur tremendous emotional and psychic cost and "humanitarian harm", as I next reveal.

4.4 "Doing Diversity" and Humanitarian Harm

My next extract is taken from an individual interview with Sanle, who had been the longest on the asylum/migration journey. Outside of the group, she spoke in depth about her experiences as a volunteer in one organisation for seven years, where she excelled and was encouraged to pursue a degree in Community Development. Her work contributed to the development of a new role; when funds came through to formalize the post, she applied, was shortlisted and interviewed, but the job was given to someone else (a European woman).

When you are working as a volunteer you are a very good friend, a very good worker for everybody. They will push you up they will push you down, they will take you radio, television, this and that. They love you! Oh well done! Well done! Well done! I was promised one day by the former director, I will look for the full time work for you. Well done! But when the funding came they didn't give the job to me (...) They like to work with you as a volunteer but they don't like to work with you like a paid staff ... The moment the money matter is there, they don't push themselves in that way (...) I'm somebody today who knows more ... they don't want me anymore because I know more (...) What I realize in this society we have today, when you know more, they don't like you anymore. They like you not to do anything.

(OOW, Sanle Interview 14/03/2012: 12)

Sanle experienced the exclusion as a betrayal by the organization of the promise of social capital. Her education, skills and previous occupation of the role did not give her entry to "full insider". The psychic trauma of this event for Sanle can be seen through what Hage (2010, following Fanon) theorizes as *racist mis-interpellation*; a

“drama in two acts” where the racialised person is hailed as belonging to a universal collectivity, but ‘no sooner than do they answer the call and reclaim their spot that the symbolic order brutally reminds them that they are not part of everyone’ (Hage 2010: 122). Sanle’s perception is that when the marginalized know more, gain knowledge legitimized by the dominant culture, they are not rewarded but become a threat to the social order. Her thesis is that “this society” rewards passivity, dependency and naivety but not hard work and achievement. Her pain is also in part being unable to break the frame of how black females are supposed to be, not to mention the hurt of severing what (what for her) were sisterly bonds with Irish women in the organisation formed over years.²³

My fieldwork observations certainly substantiate her view; independent action was mis-recognized, discouraged, and sadly, sabotaged outright by some “charitable” individuals and organizations. Approaching Christmas, Yoh had independently raised funds to purchase Christmas gifts for children in hostels, but had no venue to distribute these gifts. Having successfully negotiated a NGO space, this was retracted two days before the event, for reasons of security, insurance and staffing, even though she rightly pointed out that volunteer (migrant) staff are regularly left in charge of the building, and had offered to open the building that day. Too late to inform people of the change, Yoh, undefeated and determined, drew together a handful of volunteers (including myself) and held the event out on the street nearby, on the steps of a public building (see photograph in Appendix E).

The neoliberal rhetoric of empowerment and education freely offers symbolic rights, symbolic praise, but material rewards—social, cultural and economic capital—

²³ Migrant-led initiatives who are not with NGOs struggle for a number of reasons (see Lentin and Moreo 2012, and Feldman et al. 2005).

are harder to attain and never guaranteed, even after gaining Citizenship status. The penalties of Sanle's "difference" continued to materialize on her way, depositing layering upon layer of hurt, a burden she carried in her body. The collaborative research space grounded in Black feminist epistemology gave credence to her knowledge as an "outsider within" (Collins 1986). She could tell her story as she wanted to tell it, in her own words and speak safely about things that hurt her during other projects without threat to her social status.

It's good that we started this theatre...because before I wanted to write a book for my life...if it's not this by those interview and all that...you don't have anything to say ...because everything is your heart...you can't bring it out...it's like you are killing yourself slowly slowly...you have so many things in your heart and you... are scared to bring it out because of the society who rejects you...Even though when you become like a citizenship it's the same. Nothing changes...but you were hoping that when you have finished with the asylum seeker your life will be better but it's the same. Now you can be able to work but you never get work.

(OOW, Sanle Interview 1/03/2012: 6)

Discussion of Section

The analyses so far in this chapter stress power the *hegemonic* domain, which for Collins (2000: 284-285) links *structural*, *disciplinary* and *interpersonal* domains to naturalize or "justify oppression" by shaping group and individual consciousness by manipulating ideas, images, symbols and ideologies. I highlighted three important processes that make discourse performative: *visuality*, *intertextuality* (the visual and textual work together to create meanings in relation to each other) and *transnationality*—asylum discourse flows from global-national-local in First world nations. Embedded with ideologies of race and gender (together), asylum discourse forces identity categories but also generates disparaging and disempowering accumulative affective responses to women of colour in white Western societies.

In this context, my analyses suggest that NGO integration and diversity projects and cultural celebrations are forms of inter-cultural encounter that can recolonize,

stereotype or fragment identity through technologies of othering through *disciplinary* power (e.g. the RIA and DP, INIS police, civil service agencies that manage the operation of macro-level structural power).

Spivak's prescriptive—to dismantle the conditions of subalternity rather than giving voice or visibility (Spivak/De Kock 1992: 46)—is crucial to explain why NGO attempts to create equitable conditions for participation go awry. Recovering “voice or visibility” alone do not remedy exclusion or grant mobility to subaltern women when re-colonizing conditions that create subaltern spaces remain in place. As Das (2010) explains, ‘to have one’s voice is not the same as to be able to produce speech’; women might remain silent as resistance to conditions that appropriate their voices. Along with speaking for others and/or essentialising their identities, mis-enacting participation as “benevolence” does not ‘unlearn privilege’ (Spivak 1990: 19) or recognize subjugated knowledges or agency, but merely culturizes it. This benevolence is *enacted and embodied* by African women as they “do asylum”, at protracted emotional and psychic cost.

Returning to my discussion on Mullally's (2009: 266) critique of intersectional theory (pp.70-72), I suggest that the place to start building the desired “emancipatory feminist politics that challenges the enduring structural inequalities migrant women face” is to more fully recognize and deploy the agency and power of the women themselves. For example, in the funding dilemma (p. 171), it was Sanle who successfully challenged the artist's priorities, and Yoh who offered me a viable alternative. After all, women in asylum are hardly “blank slates”; they initiated, implemented and survived incredible journeys; on arrival, they work tirelessly for their own and others freedoms. In my view, Mullally's critique insufficiently addresses how intermediary NGOs can dissuade, depoliticize and outright deny agency and power and derail self-representation through advocacy for reform through the Master's tools and

language (see my discussion on p/ 41). Like NGOs in the South, they can stymy stronger political dissent (Roy 2014).²⁴

As a counterpoise, the data analyses in the next section chart alter-narratives to asylum discourse *from below*; I address visual *self*-representation through artwork produced in BBB, which tell a decidedly different, more complete story than top-down discourse. Importantly, the data propagated theoretical insights regarding methods and conditions of attempted self-representation that I built on when analysing data from the later project, OOW.

4.5 Self- Representation: Worlding Worlds

Participants created collages of “asylum” mid-way through the first project (BBB) following earlier sessions where ideas and themes were stimulated through discussions and drama-based physical “mapping” exercises. Sessions were held in a central hall within the premises of a Church-led support organisation, Arden House, where extant conditions were tightly managed through “soft discipline”. Even so, art itself offers a degree of safety and fosters self-representation because the materials themselves are already symbolic and multi-sensual: paint can symbolize water, blood; images of migrating birds can stand for both flight and freedom. Art offers an alternative way of “getting close” (Ahmed 2000) to others as a researcher, but more importantly, offers a way for participants to get close to their own interior images, thoughts and ideas. Reviewing photographs and videos of the art session in analysis, I

²⁴ This charge was recently levelled at major pro-migrant NGOs in Ireland (ICI and Nasc) who “represented” asylum seekers on a working group to reform (not dismantle) Direct Provision, despite numerous calls by asylum seekers to step down and allow self-representation, given that it was their direct action that forced the State to address the issue. Two outcomes of this working group have been to open *more* accomodations centres and the allocation of €4.1million to the NGO sector from 2015-2019 (see Anti Racism Ireland, <https://www.facebook.com/arnireland/posts/1017237888293059>).

noted the calm, focused emotional atmosphere in the room, remembering the silence and deep levels of concentration and trust. People worked as individuals but in quiet solidarity as a group. “Self-representation” here engendered more nuanced and varied emotional exchanges, in contrast to the demands of up-beat, celebratory atmosphere of, say, cultural events.

The collages I present below speak back to an assemblage of discourses—migration, imperialism, war, Islamaphobia, the extinction or erasure of African land and life, exploitative North/South geopolitical relations, postcolonial suffering²⁵. They reflect back to the reader the effects discourse has on participants’ identities, but also contain rich individualized and collective accounts of the root causes of global displacement. The emotions embedded in these collages evoke readings of suffering, but also of resistance, agency, courage, hope, dreams and visions of peace and safety.

A range of images and texts from magazines, paints, fabrics and assorted materials were provided, and examples and basic instruction of techniques given. I began analysis with thinking-by-writing (Richardson 1994) and asked the collage to “evaluate itself” (Leavy 2009). Images and metaphors were explored in encounters with each other, and of affective economies circulated by the representation as a whole (Ahmed 2004a, 2004b). Participant’s quotes have been extracted from various sessions over a six-week project and edited for clarity and brevity.

“Where Does this End?”

In the very first session, Bem brought the word “imagine” into the room, to stand in for possibility, the unknown, and discovery: “We are at the beginning, imagine

²⁵ I borrow this idea from Nayar (2006) and further develop this notion as a form of social suffering (Das 1997) in Chapter Five.

if we look around ...nine, ten, everyone comes from different countries, they have all kinds of resources if we put together... imagine”. Antithetical to the dictum that too many immigrants and asylum seekers deplete resources for indigenous Irish, for him, more people, more difference gathers more hope, more resources. On three separate occasions, he remarked that his was a “big story which would take a “long time” to unfold; the artwork he imagined building would need “a lot of different materials”. He also remarked that one cannot judge by a single story, but needs to read the “whole book”. His comments could have been a polite way of saying that the limited space afforded him in the research project isn’t enough. They also allude to the formidable task of “undoing” Eurocentricity and supremacy, of speaking back to the violence of forced categorization as “asylum-seeker” as it intersects with stereotypes of “Muslim men” in anti-Islam discourse, which his lived experience exceeds. Bem adheres to the spiritual (and material) teachings of the Holy Koran, which he believes “most don’t understand as they don’t or can’t read it.” All communities are imagined (Anderson 1983/2006: 6) and the differences in how the nation is imagined lie not in self-consciously held political ideologies but with the large cultural systems that precede it, one of which is religion.²⁶

Our holy Koran is big...if you want to judge, you can’t read just one chapter of the book and then go and judge about this...Because some people don’t know about ... what exactly our holy Koran is saying...there is not discrimination...there is not injustice...but unfortunately people they don’t [*see this*]

Bem (BBB Tr4)

From bottom to top, from land to life, the story his collage tells is of human evolution to its destruction—by guns, fire, human violence. Photographs of herds of animals and birds in flight make migration seem natural, but this is not the case for humans. The

²⁶Anderson proposes that religion had offered a language and metaphysics to explain suffering and death, which the scientific materialism of Enlightenment subsumed. Nationalism emerged to fulfill this need—hence, the willingness to die and kill for one’s nation.

only humans depicted are hill walkers (part of his asylum journey was made on foot), and soldiers. No African humans are present. There is a one-ness of overlapping colour and form to make a whole.

Reading the collage as a body, the big question in his “head” is: Where does this end? At the “heart” stands a clear pool of water, a mirror for Bem’s interior solution, the practice of Islam he nurtures and nourishes in his heart. His flight or migration has delivered him into a global scene where he finds that instead of hating wars and terror, people hate Muslims and Islam (which means Peace). Bem’s alter-narrative of Islam is not about terrorism or abstract religion, but of literacy and the cultivation of a civilized material life through everyday practices. Bem “speaks back” to a melee of discourses that produce his identity—terrorism, security, Islam, gender, blackness; these precise discourses, bodies and affects I found re-produced in a report on ‘Muslims and Christians in Ireland’ (Forde 2013; SMA 2011) devolving from a project on Muslim/Christian Interfaith Dialogue.²⁷ Through a series of workshops, Forde’s findings report that negative media representations and terrorism since September 11 have caused fear and suspicion among Irish Christians and uneasiness about the (presumed) cultural dominance of Muslim men.²⁸ He presents the solution as list of do’s and don’ts (e.g. gender sensitivity, not shaking hands, dietary habits, dress, avoiding pubs); these all reinforce the collective “Muslims” as irrevocable other to “Irish Christians”. Little attention is paid to the asymmetrical cultural dominance of Christianity, and there is no evidence of the “inter” aspect of the faiths, or the “di” in

²⁷ A Society of African Missions (SMA) project, which receives funds from the EIF and the State. In one workshop I attended, the entire session was Christian led and an Irish Catholic presented the lecture on Islam and no Muslim women spoke. Their presence would have greatly enriched the discussion (see De Tona and Lentin 2010; Lentin and Moreo 2012 for Muslim women’s groups in Ireland). As an invited facilitator, I heard several “white womanly” scripts at this event.

²⁸ This theme is commonly articulated in the West through the Hijab debate and Sharia Law (see Abu-Lughod 2002, 2006; Razack 2008; Scott 2007).

dialogue. The stated intention of the project (building harmony, cooperation, peace) and breaking through stereotypical attitudes about Muslims (terrorists, sexist) ends up differentiating the Muslim from the Christian through an economy of *fear* and suspicion. Fear, according to Ahmed (2004a, 2004b) involves relationships of proximity, which establish the apartness of white bodies through the repetition of stereotypes through stereotypical media discourses; *fear creates surfaces and materializes bodies*.

The word terrorist sticks to some bodies as it reopens past histories of naming ... Metonymy links words like terrorist and Islam together—even when arguments are made to unmake those arguments. (Ahmed 2004a: 132)

The Muslim is *an abstracted idea of a body*, made to appear not for his own sake, but to ease the fears of those who “other” him. Here is where *violences* take place—of misrecognition, of the flattening and theft of subjective existence. Dialogue is reduced to an exercise to overcome fear of ‘causing offence to our dialogue partner’ (Forde 2013: 27) and the Muslim faith and philosophy of the Koran reduced to social mores. In this case, intercultural “training” and “integration” through religious discourse also re-colonize bodies and identities.

“The Heart of Africa”

Adaeze represents Africa through stereotypical signifiers (unaccompanied barefoot, children, monkeys, tigers, deserted harsh land) that carry the signifieds, or meanings (exoticism, wildlife, poverty, backwardness). She re-iterates the Western colonial gaze and tourist and humanitarian discourses. However, she introduces a second set of signifiers/signifieds is introduced to disrupt this imagined space—images of collective *human* struggle and resistance represent courage, strength and power. These she places at the heart of the collage, announced by the text: “Tiger, Tiger” and “The Heart of

Africa”. Troubling the Western gaze may represent her refusal to interpellate what is imagined about Africa (her)—object, vulnerable, primitive— and assert her agency to say: “Our/my land and body may be attacked, weak, but the heart fights on”. The text accompanying a close-up view of a baby chimpanzee declares: “*Kesi lost her hand when her mother was killed with a machete*”. The animal is cute, vulnerable and draws our gaze deep into its eyes, evoking a protective urge. To its left is placed the image of a starving child. Their *proximity* provokes a question: How is it that the baby monkey is given a name, the human child is not?

Butler’s (2010) question: “When are lives grievable?” helps us to understand how narrative or visual representations are ‘framed not by locating what is “in” or “outside” but ... what vacillates between these two locations and what, foreclosed, becomes encrypted in the frame itself’ (ibid. p75). What vacillates between the juxtaposed images of the starving child and the monkey is *affective*: I feel empathy for the monkey but fear and terror for the child. I see its face and eyes. It has a name. I feel as if I could reach out to cuddle one baby but not the other. The baby monkey is accessible, save-able, the child too far-gone and the reparation too vast, impossible, out of my power. Following Butler (2004), I ask: How have these images made some lives more grievable than others? Adeaze’s third account of death and grievability in her collage explain this—an image of Muammar Gaddafi, who had been killed the day before the session. She (sadly) commented that, for her and many African people, Gaddafi was a hero (not the dictator the Western press made him out to be) who funded the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and brought affordable Internet to Africa in 2007.²⁹

²⁹ We rarely hear how Gaddafi funded the ANC, and contributed US 300 million of the cost of Africa’s first Communications Satellite, previously accessed at a cost of US \$500 a year (Honourablesaka 2012; Houseman 2014). His opening up Libyan borders to African refugees was unpopular, and the circumstances of the North Atlantic

If, as Butler argues, individual acts need be examined in relation to the conditions of the collective, my reading speaks to the need to listen to dissenting views, to understand the conditions which produce such leaders in this period of neo-imperialism. The point is that, whether vilified or celebrated, competing hero/saviour discourses need to be examined in juxtaposition (Butler 2004: 14) to extricate the global political work achieved by evoking affects and meanings for white/Western audiences. Adeaze frames these competing discourses in ways that arouse responses of horror, compassion, despair and individualized and collective grief.³⁰ With this in mind, I suggest that the competing affects that hover over her representation allude to the *postcolonial precarity of life* (Butler 2004, 2010), which depends on various social conditions being met in order for life to be sustained *as life*. It is through *the bodies produced and alter-narratives from below* that we may trace and understand this (discussed in Chapter Five).

Adeaze's collage also represents the "other side" of asylum and migration discourses—exoticized representations of the West. Large birds in flight, soaring over open green fields represent Europe or the West as fresh green spaces of freedom, order, democracy and human rights. Conlon (2011a) and Erjoh (2006) report that prior to their arrival, Africans had high expectations of religious tolerance and hospitality in Ireland through missionaries; these were shattered by real encounters in Irish society.³¹

Like Bem's, Adeaze's representation of asylum attempts a "whole" story; it works on the affective register to transmit the precarity of life in Africa but also disrupts and displaces dominant representations by politicizing, not polarizing the issues. Yes, life is threatened, she is encamped, but it is possible to guard the heart, the

³⁰ I return to the theme of collective grieving, social suffering and necropolitics in Chapter Five.

³¹ An account of Ade's encounter with a Catholic Nun, analysed further along this chapter, exemplifies this (pp.189-190).

core, through courage, vigilance, resistance and action. Freedom (like her collage) is an unfinished project; untidy, imagined, non-Utopian but like oppression and victimization, might be made and unmade through agency.



“ I Did it by Car, By Walk”

Nigiri, an Ethiopian woman in her twenties, recounted her harrowing journey across the Sahara, Lybia and the Mediterranean, which she acted out in a drama session and represented later through collage.

I did it by car, by walk. From Ethiopia to Sudan...then I started to again to cross Sudan...just by agents (...) if you have money, you pay...if you have no money, you can't eat anything...no food no money no family...same again I try to pass Sahara desert...I looked...small car it's supposed to carry twenty people...we sit thirty or more...one man is sit here...some people is sit here...you can't see anywhere...we don't know what is tomorrow...what happen to me...maybe I'm died [*Other participants join her and help to recreate the scene*] Some people is here, this car is like this...“Please...O my God, you sit my...ohh...Please, my arm...please my eyes...oh...you sitting on my leg...Ohhh (*cries out loud*) No wind no sound, no sight...I swear one break, three days...can't eat you can't sleep...like this...eleven days Sahara desert ...just hungry...from Ethiopia a lot of people with me...we don't sleep just driving...no telephone, no anything...if you finish the gas you die there...Then we stopped again...one month (...) Then we pay money for Italy...500 they travel yesterday all died in Mediterranean...we come to Sicilia for two months looking for a job... looking for my country people. I couldn't find it. I come 27th December, this country. I'm coming asylum seeker, still they are refuse me. I am in hostel. I hope this get better...my family is died, my sister.

Nigiri (BBB Tr3)

This fragmented script vividly brought into the room stories of subaltern others who make this perilous or died trying. Telling the story through participatory drama evoked affects within other participants of love, solidarity and compassion; when upset, they formed the car and boat around her and when she landed, lifted her up and welcomed her to Ireland to “unmake” her “unwelcome” by the Irish state. Nigiri valued this support, stating during the cool down period that prior to the group, living in DP had made her

not good person you know. I don't say hello for you...everyday like this (head down) ...my mind has changed, you see my face also has changed two weeks...I'm coming here”

(BBB Tr3: 3)

“This is the Dream”

The metaphor of cosmos in Carlos' picture evokes a vision of emptiness and interminability of the asylum journey, in which “everything is broken” from the past, and the future is beyond conception. Connections between land and memory have disintegrated, exploded into space. For Carlos, the barrier is psychic, in his mind; but his heart, his dream of continuity and hope runs clean, pure, untainted and connected through unmarked, un-territorialized space. Silenced in this representation are the legal and political structures that impact on Carlos as he waits in asylum; this can be read as a depoliticized response, as Carlos' reluctance to speak out against the system; but it could also be read as his desire to survive without losing his mind.

This is my life. My love you know. This is the aim of my life. In the past everything is broken and that white lines ... dreams you know. This is the future, it's like a cosmos. I don't know where I am. I am like a cosmonaut. I feel like a cosmos. Empty. I think the barrier is in me, in my mind, in my heart. That is why I say this is the dream, the white. It's like looking for my place.

Carlos (BBB Tr3b)

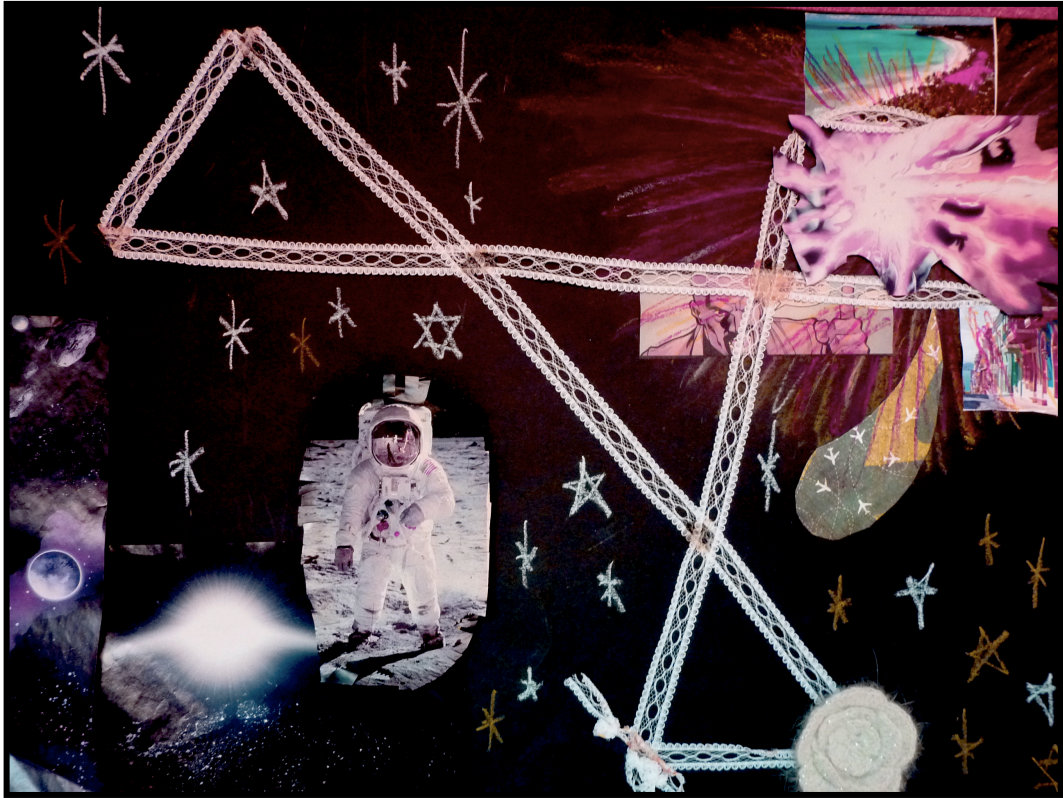


Figure 9: Carlos, South America.

For Carlos, the mind and heart are the spaces of possibility; psychic survival is the most important step for physical survival, a matter (or methodology) of the “heart” not the “head” (Sandoval 2000). Anzaldúa (1987) describes this third space as where dreams and reality are united, not severed. Audre Lorde calls it a place of illumination, of poetry, where both pain and power lie:

There are no new pains. We have felt them all already. We have hidden that fact in the same place where we have hidden our power. They lie in our dreams, and it is our dreams that point the way to freedom.

(Lorde 1984: 36)

The psychic spaces of dreams and imagination, essential for survival for some (like Bem, Adaeze and Carlos, can be threatening and need to be buried out of the frame for others—also for survival—illustrated in Anne’s collage, presented next.

“I Hate Art”

Anne, a divorcee with adult children, had volunteered in the (defunct) women’s group at Arden House. The only native Irish in the group, one of her first comments was “*I Hate Art!*”

I saw “art” and I said, Oh God! It’s the only thing I hate, is art. It really is. I can’t draw, I can’t. But anyway, you got rid of my fear about it straight away because you say it’s not about drawing.

Anne BBB (Tr1a)

Anne’s collage is comprised of neat, sparse and evenly spaced images —buildings, boats, monuments and memorials are glued with precise singularity onto a plain background, like stamps on a letter (see Figure 10 below). Land is central, water is contained or controlled- it is sailed on, fished in, or forced through fountains. The permanent residents are invisible; tourists and holidaymakers now occupy the port town. Two dead ships—the Titanic and Lusitania stand as memorials of those (Irish) who breached the land/water boundary, either “going under” or “going away” to America. The narrative is one of border crossing; it strongly evokes the past and represents it as tragedy, a story of grand plans gone wrong. The sea is a space of grief, uncertainty and burial.

I come from a town where lots of people from Ireland left...the survivors from the Lusitania come into (town)...they are buried in (town)...this is the monument...you all know about the Titanic...The Cathedral was the last sight people saw...When I went to New York for the first time I went to Ellis Island and I just sat there and cried.

(BBB Tr3b)

The texts discipline and transpose the uncertainty of the sea and its grief into neat and precise Irish proverbs that subvert loss into satire and humour:

A man with no wit has little on a pig

*You can take the man out of the bog
but you can’t take the bog out of the man*



Figure 10: Anne, Irish Volunteer

These proverbs reflect the racial stereotyping of Irish emigrants in America and the association of Irish identity with humour and wit. Anne's comments about "hating art" can be read as fear that imagination and memory might speak of matters better left unsaid, unacknowledged, lest her anger and grief be unleashed. To "hate art" may be understood as fearing to transgress collective identity, cultural norms; or, perhaps art might leave too permanent a mark.

Anne was already a transgressor (through divorce and single motherhood), she engaged with immigrants and "dared" to do art, made herself vulnerable with the vulnerable people she worked with, took up a role not as helper but that of native Irish, to give an Irish welcome denied to those in asylum—each are "traitorous" acts (Harding 1991 in Bailey 1998). She does not enact "whitely scripts"(deeply ingrained

and unacknowledged white supremacy (Frye 1983, 1992; Gray 2002) but her empathy with the other takes place through aligning her own (and the Nation's) losses with theirs. The reliance on Ireland's own history of displacement as a basis for empathy with immigrants, and the politics of memorialization, Gray (2004) argues, can evoke empathy for others *grounded in our own loss*. Appropriation of the other makes a slippery foundation for genuine empathy for the losses of the others, and forms fragile ground for feminist solidarity.

In Anne's case, both *traitorship and appropriation* are evident. On the one hand, voluntary work offers a way to *undo and unsay* hateful discourses about migrants. She successfully avoids the 'white saviour' discourse, indicating a process of "sculpting" a traitorous identity (Bailey 1998). However, if her solidarity becomes an indirect way to grieve for her own sorrow, it is not "privilege-cognizant" (ibid.p.28). For example, throughout the project, Anne and Adaeze worked side-by-side fostering a healthy solidarity. However, there were some leaky moments when this privilege was unconsciously evaded, illustrated through the next extract. Adaeze recounted an incident at her English class where she was accused of taking phone calls and chewing gum. The instructor had called in the Mother Superior (both Irish women) to list off her complaints:

There's no phone in the class, no eating, no this no that (*counting on her fingers*). Because I was chewing gum sometimes she was like trying to tell the woman that I do chewing gum in the class, that I receive a phone...But I wasn't trying to receive a phone call. My phone is on silent...I saw the missed call and I wanted to go out to pick my call. She saw me trying to go out to access my call and called me back and said "you can't do that" So I said ok, fine and I went back.

Adaeze (BBB Tr6)

Incredulous at the exhibition of such paternalism and humiliating treatment, Anne (and others in the group) supported Adaeze. Anne said: "Oh, that says it all. The nuns!" This offer of allyship emerged through her own experience of "the Nuns",

punitive and repressive educators who, for Anne, made her hate art. She tried to laugh it off, bury the hurt (and the hate). But it does not ‘say it all’ for Adaeze. The empathy offered was not cognizant of the impact of race.

Yesterday...when the woman came in and she was telling [the Nun] she herself get angry for it ...What for?...[The Nun] now tells me “We don’t do this in this country! If you want to receive a call in the classroom you have to go back to your country”.

Adaeze (BBB Tr 6)

Adaeze was perplexed—she had complied, so why did the instructor get so angry? I suggest that it was not Adaeze’s defiance that provoked this anger, but her *agency*; she saw fit to leave the room (rather than miss the call), refused to fully submit, to be put down—this incensed the white woman. Yancy (2008: 22) can help us understand how ‘the white woman is not simply influenced by racist practices, but she is the vehicle through which such practices get performed and sustained’. In this case, the Nun’s and instructor’s anger was related to a need to re-assert their dominant place through racial hierarchy to mitigate their “failure” to ‘civilize’ the African women, as the State has charged them to do. Ahmed (2004b) suggests that anger is usually towards an *individual* while hate is felt towards whole classes or groups. If we understand racism as a politics of hatred, we might understand the event as anger (towards Adaeze) up to the point of the threat to *deport her*. At that moment, it became a form of *hate*, a ‘negative attachment to an other that one wishes to expel ... sustained through the expulsion of the other from bodily and social proximity’ (ibid. p49). The affects of anger or hate do not positively reside

in an object or sign, but *is an effect* of the circulation between objects and signs (=the accumulation of affective value). Signs increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become.

(Ahmed 2004b: 45, my emphasis)

Adaeze recognized the *accumulated value* of the instructor's anger, which, I suggest, slid into *hate* through accumulated affects circulated through asylum and immigration discourses, now displaced onto the objects (phone, chewing gum). These objects were already negatively culturally signified— independence, autonomy, transgression of “ladylike” Catholic norms—and challenged the Nun's white female authority. Sadly, the anger-hate that is circulated, once deposited into Ade's body, has no place where it can go; it remains there as a psychic and affective burden.

I felt so bad ... if not for my kind of understanding ... I just looked at her ... what she said won't piss me off because she is not the only Irish woman I have ever met. I have met a lot of them ... they were so good to me. So I won't even let her know that I feel bad...I felt bad ... so bad...I just walked...

Adaeze (BBB Tr. 6)

Adaeze's final excerpt illustrates what Gillman (2007: 118) calls a “dualist racial discourse”, whereby a woman of colour internally refuses cultural or racial essentialisation and exercises her agency, without essentialising and racialising all Irish women in the process. This self-self relationship that takes place in the Interpersonal domain of power (Collins 2000) is critical for black women's survival. Adaeze's individual pain was expressed in her art and shared with group, where it was witnessed and validated. Anne, well along the path to ‘race traitorship’, is well positioned to counter and defy such practices; however, the slippery matter of empathy needs to be better recognized if her solidarity is to become race-cognizant.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion: What “work” do NGO representational practices and products do?

The recognition of others ... is central to the construction of the subject ... The very act through which the subject differentiates between others is the moment that the subject comes to inhabit or dwell in the world. *The subject is not, then, simply differentiated, but comes into being by learning how to differentiate between others.*

Ahmed 2000: 24, my emphasis.

In this chapter, I concentrated on the Eurocentric gaze of NGO visual representations of migrants/others to expose their performativity, and contrasted these with self-representational artwork from participants in BBB, which tell a more holistic story. I illustrated how local NGO practices and products can reinstate a white saviour discourse and limit options for those in asylum to “speak”. I contend that identity and representation work in concert—asylum regimes and categories force identities and bodies to “appear” which are then forcibly managed and contained within specific spaces of subalternity. When immigrants “speak” through neoliberal integrationist projects, practices and processes, the Eurocentric gaze can resignify master discourses and stereotypes previously deployed in encounters of slavery, colonization and migration (Hall 1992, 1997b). Hall (1997a) has shown that recognition does not take place in a single step, and Ahmed (2000: 23-25) further demonstrates that the “moment” of misrecognition and subjectification first takes place in the visual economy. The visual is a privileged arena— difference is recognized at the moment of encounter through skin colour, ‘the most visible of fetishes’ (Bhabha 1983: 30) and ethnic signifier. Re-cognition relies on the imagined/imagined other, as much as it does on the present/material other and is an affective, intersubjective process. I showed in the introduction (Gazing at Asylum, Exhibiting the Other and Feeding the Other) how Third World women are portrayed in global humanitarian and refugee representations as

both abject victims and/or colourful ingénues, “investments” for justice and world peace. Meanwhile, in the local Irish context, street encounters, cultural celebrations and NGO integrationist projects all expose African women’s bodies to resignification. Everyday practices like “Passing through the other”, “Exhibiting the other” and “Tasting the Other” re-iterate the *same old colonial scripts* in European metropolises, representing African women as supplicants to be “trained, empowered and made happy”. Hence, to fully understand the utility of “identification” across affective, ideological and economic registers, we need to bring cultural, material and political analyses together. If the research gaze inevitably slides towards the abjection of residents and makes counter-arguments in the Master’s narratives (Lorde 1984), the cultural aspect mutes the material effects. Even though intersectional analyses have become more nuanced, “race” refers to the racialised group in relation to normative whiteness, and gender to normative heterosexuality (male or female sex categories). However, both gender and race are fictions, ideologies; the problems are not the axes or identities but the effects of the intersecting ideologies that created them.³²

The global technologies of representation that construct humanitarian organisations and white sending nations as heroes (Razack 2007) not perpetrators of “humanitarian harm”, are replicated in the national and local scales in Irish asylum (Gray 2006; Gilmartin and Berg 2007; Conlon and Gill 2013). Hegemonic representations at the local level re-signify earlier colonial stereotypes—of abject victim or hypersexualized Black Venus—mark difference differently, and then make those differences matter in different ways (Ahmed 2000, 1998). The technologies of othering illustrated in the NGO representations guide the public into *preferred*

³² If we think of race and gender as ideologies used to categorize people, we can better explore how they relate to “class”. In neoliberalism, “class” is identifiable as capitalist power (Harvey 2005), which I explore in the next chapter.

readings, under the guise of “pseudo- participation” in courses and integration activities that presume the other is in need of betterment. Such representations reiterate both colonial and neocolonial “white saviour” scripts, and instead of the promised protection or happiness depicted on websites, recipients suffer “humanitarian harm”—this exposes the non-performativity of humanitarianism. Hegemonic representations at the local level can become a divisive force that acts on, and is enacted by and embodied by African women as they “do asylum”. I contend that black female bodies are forced to do “representational labour” and this is one of the reasons why the women feel tired, used and depleted —because the figure of the “asylum seeker” needs be constructed and ‘continually staged as a threat’ and its *hypervisibility becomes a strategy for concealment* (Tyler 2006: 199).

I have argued in this chapter that postcolonial asylum in this context is a South-in-North location, where CSOs and NGOs work from the middle, attempting to soften the blow of the State’s increasingly restrictive interpretations of the Refugee Convention and International refugee laws. NGOs are professionalized, corporatized, industrialized and philanthropicized, and require targets and evidence of accountability to donors (Roy 2014; Arnove 1982). Organisational needs can undermine the political agency of the people they serve or re-colonize them in a form of “grassroots imperialism” (Chimni 2000, 2003) that abet and strengthen the very powers they purport to challenge. Global visual/affective economies are brought to life in the national/local through “diversity and integration” practices and projects, which do the “work” of steering well meaning white/Western audiences, actors and organisations towards celebrating their own humanitarianism. This “humanitarian alibi” dissuades critical attention to western/Northern complicity in neocolonialism, militarism, and conditional entrapments of foreign aid— the root causes of forced displacement from the South in the first place. It also serves to naturalize EU policies that prevent refugees

from arriving in the West (Fekete 2000; 2002, 2005; Kneebone 2009; Hathaway 2005).

At the local level, the “humanitarian harm” incurred through Sanle’s participation in NGO projects was deeply damaging (see pp. 172-173); this materializes for other African women trying to enter the workforce. Hegarty (2007: 14-15) found seventy-five percent of the African women she interviewed felt discriminated against due to the intersection of race, gender and nationality. In reality, more migrant women (41.2 percent) than Irish women (18.8 percent) are degree-educated, yet Irish women dominate the majority of managerial, administrative and professional positions and female migrants occupy lower paid and less skilled positions (Barrett and Duffy 2007, Pillinger 2007, James 2010; Mac Éinrí 2003).

The art-based collages illustrate the assemblage of discourses that BBB participants speak back to when representing asylum, and mirror their complex, shifting identities, histories and concerns that far exceed the totalising category “asylum-seeker”. Art-based data provide agentic, holistic, politicized and affective accounts of postcolonial asylum. It inserts *organic intellectualism* into analytical frame³³—which Gramsci (1971:9, 131) describes as the ‘thinking and organising element of a particular fundamental social class’ who function to direct ideas and aspirations of others in that class. Subjugated knowledges (Collins 2000) also surfaced; photograph of the starving child in Adaeze’s collage by Kevin Carter,³⁴ for example, appears in academic texts such as Kleinman and Kleinman’s (1997) analysis of social suffering. Her alter-narrative of Gadaffi as an African hero is a politicized and

³³ Gramsci believed that all people have intellectual capacity. He distinguishes between organic intellectuals and “traditional” literary, scientific intellectuals, who set themselves apart as a class of their own but conceal the past and present class relations that locate them there.

³⁴ Carter, a South African photojournalist of Irish descent won a Pulitzer prize in 1994 for his New York Times photograph of this starving child in Sudan. He committed suicide at the age of 33.

oppositional counter-narrative to monolithic Western constructions of him as a barbaric dictator giving no account of his contributions to anti-Imperialism (against both Western and Arab worlds) and anti-racist struggles in Africa. Bem's displacement foregrounds the lived realities of decades of militarized commerce in Sudan following British departure in 1956. It is unlikely that these complexities, affects and conjunctural formations would have been spoken through interviews alone.

Furthermore, art based process goes some way towards the de-colonizing of minds and imagination; according to Sandoval's (2003:103) prescription, we need to first 'willingly perceive the image' to apprehend and grasp the whole ideology, then understand our "faithful consumption" of it. Participants in BBB attempted this—they worked to first represent, then try to make sense of how their lifeworlds were constructed, and through which ideologies. My data analyses attempted to take Sandoval's next step—to 'decipher, and deconstruct ideology using a formal mode of analysis' (ibid), which was my task as a researcher. Once the distortions are visible, the final step of de-colonizing minds is to 'then remove oneself from its system of life' (ibid). Oppressed subjects can "self-consciously" navigate these distortions and interrupt dominant discourse to survive, but also go beyond—and engage with their desires to create a better world (ibid.p 104). This highlights the importance of disseminating knowledge and critical analyses created in academia to oppressed groups themselves, as well as activists, policy makers and fellow academics.

For Collins (2000), the *structural* domain of power is stubborn and does not shift outside of major revolution/war; this might explain why "nothing seems to change". The *interpersonal* domain, and where it intersects with the *hegemonic* domain (ideas, beliefs) can be shifted more easily, and this is where de-colonizing minds is an important strategic move for Black and Postcolonial feminist politics. My enactment of Black feminist PAR works at this intersection, to carve safe spaces to advance self-

representation and produce some visual/affective alter-narratives that take politicized, “bottom-up” readings that recognize and validate the conscientization, agency and intellectualism of its creators.

Participants in BBB declined to “go public” with an art exhibition or to join the drama project (partly due to the greater vulnerability of their legal statuses), but the women in OOW were zealous in their desire to speak directly to the Irish public; dissatisfied with their previous attempts, they wanted to shed the burden of misrepresentation. As mothers, they needed to carve spaces of belonging and viable futures for themselves and their children in Irish society. They wanted to claim their place, transform their public identities and exercise their agency and creativity to speak for/as themselves, rather than remain “speechless emissaries” (Malkki 1996). My analytical focus in the next chapter progresses from visual/cultural “represented” identities to ask: What happens when *real, enfleshed* black female bodies try to represent themselves? What conditions of power, in which spaces obstruct or facilitate them to “speak” their truths as *embodied* subjects of asylum discourse, in this context?

5. Embodying Asylum: Identity, Subjectivity and Speaking Back

The war of signification takes place at the level of embodiment.

Ahmed (2000: 92)

“Identity” is not simply an ontological category but the outcome of political and psychic processes of subjection and performativity (Butler 1993, 1997) that are embodied and intersubjective (Ahmed 2000, 2004). The previous chapter illustrates how postcolonial asylum discourse produces, and then *fragments* categorical identities through visual/affective encounters. In this chapter, I argue that discourse also forces *subaltern spaces*—and *bodies* to occupy them. My analyses seek to elucidate the intersubjective psychic and embodied processes of subjection (Ahmed 2000, 2004) that “incarnate” specific bodies through asylum discourse: *illegal, dependent, deportable, and living-dead* bodies. Interred in three “dark” spaces of Irish asylum—the courtroom, Direct Provision and the interpersonal space of the maternal body—black female bodies are visible but they “cannot speak” (Spivak 1988) outside of the representational frames that seek to contain them.

I first explore instances in the data from OOW where the women have attempted to “speak back” and identify what and to whom they are speaking back to, as well as how they resist, negotiate and challenge dominant meanings made about them. Each woman’s accounts explicate a different encounter between interlocking *structural* and *disciplinary* powers of the state and agents of the state; in each, the women’s truths were made illegible and “produced” their bodies as illegal, dependent and docile.

I ask: What is silenced and expelled out of the representational frame (Butler 2004) when black women attempts to “speak” are denied?¹ In doing so, I also address Mirza’s (2009: 62) contention that the Black woman is ‘permitted to appear’ for the ‘sustenance of the patriarchal colonial and now postcolonial discourse’. For what, then, in this period, in this context, has she been made her to reappear? What are her “uses” in contemporary asylum discourse? In Chapter Four, I exposed how asylum/humanitarian discourse uses black female bodies (in the hegemonic domain) to perform cultural and affective “representational” labour. I now extend that argument to expose how their material bodies— entrapped in the subaltern spaces of asylum through power in the disciplinary domain (e.g. the law, immigration policy, police, healthcare and welfare agencies) entrap—are denied speech. When African women *do* attempt to speak/be heard, their speech is denied by *patriarchal power*, and in that denial, the truths that they attempt to speak of—that is to say, the white supremacist capitalist powers their truths expose—are *expelled from the analytic frame* and silenced. What is more, I contend in the next section, that the interment of silenced bodies (of colour) in Northern asylum also expels from the analytic frame the labour they provide for transnational capital—the labour of “waiting”. This illustrates the crucial importance of addressing race/gender/class (or capital) together, as interlocking power structures and the need for embodied analyses that also “follow the money”.

In the penultimate section of the chapter on embodiment, I explore the continuum of invisibility/hypervisibility of women of colour in Irish maternal politics; the African women in the study favour the “mama identity”, and I discuss the harrowing maternal experiences of Edith and Mamu in DP. I align these “underground”

¹ Butler (2004: 3) considers the frame as not simply exhibiting reality but an active participant in a strategy of containment, that selectively produces what counts as reality.

narratives with two other maternal deaths of migrant mothers Bimbo Onanuga, and Savita Halapannaver. I show how Irish feminist abortion activism also participates in silencing mothers of colour by “speaking through” the other, when their own voices have been denied by patriarchal power. The hypervisibility of Savita—leading to Universalist claims that “We are all Savita”—conceals the doubled sacrificial-ability of M/others, of *femina sacra* (Lentin 2013). I suggest that “necropolitics” (Mbembe 2003) is more apt than “biopolitics” to account for Irish abortion laws, particularly in the case of M/others in postcolonial Irish asylum.

I conclude by arguing that to silence the embodied truthful speech of African women in spaces of asylum is to silence critique of the interlocking powers that force them there.

5.1 Speaking Back to What?

“African” or “refugee” or “women” are not inherent or stable identities but made intelligible through discourses and the structures and institutions that produce, repeat, and normalize them. Everyday encounters with “bodies” in postcolonial asylum encounters are intersubjective processes of “re-cognition” (Ahmed 2000: 24) of meanings already known and assimilated; hence, sociality and engagement between women in asylum and the public requires them to navigate through discourses that have imaged, imagined and represented them. Althusser (1971: 162) has shown that individuals *become subjects* through interpellation, or “hailing”—they answer the call (e.g. apply for Refugee Status) and henceforth become subjects (of Refugee laws, migration regimes and asylum discourse), forced to adopt the public identity (Alcoff 2000) of “asylum-seeker”. However, the racialised are not the only subjects

interpellated through discourse—my conjunctural analyses gaze back to trace the *racist interpellation of the white subject*, as well as the *mis*-interpellation (Hage 2010) of the women. Importantly, subjectified bodies are not devoid of agency; intersubjective exchanges are spaces where resistance and negotiation of identities and their meanings take place, which the analyses in this chapter also illuminate.

The first series of transcript extracts presented are taken from discussions and interviews with women from OOW, in the context of motivations to participate in this research. Their responses identify which discourses the women have been “hailed by” and wish to speak back to.

At times you walk on the road you meet somebody...“Why did you come to Ireland?...where do you come from?”...They say ”Are you not from Nigeria?” “ No...African country is so big...It’s not only Nigeria... Then they say... “How long have you been here? You have family? How do you cope? How do you do this?”...you explain to them...some can help...some will tell you where to go...some that you see is you will see it’s a mad person drinking who is asking that thing, you just go ... one day, when I greet somebody that person say he has never greeted any black person...I say, well there’s black people full in Ireland...they say “no, they have never”...Some say they were scared ...and some you see them thinking they are not good. They really want to be friend with you but they are scared.

(Yayah Tr3c 14-16)

Yayah identifies the stereotypical discourses that all blacks are asylum-seeking Africans and all Africans are Nigerian. Nigerians represent the highest number of African nationals in Ireland, and have been specifically coded as criminals and bogus ‘by default’ (White 2009) and taken to represent all Africans (see Lentin and MacVeigh 2002: 113-114; 2006: 48, 72, 83). Nigerian women are specifically hyper-sexualized as sex workers (see Ifekwunigwe 2004; Ponzanesi 2005). The trope *Nigerian asylum-seekers* “does the work” of producing Yayah’s body as subject and object, a stranger to whom usual social niceties don’t apply. Her body is made “available” on the street to be approached and questioned, she becomes a spectacle or “matter out of place” (Douglas 1966) that disrupts the usual scene. Yayah herself, however, recognizes that some Irish are different to others so acts and feels

accordingly. She attempts to challenge the stereotypes that subjectify her—for example, stating that “Africa is a big country, not just Nigeria”, and that Ireland is full of black people—when an Irish person claimed never to have seen a black person.² The listener’s denial is a *whitely script* (Frye 1983, Bailey 1998) that is “privilege evasive”—that Gillman (2007: 131) contends, ‘blocks interactions that threaten the ontological security of whiteness’ and refuses to decentre whiteness. The person can hide behind it and feel justified asking those questions. Gillman (ibid. p118) identifies a second type of “dualist racial” script that women of colour use to contest narratives of whiteness, that doesn’t essentialise or stereotype her other. Just as Adaeze in the previous chapter recognizes that not all white women are like the Nun (p. 191), Yayah exhibits the “kind of understanding” that recognizes that some Irish are different to others (the drunk man is mad, and that some Irish disagree with the ways other Irish behave). Yet, she refuses to accept the terms of such discourse (De Tona and Moreo 2012: 41) on an interpersonal level. Going further, in the next extract (taken from a discussion about the content and title of our drama production) Yoh and Edith identify the emotional consequences that discourses about them produce when their bodies are encountered in public:

Yoh They point fingers at us...that’s why it annoys me...you know when you’re moving along on the streets there’ll be those ones who cannot even write their names or even write a sentence...all they know is drink...they say “you fucken...fucken...you fucken Africans you come to my country”...

Edith go back to my country...

Yoh they always do and then they point finger that we have ruined their economy...whereas they themselves...like the AIB manager...

Edith We can put it in that they are...accusing us

² The same challenge is found in race scholarship that argues that neither in-migration nor people of colour are new to Ireland—the Irish have encountered people of colour since the Viking era (Lentin and McVeigh, 2002, 2006; Rolston and Shannon 2002; Garner 2004).

Yoh accusing us...whereas they are the ones...

Edith Because no one...There's no voice to speak for us...to defend us to stand for us...I tell you, by the grace of God...if this group can stand...and as an organization as she was suggesting...you see...many people...like that the one that came to speak to you [addresses Yoh]...they will have a place to come and have shelter... then you start hearing the stories...cause people are afraid they don't know where to go...they don't know where to start from (...) we cannot have money to give them...we don't have papers to give them ...but at least we have their voice...let people see what they are going through.

(Tr3c: 10-18)

Edith wants it put in the drama, that asylum seekers are being blamed when the real culprits are members of the Irish elite; ordinary people don't know, so

going deeper will give them insights where we are coming from...*we are not from trees*...because most of them will say, "Ah...you should be grateful...they give you free food, they pay your bills, roof over your head...they don't know what you've have left behind because of the troubles back home"

(Tr3c: 17)

Their being "no one to stand for us" addresses the pervasiveness of dominant discourses and the dearth of oppositional voices, held back through fear and "not knowing where to start". For Edith, the group could be a safe space of shelter and by speaking as themselves, they might break the silence for others in the system.

Mamu (below) speaks back to the dispersal and Direct Provision system, which forces isolation and obstructs meaningful, unmediated cultural engagement with the public, especially for mothers.

When we first came, the asylum seekers, they put you apart...they put you in the hostel and you can't mix with them because in that hostel there is no Irish people living there(...)when the children are under four you have a preschool inside the hostel (...) those who are mixing with the Irish are our children not us...we don't have the same opportunities...you just go, you pick up your children, you don't have time to mix.

Mamu (Ind.Int: 33-34)

Sanle, like Edith, believes that educating the Irish people about the realities of their lives will create new meanings, but Yoh disagrees that they don't know the truth; besides, even if they *did* know, it's not their place to bring out the story. She wants to go beyond education alone, to have the power to define the story, not merely defend or challenge existing "versions" of the truth and the derogatory perceptions they foster.

Sanle there are something that the Irish people they don't know...so we need to tell them...

Yoh even if they know, it is not their place to bring out the story because they are not in it...I'll give you an example...to tell you that they know (...) In my organization...Africa Direct...I'm a member...they lectured me the reasons why Africa is so backward...an Irish man ...giving me those lectures (...) they have been giving talks for years...in schools...why Africa is still like this and we help Africa (...) I have too many stories...because when we were with the women I taught at least how to empower them...*in Africa we have all this strength—why can't women use them here?* The title tells you more what to say...we have much in our life history... a title like "On Our Way"...I'll talk about my life...it also stands...it still goes with how to empower other women...from being a single mother how I started how I struggled...then when I tried...how I came here...how I 'm living here

(Tr2a: 8-11)

Yoh is "speaking back" to several discourses; first, the colonial discourse of African "backwardness" (resonating with Edith's comment "we are not from trees") set against European modernity in lectures she has sat in, been the subject and object; spoken about, spoken to but not authorized to "speak". She also responds to the negative discourses on welfare and single mothers in Ireland and neoliberal feminist discourses of "empowering women". "Migrating" across multiple subject locations, it is at the site of motherhood and womanhood where she settles as a preferred location; it is from her self-ascribed identity of a "strong African single mother" that she may usefully contribute to the empowerment of both Irish and African women. Having raised three children as a black single mother, she can offer strategies that challenge

racism (Africans are “backward”) and fixed gender roles (Irish single mothers are weak). Clearly, the category “asylum seeker” is not Yoh’s primary identity; it simply *denies access to an identity*. To find a speaking location, she needs to first disrupt fixed binaries of multiple ascribed categories of identification: victim/survivor; woman/man, weak/strong, African/Irish. We see how *telling her life story* is the best way to defy and deconstructs these binaries and release the implicit value or difference between the poles (Hall 1997a: 237). It is precisely this process that categorical identity denies—when she refuses forced identities, she takes back the power denied her through categorization. Hence, the women’s common (though plural) desire for speaking contact with the public—to disrupt discursive frames (culture, migrancy, illegality) through which they have become known, reclaim their agency and define themselves.

Yoh When we talk of the Irish community it doesn’t only mean the Irish...
 It means everybody who lives in Ireland...so watching it will reflect
 on them...it stays on the record...if possible it can even ... go
 worldwide.

(TR2a: 8)

Sanle we are going to say what people cannot say it...but we are going to say
 it through good acting.

Yoh Through singing, through acting...through drama

Sanle People will see it...If you sit down there and we are doing a drama,
 for example for SIMA and all the things they are doing...they will
 know the drama is talking about them...so the public will say, “Oh...
 the acting...those people are trying to say something” We can change
 things by acting...

Yoh yes...that’s what we mean

(Tr4a: 12)

As a collective voice, it is not only visibility they desire but audibility and embodied self-representation, and in an inextinguishable way (“it stays on the record”); through drama they can “say what people cannot say” and educate the wider public. Based on their previous attempts, their pedagogic aims are best achieved working with, not “against” the Indigenous Irish. Indeed, the literature reports that when asylum

seekers “speak” as and for themselves, their agency, power and demands for theirs and others rights are rarely welcomed by the state, and worryingly, justifies backlash against advocacy by others too.³

Having identified what and who the women wish to “speak back” to, I next examine more closely interlocking powers that operate in two courtroom “scenes” to elicit how their “speech” (Spivak 1988) is disallowed, suppressed and made illegible.

5.2 “When you tell the truth they say you are Lying”: The Courtroom Scenes

Sanle After ten years what I learned is that when you want to say the truth you get people against you...so it's very difficult to say the truth and I don't even know how to say the truth ... there are a lot of things going round and round and if you want to say it you get people against you

Yoh they turn against you...

Sanle and it's difficult because I can say...we are in their country
(Tr3b: 17)

Yayah When you tell them the truth, they say you are lying. (Tr3c: 5)

Edith When they tell them the truth, they say no. (Tr3c: 6)

Mamu The problem is that they don't even believe you even if you come with the story with proof...they don't trust you!... I bring all the proof... all my work I did...I brought it to them...They don't believe you!
(Ind.Int: 8)

Ireland's high refusal rate for refugee status (ninety-five percent in 2011) stands far outside the European and UK average acceptance rate—11.6 percent and 22.7 percent respectively (ORAC 2014)—exposing the courtroom as a critical space. Bearing in mind that the judiciary in First World nations is largely patriarchal and

³ Tyler (2006) reports that UK dispersion and detention for those seeking asylum have grown more severe, even as (or because) public support has increased, while Fekete (2009) and Conlon and Gill (2013) find protest and dissent are themselves becoming criminalized as ‘crimes of solidarity’. Peter Dutton, Australian Minister for Immigration has blamed advocates for encouraging refugees to self-harm following deaths by self-immolation of two asylum seekers in offshore detention (Doherty and Davidson 2016).

white, asylum hearings are ‘profoundly racialised’ events that have been examined in the Canadian and UK contexts (Razack 1998; Razack et al. 2010; Macklin 1999; Oxford 2005; Simm 2005) but are recently emerging in Ireland (Conlan, Waters, and Berg 2012). This is potent gender/race/class encounter where the ‘imperial gaze’ of the White patriarch rests upon the most powerless, who are overwhelmingly the racialised or ethnicized in white Western societies (Razack 1998: 88-92). Through Sanle and Edith’s cases, I examine the complex embodied affective transactions between speaker and listener (Spivak 1998; 1996: 298) and show how white patriarchal power, discourse and affective economies operate together to disallow the women’s “truths”.

Sanle, aged between 40-50, has lived in Ireland for ten years and was granted asylum on grounds of gender-based persecution in 2002. Six months pregnant at the time of her arrival, her youngest child was born in Ireland; on acquiring Irish Citizenship, she was reunited with the two older children she had left behind. Frequently called upon as a spokesperson by the media, Sanle found journalists more interested in the costs and logistics of her asylum journey, which framed out her lived experience *as a woman*.

I was in radio last week and the man was asking me “To come over here from your country of origin to here, he heard that we had to spend a lot of money” and all that. But my story is about the road of coming...when I was coming... people are always abusing women...because I’m talking about women... I don’t know for men...People are abusing women when they are in a problem ... Me, my story...I will talk about...how pregnant women...because my story is about this so...I should do like that ... (*puts on her cloth wrapper to make a pregnant belly*).

(Sanle TrIB: 4)

Having “told her story” for projects (books, campaigns, consultative processes) she nurtured the idea of dramatizing (*embodying and performing*) her story *as a woman*, for many years. Sanle believed that drama would enable audiences to “see beyond” the story, to her truth.

This is my true story...The man who brought me here I gave him...if I say Euros it is 750 (...) When we came to Dublin...because I don't know anything ...the man say "You are now in Ireland...But you know what? I will ask you something...if you don't want it I will now go to report you in the police and they will send you back to (African Country). I am going to make love with you (...) And I say "What? I am a pregnancy woman...which mean, I belong to somebody and you, it's not your pregnancy and you want to make love with me?" He said "yes. You have a choice I am going out, I will come back". He close the door (...) After thirty minutes he came back (...) What can I do? Because I was scared to go back and I don't know the area, and he have to bring me where I have to go...So it's like that.

(Sanle Tr1b: 5-7)

Sanle speaks of her pregnant body as "belonging" to either the baby or the father of the baby she carried into asylum. Threatened with rape, she shifts subject positions between mother and wife and makes a moral appeal to the African man who brought her to Ireland, hoping he would be culturally versed with those norms, which fails.

Spaces of asylum grant no cultural, moral, ethical or legal grounds from which to speak; "rights" have little purchase and are easily disavowed. The Refugee Convention offers her the right to *seek* asylum, but not the right to get it. She does not *possess* "human rights" or "women's rights" or "refugee rights", only the right to have these rights, which themselves are limited, contested and subject to conditions set by the sovereign state. Patriarchal power is embedded in "human rights", which were constructed with the white, male, propertied/settled male as the subject; women of colour are un-recognizable—merely "adding and stirring" women of colour into existing laws informed by colonial legacies does not cater for them (Crenshaw 1989; Kapur 2006). Rights are not freedom or power. Nor are they benign, protective tools attached to a pre-existing subject, but as Brown avers, produce the subject to whom they are assigned

In its very promise to protect the individual against suffering and permit choice for individuals, human rights discourse produces a certain kind of subject in need of a certain kind of protection ... [T]he point is that there is no such thing as mere reduction of suffering or protection from abuse—the nature of the reduction or protection is itself productive of political subjects and political possibilities. (Brown 2004: 459)

On her way as a rights-seeker, Sanle transited several spaces; in each, men violently exploited her. First her husband beat her and tried to force her to abort their child. She exercised her agency to remove her body (and her baby's) away from harm and into asylum. She paid a fee to an agent, entrusting both bodies to another man, but he also predated and victimized her. Trapped in a house in Dublin and speaking no English, she again exercised her agency, and managed to speak in secret to a female visitor to the house. Informed that she could seek asylum in Ireland at the Police Station, she further exercised her agency to escape and claim her "rights". However, her claim under gender persecution criteria led to arrest for having no documents, so she was imprisoned for three days before appearing in Court. Seeking human rights protection in asylum exposed her to juridical domination and incarceration.

Sanle's story tells us that individual "agency" is not enough to access universalized human rights, formulated with the patriarchal subject at its core—the very subject who dominated her at each step on her way. Sanle is clearly both victim and agent, but asylum laws cannot address them both together. As *m/other*, she is already othered in relation to the child she carries (Lentin 2013: 133), as a black African woman in asylum she becomes trebly "othered" from the model rights bearer—which I refer to as *M/other* (migrant *m/other*). What language or subject position has she from where to (legitimately) argue ownership of her body, other than in terms of its occupation/ownership by others? At the root, she cannot define an intrinsic self that possesses these rights—it is the identity categories (human, woman, refugee) that

attach them to her. If there is “no her” outside of the categories that define her, she cannot access these rights. Hence, the object of human rights (freedom, protection) and their actual bearers (Kapur 2006) are separable, and here is where identity matters most.

To alter-narrate the “scene” Sanle held in her mind for years, theatre exercises from Boal (1979: 98) arsenal were highly instructive. First, Yoh played the Judge, while Sanle described events and became the gazer, “imager and describer” (Morrison, in Razack 1998: 88) not the subject/object, a spectator of her own scene. Then, reversing roles, Yoh physically “sculpted” Sanle’s body into the image of the Judge, adjusting her posture, demeanour and facial expression as she herself had embodied it.⁴ Sanle “became” the Judge, her gaze switched away so she could stand outside herself, but also explore the Judge’s subjectivity from an *embodied* location. The rest of the group interrogated her as “Judge” and an important discovery was made: Sanle believed that the Judge “thinks that someone is lying when they don’t look you straight in the eye”. Sanle might have been too afraid or respectful to “look white power in the eye” (Razack 1998)—for to return his gaze is to challenge his power and risk being judged as arrogant. The double bind is, not to look at him, might seem evasive. Either way, her gestures are open to re-signification, by the one who has power to do the re-signifying in that space. Having “warmed-up”, the whole scene was played out.⁵

⁴ I used three of four stages of developing the theatrical language of the body described by Boal (1979:102); first is to know the body and its distortions, limitations and possibilities; second, to make the body expressive by abandoning other, more common and habitual forms of expression. The “sculpting” sequence he proposes emerges from Image Theatre (Boal 1992: xxi) from the third stage—of involving spectators— which I adapted.

⁵ Drama scenes are presented with the texts bordered, to distinguish them from narrative text.

Judge/SL	Cokoria Sanle, Is that you?
Woman	Yes sir (<i>subdued</i>)
Judge/SL	Ok. Tell me. How did you come to this country?
Woman	I came with the plane sir
Judge/SL	Plane?
Woman	Yes, sir
Judge/SL	Plane? I didn't see any passport here in my desk. (<i>pause</i>) You came with plane?
Woman	Yes.
Judge/SL	And you don't have passport? (<i>sceptical</i>)
Woman	The man who brought me took my passport, sir.
Judge/SL	LYING!! (<i>fierce, accusatory, nasty</i>) how can you come to this country without...with plane without passport. You are lying. You didn't come with the plane. Tell me how did you come. And who is that man?
Woman	Somebody Sir... I don't know
Judge/SL	Somebody....Who? What is his name?
Woman	I don't know sir
Judge/SL	Sanle, you are lying. You did already three days in prison. You go back for one week. Because you are lying. When you come back, you tell me how you come to this country. OK? (<i>Strikes the gavel three times</i>) Next!
(OOW TR2b: 24-33)	

As the Judge, Sanle's bodily gestures grew noticeably expansive, her voice more authoritative. What we also learn from the role-play is that like the radio journalist, the Judge is interested in the agent, the cost and method of transport; he listens through "border security" discourse. Sanle arrived in Ireland in 2002, four years after the peak of asylum arrivals from Africa (in 1997); by then the Tampere European Council summit in October 1999 had legislatively conflated "asylum" with "human trafficking" thus criminalizing asylum-seeking (Fekete 2001:28).⁶

⁶ Border protection was tied to foreign aid and trade policies at the Lome Convention in February 2000 when £8.5 billion in aid and trade agreements between the EU, Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific region (ACP) were linked to specific rules 'guaranteeing the repatriation and expulsion of people deemed to be 'illegal' within the EU' (Fekete 2001: 28). This turned untrained Airline staff and Immigration officers into immigration police at European borders, while Third World governments were turned into "immigration police for western Europe".

Sanle's case demonstrates the *performative* power of border security discourses to interpellate state actors; the Judge, already hailed as juridical authority, is re-interpellated, doubly empowered as an agent of state governmentality. His gaze shifts from justice to security. He *becomes* the border, one wall of the fortress, in much the same way as the Nun in Adaeze's case (p. 191). His *disbelief* of Sanle's testimony (that the agent confiscated her passport) was an affective response— animated, I suggest, by his *failure* (as a State Border), which he displaced onto Sanle as punishment for having *succeeded* in transgressing it/him. Following Butler (1993), performativity is the *shift from construction to materialization*, the act of imprisoning people seeking asylum materializes the discourse of illegality to then force asylum seekers through immigration borders as “lying/criminal bodies”. Sanle, in the process, becomes subjectified by the anger and the ensuing penalty of a week's imprisonment, and interpellates the call “criminal”. Temporal and spatial effects are important here; “doing time” re-iterates and sediments such bodies as natural (Butler 1993: 245). Sitting in jail, her *body becomes evidence* of her alleged criminality, but what is more, re-produces the essentialist, fetishized traits already scripted onto her black female body (women lie). “Over time” it seems natural to imprison asylum seekers because they lie. She, the victim, is produce-able as evidence to justify the punishment and forced to occupy the constructed category “maternity tourist”. Legal focus shifts from the ground of her asylum claim to her “believability”, not having papers is deemed more serious than the dangers from which she fled. A chain is set off— border agencies begin to expect “Africans to lie” about not having passports (see next excerpt).

While in prison, Sanle obtained legal advice and a new actor entered the scene— a male Irish asylum advocate. She spotted him at her first hearing because he seemed “so nice, he saw me, he was smiling”. The man later visited her in prison, organized

legal aid for her and advised to tell the Judge what he wants to hear. Ironically, she had to lie to be believed.⁷

This time I knew my answer... “Sanle, tell me, how did you come to this country?” And I said “By boat”. And even my baby was shaking in my stomach. (*She laughs, all the women laugh*)

(Sanle Tr1b: 4)

Turning to a second extract of court hearings, Edith, arriving two years *after* Sanle, was arrested and deemed “un-believable” *because* she provided documents.⁸

Edith: when I came, I came with my passport...I gave them like this [*demonstrates*]...they said, “How come a Nigerian person bring their documents? That is not normal”.

Yayah: When you tell them the truth, they say you are lying

Edith (*louder, angrier*) They said it’s not mine. You know they arrested me for that for holding a fake passport...and that was my passport, my signature, my photograph...that one alone took a year and a half...before they accepted...(*laughs*) (...) Then after that, he now brought an issue of me seeking asylum in France (*Dublin II Regulation*) I said Me! I don’t even know their uniform of their police in France talk less of how to seek asylum there. They said no, I sought asylum with somebody else’s name. I said, “It’s me!! That one again took another long year (...) Later when they find out the fingerprints and...the picture of the lady came, they found out that...

Yoh it was not you...

(Tr3c: 4-6)

Both women’s “truthful” speech acts took place in the domain of patriarchal power, in intersubjective encounters where structural and gender power lay with a white male of elite class. Case after case, unmitigated white patriarchal power is granted to individuals within the Immigration/Justice nexus and saturate juridical power with

⁷ Though she laughed, further along the same session, she disclosed that this Irish man tricked her to stay at his home on the way to the DP hostel and *he also sexually violated her*. She worried about performing this scene in case she was identified by the “Irish helper”, She had never sought justice for this rape, and I interrupted the session and we spent some time discussing whether she might want to re-consider bringing a charge against him, which she didn’t want to do.

⁸ Edith prefers to use her real name and her country of origin. Aged between twenty-five and thirty-five, she is married and mother of three young children. She was in the asylum system for eight years, gained residency and later, Irish citizenship. The transcript is extracted from an early group discussion.

security discourse. This not only forces bodies and identities, but also materializes new instruments of surveillance at the EU level and social policy at the national level.⁹

In November 1999, the period immediately preceding Sanle's and Edith's arrival, the State "unofficially" brought in Direct Provision and Dispersal policies without consultation with Irish communities or NGO's working with people in asylum.

Purporting to provide six-months of accommodation, a two-step manoeuvre formalized the system: first, Social Welfare staff were instructed by memorandum to deny asylum seekers welfare and rent allowance, forcing them out of independent housing. Next, dispersal and encampment in Direct Provision hostels were effectuated, along with a new department, the RIA, to manage them (AkiDwA 2010, FLAC 2009). Dispersal and incarceration regimes isolate, contain, restrain, and monitor every aspect of people's daily lives and mobility, again, sedimenting the notions that "asylum-seekers" are illegal and "bogus".

Irish Direct Provision (and other immigration incarceration) can thus be seen as *performative* of the criminalization of asylum, and of white patriarchal 'juridical systems of power [which have produced] the subjects they subsequently come to represent" (Butler 1990: 2). Discourses of "floods of refugees" in the South accumulate meanings that contribute to *affective biases* in the North—people in camps are considered less bogus than the "economic migrants" who present at European borders (Malkki 1996, Hyndman and Giles 2011; see Chapters One and Two). These affective biases flourish not only in the public imaginary—they materialize in the bodies of judiciary, NGOs, Civil service, health and welfare actors of First World nations.

⁹ Surveillance instruments enhance co-operation of the ORAC with other EU States; EURODAC is the European fingerprint database for identifying asylum seekers along with AVATS (Automated Visa Application and Tracking System) and AFIS (Automatic Fingerprint Identification System). The Dublin II Regulation criteria permit deportation to the first country of arrival (ORAC 2012).

The inclusion of gendered harm in asylum cases are “scripted onto or read into” the Black female body in asylum—including transnational feminist discourses on violence against women and women in conflict—which re-produce “First World protectionism and victimization” along racial lines, though subsumed under nationality (Razack 1998; Oxford 2005; Simm 2005). Ethnocentric universalist discursive narratives are replete among the judiciary, legal professions, asylum adjudicators and health professionals who assess cases (Oxford 2005). ‘Exotic assumptions about the violence that only migrant women experience ... such as female genital circumcision and honour killings’ proliferate (ibid. p 23). My analyses show that such scripts are pitted against each other—Sanle is unbelievable because she *doesn't* have a passport, yet Edith is lying because she *has* one.¹⁰ Yoh’s claim was based on the grounds of threat to her life, after exposing a child sex-abuse ring in her country. She mentioned in her asylum interview that she raised three children single-handedly, and this, she believes, was used to discredit her claim. She appeared “too empowered”, too unlike “pregnant arrivals”. Political persecution may appear to have little to do with being a mother, but for women in asylum, gendered claims seem to obliterate the possibility of political claims (Mbugua 2012). The reality is, one discourses is pitted against the other. Worse still, in Sanle’s case, gender persecution *did* grant her refugee status but the state did not/could not protect her already-violated body from carcereal punishment and a continuum of sexual/raced/gendered violence, by African and Irish men of various class locations.

Mamu, whose asylum claim was based on political persecution as a journalist found, during her main asylum interview with ORAC, that Africans are stereotyped

¹⁰ Yoh’s claim of the grounds of political persecution was denied because she commented she had raised three children on her own, and her assessors unfavourably compared this agency with her inability to escape threat to her life.

according to nationalities, evidence is discounted and even if some agents listen and find the story credible, the “top man in charge” determines the outcome.

The Immigration system here...in Ireland, the way they are treating migrants...they have already a stereotype when you first come...ok, Like, you are from Nigeria...they say...they know us...Nigerian people...they can be this this...Even the judge himself...they know already...They say, you’re coming from Cote de Ivore, the Congo...they have an idea...so even through you go for an interview, its like you just wasting your time there (...) Even some Judge here... (*Laughs out loud*)...Once I spoke with a private solicitor? “When you went for the appeal, who was your judge? I told him the name. He said, “Hah! This one never gives paper” (...) I still remember, when I went for my interview...there were the judge himself... yeah, four people plus the interpreter-five...the one who has the power was like cutting [*interrupting*] but the other one close to... his speaking was like to appreciate...just to kind of believe you, but he’s not the one... If there are four they have to vote... but on top of that there is the man in charge...if he says no, then it’s no.

(Mamu Ind.Int: 7-9)

In the Irish matrix of domination (Collins 2000), structural power operates through identification, surveillance and incarceration, but also interlocks with ideas, beliefs and practices of the hegemonic domain—which manufactures the ideas that justify oppression— and the disciplinary domain, which organises and implements it. Together, their impact in the interpersonal domain is to mark, discredit, produce, detain and deport the bodies of people in asylum. Delving deeper, I ask in the next section, “what work” then, do these bodies do as they “do time” in asylum?

5.3 “People are Tired, They’re Using us”: Producing Docile, Dependant, Deportable (and Profitable) bodies

People are tired (ahh!) I’m saying tired because you waste time going to school and at the end you don’t have certificate you know with the hard times you are having in the hostel, being bored, you come out ... being bored ...anywhere you go...the problems keep accumulating.

(Yayah Tr3b: 11-12)¹¹

Advocates, activists and academics may strive to construct asylum and its subjects differently, but there are fewer ways to do this. The *act* of detaining people in asylum *sediments* discourses that justify their detention to the point of their indistinguishability; immigration detention appears as a “new” starting point in a new chain. Moreover, it is not merely the “construction” that is sedimented but also ‘that which is refused from construction, the domains of the repressed, forgotten, and the irrecoverably foreclosed’ (Butler 1993: 151). One of two alter-narratives refused and foreclosed in immigration detention concerns the “undeclared histories” (Ahmed 2004) of colonial incarceration or encampment of Europe’s others. What would it mean to examine immigration detention as a link in that same chain? It is this “dark side” I next examine—the violence and “colonial complicity”(Keskinen et al. 2009) of practices that incarcerate and encamp of black bodies, This inserts the final link in the intersectional triad—class (or capital).

A male participant from my first project dropped into my studio one day to show me a receipt he signed each week in his DP hostel. Of the €183.00 or so he was awarded by State Welfare, he kept just €19.10, the remainder retained for accommodation and upkeep. I began formulating the notion of asylum producing “docile bodies” which I juxtaposed with the women’s overall themes “people are tired”

¹¹ Yayah is aged between 25 and 30, and has been in DP for four years. She left two young children in Africa in the care of her family.

and “they’re using us”. If the women bodies are “doing nothing”, why are they tired? If they feel used, what are they being used for, apart from “representational labour” (discussed in Chapter Four).

For Butler (1993: 224), ‘every act is itself a repetition of a recitation, the citing of a prior chain of acts which are implied in the present act which perpetually drain any “present” act of its presentness’. What prior chain of acts might be relevant in dispersal/detention/segregation of black bodies in the “present-ness” of Irish asylum? What material work might these bodies be doing in Direct Provision accommodation as they “wait” for prolonged periods as cases are processed? My next data extracts explore “what material work” their bodies are doing in Direct Provision. I use three different but inter-related technologies to sharply focus on elements that incur *occupational deprivation* and *occupational injustice*” (Whiteford 2005; Townsend and Wilcock 2004).¹² First, the *denial of everyday occupational participation* forces inactivity, and makes people differently dependent, differently provided-for than, say disabled or incarcerated Irish citizens. Second, their *confinement* forces bodies out of public life into the private sphere, like children in need of the paternal care of the state, allowed to learn and play at cultural events and courses. Third, the *dispossession of identity*, which forces bodies into being “no-one” with “empty subjecthoods”, thus denying other identificatory opportunities.

Mamu lived with her two small children in the Direct Provision hostel over twenty kilometres outside the city, travelling over an hour each way to spend weekends with her partner as a family. She metaphorizes the system as battery farming, infantilization and slavery, and recounts how she was penalised for this

¹² Taken from the field of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, this model of human occupation can address exclusion without pathologizing excluded individuals.

Like the chickens...one box all of you...you can't do anything... you can't work...they are providing food for you whether you like it or not so you have to eat it ... you have to manage...But you just thank God that we survive [...]
 When I had my first child here we were not living together, me and my partner...And I was living far...so imagine coming and going was like two hours...even for him...You can't stay out of the hostel for a certain time otherwise you lose your place...I get so many warn (warnings) from the hostel (...) I went out at the weekend and then I came back at the beginning of the week...they just you know put a small note under my door...that "You have not been staying in this...er... room for such and such a time...If you continue you will lose your space...something like that...(sucks her teeth to indicate her displeasure, disgust, pettiness). This is not life...you're like a kid...they're controlling you...but we are parents...you have people they are inspecting you, reporting on you so you are not free...I would like to be free...manage my time...manage my outings...I don't want someone going after me like a kid to say to me..." you have to be here this time" No! It's a kind of slavery.

(Mamu Ind.Int: 12-16)

The forced occupation of "asylum seeker" reverses the role of parents, making them into the "kids", possessions of the paternal state, under constant surveillance, like *slaves*. In a drama exercise, Yoh metaphorizes her occupational deprivation also as a prisoner "in chains" being passed around, forced into positions and brought to her knees.

When you come in the country they first of all take you left right turn you and then after turning you in all those corners then they want you to congratulate them then they smile you are still...see your position? (*twisted, awkward, unstable*)...you are not standing normal...they want you to give them "thank you"... Things are not good but they want you to be happy "Why you can't smile?" You are limping, not even standing...on your knees.

(Yoh Tr2a: 15)

Yayah, in a post-project individual interview, speaks of becoming "tired" by inactivity. Her hostel is twenty kilometres away from the urban centre. Her everyday life of "just sitting" and waiting is not alleviated by doing courses or walking aimlessly through town, plus she can rarely afford the train fare anyway. As she "waits" the problems accumulate in her mind but manifest in her body, which grows *larger* from the institutional diet but *weaker*—the bigger she grows, the more her strength, power and motivation is sapped.

I don't even have any power anymore because I'm gone too big [*squeezes the flesh of her arms and legs*] I can't even do anything...before, you are active running up and down for survival...jumping from one place [*gestures with her body to illustrate her point*]...but you just get caught in the room...just sit down...it weaken me...I'm not strong like before...I used to be very strong and active...[*buying and selling cosmetics*] people would say "you see that one...she can do anything"...but now...I just get up...sit down...get up...sit down...doing nothing...that walk you just go an come back...that is nothing...no strength with those things...you are going there and you will come back and you will shower and you will sleep.

(Yayah Ind.Int: 13-18)

Paradoxically, Yayah's physicality during the interview became more animated, her gestures vivacious as she remembered; in re-telling, her body became more as it used to be. As Boal (1979) contends, the body's entrenched habitual postural distortions reflect the work or status performed in daily life and needs to be unlearned. Like an empty cup being re-filled, repeating this new-old self over time can create the possibility of a different subjectivity emerging, one that holds the former within the present. Telling us how Direct Provision has made her useless and how she used to be offers clues as to what Yayah's docile body is being "used for". The denial of everyday occupations (such as cooking, parenting, working) disallows people in DP the opportunity to contribute to their own survival. Residents may be maintained as *bare life* in Agamben's (1998) terms, but their bodies are forced to *perform (or do) docility and dependence*. In other words, they are not "doing nothing".

The specific occupations that avow the women's identities as African women are disavowed; productive work, mothering and collective social action were available to them in Africa whether in or out of the labour force. Yayah traded cosmetics; Yoh traded clothes, ran a restaurant and farmed. Women worked in collectives, as she explains.

In terms of women in my own country...as I was growing up I realized that my mothers always had small groups...they used to call them “nganji” (...) to do farming or money contribution, or cooking, or ceremonies...I was always watching them...I loved it, cos (...) it made me have that sense of unity and oneness...as I grew up I also joined women.

(Yoh Tr2b: 23-24)

When Yoh asks (p. 204): “Why African women can’t we use their strength here?” we need to fully encompass the power, agency, strength and courage of the women she refers to, who make perilous journeys, not only in aeroplanes but on foot and by boat in Nigiri’s case (pp. 184) to seek asylum in Ireland. Importantly, we need to do this without overinvesting, fetishizing or glamourizing either their agency and resilience, *or* their suffering. Edith too, seeking freedom, tried to study while in the hostel, but was reported by a fellow resident and cut off state funds.

I was in Ireland...for a good nine years, no documents... I was writing letters...no answer...nine years out of somebody’s life, what is left? I wanted...to make something out of my life...I refused anyway (...) I went to apply to the pregnancy course [midwifery] in Dublin...I started going there, but...somebody reported me that I was going to school from the hostel, so they threw me out of the hostel (...) I decided to stay on my own so I can finish that because me I was doing something good that would help me in the future (...) I was on my own...They cut me off social... almost two months I was sleeping in my car (...) I ended up doing hairdressing for a good five years.

(Edith Tr3c: 3)

On her self-actualizing sojourn of five years, Edith not only survived but thrived: she opened a hair salon, become a tax-paying member of Irish society, got married and bore a child. Pregnant with her second child, she was forced to re-enter asylum but on returning, was falsely accused of having collected her welfare allowance throughout (it is not known where this money went, but usually, the DP centre is paid directly). This uncovers a second alter-narrative refused from construction in asylum discourse—what might be the *benefits* of detaining fit, healthy, ambitious hard working

people?¹³ In the next excerpt, Yoh and Edith hint at internal corruption and opportunistic “holes” in the system that benefit some Irish.

Yoh: Those are some of those loopholes where Irish corruption goes through...some Irish people get cross on us, the foreigners...we’ve ruined our economy...those working in the system...digs a hole and they put the name there “Immigration Section”...and they know what they are scraping out of it.

(Yoh Tr3b: 6-7)

RIA (2010, 2014) reports show the system to consistently runs *under* capacity. Many opponents of the system frame expenditure in Direct Provision as “costs to the taxpayer, or state; Deegan (2013) wonder about ‘the wisdom and the way all of this money has been spent’ while Loyal (2008) and Lentin and Titley (2012) condemn the growing “asylum industry”. However, arguments are often rounded off stating that it would make more ‘financial and moral sense to allow them to work and to feed themselves ... becoming self- reliant, less of a financial burden’ (Loyal 2008: para.12). This returns the arguments to a humanitarian trope, which, I suggested earlier, in this era, re-iterates white supremacy; anti-capitalist arguments that might unsettle the naturalized logic of neo-liberalized capitalism seem unspeakable.

In contrast, Fekete (2001) over ten years of asylum scholarship sustains a tight link between refugees, racism, and global capital. If the postcolonial era has meant the ‘pauperization and the erosion of education, social and welfare provision’ in the South through the World Bank, IMF and SAPs, then ‘western-imposed immigration controls lessen the life chances of globalism’s victims still further’ (Fekete 2001: 29). She takes a *global* approach that *re-inserts subjugated histories* of Western imposed population control/ managed migration to situate asylum encampment/imprisonment along the

¹³ Sixty-five percent of female asylum seekers are in the working age bracket (but paid work or tertiary education is prohibited in DP (ORAC 2014; FLAC 2009; see also p. 218 of the thesis).

systemic continuum that ‘enslaved Black people, nativized peoples of colour under colonization and the Jews under Nazism’ (Fekete 2001 in Perera 2002: 34). Perera (2002), in the Australian context draws European analysis together with the racialised genealogy of the US Prison Industrial Complex (Davis 1997/2012, 2000, 1998; Schlosser 1998),¹⁴ to advance the notion of asylum “camps” as racialised incarceration and punishment that “manufacture criminality and criminals” (Davis 2012: 51). This is taking place hand in hand with the gradual replacement of the welfare state with the “penal states” in First World nations (Wacquant 2009, 2013; Schlosser 1998).¹⁵

In Ireland, Direct Provision did indeed replace social welfare at the same time transnational capital and neoliberalism arrived, but it is the participation in, and profitability of the EU “deportation machine” that is noted by the Irish Anti-Deportation coalition ADI (2012). Lentin and Moreo (2014) consider “deportability”—the threat rather than the act— a technology of migration control by neoliberal states that need to reconcile human rights legislation with labour needs. Coulter (2012) reports that in 2011, *legal fees* made up seventy-three percent of the expenditure of the Irish Refugee Appeals Tribunal and that most of the costs arose from challenges to its decisions. That year, deportations of 280 persons from Ireland “cost the State” over one million Euros, and despite the steady decline of asylum applications since 2002, deportation orders increased by 8.5 percent between 2008 and 2010 (Moreo 2012). Both refusal rates for refugee status and deportations in Ireland are higher than

¹⁴ Of 2.6 million Americans incarcerated, 62 percent are African American (who are only 13 percent of the population) and over 70 percent people of colour. According to Davis (1998) the fastest growing group of prisoners are Black women. Multinational US security corporations G4S and Serco operate immigration detention facilities in the UK and Australia. In 2014, G4S took over the contract for the Athlone centre from Bridgestock Ltd. (The Journal.ie 2015).

¹⁵ According to Wacquant (2013: 7) since 1977, the penal incarceration rate had ‘increased fivefold in the US... doubled in France, Italy and England; quadrupled in the Netherlands and Portugal and increased sixfold in Spain but the US rate is six to twelve times that of the EU (Wacquant 2009:119).

the European average (A.D.I 2012). The “asylum industry” in Ireland is largely monopolized by private consortiums of hoteliers and the catering industry (Loyal 2007, FLAC 2009, ADI 2012, Deegan 2013), but is gradually drawing in multinational corporations. Culling numbers, instead of “saving” money, seems to generate profits for state agents and private businesses (accommodation, airlines, security) and elite professionals.

My analyses attempt to advance an understanding of asylum/migration as neocolonial practices of racialised population control and incarceration; at one end, war and resource extraction in the South forces displacement into massive refugee camps, and at the other, restricts, detains or deports those who flee to the North. As Farrier (2013: 5) notes, ‘borders were always obstructed to arrivants to the self-proclaimed colonial centre’, and it is the same forces that proscribe asylum. The colonial ideologies are continuous, only practices have changed. The “workhouse” is very much embedded in Irish history, where profits were made through forced labour.¹⁶ My analyses suggest that postcolonial asylum produces illegal, docile deportable bodies upon which, a hovering “transcendental capitalism” lands (Hage 2003:19) to create a chain of profit from multinational security corporations, elite professionals to “trickle down” local services. To dwell on this economic angle, far from detracting from the appalling human cost, reveals that bodies in asylum are very much a labour force *inside* globalized capitalism, which provides *the labour of waiting*.

Section Summary

What might my analyses so far on this chapter say about “identity” and “representation”? First, they shift common understandings of identity to intersubjectivity

¹⁶ For example, the Magdelene Laundries and Mother and Baby homes (Holohan 2011: 426).

and affectivity, and argue that whiteness is interpellated and performative, and as hooks (2013:5) avers, individuals are highly resistant to acknowledging their “white supremacist thinking and action”. Second, *white supremacy* needs black bodies as objects of fixed inferiority, a task aided by dispossessing identities and occupational deprivation, of people in asylum, which prohibits alternative identificatory opportunities. These bodies and identities in asylum are made easily appropriable, and put to “work”.

My analyses were grounded in the women’s own experiences and organic intellectualism. I attempt to *conjoin*, (not annex) anti-capitalist, anti-racist and gendered politico-economic critiques.¹⁷ Asking “What work are their bodies doing”, it should come as no surprise that when black female bodies are the central unit of analysis, empowered, embodied (not abstracted or essentialised) and allowed to speak (heard), we most clearly the utility of keeping them silent. It masks the labour they perform for white, capitalist patriarchal power. If, as I suggest, transnational asylum is approaching one form of racialised confinement, is “biopolitics” an adequate term for understanding this?

In the following and final section of “embodying asylum”, I draw from Edith’s and Mamu’s (hidden) maternity experiences in asylum and two publicized migrant maternal deaths to discuss how the maternal body of colour is double appropriable in Ireland as a target of patriarchal attack in terms of the “necropolitics” (Mbembe 2003) of Irish abortion laws.

¹⁷ This honours the persistent call by Black feminists (Davis 1981; Mohanty 2003; Spivak 1990, Collins 2000, hooks 1982, 2002; and others).

5.4 The Necropolitics of Irish Maternity: (Dead) bodies and The Patriarchal Triangle

The role of motherhood or mothering is not confined to mothers or women, even in the contemporary conditions. As Tedla (1995) explains, the concept of mother transcends gender and blood relations. A family member or friend who has been kind and caring can be said to be one's mother. It is an honour to have such a title.

Dove 1998: 521

Motherhood is central to African culture and philosophy. Afrocentric concepts of motherhood exceed European social and biological essentialist constructions of “woman” and their assigned reproductive roles as “females”.¹⁸ All the women in the study were mothers, although some with adult children (Yoh) and others left in Africa (Yayah). Edith and Mamu gave birth during the course of the research. The women variously self-identified as African, migrant, asylum-seeker, woman, mother, Nigerian and so on (which indicate their subjection) but never as “black women” or as “feminists” They organised as “African women” but went “part of the way” (Boyce-Davis 1994) with the aims of Western/white feminists.¹⁹

For them, the “Mama” identity was favoured location for self-identification; the term is one of respectful, loving endearment used to address one other and also their daughters. In this section I first trace the complex identification processes traversed between the figurative and material roles of motherhood.²⁰ I then draw from maternity experiences of Edith and Mamu in asylum, and turn to Lentin's (2004, 2006a, 2013) theorization of the racially and ethnically othered maternal body as “*femina sacra*” as a

¹⁸ This is not to say that the concept is not highly contested in Continental African feminism; motherhood is generally agreed to be a vital role, but feminists work to *both* re-claim it *and* re-define its oppressive constructions (see Akujobi 2011; Ebunoluwa 2009; Mekgwe 2008; Ogundipe-Leslie 1994).

¹⁹ In general, African women depart from Western/white feminism at the points where gender is valorised over race, where black motherhood and sexuality is devalued and pathologized, and where women's organization is adversarial to men and segregated from community (Boyce Davis 1994: 21; Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 225).

²⁰ The chosen pseudonym “Sanle” was the name of one woman's grandmother, and “Mamu” is a version of Mama.

contra-punctual site where abortion and racial “necropolitics” (Mbembe 2003) can be executed on M/others. This sets the stage for a deeper discussion of how the maternal body of colour became politically and culturally translated and appropriated in one public encounter of “postcolonial suffering” between Irish and migrant women.

The “Mama” Identity

Motherhood is clearly a site where multiple subjectivities converge, evident in Edith’s narrative about “mama” represents:

That word mama is wrongly spelled, it should be spelled as MAN-MA, that means (a woman with the strength of a man), though in a woman's body, she most times forget she is a woman...she cries when no one sees her, when you ask her, she says all is well, her aim is to fill the families stomach, and get the children educated, she is mostly blamed for all the bad things that befalls the family, accused wrongly, no one to defend her, when others are sleeping at night, she wet her pillow with uncontrollable tears.(...) When she is been called Mama by the children, it’s with gratitude, she is like the God we see on earth, because she lay her life for the joy of the family, because of her integrity, not to bring shame to the family, she pick up any job available, even though it doesn't suit her, she is an iron lady, she is the solid rock of the family, SHE IS A WO-MAN, a friend, a mother, a sister, a teacher, a lover, a comforter, adverser [sic], defender, a brother, rescuer, provider, a wife, a partner, she is a super woman, she is my MAN-MA!

Edith deploys, then immediately disrupts any dualist notion that binds sex with gender, or gender to social roles. She troubles her own text, deftly crossing multiple meanings and qualities attributed to the “mama” identity. Her account contains but exceeds both the primary identity “mother” as *institution* and mother as *relationship* to her powers of reproduction and her children (Rich 1976/1986). She disrupts the binarised split of men and woman into discreet genders, but neither dishonours, disavows nor dwells on her gendered victimization and suffering; she embraces her migrating subjectivities, shifting across them to suture the gaps that drain her power and agency (like Yoh does, p. 204)

However, forced raced/gendered identity locations in Irish society ill-afford the luxury of autonomous self-definition; the women were socialised in Africa and were

now tasked with re-defining their blackness in opposition to whiteness. As the following data extracts illustrate, it may well be that they “became black ” through encounters with patriarchal Irish institutions as their maternal bodies move through Irish asylum.

Edith I was having a miscarriage...it was actually the GP...that actually had the fault...you know...they gave me medication that wasn't fit for the pregnancy ... so the baby dies in the womb...not knowing (*strong emotional reaction in the group*). The GP was checking me, “everything is fine”...the baby died at...12 weeks ... and I carried on the pregnancy till I carried till...22 weeks...(exclamations) not having any experience about being pregnant and all that...So, it happened one day...people were like...“I want to change GP”...I say, Oh! Well, it's free, the form is free, so let me just change. I follow you to the new GP. When I got there the GP was like “How old is your pregnancy and all that?” I said, ok 22 weeks. He said “No. It's too small for that...can I just check here?” That was what saved me...He checked me. He had to ring [*former GP*] then, from his office...I only went there with a form for him to sign for me...And I landed in hospital and they induced me. According to the doctors it would have ruptured my womb (*affirmation from women*) (...) And at the end of the admission one of the Doctors there...I showed them the packet of what I took ...The moment I took that drug...I felt kind of sensation ... down, you know...I started feeling bad...I knew it was that. When I showed it to the doctor it was that “Who gave you this?” [*I said*] GP [*She said*] OK...she left. When the next Doctor came...[*I said*] the other one said this medication was not good for the pregnancy like...Who gave you this? It's not good for pregnancy...Where did you get it from? I said well it's from my GP...she said, well, ok...She left.

Yoh Hmmp...(*laughs sadly, knowingly*) Cover it!

Edith Then, when the next doctor came I said, the other one told me that this medication was not good for the pregnancy and I told her that my GP prescribed it for me. He said, Well, we can't do anything about that. That was how it ended. (Tr3c: 1-3)

Implicit in Edith's encounter with the first GP is the suggestion that something more than negligence was taking place; others listening recognized this as differential treatment by actors in the medical professional for those on welfare, especially if foreign and in asylum. Yoh puts it this way:

Even if you leave and go the other way you'll still be treated the same way because they don't want to go against their own people...because you are now on social welfare, because now you're coming to give you another life on their social so he can give you anything...I had [*a car*] accident the doctor that first took care of me was German she took very good care of me...as soon as I was transferred...all was Paracetamol, Paracetamol...he was "it's ok" but I can't stand up, I can't sit down...because you're on medical certificate so why should they give you anything expensive or valuable?

(Tr 3c: 4)

Telling their stories in a group conscientized their *collective* anger and sorrow—hearing Edith's story, Yoh re-recognized the differential treatment of the German doctor (who acknowledged the severity of her pain) from the Irish doctor who dismissed it. Free medical treatment was an entitlement but grudgingly handed out, with corners cut. In the next extract, Mamu tells of her harrowing second birth in an encounter with the manager of her Direct Provision hostel.

I was in labour (...) I decided to go to the reception and tell them to call an ambulance for me...They couldn't do it...They said "No, I had to pay for the ambulance"... they start giving such a long story for the ambulance...someone in labour (...) I'm in a kind of situation you asking me questions...asking me to pay for something...then the lady in the reception she start making some call...I was asking myself if she was understanding English or if she knows the rules or if she knows the job she is doing..."No, you have to pay for the ambulance...If you don't want an ambulance you can pay for the taxi" I am on medical card...I am qualified...That day the social welfare was attending clinic in the hostel. I said OK...So I went to her. I have to go to the hospital...can you find a solution for me...she said "No I don't have money. We're not paying for transportation for people going to hospital. You have to take public transport..." Don't you have someone who can help you? To take you to the hospital?" (...) I was still going around the hostel looking for someone to mind my first child (...) In between holding my child and going to the hospital...I said...What am I going to do?

(Mamu Ind. Int August 2012)

Mamu frantically text-messaged everyone she knew with a car, eventually got a lift to the hospital and gave birth within half an hour of arrival. A few days after the birth, Mamu contacted me and said she tried to make a complaint through SIMA, which I

followed up, but both our requests went unanswered.²¹ Soon after, Mamu left the hostel to live with her partner.

Both African and Irish societies impose penalties on woman who bear children outside of hetero-normative patriarchal structures, but none of the women in the study were aware of Ireland's history of punishment for transgressive women, especially mothers. They believed that this only happened to them, not Irish women because the "Irish knew their rights". In motherhood, it is not the categories or axes of "race/culture/gender/class" *per se* that are of analytic importance but how they are signified and deployed to effectuate the desired political/economic outcome at the time. Yoh's asylum claim was discredited as she seemed *too* empowered, not vulnerable enough, too unlike the "pregnant arrivals (p. 215); "motherhood" was the pivotal ideological construction around which *one set of discourses was pitted against the other* but the occupational identities (mother, father, children) and the rights attached to them are over determined by the identity "asylum seeker".

In other words, race/gender/class can be understood as what Hall (1997c) calls "floating signifiers", open for re-signification. In the Irish postcolonial scene, motherhood was ripe with the "foetocentric rhetoric and ethics" (Smyth 1992 in Mc Avoy 2013: 40) of the Catholic Church and State. The framing of feminist discourses on abortion rights as *pro-choice* rather than *pro-abortion* leaves the issue ripe for liberal interpretations of the constitution (Smyth 2002).²² If the Irish court (in the preceding section) functioned as the threshold of patriarchal punishment and incarceration

²¹ Several weeks later, I was informed that they were unable to act on this and similar complaints until enough statistics were gathered to form a campaign. Apparently, the Irish Health Service Executive no longer deemed childbirth an emergency, and the Social Welfare Department did not authorize payment for an ambulance or taxi if Public transport was available.

²² A referendum in 1983 passed Amendment Eight to the Irish Constitution, giving an unborn foetus and the mother equal rights. Currently, feminists are demanding a full repeal of the 8th Amendment to the Irish Constitution. In Ireland, there is a 14-year maximum sentence (reduced from life) for those who undergo abortion, and around 4-6000 women a year travel to England (or other EU states) for an abortion, at costs of around 1500 pounds for the trip.

through which African women entered (or were “born”) into the Irish national space, their maternal experiences exposes the racist misogyny scaffolding the “patriarchal triangle” of the judiciary, the Church and medical profession in reproductive politics.

Returning to Edith and Mamu, *historicizing* their experiences situates their bodies within the Postcolonial politics of maternity and reproductive rights for Irish women. On the other hand, *racialising* them illustrates how differentiating migrant women into hierarchies (Chapter Four) can result not in solidarity, but co-option into the existing Irish feminist struggle for reproductive autonomy. Two striking examples, the maternal deaths Bimbo Onanuga and Savita Halapannaver, who both died in Irish hospitals following intrauterine foetal deaths in 2010 and 2012 respectively, illustrate this.²³

“We are all Savita”

Bimbo Onanuga was a thirty-two year old Irish-Nigerian woman who died due to the intrauterine death of her baby (Reilly 2011) following a medical induction with Misoprostol/Cytotec over seven months into her pregnancy. The drug is not registered for inducement of labour, nor recommended in the UK and USA. An inquest (initially denied to her family) was granted after three years in 2014. Savita Halapannaver, a thirty-one year old Indian dentist, was miscarrying at seventeen weeks pregnant, but denied an abortion (despite her pleas) because a foetal heartbeat was present. She died of septicemia days later (AIMSI 2013).

²³ See also the case of Dhara Kivlehan who died in 2010 four days after childbirth; an inquest was refused initially, but is now in progress; her blood tests showed grossly abnormal liver and kidney function which weren’t followed up in time (The Association for Improvement of Maternity Services Ireland, AIMSI 2013).

In contrast to the emerging literature on the death of Savita Halapannaver since the time of my research²⁴, salient to this thesis are how her death was *represented*, and the *collective affective* flows of those who protested and mourned it. Initially, I was struck by the resonance between theirs and Edith's stories— not being heard or believed, their pain being dismissed, being given drugs not properly scrutinized for their contra-indications in pregnancy, as Bimbo's partner Abiola Adesina's account states:

I was actually *shouting*... I could see that something was wrong, but the nurse who was there with me was telling me *she's pretending* ... she was telling me it's no problem, that some people exaggerate

Even before then — before the nurse — there was a doctor ... I was telling the doctor as well that something is wrong, but she wouldn't *even listen*, the doctor would not even listen. The doctor *would not even look at my face*".

(Reilly 2011, edited, my emphasis)

Savita's image (below) represents a "grievable" loss of life; here, a beautiful, youthful, feminine vibrant, vivacious, fertile M/other) is laid waste through Ireland's barbaric anti-abortion laws. Unlike Bimbo's death, this death aroused a mass eruption of grief and anger; her photograph was circulated across cyberspace well beyond Ireland, and fuelled international mass protests and vigils. Until Savita's case emerged, Bimbo's death (and others who couldn't speak) was silenced. Intersectional analysis can explain the absence of such outpourings of grief for Bimbo through different race/class/gender location between women of colour (Indian/professional versus Nigerian /migrant) and also the higher male/class privilege awarded to Savita's Indian husband (who took on the Irish state) possibly making it easier for him to speak and be

²⁴ See Holland (2013); Spillane (2015) and Freedman (2015) for example, which discuss the death in terms of abortion laws and human rights, while Lentin (2013a, b) draws together gender/race/nationalism and the sacrificability of migrant m/others.

heard than Bimbo's African partner.²⁵ Identity locations have some part to play in whose lives are more available, more grievable (Butler 2004) and more "hear-able" by the Nation. One particular campaign slogan "We are all Savita" signals how her death came to stand for so many "deaths"; that this death was "*already* particular, framed and constituted", as Ahmed contends:

When assuming a body image, subjects 'take on' the burden of particular bodily others which both precede them and are reinvented by them (...) Difference is not simply found in the body, but is established as a relation between bodies [suggesting that] the particular body carries traces of the differences that are registered in the bodies of others.

(Ahmed 2000:44)

However, the mass declaration "We are all Savita", suggests a *becoming or passing through the suffering of the other*. This is starkly illustrated in the image reproduced below (Shorts 2012), in which each face of nearly six hundred profile pictures of Savita's Facebook supporters are digitally *embedded into Savita's face*. We can ask of this image two interrelated questions: What is it that Savita's image *represents*? What "work" does her image allows us to do, by entering it, that we cannot otherwise do?

²⁵ See Mac Einri (2006) for a detailed discussion of higher (though ambiguous and intermittent) status awarded to Indians than Africans by the Irish in anti-colonial struggle, and my earlier discussion (p.79).



**Figure 11: Photograph of Savita Halappanavar embodied with 600 smaller images
(Shorts 2012)**

For Butler (2004: 14), the present conditions of the collective are important in understanding individual acts. At this particular moment in Ireland's history, a number of subalternized texts of trauma, patriarchal punishment and suffering erupted and invaded contemporary politics. Scandals of Institutional child abuse, forced adoptions, mass hysterectomies and symphysiotomies (Holohan 2011; O' Connor 2011; Mc Carthy et al. 2008) erupted.²⁶ Moreover, "mass immigration" of people of colour, and subsequent "mass emigration" of Irish nationals flooded the National psyche through

²⁶ See the Ryan Report (2009) and Mc Aleese Report (2013), which detail the sexual and physical abuses and exploitation of women and children in Catholic industrial schools, reformatories and Magdelene Laundries.

the media. Racism and anti-racism arrived. Transnational capital hovered, landed, and took off, leaving the State in penury. Irish women had already demarcated into “good and bad reproducers of the nation” and the entering postcolonial women of colour fragmented into “good and bad M/others” (Lentin 2013). These convergences released and circulated a number of collective griefs that may be described as “social suffering” (Das et al. 2000: 226; Kleinman 2000) of the National body. More specifically, ‘a series of complex transactions between birth, death and mourning’ (Das 1997: 75) can be read on/through the bodies on whom the pain is written.²⁷

In this climate, Savita became appropriable as the *‘particular body’* to be entered by bodies and voices of all those women (and men) who “cannot speak”. A woman of colour, exoticized and fetishized but who is also a “good migrant”, can perhaps speak louder than white Irish women or African/black women. However, my reading of the photograph in conjunction with Edith and Mamu’s experiences, suggests more—this was an attempt to *enter her grief*. Following Gray (2004, through Silverman, 1996), the affective outpouring of national (and international) grief could also be read as “idiopathic identification”:

where the other is incorporated, annihilated, deprived of her specificity, her unique existence and character...the motivation is not to engage with, or “encounter” the other for herself.

(Gray 2004: 422)

As Savita’s life evaporates, the collective public who mourn her insert their losses into her skin. I advance such a reading with tremendous caution, to question two conjunctural processes of “identity” and “representation”—first, the fragmentation of

²⁷ Social suffering addresses ‘social violence that social orders—local, national and global—bring to bear on people ... in the responses to human problems by the institutions of social policy and programs that are in principle organized to ameliorate the problem (Das et al. 2000: 226). Here I am following Das’s (1997: 67-75) theorization of the violence against women during postcolonial Indian partition.

“the M/other” identity, which pixelates and disassembles her *figure*; and second, the entrance into her *body through collective affect*..

The political *intentions* for white Irish feminism are clear— they want abortion legalized. Over five decades of abortion debates, bodies of dead (Irish) babies and mothers have erupted like weeping sores on the skin of the Irish nation.²⁸ The debate was overwhelmed by criticisms of the Church, patriarchal power and sexism — framed in terms of gender and individual autonomy. However, if the skin is ‘a border that feels’ (Ahmed 2000: 45), some of the affective exchanges that entered and circulated through the “skin” of this image in this instance muddy the issues of feminist solidarity across race, and thus, with women of colour in Ireland. Notwithstanding the critical necessity to legislate on abortion, too little attention was paid to the hierarchical race/class differences *between the women*, which, I contend, has played its part in limiting white/hegemonic Irish feminist engagement with women of colour *until* this event, and *outside* of the abortion issue. We are *not* all Savita.

In the wake of inquiries into Savita’s death, demands to legislate circumstances that allow abortion resulted in ‘The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Bill’ (2013). This permits abortion to alleviate life-threatening conditions including a woman’s threat to commit suicide if refused a termination, but sets conditions that perpetuate patriarchal “power-over” reproductive freedom. The situation remains: by constitutional decree, a woman’s life can be jeopardized by the equal rights of the foetus (Smyth, A. 2014 in Campbell 2014). In August 2014, a new case erupted that vivified the inadequacy and in-built loopholes of this bill. It also exposes the horrific

²⁸ I refer to the deaths of young mothers and fetuses and barbaric treatment of women by Irish “lawyers, doctors, police and priests” in the Kerry Babies case (Mc Cafferty 1985) and the X and Y cases (see Smyth, A.1992 and Smyth, L 2005).

²⁸ See also Lentin’s (2005) critique of the “Headless Hooker”, an upper-class Nigerian woman whose body was found on a riverbank in County Kilkenny in 2004.

outer-limit the State will go to justify “the integrity of its border protection”. Ms. Y, a teenage woman in asylum, pregnant through rape in her own country sought permission to travel for abortion; without travel papers or funds, a series of delays (deliberate or otherwise) ensued as an “expert medical panel” debated the case. She went on hunger strike, was force-fed and later, deemed too late to terminate, was forced to deliver her child by Caesarean section. It is believed that two psychiatrists agreed to the termination and one Medical Doctor disagreed. In this “worst case” scenario, Irish state actors executed a series of baneful, unconscionable deeds as they twisted and turned to adhere to their own dictates. These twists are not new; Lentin (2003) illustrates that even as the Irish state bans abortion, it condoned and paid for ten M/others in asylum to travel for abortions in 2002. At the same time, it refused the claim to protect the unborn child of a Nigerian asylum seeking M/other, deporting her, posing the cynical paradox that the unborn is ‘not a person when it is mothered by an asylum seeker’ (ibid.p 314).

The point I wish to stress is that in each of the five maternal cases I refer to, Healthcare and Social welfare workers and hostel managers were interpellated with racist/sexist discourses about African women and asylum seekers. Lyons et al. (2008: 272) found that maternal healthcare providers to ethnic minority women in Ireland between 2002 and 2003 perceived unacceptable/unfamiliar behaviours (such as not wanting pain relief during labour, or silence/vocalization during labour) as cultural problems (not individual choices) that made extra demands on their time. Although fifty-eight percent of ethnic minority women were not African some staff referred to all ethnic minority women as African, considered all ethnic minority women as one homogenous group (usually asylum seekers) and differentiated between Asian/African women regarding pain relief.

In the *hegemonic* domain, values, beliefs and ideology justify and normalise *structural* and *disciplinary* power by enacting it; it is at this point that state actors deny

“rights”. Mamu, in an individual interview, recounted her standoff with hostel management; when told she would lose her place after visiting her partner and being away from her hostel for more than three days, she demanded that the child and the father, and herself have “rights” to spend time together, and succeeded in having the injunction revoked. She points out the non-performativity and hypocrisy of democracy and human rights in the West, but also how disciplinary power operates.

I was dealing with social welfare and the management of the hostel (...) according to me, I think they are too powerful...too powerful. Those who have power they can influence so you don't have any rights (...) So if you were flying from where we came from for lack of rights, lack of democracy because of corruption and here we meet the same thing, it's like...hah! We are talking about rights, democracy, why is the people making all those policy? When they can't really fulfil it?

(Mamu Ind.Int: 18-19)

Here we see the logic of Collin's (2000) matrix of domination model—intersecting race, gender and class oppressions *produce* identity categories through interlocking powers. The “additive” identity category style works hand-in-hand with “human rights” but does not address *which* form of power, *where* and *how* it is enacted, and this hinders robust strategies to obtain justice. We also see Ahmed's affective economies at work, to ‘do things and work to align individuals with collectives—or bodily space with social space (...) to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective.

(Ahmed 2004: 26-29).

5.5 Discussion: Bodies as Evidence and Necropolitics

My data analyses in this chapter attempt to illustrate how postcolonial asylum discourse not only forces identities but also *spaces* —and conditions/practices within those spaces that “incarnate” specific *bodies*. If, as Luibhéid (2004, 2006) argues, Irish

asylum/migration regimes are governmentalities that re-nationalized and re-heterosexualized the Nation through African women's bodies, my analyses *enflesh* those bodies, allowing them to "speak" and "feel". I showed, across several instances how the figurative/represented body is re-made through *intersubjective* encounter via re-signifying identificatory practices and affective flows. In Sanle's case, seeking refuge aroused patriarchal *anger* and punishment in the courtroom; in the NGO sector, she was *feared* and rejected for a post she had excelled in for years and the neoliberal promise of *happiness* denied. The body she offered was "niggerized", confiscated of its meaning and harshly put back in its assigned place, "returned" (Yancy 2008: 67) with re-coded scripts to ensure continuing differentiation from Europeans. Savita Halapannaver was "made die so the foetus may live"; as Lentin's (2013) *femina sacra*, her life as M/other was sacrificable. She was *publicly* grievable in abortion politics, but Bimbo Onanuga was not—some conditions of exceptionality (public/private) and some morphologies (Nigerian/Indian) make some M/others less grievable than others. When the M/other speaks, she is not believed; her *pain* is not registered as pain, her *suffering* is dehumanized. Edith's and Bimbo's doctors gave medication inadequately scrutinized for contra-indications in pregnancy. Edith was told her at each check-up that "everything was fine", but she carried a dead baby for ten weeks. Medical staff in the hospital saved her life, but concealed their mistakes and silenced her. Mamu was told to "get the train" to hospital in the midst of labour contractions. Her levels of tolerance were not considered human but "superhumanized".

My analyses locate the maternal violence administered to Edith and Mamu on the same *continuum* of maternal violences that Savita and Bimbo, and their dead, unborn (or stateless in the case of Ms Y) foetuses were subject to at an extreme point. Direct Provision, as Luibhéid (2013: 119) puts it, 'is structured to produce death in every way except biologically'. That said, sixty-one people have *actually died* in DP

since 2002 (Barry 2015)—a quarter of them infants (aged 0-5years)—through undetermined causes.²⁹ These *dead or living-dead bodies* “give evidence” (Perera 2006) of unknown number of M/others in or out of Irish asylum (and in asylum elsewhere).³⁰

I propose that rather than Foucault’s (1977, 1978: 141; 1995: 221) biopolitics, we need to engage and genderize Mbembe’s theorizations of *necropolitics* and *necropower* (Mbembe 2003: 10) in postcolonial asylum encounters. Biopolitics makes particular bodies available and docile keeps them alive to serve capital, and biopower ‘presupposes the distribution of human species into groups, the subdivision of the population into subgroups, and the establishment of a biological caesura between the ones and the others’ (ibid p.17). If biopolitics regulate life, and states of exception (Agamben 1998, 2005) allow the sovereign/state to “make live and let die”, necropolitics are ‘contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death’ (Mbembe 2003: 39). Following Perera (2006: 11) we might fruitfully ask, in the context of state reproductive control, Mbembe’s question: ‘[U]nder what practical conditions is the right to kill, to allow to live or to expose to death exercised? Who is the subject of this right?’ (ibid.4). In Savita’s case, the necropolitics of Irish reproductive control were exercised through maternal medical care, and for women in asylum, under conditions of asylum detention. The subject of this right is Lentin’s *femina sacra*—the sacrificable M/other (2013a, b). In the case of Ms Y, not one, but two bodies were forced into existence; not dead, but at the limits of life—one suicidal, black teenager, physically and psychically scarred for life, and a parent-less black baby, on the edge of human viability and stateless (Campbell 2014).

²⁹ The RIA claims not to have access to their death certificates, so cannot verify the causes of death though some infant deaths included stillbirths and cot deaths (Hennessey 2013).

³⁰ Here, I am including other sites of extreme asylum incarceration, like Australia where asylum boats are turned away and asylum seekers detained on “deathscapes” (Perera 2006) like Nauru, Manus and Christmas Islands.

Necropolitics speaks with the gravitas necessary to account for the bodies (dead, alive, or as living dead) they produce. It becomes possible to read in the *local*, the *global* targeting and attack on reproductive bodies of Third World, poor Black and Indigenous women, both North and South. In the South, the female African body in particular, is exposed to death through war, famine, forced displacement and population control (Caffentzis 1993:31 in Nagar et al. 2002: 258; Fekete 2000, 2002, 2005).³¹ Her life and the lives she bears become less grievable when military and security discourse justify wars to “save Muslim women” from various harms (Abu-Lughod 2002, Eisenstein 2004, 2007; Enloe 2007; Butler 2010). When displaced in the First World, she is a threat to white racial purity of the imagined nation, and her maternal body targeted as a reproducer of black bodies.

In Irish postcoloniality, technologies that control reproduction are gendered, and contemporaneously illustrate Rich’s dictum, that (1986: 127): ‘the female generative organs, the matrix of human life, have become a prime target of patriarchal technology’. Emerging histories of institutional abuses of women and their children, forced adoptions (Smith 2005), gynaecological and obstetric abuses such as mass hysterectomies and symphysiotomies and suspected vaccination trials sanctioned by the medical profession (Holohan 2011: 426; O’Connor 2011; Mc Carthy et al. 2008) can also be seen as necropolitical technologies. Here, the patriarchal white classed state decides who may be “allowed to live or exposed to death”—and bureaucratic/disciplinary power executes the acts.³²

³¹ See also Davis (1981: 207-271) for links between Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights.

³² According to (Mbembe 2003: 23) technologies of “massacre and bureaucracy” were *synthesised and tested* in the plantations and colonies, including ‘the selection of races, the prohibition of mixed marriages, forced sterilization ... the extermination of vanquished peoples’. If we consider Ireland the “crucible” plantation/settler colony (Garner 2009), we might find continuities of such a synthesis within earlier histories of famine and the racialization of Irish.

In this chapter, I mapped spaces and bodies produced in this context of postcolonial asylum along *colourlines* to insert black bodies “labouring in asylum” into histories of racialised encampment and incarceration (Fekete 2001; Perera 2006; Davis 1998). “Just wars” in the South create profits for re-construction and arms industries. Meanwhile, in the North, “humanitarian” detention in asylum produces a hyper-exploitable population of asylum seekers, forcibly incarcerated as “living-dead” bodies in subaltern spaces. This approaches a form of primary labour extraction— of the labour of “waiting”—by state and transnational corporations.

Refusing to detach race, gender and class oppressions in asylum exposes capitalism as its life-blood. As Harvey explains, corporations and financial legal apparatus form the “inner sanctum of capitalist activity”, and this is where Twenty-First century neoliberal class power lies. By tracing interlocking power structures, we see how *bodies* are necessary to do capital’s work. The bodies produced in and through asylum are ‘always telling us about History, about borders imposed by force, about strange laws and topographies, about distant, but not forgotten, humiliations’ (Beneduce 2008: 511). Asylum stories of participants in both projects “give evidence” of all those bodies who didn’t make it; Nigiri (p.184) told about people who died crossing the Sahara, the five hundred who drowned as their boat sank in the Mediterranean the day before she boarded her vessel. The bodies of the living, the dead women and their babies and the “living-dead” in asylum trace meaningful markers of place ‘borders, thresholds and points of connection, between spaces and between temporalities’ (Perera 2006: 19). Their bodies bear witness to the “death worlds” (Membe 2003: 40) forced through neolocolonialism and necropolitics in the South.

As instances in the data show, NGO advocacy in this context can not only re-colonize bodies and identities but stymie stronger political dissent. As Spivak (1999: 275-277) points out, postcolonial analyses must look beyond conditions for only the

Third Worlders *we have access to*—the South in North. NGO advocacy can dissuade critical attention to state complicity in militarism and neocolonialism in the South. Stories of asylum, if listened through Black feminist consciousness and reflexive situational practice, can respectfully represent and link subaltern spaces in the South, which each participant in their own way, transported into the research frame. This methodology goes some way towards settling objections that postcolonial theory can detract from the material realities of race and gender and remove attention from material decolonization of the South (Suleri 1992: 761; Parry 1997).

There was no mass Irish feminist activism against the Citizenship Referendum of 2004 to support M/others; but mass feminist grieving for Savita. The message seems to be “we don’t want migrant mothers to reproduce the Nation” yet, when one dies, we mourn them. In the exceptional moment of Savita’s death, the walls of difference (and indifference) came down; we saw the horror and feminist solidarity was forged across local, national and global levels. However, race and class—barely mentioned— *matter together* for women of colour in asylum, just as they did in the deaths of Bimbo and Savita. If race is transcended or silenced, Irish feminist activism cannot carve a *speaking location* for women of colour in Ireland, in spite of the “evidence” of their highly visible (but speechless) dead black bodies. This thesis attempts to carve such spaces and argue that exceptional events cannot offer reliable pathways to solidarity. By showing how spaces of grief and mourning are appropriative of the other, my question becomes: Could we possibly find a way to grieve together? The legacy of “postcolonial suffering” is now everywhere as the ‘The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds’ (Nandy 1983: 11).

As suggested in my introduction, the “humanitarian alibi” is a colonial continuity, first instigated as a civilising mission, then through development and aid, and now “just wars”. It is effectuated through photographs of black females on colour

circulated in multiple political and intercultural discourses (e.g. feminist, refugee, security, integration, trafficking etc.). Instances in my data suggest that this imperative to “aid, save, feed, empower, integrate or invest in” suffering black female bodies (whether local or global) is *non-performative* of humanitarianism, but *performative* of the “white saviour” discourse. Like the colonial civilising mission, asylum-giving turns out to be a “handshake in front and a slap behind (Yoh). Gibney (2014: 68) raises the same vexatious question: Why do developed nations embrace the Refugee Convention but shun asylum seekers and refugees when they materialize? I content that one reason is that identities and bodies of colour are readily appropriable; Black female bodies are the site at/through which the necropolitical technologies of gendered racialisation are executed. They perform important neocolonial scripts and these scripts serve patriarchal power within the bounds of the nation state but dance to the tune of *transnational patriarchy* (Patil 2013), *transnational capital* (Spivak 1988a, b; 1990, 1999; Mohanty 2003) and *transnational whiteness* (Moreton-Robinson 2008).

My data analyses so far purposefully charted some *anterior* steps necessary to understand the links between identity and representation of African women in one Irish context. My visual/cultural analyses illustrated that *humanitarian circuits of representation* in the hegemonic domain interpellate white and black subjects and force material performances —bodies, identities— through asylum regimes and actors within them (via structural and disciplinary power). Gržinić (2012) has argued that today, ‘the only area in which the nation-state has the power to decide is within culture; all other issues from the economy to the legal system to international affairs are controlled by transnational capital’. I then explored alternative ways for self-representation with less risk of appropriation or mis-recognition. My PAR processes worked against and in parallel with that cultural power, at the hegemonic/interpersonal domain, which for Collins (2000) is most “transformable” for self and others. This space is also for

Sandoval (2000:102-104) where postmodern power takes its effect (the poison) and where it is best contested, through ‘decolonizing minds’ (the medicine). It is here that ideology, values and images, symbols and texts can be disrupted, where “traitorship” can work outside of, and in spite of structural and disciplinary power, if conditions are made felicitous.

In Chapters One and Four, I asked: How are African/Black women represented? What work do these representations do?” In Chapter Five I asked: What goes wrong when they try to speak? In the next chapter, I ask: Can the relatively de-colonized, convivial conditions of the theatre space better facilitate self-representation? Did the women’s aims to “speak back” achieve the desired “decolonizing” of minds of the audience? For this, I analyse data from a performance of “On Our Way” that marked the culmination of the PAR process.

6: Performing Asylum: Self-Representation through Participatory Theatre in the “Fourth Space”

Some things need to be re-fictionalized before they can be understood.

Das 1997: 69

6.1 Introduction

In my final data chapter, I analyse two full scenes from a public performance of the first act of “On Our Way” at a Community Arts Festival in March 2012 and some shorter transcript extracts of a Post-performance discussion with the audience, including a Forum style re-play of one highly contentious scene.¹

Unlike visual/affective representations in the previous two chapters, live performance operates simultaneously across visual, textual, discursive, embodied and affective registers. The conditions of play building were race and gender “safe”, away from “charitable” NGO spaces, and inside a rented studio of a highly supportive artists collective. As the data in the previous two chapters elucidate, the *processes* of PAR through drama provided rich data of equal, if not greater value as the final outcome—its performance. I examine the theatre space as a *convivial* encounter with the public, on the women’s own terms. *Dialogical* meaning-making took place through post-performance discussion. If feminist theory, epistemology and methodology guided the academic process, this event manifested the women’s creativity, talent, activism and desires. In this chapter, I explore the outcomes of participatory drama as a form of self-

¹ This event marked the end of the formal research period. To my knowledge this was the first public theatrical performance by an all Black woman-led theatre group in Ireland. In Forum Theatre (Boal 1979) the actors perform a scene, and audience members may step in and replace protagonists to test out various strategies.

representation that can “speak back” through multiple registers, in opposition to “being spoken about”. Three analytic components are examined:

1. What are the dynamics of the shifting identity positions taken by the women as they perform “versions of themselves”? What are the affective flows on and off-stage? What do scripts of audience members who respond in the after-show discussion tell us about “identity and self-representation”?
2. Were the women’s aims—to seek empathy and disrupt and challenge negative stereotypes—met? If so, how? If not, why did the attempt fail? In other words, what “work” did this performance do at this meso-micro level of encounter? How did it differ from, say NGO projects? What work remains un-done? Why?
3. Have there been any changes for the women at the micro-level interpersonal domain of power?

Two methods I use are attention to intersubjective and affective exchanges in the encounter (Ahmed 2000, 2004), and tracing “double-voiced discourses” (Gillman 2007) of whiteness— that “disaffiliate” from universalized stereotypes, but deny racial difference—plus those used by the women to contest them. To conclude, I articulate a new “fourth” space of dialogue between the women and members of the Irish public where the ‘third in-between space...that merges knowing, doing, and making’ (Pinar 2004, in Leavy 2009) spawns a “live” fourth space. Here, there are opportunities to re-represent and negotiate meanings already assimilated (Ahmed 2000: 177) which hopefully avoid “saving, appropriating, consuming, passing or exhibiting” the other.

Ireland boasts a rich and brilliant tradition in political theatre, poetry and song; nevertheless, access to theatre and performance art is privileged and competitive. I found no existing migrant women’s theatre groups in the Republic. Two Dublin-based professional African theatre companies (both led by male Nigerian artists/academics), and one Community Theatre project (ALâ) worked with migrants and people in asylum

through theatre.² In the UK context, asylum has emerged as a new site of political theatre for *professional women* playwrights including plays like *The Bogus Women* (Adshead 2000), *Credible Witness* (Wertenbaker 2001), and *Asylum Monologues* (Linden 2006). One exception is Lydia Besong (Carter 2012), a Cameroonian woman who successfully fought her deportation using her play “How I Became an Asylum Seeker” as a campaign tool.

“On Our Way” follows founding principles of grassroots theatre activism by Black and Third World feminists that proliferated in the USA and the UK during the 1970s and 1980s (Griffin 2003).³ In Ireland, this collaboration forged entirely new ground; it models academic/activist research that attended to content, process and “live” translation. The women’s ‘memories of violence’ are rearticulated through the dramatic work as a way to ‘forge a future in relation to a violent past’ (Das and Kleinman 2000: 13).

First, I briefly review the *benefits* and *pitfalls* of participatory drama for refugees through salient critiques from other contexts that problematize the intersubjective dynamics of spectatorship or witnessing. Situated at a juncture between past failures and present possibilities, insights from more established diaspora spaces can imagine new spaces in community arts as Black feminist activism in the Irish context. However, as Farrier argues, a *postcolonial* analysis is necessary to:

² Arambe is directed by Bisi Agudun and Camino Productions by Kunle Animashaun. ALâ is a community theatre organization dedicated to Boal’s (1979) Theatre of the Oppressed methods as pedagogic and development tools. They have devised and performed drama with and by asylum seekers and conduct training workshops, one of which the women and I attended in 2012.

³ In the US June Jordan, Ntozake Shange and Toni Morrison developed the Black Arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s, itself rooted in the Harlem Renaissance (c.1918-37) and the Civil Rights Movement. In the UK, Buchi Emecheta, Bernadine Everisto, Kadija George and Pratibha Parmar are Asian and Black novelists and playwrights integral to Black Arts and feminist theatre of the 1980s and 1990s. Recently, Camden People’s Theatre has begun a Feminist Theatre Festival (see www.cptheatre.co.uk). Smashing Times is an active political theatre group in Ireland; and a non-Indigenous social theatre project, Calypso Arts, operated until the early 2000s.

conjure even-handedly with the exception(al) and the quotidian without recourse to the defamiliarization strategies that would cast the asylum seeker as the irredeemably other.

(Farrier 2012: 430)

I then analyse two scenes—a comedy and a tragedy, then a post-performance audience discussion. My strategy is to trace the inter-subjective shifts in the texts when the everyday and the exceptional are presented to live audiences. These are complex: the actor “plays herself” but speaks from a body *already inscribed with meaning*. As she voices an alternate script of her own creation, the audience witness, listen and respond to the “other” also from shifting subject positions, also already inscribed with prior scripts. As researcher, I too shift back and forth across roles: scribe, director, and Black feminist academic analyst. My analyses incorporate bodies, texts, symbolic and semiotic meanings of objects and props as well as affective exchanges.

6.2 Naturalistic Performances of Trauma

Important critiques on spectatorship of suffering and trauma have emerged from Popular and Educational Theatre in the Canadian context. Watching asylum theatre for white audiences has been theorized by Salverson (1999, 2001, 2006, 2008) as an act of “witnessing” consistent with that of other social justice arenas (such as the courtroom). Naturalistic theatrical self-representations can reaffirm white supremacy and arouse an ineffectual, passive empathy in audiences that fail to pay attention to White/majority complicity in the causes of “black suffering” (see also Nicholson 2005 in Yuval Davis and Kaptani 2008). Razack (2007: 376) theorizes this form of spectatorship when white audiences watch “Third World” films as “slipperiness” of empathy

in which Black people can become the source of moral authority and pleasure, obscuring in the process our own participation in the violence that is done to them [and rely on] images and stories to confirm our own humanitarian character [as a] a compassionate middle power which is largely uninvolved in the brutalities of the worlds.

Instead of having the desired effect of “de-colonizing” minds, re-enacting the foundational violence of colonial white supremacy re-produces “imperial raciology “ (Gilroy in Farrier 2012) in white audiences. My analysis draw from both negative *and* positive sociological findings (Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2008; Österlind 2008; Perry 2012) to explore how such appropriation might be subverted or re-negotiated.

Salverson (2008, 2001) has argued *against* naturalistic performances of trauma and tragedy as they invoke an ‘aesthetics of injury’. This specific challenge arose when scene-building —the women wanted to re-enact events of injury, anticipating that the “truth” would foster empathy and understanding in Irish audiences. As witness to their stories narrated in private, I had to tread water between two theoretical shores: was I to risk exposure, re-essentialisation and appropriation, or to trust in Black feminist and participatory ethics? Instead of falling into “representational paralysis” I only went “part of the way” (Boyce Davis 1994) with Salverson. Without discounting my own social privileges, I felt her critiques very much speak to White/western actors telling stories of “harms done to racialised others”. In light of women’s previous social interactions (as discussed in chapters Four and Five), their freedom to tell the story the way they wanted to was a priority; I trusted their choices and Black feminist praxis.

Over eight sessions, the women brought stories from which they improvised scenes; when needed, I gave basic direction and coaching in drama techniques and staging. We solved dilemmas in stagecraft, content and dramatic effects through individual and collective dialogue. Feminist Participatory theatre methods (Aston 1999, Swarr and Nagar 2010) and Boal’s (1979) Theatre of the Oppressed guided devising

and rehearsal sessions. The women did not write or learn lines as such, but improvised storylines, performing them slightly differently each time. Every woman appeared in each scene playing various parts.⁴ The transcripts analysed here are written up as play scripts.

6.3 The Comedy: “Garula”

Garula sits on a low stool, singing quietly as she pounds yam. She gets up to cook, sweep, stops to pick up the crying baby. She sings to soothe her (a song which the actor’s own mother sang to her). Each task is interrupted by the baby’s demands. Garula sighs with exhaustion. She is feeding when her husband Mbutu enters centre stage and doesn’t notice him. He is dressed in African attire, carrying a briefcase. He stands for some time, waiting for attention, clears his throat in an exaggerated fashion. (Audience laughs) Garula looks up, puts the baby down and hurries to greet him.

GARULA ‘Welcome Sir!’ Welcome Sir’

She genuflects in a traditional greeting and takes his briefcase. He sits down and crosses one leg over the other to relax. Garula rushes back and forth between him and the baby, who doesn’t stop crying. She sits back down to continue feeding.

GARULA Oh! This child. This child. Stop crying. It’s ok...its ok.

[A moment’s pause]

MBUTU Garula!

GARULA *[Stands up with the baby, bows to him]* Yes Sir?

MBUTU Give me the remote control! *[Audience laughs]*

GARULA Yes Sir...*[runs to stage left, finds the remote control and takes it to him, bowing as she hands it over]* There Sir.

MBUTU *[Switches on the TV]* Ahhh! Manchester United. Heh he heh!

GARULA *[Starts to sweep the floor, bent over a reed broom. She crosses in front of him]*

⁴ Edith devised and rehearsed her scene, but was unable to perform on the day.

MBUTU:	Ehh! Move!! <i>[Waves his hands aggressively, gesturing her out of his way. As he watches football, he cheers and waves his arms about animatedly.]</i>
GARULA	<i>[Sits back down but for a moment]</i>
MBUTU	Garula!!
GARULA	Sir? <i>[Rising, babe in arms]</i>
MBUTU	The food is not ready yet!
GARULA	Very soon sir.
MBUTU	Very soon? I'm coming from work and the food is not ready!
GARULA	You know, the work is too much sir...
MBUTU	<i>[Cuts over her, more interested in the match. Shouts to the players]</i> Ahh-hah!!! Kick!! Give to the other one. Ohh my God! Eh heh! Pass Pass! Go to the...Kick ! kick ! Ohhhhh...these people! <i>[Garula rushes between cooking and the stool, where she sits to feed the baby]</i>
MBUTU	Garula!!
GARULA	Sir?? <i>[wearily]</i>
MBUTU	<i>[Doesn't take his eyes off the screen]</i> Give me my slippers.
GARULA	<i>[Fetches them, and bends at his feet removes his shoes, places the slippers on his feet and carries the shoes away]</i>
MBUTU	Garula!! GARULA!!!!
GARULA	Sir?

Mamu authored and improvised the scene. Playing Mbutu (the man), she parodied the male gender through mimicry, transgression and farce to deploy stereotypical sexist male traits: inflated sense of importance, unreasonable, childish demands for attention and service, and entitlement. The scene aroused uproarious laughter from the audience; we all know it is an act, see through it and laugh. If we look at the “acts, gestures, and enactments that ... constitute its reality” (Butler 1990: 136), the performance of masculinity that was (intentionally or intuitively) improvised

is effected through posture, attitude, commanding tones and aggressive speech.

Mamu's parody accentuates how these gestures *organize power* between the couple through "technologies" of *spatial control*, such as *ordering, dismissing and ignoring*; not looking at her but *looking away* (the football match is more important than you); *making her wait* (stand there and hold the glass), answering only when he sees fit; *sitting at the centre* (while she runs around the margins in and out); and *placing his needs* (for entertainment and food) *above* her needs and those of their baby. Dramatized here through a male/female dyad, these technologies uncannily and *precisely map the spatial and temporal* elements that distribute and hierarchize power in asylum (see Yayah's account of Direct Provision in Chapter Five).

African "culture" was introduced through props—the women wanted to wear traditional African clothes and brought their own cooking implements and decorations to locate the scenes in Africa. However, by introducing the Manchester United football game transmitted via satellite Television, Mamu situates Africa in contemporary globalized modernity. In this scheme, the African man symbolically aligns himself with sanctioned versions of Western masculinity through global cultural products. Further along the scene, Mbutu asks for his book, demanding that Garula find the exact page and line he had been reading, and berates her when she fails.

MBUTU	Garula! How come that you don't know the line? You supposed to remember everything ...the word...the line.... Like the way you recite the rosary...Hah? When you go to Church, how do you recite the rosary? You have it in your MIND!
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Mamu created this scene in a way that symbolically spoke to the instruments of Western cultural domination- the book, the Bible, football, Television, beer. This suggests she links Mbutu's dominating behaviour to the power of Western language and culture to control the minds of the colonized. As Wa Thiong'O (1986) puts it, 'the night of the sword and the bullet ... followed by the morning of the chalk and the

blackboard'.⁵ One reading of the dramatized scene on an Irish stage is that Africa is "remote controlled" by European cultural domination, wielded through the screen. Mbutu passively observes "the West" through the screen but tries to speak to the players, instructs them. "*Oh Those people!*" He is saying that *he* could do things better if only they listened to him, but the reality is that they don't hear him. The woman also doesn't "hear" him; she places his hunger secondary to the baby's hunger, cannot remember where his last page was. He is doubly displaced, as a man and as a black African man.

An alternate reading might be that it is the screen (projecting ideals of masculinity) that remotely controls Mbutu. He sits and watches, oblivious to the "colonial" woman circulating around him, performing reproductive, service and domestic labour, very much in the way that transnational capital appropriates migrant women's labour and service. In this reading, his maleness allows him to appropriate this power to control the colonial woman's movements. After the football match comes the beer, a second sign of "masculinity".

GARULA	Sir?
MBUTU	Bring me my beer.
	<i>[Garula fetches the beer and hands the bottle and a glass to him. He takes the glass and hands the bottle back. He moves slowly and deliberately]</i>
	Serve me.
	<i>[She serves the beer. He takes one sip and spits it out dramatically].</i>
	Ahhhhgg!! Garula, what is it? The food is not ready yet <i>[shouts angry]</i>

In their discussion at meetings, the women repeatedly referred to the dominance and violence of the African male in relationships, but *none* of them felt that *gender itself*

⁵In 'Deconizing the Mind', Wa Thiong'O considers the bullet the means of the physical subjugation, and Language that of spiritual subjugation, a theme common to Irish playwright Friel's 'Translations'().

was an “oppressive” force, but that *race* was more damaging. The intersection between violence, masculinity and culture played in the scene may be examined through the formation of patriarchal power in colonial Africa. According to Loomba (2005/1998: 141):

Colonialism eroded many matrilineal or woman-friendly cultures and practices, or intensified women’s subordination in colonized lands. In rural Africa, the control of women over farming and the crops they produced declined with the advent of the slave trade ... women became increasingly dependent upon male incomes. Christianity profoundly altered family structures and sexual patterns. Colonial law restructured customs by taking texts and practices of the elites as the basis on which changes should be made.

This is not to say that pre-colonial African societies were not gendered and devoid of patriarchal power, as Oyewùmi (1997) has suggested, but that the gender system disenfranchised and excluded native men from the public sphere who, ‘seizing upon the home and the woman as emblems of their culture and nationality’ grew more tyrannical at home (Loomba 1998: 142). Though opposed on racial terms, colonial men collaborated in the domination of indigenous women (Mani 1987; Mama 1997, 1995; Lugones 2003). This domination not only objectified women’s bodies, but used their labour (sexual and economic) to “feed” the colonial machine, a pattern that remains continuous in postcolonial nationalism and development in Africa (Mama 2005).

Before Mbutu enters the scene, Garula is already subjectified or “feminized” as domesticated wife and mother, performing everyday gender-prescribed greeting practices (bowing, genuflecting, addressing the man as “Sir”). This clearly shows how everyday greetings re-inscribe power in a banal way. If she is already “feminized”, one could ask of Mbutu, why the need to re-assert power (“*Serve me*”) when he already has it? He needs to actualize and animate this power, to embody it— in this case, through anger and violence. Mbutu’s arrival instantiates the moment when “power over” enters,

a power that needs to be “done” and repeatedly so, always through force and violence. Technologies and practices need bodies to enact them, and it is at moments of resistance that we see power. Garula *resists* domination by, for example, returning to her highest priority (the child) in-between each demand; she stalls preparing her husband’s meal. Each small act of resistance requires the dominant to inflict *a higher degree of assertion*; Mbutu demands Garula not only to bring his drink but “serve” it. “Work” is needed to constantly re-assert male power. The more she refuses to comply (initially, non-verbally; silently, away from his sightline on stage) the higher the level of control necessary to maintain the status quo. This tells us something useful about power.

Although Garula’s subjection is demonstrated through performative acts (appeasing, pleasing, apologizing), her non-verbal “speech”—that is, her bodily utterances (sighing, facial expressions of frustration) take place out of his view and are only visible to the audience. “Out of sight-ness” then becomes *both* a technology of *survival* (Garula hides her complaints) *and of domination* (Mbutu ignores her and looks at the screen), deployed differently. Importantly, it is when she *speaks*, and brings herself into his vision, where he cannot ignore her through sight, that the violence escalates. This move, from invisibility and gesture to visible, uttered speech unleashes the man’s physical violence — the consequence of “talking back”.

MBUTU Bring me the DVD remote control!

GARULA Sir, can you please try and pick it yourself? *[More assertive voice]* The baby's crying, you're asking for food, you're asking for everything...at the same time Sir.

MBUTU *[Rising from his chair, shouts]* Eh eh eh eh eh eh!!! Garula?

GARULA Sir.

MBUTU You can raise your voice to me? *[Turns towards her]* Garula?

GARULA Sir!

MBUTU Little dog!! You can talk to me like that? *[He squares up. She shifts uncomfortably on the spot]*

GARULA You call me a DOG? *[vicious, loud and angry now]*

MBUTU *[Incredulous]*. Woman!! Who is the man in this house?

GARULA You are the man sir.

MBUTU Go and get me the DVD remote control.

GARULA Sir, go and pick it yourself.

[Mbutu's simmering violence erupts. He picks up a slipper and chases her, beats her. She runs off stage screaming. We hear loud screams off-stage. This scene segues with the next scene, where Ekame enters as the woman being beaten].

Yayah, who played Garula, spatially maps onto the stage the “running around, waiting, tiredness”, narrated in discussions and interviews. Mbutu represents the Irish State. Metaphorically, she may be speaking to and of the lengthy wait for asylum cases, the exhaustion of running between organisations, attending “courses” that discipline her to become a “good” asylum seeker (see Chapter Four). That there is never enough time to “feed the baby” resonates with the State’s denial of opportunities to attend to her own pain and hunger, to nurture her future, to fully mature and “become” a member of Irish society. In asylum, she is “not being seen “ through hypervisibility; the State ignores her by keeping her waiting for long periods in between its demands. It commands her attention, and then does nothing with it. It answers when it sees fit, demands she bring evidence, letters, certificates, but even when she fulfils its

increasingly “ridiculous” demands, she is still left waiting. The NGO’s too, keep her busy with issues that they consider more important (celebrating culture, training, integration projects, making complaints).

To satisfy the demands of the Justice Department, she has to bow, genuflect, be grateful, to appease them, but in the process is robbed her of dignity, strength and usefulness. When she speaks back and resists more powerfully, standing in full view to demand that her work, her exhaustion, her selfhood be recognized, she has to fear the ultimate threat: of deportation. With no warning, deportees taken from their beds in dawn raids, handcuffed, jailed, in front of spouses and children, regardless of how long they had lived in Direct Provision centres.

Speaking back in asylum is met by violent retribution. Conlon and Gill (2013) suggests that protests by asylum seekers are constituted as evidence for the need for stricter security measures, or the unsuitability of the applicant for asylum. Of 5,943 people with deportation orders, only 1,413 were *actually deported* from Ireland (Titley and Lentin 2012), so people live in a prolonged state of ‘deportability’.

Overall, the comic scene represented crude, stereotypical characterizations of violent men and abused women; as a piece of theatre, it might be something Salverson has been critical of, where ‘The plays look the same, the audiences respond in the same ways, the victim is rewarded for her pain, the person who displays the most pain gets her story featured’ (Salverson 2006: 149). However, Mamu skillfully disrupts a “naturalistic” reading through satire, a traditional form of African folk theatre. Folk theatre are forms of “political media” that have a didactic purpose to express ‘disgust, to report and comment on current affairs, for political pressure, for propaganda’

(Ebewo 2001: 51).⁶ Satire evokes and circulates humour rather than guilt or shame.

Mamu “played” with the audience’s emotions in a way that reduced the “trauma” for them, allowing them to laugh and relax, to be her guests rather than moral judges of the characters they witnessed. Of the three forms of *witness subjectivities* Salverson (2006) describes—*tragic, paralyzed and foolish*—this strategy engendered in the audience a “foolish witness” role, *opening them through humour to whatever might be presented ‘by truthfulness and a willingness to engage in the face of failure’* (ibid p.153). As an alternative to head-on confrontation (which in the current climate of hostility might engender either a paralyzing effect of shame, guilt or retaliation in audiences) and as a form of protest against asylum injustices, racism and sexism, African drama strategies offer effective ways forward. I later illustrate this through two audience comments, but first, I introduce the second data extract, a Tragic Scene that immediately followed.

6.4 The Tragedy: “Ekame”

In the scene that followed, Ekame replaces Garula, who has run off-stage.

Ekame enters stage left, chased by Mbutu. Mbutu kicks her to the floor and exits. Weeping, her body bent over in pain, Ekame stumbles to her feet. In a breaking voice, she starts to sing- a lament. She takes small, laboured steps towards centre stage. She touches with her hand the injured parts of her body, one by one. Her womb, her thighs, her face. She is in considerable pain. Her mode of delivery is a soliloquy.

EKAME I’m tired. To be beaten every day. Ahhh. I want to kill myself. But what about the children? Who will take care of them?

[Starts to sing again, the lament. She wipes off blood from her chin. Wipes at her tears]

God. Hear my voice! Hear my cry!
If I go to my parents, they will say “Go Back! Your children are there!
I’m dying for my children!

⁶ Across many African countries, songs are ‘praise poems’ (Ebewo 2001), as were Classical Greek and Elizabethan lyrics. A similar tradition of praise poetry existed in Ireland, and satire was a poetic practice greatly feared and aimed to ridicule or shame, or “scald” its subject. Thanks to John O’Leary for this information.

[She moves slowly to a chair centre stage, sits. Moans at each movement in pain.]

God. Help me! Take me! Bring me anywhere you want!
Where can I run? Where?

[Sings. Dries more tears.]

The children are coming from school. He didn't give me money for the food...I will try to cook something

[She gets up but is barely able to move for the pain. She picks up the pounder, and then puts it down. Takes up a wooden bowl and places it down again]

I don't know if it's like that all the women are suffering.

When am I going to be free?

I wish I could go somewhere where he will never ever find me again. *[She sings]*

My back...I can't even cook...I think...I had some coins here *[unravels a pocket in her wrapper]*

I will go and buy bread...for my children...to eat...I can buy bread...I will go to the shop and buy bread...I can't cook. He's beating me yesterday. He's beating me...today again.

[Walks stage right, singing her lament...sits on a stool to rest]

Scene Ends.

The woman plays Ekame almost entirely through her body, in a performance that truthfully (and powerfully) communicated physical and emotional pain. No attempt was made to interpret or abstract the reality of repeated beatings as a woman, of the emotional trauma of having to face the arrival home of her children, of needing to feed them. Empathy was aroused as the audience listened in deep silence. Her whole body was a deeply moving song. This is what Boal (1979: 87, 176) calls “theatre as language”, the sum of all imaginable languages— words, colours, forms, movements, sounds. I do not focus on words or their meaning but take an *affective reading* of her performance and its translation by the audience.

Most striking was the *rhythm* of Ekame's orature, traced through the sequence of steps she took when performing her soliloquy. Her vocalization was broken into

short utterances, as if to shift the pain (and the memory of it) through her body *as sound*. In doing so, step by step, she eventually recovers her speaking voice. Song is deeply integral to African narration in everyday life, rituals, healing, divining and theatre. In African Theatre, Sirayi (2001: 50-52) explains that songs ‘live in the mouth of the people’; they are critical in developing structural patterns and how the story evolves. Song serves to educate, entertain and to arouse the feelings of the performers and the audience. Like satire, song is far more than entertainment, but is

as breathing is to life; breathing that accelerates or slows, becomes regular or spasmodic according to the tension of the individual and the degree and nature of his emotion. (Senghor 1964 in Fanon 1952/2008:102)

The rhythmic architecture of Ekame’s movements and song emanated, in Senghor’s words, as a ‘system of waves ... toward the Others’ (Senghor 1964 in Diagne 2014: para.6). In performance, her story went on to trace a step-by-step displacement, a journey in which each act of agency is brutally punctuated by further violation and betrayal. She crosses a series of intersectional locations “on her way”, each subjectifies her as woman, black, stranger, and mother. At each step, racism and sexism over-determine female agency. Yet, she moves the pain of violation through a genre that both “voices and shows” that harm, otherwise *un-speakable*. Her body charts the journey; her song intones the affective elements of mourning and echoes Das’s (1997: 67) articulation of women’s suffering as “complex transactions between body and language” where the women

took these noxious signs of violation and reoccupied them through the work of domestication, ritualization, and re-narration ... spoke of violence and pain within the genres of mourning and lamentation [and] were able both to voice and to show the hurt done to them and also to provide witness to the harm done to the whole social fabric. (Das 1997: 205- 206).

In conjunction with the “evidence” that bodies in asylum give (discussed in the previous chapter), the women’s dramatization of their “asylum stories” was less an opportunity to display personal harms done to them than to bear witness to the collective social harm of women; to re-present this at a collective level, through offering their bodies and lives. Black female suffering in these dramatic texts is different to its representation in images and discourses—it is live, unfrozen, embodied, and takes place on the women’s terms and territory without mediation. Nevertheless, the risks of “speaking back” are present, and as my next analyses illustrate, make themselves visible through the affective exchanges between actors and audience.

6.5 Audience Discussion

The *affective* atmosphere from the start to finish of the thirty-minute performance was electric to say the least, and received loud, energetic applause. The women returned to the stage and were introduced, after which I joined them to engage with the audience. The most heated discussions arose in relation to the “Garula” scene and the “Ekame” scene, both featuring male-female violence. I analyse two instances; first, a comment by an individual and then, a moment of transgression when African men in the audience “spoke back” to what they considered unfair portrayals of them.⁷

Comment 1: Irish Woman

I have to say I found it very emotional. In the parts where some people were laughing because of the man and the woman, it wasn’t...because you knew what was going to happen...I did find it very strong.

⁷ All comments have been edited to remove identities and for clarity; pauses are indicated with ellipses, longer cuts are bracketed.

Initially speaking for herself as a “knowing” subject, the woman soon shifted to the second person to distance herself—“you knew what was going to happen”. Some people laughed—from shared emotional recognition—that this dance of male/female control and violence was universal, not particular. She then acknowledges finding it “strong”, but stopped short of naming her feelings. Having partially identified herself a woman who recognizes this violence, she switches tack to identify the actor playing Ekame by name.

I know (*names the actor*) and I have seen her in a totally different light...and I’ve known her now for three years, and...a few of us know her here...and I always find her very shy and I’m always trying to get her to smile and I’ve seen her here today in a very very different light...and I’m impressed...very very impressed.

At this point, the actor smiled, humbled herself to graciously receive the “compliment”. The audience clapped to affirm their appreciation of both the praise and the “positive” interaction. Nonetheless, the commentator’s shift in subject positions illustrates the ambivalence and “risk” of staged performances of stories of abuse. Having disclosed an emotional response, the commentator found herself in an unknown location, not knowing where to go next; this has been one of the criticisms of naturalistic drama of abuse by Salverson (1999). Having transgressed the norm and shown emotion in public, she displaced her emotion (as passive empathy) and discomfort through a subjective shift into a more authoritative position: from “knower of violence” to “knower of the other who knows violence”. She further authorized her speech by claiming a shared status with other white Irishwomen present, who also knew the actor, and qualified the length of time she and the others had “known” the actor (three) years. Once established as an “authority” on the actor and her qualities, she disavows her earlier “confessional mode” (Frankenberg 1993) to deny her own possible experience of violence. Rather than “fearing” her other, she fears her own experience; this finds

expression through faulting her other for her “shyness”. What began as a gesture of solidarity and recognition moved to praise, but the praise was revoked by transforming the actor’s success (agency) into her own failure—her failure to “make her smile, to bring her out, to foster and nourish her talents”—in other words, to cure her, to make her happy. That the commentator was “impressed” indicates she had *not* been impressed *before*, had not “imagined” any other talents or qualities the actor might possess. In these shifting whitely scripts, the theme of “woman abuse” is submerged and along with, it the emotion aroused in the commentator’s own body. This emotion was deposited into another body or “returned” (Yancy 2008) but in doing so *through a whitely script of self-authorization*, re-produces social and racial hierarchy. The material and discursive effect is also to “disappear” the black woman’s story, her talent, and her agency.

For Salverson (2006: 152), ‘witnesses do not consider themselves subjects, and ... this erasure is as much a cultural problem as it is a psychological one’. The commentator had little awareness that identifying the actor by name might be inappropriate in a public space; she assumed the right to speak about her (rather than the act she performed). The possibility of making the (desired) empathic link between the actors “shyness” and the fact of her blackness—her status as asylum seeker, a survivor of domestic violence, a social outsider—were all lost as the moment became appropriated by the whitely scripts of the commentator. White privilege, as Gillman (2007 :131) suggests, is

manifested as an enactment of a repertory of discursive gestures for the purpose of systematically blocking interactions that threaten the ontological security of whiteness.

The actor's response to this whole encounter was to bow and smile, to defer to the white woman's authority and, in many ways, understandably so. She was perhaps performing African woman-ness—graciously accepting public praise is indeed part of her cultural tradition. Actors accept praise for their talents. As analyst, I need to acknowledge all these possibilities together, but not bypass the power. A more critical reading might be that she has perfected the performance expected of her, and, as Gillman (2007: 131) explains,

having to meet certain expectations with regard to behaviour (tone and volume of voice as well as the tempering of other bodily gestures) so as to appear nonthreatening ... a task that often becomes necessary in a society where the mere presence of people of colour is something to cause fear or suspicion.

Gillman (2007) juxtaposes the two types of “double-voiced” scripts: the “*whitely scripts*” that refuse to decentre whiteness and the “*racial dualist scripts*” used by women of colour to contest white hegemony. It is useful to allow both such scripts to be voiced, through the presentness of performance, to illustrate the type of “foolish witnessing” Salverson asks privileged/ white audiences to develop the capacity for. She asks that they

bear witness, to be present to both the losses and the capabilities of others ... In being foolish witnesses, we allow ourselves to fail while remaining always alert, ready, and willing to try. (Salverson 2006: 155)

This indeed turned out to be the case when three African men at the back of the room boldly stated “African Man Wants to Talk”, made themselves known, vivifying one of the critical moments in Boal's Participatory theatre where members of the audience transgress the stage and becomes “spect-actors”.

Comment 2: “African Man Wants to Talk”.

MAN 1 African man want to talk! (*Laughter and applause and cheering from audience. The men also laugh*) They just come to blame African men’s attitude here (...) And what I can say is that some of those things happen because of the woman. How they... behave themselves [*gasps of shock and laughter from the audience*]... You know in our society... women think that it is man who control the family. He have to bring the money... for the family (...) I think the man is tired. He brings the money. You do the rest. I think that is what is happened. (...) I think that the big part is to blame women... if something happened like that... those kind of slavery in the family (...) The women who don’t do anything. They just sit down at home and want man go and find the money.

The patriarchal scripts in this comment are not difficult to identify: *the woman is to blame, she brings violence upon herself for being too demanding, she demands material things, sits at home all day doing nothing*. A second man added that “things are different *here*” where men and women both contribute financially, unlike *there*, in Africa, “but the women are not satisfied” and what is more, “the woman is often the first to strike”.

MAN 2 First of all, me I’m a Christian, and the Bible basic teaching, women are the half of... not that they are half the person... but that they are there to help the men... according to what the Bible say... So, that means that they have to share the life and do everything together... But here in Europe, if men are doing enough as well, they are not always sufficient for the women. In some area... in some family, you will see, in small thing it’s the women who raise their voice first and they are the one who raise their hand first on the men. Here, it happen a lot *here*. Small thing, come down and talk about it in a polite way, most of them, before you move they slap you already (*gestures a slap*). That happens a lot here. So not only on the part of men who batter or behave in the wrong way with the women... the women as well does towards the men.

It is important to bear in mind that the men are surrounded by white audience members whose sympathies have been purposefully drawn towards the “suffering black women”. The dramatized portrayals having charged “African men” of being violent, controlling, ridiculous, a laughing stock. Anglophone audiences less familiar with African-English are further tasked with understanding speech denied of nuances that might clarify

ambiguities. A “double translation” of culture and language is needed to fully convey the meaning of his “double script”; but the man’s *affect* has been communicated (and received) as friendliness and fun. It is a convivial space in which serious matters are being discussed. The initial laughter and applause of the audience was a collective response to the men’s playfulness, humour and confidence; but as Man 2 spoke, the grounded and sincere tone of this voice expressed *pain and difficulty*, not aggression. To examine this pain at the “Imperial source” might shed light on how it has returned through the postcolonial African man, to a contemporary setting.

According to Mama (1997, citing Mies 1985) European histories of patriarchal gender violence such as the witch-hunts and inquisitions of the Middle Ages in Europe have had a direct bearing on the treatment of women in the colonies.

[European] class, race and sexual inequalities acted in concert with one another, generating a repressive imperial ideology that [rendered] African women more vulnerable to the violence emanating from both European and African sources ... In addition to perpetrating crude and overt acts of violence against African women ... the colonization process also transformed African gender relations in complex, diverse, and contradictory ways [including] forbidding marriage to African women ... while, at the same time, encouraging prostitution and concubinage while encouraging confinement of women to the economically dependent role of housewife [and] the introduction of waged labour systems [for men while excluding women] from the wage economy.

(Mama 1997: 51)

Comment 3: African Woman in audience

I don’t want to say it in a defensive or whatever...I don’t have a proper way of explaining it...but just to clarify to my African brothers that maybe we shouldn’t look at the play as it’s pinpointing a certain group of people that abuse others...as you said earlier, other certain things were exaggerated...its drama...they were dramatized...they were not meant to focus on men abusing women as such...but just to spice up the creation that you were showing. It can be that men can be abused as well, as we all know (...) We shouldn’t get so much into defensive mode (...) It’s not about men abusing women only, its just in general (...) Maybe if you get involved, they said they are looking for people to participate, you can bring in your own ideas to show the other part of abuse. *[Audience applauds]*

Though the African audience member says she has no “proper way” of explaining it, she goes on to explain it, thus creating in that moment, a fourth, previously “unavailable” space; in this new space, the un-speakable was granted a discursive location. Importantly, though African men and white people were welcome to speak, it was the black women who established the space and determined the terms of communication. Within this “fourth” space, the African woman commentator speaks through a “double racial/gendered script” (Gillman 2007)—she attempts reconciliation and harmony; she minimizes the disparity that gender makes to differences (admitting that “men also get abused”) and also the effect of male violence on women (by saying that the dramatization was to “spice up the creation”). Though in many respects this is true, she faces the black woman’s dilemma of challenging sexism —knowing the annihilating effects racism has on Black masculinities. It is necessary to challenge patriarchal violence but also support black men against racism. The *social suffering* of colonial reformations of traditional societies and cultures is present in this encounter. However, thus far, it is only the people of colour who have revealed it and taken ownership of it. This reinforces “race” and “culture” as being property of the Black people, where whiteness is not seen as race or culture. What happens when the Irish men and women respond? The first comment was from a white Irish woman, who defended the black women’s performance using a different strategy.

Comment 4: Irish Woman in Audience

They did talk about respect. Respect in marriage, which they did say that both people should have respect, and that then...you have to have respect... We teach our children...I try to teach my children to respect all different cultures...I think they are very fortunate...and I think respect is very important...and whether a woman hits a man or a man hits a woman...I would never hit my children because I think it’s humiliating for them and it is all about respect. They did bring that up. I did think...The lady next to (actor) she did speak about that...that when you’re in a relationship you should have respect...both people...so whether that means there should be no abuse of any type...cultures ... You did mention that.

Actor : Thank you.

Here, the Irish woman pointed out that the men based their complaints on one negative portrayal but failed to acknowledge that in other scenes, the women had emphasized the importance of harmony and respect in marriage. She recognizes the African woman's balanced portrayal and forms a *gender* alliance, which the actor accepts with grace. However, almost immediately, as if uncomfortable speaking for herself, she slides into the second person and collective (you and we), then into the subject position of "mother". In these moves, she *personally/individually* undertakes the responsibility for "teaching respect" to her children. In so doing, she elides demanding responsibility from men to be respectful, non-violent, to educate their children. She submerges her (unavailable) subjectivity as *woman* to become *mother* as "cultural bearer", assuming responsibility for the (latent) violence of others. What is "unspeakable" (the violence men perpetrate on woman) is displaced onto "the children's" and her own behaviour. "*I would never hit my children because it's humiliating for them*". She cannot speak of how humiliating it is for a woman to be beaten—as herself. As if she is not there. I suggest that her speech is silenced by white patriarchal power. In Salverson's (2006: 150) taxonomy, hers is a subjectivity of a "paralyzed witness". She opens, then shuts because *if she speaks as herself* she risks losing some privileges her whiteness affords. Her way out was to shift her position to "speak through" first, the actor and next, through her subjectivity as mother. The first move collapses and disappears racial/cultural identification but retains solidarity through gender; the second shifts male responsibility for their violence onto the woman/mother; together, power is shifted back into a white patriarchal formation and she is kept in place. *She cannot speak directly back to white male violence*. Following Butler (through Salverson 2006), impossible speech is not a matter of censored speech, but the operation of censorship that governs

what is speakable and what is not ... *To move outside the domain of speakability is to risk one's status as a subject.* The question is not what it is I will be able to say, but what will constitute the domain of the sayable within which I begin to speak at all.

(Butler 1997: 133 in Salverson 2006: 252, *emphasis in original*)

Three interrelated points of disjuncture are noteworthy in the audience comments above: First, African Man 2 “heard” the discourse of “African men are violent and sexist” over and above his own views and those portrayed by the African women in a different scene of the play. The interpellation of the “black man as bad, violent” and so on has strongly subjectified Man 2 making it difficult for him to “hear” or “speak” outside this. Second, the Irish woman is unable to speak of white male-female violence because she has been made abject through patriarchal power. Third, the African woman is “torn between race and gender” alliances, so shifts across gender and race subjectivities to seek harmony. All three witnesses have been subjectified through different discursive constructions that affect and shape their capacities as “witnesses”. While the actors’ speech was developed under conditions of safety, the safety of witnesses to speak is also an important consideration in this work.

At this point in the performance, I felt tremendous admiration for the courage of people in the room but also worried that the discussion had exposed African men to racism, the women to sexism, and myself as the ultimate progenitor and facilitator of this “unruly” scene. I felt conflicted: Ought I need make it permissible for all to “speak”(which was, after all, the entire point of Participatory Theatre and research) or draw boundaries? One option was to end there, which would defuse their fears and mine, but that would forfeit the potential for a more harmonious, possibly transformative closure. The audience was engaged, warm, receptive, excited and ready.

I had earlier pre-empted and discussed the possibility of playing a Forum if things “felt right” and the women had agreed. So in that moment, I made the decision to trust myself, the women, the audience, Boal, and art itself as safe, egalitarian practice. I stepped into the “Joker” role, which for Boal (1979: 152) is to ‘analyse the text and reveal this analysis to the audience; to focus the action according to a single, predetermined perspective’.⁸ I “foolishly” seized the opportunity and suggested we re-play the scene using Boal’s Forum Theatre. Uncertain of how to begin, I spoke through my emotional register, as myself, to acknowledge that there is conflict, tension, pain, difficulty but also possibility to transform that.

Joker/NF It’s a very hot issue isn’t it? [*Audience laughter*]...phew...I mean I can just feel the temperature...[*more laughter*]...It’s very very hot...and therefore for me, its very very interesting (...) We want people to open up a space...first of all we opened a space for the women to train, to express themselves, but we also want to open up a space inside to see the possibilities... to see the tensions... we want to have this kind of theatre (...) So there’s an uncomfortable period (...) conflict is exciting but at the same time it’s uncomfortable and in a way, the excitement comes from in there...that’s the artistic and creative idea we are working with ...And yes, absolutely, as my sister [*African women in audience*] said, it’s not blaming [men] ... one thing I really don’t like, myself, personally, is to think violence belongs to African men or black men. That is so so wrong and I totally oppose that, because it doesn’t belong to anybody. Violence is in everybody peace is in everybody. And very often we can create these stereotypes-racial stereotypes...racist stereotypes...these are the issues we would like some of our brothers to come work with us...It seems like the violence is the hot issue, is it?...Is there anyone who would like to see that scene played again but a little differently?

I set ground rules (no words or actions that harm others), and suggested we try out other ways of playing the scene to gain a better outcome for the protagonist. What followed were a series of “simultaneous dramaturgy”—the audience shouted ideas

⁸ The Joker’ system already exists in various forms (e.g.narrator or chorus). In Forum Theatre, the Joker’s role is to facilitate, moderate, and make the performance develop on ‘two complementary levels’ the “fable” or imaginative story, and the “lecture” which is as exegete or intepret (Boal 1979: 152-152).

from the floor to actors, and later, become “spect-actors” who “invaded” the stage (Boal 1979: xx) in the Forum scenes.⁹ The audience became wildly enthusiastic and energized; the drummers punctuated the action with drum rolls, charging the atmosphere and stirring risk and danger with humour, playfulness, good will and courage. At this moment the stage dissolves and actors and spectators, fact and fiction, action and acting become one.

The scene was re-played several times in a condensed form. Each time, the audience and actors shouted instructions, comments, suggestions, and jokes. By now, the African men and women were centre-stage and African Man 1 and 2 played an “ideal” scene, a fantasy in which an “ideal wife” devotedly attends to her husbands every need. The Irish audience members grew more vocal and made a range of comments:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| IRISH WOMAN 1 | A the end of the day I am tired...I don't see the purpose of that. |
| IRISH WOMAN 2 | I think we have to respect each other's cultures. |
| IRISH WOMAN 3 | You can't compare... |
| IRISH MAN 1 | (<i>nods</i>) I don't think any man would expect his wife or partner to take his bag for him...I don't think that would happen... |
| IRISH WOMAN 4 | I'm just thinking that actually we would have seen exactly this happening in Irish culture...you can see it happening in Irish culture...and if you went back thirty years, it might have been even commonplace in Irish culture [<i>audience murmurs, some women nod their heads</i>] Something has happened over a period...since the 70s that something has changed in the way men and women relate to each other in Ireland...someone mentioned earlier that she was amazed to see a man pushing a buggy in Ireland, but going back thirty or forty years, you would never have seen a man push a buggy in Ireland. |

⁹ In Boal's democratic approach—the “bourgeois spectator” must become unsettled and transformed into a “spect-actor” who must invade the stage, step in and replace protagonists to test out various strategies. What is represented on stage is a fictionalized reality but the audience is not fictional. ‘He exists in the scene and outside of it, in a dual-reality. By taking possession of the stage in the fiction of the theatre he acts: not just in the fiction, but also in his social reality. By transforming fiction, he is transformed himself’ (Boal 1979: xxi).

The first woman accedes that the woman ought not have to perform the “good wife”, the second recognizes cultural differences, and the third contends that cultural differences make comparison impossible. “Good and bad gender/cultural difference” becomes the economy through which the Irish *women* engage with the issue. The Irish *man* flattens out and universalizes notions of gender, speaking for “all men and all women”. What is *absent* is how history shapes culture, which then shapes gender relations, which the fourth woman interjects to show similarities between African and Irish gender relation and how both have altered over time. Taking an intersectional analysis, each script identifies a single axis of “difference” or “similarity” (culture, gender, historicity) but the “something” that has changed is not named. This something cannot easily reach the level of utterance (understandable in this setting), as it is a *relational* rather than essence and cannot be “named” in a “single-voiced” discourse. But it can be in a *dualist discourse*, as one actor demonstrates:

ACTOR 1 I was trying to say, taking a man’s bag is not something extraordinary, it doesn’t show you are too submissive, you are down there. It’s a kind of love. In Africa...not every home...some areas...where they show the love, there is respect...as soon as the...just the sound of the vehicle you see the partner the woman come out and not because he is the one working, the money, no, but the love is there, the respect. You are receiving him, he has gone out, he is tired, at least you give him a hand. It’s not because we are so low there! No! It’s sign of respect and love. African women are very submissive and very respectful, and the men...some...don’t understand that its because of love and respect...they fear that they are just looking for the money.

The actor attempts to theorize gender roles through a dualist discourse (Gillman 2007) that refuses “whitely” cultural/racial essentialisation (African women are submissive, African men are violent, all Africans are the same), while also addressing the “manly scripts” of the African males who misrecognize and mistreat women’s love (women only want money). She explains that some women “perform” their culture as a form of love and respect, contrary to the African man’s contention (she does it for the money he

brings in). This cannot be counted as “evidence of domination” but can be one articulation of love, done through choice. For this actor, the problem is that men read the performance of gender in terms of a manly script, and misrecognize the respect and love that it expresses. Indeed, she posits that the men “fear” it’s about the money but really their “fear” is of not being loved.

The final scene is played as “ideal”; the two African spect-actors flamboyantly act the parts with great panache, ending with them hugging and kissing each other. Man 1 calls Man 2 “*Ma Cherie*” and massages his shoulders, showers him with physical affection and fusses over him. The audience laughs and claps at this fantastical display of female devotion, as the stage once more dissolves into one space full of spect-actors. The African women-actors, for the first time, speak directly back to the men, and there begins a conversation between all.

ACTOR 1 That is not Africa! (*loud laughter from all*). In Africa I never see a man washing plate.

AFRICAN MAN 2 In Africa, things are changing. Things are becoming more clean now. They don’t want to treat anybody like a slave. Things are changing.

IRISH WOMAN 1 I would like to wait and see what would follow on.

IRISH WOMAN 2 Would he get up and do something for the woman...[*asks Man1, on stage*]. Would you let her sit down and you go get her the coffee or the water or whatever?

AFRICAN MAN1 No No! (*smiles*) (*Audience laughs, applauds his honesty*)

IRISH MAN 2 There’s something there that I thought that the scene at the beginning was better, because it should be about drama, it should be about entertaining and it should be provocative, and it shouldn’t necessarily be a representation of real life. If its going to provoke, if its going to entertain...And it was very entertaining and very provocative.

The closing comment illustrates the multiple effects of a convivial space of performance encounter, oscillating between reality and fiction, risk, provocation and entertainment, art, politics and activism. It also speaks to rich, multi-valent data “from below” that is gathered through PAR, that in this case, brilliantly magnifies and reveals

the complex shifting subjectivities and affective flows that narrative or image-based data cannot capture.

6.6 Discussion: Convivial Encounter in the Fourth Space

A number of findings central to “identity and representation” may be drawn from the analyses of *embodied, self-representative* data presented above. First, the women envisioned and materialized a space of convivial encounter; in this space we can study the multiple transgressions and negotiations of identity (for men and women) that take place on and off-stage. In contrast to essentialised, frozen two-dimension images and texts that circulate knowledge about asylum-seekers (discussed in earlier chapters), women’s speaking bodies that represent themselves in convivial spaces can, as Anzaldúa (1990) proposes, be translators or agents who formed a contact zone of conviviality and meaningful cultural exchange, which is important for diaspora space (Brah 1996) in-the-making. Their bodies are bridges, that “create new windows and doors in the walls ” that separate us:

By sending out voices, visuals and visions outward into the world, we alter the walls and make them a framework for new windows and doors. We transform the posos, apertures, barrancas, abismos [sediments, openings, gullys, abysses] that we are forced to speak from. Only then can we make a home out of the cracks.

(Anzaldúa 1990: xxiv)

Second, though the performed scenes themselves did not always avoid stereotypical representations (e.g. “typical African man” and “black female victim”), the Forum Theatre method disrupted those limitations. The men broke the mould of “passive” spectatorship but also spoke back to representations of them. Yes, the African men verbalized sexist patriarchal scripts —these prevail in society but *are rarely spoken out*

in “politically correct” situations. The participatory theatre encounter permits these texts to be spoken—and therefore challenged, but a further crucial step can be taken—to negotiate and re-signify their meanings. Violence against women in Africa is a serious problem (Mama 2005); in this instance, the women challenged it in a new context, from possibly “unavailable” speaking location in their own communities. I felt vindicated in my decision to work with men in BBB, as the insights into Black men’s intersectional gendered racialisation allowed me to handle men “foolishly/playfully” rather than shut them down. To release subjugated women’s texts was one aim of this thesis; this unexpectedly released some men’s subjugated texts—making both available for study. This, in my view, is what Lugones’ (1990: 393) “playful world-travelling” is like, where the game is not about ‘winning, losing, battling’ but the convivial attitude of how it is played.¹⁰

Third, a number of useful insights into individual and collective subjectivities of “witnesses” were gained through tracing both “whitely” (i.e. white womanly and white manly) and “manly” (black manly) scripts of audiences, when read against the “double scripts” (self-conscious awareness) of the African women. The audience was a mix of general public, activists, artists, academics, asylum seekers and people from migrant backgrounds. This is one advantage of arts-based activism—the audience is not homogenous and their comments reflected a mix of ingrained and newer/enlightened scripts of gender/race/culture difference. For example, Irish woman I was unable to speak of white male-female violence, but Irish Woman 4 addressed Irish male sexism; Irish Man I denied the inequity of gendered domesticity, while Irish Man 4 and African Man 2 espoused enlightened views about the changing face of both Irish and African society.

¹⁰ See also pages 98 and 125 of the thesis.

This illustrates how homogenized identities can be contested in context-specific ways and that identities and alliances shift and are negotiated; these insights can usefully inform projects aiming to foster PAR through arts for women of colour. What are important, and not always available to audiences are *discussions* and a chance to offer comments in real time. Theatre practice offers “live” rather than “frozen” modes of self-representation; it exists not ‘in the objectivity of bricks and mortar, sets and costumes, but in the subjectivity of those who practice it, at the moment when they practice it’ (Boal 1995: 91). It is not known (apart from the very positive immediate affective responses of audiences—clapping, laughter, high energy) the degree or lasting transformative impact on attitudes.¹¹ However, the project created new conditions, a new collective coalition, a platform for African women’s drama outside of NGO campaigns and courses and cleared new ground self-representation. It also paves a way for future PAR research.

In her use of participatory theatre, Yuval-Davis found identity and subjectivity to be either theorized as a dyad of differentiation, as in *me/other* by Lacan and Winnicott or through dialogical process, as in *me/us* by Bakhtin (cited in Yuval-Davis 2008a: 11) but that *both paradigms* were evident in their data. The *me/other* was confined to reified, racialised identities and official discourse that told refugees ‘who they were and how they should behave’, and the *me/us* dyad arose out of ‘group dynamics and constructions of collective identities’ (ibid). This was also the case in my data, but what I also saw was that *the safest space of return was to the body*. Yayah made several references to the body (tired, big, no power, can’t move), and Sanle referred to her heart, stomach, and blood.

¹¹ This is a possible area for further research.

Everything is your heart...you can't bring it out...it's like you are killing yourself slowly slowly...because by the time your heart is big...so many things in...it can give you sickness (...) I say heart, but really it's in the stomach...I'm sick...it's good for me to bring everything out.

(Sanle Ind.Int : 4)

This resonates with Moraga's (1981) "theories from the flesh" which are knowledges born from survival and opposition and we have much to learn from the women's strategies of convivial confrontation, dualist discourses, their power and love. It also speaks to the type of agency Das (2007) describes as the capacity "to pick up pieces and to live on in the very place of devastation".

If my examples of visual/affective cultural analyses in earlier chapters showed "what has gone before and what is being said", then the narrative data (meetings, interviews, discussions) showed how the women "took in, deciphered and deconstructed"¹² their experiences within a third space. They formulated their "re-tellings" in rehearsals and ultimately carved a "fourth space" of direct, convivial encounter in performance.¹³ This is one way to resist colonization from *within* interpellated identities and subjectivities. Even though much of the highly politicized material was spoken off-stage—not in the performance—they appear in the thesis (and will appear when the play is fully written). Safe autonomous research space was a vital anterior step. In this project, it wasn't the case that the "action" and "theory" components were knitted together; different forms of social action took place throughout various stages of the PAR process; for example, the women rotated positions as chair, finance officer and trained in leadership skills. They were able to

¹² Sandoval's (2000:103) prescription for de-colonizing the mind is to "take in, decipher, and deconstruct" ideology using a formal mode of analysis (see p. 196).

¹³ I align Bhabha's (1994) "third space of enunciation" with Sandoval's (2000) "oppositional consciousness".

claim alternative identities, of artist/actor/workshop leader. Like a *njangi*, we got together and did whatever is necessary, using whatever skills each had.

Opportunities for women of colour in Ireland to lead the way are rare; their autonomy made this encounter of difference different. Drama replenished the women's bodies that felt "used and tired" at the start of the project. Self-representation as embodied speaking agents can "enflesh" two-dimensional representations. Though performance is hard work, it is meaningful work of choice that provided artistic expression and pleasure for the women through acting, song and dance. The evaluation interviews showed evidence of deeper conscientization and replenishment, that participants felt accomplished and enjoyed public affirmation of their talents and life experiences, and the project met a number of personal aims were met.¹⁴

I really like acting...for a long time I've liked acting...even in the act now if you tell me to cry...I will cry in a real way like...*the most important thing in the drama is that I will release myself*...that is the most important thing...that when people see...they don't see all the things we are doing but they will see *beyond* what we are doing...they will say "Oh, there's *something those women are bringing out*"...In drama I can bring out what I cannot say outside...drama is a free way to talk...bring out what is in my stomach. Its like in my heart...its like you were hiding something and now, you put it out and then you are free...theatre and drama and music...today with this world...with this recession people have so many problems so they want to relax themselves watching a piece of drama. It's very very good...it's one of the things in this life to have musician, theatre, drama.

Sanle

¹⁴ Edith was unavailable for interview, as she had just given birth.

The benefit is to express myself, how I travelled to Ireland. I liked it. It makes me feel relaxed. People who were watching they said they liked it...they liked the songs. It gives me some confidence that I should do more (...) I like the feedback...some people will say, "Oh the singing was beautiful"

That song I am singing means a lot...it's so touching (...) the words are "If I had not been born to a responsible person I would have died. Thank God a responsible person put me to bed". I heard my mum singing it and my mum explained it to me when I was growing up...I like it so much.

Yayah

For myself it was always a dream for me when you came you came from a background...you come to a country that the language they are speaking is not your own, so its a challenge for you...how to put yourself together and use your skills. I was always thinking how can I use my skills...we were talking talking talking... my partner he's the one who push me. "You have to do something...you need to use your skill". I always have this sort of idea but I don't have anyone to work with so it's very difficult to find someone who can share and have the same vision as you so, thank God I am starting now...so my vision start growing. That's better for me. I'm feeling great now. It's something I was missing for a while.

Mamu

I've always loved working with women. I like acting and I like being among women who are creative. I was thinking of writing my life history...I was jotting down my life story when I was coming here...I always told my children...in the beginning I was like...how will I begin? Where do I start? Now that I have acted it has given me more ideas even to write...I'm learning more and I'm very happy that I have done the play.

Yoh

7. Contributions and Evaluation of the study and Concluding Remarks

In this final chapter, I present an overview of the contributions made in this study, evaluate its successes, challenges, validity and generalizability and remark on implications for feminist and community practice with women of colour in the Irish context.

7.1 Contributions to Knowledge: An Encounter between Theory, Methodology, Practice

I think we need to recommit to insurgent knowledges and the complex politics of antiracist, anti-imperialist feminisms.

Mohanty 2013: 987

I set out, in this thesis, to explore how postcolonial theories of cultural representation and Black feminist theorizations of intersectional identities apply to African women's experience of asylum in one Irish context. In Chapters One and Two, I took a global/national approach to identify five gaps in the international and Irish asylum literature: Epistemic "apartheid" and inadequate attention to the legacies of colonisation in contemporary asylum studies; Absence of Black and postcolonial feminist perspectives; Neglect of visibility and intertextuality in humanitarian/refugee discourse and the role of affective economies and their performativity; and the Material effects of discourse for women in asylum. I exposed how UNHCR and humanitarian representations (pp. 21-24; 30-33) rely on images of African women to promote their cause and contended that the "humanitarian alibi" is continuous with the colonial civilising mission.

To fill these gaps, I worked across theory, methodology and practice to “decolonize” elements of each. First, I developed a four-strand **theoretical framework** (Chapter Two) to subvert Eurocentric domination and ‘epistemic apartheid’ (Sandoval 2000; Chimni 1998, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2009) in knowledge production. I introduced Black feminist perspectives of intersectional identities and powers to centralise women of colour and investigate their agency as well as their oppression (Lentin 2003; Lentin and Moreo 2012). The Irish matrix of domination (Collins 2000; see pp. 65-68) exposed the interlocking *structural*, *disciplinary*, and *hegemonic* powers that produce spaces of asylum and force subjects to occupy them, as well as the main agents and organisations that obstruct power in the *interpersonal* domain of everyday lives.

Having established theoretical ground and reconceptualised asylum as a postcolonial encounter (Ahmed 2000), I innovated a **methodological framework** to “decolonize” elements of epistemology, design, methods and analysis by using Black feminist standpoint epistemology (Collins 2000), Methodologies of the Oppressed (Sandoval 2000), principles of participatory action research and mixed methods of data collection that gathered visual, discursive and performative data (Chapter Three).

My **analytical framework** (pp.138-141) demonstrated over three data chapters, what is represented (said/known/imagined) about African women and how this impacted on their identities in Irish asylum. In Chapter Four, I argued that representations force spaces, identities and bodies in asylum; *global* humanitarian discourses of “Feeding the Other” and “Exhibiting the Other” (p. 32) are reproduced in the local NGO context through cultural events and intergration and diversity projects. Practices and products at this level fragmented identities, differentiated between “good” and “bad” others, and incurred appropriative, consuming technologies of “Passing through the Other” (pp. 160-162), “Investing in the other” and “Tasting the Other” (pp. 166-169) and “Grieving through the Other” (pp. 231-236). Together,

representations and identity work together at that level to consume, mis-recognize and disempower the women's knowledges and agency "re-colonize" them, force them to perform "representational labour" and inflict "humanitarian harm".

In Chapter Five, I examined what goes wrong when they try to speak in those spaces. Asking "What happens when the women try to speak? I found that intersubjective encounters between black women and structural patriarchal power—asylum/migration regimes, the court and medical professions—disallow or make illegible their speech but also incarnate "bodies" that are "put to work". In Chapter Six, I illustrate how participatory drama can foster more effective self-representation (Chapter Six).

My aims for **feminist practice** were to enact Black feminist epistemology (Collins 2000), to "learn to learn" from below (Spivak 2004: 548; 2006, 2012) and to carve new spaces for self-representation for women through PAR. I listened closely as the women (and men), using mixed drama and art-based methods as they "authored their own stories" of past suffering 'in relation to representations that seek to impose a different kind of truth on them' (Das and Kleinman 2000:13).

My findings BBB were that art provided rich, visual/affective counter-narratives to dominant asylum discourse, and told a holistic, politicized story of asylum that recognized affective economies and organic intellectualism (pp. 176-186). Participatory theatre practice in OOW took self-representation a step further—to "speak back" in the public arena. A degree of safety and autonomy facilitated freedom for the women in OOW tell their stories, but also to directly challenge and contest "whitely" audience scripts and "manly" African men's scripts (pp. 266-270). It replenished the women's bodies and gave them access to more empowering social identifications as leaders, actors and activists. Both art and theatre practice, in different ways for different participants, provided convivial, safe encounters and carved new

platforms for reflection and rich, embodied self-representation. This type of engagement with participatory processes starkly contrast with performances of “happiness and celebration” demanded of people in asylum in integration and intercultural practices.

Answering the women’s “call” in this context of asylum—that they felt angry, tired and used—my academic response was to explore what “work they were doing”. My findings propose that their bodies and identities were “effects of representational regimes that name them”. Forced to *appear* as asylum-seekers, black female bodies circulate and are circulated through global, national and local circuits, where they *perform political, cultural, affective and material labour*. At the local level, they perform neoliberal scripts that work to differentiate between and re-organise “other others” according to culture, which masks structural racism and sexism. Deprived of other human occupations (Whiteford 2005), bodies incarcerated in asylum “do the work” of *waiting*; as they wait, transcendental capitalism lands and profits off their backs. On the national level, Luibhéid (2004) has shown that pregnant African women did the “dirty work” of boundary maintenance; my theoretical focus as a Black feminist scholar is on *the bodies and lives of those who do this dirty work*. The lived experience of black African bodies in asylum not only expose the co-constitutive nature of racist, sexist and capitalist ideologies but provide *evidence* of their intellectual and political strategies of deconstruction, refusal and survival. These are recognized as “theories of the flesh”, imperative steps that interrupt the covert ideology of ‘white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy’ (hooks 2004: 17) and resulting harm and trauma (hooks 2013: 5).

On the global level, I contend that postcolonial asylum is one key technology that reinstates the contemporary global hegemonic ideology of Western/white humanitarianism through circulating the “white saviour” discourse. The roots of forced displacement are grossly inequitable neocolonialism and necropolitics in the South.

Postcolonial asylum appears as a disingenuous helping “handshake from the front” (Yoh) that deflects attention from the “slap from behind”—of First World elites (with Third World allies) “helping themselves” to resources and labour in the South.

Throughout this thesis, I argued for and advanced Postcolonial and Black feminist perspectives and demonstrated its critical importance in articulating “deconstruction” as not merely textual or “cultural”. The textual and the cultural *are cause and effect, accumulative, and affective but always, material*, and ought not be disciplined apart in academic feminist, asylum, migration and postcolonial studies.

Contributions to Knowledge

This section summarises the contributions of this study to postcolonial feminist, asylum and migration scholarship. The study stretched the boundaries of intersectional theory and uses it as a *deconstructive* tool to develop understandings of race and gender not as individual, detachable axes of identities—but as *performative* of the matrix (Collins 2000) of global/national/local powers that intersect at the site of Irish asylum—and how this serves capital. This bridges the gap in Irish feminist studies at the gender/nationalism intersection, which has tended to elide race and capital. It also answers the call for intersectional analyses to address global/national/local scales (Patil 2013) and ‘recommit to insurgent knowledges’ that attend to the complex politics of antiracist, anti-imperialist feminisms (Mohanty 2013: 987).

Explication is made of the paradoxes and tensions in *political versus humanitarian* asylum (Chimni 1998; 2002, 2003, see pp. 20-24) according to race and colour lines; this addresses some historical, political and cultural interconnections between racism, imperialism and colonialism in contemporary asylum encounters. The study’s findings situate postcolonial asylum as contiguous with colonial strategies of incarceration that expropriated Third World labour (cultural, material, political) to

serve capital, but now force bodies into illegality, detain-ability and deportability within the transnational “asylum industry” (Fekete 2001; Perera 2002, see pp. 219-225). This approach resists abstract theorizations of asylum and asylum seekers and moves beyond scandalizing immigration/asylum policies in the North,¹ instead paying attention to the embodied lives and strategies of people living subaltern lives as asylum detainees in South-in North locations.

The findings help produce theory from the flesh (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983: 23)—that is, a consideration of the corporeal enfleshed bodies of women who have survived incredible journeys—as evidence of “survival and beyond”. They exhume their emotional intelligence, agency, power and organic intellectualism that dominant regimes of representations bury. Taking this step refuses to *gaze at* them, but *speaks back* to powers that force, consume and exploit their identities, bodies and labour in Northern asylum. Das (2007) refers to this agency as the capacity “to pick up pieces and to live on in the very place of devastation”. Embodied stories of asylum, as told in this thesis and heard through Black feminist consciousness and reflexive situational practice, bear respectful, non-consumptive witness to the “death worlds” in the South (Membe 2003: 40) forced through neocolonialism and necropolitics (see pp. 240-244). Rather than ignoring the subaltern in the South by focussing on just the Third Worlders to whom we have access to in the North (as Spivak 1999: 275-277 warns against), asylum survivors’ bodies as evidence (Perera 2006) can represent the subalternized in the South to invigorate (rather than stymie) criticisms of Northern complicity in militarism and neocolonialism. For example, Bem’s and Adaeze’s collages (pp. 177-184) and Nigiri’s dramatic recreation of her asylum journey (p.184) bring into the room family members killed in conflict, those who couldn’t afford to

leave, who died on perilous journeys across the Sahara and the Mediterranean—precarious lives of countless others from multiple locations in North Africa and the Middle East.

This study has innovated, modelled and advanced Black women-led, convivial, dialogical Feminist Participatory Action-based praxis. In this case, art and theatrical performance provide effective alternatives to self-representation that move beyond “voice and visibility” alone, and provide a much-needed antidote to integration/diversity projects (pp. 147-175). Such methods replenish and avow emotions and physical expression. Art and drama allowed exploration of spectator/audiences intersubjectivity and affective economies (Ahmed 2000a,b). These expose the “whitely scripts” (Frye 1983; Bailey 1998) and promises of happiness (Ahmed 2012) of asylum, and means to contest them (see pp. 268-279). This mixed methodological model can be usefully applied to other art forms and studies of other types of community-based groups. Importantly, I have thoroughly documented the links between theory, methodology and practice and the critical need for each to inform the other, as social conditions alter.

Finally, the study begins to opens new ways to address inattention to whiteness in Irish feminism. Through critical analysis of scholarly texts (see critiques on pp. 62-64 and 70-74) and also the appropriation of maternal deaths of women of colour (pp. 231-238) in abortion activism, it identifies transnational whiteness as a feature affecting feminist representations of the other in academia and activism. The deconstruction of visual/affective images (pp. 24; 32; 166-67) and conjunctural analyses that expose consumption or “idiopathic empathy” (Gray 2004) were discoveries made in this study that chart some anterior steps taken to deconstruct whiteness, and gendered manifestations of “postcolonial suffering” for women of colour and white women both. The study may inspire future research by white and non-white feminist scholars alike,

and inform activism that builds greater solidarity and “traitorship” which, as demonstrated in the case of Anne and Adaeze (on pp. 195-198), can easily slide into non-cognizance across race/class difference.

7.2 Evaluation: Successes, Validity and Challenges

“Openly ideological research” as Lather (1986: 64-67) argues, defies the notion of scientific neutrality and objectivity, which serve to ‘mystify the inherently ideological nature of research in the human sciences and legitimate privilege based on class, race, and gender’. Practitioners of feminist and action-based, transformative research (e.g. Reason and Bradbury 2001; Maguire 1987, 2001; Kesby 2005; Eubanks 2009), as well as asylum scholars (Voutira and Dona’ 2007) openly commit to criticize and transform the status quo. However, even new paradigms, Lather (ibid. p78) argues, need systematic approaches to empirical accountability to guard against biases, validate and legitimate the knowledge produced. Four key constructs she calls for are: triangulation of methods, data sources and theories; construct, content and face validity; reflexive subjectivity (documentation of how the researcher’s assumptions have been affected by the logic of the data); and catalytic validity (some documentation that the research process has led to insight and activism on the part of respondents).

Triangulation: I worked from “below” across theory, epistemology, methodology, and methods in this work, to “ceaselessly confront experiences of people in their everyday lives rather than impose theory on them” (Lather 1986: 67). Throughout all stages of my fieldwork I triangulated multiple data sources through multiple methods (such as observations of others in asylum centres, home visits, immersion in the population;

interviews, discussions, artwork, drama, websites). I took conjunctural readings of data, and applied the theories of subjectivity and interpellation to *both* speaker/audience with regard to both top-down and self-representations.

As regards *construct validity*, I triangulated multi-dimensional aspects of identity and representation (i.e. Performativity, affectivity, embodiment, visuality, intertextuality). Complex constructs needed multiple measures, so I gathered visual, discursive and performative data, in different power conditions, across the global/national/local scale.

Face validity was established partly through the PAR process itself, and by constant comparison (member checks, checking analysis back through the women both formally and informally), throughout meetings, play building and performance. The main issues emerged from the “bottom up”; interestingly, my rating exercise (Appendix B) showed that the geopolitical situation of Africa was highly important to participants but this did not come up in their data. Similarly, gender was not as important as race, yet the women’s stories were replete with gendered violences. My solution was to attend to South/North geopolitics in my theoretical framework and feel confident in the content validity (race/class/gender) of the study. I tried, during analysis and writing up, to frame participants concerns in their own words and phrases and developed *prior to reading theory*, following Grounded Theory methods (Glaser and Strauss 1967/2012). I later followed the impetus of the data itself, to combine cultural, visual and poststructural analyses to take deconstructive readings using various methods for different modes of data (pp. 138-141). These measures strengthen validity of a small but in-depth case study, by disrupting epistemological, methodological and theoretical assumptions about how my constructs (“identity”, representation” and “asylum”) operate in terms of race/class/gender (my content) for this group.

Catalytic validity/Empowering Research: The degree to which the research process re-orientes, focuses, and energizes participants or their "conscientization" (what Friere 1973, explains as knowing reality in order to better transform it) is indicated through the women's increasing politicization of "being used". Their comments in evaluation interviews (see pp. 280-281), and their engagement beyond the formal research, and on-going commitment of some members to write and perform also demonstrate this to a certain degree. I attempted to democratize knowledge and power throughout the process; we rotated committee roles so each woman cycled through chair, minute taking, financial officer and so on. We also distributed leadership roles in outreach workshops in DP centres. I owe this effectiveness to Black feminist epistemology, and framing of issues from the bottom up, but also due to my researcher positionality and reflexivity.

Reflexive subjectivity: I strived for systematic reflexivity through journals, discussions and dialogue,² and documented how my own social location and experiences of gender/racialisation was similar but different to the women (and men) in the study. Very early in my research (pp. 102-103), I engaged with "mestiza consciousness" (Anzaldúa 1987) to heed the myriad subject positions other subjects and I occupied, and practiced it through a conceptual tool ("diamond mind") to guard against the notion of fixity of either identity or knowledge. Spivak (1988) warns that making ones location transparent doesn't remove the problems of representation. Patai (1994, in Pillow 2003) is also critical of self-absorptive trends in "self-indulgent, narcissistic" reflective accounts of the researchers positionality and emotions that doesn't necessarily produce "better research". In this work, my approach fits what Pillow

² I kept three three separate journals (one of chronology, one of research matters, and a "shadow" journal of my own emotions and "transgressive writings" (St Pierre 1997) which traces the alteration of preconceptions. I referred to them all during final analysis.

(ibid.) calls an “uncomfortable reflexivity”, which accepts that mine and the women’s knowing (of ourselves and of each other) are situated, partial and exceed representations of that knowing.

Scope of the Study

As a Black feminist scholar, I attempted in this thesis to tell a story of asylum in Ireland through a Black feminist alter-narrative. This alone cannot change asylum regimes or decolonize *all* methodology, but it does model activist/scholarship, an important gap in the Irish context. It demonstrates how researchers *can* refuse to participate in oppressive practices, address their *complicity* in re-colonizing subjects, try to do less harm, and learn how to learn from below and add a small but valuable *contribution*. Activist scholarship, as Naples (2006) avers, can revitalise political analysis and strategies.

Alter-narrating *epistemology*, according to Collins (2000: 271), can be more threatening than alternative knowledge claims in and of themselves; these are ‘routinely ignored, discredited, or simply absorbed and marginalized in existing paradigms’. The substantial corpus of knowledge claims about human rights violations and detrimental effects of Direct Provision for example, are not taken into account at court hearings and haven’t transformed material conditions. More threatening is to disrupt and trouble the epistemology used to validate knowledge claims that justify structural power.

Though specific to Ireland, the findings of this study are generalizable to other hegemonic white/Western nation-spaces whose Immigration regimes share a “fortress” mentality. Though varying in context, there are similarities in how different meanings of the blackness of non-Western peoples are transferred through ‘metonymic links with

earlier colonial racial categories that fix their out-of-place-ness in whiteness (Mohanram 1999: xiii). This was evident when I triangulated the Irish data about attitudes to asylum seekers and found they mirrored the UK, USA, Canadian and Australian contexts. Similarly, though my samples of global representations of Third World women were small, a more extensive analysis of such images across other representational circuits could be usefully brought together. It would also be useful to gather data regarding audience transformation at future performances, to add important weight not only to the use of participatory theatre as a social research method, but also as an activist tool to build solidarity in hostile conditions.

7.3 Concluding Remarks

In this study, some African women in asylum have spoken, but *how* will their agency be heard? By whom? How might we (feminists, NGOs) listen differently to Third World women in asylum? Some tentative steps forward I suggest are to first skilfully decipher the episteme of whiteness-as-humanitarianism and the whiteness of Irish feminism. One path is a pedagogic approach, to teach and advance non-Western feminist scholarship and praxis. Another is to nourish self-representation and migrant-led activism and empower oppressed groups and individuals to seek political and material transformation (Lentin and Moreo 2012). Sandoval (2000) and Anzaldúa (1987) both insist that de-colonization needs to create a further stage, of possibility, a future that does not retreat to a “pre-colonial” utopia or a fixed essence. This requires women of colour to create safe, oppositional space for themselves, where they dictate the terms of engagement, and where their bodies and stories move together, as “insurgent texts” (Boyce Davis 1994; Mohanty 2013). That is to say, as speaking,

moving bodies that disrupt dominant discourses, forge alternative paths and re-script their agency as well as oppression, but without having their differences from white women fetishized, or their suffering erased or “disappeared (Boyce Davis 1994).

For Irish feminists to “bring women of colour along with their stories” and “lift as we climb” (Davis 1981) are, for me, important next steps to be taken. Ahmed (2000; 2004a) and Spivak (1990; 2006; 2012), in different ways, both argue for *proximal* encounters—we need to get close but not in ways that re-iterate the violence of categorizing, colonizing and hierarchizing “difference”. For Ahmed (2000: 180) ‘alliances are not guaranteed by the pre-existing form of a social group or community ... collectivities are formed through the *very work that we need to do* in order to get closer to others’. Rather than trying to change the other, we might allow them to change us, through knowledge-making from different standpoints that encourages transversal solidarity.

As a postscript, I also put a case forward to *not dismiss* transformation at the individual level; some months after the formal research ended, the women conducted a second TOP drama workshop at a particularly isolated DP center, on Saturday. The following Monday, the women residents staged a protest that gained wide publicity and a change of management. This protest was first in a chain of protests at other DP centres. The workshops were not “political”, but seemed to energize and replenish the women enough to act on what they already planned (as I was told by an insider). This illustrates the unpredictable nature of individual transformation, and the collective possibilities that can arise.

Limited white feminist engagement thus far has not deterred women of colour’s work towards their own freedom and justice, as had been the case throughout history. I suggest it is more likely we have much to learn from African women’s strategies of

convivial confrontation, dualist discourses, their power and love—all elements of theories of the flesh, born from survival and opposition. Perhaps it is the task of black women who live, write and protest in the national space to enact feminist-of-colour praxis and bring it more fully into view. Whatever transpires in the future, it is certain that African women are well “On their Way” to transforming Ireland.

Appendix A: Demographics of Irish Asylum

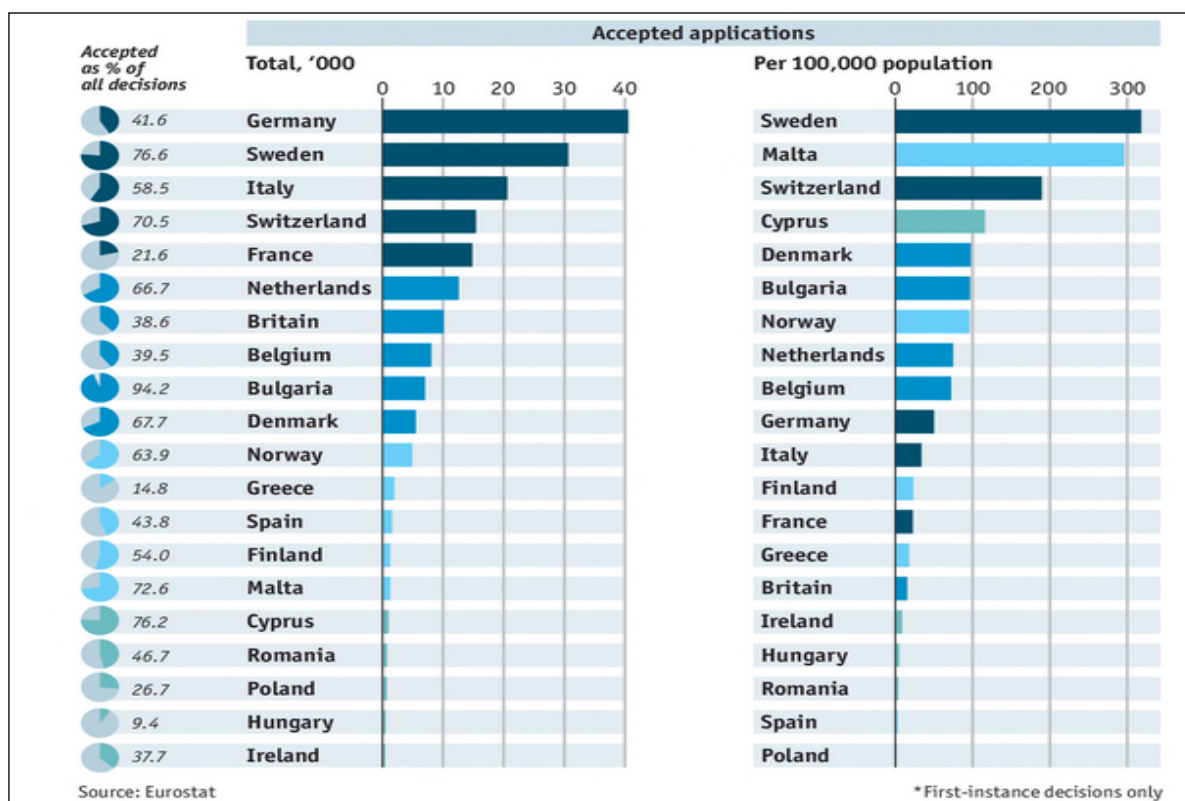


Table 6: European Asylum Acceptance Rates 2014 (The Economist 2015)

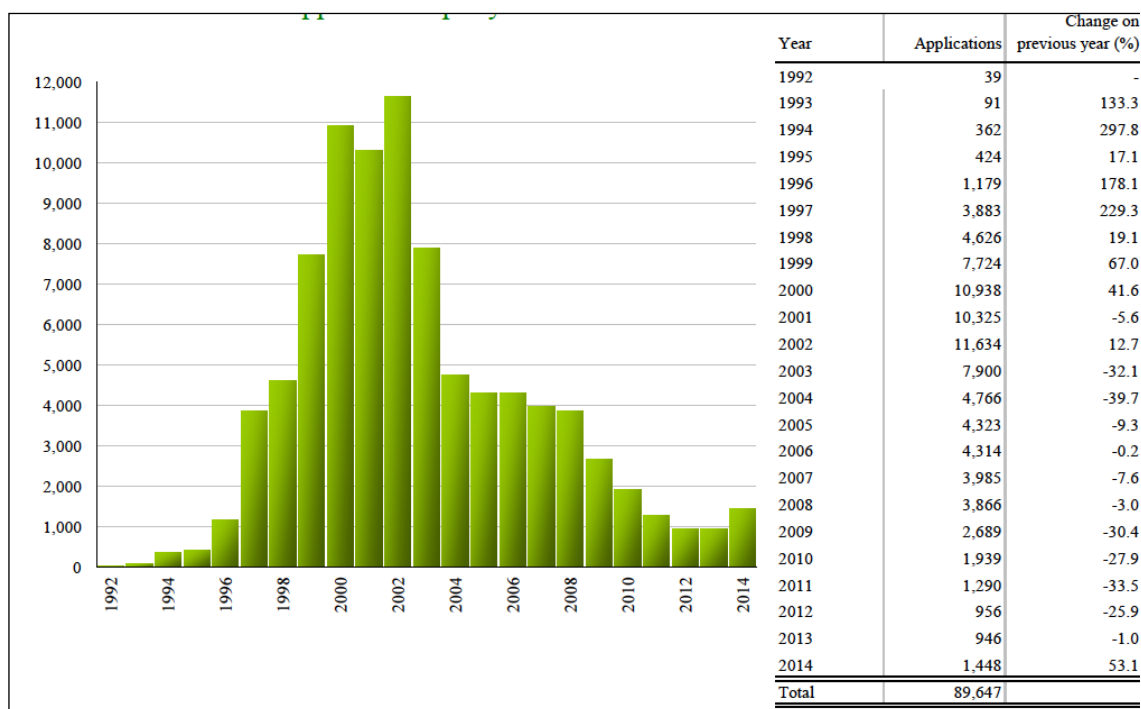


Table 7: Numbers of People Seeking Asylum in Ireland 1992-2014 (ORAC 2014: 56)

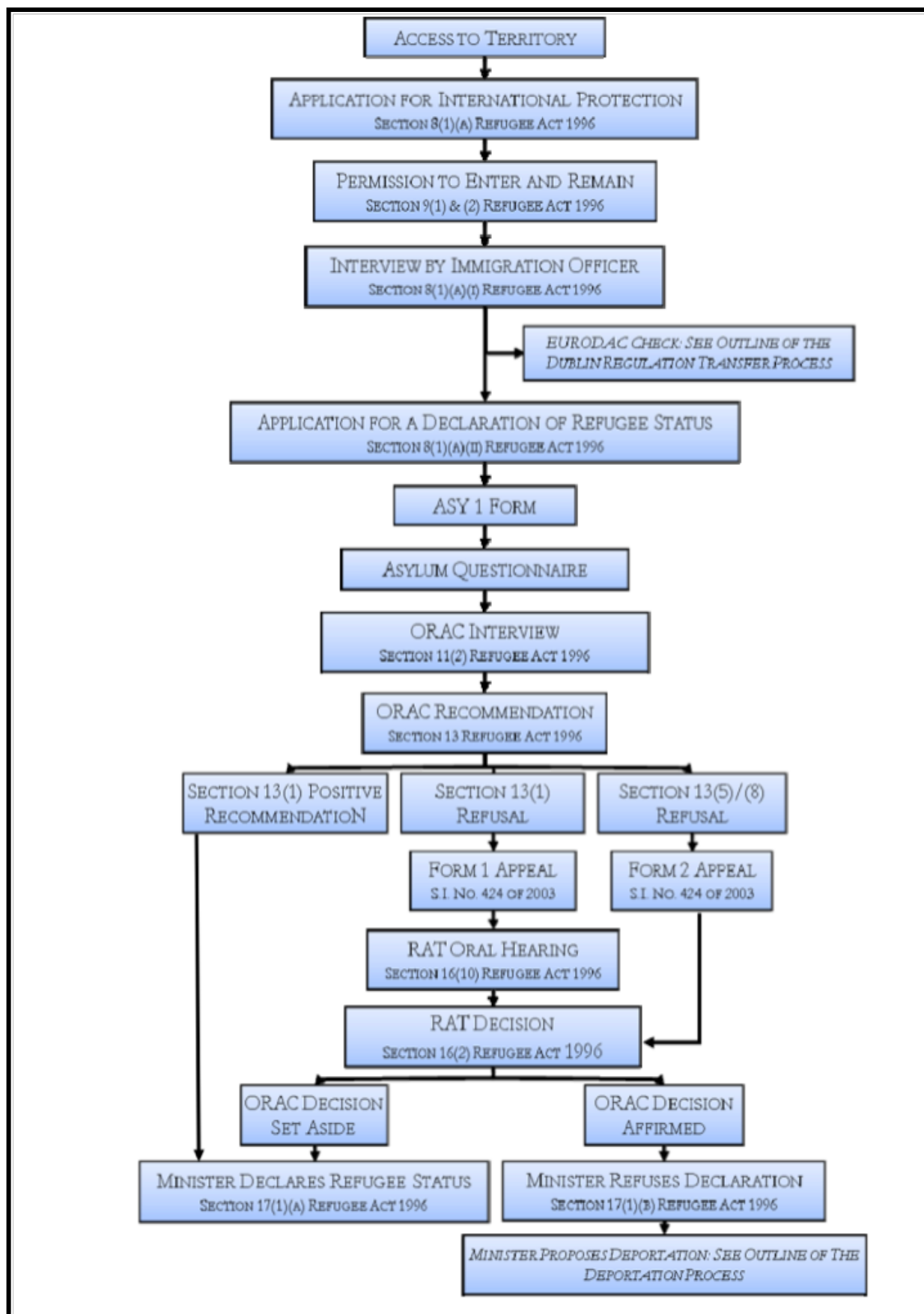


Figure 12: The Asylum Process in Ireland (Quinn et al. 2008: 357)

Table 8: Continents of Origin (RIA 2014: 19)

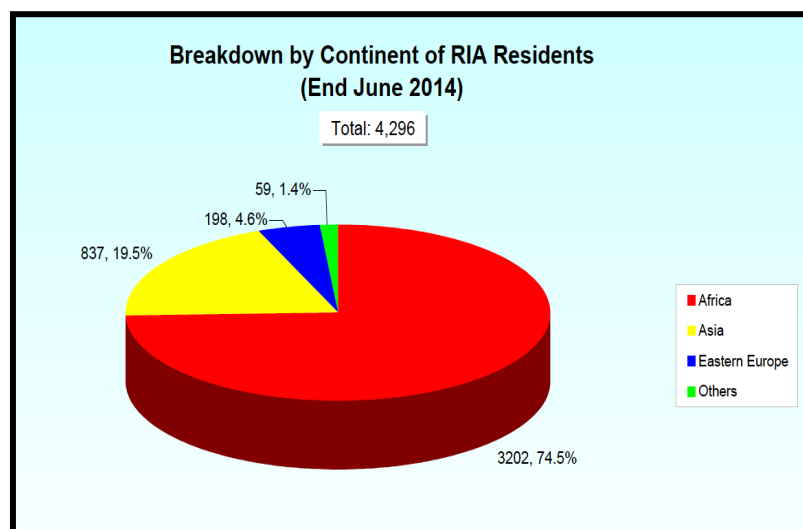


Table 9: Length of time in Asylum (RIA 2014: 9)

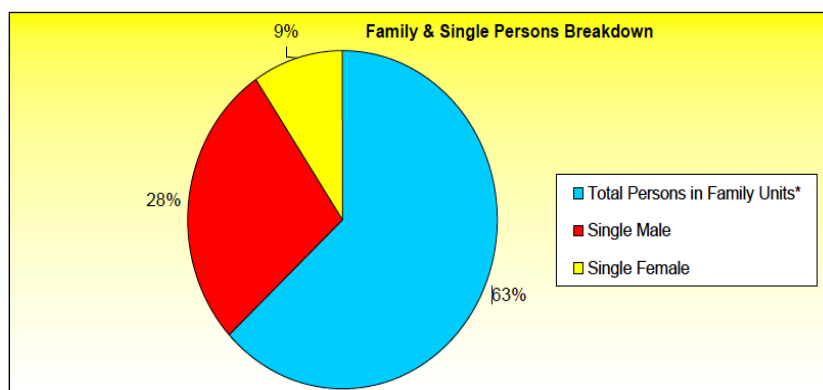
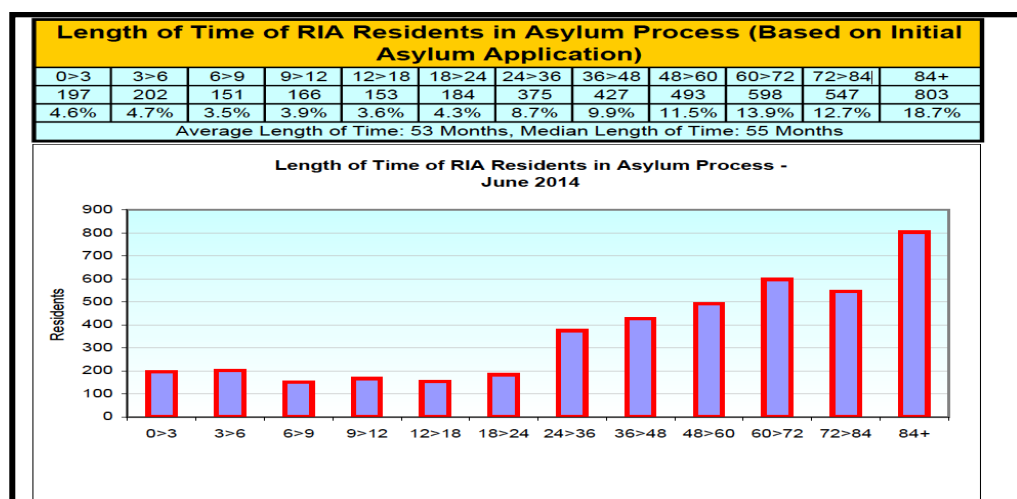


Figure 13: Breakdown of Families and Single Persons (RIA 1014: 18)

Appendix B: Project Documents and Charts

Figure 14: Sample Consent Form

19-14

GENDER, IDENTITY, CONFLICT RESEARCH PROJECT
With Nilmini Fernando, PhD candidate, UCC

Release Form

The purpose of this agreement is to make sure that your artwork, writing, recorded interviews and any other materials you give me are used in accordance with your wishes.

By signing this form, you are giving permission for the researcher to use excerpts and photographs of your artwork/images and excerpts of interviews and discussions created during the project in the production of a WRITTEN THESIS and related PUBLICATIONS (eg. Academic Journals, Conference Presentations, Website, Book Chapter)

Unless stated otherwise, your interview and background details will be kept anonymous. This means that your name and address will not be attached to the interview excerpts or made available to the public or to other researchers. The recordings will be stored in a secure place. The group recordings (audio or video) and interview recording or full transcript will not be passed on to any third party. Your artwork belongs to you. You may request copies of any material produced and review parts of the thesis that are relevant to you.

Whatever additional restrictions and/or conditions you may wish to impose below will be adhered to.

Restrictions/Conditions

.....

.....

.....

I hereby give consent to use my contributions as outlined above to the Nilmini Fernando for the research project on Gender, Identity and Conflict at UCC.

Signature of Participant..... Date 19/10/2011

I agree to respect the wishes of participants regarding the use of any information they share with me. I am prepared and willing to answer any questions concerning the research procedures or other aspects of the project. I recognize that any participant is free to withdraw consent, to discontinue participation in the project, or to deny answers to specific questions.

Signature of Interviewer..... N. Fernando Date 17/10/2011

Table 10: Situational Analysis "Messy Map"

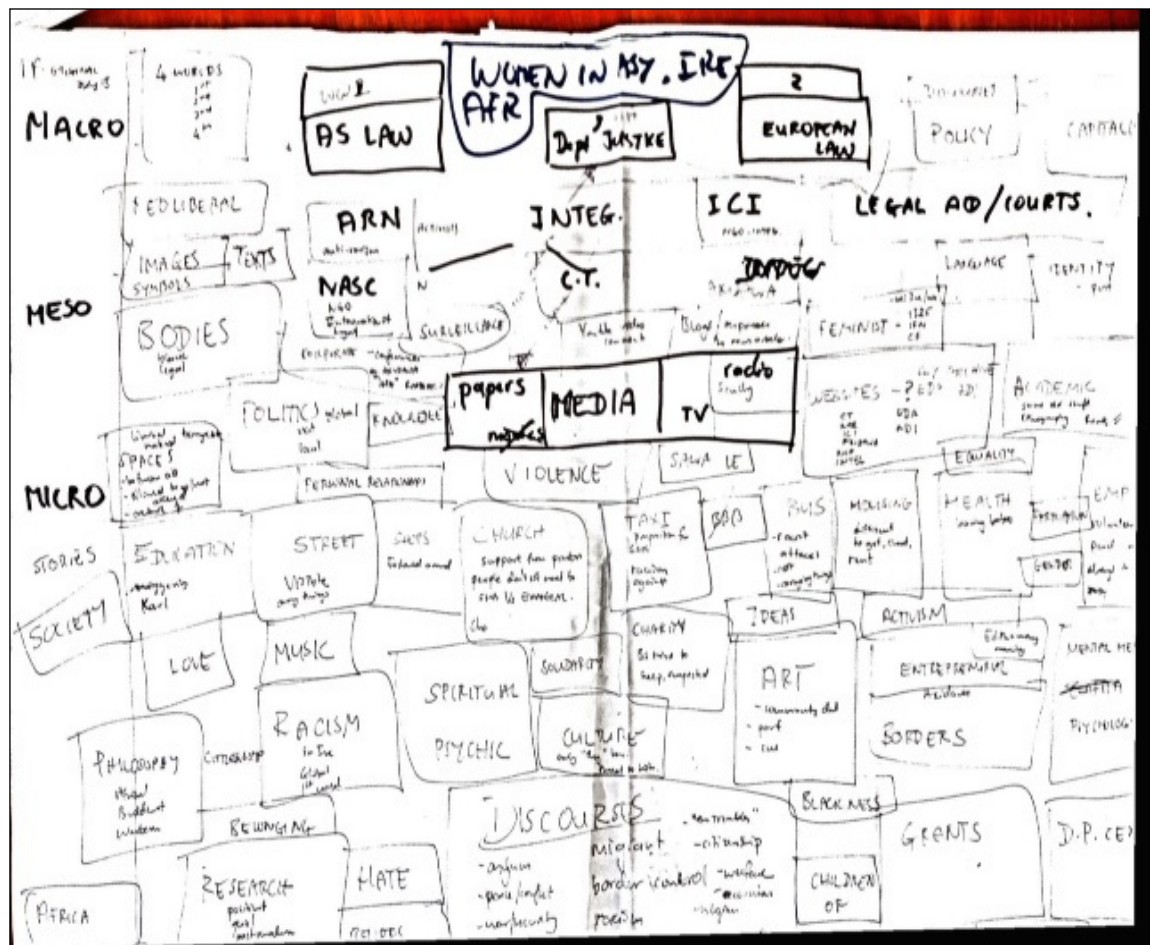


Table 11: Agents, Actors and Actants in Irish Matrix of Domination

POWER DOMAIN	STRUCTURAL	DISCIPLINARY	HEGEMONIC	INTERPERSONAL
	International and EU Asylum Law UN Geneva Convention Dept of Justice and Immigration INIS RIA Judiciary EU - Frontex Airlines (deportation) Army	Direct Provision Hostels State Health/Welfare/Housing Police	Mass Media NGOs Academy Humanitarian Organisations Church Education Feminism- UN women Internet	Relationships Interactions Intra-actions Psychic self Memories Affects- love, fear, anger, peace Subjectivity Identities
LEVEL	Macro/Global x European Transnational- First world/white nations	Meso/National	Mac/Meso/Micro Transnational:	Micro
FEATURES (Collins 2000: 276-288)	Powerful social institutions Organizes oppression, Groups Slow to change, sets the overall "power over"	Manages oppression Control and Organize behaviours through bureaucracies-discipline and control populations Technologies that control women of colour's (and white) women's bodies	Justifies oppression Links them all Manipulates ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies - to shape consciousness. Critical site for – resistance, subverting, crafting counter-hegemonic knowledge A mode of social organization that uses ideas and ideology to absorb and thereby depoliticize oppressed groups' dissent . Alternatively, the diffusion of power throughout the social system what multiple groups police one another and suppress one another's dissent . What is silenced?	Influences everyday experience and the individual consciousness that ensues. Change is possible, how we see our own experiences fosters changed consciousness.
ACTORS: Human Non-human	Judiciary Politicians Immigration Police Civil Servants Time: colonialism, postcolonialism , history, Space- geography, prisons, hostels, hospitals, theatre, street	Civil Servants State officials Hostel Management Police Legal Aid Waiting, Moving Subaltern- no mobility Restricted, sharing,	NGO staff Funders Means of Representation: who controls? Researchers Religious Leaders Schools Advocates/Activists Employment/volunteers Knowledge- access to, creation of, dissemination	Public/ neighbours Family, children, partners Migration agents/ traffickers Fellow residents Activists Hostel staff and management Medical/Legal professionals Shops/services Transport Landlords

Table 12: Evaluation Exercise of Main Themes

Main emerging themes and OOW Rating Exercise (15th August 2012)

- A. Coming from different cultures, different reasons for coming to Ireland
- B. Childcare/Transport costs to participate in NGO and development projects
- C. Differences between then and now, there and here:
 - i. African culture: greetings, hospitality/not all African same/who is teaching about African culture should be us!
 - ii. Irish culture: youth/welfare/lifestyle differences
- D. Funding/Bank Accounts: difficulties when try to be independent/autonomous/lead — e.g. account for women's group, Christmas presents for children
- E. Organisations: paid/unpaid work, corruption /funding, feeling used, not credited or rewarded for work, work for free, use of films and photos without permission, funds and jobs passed around themselves
- F. Violence, Woman abuse and rape: differences and similarities Africa/Ireland
- G. Courts: Truth is lies, lawyers not answering, not being believed
- H. Direct Provision Centres: life lost, loneliness, wasted time, complains go nowhere nothing changes
- I. Children: cultural difference, isolated from extended family, giving birth as asylum seeker, stereotypes, prejudice.
- J. Racism: exclusion, trying to find work, access services, on the street, shops
- K. Independence and Equality for women: Financial, how African women support each other, seeking justice/equality in Irish society
- L. What Irish think about asylum seekers/refugees/migrants: media, Immigration/Justice Dept, NGOs,
- M. Relationships/Love: exploitation by Irish for sex, finding partner and having family here, jealousy and control after having babies
- N. Conditions in Africa: War, famine, corruption, politics - why is this so? Exploitation of African resources

The women were clearly heterogenous—each had particular experiences that shaped priorities. In common, all the women rated “conditions in Africa” and Children (N, I) in the first FIVE issues in order of importance and different cultures/different reasons for coming (C) in the first SEVEN. Global concerns were a high priority, and children, racial stereotypes and childbirth/parenting. All equivocally stated **race** as more problematic than *gender*. The exercise (borrowed from Chambers 2002) served its purpose but was analytically limited. It highlights how intersecting social locations might be the same, but each woman has problems of different scale and priority within this location. This highlights the limits of “survey-type research popular in the NGO sector; for example one email survey of “Racism” (Integration Ireland) asked two yes/no questions about “incidents” of racism, whether or not a complaint was made, and if not why not (four reasons were given). Racism is constructed as “incidents”, so structural racism, heterogeneity, specificity, intersection of race/class/gender or individual versus collective concerns area all excluded from the frame.

Table 13: Thinking Through the Data

What can be analysed?	Data source	Analytic method/style
Words	Discussions, Interviews	Textual/discursive
Speech Acts	Discussions, drama, spontaneous	Performative Discursive
Images and Symbols	Made, found in environment, media,	Visual
Behaviours/actions	During art work, in drama, in discussions	“embodied acts”/agency
Beliefs/Thoughts/ideas	Spontaneous, in discussions, in art-making	Cognition/Intellectual/Ideological
Stories/Narratives	Spontaneous, through art, discussion	Representational/ Performative
Emotions	Remembered, expressed, unexpressed	Affects/embodied feelings
Policies and Rules	Of NGO, Hostels spoken and unspoken	Power/Disciplinary
Inclusion/Exclusion e.g. racism/identity	Experiences recounted	Spatial
Identities	Self-referential, imposed, researcher	Subjectivity

What can be “found”? Look for/listen for	What can be “known”? What can these tell me about?
Breaches Patterns Silences Frames Secrets/lies Performances	Technologies of oppression/resistance/survival Affective Economies Subject positions Strategies Power dynamics

Space	Textual	Visual	Performative
Micro	Discussion	Art Work	Drama and movement Affects
Meso	Biographical Narratives-oral and interview transcripts	Images- produced by participants Affects	Celebrations and Events Narratives Affects
Meso	Literature, Policy, NGOs Media	Images produced about population Affects	Presentations and Conferences Media Affects
Macro	UN Refugee literature Academic literature- exploded in 1990s in north Mass media Mass culture	Images Affects	Impact of North policies on refugees in South and vice versa Affects Identities

Figure 15: Sample of Data Transcript Coding

CODE 23: CONTINUUM OF VIOLENCE, RACISM, EXPLOITATION

Sanle's Story

27:48 P9 "BAD NEIGHBOUR, AGAIN AND AGAIN"...

Sanle first discussed the asylum journey in the initial session, held two months prior to the beginning of the OOW project.¹ The following transcript follows the context and sequence through which the women discuss the story, the way it is presented, and the intentioned or unintentioned effect the way it is told might have...on different people.

TR IB: 4-14

NF So, what we need to think about is what stories do we want to tell and how would we want to tell them?

Me, my story...if maybe I can...I didn't bring anything but I will talk about...how pregnant women...because my story is about this so I should do like that...(*acts out puts on her wrapper to make a pregnant belly*) when my stomach was like that and they put handcuff...this is already something...

MEMO The image precedes the action? This image is pregnant woman. What is she holding inside? Pregnant with what? What has she swallowed? Sometimes the womb is referred to as the stomach (interview, SL) and work as "food". Working from images. Or subjectivities? Writing- did not work, but much later, they began to write down...Reported speech is frequently used, and is marked by ""

SL When I said I came by flight he said "no, that it is not true that I came by flight"...and and later on the solicitor told me if he asks you again, tell him that you came by boat. So I went back and he asked me..."Sanle, tell me, *how* did you come to this country?" And I said "By boat" And even my baby was shaking in my stomach...(LAUGHS)

(All chuckle)

So this one too is....

¹ I had already listened to her testimonial, and was moved, permanently, towards this whole work through her story. Whatever that means...it was her story that engaged me in this area of research, the moment when I realised that the "women" were bussed in, tell their stories, paid a fee, and then disersed again. If it hadn't happened, though, they would have not been included in the 1325 report. If I hadn't been there, there would be no sawa le...

² It is the responsibility of representation that I also face.... A burden or a choice? Participation too, can be a burden or forced, but also a choice. It is not possible to make a clear disinction between "truth and lies", and the "silences" in between them.

Table 14: Checklist for Reviewing Drama

- Watch Play Through- Respond
Then Watch Audience Discussion
What changed?
1. GENERAL DISCUSSION ON PERFORMANCE
 - What holds elements of performance together?
 - Relationships between systems of staging
 - Coherence or incoherence?
 - Aesthetic principles of the production
 - What did you find disturbing? Strong moments? Weak moments? Boring moments?
 2. SCENOGRAPHY
 - Spatial forms: urban, architectural, scenic, gestural?
 - Relationship between audience and acting space
 - Systems of colour and their connotations
 - Principles of organizing of the space
 - Relationship between on and off stage
 - Links between space utilized and fiction of the staged dramatic text
 3. LIGHTING SYSTEM
 4. STAGE PROPERTIES Type, function, relationship to space and actors bodies
 5. COSTUMES How they work; relationship to actors bodies
 6. ACTORS PERFORMANCES
 - Individual or conventional style of acting?
 - Relationship between- the actor and the text
 - the text and body
 - the actor and the role
 - Quality of gesture and mime
 - Quality of voices
 7. FUNCTION OF MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS
 8. PACE OF PERFORMANCE
 - Overall pace, steady or broken?
 - Pace of certain signifying systems
 9. INTREPRATION OF STORY-LINE IN PERFORMANCE
 - What story is being told?
 - What kinds of dramaturgical choices have been made?
 - What are the ambiguities in performance and what are the points of explanation?
 - How is plot structured?
 - How is the story constructed by actors and staging?
 - What is the genre of the dramatic text?
 10. TEXT IN PERFORMANCE
 - Main features of translation
 - What role is given to the dramatic text in production
 - Relationship between text and image
 11. AUDIENCE
 - Where did the performance take place
 - What expectations did you have of performance
 - Hwo did the audience react
 - Role of spectator in production of meaning
 12. WHAT CANNOT BE PUT INTO SIGNS?
 - What images have you retained?
 - What did not make sense in your interpretation of the production?
 - What was not reducible to signs and meaning (and why?)
 13. Any special problems need examining? Comments? Suggestions?

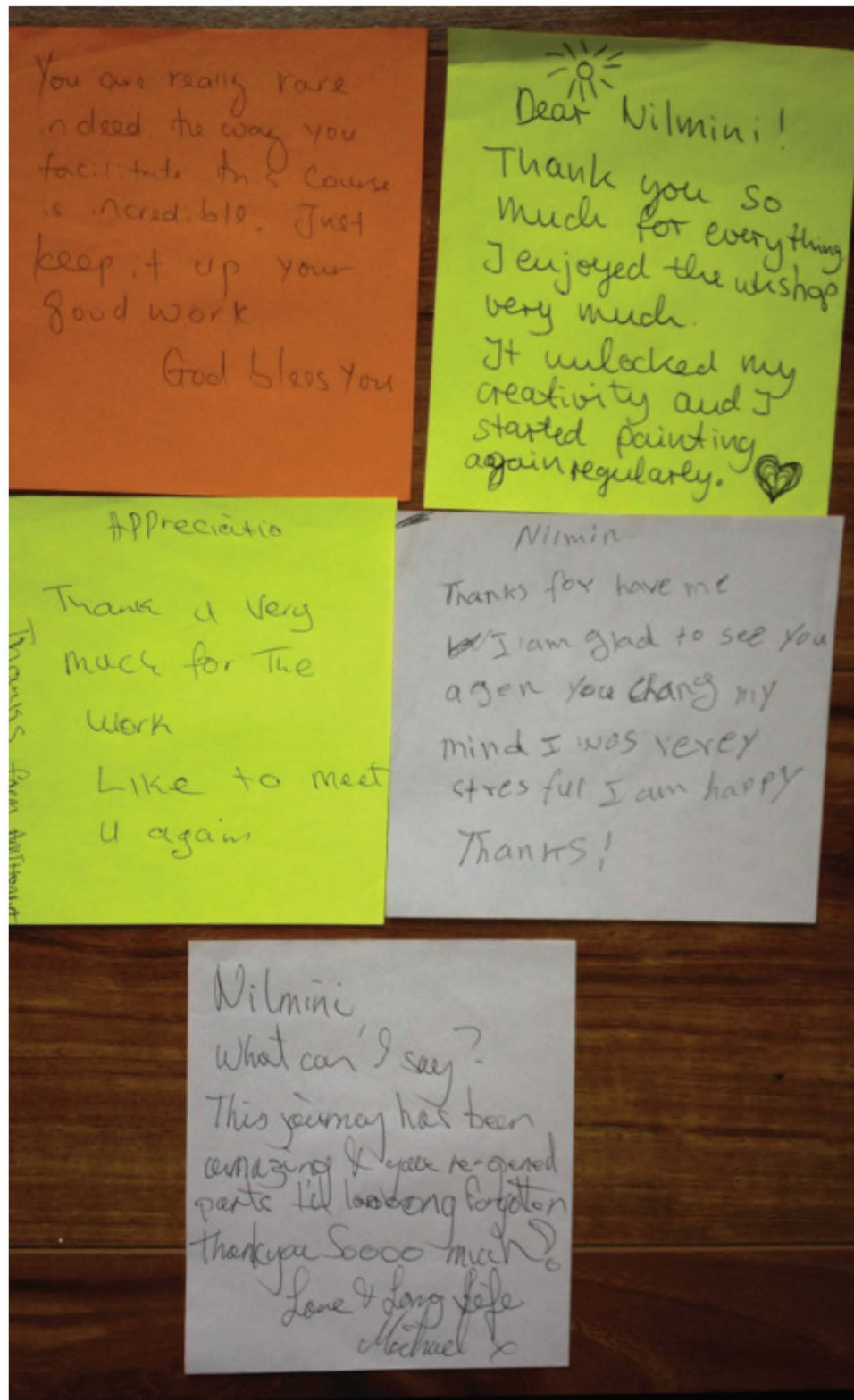


Figure 16: Participant Feedback from BBB

Table 15: Post-Conference Feedback from Academics (Personal Communication via Email)

APPENDIX E: Feedback from Performances (Academic Audience, UCC Conference June 2013)

IFE DIMBO: 8th July 2013

"It was great both the performance and your work, the performance perhaps affirming your theoretical perspective? It was brilliant. "

CAROLINE FLEMING , 2nd July 2013

Both were very powerful acts in fact I shed a tear! No academic paper could have touched me with the same emotions. I was left with a strong understanding of the political and social barriers experienced. I felt very strongly that the stories were told from the heart & that their pain & anguish was indeed very real.

I worked in a refugee centre in Bantry some yrs ago & listened to many similar stories. The arts are a very effective tool to showcase the harsh reality of their experiences. I feel an audience could not switch off to this performance in the same way we can all doze off in a conference where paper after paper is delivered!

KARL KITCHING 17th June 2013

I thought it worked very well. I didn't attend the whole conference (only came for Ife's book launch and your/Sawa Le's presentation-performance) but I think it brought an important message to the conference in terms of a space for Black Feminism in Ireland.

I was impressed by the clarity of your words and the way that you weaved certain ideas together; sometimes I come to scholarly anti-racism from a very cognitive perspective and I felt that the way you expressed certain ideas/used references to Spivak (brown men/brown women) made my own understanding more complete/grounded. I think you've edited the video extremely well, it made perfect sense.

There was something unspoken about the women's performance that resonates beyond words and 'voice', which I thought was a very nice critique that you posed. Often you find that in presentations where someone tells their story directly, what happens is that the presenter absolves the guilt of the (white) audience, and the audience goes away feeling better about themselves, while nothing changes for the presenter/to combat racist structures. Vocio did not become this thing that could be appropriated by the audience, it went beyond voice to a complex range of different subject positions so that the audience could not appropriate it as easily (i.e., see the women simply as 'oppressed' or 'heroic'. For example, you had the use of 'I wish I knew how it would feel to be free' was agentic, sisterly, but in no way suggested the women were freed. So the familiar racist circuit of audience-performer was broken. The audience did not say a whole lot afterwards or ask sustained questions. They did applaud very enthusiastically.

The performance may, I'm not sure, have introduced a sense of discomfort into the space, which, of course, is what tackling white privilege is about. The effects are immeasurable in some ways, but the effects are there nonetheless! If you do want to gauge people's personal response, I think you might think about giving people a link to a survey monkey questionnaire?

Appendix C1: Images of Empire

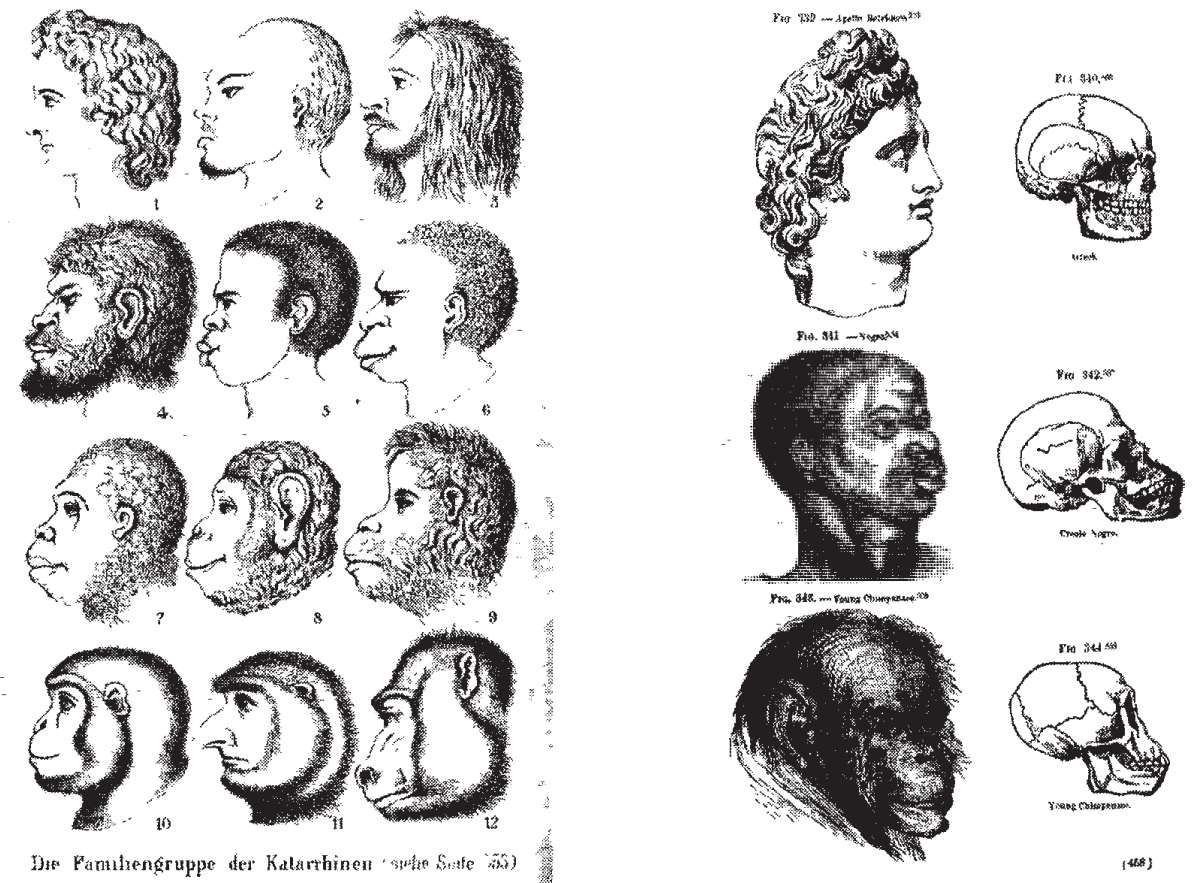


Figure 17: Family of Man 1872 (Mc Clintock 1995: 39)

Racialisation of Irish in USA: From Black to White



FIGURE 1.10 "CELTIC CALIBANS."
Puck, Vol. 10, #258, 15 Feb 1882.
 p. 378. The title of Frederick B. Oppen's
 cartoon "The King of A Shantee" suggests
 an analogy between the Irish and African.

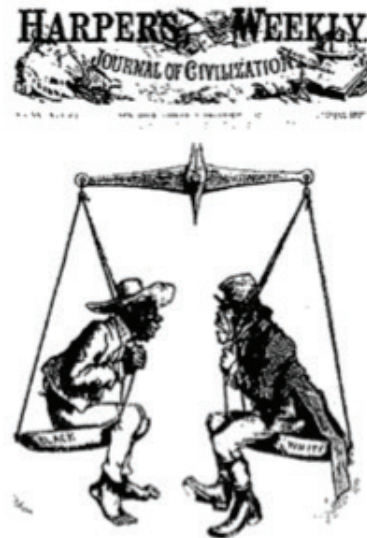


FIGURE 1.9 RACIAL MEASUREMENT AS AN OPTICS OF TRUTH.
 Nast's cartoon in *Harper's Weekly* (9 December 1876)
 stages an analogy between the racial and political
 weight of a freed slave and an Irishman.

Figure 18: Harper's Weekly 1876 and "Celtic Calibans" 1882 (Mc Clintock 1995: 51-53)

C2: Re-Signification of Colonial Images

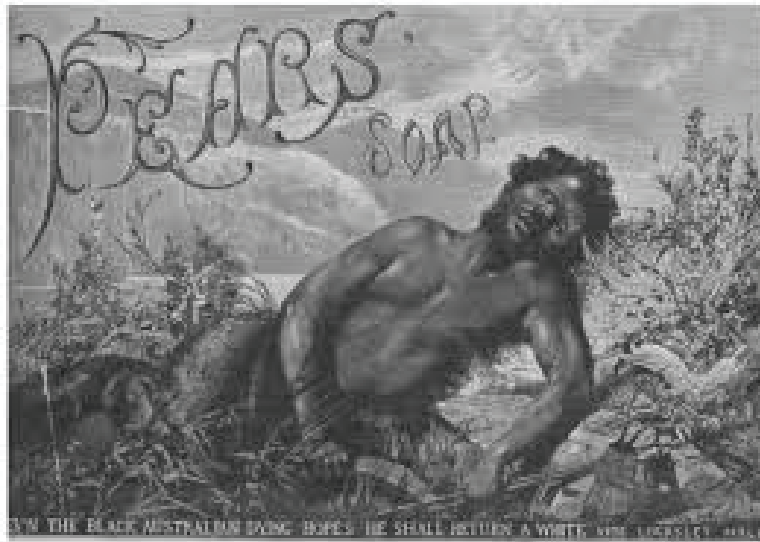


Figure 19: Necropolitics: “Even the black Australian man dying wishes he shall return a white man” (1880s in Parker 2014: 32)



Figure 20: The “Black Venus” (Ponzanesi 2005: 181-182)

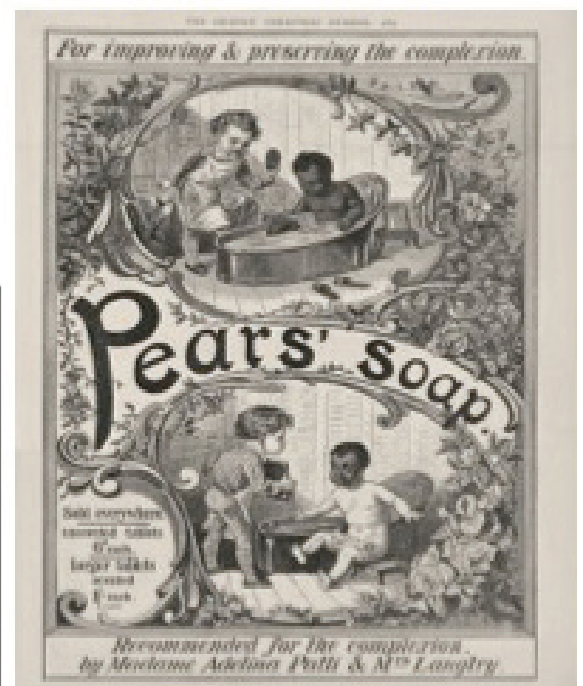


Figure 21: Images of Purity

APPENDIX D: Semiotic Analysis of Website Representation

Sample Semiotic Analysis: “Women in War” Red Cross

Barthes (1974): ideologies are ‘myths’ produced by second order signification—denotation ‘pretends’ to be the first meaning, but a semiological chain which existed before it. The signifier/signified *seem* identical. E.g. The Third World woman appears to be a ‘natural sign’ produced without the intervention of a code (Hall 1980: 132), but it is coded with meanings.

A sign: a thing plus its coded meaning; depends on the cultural context Hall (1980): **Dominant** (or ‘hegemonic’) readings: reader/audience fully shares the text’s code, accepts reproduces the preferred reading (code seems natural/transparent).

Detonation refers to the literal or obvious, common sense meaning of the sign, while **connotation** refers to the socio-cultural and personal associations of the sign.

Negotiated reading: reader may share and broadly accept the text’s code, but resists and modifies it to reflect her own location or experiences.

share the text’s code, prefers to use an alternative frame of reference.

My readings are oppositional/counter-hegemonic with the pedagogic aim of elucidating how *the signs move from codes to* ideologies in wider systems of meanings (Hall 1980: 132, Rose 2012: 133, Chandler 1994). Signs are more ‘polysemic’ (more open to interpretation) in their connotations than their denotations and how the image is photographed adds a third level of connotative meaning. (Chandler 1994). Once transmuted into a new signifier, ‘the previous meanings, the histories and social usages associated with the sign at its first level, are appropriated and colonized’ (Sandoval 2000: 94). This third order of signification, or myths, fulfill the function of naturalizing the cultural so dominant ideologies can seem ‘natural’, ‘normal’, self-evident, timeless, obvious ‘common-sense’ - and thus objective and ‘true’ reflections of ‘the way things are’ (Barthes 1977, 45-6 in Chandler 1994).

Oppositional (counter-hegemonic) reading: reader may understand preferred reading but rejects it, as she does not

1. Identify the signs and the codes within which these signs have meaning
2. Identify paradigm sets (such as *shot size*: long shot, mid shot, close up).
3. Identify structural relationships between the various signifiers
4. What are ideological functions of the signs in the text and of the text as a whole? What sort of reality does the text construct and how does it do so? How does it seek to naturalize its own perspectives? What assumptions does it make about its readers?

SIGN /SIGNIFIER	CODE/CULTURE	PARADIGM	SIGNIFIED	RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SIGNIFIERS
Third World woman 1	Eurocentric gaze	Close-up, pregnant belly	Primitive, passive, victim, sexualized – Scopophilic	Helper/helped
Red cross symbol	European/war	Appears 4 times	Aid, humanitarianism, benevolence	Emergency/crisis Political and economic “neutrality”
Third World woman 2	North to South Development/aid/charity		Empowered, agency, trainable	Helping them help themselves Contradicting discourse “Population explosion” versus “death/saving lives”
Pinard horn-midwives instrument	Medical discourse, maternity/reproduction		Close to red cross-contiguous and “fixes” meanings to differentiate between women	The black female split in two subject positions- victim and agent. UN 1325/Women, Peace and Security in North, versus African war/precarity in South

TEXT: Placing “women” and “war”: feminizes war, appeal to women. The words and images stick together and naturalize the black/third world woman with war and suffering while simultaneously naturalizing the white/Western world as superior.

The myth of difference between “us and them” is re-installed in racial terms— war affects brown people in far-away countries.

We viewers can gaze from “our” is a safe, peaceful, modern civilized country, not like “theirs” with uninterrupted white privilege —to gaze upon the underdeveloped Other.

The *sign* (African/black woman’s body) is ALREADY signified through colonial discourse as victim/supplicant /primitive: as signifier and re-signified – a second African woman who is an agent, a medic.

The meaning shifts to “not all Third World women are victims, some of them are developing, thanks to “us”; things have moved on, “we” no longer colonize the other but empower them (but they must remain stuck).

The Western/white saviour colonial discourse is re-produced through liberal postfeminist discourse that shifts from victim to power feminism. Earlier “humanitarian” intervention (colonial “civilizing” mission, Structural Adjustment Programmes, micro financial loans to poor Black women as a solution to Third World poverty) are embedded in neoliberal feminist discourses.

The preferred reading is that African women can acquire agency through Western intervention: humanitarian, medicalized, and pedagogic.

WHAT IS SILENCED The singlemost important agent of neocolonisation is most deeply hidden: Western military intervention

We (decoders) are transported not to a battlefield, but private, intimate space of the black woman’s body, bare and ripe for surveillance.

This becomes critical in knowledge production—each detonation (meaning-making) positions us in the dominant ideology through connotations (Silverman 1983: 30).

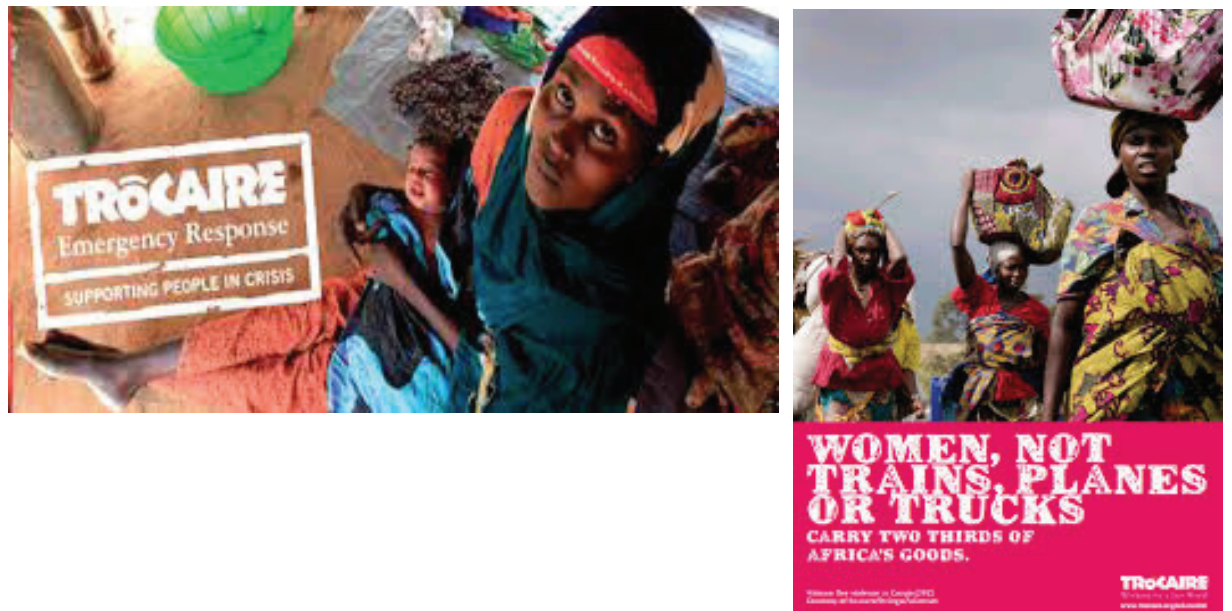
LOCATION The exhibit was timed and located to launch the NAP on UNHCR 1325 by the Defense Department. The Powerscourt Gallery is flanked by Trinity College, Leinster House (Parliament), The National library and major Government offices and educational/cultural institutions, so likely to draw audiences with intellectual and political interests.

A different photograph was featured on the website when the exhibit moved to Belfast (Northern Ireland) the following month—of Black women in an unspecified crowded prison. A special offer of ‘free entrance to the exhibit when doubled with a tour of Crumlin Road Gaol’ was made available. Together, the text and image metonymically link Third world conflict with Irish women’s struggles during the “Troubles”.

What is silenced is that Irish women’s peace groups felt used as a “tool” both by politicians (Callaghan 2003) and the “armed patriarchy” of the North (Ward 2005: 19). Currently, Irish women’s post-conflict needs have not been adequately addressed in the Irish NAP (Hinds and Mc Minn 2013; see Figure 4).

The gesture to align Third World women in post-conflict (them) with Irish women (us) in gendered terms is a moment of discourse production that successfully brings “us” together under the umbrella of Women, Peace and Security but removes critical sociopolitical and geographic differences and specificities.

Figure 22 : Black Babies and African Women on Collections Boxes (Torcaire Ireland)



APPENDIX E: Photographs and Video (Redacted)

E1 & E2: Photographs from BBB and OOW

E4: Video of project presented at UCC Women's Studies Conference June 15th 2011.

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