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Forthcoming in: **Reimagining Diasporas: Transnational Lives and the Media**
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(University of Leeds) and R. Harindranath (University of Melbourne). Published by
Palgrave Publishers, UK

Re-imagining Diaspora through ethno-mimesis: humiliation, human dignity and belonging

Here abroad nothing is left, we have been catapulted out of history, which is always the history of a specific area of the map, and we have to cope with, to use an expression of an exile writer, 'the unbearable lightness of being'.

(Czeslaw Milosz 1988 1-3)

Introduction

This chapter builds upon the author's work on renewed methodologies for conducting ethnographic research with asylum seekers and refugee groups in the UK and explores the political implications of 'ethno-mimesis' as critical theory in practice.

Concepts of 'diaspora', 'humiliation' and 'dignity' will be problematised and explored through the analysis of hybrid texts (art forms) produced by refugees and asylum seekers in the inter-relation/inter-textuality between art and ethnography – as ethno-mimesis.

The authors concept of 'ethno-mimesis' is defined in this chapter through a combination of participatory action research (PAR)¹ and participatory arts informed by the work of Adorno and Benjamin. Ethno-mimesis draws upon 'feeling forms' such as photographic art, performance art and life story narratives, and engages dialectically with lived experience through critical interpretation, towards social change. Ethno-mimesis as critical theory in praxis seeks to counter negative stereotypes in the public imagination and facilitate the production of refugee and asylum seekers self re-presentations of lived experiences through visual and biographical texts that speak of the utter complexity of lived relations through 'feeling forms' as 'sensuous knowing'.

'Diaspora' is re-imagined within the context of the current law in the UK, the asylum-migration nexus, and new labour 'governance' on this issue especially discourses of public participation and inclusion. Concepts of 'humiliation' 'belonging' and 'identity' are examined both theoretically and experientially through ethnographic accounts and ethno-mimetic texts.

¹ Temple and Moran (2006:6) argue that participatory approaches can help to maximise local participation, (which is especially significant for people who speak little English and/or do not access services); lead to a sense of ownership, responsibility and self esteem; recognize and value people's skills and capacities; and lead to community development processes and capacities . Additionally, because the research methods used involve rigorous checking and cross checking of interpretations a deeply embedded reflexivity emerges in the research design, process and outcomes.

This chapter argues that the articulation of identity and belonging for those situated in the tension that is the asylum-migration nexus² can helpfully be understood within the context of: a) renewed methodologies for social research that are participatory, interpretive and action oriented; b) a deep understanding of the economic and political relations of humiliation, inclusion and exclusion that includes the role of the mass media (print and broadcast); c) and the related issue of governance at national, European and international level. The focus for the work discussed here is research undertaken by the author with Bosnian and Afghan refugee communities in the UK and new arrivals (asylum seekers and economic migrants from various countries) to the East Midlands between 1999 and 2002.

At the centre of this work is the importance of renewing methodologies in the process of re-imagining diaspora especially within the context of the asylum-migration nexus, globalisation, analyses of human rights and the impact of humiliation (Linder 2004).

Re-imagining diaspora: the asylum-migration nexus

Stephen Castles (2003) and Zygmunt Bauman (1998) both focus theoretical attention on the global dimensions of forced and economic migration. 'Migration in general and forced migration in particular are amongst the most important social expressions of global connections and processes' (Castles 2003 :17). Bauman quoted in Castles

² This is the complex relationship between migration (the movement of people across borders) and forced migration (forced movement, for example as a consequence of civil war, natural disasters, decolonization). The distinction between forced and economic migration has become blurred and there are complex factors and outcomes operating that link the local with the global.

(2003:16) adds: “mobility has become the most powerful and the most coveted stratifying factor...the riches are global the misery local”.

Analyses of the asylum-migration nexus should necessarily acknowledge the wider global and political context in which mobility and migration (both inward and outward) take place. What is very clear, even in the most rudimentary exploration of the literature, is that migration, particularly in the context of globalisation, is on the increase; as is the emergence of transnational identities³.

Marfleet (2006) urges us to think about transnational communities in relation to ‘circuits of migration’ and diasporas (scatterings) as ‘networked communities.’

Within the context of migration research he argues that three developments have been crucial to the growth of transnational communities. First, changes in new technologies of mass transport (international tourism, mass air transport); second, changes in the means of communication (virtual communication, satellite, internet and cyber environment), and finally ‘the generalisation worldwide of ideas about human entitlement’ or human rights that ‘require new frameworks of understanding’ (Marfleet 2006:216). Moreover, one dimensional analyses focusing upon push - pull factors in relation to economic need and the demands of the market are now too limited and linear. The complex movements of migrants involves undertaking multiple journeys ‘which may involve repeat, shuttle, orbital, ricochet and yo-yo migrations’ in attempts at settlement and return (Marfleet 2006:216).

A number of key themes emerge when exploring the asylum-migration nexus, not

³ See for example the web-based site- www.saemp.org.uk a Somali European Media Project, based in Leicester (a nodal city) that are global in reach but have particular links with the Netherlands, Norway, where some of their members first gained refugee status before deciding to make Leicester in the UK their home.

least of which is what Castles describes as the complexity of this ‘transnational and inter-disciplinary undertaking’ that include analyses of globalisation, legislation, policy and border controls, processes and practices of settlement and belonging, the development of transnational communities.

Castles (2003) outlines the foundations for a sociology of forced migration, as a development of his work in this area over a number of years. He suggests a shift in focus from a sociology of the nation-state to a transnational sociology, arguing also for a renewal of social theory ‘taking as its starting point the global transformations occurring at the dawn of the 21st century. The key issue is transnational connectedness and the way this affects national societies, local communities and individuals’ (Castles 2003:24). Castles urges us to examine networks and global flows as the key frameworks for social relations ‘in which ‘global cities’ with dualistic economies form the key nodes’ (p27) and transnational communities are the focus ‘for social and cultural identity for both economic and forced migrants’ (p27). Castles suggests integrating various levels of analysis into a new global political economy from local ethnographic to global political economy including dynamics of mobility, settlement, community and identity. Moreover, methodologically the underlying principles should take into account interdisciplinarity, historical understanding, comparative analysis, transnational social transformation, local, regional and national patterns of social and cultural relations, human agency and the need for participatory methods. The remainder of this chapter takes up Castle’s suggestion of integrating the ethnographic with the political aspects of sociology of forced migration. This is achieved by exploring the concepts of ‘diaspora’, ‘humiliation’ and ‘belonging’ as well as a methodological approach to research that incorporates participatory action

research and participatory arts; the inter-relation/inter-textuality between art and ethnography as *ethno-mimesis*, as critical theory in practice.

Diasporic Identities: humiliation, identity, and belonging

Today militancy in the Middle East is fuelled ...by a pervasive sense of humiliation and helplessness in the region. This collective feeling is driven by a sense that people remain helpless in affecting the most vital aspects of their lives, and it is exacerbated by pictures of Palestinian humiliation (Shibley Telhami [2002] quoted in Lindner 2004:28)

The opening up of communications and travel, global connections and processes alongside the erosion of national boundaries and cross border flows make understanding processes and practices of globalisation crucial to analysis of the migration-asylum nexus. Moreover, forced migration is 'not the result of a string of un-connected emergencies but an integral part of North-South relations' (Castles 2003:9). Forms of expression emerge from global inequalities, societal crisis and social transformations in the South, as well as what Marfleet calls 'the impact of the entire migratory framework' upon our understanding of community beyond the boundaries of space, place and the nation state . 'New networks themselves play a role in shaping global movements, drawing in and re-circulating migrants as part of a process of flux and flow'(Marfleet 2006:218).

Kushner and Knox (1999) write that the identity of the label 'refugee' can be both a source of pride and shame. As 'outsiders' asylum seekers and refugees as 'others' cope with 'scapegoating' and 'othering' within the context of dis-location and attempts at re-location. 'Catapulted out of history' (Milosz 1988) it is very difficult

to feel at 'home' in the new environment. Finding new rhythms in time and space, quelling the anxiety of the unfamiliar and the loss of orientation takes time. Drucilla Cornell drawing on Stuart Hall's work describes cultural identity as a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being' belonging to the future as much as to the past and subject to the continuous play of history, power, culture. She tells us:

far from being grounded in mere recovery of the past, which is waiting to be found and will secure our sense of ourselves in eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past (2000:55).

In the following narrative, (an excerpt from an interview conducted in 2000⁴) Leyla's experiences of humiliation, loss of dignity and respect are wrapped up in the experiences of forced migration, dislocation and the temporary nature of being an asylum seeker in the UK.

Leyla's brother was killed and she was forced to flee because of a well founded fear of persecution that included possible death at the hands of the authorities. She arrived in Britain using a visa and claimed asylum when the visa expired. She was dispersed to a city outside of London.

They didn't explain anything that night. That night they decide to take us to X from X. That night they just took us in the bus and then we didn't know where we had to go and then we arrived to X...It was the middle, midday and then we arrived about night-time. There were people from somewhere else they dropped them from other towns and places. The one important thing is that the main thing is that they didn't explain us where we had to go...And then they separate everybody and we just see women left because they, our

⁴ The interview was conducted as part of an AHRC Funded research project examining experiences of exile and integration led by O'Neill and Staffordshire University.

names weren't on the list, our names weren't on the list and other people they had accommodation...we are speaking very little English and then I ask them why, where I am going for. And I tried to hit the person because my temperature was over and then I called my sister on the phone...I forced a person to call my sister to communicate...

She describes being very scared and humiliated by this experience. Her asylum claim took one and a half years to be processed and her application was refused. She appealed against the decision and at the time of the interview was awaiting news of the appeal. During this time she tried to kill herself twice. In her home country Leyla was a journalist writing for a Kurdish women's newspaper. She said:

We are scared to go back to our country.... can we stay or not and psychologically we are under pressure on this because we don't know what our future will be...we don't know what will happen to us.

A concept that is becoming a key focus in interdisciplinary research related to the asylum-migration nexus is *humiliation*. A global network, founded by Evelin Lindner, has emerged around the need to address, understand and move beyond the experiences of humiliation, non recognition and lack of respect through transformative social action underpinned by the need for human dignity globally and locally. For Lindner (2004) there has been a shift (*we could call it from modernity to late modernity or postmodernity*) in global relations, 'from a world steeped in Honor codes of unequal human worthiness to a world of Human Rights ideals of equal dignity' Influenced by anthropological texts Lindner (page 4) writes:

in the new historical context (of equal dignity for all/Human Rights

legislation) , the phenomenon of humiliation⁵ (expressed in acts, feelings and institutions), gains significance in two ways, a) as a result of the new and more relational reality of the world, and b) through the emergence of Human Rights ideals. Dynamics of humiliation profoundly change in their nature within the larger historical transition from a world steeped in Honor codes of unequal human worthiness to a world of Human Rights ideals of equal dignity.

Dynamics of humiliation move from honor-humiliation to dignity-humiliation, and, they gain more significance.

For Lindner the human rights revolution ‘could be described as an attempt to collapse the master-slave gradient to a line of equal dignity and humility’ that she defines as ‘egalization’. Lindner writes that feelings of humiliation may lead to a) depression and apathy, b) the urge to retaliate with inflicting humiliation (she gives the example of Hitler, genocides, terrorism, or c) they may lead to constructive social change (she gives the example of Mandela). Lindner is committed to research and action that helps to foster new public policies for driving not only *globalization* but also

⁵ Lindner writes: ‘Humiliation means the enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honor or dignity. To be humiliated is to be placed, against your will and often in a deeply hurtful way, in a situation that is greatly inferior to what you feel you should expect. Humiliation entails demeaning treatment that transgresses established expectations. It may involve acts of force, including violent force....Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of humiliation as a process is that the victim is forced into passivity, acted upon, made helpless’. (2004:29)

egalization and helping to create a peaceful and just world and she writes that three elements are necessary for this to be progressed.

Firstly, new decent institutions have to be built, both locally and globally, that heal and prevent dynamics of humiliation (see *Margalit*, 1996). Secondly, new attention has to be given to maintaining relationships of equal dignity. Thirdly, new social skills have to be learned in order to maintaining relations of equal dignity. We need not least, a new type of leaders, who are no longer autocratic dominators and humiliation-entrepreneurs, but knowledgeable, wise facilitators and motivators, who lead toward respectful and dignified inclusion of all humankind as opposed to hateful polarization.

Lindner calls for a *Moratorium on Humiliation* to be included into new public policy planning. The need for new decent institutions and leadership to heal and prevent the dynamics of humiliation, othering, de-humanization and an examination of governance both nationally and globally.

Governance in the UK

Nationally, in the UK, a commitment to international Human Rights legislation is overshadowed by a focus upon protecting borders and strengthening legislation to reduce the flow of people seeking asylum and refuge. There are many examples of the humiliation of those seeking asylum and protection from the British State in relation to a general lack of welcome and fear of the stranger perpetrated by some sections of the mass media; and the raft of asylum and immigration legislation from the 1990s through to current day that makes it very difficult to gain refuge in the UK. The operation of governance in this area does not operate in a clear way with internal

integrity but rather is deeply problematic in offering a mixed message of ‘welcome to Britain’ and ‘Go Home’.

O’Neill and Harindranath (2006) write that in relation to forced migration and asylum discourses around the exclusion of the ‘other’ (involving criminalisation, detention and deportation) and the maintenance and control of borders (developing ever more tighter controls on entry and asylum applications) exist in tension with discourses that speak of human rights, responsibilities and possibilities for multi-cultural citizenship especially in the community cohesion literature.

There is a conflict at the heart of New Labour’s approach to asylum policy linked to the ‘alterity’ of the asylum seeker that promulgates hegemonic ideologies and discourses around rights to belonging and citizenship, perceived access to resources (redistribution) and misrecognition fostering suspicion of the ‘stranger’. Alongside discourses of fairness and rights to enter and seek refuge, there exist regressive discourses that water down the vitally important actual and symbolic 1951 UN convention, and foster a split between ‘bogus’ and ‘genuine’ refugees, making it extremely hard to seek asylum in the UK.

In the 1990s a series of asylum and immigration acts were passed in the UK that served to increasingly restrict the rights and choices of asylum seekers and refugees, and ultimately lowered benefits. In January 2003 support was further eroded by section 55 of the 2002 Asylum and Immigration Act. Asylum seekers who do not put an application in at the point of arrival will receive no support. 2004 saw an additional asylum and immigration act with the implementation of sections 2 and 9 in particular adding to the hardship and humiliation experienced by asylum seekers both on arrival and at the end of their claims. Section 2 criminalises those who arrive without a

passport and without reasonable excuse⁶ and under Section 9 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004:

families who have reached the end of the asylum process and exhausted all their appeal rights can have their financial support and accommodation removed if they ‘fail to take reasonable steps’ to leave the UK. In the event that families are made destitute, they can face having their children removed and taken into the care of social services. During the passage of the bill, the government said their aim was not to make victims of families with children but to encourage them to take up voluntary return packages.

(http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/downloads/rc_reports/Section9_report_Feb06.pdf)

⁶ According to Home Office statistics, more than 100 people were charged under Section 2 between 3 July and 9 October 2005; three quarters of these were convicted and imprisoned. The prison term is usually 2-5 months if the person pleads guilty. However, it is only after the term has been served that the person can enter the asylum determination process and the actual strength of the case for asylum can be considered. The case may then have to be pursued from detention, which means it will be harder to get legal advice; and the Section 2 prosecution has to be taken into account in determining credibility in the initial decision and any appeal. Jawaid Luqmani (2006:5) ‘Working with change, meeting the challenge: an asylum policy and legislation update’ March 2006 Conference Report.

Increased use of detention is a further issue of major concern. Tim Baster, Director of Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID), presented an update on detention to a conference hosted by the Refugee Council in March 2006:

By October 2005, 2929 people had gone through super fast track at Harmondsworth of whom 2424 had been refused and about 1500 removed. The average length of detention was 53 days. Eleven had been granted asylum and 67 had successfully sought bail. The rest were passed through an unjust system at speed and released. However, their appeal rights were already exhausted. There are no automatic bail procedures for families, and it is estimated that 2000 children are detained each year. Often this is as a result of early morning swoops with no warning, and then detention for indefinite periods. help, they cannot access the 'elective bail' procedure. It is BID's understanding that currently half of those going through the new fast track procedures have no legal representation when they arrive in court for their appeal.

Research conducted by Save the Children in 2001 '*Young Separated refugees in the West Midlands*' found that young separated refugees experience considerable anxiety over the asylum process, brought about by the difficulty of contacting legal representatives in distant cities, problems with the Home Office, and a general lack of information and support .

Section 20 of the 1989 Children Act, which identifies when children in need should be looked after by the local authority, is rarely used in the assessment of young separated refugees. Almost all young separated refugees are housed in inappropriate accommodation. In some cases this raises child protection

concerns. Young separated refugees reported that social services were often unable to help them with their problems. 58% had no named social worker. Standards varied widely between different social service teams. Young separated refugees prioritised the need for better access to appropriate education, in particular English language courses. Many 16 - 17 year olds have no access to education; some under 16s were not attending school full-time. Many young separated refugees, although physically healthy and with good healthcare access, are suffering the combined effects of home country trauma and loss, and isolation and boredom in the UK. (source: <http://www.icar.org.uk/?lid=4397>).

Research conducted nationally throws up a number of key themes in relation to the impact of dispersal managed by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS - a government office) including the impact of destitution, housing, health, mental health, and education needs. The literature provides evidence of fragmented services, serious language and communication issues, a need for orientation and information about the dispersal area for new arrivals, and emerging tensions between established and new arrival communities. The latter appears to be fuelled by perceived differential access to limited resources.

Certainly, it can be argued that the phenomenon of humiliation is expressed in acts, processes, feelings and institutions at local, regional and national level when we examine through ethnographic methods the experiences of those seeking a place of safety, settlement and belonging. This phenomenon is embedded in the practices, processes and institutions that make up the network of agencies involved in dealing with immigration. As I complete this chapter a national newspaper documents the case of a Zimbabwean refugee, the victim of rape and violence, who is the target of

sexual bullying and exploitation by an immigration officer based in the IND (Immigration and Nationality Directorate) at Croydon, who has demanded sex in exchange for help processing her asylum claim.

Governance in relation to the asylum-migration nexus appears to be in a state of crisis that includes extending the processes of humiliation experienced by new arrivals to include the enforced lowering of a person or group through a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honor or dignity.

Re-imagining the asylum-migration nexus through a politics of representation

How can we address these processes of ‘othering’ and subjugation? How can we foster processes of dignity and egalization in our institutions, policies and practices towards people seeking safety?

New arrivals in communities impact upon the richness of social and cultural diversity. Integration (settlement) via supporting micro community development and fostering routes across diversity is a key theme of much of the work conducted in the UK in this area by mutli-agency fora, local and regional integration strategies and academic and policy oriented research.

We need innovative methodologies to analyse the new governance, the dynamics of forced migration, humiliation, and processes of exile, displacement and belonging. In this chapter I argue that combining arts based methods with ethnographic methods is one route to facilitating transformation in this area. More specifically, I will talk about the contribution that ‘ethno-mimesis’ (O’Neill 2001) can make under the rubric of

PAR. I developed the concept of ethno-mimesis⁷ in the process of imagining a methodological process that might bring together sociology (ethnographic social research) with artistic methods – creative art processes in challenging and changing sexual and social inequalities –towards social justice. Ethno-mimesis (a combination of ethnographic work and artistic re-presentations of the ethnographic developed through participatory action research) is a process and a practice, but it is ultimately rooted in principles of equality, democracy, and freedom, as well as what Jessica Benjamin (1993) describes (drawing on Hegel, Kant, and Adorno) as a dialectic of mutual recognition.

In a recent article O'Neill and Harindranath (2006) explore the use and importance of taking a biographical approach to conducting participatory action research (PAR) with asylum seekers and refugees in order to better understand lived experiences of exile and belonging; contribute to the important field of Biographical Sociology; provide a

⁷ Following Adorno, 'mimesis' does not simply mean naive imitation, but rather feeling, sensuousness, and spirit in critical tension to constructive (instrumental) rationality; reason; the 'out-there' sense of our being in the world. Mimesis is not to be interpreted as mimicry but rather as relationally deeper – as sensuous knowing. Taussig understands 'mimesis as both the faculty of imitation and the deployment of that faculty in sensuous knowing' (1993, 68). Ethno mimesis is both a practice (a methodology) and a process aimed at illuminating inequalities and injustice through sociocultural research and analysis; but it also seeks to envision and imagine a better future based on dialectic of mutual recognition, congruence, care, and respect for human rights, cultural citizenship, and democratic processes.

safe space for stories to be told; and in turn for these stories to feed in to policy and praxis.

Recovering and re-telling people's subjectivities, lives and experiences is central to attempts to better understand our social worlds with a view to transforming these worlds.....Biographical work re-presented poetically, visually as well as textually can help to illuminate the necessary mediation of autonomous individuality and collective responsibility. (O'Neill and Harindranath 2006:49)

The authors also ask how do we come to understand the lived experience of 'asylum', exile and processes of belonging in contemporary western society? They answer by offering examples such as the mediated images and narratives of mass media institutions; advocacy groups and networks; and academic research. Moreover, the authors argue that the media politics of asylum can be interpreted through the weaving together of legal, governance and media narratives/messages for general consumption. Examples are given such as 'the relentless repetition and overemphasis of precisely those images that reinforce particular stereotypes and a failure to source more diverse images to illustrate the many other aspects of the asylum issue'.

Bailey and Harindranath (2005:28) illustrate that in media representations there often takes place a 'discussion of policy issues in an outwardly reasonable language, but one using words and phrases that are calculated to carry a different message to the target audience' (Bailey and Harindranath, 2005: 28). The asylum seeker is represented as an undesirable alien, occasionally represented as a possible threat to national sovereignty and security. This appears to be humiliating at the level of lived experience, re-presentation and embedded in the institutional processes of media production.

The combination of the biographical and visual can be potentially powerful in providing alternative re-presentations and challenging such limited and limiting imaginings in relation to individuals, groups and micro communities and that may ultimately impact upon practice and policy.

Participatory action research and artistic/visual methodologies can create a reflectively safe space for dialogue, thinking through issues, and representing the voices of refugees and asylum seekers that speak of loss, mourning, shame and humiliation as well as mutual recognition and the importance of publicness/public sharing for democratization and egalization.

Participatory, creative methodologies also help to counter processes of 'postemotionalism' that Stefan Mestrovic (1997) writes about in his work and that may underpin the contradictory approaches to asylum-migration taken by the new labour government. Mestrovic writes about how in contemporary 'me dominated' (*Western*) society rooted in consumption and commodification our emotions lose their genuineness. Thus, we reach a state of 'compassion' fatigue and cannot/ or choose not to connect with the pain and suffering of others. So, in relation to forced migration and the plight of people we turn over the page or reach for the remote control to switch off the images or words.

Fig 1. Insert map of the camp

The image above [fig 1] helps the observer/participant to engage with the flesh and blood young people whose lives were transformed by war in Bosnia. Two young men re-present their memories of the refugee camp, of living in cramped containers, of land mines, guns and bombs; all symbols of their lived experiences. The inclusions of

a walkman and toy car provide symbols of their life before the war and they reveal their ordinariness as young people who, like their British counterparts, had access to toys, technology and music. The inclusion of these images was a direct resistance to the way they were defined by some of their peers at school as ‘peasants’. Just as the images below [fig 2, 3 and 4] are representative of a peaceful family oriented childhood devastated by the gathering forces of war and humiliation. The young woman’s family and life were turned upside down, forced into hiding, shunned by friends and neighbours, they eventually reached safety in a UN refugee camp in Croatia and were sent to England under the Bosnia Programme in the mid 1990’s. In figure 5, the young woman’s life in England is marked by the letters from family and friends in other countries, representing her life as part of a transnational community/network – but also the joy of surviving of being alive is present here too in the shiny newness of the image.

Insert vernessa’s images – figs 2,3.4.5

Shierry Nicholzen (2002) draws comparisons with postemotionalism (Mestrovic) and normotic illness (Bollas). In her reading of Mestrovic she says emotions ‘lose their genuineness and become quasi emotions. The emotional spectrum becomes limited and individual emotions blurred’. In defining ‘normotic illness’ Shierry states that for the normotic individual subjectivity recedes and the person experiences him/herself more as a commodity object - describing flatness of emotions and an absence of affective links between people and in relationships.

Nicholzen (2002) further develops the analysis by drawing on Adorno to argue that normotic illness and postemotionality cannot be understood separately from war.

Death-dealing violence and social domination are the agents of the destruction of experience, and thus inextricably linked to the phoniness and propaganda quality of postemotional society- not the war of the Good Americans a vs Bad Germans, but rather the inextricable presence of killing and war-making in the society of domination. (p11)

To counter postemotionalism and the administered society (in our lived experience but also in building, creating our social worlds) the interrelation between thinking, feeling, and doing is crucial (Tester 1995). Moreover, the interplay between critical thought, artistic praxis, and social action is one source of resistance to and transformation of the disempowering and reductive social and psychic processes that Mestrovic (1997) speaks about so clearly in his work.

In the process of developing intertextual research with refugees and asylum seekers, it is important to counter the forces of humiliation and shame by helping to open up multiple, practical spaces for new arrivals, asylum seekers, refugees, economic migrants to speak for themselves. This work, as a work in progress, as 'micrology,' aims to create intertextual social knowledge as ethno-mimesis (O'Neill 2001; 2004) and can help us avoid accepting reified versions of reality , re-presents the complexity of lived experience and lived relations as a counter impulse to 'postemotionalism'. The research also supports processes of community development (social regeneration, social renewal) and cultural citizenship in collaboration with the individuals and groups.

In PAR with Bosnian and Afghan communities life history narratives, biographies were re-presented in visual and poetic form. The participants in the research are the co-creators of the research. The life story narratives and photographs produced re-

present three key themes that emerged from the life stories of those involved in the research⁸:

1. Experiences before the war—dislocation marked by post communist citizenship in Yugoslavia that reconstituted citizenship on a kinship or community basis, that is, for the Serb leader only Serbs were allowed citizenship and the protection of law.
2. Experiences during the war—displaced and abstracted from history, citizenship, and the law, humiliated, separated from families and friends—living in refugee camps, and for some, concentration camps.
3. Experiences of living in the UK—relocating and rebuilding lives and diasporic communities

The research is both transgressive and regressive. Working together with the Bosnians in the Midlands through participatory action research (PAR) proved to be transgressive across three levels of praxis. The first level is textual, performed through documenting their life stories as testimony to the humiliation, suffering, and genocide they encountered at the hands of the government, army, police, employers, hospitals, medics, and former friends and neighbours. The second level is visual, performed through the production of art forms to re-present their life stories with the help of freelance artists, saying the unsayable. The third level combines the visual and textual elements shared with others – audiences in community spaces, gallery spaces, civic centres and universities, and supports and fosters dialogue, understanding and processes of community development.

⁸ See O’Neill (2004) ‘Global Rights (Human) Rights, Citizenship and the Law’ in Cheng, S [ed] Law, Justice and Power: between reason and will California: Stanford University Press

Challenging and resisting dominant images and stereotypes of refugees and asylum seekers and making this work available to as wide an audience as possible can also serve to raise awareness, as well as educate and empower individuals and groups.

Dominant images and stereotypes of refugees include those of victim, passive, and dependent and do not reflect the courage or resistance, as well as the need for building self-esteem, self-identity, and cultural identity, in the face of tragedy and loss (see Harrell-Bond 1999; Adleman 1999).

The PAR project with the Bosnians (funded by AHRB) proved to be both critical and reflexive. By both narrativizing and re-presenting/reimagining history and lived experience the vital importance of opportunities for social renewal, for creating citizenship, for re-imagining identities and communities against the backdrop of British law (and at local level the mediated structures and processes of statutory and voluntary organisations both horizontally and vertically) emerged. The role and purpose of PAR, the vital role of the arts in processes of social inclusion, the civic role and responsibility of the university and the vital importance for creating safe spaces for dialogue that might support processes of restorative justice and reconciliation were also explored.

In summary, there is clearly an urgent need to develop interventionary strategies based on collective responsibility and what Benhabib (1992) has called a 'civic culture of public participation and the moral quality of enlarged thought (1992, 140) in relation to work in the area of understanding diaspora/transnational communities and identities, circuits of migration. How can ethno-mimesis address this?

The experiences of the people concerned must be listened to and acknowledged, and advocacy networks developed to operationalize their voices through participatory action research. Recovering and retelling people's subjectivities, lives, and

experiences is central to attempts to better understand our social worlds with a view to transforming these worlds (see O'Neill and Harindranath 2006). Such work reveals the resistances, strengths, and humour of people seeking asylum, as well as knowledge of and a better understanding of the legitimation and rationalization of power, domination, and oppression.

Drawing on Shierry NicholSEN's work, the photographs presented here have the capacity to arouse our compassion while not letting us forget that what we are seeing is socially constructed meaning. Through re-presenting the unsayable, the images help to 'pierce' us, bringing us into contact with reality in ways that we cannot forget—ways that counter the 'postemotionalism' of contemporary 'me' dominated society that Mestrovic (1997) details so carefully in his work.

Within the context of the work of the humiliation and human dignity network research undertaken using participatory and visual methods envisions/imagines a renewed social sphere for asylum seekers and people seeking asylum and refugees as global citizens, with our eyes firmly fixed on the 'becoming' of equality, freedom, and democracy, through processes of social justice, cultural citizenship, egalization and mutual recognition and renewed social and public policies - in the spheres of polity, economy, and culture. PAR as ethno-mimesis is both a practice and a process aimed at illuminating inequalities and injustice through socio-cultural research and analysis. In addition, it also seeks to envision and imagine a better future based upon a dialectic of mutual recognition, ethical communication, and respect.

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