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Corporeal Conjunctures
No-w-here

Failed asylum seekers and
the senses of the international

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Heartfelt acknowledgements

This work is about bodily points of contact. It is marked with loss, displacement, joyous encounters, laughter, overwhelming happiness, grief, sadness, gnawing insecurities and uncertainties both concretely and figuratively. In other words, life has gone its course containing both turns that I would have preferred not to take, and ones that have turned out to be even more pleasant than expected, even though in unexpected ways. In the midst of life, I have both taken asylum and felt imprisoned by this project that now lies in front of my eyes. It has been an exhaustive process, but looking back I cannot be but happy of all the places it has taken me, all the people I have met because of it and the relations it has enabled me to form.

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At home, May 2012,

Eeva Puumala

Abstract

One of the greatest fears among nation-states continues to be the loss of control over their borders. Such a fear reflects the fact that sovereignty and the idea of a common national home are naturalised as the normative features of the political structures of our time. The borders, boundaries and limitations orchestrated within the international bear concrete effects on people's possibilities to enact themselves politically and are central to imagining what political life can and might be about. These borders are instituted to reduce people's possibility to constitute themselves as political agents and claim access to socio-economic services and goods in a particular community. In this research the functioning of the border is investigated through the institution of political asylum. It is claimed that the asylum procedure with its practices of categorisation transforms the moving body into a site where political relations are reproduced.

The empirical focus of this work is on failed asylum seekers in Finland. This research takes its cue from ethnographic fieldwork in three reception centres and the detention unit and interviews with failed asylum seekers and a variety of asylum professionals. With the conceptual help of Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophy of carnation, this work explores how failed asylum seekers, through their movements and acts of relating, open space for imagining political agency beyond territorially separated and ontologically fixed identities. The Nancian ontology of the body enables studying political relations without remaining captive to the dichotomous logic of sameness/alterity, identity/otherness and inside/outside. In fact, the experience of seeking asylum bears with it a sense of a history that cannot be totally owned by or reduced to an individual subject, and therefore this work is best characterised as an exploration into the ontological relationalities between selves and others.

Asylum seekers both challenge and are challenged by what 'we' think a good and happy community is. In a conventional approach on political community, identifying with a nation makes people individuals and gives them a place of reference from which to act. We, then, end up with the idea that all people in Finland should embrace the 'common' culture, which is already given and somehow stable. With their moving bodies failed asylum seekers complicate the limits between places and disrupt the notion of political life as something that takes place either between fixed insides and outsides or within stable communities. The moving body undermines the spatial regime in which different expressions of what it means to lead a political life and be a human are flattened out and obscured by a vocabulary of security, organisation and efficiency.

Through the limits embedded in the modern spatiotemporal logic this work

is framed conceptually under the international. Instead of merely criticising this logic the work set out to explore the relations with and through which it expects us to talk about the possibilities of political life. By engaging with the failed asylum seekers' voices, movements and their sensuous experiences this work creates new frameworks for a discussion on what belonging, displacement and being out of place mean and what their relation to political life is. While some senses of the international are produced at the border, in their daily lives the failed asylum seekers contest those senses and expose alternative ones. The relationality that characterises existence guides us towards an understanding of the international as a sphere of bodies that are with one another and that strive to surpass their artificial separation.

Tiivistelmä

Rajakontrollin menettäminen on edelleen yksi kansallisvaltioiden keskeisimmistä huolenaiheista. Ajatus suvereniteetista ja yhteisestä kansallisesta kodista ovat juurtuneet syvälle oman aikamme poliittisiin rakenteisiin. Rajat, rajoitukset ja rajanvedot, jotka luonnehtivat kansainvälistä tilana, ulottavat vaikutuksensa ihmisten mahdollisuuksiin toimia poliittisesti ja siten ne näyttelevät suurta roolia siinä, miten ja millaiseksi me ymmärrämme poliittisen elämän. Tässä tutkimuksessa rajojen ja rajanvetojen kysymyksiä tarkastellaan turvapaikanhakijoiden kokemusten kautta. Työ lähtee liikkeelle oletuksesta, että turvapaikkaprosessi kaikkine kategorisoinnin käytäntöineen muovaa turvapaikanhakijan kehosta paikan, jossa poliittisia suhteita tuotetaan ja luodaan uudelleen.

Tutkimuksen empiirinen fokus on Suomessa vaille turvapaikkaa jääneissä, joita haastateltiin säilöönottoyksikössä sekä kolmessa eri vastaanottokeskuksessa. Tämän lisäksi tutkimukseen haastateltiin eri viranomaistahoja. Käsitteellisesti työ juontaa Jean-Luc Nancyn ruumiillisuuden filosofiasta, jonka avulla työssä tarkastellaan vaille turvapaikkaa jääneiden toimijuutta äänen, liikkeen ja kehollisten kokemusten ilmentämänä. Tämän viitekehyksen kautta kyseinen tutkimus pohtii mahdollisuuksia käsitteellistää poliittista toimijuutta tavalla, joka ei juonna territoriaalisesti ja ontologisesti sidotuista identiteetin muodoista. Nancylainen ruumiin ontologia mahdollistaakin poliittisten suhteiden tarkastelun uusintamatta dikotomioita kuten identiteetti/toiseus, samankaltaisuus/vieraus tai sisä-/ulkopuoli. Tutkimuksessa osoitetaan, että turvapaikan hakemiseen liittyy historiakäsitys, jota ei voi pelkistää yksittäiseen subjektiin, minkä vuoksi parhaiten kyseistä tutkimusta luonnehtii pyrkimys tarkastella ontologista suhteellisuutta itsen ja toisen välillä.

Turvapaikanhakijat haastavat vallitsevan ymmärryksen poliittisesta yhteisöstä, sillä usein vasta kansakuntaan identifioitumisen nähdään muovaavan ihmisistä yksilöitä ja antavan heille viitekehyksen, josta käsin toimia. Tämä ajatusmalli johtaa ymmärrykseen, että kaikkien Suomessa asuvien ihmisten olisi omaksuttava 'yhteinen' kulttuuri, joka on ennalta olemassa ja vakaa. Turvapaikatta jääneet kuitenkin tekevät paikkojen välisistä rajanvedoista monimutkaisempia ja siten murentavat käsityksen poliittisesta elämästä jonain, joka tapahtuu vakiintuneiden sisä- ja ulkopuolten välillä tai vakaiden yhteisöjen sisällä. Kehollinen liike vie pohjan tilalta, jossa poliittisen elämän moninaiset ilmiasut on pelkistetty turvallisuuden, järjestyksen sekä tehokkuuden teemoihin.

Erilaisten rajanvetojen ja rajojen tematiikan kautta 'kansainvälisen' käsite kulkee punaisena lankana tämän työn lävitse. Sen sijaan, että rajojen politiikkaa pelkästään kritisoitaisiin, tutkimuksessa kartoitetaan niitä suhteita, joiden välityksellä tämä politiikka olettaa poliittisen elämän mahdollisuuksista puhuttavan. Siten tutkimus luo vaihtoehtoisia tapoja keskustelulle siitä, mitä

kuuluminen, paikattomuus ja pakkomuutto merkitsevät sekä mikä niiden suhde poliittiseen elämän rajoihin ja mahdollisuuksiin on. Vaikka osa kansainvälisen tunnusta, mielestä ja merkityksestä syntyykin kansallisvaltioiden rajoilla, niin vaille turvapaikkaa jääneiden kertomuksissa myös muunlaiset rajapinnat tulevat merkityksellisiksi kansainvälisyyttä ja kansainvälistä pohdittaessa. Kun poliittisen toimijuuden ja yhteisön ilmentymiä tarkastellaan ihmisten kanssakäymisessä, paljastuu kansainvälinen paitsi valtioiden väliseksi tai ylivaltiolliseksi poliittiseksi rakenteeksi, myös prosessiksi, jota eri tavoin kategorisoidut kehot muokkaavat ja luovat omissa suhteissaan.

Preface

Failed asylum is a puzzling topic. It can be conceived as a struggle, a political question, a methodological/epistemological issue or an ontological challenge and opening (cf. de Genova 2002: 420–431). Informed by the first and last mentioned aspects, my work thinks of failed asylum in terms of *a politico-corporeal struggle*, which enables the creative study of the possibilities of political life within the international[1]. This means exploring the corporeal conjunctures no-w-here. Or, put otherwise, the way in which an engagement with failed asylum seekers exposes the international as a sensuous space where self and other, inside and outside can no longer be conceived as separate categories. This work thus evokes a particularly sensuous understanding of the international as well as of the modern subject.

In this work, the principle of sovereignty is not strictly limited to the state, but functions at multiple and interconnected levels simultaneously. Sovereignty is understood as a spatiotemporal construction that constrains our notions of politics and political life, where they can be found and what forms they might take. I claim that our political imagination is being challenged in its ways of ordering, practicing and thinking about the international and those relations we call international. The issues relating to asylum seekers are one example of the deficiencies in the spatiotemporal logic upon which these relations were originally built (see Squire 2009; also Walker 1993; 2009; Doty 1999; Brown 2002; Cavarero 2002; Inayatullah & Blaney 2004). Indeed, words such as 'nation', 'people', 'sovereignty' and 'community' leak like cracked vessels, which again points out the urgency

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[1] In political studies asylum and migration have been debated in relation to peace, security and international policy-making by connecting arms sales, unfair trade practices or other economic, environmental and political reasons with the production of refugees and migrants. These approaches typically tackle the challenge of the moving body from a problem-oriented standpoint. Within International Relations most prominent analyses have emerged from critical security studies, discourse theory and governmental approaches, lately to be coupled with political sociology and the politics of mobility. See e.g. Huysmans 1995; 2006; Den Boer 1995; Bigo 2002; 2007; Ceyhan & Tsoukala 2002; Nyers 2003; Dauphinee & Masters 2006; Rajaram & Grundy-Warr 2004: 2007; Squire 2009 and Nyers 2008a; b; Aradau & Huysmans & Squire 2010; Squire 2010.

of thinking anew about the 'international' (also Nancy 1990; Van Den Abbeele 1997: 12–13). Conventional methods of governing, regulating and administering increased forms of mobility are in trouble, which gives rise to the invention of new technologies at borders and introduces regulations and spaces of exception. The challenge can be conceived as both a practical one and a philosophical one, but ultimately it is nothing less than a question of life and death – in a literal sense.

Nevertheless, my work pertains that the body beyond accommodation is not a passive surface on which international relations writes a political saga. The body, with multiple strategies, writes itself on those relations and suggests a different sense of the international. I am, then, interested in how the body mediates and exposes our political existence in the world and the bearings this has on our notions of the international.

Experiential and conceptual points of departure

Eeva: And then you had a B permit [a temporary residence permit]. For how long did the...?

Tahir: Appeal?

Eeva: Mm.

Tahir: When I received the B permit, I appealed right after that one month. It took some thirteen months. [...] I go to court like, was it 16th November, year 2006. And then it takes three months and then I got the continuous [residence] permit.

Eeva: I see. Well, how about, why were you given the B at first and then it was changed? Was there..., or what do you think?

Tahir: [sighs] Yeah, they say that then the situation in Afghanistan had ameliorated and my travel, how I told there, it was all like unbelievable and you cannot trust it and then the reason why I am here, they didn't believe it. They didn't believe, and said that you're lying here and that's why I appealed and the court found out how things are. [...]

Eeva: Okay, right. And how did you feel, when they said that you are being unbeliev... or that they do not believe you and your story?

Tahir: Well, it is really very difficult. I recall when I received the B decision and there it said that you're lying. I wasn't sad for having the B, I was just so terribly sad when it said that you're lying. It was very difficult for me to accept this answer, because [...] I have, with my own eyes, and they say that you're lying. It is a very difficult thing for us. [...] It was extremely difficult, that I tell about this thing. And it was difficult with the mike, and when another person said that you're lying. It was really difficult, terribly difficult. But luckily that time has passed. It passed, but was really difficult. I think the B decision is very difficult. It is like, the B, I think they are bullying people.

(Interview with Tahir, my translation, April 2007)

Tahir's is not simply a personal story of a failed asylum seeker, but it also connects the body to sovereign power in legal, technological and political terms. The story resonates within the sphere of the international because the political institution of asylum evokes a relationship between a sovereign state and a system of states[2]. Moreover, Tahir's is a story of the sense of the international, or the politics and relations of the international as they intertwine with the body. Thus understood, the sense of the international refers to *the meanings* that the failed asylum seekers give to their lives in the space between nations, to *the sensory perceptions* that this experience arises and also to *the rationality* according to which international relations function[3]. In fact, by engaging with the senses of the international, the present work sets out to explore some of the corporeal and bodily dimensions of this functioning. In order to accomplish this, it combines the experiences of failed asylum with Jean-Luc Nancy's ontology of the body.

For Nancy, 'the political' figures an existential condition, which can manifest itself and be practiced in innumerable ways, through various relations. Inspired and informed by Nancy's thought, my collage seeks to think the meaning and content of the political body within international relations and, thus, to reimagine the possibilities of political life within International Relations, the discipline within which this study is situated (for a more detailed account see Piece II). Nancy's notion of the ontological body, in turn, signals an appreciation of bodies sharing an existential relation with each other, which makes the political a shared and relational space created by the withness – plurality – of all human beings. To be more accurate, in Nancian thought the political is an event; it is something that happens between people. With the adopted focus, my work departs from analy-

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[2] Asylum is governed and regulated not only nationally, but also regionally and internationally. The international basis of the political institution of asylum lies in three documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see the United Nations 1948), the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (see the Geneva Convention 1951) and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (see the New York Protocol 1967). All asylum applications are evaluated against the Geneva Convention. However, in the EU the main goal for asylum policies has become the control of what is termed 'illegal immigration' instead of more humanitarian aspirations. In 1999, in Tampere, the EU member states decided to create a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and increase cooperation with the countries of origin. By May 2004 the first stage of the CEAS – namely the adoption of common minimum standards – was completed. It included determining the state responsible for reviewing the asylum claim (the Dublin II Regulation), agreeing on common standards for a fair and efficient asylum procedure and common minimum conditions for the reception of asylum seekers as well as harmonising the rules that apply to refugee recognition (also Uçarer 2006: 230). In fact, many foundational agreements of the EU, e.g. the Schengen Agreement and the Dublin Convention (together with the Dublin II Regulation), were signed in order to harmonise migration policies (see also Council of the European Union 2000; 2003; Commission of the European Communities 2004; 2006; 2007).

[3] In my writing the terms "failed asylum seekers" and "the failed asylum seekers" appear side by side. When I refer specifically to the interviewed failed asylum seekers, I use the definite article. However, when I understand my findings to carry potential beyond the limited number of interviewees, I will denote this with omitting the definite article and write about "failed asylum seekers" generally.

ses that reduce failed asylum seekers to *homines sacri* (Agamben 1998), people without political power and voice. Instead, the suggested focus means exploring 'the political' as an ontological relation that we all live on a daily basis, in ways that transcend rigid borders and national identities. Political communities become conceptualised as fluid, relational and overlapping.

In a similar vein with the political, I resort to a specific understanding of the international and in fact the two concepts are closely related in my writing. The scholars of IR are well aware of the fact that the disciplinary space of IR is stratified with particularistic notions of the international (see Sylvester 2004: 59; Sylvester 2007). This state of affairs is reflected through various approaches to the concept: Christine Sylvester (2007) points towards the withering of the international, Jenny Edkins and Maja Zehfus (2005) advocate generalising it, Phillip Darby (2003) seeks to reconfigure it, while Xavier Guillaume (2007) unveils it. Jacques Derrida (1994) has used the term "the new international", and Rob Walker (2006b) "the modern international". It seems then an understatement to conclude that the whole notion of the international is being debated, even to the extent that Didier Bigo and Rob Walker (2007) have contended that the concept poses a problem for political sociology.

The notion of the international is especially tricky because it enables claims of both particularity – i.e. territoriality, sovereignty and localisation – and universality – i.e. cosmopolitanism, commonality and globalisation. In this work, the international is neither reducible to "between nations" or "inter/among states", nor expandable to "supranational", "the world" or "global". It penetrates both the local and the global, including also the private, the individual and the bodily. The international is not only personal (cf. Enloe 2000), but also corporeal and carnal (cf. e.g. Shapiro 2003; Nordstrom 2004; Penttinen 2008). In fact I claim that conceiving failed asylum in terms of a corporeal and relational struggle enables engagement with the possibilities of political life in a way that transcends the logic of both particularism and universalism in the spheres of the international. Instead of focusing on either one of the trends singularly, considering political life through failed asylum seekers' agentive potential requires that attention be paid to *the relation* between diversity and commonality (cf. also Walker 2009: 29).

As mentioned previously, this work is inspired by Nancy's thought and his philosophical views have led me to redefine my understanding of the notion of the international (see Piece II). The international, in the forthcoming pages, represents a political construct – an idea – embracing both community and the world. It is a historical event, or to be more precise, political history taking place and being created through the 'togetherness of otherness' (cf. Wurzer 1997: 92). Within such an imaginary, the international is not a static concept, but an ever-unfolding relational process and a political project. As such it unfolds both in terms of reality and

possibility. The real effects of this project are characterised by the logic of inside/outside, which also frames IR as political theory (see Walker 1993), and on the other hand, the possibility of a different international is reflected in people's lives and in their actions that resist being categorised in terms of the above mentioned divide. Within this frame of interpretation, the sense of the international cannot be completely disclosed, but both *the reality of possibility* and *the possibility of reality* of the international need to be taken into consideration. In other words, a change is possible, but yet not affirmative. This dialectics flows through my writing.

A curriculum for reading

Not only is the phenomenon of failed asylum a puzzling issue, but as such it also evokes a complex web of political relations. Ultimately my wish to write a comprehensive account of failed asylum urged me to construct this work as a collage. A collage, in Christine Sylvester's (2007: 562) terms, enables one to look basically at one thing from slightly different angles. The various angles deepen our understanding of the 'thing' in question and its meanings for the international. In exploring the senses of the international, the present work weaves together elements and viewpoints that often go their separate ways. More precisely, this effort involves bringing the body, the international and the political together by thinking about those corporeal conjunctures that failed asylum seekers expose.

Such a research design means that, for me, the role of theory and theorising within IR is not that of explaining, but rather understanding (cf. Cox 1996: 88; Hamati-Ataya 2011: 268–272; Jackson 2011: ch. 1 and 2). Explanatory research emphasises 'facts' and objectivity, whilst the latter accounts for 'values' and normativity. In terms of theory my collage avails itself to a certain (marginal) genre within IR. Perhaps it is best positioned within post-structuralism, but at heart it cuts through a number of debates and disciplinary discussions and also turns to other disciplines – such as philosophy, psychology and sociology – in order to be faithful to the spirit of a collage.

My work as a whole is based on a strong belief that the discipline of IR is not separate from the world of lived international relations, and therewith, both IR and ir are, willy-nilly, ethical issues (cf. Smith 2004). This stance makes it possible to characterise my work as 'dissident' or 'critical' from the perspective of mainstream IR. Undoubtedly this collage shares important points of connection with the calls for "thinking other-wise", "speaking the language of exile" and exploring "patterns of difference", that started emerging in IR since the late 1980s (e.g. Ashley & Walker 1990a; b; Der Derian 1990; George & Campbell 1990; Bleiker 2001; Huang 2001; Inayatullah & Blaney 2004; Weber 2010; Hamati-Ataya 2011).

Methodologically and epistemologically this work takes part in the move to bio-
graphical methods in social sciences (e.g. Wengraf, Chamberlayne & Bornat 2000)
and to a lesser extent it has been inspired by the aesthetic turn within IR (e.g.
Bleiker 2003; Holden 2003).

The question that ultimately drives my research is: *how does the failed asylum
seekers' agentive body politic affect understandings of the possibilities and sites of
political life within the international?* Theoretically this signals exploring the ways
in which the body is related to the international as a 'singularly plural spacing' and
also how the international forms as a result of the compearance of bodies (for a
more specific account see Piece II). In Nancy's philosophy the notion of spacing
(*espacement*) is a fundamental ontological concept, which denotes the intertwining
of time and space. It signifies the taking place of being, which opens up spaces in
which presence is born. Therefore, spacing is inherent in the existence of a human
body. (See e.g. Nancy 1992; 2008: 19–25; also Heikkilä 2007: 72–77.)

The notion of compearance (*la comparution*) also derives from the Nancian
philosophy where it is understood as an existential condition for every appearance
(see Nancy 1992; also Devisch 2011: 10–12). It suggests that we exist only with
one another. Furthermore, the ontology that arises from the notion of compearance
places emphasis on punctuations, encounters and crossings (Fischer 1997: 34).
Taking cue from Nancy's thought, the theoretical focus of this work will explore
the political implications of all appearance and being-in-the-world taking place as
compearance and being therefore inherently relational by nature.

Empirically I focus on the sensuous, bodily and experiential ways through
which failed asylum seekers participate in political practices and initiate political
relations. This means exploring the political prominence of failed asylum seekers'
presence. I am curious about the ways in which the body's political agency – its ex-
pressions of its singular plural condition – can help to imagine political existence
in terms of 'with being' (cf. Edkins 2005b; Vaughan-Williams 2007; Coward 2009;
also Smith 1992). Different arenas and audiences bring forth the variety in the
failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic as it articulates their presence no-w-
here with regard to various institutions, collectivities and human beings. Through
the establishment of relations that exceed or interrupt sovereign power, their agen-
tive body politic challenges the spatiotemporal logic on which the international has
been built. And yet such a body politic does not totally escape or evade the effects
of that logic.

As any collage, this work comprises smaller Pieces, which resonate with one
another with varying degrees of discord[4]. The various Episodes and Pieces form
intersections and meeting points between theory and empirical material, the inter-

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[4] I must emphasise that the stories, voices and bodies that now have been splintered into small-
er units offer insight into all of the pieces no matter where they figure (cf. Butalia 1998: 18–19).

national and the local, the body and the political (cf. Shapiro 2002). But let me now briefly introduce how the Pieces unravel the research question.

In Piece I, I outline the methodological and epistemological bases for the argument that the failed asylum seekers speak beyond their own immediate experience (cf. Huynh 2007; Agier 2008). Piece II, in turn, will continue the task of outlining and discuss the theoretical and philosophical choices I have made during the research process. Both Pieces rely heavily on the empirical material as they seek to explain paths explored and yet not taken, as well as scrutinise roads taken and the conditions of my philosophical inquiry.

The first of the three thematic pieces, Piece III, takes up the questions of subjectivity and community through the failed asylum seekers' voice as a modality of their agency and discusses these voices as a way of positioning oneself in the world and with regard to Finnish policy-making (cf. Epstein 2010: 343). It will pave the way towards understanding the political potential that the failed asylum seekers bring to the surface in spite of the fragmentary nature of their agentive strategies. The Piece discusses both public and private deliberations as attempts to build relationalities towards others.

Piece IV, in turn, addresses mobility in terms of movement and the gestural. It discusses the international as a spacing, a spatiotemporal event, not as a fixed and determined environment for action. The Piece creates a sense of the failed asylum seekers being simultaneously perpetually mobilised and immobilised within the international (cf. Raj 2006: 517–518; Nayak & Selbin 2010: 98). Inspired by a Nancian account of space, it examines the way failed asylum seekers' bodies become limits, instead of these bodies simply coming up against borders. In addition to cross-border movement, the Piece addresses a much more subtle corporeal politics of mobility, and thus complicates the logic of – and a strict division between – inside/outside.

Piece V is the most abstract and experimental in tone. In engaging with the sensuous body, the Piece articulates a move from incarnation to carnation through acts of corporeal poetics. It thus seeks to think in terms of the political in (traumatic) stress, suffering and emotional pain, and argues for the relevance of the senses in International Relations. Explicit topics addressed are the failed asylum seekers' practices of self-harm and their 'relapses' to melancholy, silence and passivity.

The three thematic Pieces (Pieces III–V) explore political life at sites and in ways that tweak notions of separation and connection, which within IR are often fathomed in terms of the state or the modern system of states (cf. Walker 2009: ch. 2). They will thus illustrate the variety in the failed asylum seekers' political engagements in their daily lives. Each of these Pieces reorganises the relations and logic between the body and the international and suggests a different ontological order: one of carnation and compearance. This approach is inspired by Nancy's

writings, which I have found painfully beautiful and capable of opening something within my scholarly me. The Pieces are not designed to 'deepen' my analysis thus leading to unknown places and uncharted territories. Rather they function so as to scrutinise the multiplicity of those ways in which the political as a relational condition unfolds on and through the body deemed beyond both return and accommodation. Hence, these Pieces unravel the corporeal opening of the possibilities of political life within the international. To put it differently, together the three thematic Pieces expose the fragmentary nature of political life and the multiple practices through which it takes shape. One by one the focus of this collage will move from the public and intentional argumentation of one's political existence towards implicit, bodily and sensuous forms of agency, which nonetheless are always political.

The Episodes between the Pieces function so as to centre the failed asylum seekers' bodily struggle and bring forward how my own conceptions of IR, ways of doing IR and the focus of this work were challenged during fieldwork. With the various Episodes and Pieces I aim to illustrate how our selves, our perceptions of others and the world are shaped by political constellations collaged together in particular, but by no means unquestionable ways. The work will little by little move towards a more Nancian direction, from the politics of the international towards the political relations within the international.

The failed asylum seekers urge us to think of the international not as a static constellation, but as something that is constantly negotiated, debated, resisted and enacted in various ways simultaneously. In the course of my work the international becomes a singularly plural spacing: a matter of compearing bodies that cannot be reduced to an essentiality. There is always the possibility to start afresh, reverse the angle of observation and re-organise the parts in unexpected ways. In terms of International Relations this means exploring, besides matters of fact and reason, also the tactile and sensual.

Throughout the work I will relentlessly claim that the politico-corporeal struggle of failed asylum needs to be conceived as a possibility and an opening, which has consequences for IR both epistemologically and ontologically[5]. Nevertheless, I hope that my writing has not done away with the manifold forms of suffering and distress that accompany this struggle. Hopefully some of the sense of the incomplete will transfer to the reader.

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[5]Here it might be useful to define the concept of ontology. Patrick T. Jackson (2011: 28–29) distinguishes between scientific ontology and philosophical ontology. Scientific ontology refers to the act of explaining and understanding the world, whilst philosophical ontology denotes the ways in which we are connected to the world. To frame this differentiation in terms of my work, the former questions the relations we are talking about, while the latter questions also those relations we are talking in and therefore it comes closer to my ambitions.

Episode 1

Shaken by the ethnographic experience

Anna, a counsellor at the reception centre, asks if I would help her to clear a room. The Nigerian man living in the room was taken into police custody for being a Dublin-hit[6]. This was two days previously, on Tuesday. By now he might have been transferred to the detention unit, if not turned back to Belgium.

We enter the room. The police have already collected his personal effects the day before. The first thing that catches my eye is a plate on the table. He did not even finish his meal before leaving. The tuna on the plate has dried around the edges. His reading glasses are on the table next to his books, which included the Holy Bible and a prayer book, his shoes lay on the floor, pictures of his loved ones decorate the wall and scattered around the desktop there are letters from and to his family: *"Dear dad, I'm writing you to ask a favour…"*, *"I hope that you would hold me in your heart until we can be together again…"* His CDs lay on the bedside table and some kind of official papers from his home country in the cupboard. Somebody has written the words "**DA BLOOD**" in thick capital letters on the wall. One out of the two cupboards is filled with food. He hadn't planned to be leaving so soon and so suddenly. My stomach turns when I think about what we are doing and why, that is the wider political context of our actions. I don't wish to be party to this, but I bite my lips and keep the black rubbish sack open as Anna stuffs his things into it.

We take only things that would go bad, such as opened groceries. Even so the black sack is filled halfway. I bet I look guilty when we walk down the corridor. We pass by a woman from Azerbaijan who sees us at work with rubber gloves, carrying that big black sack. She stands still, does not say a word but her eyes follow us. I sense she knows what we have been doing. Anna says that the residents will probably have nightmares for the rest of their lives, first of people going missing and then plastic sacks being carried down the corridors the morning after.

Outside, she heaves the sack into a rubbish container. When we get back to the office, we disinfect our hands – following the general procedure – and Anna phones the police to check whether the remaining personal items could be sent to the man. The police however

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[6]The provisions of the Dublin Convention introduced a system which assigns exclusive responsibility to contracting EU states for reviewing asylum claims and obliges them to recognise the negative decisions reached in another contracting state as final. (Also Uçarer 2006: 228.)

explain that he was returned to Belgium the previous day. Next Anna calls his legal representative, who is not aware of the situation. The lawyer is outraged by the police action and certain that the return would not have been enforceable in court, because the man has two minor children living in Finland.

I can sense a certain feeling of resentment rising in me, and I do not like it. I feel tired, hopeless, lost, empty, fed up, angry and glad I can go home (and yet the mark of this place does not easily leave me). I do not like these feelings as they make me sleepy, my limbs get heavy and start aching, and I get easily irritated.

(Field notes, 26th September 2006)

The paths that open with this Episode rely on the notion that there neither exists a common refugee experience that can be found, nor a refugee figure that can automatically and paradigmatically be recognised. Therefore, this work adopts various angles to explore the experience of displacement and those forms of political agency that take shape as a result of being out of place. Such a perspective explains the nomadism that characterises my writing throughout the work and that reveals the lack of foundation of some of the core concepts on which contemporary notions of the international have been built.

Informed by my bodily experiences, my work argues for the importance of taking note of the manifold bodies and diverse experience worlds behind administrative and categorical figures. It therewith highlights the fact that the meanings and content of political life are always ultimately negotiated between people, beyond state practices. Too often IR theories and asylum policies do not take note of their human dimension and leave the person faceless and nameless – as a statistic, a mere drop of the wider 'flow' of her/his 'kind'. And yet, in their lives and through their movements, people enact political potential that is not accounted for in the current political discourse or thought. This political ethnography is my "timid attempt at walking outside the line in spaces where Knowledge (capital K) is wielded as a tool to silence the voices of people fighting their marginalization" (Reyes Cruz 2008: 652). With my collage I seek to question the ontological foundations of the figure 'failed asylum seeker' and explore the political potential that rests in the body and in the relations the body enacts.

It is fair to state that the overall focus of this work stems from the field and, furthermore, that it has clear points of connection with the rather recent phenomenon of autoethnography within IR. Indeed, my ethnographic experiences shook me profoundly and guided me with my theoretical and methodological choices. Through my involvement in the kinds of politics and political practices that I object to, this work started moving in directions that I had not anticipated when planning this project. Situations that I was engaged in whilst doing the fieldwork made me

ponder the researcher's role, together with the way methodological choices affect what becomes perceived as knowledge or worth exploring. My own experiences of the lives that rejected asylum seekers led in reception centres were so overwhelming that finding and maintaining a research position became very difficult, at times impossible. The figure of the objective and securely positioned researcher, who always holds the field at a secure arm's length, maintains control and comes out untarnished, became a casualty of this work.

Fieldwork makes it hard to construct and maintain rigid categories. What becomes central is movement in its diverse forms: corporeal and incorporeal, voiced and non-verbal, physical and symbolic. Therewith, fieldwork may challenge not only the composition of the research but also the researching 'I' and the research process altogether. During the period of data collection I had to reflect carefully upon such questions as: What kind of power am I ready to accept and use in interviewing, doing participant observation and even in writing? What traces does power leave on the body, and what kind of traces do bodies leave on each other? How does the international – as a political project – mark us and how do our daily actions shape notions of the international?

Even though I began the research process with people and from the field, I soon noticed framing and categorising 'failed asylum' with disciplinary discussions and paradigms that were familiar to me. While listening to stories, memories and experiences that were exposed during my fieldwork, I had to find a respectful way of fitting these complex life experiences together with the theoretical debates within IR. However, whether I read official statements, guidelines, reports, studies, theories, or philosophy, I felt increasingly overwhelmed and bewildered. I felt I sacrificed the people who made my writing possible in the first place. I noticed I was writing more about and for the disciplinary IR community than I wanted to and than I felt comfortable with. My field experiences did not go together with the framework I had started to create. In many ways – and on multiple fronts – this work, then, is about struggles. There are my personal struggles within the discipline of IR, in the field and within myself, and then there is the failed asylum seeker's struggle for a normal life.

While it was incredibly difficult to get the research process started, it was sometimes far more strenuous to keep up the momentum. Weaving plotlines from bodily experience and claiming that these lines are not only a meaningful, but also an inseparable part of international relations has been a point of constant reflection. The first Piece of my collage dwells on these considerations and developments. It begins with the body and from the field, and only through them the Piece moves to connect the topic with IR. This choice results from the personal anxiety that my ethnographic experiences arouse in me, the discontent and difficulties that I experienced in linking (auto-)ethnography with the discipline and the importance of

establishing this connection. Even though it might create great personal anguish, there is value in leaving the ivory tower of theory and moving to improvised theory (see Cerwonka & Malkki 2007).

Piece I

Epistemological outlines: pro-face

Perhaps because I decided to ask the failed asylum seekers themselves how they conceived their state, it has not at any stage been easy to find a research position. When my own perceptions and knowledge-practices were fundamentally shaken by the ethnographic experience (see Episode 1), it is necessary to begin this work with methodological and epistemological reflection. Otherwise understanding the theoretical paths (not) taken is hard: the truth is that my research focus and questions changed drastically after entering the field.

Listening to and engaging with people's experiences, hopes, fears, memories and anxieties taught me a great deal about myself, my own prejudices, presuppositions and preconceptions. By starting with people and showing the fluidity of those categorisations on which also my writing relies, I hope to avoid incarcerating failed asylum seekers conceptually and instead give space for their own voices and agencies however complex and contingent they may be (cf. Soguk 1999: 8; Smith 1992). Failed asylum seekers define themselves, their identities and actions in their own terms. Because of this they challenge the ontology behind those border practices that have come to characterise the sphere of the international (cf. Nancy 2008: 5; also Said 1978: esp. 49–73).

This Piece points out that the political challenge that failed asylum seekers present is not one of people's right to have rights or them asking for recognition. The notion of recognition bears the element of being included to the dominant political imagery, which for failed asylum seekers is inadmissible and perhaps only perpetuates the hierarchical structures and the logic that penetrate the international. Instead, they demand that we respond to their presence (cf. Sullivan 2001: 103). Responding is not necessarily free of violence, but it implies an openness to change through critical self-reflection. From this starting point the first Piece of this work will provide a general methodological outline of failed asylum. This out-

line enables an exploration of the international and its politics as they unfold on the body and are unfolded through multiple bodily relations. In order to accomplish this goal, two questions require specific attention: *how to learn to read, listen and engage with the failed asylum seekers*, and *how, if at all, to situate the failed body in terms of the 'problem' of asylum?*

1.1. Failed asylum, failed asylum seekers and the 'international'

The purpose of my writing in this Piece is not to present my 'findings' or even to create a comprehensive analytical framework, which is implemented throughout this collage. Rather the epistemological attitude introduced here is reflected in the Episodes between the Pieces and develops and matures further in each Piece of the work. I aim to sketch a methodologically reflective reproduction or restructuring of my journey into the bodily politics of asylum and where this search has taken me. On the one hand, this signals an endeavour to fit political theory together with the material body and, on the other, an attempt to negotiate between my personal feelings and thoughts and the failed asylum seekers' expectations, hopes and experiences.

1.1.1.   *Failed asylum as a legislative and policy issue in Finland*

The political context of Tahir's story that was presented in the Preface dates back to the year 2004. Then the Finnish Aliens Act (Act 30.4.2004/301: section 51) introduced a temporary residence permit (the B) for asylum seekers who could not be returned, although no grounds for asylum or for the issue of a residence permit were discovered during the asylum process. The reasons prohibiting return were the lack of technical connections (flights) or travel documentation, health problems or that a state refused to take its citizen back.

The B was issued for one year at a time, and it could be given for a maximum of two years. If deportation still was impossible after that time, the person was entitled to a continuous residence permit (the A). In reality, most of the B permit holders got a continuous residence permit, since their countries of origin suffered from protracted conflicts. The well-meaning idea behind the permit was, on the one hand, to make sure that all people residing in Finland had a legally defined place in the society and, on the other, to avoid their total exclusion from the social support networks and systems (interview 9; also Asa 2009)[7]. The permit holders were en-

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[7] In Finland the basic principle of refugee politics (including asylum politics) is to affect the ground reasons of refugeeness, e.g. human rights violations, poverty and political crises. Finland has adopted

titled to a bed in a reception centre and received social assistance. Administrative-
ly, however, the permit was poorly designed. The section left too much room for
interpretation, and the permit was used much more widely than first anticipated[8].
Receiving the B meant limitations on the right to work during the first year, limited
access to education, the impossibility of family reunification, and having no right
to legal domicile to which many social security rights are connected[9]. All in all this
meant prolonged stays in the reception centres (cf. Act 9.4.1999/493).

In 2008 the Aliens Act was reformed, and by the year 2010 the B permit given
on the basis of the section 51 was rarely used. Before that a total of 672 persons,
mostly from Somalia, Iraq (Kurdistan) and Afghanistan, had received and lived
with this status. Yet the reform did not reduce the exclusionary tendency, but mere-
ly shifted it. The Finnish policies did not become more liberal, nor did it become
easier for arriving asylum seekers to claim their position, establish themselves as
political agents or find alternative ways of playing a part in the society. The 'prob-
lem' that these bodies presented the Finnish state with was not solved or put to rest.
Instead new restrictions concerning for instance working and the rights to social
security and family reunification were issued and new, stricter screening practices
were erected.

In addition to the B permit holders, rejected and detained asylum seekers repre-
sent another 'group' of failed asylum seekers in Finland. The only specific deten-
tion unit, with the capacity of a mere 40 people, was established in 2002. When
the facility is full or the geographical distance to the unit is long, people are held in
police custody at local police stations. In Finland, the three main reasons for deten-
tion are: a) a reasonable suspicion that the 'alien' might commit an offence, b) that
the person might hinder or prevent either the issue of a decision or the enforcement
of their removal from the country, or c) if the establishment or clarification of the

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in its politics three permanent solutions to the question of refugees. These principles are voluntary
return, local settlement and relocating refugees. (E.g. Työryhmän ehdotus hallituksen maahanmuut-
topoliittiseksi ohjelmaksi 2005: 34.)

[8] My approach differs significantly from Emma Haddad's (2008: 206–208). According to her in Eu-
rope where asylum continues to cause political tension and the number of applications lodged is
high, temporary protection can ease the fears of the public "convincing citizens that the arrangement
is not permanent and that the refugees will not be allowed to become a 'burden'". This way she sees
that this status, as it means that the individual will return 'home', can "provide a useful link between
non-refoulement and a durable solution" (also Kjaerum 1994). The temporary residence permit is
not equal to temporary protection, which applies to different kinds of situations of mass flight, but
common features do exist. (Cf. Uçarer 2006: 234.) The Finnish case shows that temporary tolerance
is not politically sustainable.

[9] Asylum seekers are allowed to start working three months after lodging their claim and work during
the asylum process. If granted the B one had to stop working, unless an appeal against the decision
was made. The second year of the permit did not entail any restrictions concerning work. In 2007, a
legislative proposal was launched, which ultimately gave the B permit holders the right to work also
during the first year. (Cf. Sisäasiainministeriö 2006.)

person's identity necessitates detention (see Act 30.4.2004/301: section 121; also Act 15.2.2002/116; cf. United Nations 1986). Every fourteen days the detention decision is judicially reviewed in the local civil Court (Act 30.4.2004/301: section 128).

It must be emphasised that not all rejected asylum seekers are detained and not all detainees are failed asylum seekers. A 'typical' detainee is a single man in his mid-20s from the Former Soviet Union, Nigeria, Ghana or the Congo. The criminality of detainees tends to be highly overstated in the Finnish media, and in reality most are several time Dublin-hits who have travelled around Europe for years. Many people come to the unit year after year. They might be using different names, but a set of matching prints in the Eurodac system gives them away. Over 80 per cent of the detainees are turned back or deported, mostly to other European countries. (Interview 8.) People I interviewed had been detained only after receiving a negative asylum decision, so at the time of the interview they were waiting for deportation/return[10], but yet hoped that their appeals would allow them to stay in Finland. At the time of my fieldwork the average detention time was around three weeks. If the detainee was not deported during that time, s/he was usually transferred to a reception centre. The material conditions in reception for detainees are similar to those at the reception centres. Social assistance, however, is given in kind and it includes prepared and served meals and two euros per day as pocket money (Stenman & Scheinin 2007: 40). Limited mobility both within and outside the unit is the most obvious difference between detention conditions and the living conditions in the reception centres.

Having now briefly sketched the legislative context of failed asylum, some policy developments that affected the daily lives of failed asylum seekers – the B permit holders in particular – need to be addressed. This enables me to start shifting my thinking from the political 'question' of failed asylum towards the living and struggling body and its political potential (cf. Epstein 2010). In other words, I am now beginning to ground the tweak, to be completed in the next Piece, from the discursive and pre-existing to the experiential and relational.

Finland receives relatively few asylum seekers each year and asylum is rather recent as a noteworthy policy issue (see Saarelainen 1996; cf. Leitzinger 2008). This and the number of arriving people varying from year to year explain the state of constant turmoil in asylum policies[11]. New screening practices, legislative con-

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[10] In order to be deported, a person must at some point of one's stay have had a Finnish residence permit. Most detainees have never had a residence permit, so in legal terms they are sent back, not deported. In effect these two governmental acts are, in any case, the same.

[11] This turmoil is reflected for instance in the development of the reception centre network. In 1994 there were 34 reception centres, but in 2006 only 14 centres remained. During my fieldwork, 2006–2007, the declining number of asylum seekers led to five more centres and a unit for independent living being closed. Representing the lowest number since 1998, merely 1505 asylum applications were

ditions and criteria are being developed to contain the number of people arriving and, in the meanwhile, the national policy landscapes are ever-changing. Because the mobility of people causes a flux in policies, I claim that any responses to the arrival of asylum seekers are reactive rather than proactive. These policies can never anticipate the scope and direction of bodily movement within the international. Now, I must emphasise that it is essential for my argument that the international be here understood as a particularly enacted political project in the world: a project that is based upon a specific spatiotemporal logic. This project aims to produce a particular political order among states, but it simultaneously carries very concrete material and corporeal consequences for people's lives. As a project the international can be conceptualised otherwise, and it is always prone to change. As this first Piece will argue, my collage dwells on one potential source of transformation within the international and how we think of its relations and politics.

Furthermore, my approach necessitates separating between the politics of the international and world politics as sometimes in IR – the discipline that theorises and focuses on the international – there is, I feel, a rather problematic elusion between the international and the world (see e.g. Agnew 1999; Jackson 2011: 16; cf. however Agathangelou & Ling 2004b; Walker 2009). This elusion leads to the view that the empirical focus of IR is and should be on world politics. However, the world and the international are not synonymous, which means that the politics of the international and world/global politics are not that either. I draw still a further distinction between the politics of the international and the relations of the international. The former, pertains Rob Walker (2009: 4), expresses simultaneously an account of the relationship between "a particular form of particularism/pluralism in the sovereign nation-state and a particular form of commonality/universality in the international system of sovereign nation states". In the politics of the international borders are regarded as sites, which specify rights and belongings, or "where the remit of justice ends" (Dillon 1999: 156). However, I am not comfortable with conceiving the international simply through asylum political practices, which are connected to the production of boundaries and hierarchies and which classify people into different categories (cf. Mbembe 2003: 25–26)[12]. This

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lodged in the whole of 2007. However, in the following year 4016 asylum seekers arrived in Finland, and the number was again exceeded in 2009 with a total of 5988 applicants – the highest figure in Finnish history. As a result there was a shortage of reception facilities and new centres were opened in haste around Finland. The increasing number also caused problems in terms of the placement of the accepted applicants within the municipalities. In 2010 the number of applications declined to 3965, so the reception centre network faced new reductions. In this light it does not seem totally unreasonable to claim that the response of the Finnish policies to these changing numbers seems to be ad hoc (cf. Schuster 2003: 145–146).

[12] Nevzat Soguk (1999: 97), citing Richard Plender (1988: 72–73), writes that "significant in terms of the emergence of the 'international' in the nineteenth century was the formulation of a number of 'exemplary' nonbinding resolutions on the asylum, extradition, and expulsion of aliens by the Insti-

dissatisfaction of mine brings me to the *relations* of the international as a means of tweaking our understanding of the nature of borders. In my work, then, borders are understood to suggest relational and shared liminality, not terminal and absolute separation (cf. Walters 2006). Adopting such a stance means that we move from the logic of governance to the sphere of the experienced and corporeal effects that mobility raises.

Indeed, it is worth taking note of the experiential and personal aspects of the asylum politics that begin to take shape in the following interaction between the B permit holders and the reception centre director. These failed asylum seekers (F) question both the functioning and rationale of the Finnish policies and the national project they aim to secure by making the director (D) confess that there are no laws carved in stone:

> F: In the last meeting we were informed that, during 2007, 27 or 30 people will be able to move in their own apartments, so they get a continuous residence permit. Where are these promises? Who are these people? Can you list the names, who those 28 or 30 people, that you promised, are?
>
> D: We were talking about 27 people, who are residents in this reception centre, whom have then had the B permit for two years. Last year's information was that, the information that we here at the centre, I stress, we in the reception centre had that information that after having had the B permit for two years, one can apply for an A permit. And we also had that information that it is pretty automatically granted. But now you have heard that the applications will be processed one by one and that new guidelines have been produced concerning Afghanistan. And concerning Somalia and Iraq, but to a somewhat different direction.
>
> (Meeting 4, taped, my translation)

At this point it is not necessary to go into the details of this discussion. What is noteworthy is that the definitions about who can be included or cannot be accommodated in the Finnish society are revealed to be in flux. Because it involves a reading of the spatial and bodily relations between people, the international, in this work, is ultimately about the possibilities of political life. Sovereignty, then, becomes understandable as a spatiotemporal practice of discrimination between bodies that are entitled to lead a political life within a given society and those who cannot be granted such a right (for a more detailed account see Piece II). The line of separation is fluid and subject to change. The described lack of firm foundations perhaps explains why most public and political debates around the institution of asylum focus on security risks and problems caused by uncontrolled migration.

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tute of International Law, which served as a common platform for the formalization of the control of people's movements and activities within and across borders". Hence, the sphere of the international was and in asylum politics at the European level still is seen as a sphere of practicing statecraft between nations.

The other and unfamiliar become conceptualised as threatening and frightening. This represents the inter-national, a world divided by borders, which Tahir's account in the Preface subtly and implicitly articulated. But more importantly for my present purposes, I claim that this imaginary refuses to engage with the thought that foreignness and otherness readily reside within us, in the 'I' (see Nancy 2008: 161–170).

The international and the bodies exposing and exposed to it are in a constant process of formation. They are never finished, complete or final, but always unfolding in relations that evolve, on the one hand, between people and sovereign practices and, on the other, among people as they all move in relation to one another. In terms of 'doing' IR this is to suggest that, for once, we might refrain ourselves from asking: "what do lines do" or "how are boundaries drawn". Instead, we might, just might, question how boundaries have become so central to our understandings of identity and political existence. This means asking: "How have we come to think about ourselves as separate in the first place" (Edkins 2005b) and "what does it mean to be many" (Nancy 2000)?

1.1.2.   *Fieldwork and interviews*

So far I have introduced 'failed asylum' from a problem-oriented standpoint. Let me now approach the issue from a more personal perspective and introduce my sites and methods for data collection. As mentioned in passing already, this work draws on participant observation and interviews with B permit holders and detainees.

The interviewed 'B people' lived in the reception centres in Punkalaidun, Tampere and Turku, and the detainees in the Metsälä detention unit in Helsinki. The reception centres were selected based on an estimate of where I would be able to meet with the greatest potential number of B permit holders (interviews 1 and 10). Another consideration was that the Tampere centre operated a unit for independent living, mostly inhabited by B permit holders. Punkalaidun, again, was a rural centre, but the municipality is known for its exemplary work in terms of inclusion of migrants in schools and working life, as well as building good social relations between migrants and Finnish residents. The Turku centre operated by the Finnish Red Cross included also reception facilities for minors, some of whom had received the B. The Metsälä detention unit was a 'natural' choice, as the only designated detention centre in Finland, and thus it was the only place in which detainees were at all times 'available'. The centres in Tampere and Punkalaidun were closed during the administrative changes of 2006–2007: the Punkalaidun centre and the unit for independent living at the end of 2006, and the rest of the Tampere

centre a year later.

'Entering' the field was not as easy and straightforward as it may sound. I had to first make sure that the directors would permit my access, and after that I needed to apply for an official research permit from the social services in Tampere and Helsinki. This included providing a research proposal and a plan for disposal of the material collected after the completion of this work. The ethical requirements to which I had to conform meant among other things that I was under no circumstances allowed to use my interviewees' real names, even if some of them in our encounters later asked me to do so. This made me ponder to whom I was actually ethically responsible, and how to negotiate the potentially conflicting ethical aspects and sensibilities.

Due to my commitment to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewees, all names that are used in this work are pseudonyms. This applies equally to the failed asylum seekers and the employees of the centres. Behind each name there is one person, except in the case of Nasir, which is a composite voice based on a group interview with five men who all had the B permit. The reason for using a single pseudonym in this case is that one of the men interpreted the views and answers of the others in a manner that constructed them as one subject with a unified message. Although I am aware of the ethical and epistemological problems related with constructing this composite, I find it impossible to differentiate between the speakers who picked up where the other had left off and added views and perceptions to one another's stories.

After receiving the research permits I started a period of participant observation from the beginning of August 2006 till the end of April 2007 in one of the reception centres. The period spent in the field allowed me to gain insight into the everyday aspects of the political relations at work within the centre. I could meet with people outside the 'official' interview context and understand what living in a reception centre means and the dynamics it evokes between people. My fieldwork schedules followed the day (from 8 am to 4 pm) and evening (from 2 pm to 10 pm) shifts of the staff. Rather than merely 'observing' and taking notes, fieldwork entailed helping the staff in their daily routines and participating in their meetings. The time spent in the centre also allowed me to be present at several meetings between failed asylum seekers and various migration officers, to have numerous informal chats, group talks, semi-private discussions and debates in the corridors with the residents of the centre. I also exchanged emails and phone calls with some of my research participants.

As a whole, the fieldwork that I conducted brought important aspects of living as a failed asylum seeker to my attention and enabled me to sense the failed asylum seekers' presence. I documented the fieldwork by taking detailed field notes and keeping a research diary, both of which address everyday life in the centres and

include observations beyond my research participants' immediate experience.

I located most of my interviewees by presenting my research interests at various meetings in the reception centres, and afterwards was contacted by interested participants. This, of course, affects the material I have gathered for all were not equally active. In a few cases, however, the interview was arranged through the staff. As for the detention unit, the employees organised all the contacts based on the profile I had given: people who had been detained after receiving a negative asylum decision. The interviews, which lasted between forty minutes and two hours, took place from mid-August 2006 to late June 2007. Some people were interviewed twice and some lives I was able to follow and observe for months. Except for Nasir, all were individual interviews conducted in the scarce private locations that the centres had to offer. All in all this work presents you with twenty failed asylum seekers (see Appendix 2).

While interviewing I was worried about evoking painful and traumatic memories or my questions bearing a resemblance to the asylum interview. For many it had been the first interview ever, and it had a terrible reputation. Thus, the mere word 'interview' had a lousy echo among the failed asylum seekers. Maybe 'conversation', 'talk' or 'discussion' would be more true to the nature of my interactions with them. Nevertheless, in order to stay cognisant of the power hierarchies embedded within the relationship, I still utilise the term (open-ended) interview (cf. Enloe 1999: 186; also Briggs 2002).

The interviews were conducted without (official) interpreters, which obviously limited the number of my research participants, but from another angle made intimacy possible and proved to be a trust-building measure. When a tape recorder was used, I transcribed the interviews, but sometimes it was my research participant's explicit wish that nothing was taped. In these cases I took notes, from which I constructed a detailed account shortly after the interview. In transcribing the interviews I have neither corrected the language nor changed its oral and fragmented nature. In case the language or its lack of accuracy hinders understanding, I have inserted a clarification in brackets within the account. Rewriting the interviews and correcting the grammatical errors would make the language impersonal as each one of us had our manners and fashions of speaking and using certain expressions.

Most of the interviewees were men, aged between 18–50 years, but there were also two young women, one with a three-year old child[13]. Geographically they came from Afghanistan, Algeria, Ghana, Iraq (Kurdistan), Nigeria, Nepal, Pales-

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[13] Thus, there is a gender bias in my analysis that mostly results from the fact that most B permit holders and detainees were men. Albeit the stories that this work takes up are mostly masculine, it does not signify a lack of feminine touch. Behind many narrations were stories of mothers, wives or sisters, who had encouraged or organised the trip and who were surviving and taking care of the family while the men felt they were 'doing nothing' in Finland.

tine and Somalia. But migrant trajectories are rarely, if ever, simple. What is consistent in them is almost constant movement. Therefore, besides the country of origin and Finland, people talked about their lives and routes in and out of Austria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Denmark, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Greece, India, Iran, Italy, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lithuania, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and Yemen. In my work this movement between countries together with people's political existence between states and beyond national narratives are the bluntest elements of the inside/outside logic that characterises the sphere of the international. However, I want to emphasise that I am not interested in composing a 'typical' profile of a failed asylum seeker, tracking down people's reasons for leaving, or assessing whether my participants were 'worthy' of asylum or not.

In many ways the interviews disrupted the notions of 'objective' research. Indeed, on many occasions people asked for my help: they asked me to change their status or help them in changing their status. They also asked me to organise contacts with the media or to publicise their cases, which put me in a difficult situation. It was not easy to be a gatekeeper, or more poetically a hangman of hope. In the end, I tried to help as I best saw fit, by giving them advice who and what parties might be interested and how to contact them or by talking with people from different projects and the Refugee Advice Centre on how people could find a way to voice their stories in public. However, at the beginning of each interview I explained that participating in the research would not affect their status and that my work would take quite some time before it was finished. If people still wanted to tell their stories to me, I was happy to listen. For most it was enough that somebody listened to what they had to say and that their stories would be passed on at some stage.

In addition to the fieldwork and interviews, my work relies on a third source of insight. In order to explore the phenomenon of failed asylum from various perspectives and to grasp both the experiential and the governmental sides of the issue, I interviewed various policy makers and officials working with asylum seekers between May 2006 and June 2008. This set of 'informants' included representatives from the Finnish Ministry of Labour (now the Ministry of Employment and the Economy), the Directorate of Immigration (now the Finnish Immigration Service), a mental health team working specifically with migrants, lawyers of the Refugee Advice Centre, the directors of all four centres, social workers in all three reception centres and smaller discussions with other staff members in the detention unit and reception centres (see Appendices 1 and 2). Although these interviews are not subject to analysis in themselves, they are utilised to give further context to my field notes, interpretations and the primary interviews with the failed asylum seekers.

My own attitudes towards failed asylum grew more ambiguous during the ethnographic research process (cf. Cerwonka & Malkki 2007). I noticed I was

dwelling more and more on questions such as: what is displacement or belonging; what are my concepts of them, and how are the boundaries between people set and maintained? (See Reyes Cruz, Moreira & Yomtoob 2009.) During the fieldwork period I came to consider failed asylum as a case of institutionalised or ontological violence, which normalises and legitimises the prevailing political order and makes it invisible as violence. This violence is ontological in the sense that it leaves the mind-set that gives rise to particular understandings of legitimacy, agency and politics beyond scrutiny (see Nevins 2008: 196). Having said this I must acknowledge that I, too, gained access to my research participants through their status. Therefore, it seems necessary to deepen my argument so as to point out some of the ethical and epistemological implications of the kind of perspective that governmental and political labels occlude from view.

1.2.   Ethical and onto-epistemological challenges

During this research project I have been asked many times the significance of studying asylum seekers, not to mention failed asylum seekers, in Finland. If I have asked why the person thinks it is unimportant, it has been explained to me that the question stemmed from the fact that the number of asylum seekers arriving in Finland is minuscule in comparison to most other European countries and nothing on a world-scale of migratory movement. Or, alternatively, the person asking felt that those who have reached Finland live rather comfortable lives compared with those migrants who reside in refugee camps or "jungles" (Rygiel 2011) and who struggle every day to fulfil even their most basic needs.

In both cases the answer to the question of the significance of my work would then be: in quantitative or comparative terms the meaning of this work is nothing on a world-scale of asylum. My point, however, is not to measure or compare the amount of suffering embedded in any experience of displacement. Ethically and normatively this work is needed to describe what has been lived, and from this viewpoint I derive the justification to pursue the topic.

When I became familiar with the phenomenon of failed asylum, in the late 2005–early 2006, it was because of the heated media debate on the need to manage the negative phenomena associated with asylum seeking. Later on, another perspective gained more and more prominence. This same voice echoed in my ears when entering the 'field'. By nature the second voice was victimising. It tended to speak for, in the place of, the failed asylum seeker who had been deprived of agency and voice – and to an extent it is true that the failed asylum seekers are not listened to in Finland:

Ayan: They say: "you are not Somali". If I'm not Somali, what am I? I don't know, re-
        ally.
Eeva: They said you are not Somali.
Ayan: Yeah, "we don't know if you are Somali. You tell only all these things." Really,
        and they ask me where I live, and I tell, and they say: "it's not true". Now they
        are rejecting me, and say that we don't know if you are really what you say you
        are. … And now that I have my passport [an alien's passport], they write that we
        don't know for this person, really. [Ayan goes through her things in her handbag
        and looks for her passport.] We can't identify. Here, it's here, you see.
Eeva: Aha, "it has proved impossible to verify the identity of the holder".
Ayan: And they write it there, that we can't verify your nationality, if you are a national
        of Somalia. I say: "if I am not a Somali, what am I?"

                                        (Interview with Ayan, October 2006)

Abuukar reads aloud the sentence "it has been impossible to verify the identity of the
holder" from his passport, and asks me if he can ask the police to change this. He tells
that he had provided the police with his driving licence and all other id papers that he
had from Somalia. He tells that his documents were real and that he has never had this
problem before. "I have an identity", he says seemingly nettled.

                                        (Field notes, 1st March 2007)

Failed asylum, as Ayan and Abuukar make evident, is an example of a situation
where people find themselves "limited by the singular voice of the role and begin
to feel that the role is first 'restricting' or oppressing, and, more radically, that
it is alien to them" (Gagnon 1992: 235). Giving an account of oneself is not as
straightforward as we often make it sound: both Ayan and Abuukar were denied
the authority to voice themselves. This does not, however, mean that failed asylum
seekers do not have a voice or that they would lack the capacity to articulate their
views and claim a position for themselves. Rather, in philosophical terms, the body
of a failed asylum seeker does not exist, but comes into being through a politics of
identification; the body is subjected to a specific system of meaning and seized in
transubstantiation (see Fischer 1997: 35). Therefore, claiming to know something
about the lives that 'failed asylum seekers' lead is not a simple deal, but doing so
evokes complex relationalities (cf. Dauphinee 2010: 805–813).

    The problem with both the demonising and victimising discourses is that they
address the asylum seeking body through its political status or label. There is a
politics of identification at work here: the other is known on our terms and sub-
jected to our knowledge practices. This politics does not invite or encourage criti-
cal self-reflection, which would engage more deeply with the conjunctures of the
self and the other. Instead the power of this politics, Anna Agathangelou and Lily
Ling (2005: 827) opine, easily fixes us – and our thought – in locked cycles of

dominance, retaliation and annihilation. If we remain within this imaginary cycle there is a considerable risk that failed asylum seekers become sentimentalised and moralised, which silences the violences, violations and injustices that legal and governmental structures perpetrate (cf. Agathangelou & Ling 2005: 835). This state of affairs made questions of agency and ethics prominent for me and for this work.

Although ethnography is occasionally celebrated as a method with emancipatory potential, it is not free from power and does not in itself guarantee a way out of colonising other people's experiences and lives (cf. Behar 2003: 15; cf. Spivak 1988; Maggio 2007). Power is at work in data collection affecting the development of understanding during interview situations (cf. Edkins 2005a: 64). For one thing, the people I interviewed were not always eager to accept my authorship and often challenged me openly. They questioned me about my work and life philosophy. They challenged my accounts, views and being. And in turn I questioned them about their interpretations and openly disagreed with them. However, we also agreed with one another. We laughed together and sometimes we cried together. (Cf. Tanggaard 2009.) This particular nature of our interactions made me reflect upon who was to have "ethnographic authority" (Rosaldo 1986) and could claim knowledge: me with my questions or the failed asylum seekers with their moving stories (see also Clifford 2007)?

> Eeva: Can I understand what you tell me, because I have never witnessed war?
> Nasir: Well, it's really difficult, I just don't know. I can't say. You should ask someone who himself is in the same position to tell you, so it's really hard. I would say no. I would say no, because many of the refugees have witnessed with their own eyes things which seem or sound really unbelievable, or unimaginable. You can't even imagine those things, which they have even witnessed. I don't want to talk about those very gruesome horrors, because it's, yeah, really nasty. You can… There are so many things happening, nasty things happening, that if we talk, you wouldn't believe that this might be happening in Afghanistan. You couldn't understand it.
>
> (Interview with Nasir, March 2007)

Nasir made me ponder carefully the way in which I was to relate to the failed asylum seekers' presence – their voices, gestures and moves. After initial bewilderment, I decided to follow the idea of "multiple and intersecting workings of power" that encourages the study of "the production of subjectivities and identities, ethics and responsibilities" (Ackerly, Stern & True 2006: 261). I needed to ground my knowledge differently from what I was used to doing and pass that understanding on to others (cf. Solis 2004: 185; Reyes Cruz 2008). However, most of the methodological books on IR remained silent about ethnographic research and the ethical and epistemological caveats and openings evoked through a reflexive

approach to knowledge production. What I had begun to grasp, did not go together with the conceptual world of International Relations (see Bourgois 2007: 288–292; Moreira 2005: 53).

With the value of hindsight, my bewilderment was largely due to the fact that the necessity of interpretive passing is not only a passing on, but also a passing *out* in the sense of distribution and sharing of meaning between singular-beings who pass it on to each other. Such an understanding arises from Nancy's hermeneutics in which interpretation involves an endless fragmentation of voices. (See Librett 1997: 132.) In this work, this fragmentation is reflected through ethnographic compositions and research settings in which theory is improvised through a constant oscillation between empirical insight and theoretical frameworks, rather than simply implemented (see Cerwonka & Malkki 2007). Basically it still might have been an option to resort to a more conventional approach within the discipline, but my bodily reactions to the ethnographic experience did not permit this. I felt compelled to seek my own answers to the question of under what conditions some individuals acquire a legible and visible face and others do not (cf. Butler 2001: 23). Because I believe firmly that migration research can never be free from normative judgment, it is fair to state that a sense of responsibility marks the politics of my research (see Doty 2004; Campbell 2005; Eckl 2008; also Chan 2003a).

The element of normativity necessitates discussing the place and role of values in knowledge production. "The problem of values" is, as argued by Inanna Hamati-Ataya (2011: 259), central to Western epistemology and its notions of objectivity. Besides being a constitutive part of social sciences, this problem is revisited with paradigmatic changes and, within IR, addressed in its disciplinary debates. This problem is in this work tackled through a systematic socio-cognitive practice of reflexivity, that is *reflexivism* (Hamati-Ataya 2011: 261; see also Eagleton-Pierce 2011). The adopted stance requires that I reflect carefully on the interpretive frameworks, knowledge-interests and the nature of narration prevalent within the IR discipline (cf. Radhakrishnan 1993; Budgeon 2003; Chan 2003b; Doty 2004; Beier 2005; Grovogui 2005; Eagleton-Pierce 2011). The reflexivist stance bears effect in terms of doing fieldwork and writing about it, both of which have become questions of relation for me. One set of the relations that I perceive meaningful reaches back in time to those failed asylum seekers and others who participated in this research, whilst the other is future-oriented and reaches towards the readers. In my case the problem of values could, thus, be formulated as follows:

> When the reality in which I am participant-observing is *not* objective, but is emotion-*full* rather than emotion-*less*, and when that reality is *not* separable from my own being, how do I discipline the effects of this emotional dimension to minimise my distortion of that reality, while still fully accounting for the significance of the passions that others value-experience?
>
> (Smith 2002: 461, italics orig.)

From the early phases of this work till the very end I have felt pressure to do descriptive justice to people and their bodily experiences. This pressure challenged my thinking on how to write and present my interpretations. Since I conceive international relations being a set of corporeal and lived practices and engagements, being fair to the accounts of the failed asylum seekers is not separate from describing the senses of the international as fairly as possible (cf. Bourgois 2007: 290; Cohen 2007: 114; Herzfeld 2007). I must, thus, remain constantly aware that this work, no matter how theoretical or conceptual it might be, is yet one of flesh-and-blood people. Failed asylum cannot properly be treated as an impersonal 'question'; it is a struggle. This realisation made me explore the relations and senses of the international as they emerged from the failed asylum seekers' stories:

> Soran says that he thinks too much, but that he doesn't know how to explain his thoughts to me. He tells that if I stayed at the centre for a night I would understand, if I went to take a shower there, I would understand, but not even the staff understand, or they do not think about it. When he gets to the point of taking a shower in the centre, I slip: "I don't want to do that". He looks at me and says: "I know you don't, but then you would understand. How would you feel if you went to Kurdistan, and nobody would help you, talk to you or like you? What would you think?" I tell him I'd be sad, angry, bewildered and would want to leave. "Yes, and you could leave. What about me? Why do they take my fingerprints? If I leave will they delete them? Where can I go?"
>
> (Field notes, September 11ᵗʰ 2006)

> Benjamin: In jail… No, it's never good. To be in jail. And I haven't done wrong, because I am an asylum seeker. […] But to put me in jail, whereby I haven't committed any crime, because I'm seeking help from you, and you tell me that you don't give it to me, then you put me in jail. You cheat me. [pause] It's a cheat. […] You know, I feel self-pity about myself. […] You know this place makes me remember all the time my story, because why do I leave, why don't I have the access to see the natural sun, to talk to people like the way I used to do. I really live like in a cage. I don't like it. […] So, it worries me that I'm not outside and I am not a criminal, but I'm living, you know, in a place whereby they see you [as] something different.
>
> (Interview with Benjamin, June 2007)

Both Soran and Benjamin considered the label assigned to them unfair and unjust. They had done nothing but lodged a claim in order to be recognised as refugees, but the Finnish officials 'failed' them. Consequently they encountered a liminal status that contradicted their sense of justice and fairness. Soran openly demanded and Benjamin implicitly asked for another kind of response from me. They, when describing being beyond both return and accommodation, needed me to reflect on the relation that had been imposed between us through the political asylum process. Soran and Benjamin did not invite me to elaborate on my private feelings that

displacement and 'refugee experience' might arouse. Rather they pointed out the moral hurt as well as personal and yet political action that such experience gives rise to, if emotional distress was admitted politically (see Zarowsky 2004: 201; Philipose 2007). Their protest made me realise that we were not separate subjects, but that in a way I was a complicit in them being categorised as failed asylum seekers. We came to be only in relation to one another.

Tellingly, Benjamin felt cheated by the response his asylum claim had generated, and Soran pointed out my reluctance to change places with him. I am, together with many others, privileged enough to trust in the freedoms and securities that the Finnish sovereign state promises. Yet, the same state denied Benjamin and Soran this privilege. It is, thus, fair to argue that the state and the system of modern states have come to frame the possibilities and necessities of political life. Every body is expected to belong to a state, to have a nationality. The state also structures our accounts of who we are, who we must be and who we must become as political beings capable of acting in the modern world. (See Walker 2009: 57–58.) This constrains and directs our political imagination, and it begs the question whether it is necessary for scholars to remain with the 'apparent'. It is easy to stick with familiar categories, frames of interpretation and explore the world as we find it, in terms of the roadmap we have been taught. I am no different: at first my firm intention was to pursue an Agambenian study of bare life and the camp (see Piece II). That is what I thought failed asylum seekers represented, being placed beyond both accommodation and, in the case of the B permit, also return. That is what at several conferences and seminars I was told to do; inutile were my meagre attempts to vaguely argue – after being shaken by the ethnographic experience – that actually things were not so simple.

In time my focus became somewhat more precise. I started to claim that I am not going to study what it is that we are talking about when we discuss failed asylum, but to explore *those relations that the talk about failed asylum presupposes and on which it rests*. Benjamin's and Soran's voices, then, incited an ontological focus in addition to an epistemological one. Their voices made me realise that failed asylum seekers, through their movements and acts of relating, open space for imagining political agency beyond territorially separated and ontologically fixed identities (cf. Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 131; also Tickner 2003; Darby 2003, 2004; Walker 2009). The presence of failed asylum seekers crystallises differences in ways of life, political visions and values and thus challenges the seeming and accustomed naturalness of our own social and political practices (cf. Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 23).

Cynthia Weber (2008) claims that the modern liberal citizenship is a failing design (cf. Yuval-Davis 1999). In the face of this failure, the presence of rejected asylum seekers affects understandings of the limits of citizenship and political com-

munity, as well as raises different forms of political life within the international (cf. Doty 2001: 526; Soguk 1999: 28–29). Nowadays in IR it is not so rare anymore to explore how sovereign responses to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants shape and reshape those "relations and institutions that make possible and simultaneously condition the scope and properties of peace, security, and democracy in life" (Soguk 1999: 233). However, it is necessary to move beyond sovereignty and open up ontological space for various hybridities that entwine legacies and interweave peoples and societies (Chen, Hwang & Ling 2009: 744; see also Tickner 2003: 305–307, 323–324). The ontological grounds on which 'the international' has been founded need to be questioned (Nayak & Selbin 2010: ch. 2; see Piece 2).

An ontological perspective allows the examination of the responses *of* refugees, asylum seekers and migrants *to* the administrative reactions that their presence generates. These personal responses are equally important to the societal responses, if we wish to think about the *possibilities* of political life on various fronts. Some developments in this direction already exist within IR, but yet a further push is necessary: the discipline must learn to express and examine the complexities of human existence (see Chen, Hwang & Ling 2009: 744–745). One way to start this learning process is to reflect upon ethnographic, self-reflexive and participatory research in terms of both its possibilities and pitfalls (see Nayak & Selbin 2010: 42).

For me, people's experiences of the corporeal touch of failed asylum mark a moment of friction between the politics and the relations of the international. The previous sphere is one created through the dichotomous logic of inside/outside and would in this case mean analysing the political use of individual bodies. The latter, instead, takes its cue from the political in the body as bodies engage with and expose themselves to one another in corporeal conjunctures no-w-here[14]. With this formulation I refer to those bodily junctures and relations that come to exist as bodies move within and across the spheres of the international as well as to those ways in which the body creates the international through various relations. Ethnographic research may open a means of exploring the ontological potential that already unfolds constantly through relationalities lived in the spheres of the international. Besides abstractly 'reflecting upon' the social and ethical dimension of their work, IR scholars are hereby invited to make this reflection socially useful through an ethos of social engagement (see Hamati-Ataya 2011: 280; cf. Jackson 2011: 22–23).

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[14] In this wording I am inspired by two writers: Tarja Väyrynen (2001) has used the notion of global conjunctions in IR, and Gunnar Olsson (1991; 2007) who with now-here/no-where denotes the working and power of lines, their intersections and intermingling.

1.3.   Ethnographic IR: methods and strategies

Ethnography and International Relations might seem to be an odd couple. IR is occasionally considered onto-epistemologically incompatible with ethnography, because it was originally founded on the ability to distinguish the international from national, personal and the everyday[15]. Whilst IR tends to rely on strict divisions, ethnography questions the meaningfulness of dichotomous categorisations and, hence, the logic of straight lines (see Brigg & Bleiker 2008; 2010; Jackson 2008; Vrasti 2008; 2010; Rancatore 2010; Wedeen 2010; also Cerwonka & Malkki 2007: 8–12, 27, 73, 165). Traditionally the IR discipline and ethnography, then, have asked very different types of questions, with different methods and methodologies (cf. Jackson 2011).

Contrary to most theories of the international, ethnography is context-bound and situational. It is not limited to a single method, but involves a multiplicity of methodical options, which are complementary to, rather than exclusive of, one another. Ethnography is neither a fixed method, nor a stable methodology that one can follow and apply (see Cerwonka & Malkki 2007; cf. Humpreys 2010). Therefore, we now need to address my choice of ethnography as both *a field practice* and *a writing strategy* together with the specific purposes for which these choices were made.

1.3.1.   *Re-focusing failed asylum through ethnographic seduction*

For me it was imperative that the selected field practice would take note of acts of sharing and the ethics of encountering. In other words, the adopted method must allow room for fluidity in perception and remain responsive to the unexpected turns that may change the research focus altogether. When questions of ethics and epistemology played such a great role in the process of data collection, "ethnographic seduction", a term coined by Antonius Robben (1996), became my field practice.

Ethnographic seduction entails "a complex dynamic of conscious moves and unconscious defences that may arise in interviews" (Robben 1996: 72). The act of seducing becomes especially relevant in cases where people have high political

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[15] See Lucian M. Ashworth (2009) on the development of international relations as a scholarly field. He examines the strange relationship between IR and interdisciplinarity and claims that the field ranges across multidisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity. Ashworth concludes that to a large degree the different approaches to IR talk past, rather than with, each other, which makes it possible to argue that IR has not yet reached a truly interdisciplinary stage (besides perhaps the critical and post- approaches within it), but is actually a multidisciplinary subject. (For a view of the state of the discipline see also Vogt 2008: 366–368.)

and personal stakes in legitimising their interpretations. Let me discuss the potential of this field strategy through Stephen's story. His narration starts paving the way for a sensuous experience of the international, or for the kinds of experiences that the international as a political project sometimes generates. I hope the account tunes the reader's ear to something that cannot be captured by relying solely on the said.

> Stephen has been in the detention unit for two weeks and a day. He tells that he has been detained because his identity cannot be proved. He applied for asylum in 2003 in Germany so his fingerprints are in the system, but here his name is different. He tells that the situation with regard to names is different in Africa. "A person can have three, four, five different names. Mother's, father's, grandfather's name, and all. There is not just a single 'real' name in Africa," Stephen explains counting the names with his fingers.
>
> He has arrived in Finland because his fiancée and baby live here. Stephen tells that she delivered prematurely in a hospital in Tampere. She was just seven months pregnant when the baby was born. He contends that the labour was difficult, but that now both of them are ok. He expresses his gratitude to the hospital and the doctors who did such a wonderful job.
>
> (Interview with Stephen, May 2007)

Stephen's account continues to remind me why I chose the ethnographic method in the first place. I wished to bring international relations closer to the ground – manifest the international working in the minutiae – by telling stories of real people in real places. The political status was the only way through which I could reach my interviewees, and at first I let it affect my questioning too much. Fortunately the interviews started to spill over quite soon and I needed to relinquish my will to control the discussions (cf. Behar 2003: 16). People wanted to talk about many things, in their own ways. For them, like for Stephen, the identity outlined by the B or rejection was not enough. They were mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers. They had professions, dreams and a past. They did ordinary things while living in extraordinary or exceptional spaces. Yet, by virtue of their status the senses of the international somehow penetrated also in their everyday actions.

After a while I sought to move explicitly beyond the label by asking people about their happiest memories, hopes and the most important things in their lives. This enabled me to engage with people and see them beyond the label. This spill over effect started my journey towards decolonising my own way of knowing (cf. Eckl 2008; Reyes Cruz 2008). I needed to start looking for stories which I did not know were there, and find stories I did not realise I was looking for in the first place (see Behar 2003: 16). I needed to understand both the subtle touch and the harsh effects that the politics of the international had for the failed asylum seekers. This task required a move towards exploring the relations of the international as they are lived, sensed and created.

I ask Stephen why he left Nigeria to seek asylum. "Oh, that's a long story", he says, "but I'll tell you". He begins a very detailed explanation of his troubles. (During his story he examines my face as if he is trying to detect whether I believe it.)

Stephen explains that his troubles stem from something called 'courtism'. 'Courtism' is the practice of setting up secret courts at universities, and where, as a consequence, the campus is controlled by university students with the power to veto actions, Stephen clarifies. The first of these courts was formed in 1985 by a professor in Nigeria. The group was called the Pirates. In 1989 other groups – called the Black Axe, the Black Eye the Black Magic – emerged. "If they want to initiate you", Stephen says, "they'll contact you". He was contacted, but he didn't want to get involved. Then another group also approached him. When he told them that he didn't want to participate, they told him that "either you accept or leave the school".

Stephen departs momentarily from his personal narrative to explain the initiation rites to me. He tells that the initiation takes place at a shrine, which might be located for example in the high mountains. It involves beatings, where you are beaten until you fall to the ground. They will then continue, repeatedly beating you until you stand up. Achieving this you are recognised as a strong man. I ask if you then become a member. "No", says Stephen, "but if you are recognised as a strong man, you can perform the rituals". One of these rituals is drinking animal blood. Stephen returns to his personal story and tells me that these gangs commit group killings. He tells that one night he was kidnapped from his hostel and taken to a Black Eye gang's shrine. He explains that he was beaten, and that he thought he would die. He shows me a scar on his shin; it is quite broad and approximately 15 cm long. They told Stephen that either he became a member or he would be beaten to death. "Then I became a member," he says. He contends that the police are powerless in the face of these powerful and armed gangs, so that they couldn't have helped him. When he was released from the hospital where he went after the beating, five members of the Black Eye came and took him away. He was made to perform the initiation rituals. Shortly after this, he was told to go to another university where he was to handle some weapons. Stephen, however, ran away to another village and went into hiding. After some time he moved to Lagos, and believed that his trauma was over.

(Interview with Stephen, May 2007)

Let me break into Stephen's story at this point and outline the role of ethnographic seduction so as to facilitate the reception of his colourful account. I understand it to be a method that creates a space, which is open to negotiation, in-between the interviewer and the interviewee[16]. If successful, ethnographic seduction also extends the sense and feel of the interview to the readers. As a field practice it gives the question of failed asylum its flesh and materiality by not relying just on administrative figures or political labels. Thus, whereas Robben (1996: 76) ponders how to cope with ethnographic seduction, for me it is a resource: a tone that leads to an

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[16] This understanding comes close to Jean-Luc Nancy's idea that we are together and come-into-presence together. His influence on my work will be discussed in the next piece, for now it is enough to point out how field experiences affected the overall setting of my collage.

unexpected story and an opening in which to think the "not-mobilized-yet" (Reyes Cruz 2008: 654). Within IR this enables the imagining of ways of political life and existence that go beyond those forms of political community that still to a great extent rely on citizenship and the dichotomous logic of inside/outside (cf. Weber 2008; Walker 1993, 2009).

Stephen's narration did not have a clear plot; like most of the narratives that I was offered, it was fractured. There were immense gaps and cracks filled with detailed but scattered information, unclear connections and 'causations'. In hindsight there is nothing surprising or extraordinary in this. This state of affairs simply points out the multiplicity of sensuous experiences that the international might bear for our lives.

> Later that year Stephen went to a festival in his town. There was a party one night, where some members of the Black Eye gang spotted him. He explained that there was fighting, and that his brother was killed with a machete. One of the gang members was also killed, along with three others from his town. The police arrived on the scene, and Stephen was taken to a cell at the police station. The Black Eye gang members did not give up, however, and committed a crime near the police station so that ultimately they were put in the same cell with him. "I was there for one night", explains Stephen, "and there were many people in a small cell. It was dark and you couldn't see anything and the cell was full of people". Then he felt something in his right arm; an injection. After that "my body was weak and I couldn't do anything. Some days later, it could have been two or three days' time, I cannot tell because I was unconscious, I woke up in a hospital." The doctors told Stephen that he had been poisoned. I ask for how long he stayed in the hospital, he says "I cannot be sure, maybe for two weeks". After this he left Nigeria, and moved to Guinea, and from there he went to Germany in 2003. Two years later, in 2005, he was returned from Germany to Nigeria.
>
> Stephen explains that in his quest for protection he walked all the way to Libya. The journey took him six months, and involved long treks in the desert. He says that there were many people travelling with him. Now he has been "seeking protection for four years. I could have graduated, been a somebody. Now I have just been living a hell of life."
>
> (Interview with Stephen, May 2007)

Evaluating the truthfulness of what Stephen told me is not of interest or important from my perspective. Stephen's voice now tells me something about the ways in which failed asylum seekers themselves create meaning, relate to others and construct their political standpoint; namely what they consider meaningful and what kind of things are important in their lives (cf. Hewett 2004: 725). In their utterly corporeal accounts the failed asylum seekers often relied on layered ambiguities (cf. Sermijn, Devlieger & Loots 2008). Also Stephen's story defies simplistic interpretations and hence the will of the Finnish asylum procedures to discover the 'truth' about and behind a person. In fact, as Mary Gergen (2004: 270) claims,

narratives are always more than, less than or other than 'what really happened'. This raises the need to explore how a person's self perception emerges within relationships and through conflicting narratives (cf. Solis 2004; also Richardson 1994; Bamberg 2004: 137).

Failed asylum seekers' voices need to be interpreted in relation to the political situation that people find themselves in, not as avenues to speakers' minds, identities or even their lived experience (cf. Denzin 2000). The shifting strategies of narration are also Stephen's way of coping (Riessman 2002a: 701; also 2002b). They are his way of resisting asylum politics 'as usual' and claiming authority[17]. This connects the body to politics, and in the case of failed asylum also to international relations and the logic of its functioning.

> Four weeks later, in late June 2007, I return to the detention unit, and find that Stephen is still there. I ask if he would be willing to talk to me again and he agrees. Stephen is wearing an Indianapolis t-shirt, light grey college pants and flip-flops. Now it is a bit easier to talk to him, as he knows me and I know him – I don't know if I can call it trust, but it is some kind of mutual understanding. We sit down and start chatting about mundane issues; how he has been, if he has heard from his wife, and if she and the baby are in good health and so on. I tell him that this time I'd like to talk to him about his travels and then his stay here, since last time we talked a great deal about his troubles in Nigeria.
>
> I ask how he actually managed to organise his trip to Germany or Finland. He explains that he had another person's passport. "It is very easy, you know," Stephen states. "There are so few black people in Finland and Europe, that for you we all look the same, and if you have a passport that looks somewhat like you, it is easy. Like me, I know you when you come here, but if I saw you in the street, I might not recognise you, for to me, you all look the same." Stephen tells that in a passport, which belonged to a Nigerian man, there were "multiple visas secured". It is easy to find people who will sell you a passport, because it is a form of business in Nigeria. "If you want to travel, they have several passports, and then they'll give you one that is similar looking", says Stephen and continues when I ask how much the passport cost, "I bought the passport and ticket together, and paid 2.800 dollars". "That's a lot of money", I say. But Stephen says that it depends what you compare it with. "Is it much to save your life? I was desperate to save my life, so that is not much."
>
> Stephen narrates that he arrived by air, first reaching Spain, then France and ultimately Finland. I ask if he was nervous travelling with somebody else's passport. "Nervous, why?" he asks. "It was a look-alike passport. The people tell you not to fear. And, in the worst case, if you are harassed in the airport, you can apply for asylum already there." According to Stephen this form of business is "rampant in Africa".
>
> (Interview with Stephen, June 2007)

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[17] I use the term 'asylum politics as usual' to refer to the tendency to conceive asylum mostly as a question of (European/national) security (cf. Uçarer 2006; also Council of the European Union 1996; 2005; Hague Programme 2004; Commission of the European Communities 2007).

Stephen's 'case' illustrates well that refugee life depends on stories. It is no wonder that stories that concern possible entitlements to asylum and to a normal, better life circulate. How easy and natural – and I might add how humane – is it to shape the past in such a way that it provides greater hope for a better future? Now we must, however, be cautious with our conclusions and interpretations as that what I stated above does not mean that refugee stories are all invented (also Moorehead 2006: 136). It only points out that ethnographic seduction requires both the interviewer's willingness to wonder and the interviewee's story to be allowed to wander, which is why I perceive it as potentially helpful in unfolding categorical and spatialised identities. In order to function this way, however, the parties need to share an affinity or a sense of an "embodied involvement" (Sarbin 2004: 18: see also Harker 2007: 59–69). This means that the researcher cannot claim (pretend) to be value-free and objective (cf. Hamati-Ataya 2011: 265).

In taking note of the variety and registers of voices, visions, desires and positionalities that are already involved in the relations of the international, ethnography restores the richness of being to knowledge production (see Chen, Hwang & Ling 2009: 745, 763). In my work refugee life represents itself as a different slant on the world (also Huynh 2010). As such it implies ontological potential also for our understanding of the international – a project concerning the political organisation of the world. For me, ethnographic seduction provided a means to discover "the deep conjunctures that inform any effort to know the world beyond the self" (Behar 2003: 23; cf. Butler 2001: 28). Therefore, ethnography has its place in IR just because it can make a difference to how we conceive the international and the world (cf. Jenkins 2010: 86). The story I did not know I was looking for when planning this research and entering the field was about corporeal conjunctures, which reflect the international coming out in unexpected places and taking unexpected forms (cf. Grayson 2010; Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 135). The entwinements that emerge when we, as human beings, sense and respond to failed asylum seekers' presence no-w-here is an example of political life taking shape through relational events. Such an understanding of 'the political' came to profoundly challenge my thought on the place, space and possibilities of political life within the international (see Piece II).

The quest to know who failed asylum seekers truly are is bound to fail in the sense that the answer one is expecting will not come, and the answer one gets will never satisfy completely. My fieldwork and interviews point out that the stories tell much more about relations preceding, proceeding and exceeding the status than about people's 'true' identities and experiences. There are no satisfactory answers to the 'question' of failed asylum, but conceiving failed asylum as a politico-corporeal struggle changes the research focus. This shift emphasizes sensuous bodily experiences that raise a different relationality between variously categor-

ised people (cf. Ellis & Berger 2002; Osella & Osella 1998: 198; Tanggaard 2009).
Through its potentiality in disclosing and reflecting upon the inherent relationality
of (political) life ethnography is put into practice in the later parts of this work. It
does not, then, function only as a tool to gather research material. It flows through
this collage, accompanied with Jean-Luc Nancy's ideas on the ontologically rela-
tional condition of the body.

1.3.2.   *"No textual staging is ever innocent": doing things with words*

Conceptualising people whose stories this work takes up first and foremost as rep-
resentatives of a label would mean annihilating the political process of becom-
ing in which the person is never finished and complete. While doing fieldwork I
came to think of ethnography as an epistemological attitude towards what can be
known, and how this knowledge is constructed and passed on. As mentioned, the
interviews revealed the participants as more than failed asylum seekers. For me it
was therefore imperative that the multidirectional nature of the narratives that de-
fied any simple, straightforward interpretation and the adopted analytical focus be
reflected also in the *writing* process.

The world in which the failed asylum seekers inhabited seemed to be a world in
which, in Caroline Moorehead's (2006: 147) words, "nothing is what it seems, and
nothing stays the same". The exhaustive thoroughgoingness of this world caused
me to feel alone and very fragile (see Behar 1996)[18]. There is a very dark side to
this world, and it is easy to be swallowed by that darkness. It is easy to sink in too
deep. However, it is not a world without any light. It is a world with fine distinc-
tions, and yet a world, which represents lines very concretely in the flesh. What was
I, then, to make it mean? Some of my 'findings' are, to be perfectly honest, nothing
but undertones or a "muffled subtext" (Mazzei 2003). It took me a considerable
amount of time to expose from the field notes and interviews some of the elements
that I now consider extremely meaningful. At first I did not regard the mundane
in the stories as relevant or interesting, and then I struggled with the ethical and
political considerations involved in bringing out the controversial, aggressive and
negative tendencies in the failed asylum seekers' behaviour (cf. Cohen 2007). Are

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[18] I was deeply affected by the centre and those expectations that both the failed asylum seekers and
the employees in the centres had of my presence there. In my discussions with the centre director
(interview 4), which addressed my position, denying the complete penetration of this experience
was to no avail. I cried for the most part of the two-hour meeting. I struggled with learning to face
something that for me was not acceptable. My response was emotional: it was one of discomfort, rage
and disbelief. (See Ahmed 2004: 35–36.) In the end, the stories that made me feel so vulnerable and
lost at times, guided me to ask questions of the international and its meanings, bearings and effects
(cf. Piece II).

there things that are too sensitive to be written about? Where is the line between voyeurism and reflexivity in (critical) ethnography? Should a person's whole life be exposed for the sake of them being politically 'failed'? What is my responsibility for protecting the participants from the potentially negative responses that their stories and my interpretations of their stories might evoke?

"No textual staging is ever innocent", Laurel Richardson (2002: 879) claims. Furthermore, choosing a method of writing involves risks as Yvonne Lincoln and Norman Denzin (2004: 575) note: "writing the present is always dangerous, a biased project conditioned by distorted readings of the past and utopian hopes for the future". The lack of innocence and the risk of misrepresentation reflect the state that in representation we take part in a wide range of social and political practices. Indeed, our ways of writing participate in the constitution of "the modern world, with its distinctive concerns with order, truth and the subject" (Rabinow 1986: 240; see also Richardson 1994; Smith, P. 1999; Ellis & Berger 2002; Rosenblatt 2002; Lincoln & Denzin 2004; Hill 2005). This means that the methods used in writing imply particular kinds of transactions and engagements with the world (Atkinson & Coffey 2002: 807). Such an attitude comes close to what Paul Stoller (1997) has termed "sensuous scholarship", a concept by which he refers to the type of research in which head and heart mix, and one's being is opened to the world (also Denton 2005). In and through writing scholars find new perspectives on their topics and work their relationship with these topics.

The ethics of responding to feelings and experiences of pain, suggests Sara Ahmed (2004: 32), involves openness to being affected by that which one cannot know or feel. Furthermore, it involves exploring the sense(s) of the international and those practices through which these senses are produced. These ethics encapsulate the spirit of my field strategy and ultimately led to creative experimentations in writing. With an alternative way of writing IR I seek to overcome some of the ethical dilemmas that arise when exploring corporeal conjunctures between selves and others, inside and outside (see Nayak & Selbin 2010: 88–89; also Jutila, Pehkonen & Väyrynen 2008).

Before moving on to discuss creative writing and its disciplinary potential, I believe a brief post-partum reflection on the birth of the empirical narratives is in order. The total amount of research material after transcription was some 250 pages (with 12 point Times New Roman and line spacing 1). This includes both the interviews and the field notes, but not my handwritten research diary. Quite obviously, the stories that now feature in this work did not simply emerge from nowhere, but were actively created. First I read through the collected material several times, each time marking and taking notes on elements, wordings, individual words and repetitions that caught my eye. Eventually this reading process led to the creation of the Episodes, in which I wanted to present fuller and lengthier quotes from the

field so as to highlight the theme that each story brought to my attention[19]. Still, not one of the Episodes limits itself strictly to a single theme or question. Instead, each of them seeks to remain true to the fragmentary nature of the 'data' and, through this, allows a degree of ontological and existential intactness or wholeness to my interviewees.

Through the Episodes I aim to present the person from various perspectives and create a sense of the passage of time and situations that live in time. As for the shorter vignettes within the Pieces, the writing-strategies are more varied. Most of them are largely unformatted extracts from my interviews or field notes, only modified if the original wording was incomprehensible. In order to adhere firmly to the central theme of my argument I was compelled to abridge some extracts that were too long to be included in their entirety. In such cases I have marked the places where something was omitted with brackets […]. The creation of more artistic compositions is of course a completely different question. These minor artistic and creative experimentations include composing poetry (in this Piece) and conceiving it as a corporeal strategy (Piece V). I also 'painted' with words by using metaphoric language and visual elements (e.g. Shiva's story in Piece IV), through imagined dialogue I created points of connection and separation between interviews and official documents (see Nasir's story in Piece III), and through unconventional layout I highlighted the movement in the stories (e.g. Episode 3; Soran in Piece III).

Writing creatively means that I try to push myself beyond the categories of body/mind, self/other, fact/fiction and truth/make-belief as dichotomies[20]. Originally I resorted to creative writing in order to find a place and position for myself (see Episode 1; cf. Eckl 2008). Then I noticed it helped me in challenging the way my training in IR had influenced my conceptions about the world and naturalised certain questions as worth studying and others as irrelevant or not interesting within the discipline (cf. Constantinou 2000). Because of the latter realisation I ventured on the greatest of my creative experiments and structured this whole work as a collage. Other creative strategies are also experimented with so as to break the logic of representation typical of the scientific tradition of both making neat divisions and drawing clear connections between objects of study. For me these experimentations bring to light the shifting nature and various forms of political life.

I will now briefly address the epistemological potential in poetry in a more

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[19] In terms of the Episodes themselves, numbers 2 and 4 rely on a single interview, Episode 5 is a composite of several interviews, talks and field notes concerning the same person, Episode 1 is based only on field notes and Episode 3 on informal encounters.

[20] The questioning of the division between body/mind and self/other lies also at the heart of Nancy's work, which is why I resort to his writings so strongly in the later parts of this work (see Piece II). Nancy's ontological thinking of the body opens a theoretical and philosophical framework to re-conceptualise political life and the way we are always connected to others.

detailed manner, because the kind of openness typical of it penetrates this whole work in various ways. I use the term poetics in two senses: *poiesis* – to do, to make, to be active and effective – and *poetics* as critique, a practice of rewriting and articulating stories from some *body's* position (see Threadgold 1997: 1; Pugliese 2004: 27). Poetry is a felt and embodied method (Richardson 2002: 879). As such it is in line with my experiences of doing fieldwork and composing research. It is (at least) two-directional, reaching both to the concrete, sensual outer world and to the mental interior world (see Brady 2004: 631; also Poindexter 2002). Thus, poetry can function not only as an alternative way of writing, but also an alternative way of knowing and acting as it allows and encourages change and interpretation (see Richardson 2004: 516). Through narration that includes seeming contradictions and silences, the failed asylum seekers articulate and negotiate spaces and relations. Occasionally this negotiation is manifested within the most minute of acts – like wearing flip-flops in the snow. Communication is, therewith, more than voiced words and sentences (cf. Spivak 1988; Maggio 2007; also Soguk 1999: 54). It includes gestures and moves, touches and sense, taste and feel, which all evoke relationalities and are arenas of political agency (cf. Herzfeld 2007: 431–437)[21].

Writing Nasir's interview in a poetic form was my way to start exploring in a non-linear way what the unfolding of borders means to the body and how the body senses and unfolds the international with various means. The poetic representation follows the structure, spirit and chronological order of the actual interview. In the midst I have inserted my own impressions and perceptions, the connotations Nasir's story brought to my mind and the feelings it aroused in me. To play with the emotionalities present in the interview I versed the poem in a particular manner and included Nasir's tone of voice. I also highlighted with (omitted) punctuation the pace of his narration. This alternative staging of the interview necessitates and enables reading within the apparently empty spaces between words. It makes it possible to ponder the ontological challenge of, as Nasir put it, the "hopeless waiting, meaningless waiting". As much as exposing Nasir's story in a different light, the poem is about me negotiating my disillusionment with my being-in-the-world. This poetic experimentation was the first step in my attempt to answer the challenge that Soran and Benjamin brought to the surface earlier in this Piece and that became the focus of this collage.

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[21] Manning (2007: 8) envisions the potential of gestural politics and regards gestures as providing an alternate (and existing) vocabulary of the political. Her approach, however, has been criticised for overt generalisation (e.g. Blackman 2009).

Lines of life

"We need to talk to you. We have been looking for you." This is how we got started. The TV with an Indian film on is muted. I leave my shoes in the company of four pairs of flip-flops. How can they wear those at this time of the year, I wonder. Almost everybody does, though. Flip-flops in the snow. "A glass of tea?" As a guest: as in an ordinary visit to a friend's house. In the centre, their home. Photos on the shelves, a small and lonely-looking red chair in the doorway, next to an empty carton of milk, half seen from the dustbin. Thick, soft carpets cover the floor. I take a seat in the sofa and bury my toes in the softness of one of the plush carpets as they question my motives and intentions. These five men and me, learning to be with one another, negotiating the space of what might appear. It took us four weeks, five emails, three talks and four cancellations to get here. For them the journey has been longer still.

Oruzgān, Sar-e, Ghaznī, Kabul:
Afghanistan.
We all have it.
The B.
Unjust.
Unjust and unwise.
Finland has never been an attractive
country for refugees.

When they interview they point out flaws
and they make their decisions but they
don't bother ask you again
or allow you to come and appear
before the judge in the court
to explain why those flaws exist you have reasons for them
sometimes there isn't any contradiction, but they think there is.

In the interviews
we
only answer the questions asked.
Most of them not really important.
Not relevant.
Most of the time silly questions
"Why you came to Finland?
What if we send you back?"
Questions that are in their interest.
Being as a police, or being as an official.
Try to show off – being efficient, doing their job well.

Under the Taliban regime, well
(silence)
It was, yeah…
Chopping off someone's hands
Stoning someone   until death
Blow his brains off,
with stones
Mujahedin were even worse.
The same, now in power
slaughtered   in the district of Afshar,
south-west of Kabul
8.000 men, women and children.
Cut off their breasts,
cut off their heads,
and yeah,
so babies...
              [Nausea. Chills.
               I don't want to know.
               Afraid of what might come next.]

"We should work to remove the dictators,
to remove the threat."
In theory it sounds really   good.
Really fancy,
and yeah.
(silence)
Why are you not doing what you say? So,
this is the irony.   [A very harsh irony.]
Yeah, bitter.

[Can I understand what you tell me?]
I just don't know I can't say
I would say   no
things seem or sound really
unbelievable or unimaginable I don't want to
talk about those very gruesome things
because it's,
yeah, really nasty.

[Are you comfortable talking about this?]
They involve your family.
Persecute and punish
the whole family. And you know
that there are, these families
close, big families, living together:
brothers, uncles, aunts.
Everyone suffers.
This is a problem for everyone
who gets into some kind of problems.
So,
we should not go into personal things.
                    [Remembered the note
                     taped on his chest:
                     "Better to die suddenly,
                     than to die
                     little by little."
                     It all happened not too long ago.]

[This, I'm not comfortable asking.]
Many people have died
after they have survived in their own country.
Could not survive on the way to a safe place.
Died on their way.
To some safe place.
People have,
yeah,   drowned.
In rivers, in oceans. People have
come with those
balloon-boats, yeah?
People have crossed the sea with those boats,
Balloon-boats
Almost… many.
From Turkey to Italy or Greece.
Just imagine.
And they would pump it with their own mouth.
From Turkey to Italy on those boats.
Very few reach safely.
            [On the shelf, yellow narcissuses, made of plastic;
             and a white statue of a naked woman.
             Toothbrush and toothpaste.
             A big, white box of medicine.]

They said the district I came from,
it is safe
and you can return.
And, I wondered.
I don't care if it's safe or unsafe it is not
safe for me I have problems there.
I have talked to you about
my problems and you
are telling me it is
safe who the hell cares!?
Where ever they would return me,
once you are there in Afghanistan, yeah.
You're dead.

They don't even think
for a second that
they could be wrong. Incorrect.
Or that we could also be right.
We could also be
telling the truth.

Family.
The most important thing.
Your safety. Their safety.
And that you have a,   yeah,
a normal life a peaceful life
a career.
All of us have one thing in common,
we all strive to live a normal life.
And I guess we have
a right to have a normal life. Just like
any other person.

Being a refugee or
having been born and raised in war,
these two things
can't be explained in words. I'm trying my best,
but I can't.
So many, so many things.

This stress, mental stress.
You are away from your family.
Uncertain about your future.
Your safety.
And yeah, that people
look at you with a different kind of,   you know.
(silence)
This feeling of powerlessness.
That someone else
has your destiny in his hands.
And he can do whatever he wants to.
He can… If he wanted,
he could give you that opportunity.
Give you that life,
normal life. Give you your only dream.
And if he wanted,
he could destroy and finish everything.

[A sleepless night]

For me, creative writing serves as a way to reflect on the politics of doing research in IR (cf. Humpreys 2005; Acharya 2011). An important part of the scope of my writing is to convey the multiple political meanings attached to the experiences that this work takes up (see Ellis 2004: 64–69, 127). Carolyn Ellis (2004: 122–127) has written excellently about using alternative writing methods to get at the experience of the participants: these methods function to explore how (political) life is being performed (also Sluka 2007). However, experience cannot be fully captured no matter what method one resorts to. The ethnographer needs to reflect critically on her roles and positions with regard to the subject studied (see e.g. Marcus 2004; Reyes Cruz 2008).

Creative writing allows me to represent the failed asylum seekers' lives, practices, beliefs, values and feelings. The sensuous elements bring context to the story and transfer the focus of my research on failed asylum from a question to a struggle, which is experiential. Undoubtedly, the claims one can make through creative writing differ significantly from more conventional approaches in social sciences. Furthermore, as my writing is based in a particular political and time context it does not aspire to perform an exclusive narration of failed asylum or those rela-

tions and politics that the failed asylum seekers partake in and enact[22].

As a method creative ethnographic writing builds relationships, rather than communicates about a political subject (see Gergen & Gergen 2002: 12). In accordance with that thought, in resorting to creative methods I am not only writing the Other, but also "relieving emotional pressure" (Richardson 2002), "rewriting myself" (Richardson 1992) and my relations to others (see Richardson 1998). Not claiming to represent something that is absolutely real per se or that tells the truth about something, does not yet mean that I did not seek to remain true to what happened and fair to the events and discussions that took place. The reflexive form of writing highlights the fact that interpretations do not simply emerge out of the blue, but even scientific analysis always involves a multiplicity of choices and decisions (see Kvale 2006: 487; also Brinkmann 2009; Wright 2009: 629–630).

The perspective I have adopted requires contemplating the self as a relevant resource for IR. The thus emerging genre of *auto*ethnography manifests an unexpected, although not an inexistent form of writing IR (e.g. Cohn 1987; Doty 2004; 2010; Huynh 2007; 2010; Brigg & Bleiker 2010; Löwenheim 2010; Neumann 2010). In ethnography the self has been a legitimate, yet not unproblematic, source of knowledge for a long time. There is no reason why it could not be(come) one also in IR. And yet, as Morgan Brigg and Roland Bleiker (2010: 782–784) point out confirming Wanda Vrasti's (2010) perception, most efforts within the discipline are headstrong in writing the self out, rather than in (cf. Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 156). Autoethnography is a relational practice that evokes a particular understanding of knowledge. The practical involvements of a (self-)reflexive researcher encompass both the scholarly field and the wider society (cf. Jackson 2011: 165, 174–179). Autoethnographic insight, therefore, is not limited to the research-doing I, but as a form of writing it invites the readers to reflect on their being in relation to the presence of failed asylum seekers.

Drawing on the nature of autoethnography, instead of explanation interpretation gains prominence in ethnographic IR (cf. Humpreys 2010: 257–262). In interpretive understanding, the reflexive structure is never closed, but, to put it in Nancian terms, understanding incessantly precedes and proceeds itself. Such an approach turns the hermeneutical circle into a matter of existence. Furthermore, because existence is always bodily also the process of interpretation should use all the resources of sense making – including the (material) self – that are available (see Librett 1997: 131; Cohen 2007: 109). Both the ethnographer's and the research participant's bodies are interpretive resources and ways of gaining insight.

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[22] Failed asylum as such is by no means a Finnish particularity, but a political issue that touches upon most, if not all, Western societies. Therefore, my case can be used to illustrate something more profound about the mode of thought, which gives rise to such a phenomenon. (See also Newland 2010.)

Through self-reflection and self-effacement ethnography approaches the body and senses as hermeneutic resources, which implies that ethnography always involves an autoethnographic element (also Jenkins 2010: 84; Cerwonka & Malkki 2007: 33–36; also Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 172). The understanding thus gained takes account of the constant interplay between the body, the senses, politics and the international (cf. Episode 1; also Löwenheim 2010).

Between the international and the local, the self and the social, the personal and the political, there is a constant dialectics, which becomes reflected through the practices and relations that people enact and foster locally on what is going on in the world (cf. Chen, Hwang & Ling 2009: 757). The different genres of writing help me to reflect on how information, emotions and ideas are shared and how they relate to more abstract philosophical and theoretical discussions about the body and its place within the international. Within IR ethnography not only makes it worthwhile to explore the political significance of localised practices, but it also challenges our visions of what it means to be political in the spheres of the international. The point of reflexive writing is to shed light on the multiple realities and meanings of being a failed asylum seeker and the relationalities and dynamics that occur between sovereign(s)/the international and the deeply personal/emotional. The international is not about bloodless and disembodied abstractions, nor can we in Finland afford to think that we are untouched by the injustices of war, poverty and conflict because they are apparently absent from our society.

1.4.   The senses of the international

[Modern politics] is predicated on the assumption that all of humanity, all the peoples of the world, can be brought *within* the jurisdiction of some modern sovereign state that can itself find its proper place within the community of modern nations, within what is now often called the multilateral world of the international, so that the modern individualized political subject can find its home, its space for freedom under the necessity of law[.] Or perhaps the logic works the other way around, so that we should say that modern politics has become, among other things, an individualist or subjectivist politics. It is predicated on the assumption that people must be understood as individuals, each in principle free and equal, and thus in need of a state to ensure their continued well-being, and some kind of arrangement between states to ensure the continued capacity of states to secure their modern subjects. Or perhaps it has become a statist politics, predicated on the assumption that it is the state that produces both its subjects and the system that somehow enables its own existence. Or perhaps […] the structural logics linking the international and the individual through the claims of the modern sovereign state are rather more multidimensional, co-constitutive and uneven than these familiar monological options […] tend to suggest.

(Walker 2009: 47, italics orig.)

In the light of the above quote, there is nothing simple or easy in failed asylum, if we perceive it to be a phenomenon in which the questions of sovereignty and modern political subjectivity intertwine. This *does not* mean, however, that we should not engage with the challenge it presents to our political imagination. Instead it *does* mean that anyone aspiring to do so needs to be cautious in not succumbing to the familiar structural logics that Walker describes and that often are affirmed as the necessary points of departure for any analysis of political life within IR.

As my struggles in categorising and theorising the topic suggest, (failed) asylum seekers have multiple and multiform ways of contesting and disrupting the functions and practices of the spatiotemporal logic on which International Relations was originally founded (see Piece II). The challenge that failed asylum seekers present to the discipline is multifarious. It is in their ways of engagement and relating with various others. So, if I am to answer the call that the fieldwork and research participants exposed, I need to explore the limit between the international and the personal (cf. Taylor 2005). Or actually, I must perform my explorations in a way that acknowledges this limit as multidimensional, uneven and, most importantly, co-constitutive of both the international and the 'singular' human being. The failed asylum seekers' bodily presence – both in spatial and temporal terms – needs to be explored in its political complexity.

I would claim that it is necessary that those of us writing academic IR remain open to multiple stories that may not suit our conceptions of what counts within the discipline, and sustain from relying solely and uncritically on familiar forms of narration. This requires being invested in stories of a different kind of world, acknowledging that we might get it wrong, and being invested in how we write our stories. The epistemological promise of ethnography and creative practices in International Relations lies in their potential to expose relations of the international as culturally and historically situated accounts of people's political place in the world. In line with this spirit and with the methodological choices introduced in this Piece, I sought to highlight some of the multiple connections, shifting practices and hybrid relations that entwine politicised bodies in various corporeal conjunctures no-w-here, and to illustrate these conjunctures as potentially meaningful within IR. By engaging with the failed asylum seekers my work argues for sensory and inherently corporeal articulations of political life that exceed strict categorisations and the logic of sovereignty (also Sylvester 2007).

Failed asylum seekers' ontological potentiality lies in various relations, multiple practices of relating and in the condition of us all being-towards-others, our compearance. According to Erin Manning (2007: 160) focusing on individual subjectivity is not enough when thinking about the body and bodies, since the body does not exist alone, but requires other bodies to become a body (see also Nancy 1998; 2008). The body, no matter what its political status is, has the potential to

reach towards another body, touch it and leave traces of oneself on the other. Such a stance requires rethinking the sense and experiences of the international unfolding on the body, and also the spaces, places and relations that the body creates through its movements and gestures.

The reflexivist stance of this work implies that through gaining knowledge of the international I simultaneously seek to transform it and the kind of political project it represents (see Piece II; cf. Jackson 2011: 159–160). Hope of transformation and the related hope of seeing a different political project of the international involve regarding 'failed asylum' as something that does not have to be, that came to be over time and with effort (cf. Ahmed 2004: 180). It is necessary to start questioning the relations in which we are talking, in order not to stare blindly on what we are talking about (see Olsson 1991: 99; cf. Chakrabarty 2000; Muppidi 2010). Ultimately, my collage aspires to present both the body as a space within which the international occurs and the international as a lived, but always incomplete, spatiality (cf. Massey 1992; Kirby 1993; Ruiz 2002; Falk, Ruiz & Walker 2002). Indeed, the failed asylum seekers move beyond impersonal and disembodied international relations – both in upper and lower case – and articulate these relations as choices, decisions, commitments and engagements (cf. Said 2001: 120).

In the pages to come I would like the reader to muse the idea that the international is not something waiting to be found and recorded, but as much a social and political product as the failed asylum seeker. In this sense, also the 'question' of the international is a politico-corporeal struggle fought on multiple fronts, with varied strategies and means, in the bodily relations between people. Thus my collage seeks to make a contribution to reimagining socio-political practices that give rise to a particular understanding of political life, what it can be and where it occurs. This does not mean that this collage sets out to predict specific outcomes. Rather it exposes political life unfolding on multiple fronts and through various strategies that materialise poignantly in the struggle of failed asylum.

Episode 2

Claiming authority: the question of political life

As soon as Farzad sits down on the white leather sofa, he wants to know how my work is going on. Have I talked to others? What have I asked and what have I been told? I explain again what I do in the centre, that I have spoken to others who have the B permit, and provide a list of things and themes that have come up in my talks. When I mention hopes for the future, Farzad looks at me and asks "what hope do they have? What kind of hope can we have? How are we different from those whose fingerprints are in the system and who are deported in a short time?" He looks at me and I know I have to give an answer. "What hope can we have with a B? Tell me, how are we different from those others?" I speculate that temporality is one key aspect; that those with the B do not know for sure what will happen, if and when they are deported. I explain how the B is officially speaking a positive decision, but because of all the restrictions, it is more often considered a negative one. Farzad's eyes penetrate mine and he asks "and how is this decision positive? How do you feel about this?" He is seeminly unhappy with my evasive wording. He exclaims giving his interpretation of the issue: "Hope! What hope can you have with this B? Tell me what kind of hopes these people, you have met, have?" I tell that their hopes are really directed towards the time after the B, but Farzad replies that for him this is impossible. "You never know what can happen after this. You cannot hope for or plan anything."

Farzad came to Finland in June 2005. "I complained about my decision, appealed, but it has now been over ten months and I still have no answer. How long is it going to take? Now my first B will expire, and I still do not know about my future. How can you plan your future with the B? You can't. I don't know with whom to talk, what to say anymore. We are told that we cannot study or work. We haven't come here to live in a refugee centre, even though here we don't have to be afraid of being killed, but we come here to find a better life. We don't come here to get the 300 euros per month to buy food. We expect to have a better life. Work, live, study; be free. That's what we want, nothing much. The trip is very long; some of us have come 8.000 or 10.000 kilometres to live like this here. It is very expensive to come."

I ask if he has a family, and whether he came alone. "Yes, I have family in Afghanistan, or at the moment I don't know where they are. I just hope that they left the village in time.

It is a bad village, where the Taliban still try to rule and there's constant violence. I hope that my mother and two little brothers left that village, and Afghanistan. When I came here, I left a letter to the social worker, who sent it to the Red Cross in Helsinki who sent it to Kabul, where somebody tried to find my family, but they were not there. They couldn't be found anywhere. And now I don't know where they are. After my father… (pause) Who's going to take care of them now?" I ask whether he thinks of his family a lot. "I always think of them. I'm a human. She's my mother. I will never forget her." Farzad says that it is not easy to worry about his family and then of his own life here. He tells that he doesn't know if he would stay in Finland, because somebody has to take care of his mother, and his brothers are so young.

"My lawyer doesn't want to talk to me anymore because I have asked her for so many times when the decision will come. I just worry about my life and future, and that's why I ask her so often, maybe the others don't so much. People are different. Why do we have to live like this? Are we not human? Why do we have to share the room with five people and the toilets and showers and kitchen? You can put that in when you write."

My interview with Farzad in September 2006 was in many ways a frustrating experience for me. It made me question my skills and competence as an interviewer, the setting of my research and whether I was personally up to the task. It took me some time to grasp what had happened during our discussion; with all the emotions that were present and the relationship that evolved between us. Then something caught my eye. A minor sentence at the end of the interview, said in an emphatic tone: "*you can put that in when you write*". This voice did not make any excuses, did not ask for pity or compassion. It was meant as a comment on my work and on the conditions the failed asylum seekers lived in. The claim for authority that Farzad presented was strong. It went beyond the body as simply an object of sovereign power and politics.

Failed asylum seekers claim political authority and their right to control their lives (see also Benhabib 2004: 49–69; Moulin & Nyers 2007; Squire 2009: cf. Burke 2002; Bleiker & Kay 2007). Farzad's interview, in fact, exposed the political in the body and opened a space for transformation. His voice was closely linked to the Finnish politics of asylum, but it did not acquiesce to it. The political became exposed through the restlessness that the status and constant uncertainty bore on his body. With questions like "why do we have to live like this" and "are we not human", Farzad implicitly demanded breaking the securitising logic of lines so central in IR/ir (also Bigo 2001; Walker 1993).

Farzad disrupted the knowledge hierarchy between us and claimed that our ways of perceiving the topic of failed asylum were rather different. Yet, his lament concerning his body being placed beyond the possibility of pursuing a normal life – a life much like mine in its basic aspirations – illustrated that we were both

involved in the corporeal struggle of failed asylum. The political relationality that Farzad evoked could not be unambiguously categorised or contained. The more I talked with people and observed what was going on around me, the more this aspect started intriguing and interesting me. In the end, the interviews made it imperative for me to reflect upon the space for politics and the possibilities of political life – possibilities that for some are self-evident and for others unattainable (cf. Rajaram & Grundy-Warr 2004; Walters 2006).

The disparity between people's possibilities of enacting themselves politically necessitates developing a theoretical stance that distances itself from the accounts of sovereignty and the sovereign subject. The logic that founds these concepts does not leave space to account for the multiple expressions of political existence that, for instance, failed asylum seekers enact.

Piece II

Political life beyond accommodation and return

Eeva: Did you come with a fake one [passport] or somebody else's?
Benjamin: Somebody else's passport.
Eeva: Somebody else's.
Benjamin: Yeah, it's a Portuguese passport.
Eeva: Okay.
Benjamin: Yeah. So, I come with it, […] and they [the Directorate of Immigration] told me that […] they can't grant me. I said "fine", I have a chance to appeal. […] So, we are here to see what God would do, because they said they have to prepare my documents to send me. And […] now after you hear my story finish, you are preparing to send me back, to my destiny. So that means, even if I go and die, it's not your problem.

(Interview with Benjamin, June 2007)

[A]nyone seeking to reimagine the possibilities of political life under contemporary conditions would be wise to […] pay far greater attention to what goes on at the boundaries, borders and limits orchestrated *within* the international that simultaneously imagines the possibility and impossibility to move *across* the boundaries, borders and limits distinguishing itself from some world beyond.

(Walker 2009: 2, italics orig.)

It is safe to say that asylum seekers have limited options of entering Europe. As in Benjamin's case, the routes may open up with human traffickers, travelling with fake documents, or providing an acceptable reason for entry in order to get a visa. Crossing a political border, however, puts the identity of an asylum seeker under suspicion. Unclear identity creates space for a struggle over the meanings of the body and raises the need to label the moving body in terms of the prevail-

ing political order. As a result, Benjamin was detained. He had crossed the border to Finland, but did not manage to move *across* it as his body was symbolically placed between state territories in the act of detention (cf. Haddad 2008: 113; see also Doty 1999: 597; Nevins 2008: 27–28). Indeed, as the quote from Walker's book *After the Globe, Before the World* suggests, these borders, boundaries and limitations are orchestrated within the international. They bear concrete effects on people's possibilities to enact themselves politically and are hence central to imagining what political life can and might be about.

As Benjamin implies, the bodily politics of the international effectively out-sources the ethical dimension of asylum: after the administrative process has reached its conclusion and the label has been assigned, 'we' can contend that what happens to the person afterwards is no longer 'our' problem (cf. Puumala 2010). The minimum requirements that the Finnish state is obliged to fulfil have been met, and no ethical concerns about the destiny of the person are necessary. This is the harsh reality that follows from applying the logic of inside/outside to the case of migratory movement. Even in benevolent terms the idea of place, iden-tity and belonging being tied together easily leads to the victimising assumption that to become uprooted and displaced equals losing one's identity, traditions and culture (Malkki 1995: 508). For the reasons presented in Piece I, adopting either a strictly administrative or victimising perspective was not possible for me. The failed asylum seekers' experiences made me feel compelled to explore the knowl-edge practices within asylum politics and question its ontological foundations (cf. Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 158).

To criticise the state as the site of political activity *par excellence* and to claim that political life exceeds the state is rather simplistic – and nowadays rather un-imaginative. It is much harder to think what are the possibilities and forms of political life that lie somewhere beyond the state (see Walker 2009: 42). Yet this Piece attempts to do just that. In the first section of this Piece (section 2.1.) I will introduce Jean-Luc Nancy's thinking on ontological compearance in order to claim that borders, border practices or a certain form of governmentality can never solve the 'problem' posed by the moving body. I posit that Nancy's philosophy enables an examination of the body's capacity to articulate political relationalities that reach well beyond rigid and straight boundaries. The second section (section 2.2.) focuses on the critique of the state and the system of states as the space within which people's political life is assumed to take place. I will chart how the process of categorisation, as an expression of sovereign politics, works and how the label 'failed' is received. This means exploring critically those *limits* of political life that governmental practices institute within the international. The section 2.3., in turn, begins to tweak the focus of analysis and addresses the *possibilities* of political life. The tweak is finally completed in the section 2.4., which discusses the failed

asylum seekers' agentive potential.

As a whole this Piece shifts the focus of analysis to those relations of the international that the body initiates and enacts notwithstanding its marginal position. It posits that the need to re-conceptualise 'failed asylum' and the failed body arises from a particular political reality and context. Attending to the struggle of failed asylum should not, hence, be considered simply as a purely academic or my (auto-) ethnographic endeavour. As human beings we are all presented with this puzzle by those asylum seekers that our societies have failed.

2.1.   Towards ontological compearance

> One must hear [...] the fact that [existence] carries itself to the day, with the space-time of its ex-isting, *through*, *in*, and *as* plural singularity. And this does not occur in any distinct manner between 'man' on one side and 'nature' on the other, but this partaking is itself already existential, and this existential carries with it the instance of a labor and an exchange themselves *a priori*.
>
> (Nancy 2004b: 42–43, italics orig.)

The above quote makes a claim in terms of existence and suggests that the political cannot be reduced to resistance. Thus, theoretical propositions, which suggest that asylum seekers demand their political recognition and inclusion through resisting and conforming to sovereign power, are somewhat problematic (e.g. Edkins & Pin-Fat 2005: 105; cf. Ahmed 2000: 3). In these approaches relations are established through labelling the 'alien' in terms of the prevailing order. However, in what will follow, I posit that the claim of the failed asylum seekers might belong to a completely different political register. I suggest that the failed asylum seekers' political agency needs to be understood and theorised in terms of 'the political', if one is to avoid reducing the asylum seeker to a sovereign-less subject with no political significance. 'The political' marks the ways in which the body exceeds the question of both sovereign authority and subjectivity and the ways in which the singular plural body always comes into being with other bodies; it compears.

2.1.1.   *A short introduction to the political as a question of relation*

Even though Jean-Luc Nancy is not a political philosopher, his philosophy treats – or perhaps more accurately re-treats – the question of the political[23]. For the pur-

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[23] In fact, in the book *Retreating the Political* (1997) Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe cast for instance Hannah Arendt as an empirical analyst of politics – a political scientist – and establish their own position as "quasi-transcendental analysts of the political" (see Caygill 1997: 26–29).

poses of my argument, it is important to take note that in Nancian thought there is a fine but significant distinction between 'politics' (*la politique*) and 'the political' (*le politique*) (see Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy 1997)[24]. This distinction now merits some further examination. In Nancy's philosophy 'politics' refers to empirical action, praxis, which takes place within the sphere of normalised order. Thus, 'politics' denotes the oscillation of power and interests in processes of governance. To the contrary, 'the political' cannot be reduced to governmental rationality or the composition and dynamics of power, for it indicates philosophy, a system of meaning/intelligibility within which 'politics' manifests itself. (See also Dikeç 2005: 185; Norris 2000b: 54.) In a manner of speaking, then, 'politics' denotes various ways of actualising 'the political' and putting it into practice. In this collage 'politics' represents a struggle over something that can be known, named and recognised. 'The political', again, takes form through humane restlessness brought about by a process of becoming, which remains open and subject to change and which the experiencing bodies consider lacking (Puumala & Pehkonen 2010: 56; also Puumala *et al.* 2011).

The political cannot be reduced to a project, for it is something that occurs when bodies come together and relate to one another. Namely, the political emerges from relations rather than precedes them (see e.g. Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy 1997: 133). Furthermore, when we take note of the fact that for Nancy 'the political' is our ontological state and situation – a question of the nature of our existence – we can see that 'politics' takes shape as a project, a particular but by no means the only possible way of organising that existence (see Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy 1997: 110). Not only does this elaboration suggest that the body has a central role in politics, but further yet, it implies that the body is inseparable from the political. Actually Nancy's is a philosophy of carnation, which takes up the body (*corpus*) in its materiality and as such it goes beyond mere embodiment – or incarnation as he himself terms it. With a focus on the marks and effects that power leaves on the body or on the ways that processes of inscription affect the body's capacity to take up political acts and constitute oneself as a political agent, embodiment works at an epistemological level (see e.g. Beasley & Bacchi 2000; Coole 2005; Penttinen 2008). On the other hand, a focus on carnation and fathoming the body as ontological privilege the process of *exscription* and moments of *exposure*, which mark the body's capacity to articulate a relational politics.

For Nancy the body as a place of existence is characterised by openness. It is a

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[24] Nancy's formulations differ from Carl Schmitt's ideas, which have gained most prominence in political studies. With the concept of the political, Schmitt (2007), denotes the essence of politics (distinct from party politics), which is predominantly the state's realm. The political, in Schmittean thought, is essential to identity. This results in that the other (an enemy) is made the figure in opposition to which the content of politics and state unity are defined.

place, which makes room for creating an event. Perhaps we can understand what is at stake with such a notion of the body, when we pay attention to the Nancian conception of existence, which places heavy emphasis on happening. Indeed, according to Nancy even our being *occurs* between us or, in other words, we *are* not, but we *come-into-presence*. Our being and bodies resist exhaustive telling and knowing. Therefore, the body never makes sense, but is a sense in action: always on the edge, "at the extreme limit", "about to leave, on the verge of a movement, a fall, a gap, a dislocation" (See Nancy 2008: 15–17, 33; cf. also Hewitt 1997: 38). The body signifies that what is outside, next to, against, nearby, with a(n) (other) body; it is an opening and an exposure. What follows from the condition and nature of the body is that our being is always constituted by its withness. But even this relation between 'us' cannot be named beforehand as it has no specific shape, rather it is "a movement of withdrawal from any substance" (Caygill 1997: 23). The Nancian ontological body, in fact, undermines the notion of a sovereign subject and rethinks the meaning of coexistence, i.e. how it would be possible to think of relations between bodies and between the body and community in a way that would not lead to totalitarian rule[25].

Conceiving 'the political' in terms of relation results in the disposition of community as such. Indeed, 'the sharing of the community' and 'the political' can stand as synonyms for one another (Dallmayr 1997: 182). Hence, the openness of 'the political' and the openings that it bears for IR demand re-thinking the structuring principles of community, or thinking of community in terms of "the destination of its sharing" (Nancy 2003a; 2004a: 40; cf. Edkins 1999: esp. 125–146). Such an approach may sound completely foreign for IR, because the discipline has conventionally placed far more emphasis on acts of excluding than acts of sharing. Within the discipline the state or the society of states has for long served to stabilise and justify a more or less common form of (international) social and political life (cf. Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 146–147). However, for Nancy community is not related or equivalent to a state, an ideology or a political orientation (see also Fynsk 2004: x; Panelli & Welch 2005; 2007).

In Nancy's philosophy, the 'co-' of community does not refer to a commonality, but signals the "sharing out of a space" and "a being together without assemblage" (Nancy 2003a: 31–32). The notion of the share – in terms of an act of finite being – is central to Nancy's concept of community. In other words, the question of community is a question of withness; what we all have in common is, perhaps con-

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[25] In this regard the connections of Nancy's thinking to Hegel and Heidegger are clear. Nancy's philosophy is a response to Western metaphysics, which considers politics as a real practice that originates and culminates in a self-identical, self-sufficient, self-determining entity whether viewed in terms of nation, race, class, religion, sex, gender or another category of cultural-political identity. (See Librett 1997: 123.)

troversially, that we are apart. Accordingly, two bodies can never occupy the same place, which in other words means that all existence, and therefore also political existence, signals the sharing of the world (see Nancy 2000: 29)[26]. A notion of the community of singular-beings positions identity in difference and articulates the radical (im)possibility of identity as an essential and substantive category of being (see Librett 1997: 124, fn. 25; also Nancy 2004a). With regard to International Relations, such an approach disposes the nation-state, the system of states and the sovereign subject, and requires engagement with the political potential that the inherent withness of being exposes (cf. Odysseos 2007). Community thus fathomed, claims Howard Caygill (1997: 23) provides radical reconceptions of freedom, ethics and the political.

Resulting from the emphasis that Nancy places on relationalities, the ontology of the body is in fact an ontology of "being-with-one-another" (*être-les-uns-avec-les-autres*)[27]. This ontology suggests that human existence is a question of compearance: we come to presence – happen – only with one another. In other words, and to put it as simply as possible, we co-appear. However, it needs to be clarified that Nancy by no means aspires to establish the body as ontological in the sense of a concrete category of being (cf. Manning 2007: xxi). For Nancy, there is no foundation upon which existence is, instead "there is only the 'with' – proximity and its distancing – the strange familiarity of all the worlds in the world" (Nancy 2000: 187). In this sense, the concept of ontology might not be the most suitable one to describe what he seeks to emphasise; namely *the event of becoming as the essence of being-with.*

With regard to my efforts to think of the senses of the international, the ontology of the body incites me to focus on relations as the concretisation of our singular-plural condition. These relations take place locally, at the limit between a person – always situated in a body – and the community. Being unfolds when bodies come together and 'the political' begins to take form on the surface of the body, thus arousing feelings and sensations. The emphasis placed on the relational nature

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[26] Were my collage completely faithful to Nancy's thought it would not make sense to talk about existence and political existence as if they were separable from one another. Nancy fathoms the political as an existential condition, which means that all existence is political – or that the political is intrinsic for existence. For the sake of bringing my argument closer to the conceptual conventions of IR I chose to distinguish between the two.

[27] In a more radical manner than Heidegger in *Being and Time*, Nancy demonstrates how the self I am thrives only because it is always placed in a situation of plurality. This always and already being-with-many is the point of departure of his ontology. In order to avoid any future confusion, it needs to be noted that the ontology that Nancy posits appears under several names, such as "the ontology of bodies", "the ontology of the body", "the ontology of being-with", "the ontology of being-towards" and "the ontology of being many". Nevertheless, the content of this ontology does not change, but the variety of concepts merely illustrates the emphasis Nancy places on the taking place of existence together with the fragmentary nature of his thought.

of existence and the political enables the present exploration into the possibilities of political life within the international through corporeal conjunctures.

2.1.2.   Philosophical infidelities and theoretical reservations

Before going any further, it must be underlined that my collage is not a Nancian theorisation of failed asylum. It is not actually a purely Nancian effort at all. Nancy's philosophy – or my limited reading of it – is not even my point of departure, but evoked in order to reflect creatively upon failed asylum as a corporeal struggle and upon the meanings of this struggle in terms of the international and the political. The ontology of the body and a Nancian understanding of the political merely serve to illustrate and question, first of all, some of the corporeal dimensions of the Finnish asylum policies and, secondly, the way in which failed asylum seekers' agentive bodies might inform scholarly debates around political life in international relations. Having now exempted myself from performing a strictly Nancian project, it is necessary that I relate my reading of him to his wider thought. At the same time it is also necessary to discuss why I have chosen Nancy in particular as a philosophical point of reference, or what makes his work stand out in the field of study that my collage pursues. Nancy's thought was not the only possible choice, but for me it was the most prominent one[28].

Ian James (2006: 2) characterises Nancy's philosophical corpus as a response to "a fragmentary demand", or to "a demand made by the fragmentary". The emphasis on the fragmentary signals that Nancy's writings do not form a unitary effort, although certain concerns – such as Christianity, subjectivity, body and art – keep reappearing (see also Sheppard, Sparks & Thomas 1997). For my purposes Nancy's contribution to debates on community and the nature of the political cannot be left aside. His thought can perhaps be characterised as an attempt to create a yet unattended constellation concerned with the questions of freedom and 'the common' as he has persistently sought to engage with pressing contemporary concerns such as war, technology and injustice (e.g. Nancy 1999; 2000: 101–143; 2003b:

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[28] Perhaps the most common approaches in the studies on migration and displacement that concern the question of political life build on Jacque Rancière's or Giorgio Agamben's thought. Relying on either of the two philosophers, however, does not enable questioning the foundations of our very notion of politics, what it is and where it can be found. Agamben's work focuses on the functions and effects of the "sovereign ban", and thus it reduces all political existence to the sphere of sovereignty.

Rancière, for his part, seeks to address the possibilities of and the necessity to come to terms with people's equal capacity and right to claim rights. However, in dividing subjectivities to those who have a part and those who do not, even if contesting this division, Rancière's thought remains within a logic that conceives existence and being political in terms of the subject. Neither of the two, then, are able to account for the possibilities of political life that question those ontological relations on which our political imagination is founded.

277–288; 2006; 2007a; see also Hutchens 2005; James 2006; Wall 2008; Devisch 2011)[29].

The possibilities that Nancy's treatment of human rights and citizenship opens in IR were an important factor in my choice of his ontology (see Nancy 2000; also Motha 2002; Ahrens 2005; van der Walt 2005; Devisch 2011: 5). Indeed, for Nancy the world is finite and contingent, fragmentary and resistant to any totalisation within a system of goals or ideologies. This world is one of material bodies that come-into-presence with one another. (See James 2006: 151.) The coming together of these two aspects make Nancy's thought intriguing for IR and, at least for me, indispensable in thinking the *possibilities* and not merely the limits of political life.

As perhaps became obvious from the discussion in the previous section, Nancy's concept of the 'singular-plural' is particularly important for this work. Singular plurality is a demand to think of 'being' as existence where any possibility of unity and identity has been withdrawn. In other words, singular-plurality does not allow any references to an overarching unity, commonality or totality. Nancy's ontology is both "*an ethos* and *a praxis*" (Nancy 2000: 65; also Norris 2000a; Wagner 2006; Schwarzmantel 2007; cf. however Fraser 1984; Critchley 1993; Caygill 1997; Elliott 2011). It requires that sense be made to signify in a way which addresses sense as singular and plural, and also as the infinitely open-ended spacing – or spatiotemporal unfolding – of a shared world. The ontology of being-with, then, allows us to address the real existence of beings in a way that attends to their specificity and relationality. This ontology enacts itself as both an ethics of and an address to the singular-plural of being. (See James 2006: 112–113.)

By placing emphasis on being-in-the-world as finite existence Nancy's ontology of the body provides an excellent point of reflection for a study, which aspires to address the worldly, bodily and real. This is so because Nancy engages with the body in its materiality and physical situatedness. The perspective that thus opens makes it not only possible, but also necessary to think of failed asylum seekers' corporeality and presence in terms of an agentive body politic, which accounts for a messy, lived and material existence (see section 2.4.; also Ojakangas 2005: 42–45). This ontology poses 'being' as a movement of sense, which in its singular plurality is always bodily (see James 2006: 103). Adopting a Nancian lens allows me to utilise my field experiences as an important point of insight into the challenge

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[29] It is curious that Rancière criticises Nancy for being linked to an idea of 'fundamentalist' philosophy, as Nancy still remains attached to the idea of philosophy that seeks to postulate, in its impossibility perhaps, a primary experience of e.g. meaning, the world, the other and the common. (See Baronian & Rosello 2008; cf. however Perpich 2005: 86–89.) I interpret Nancy's philosophy as seeking to question and interrupt the apparent integrity of political and social identities and look for points of rupture for example in bodies taken over by asylum politics. For me, Nancy's thinking of finite being makes his philosophy deconstructive. (Cf. Watkin 2009.)

that the presence of failed asylum seekers introduces to our thinking and being. It urges us to question the foundations of our being (political) and our ways of knowing. Nancy's thought enables me to transcend the play of identity and difference, sameness and otherness and allows – or perhaps even demands – an examination of the possibilities of political life within the international. Besides representing a political project, the international, in my collage, takes shape as a political process, which should not be univocally coincided with the material world.

According to Nancy, we – each and every one of us – must at all times be able to answer for our existence. It is our ethical and existential responsibility to one another. However, it is exactly this that the spatiotemporal logic of sovereignty prohibits us from doing by seeking to frame our rights and liberties in terms of our political situatedness in the state. If we, then, wish to come to terms with this existential responsibility, we must resort to a different ontological order, a different status of what is (see Nancy 2000: 179; Devisch 2011: 6). Thus, ontological descriptions of being-in-common are never contemplations of the status quo of the world, but lead to a much deeper exploration of the problems confronting our time (see Devisch 2011: 7–13; also Matteo 2005: 323–324).

Albeit my work is not a Nancian effort as such, it can still be claimed that this collage is an illustration of Nancy's ontology. On the one hand, it takes up the ways in which the failed asylum seekers are captive to the limits that the international as a system of sovereign states instantiates. On the other, this work acknowledges that the failed asylum seekers' body politic is resistant to and transcends those limits and articulates the possibilities that 'shared becoming' bears for our understandings of political life within the international.

2.1.3.   *International relations through a Nancian lens*

In particular the meaning and role of two concepts in disciplinary IR and the way Nancy's ontology re-treats them, need to be taken up here. These are *sovereignty* and *the (acting) subject*. The principle of sovereignty, to put it crudely, seeks to solve the problem of 'otherness' within international relations. In an orthodox approach to IR, disorder is thought to result from difference and therewith the sphere of the international represents chaos and anarchy. Stability and social order are products of social conformity and homogeneity, situated within a state or possibly within another form of sovereign authority. This Hobbesian understanding means that power is spatialised in the form of the sovereign state, which translates the plurality of voices to a singular will (see also Campbell 1998b: 42). The doctrine of

sovereign authority is in fact closely related to the conception of body politics[30] as within this imaginary political life gains its expression in the figure of a citizen.

The principle of sovereignty, whether conceived in terms of the state or a system of states, presumes human commonality and claims that such commonality must be created (Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 95). For Nancy, again, the very notion of the state testifies to the necessity to discover a principle of grounding and of solidity, where such an absolute foundation is definitively lacking (Nancy 2007b: 9; cf. Ahrens 2005). He argues that political longing for a community of people joined by identity and background is just another name for nationalisms and sub-national forms of identification, which lead to conflicts (Nancy 2000: 101–143; cf. Shapiro 1997; also Olsson 2007). The raison d'être of the statist community has tragically failed its (unachievable) promise – a stable territorial/ethnic community – and the amount of human suffering caused by politics driven by sovereign body political idea(l)s has become too great to ignore (see Nancy 1993b; also Chan 2010).

Sovereignty, however, is not merely a spatial construct. It results also from a specific historical (temporal) development and thus it goes beyond being solely about the territorial state. Sovereignty represents a form of authority, which develops in and through time. It relates to community formation as it gives communities a sense of continuity and enables the development of narratives of belonging and home. Sovereignty is perhaps best conceptualised as a process, which authorises distinctions and separations and seeks to maintain and enforce them. In terms of political life, the ontological privilege given to sovereignty has been utilised to deny some people full subjectivity, rights and agency (see e.g. Nayak & Selbin 2010: 29). Because of these limitations embedded in the principle of sovereignty, I need to go further than inquire after the effects or practices of resistance and struggle among the failed asylum seekers. A deeper questioning of sovereignty as a founding ontological principle of the international is called for.

My work shares with Nancian thought the view that political philosophy can no more make itself "a matter of a single community, of its essence, closure, and sovereignty" (Nancy 2000: 35). Nancy (2000: 36) invites us to think "what becomes of sovereignty when it is revealed that it is nothing but a singularly plural spacing". This original doubling of sovereignty, the subject and community/nation evades political existence being condensed into an essentiality (see Motha 2002: 315; cf. van der Walt 2005). Such an approach makes it feasible to think of political life beyond a linear and bounded conception of space-time proposed by state sovereignty.

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[30] This concept is one significant point of potential confusion in my writing. Traditionally in IR the concept of body politic refers to bringing together people, state and territory into a harmonious and homogeneous whole. My use of Nancy's thought relies on his definition of the body politic and is related to his ontology of the body. In my work, body politic refers always and in all contexts to the sphere of the political and therefore to Nancian thought.

Furthermore, it allows for the examination of both 'being' in terms of ontological compearance and sovereignty as something that is shared by all of us existing in community, that is us being-with-one-another (Nancy 2000: 34–35; also Nancy 1992; Ahrens 2005: 310). A Nancian conception of sovereignty, thus, demands us to think how we are 'us' among us (Nancy 2000: 26; also Motha 2002, Devisch 2011). This task exceeds notions of foundational identity and difference, and it deconstructs the identity of national community as a collective subject situated in the state (see Matteo 2005: 316). Because all appearance is compearance, exploring sovereignty through a Nancian lens means thinking against one origin and one sovereignty. Thus, through reconnecting IR with the historical problem of what to do about diversity, the suggested Nancian approach might give the discipline a distinctive purpose as a field and art of facing, understanding and addressing difference (see Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 94–95, 123; cf. Jackson & Nexon 2009).

The questions of commonality and difference bring me back to the second concept that is particularly important for situating my work within IR: the (acting) subject. Within the discipline, modern political subjects are bound by the claims of necessity and possibility made by both the modern state and the modern system of states – by both the national and the international (Walker 2009: 55–56). A focus on the state exposes a political project and denotes 'politics', whilst an approach, which takes its cue from Nancy's ontology, unravels 'the political'. Both spheres are related to the notion of the international, although they represent radically different ontologies and ways of treating the question of human existence.

The principle of sovereignty, as Walker (2009: 193, 206–208) claims, is then profoundly linked with the question of the subject as this principle claims to express a form of subjectivity that is potentially universal, and yet always finds its home in a specific and stable place, be it a territory, an institution or a body. The subject becomes the foundation without foundation on which our conceptions of the possibilities and limits of political life are built. If we, in line with the introduced logic, understand temporality as a process that works within an already present subject that is at the same time both universal and particular, we are bound to face difficulties, as the subject is constructed as both the origin and destination of modern political life. (See Walker 2009: 153–154.)

In Nancy's analysis, political subjecthood and political citizenship are both divided into sovereignty and community, which represent the aspects of separateness and togetherness. These aspects, according to Jeffrey Librett (1997: 124) repeat "the possibility (of the subject) and the reality (of the citizen) within each". In other words, Nancy suggests that we should understand ourselves as beings who become intelligible to each other only within a social context. Singular beings emerge together from the beginning, which means that community takes place as compearance in a shared space (see Dallmayr 1997: 181). Thus, Nancy's thought

exceeds discussions about intersubjectivity. Indeed, as Fred Dallmayr (1997: 181–182) points out, Nancian community is not constituted or constructed, nor is it a matter of intersubjective bonding. It does not emerge among already given subjects; rather it signals the place of "the between as such". In thinking about this sort of community, we must be careful not to get confused with terminology. Importantly, sociality is never a way of 'common being' for Nancy, but a form of 'being singular plural' (Nancy 2000; also Kellogg 2005: 340). In the end community, to put it very simply, implies exposure. Hence, adopting a Nancian lens requires that we approach failed asylum as a politico-corporeal struggle that calls for an ontological understanding of the body (the singular-plural) and existence. Catherine Kellogg (2005: 350) names this call as the immeasurability of what every body risks by living together.

In this work the body is understood to be a site for a struggle to make one's self. It is not a neutral, asocial and apolitical place, but one where both the modern political agent and the modern society take form (see Epstein 2010: 332; also Foucault 1978; 1979; 1982). Yet, the body is not merely reflective of social and political influences, although in IR this society-driven approach holds a prominent position and inspires analyses of body politics as a means for both state formation and the formation of the political community within a state (cf. Cohen 2007: 117). These analyses resonate with a Hobbesian tradition, where politics starts with the Leviathan, who strives to secure the interests of the national insides against the anarchic and chaotic outsides. Such a stance is in steep contrast with the Nancian understanding utilised in this work, where the political emanates from the experiencing body.

Often our understanding of being-in-common that both makes 'us' and founds 'us' remains torn between integration – fusion – within a common-whole and the absolutisation of an individual-whole (Nancy 2004b: 44)[31]. In the philosophical framework on which this work relies, these two opposed metaphysical conceptions of community must be renounced. In the first, as Caygill (1997: 23) points out, the community is a substance – a common being – and, in the second, the individual is made substantial. If we, then, are to understand what is at issue with singular

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[31] Nancy's is actually an accurate formulation of the tension between universalism and particularism that frames the international. The international relies on a presumption that all relations of universality and particularity may be worked out either *within* any particular sovereign state that supposedly enables the reconciliation of universality and particularity within states, or *within* the system of states that supposedly enables the reconciliation of universality and particularity between states (Walker 2009: 57). One is expected to theorise either at the 'cosmopolitan', global or systemic level or then at the level of the sovereign subject (state) (see e.g. Lebov 2006). This is the level-of-analysis problem. The two 'levels' wander most often their separate ways, and both take up the question of the human as a question of in-common-being. What is perhaps even more disturbing is conceptualising the world through levels, which limits seriously (even fatally) our understandings of politics – what and where it is, can or should be.

plurality as a question of the (acting) subject in IR, we must explore the limit of the singular, which is of a particular ontological constitution. The aim of this exploration cannot and need not be the inclusion of the failed asylum seeker in the space of citizenship. But this aim must not be the creation of a global and border-free world inhabited by equally sovereign, independent beings either. Neither one of these spatial relocations of the failed asylum seeker changes the temporal dynamic of international relations (cf. Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 123).

Both sovereignty and the (acting) subject are related to the question of political life – what it means to lead one – within the international, and also to the constitution of IR as an academic discipline[32]. In eluding stable ideas of selves and others failed asylum seekers potentially destabilise the logic of inside/outside that pervades international relations and structures the spatiotemporal framing of politics within its spheres (cf. Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: e.g. 96, 105, 120; Walker 2009: ch. 4; Nayak & Selbin 2010; also Tickner 2003). This destabilisation tempts me to imagine what a world that is politically organised neither as a global cosmopolis, nor as a system of states might look like.

Next, I will move to argue that the failed asylum seekers' agency cannot be considered simply in terms of either resistance or domination, as both concepts are manifestations of the sovereign logic (cf. van der Walt 2005: 293). While exploring the way political conditions are experienced by those who see themselves as their victims and how those very conditions enter into people's formation as agents is undoubtedly interesting (see Butler 2004: 11), it is not enough. I suggest that Nancy's ontology allows for an alternative conception of agency and political life because it conceives the body in terms of a place where politics both begins and ends.

Within the sketched imaginary the body is inscribed with various meanings, but it always also incessantly exscribes itself and exceeds both the marks imposed on it and the lines drawn to control its moves. Thus, as Phillip Darby (2004: 26) in my mind accurately points out, a focus on either dominance or resistance misses the ambiguity and mobility of social and political relations (see section 2.3.; also Campbell & Heyman 2007; Walker 2009: 44; Joseph 2010). If we, nonetheless, still speak of resistance with regard to the struggle of failed asylum, it should be noted that such a resistance belongs to another world; the failed asylum seekers resist the appropriation of their bodies within an essentialist politics (see Nancy 2004a: xli).

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[32] Even though my argument might at points seem to suggest otherwise, political life is not merely a question about the subject, the sovereign state and the system of sovereign states. And yet, Rob Walker (2009: 224–225), whose writings have greatly inspired me, claims that it is not entirely clear how we might think that there is more to political life than the subject, the sovereign state and the system of sovereign states.

2.2.   The limits of political life

Because of its founding logic, political asylum represents a practice that is designed to answer the question of "ontological belonging" (Agnew 2007: 141; see also Kratochwil 1997: 181–182; Gustafson Scott 2004; Massey 2004; Squire 2009: 21). This practice leads, on the one hand, to the emergence of a plethora of labels, which effectively restrict access to refugee status, while, on the other, it conceals both the political agenda and ontology that give rise to the asylum process in the first place (Zetter 2007: 189; cf. also Soguk 1999: 4; Burke 2002: 21; Haddad 2008: 168). Failed asylum can easily be treated as *a question*, which reflects those relations of power that operate at the level of the individual body and affect its movements, actions and possibilities (cf. Norris 2000b: 49–50; Pugliese 2002). As a result failed asylum seekers are seen to form an imagined community (cf. Anderson 1991), even though the label is nothing but an outcome of the prevailing governmental and biopolitical techniques and the logic of inside/outside (see Walker 2007; 2009; also Foucault 1978; 1979; 1982; Smith 1992: 495; Vidler 1993; Ahmed 1999: 99; Parr 2001: 160; Calhoun 2003: 548).

Framing the subject or subjectivity in terms of ontological belonging leaves no space for subjectivity that is neither one nor the other, or that is both (cf. Longhurst 1997: 490; see also Moon 1991; Mbembe 2001). Therefore, regarding refugees or asylum seekers as particular kinds of persons with common characteristics strips them of authority to give evidence and narrate their condition in politically relevant forums (Malkki 1996: 384–387; also McNevin 2010). However, understanding failed asylum as *a corporeal struggle* allows the scrutiny of the relations through and with which the failed asylum seekers contest and exceed the logic of inside/outside altogether.

In emphasising the relations that the body enacts, I argue that the idea of states as bases for political life, belonging and community is always undermined and remains incomplete. A focus on failed asylum seekers, their bodies and the political represents the international as an uneven, pitted and sensuous space, which is transformed and shaped by various means, even by those who are often considered its shadow bodies having no part in its politics.

2.2.1.   *The ontological gap: the logic of inside/outside at work*

Eeva: Do you experience pressure in the process of applying asylum? And if so, how would you describe it?

Nasir: Yeah, that that pressure, that frustration, it's strange. You can't really describe how. I don't know, maybe I can't describe, maybe some really, yeah, some professor or some scholar will do, but I am not so good in explaining. And some of the

refugees are illiterate; they have never been to school. It is they [asylum officials] who decide and unfortunately they think in a different way. Their mentality and how they approach, these things, … these …, our cases, is really different. It's really different.

<div align="right">(Interview with Nasir, March 2007)</div>

Nasir's answer to my question reveals that the political asylum process represents dispute over the right to construct the subject of knowledge and the possibilities to claim authority for such a position. His description of the different perspectives through which the central actors in the process approach the issue, reflects the divide between mind and body, knowledge and experience. In an imagery that relies on strict dichotomies and binaries, the international can be conceptualised in terms of a political project founded upon (a system of) sovereign states. As a theoretical question asylum, hence, relates to a contemporary view of political life and subjectivity that is contained in the state (cf. Walker 2009: 23). The asylum process is designed to re-determine and re-establish that dividing line which the asylum seeking body disrupts. Movement of a certain kind can shake the foundations of our ways of knowing and even our knowledge per se. Such an understanding makes it possible to conceive the gap between the parties, which Nasir described above, in terms of ontology:

> Speakers of dialectics and conventional logic fail to understand each other. The main reason is that they anchor their words differently. Both languages are internally consistent. Yet they are both paradoxical. Thus the consistency of the conventional thinker makes him inconsistent, just as the inconsistency of the dialectician makes him consistent. The problem is consequently *not with the thinking writer, who merely follows the laws of his land*. It is rather with *the preconditioned observer, who refuses to break out of his own mode of thinking, acting and speaking*. When he encounters a different way of structuring the world, he does not understand that familiar words are used in radically different manners.

<div align="right">(Olsson 1991: 73, italics mine)</div>

Bodies identified as 'false' in their asylum claim can neither be accommodated within the Finnish society as recognised refugees, nor can these bodies accommodate the image of themselves put forward by the authorities (cf. Manning 2000; Butler 2001). This is the corporeal concretisation of the ontological gap, which reflects the tension between asylum politics and the political that emerges from the asylum seeking body. The ontological gap is not about one being 'wrong' and the other being 'right': in fact both parties are consistent and coherent in their own manner, but from each other's perspective they seem equally *in*coherent.

The first time I came across the ontological gap, even if I could not name it at the time, was in the first months of my fieldwork. A lawyer of the Refugee

Advice Centre approached me and was interested in whether my interviews gave
any insight to why the asylum interviews especially for Somalis seemed to go so
badly. She mentioned many applicants, whose stories should have entitled them
to protection, having received negative or B decisions (interview 11). The issue
slipped my mind until my interview with Nasir brought once again to my attention
the effects that the differences in perception and articulation between the parties
might have.

The applicant's incapacity to speak the 'language' that the officer expects,
leaves them in a vulnerable situation. The words with which the applicant is ex-
pected to characterise their experience might not correspond to the lived reality
which they inhabit[33]. Furthermore, some words may carry connotations and refer-
ences that one is not willing to accept or that make the story seem contradictory
(see also Chambers 1994). Nasir was not ignorant of the different 'mentalities'
at work. Instead, he directly addressed the role of professionals in translating the
body of an asylum seeker to others. In its quest for knowledge and truth asylum
has become the realm of scientists, doctors and other professionals, which leaves
the applicant without an audible and understandable voice. Accordingly, Nasir's
life was made politically 'bare' and he was turned into a homo sacer, who neither
has nor can adopt a political voice (see Agamben 1998: 67, 83, 178; Dillon 2004;
Huysmans 2008: 176–177; cf. Butler 2004: 67)[34].

The international that arises from the logic of sovereignty and from a strict
division between inside and outside is not only about organising political power,
but also a political way of organising people (Haddad 2008: 48; see also Agamben
1998: 6; Epstein 2007; Nevins 2008; Walker 2009: 47). Besides the sovereign aspi-
ration to attain a monopoly over violence, the state claims a monopoly of the politi-
cal in its desire to manage and control migration (Nyers 2003; see also Bartelson
1995; Squire 2009). With regard to the multiple restrictions that follow from the
status, failed asylum seekers are, in a manner of speaking, banned from the sphere

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[33] The relation between language or narrative and experience is ambiguous as Thomas Csordas (2008:
118) states: "there is a tendency to mistrust language's ability to provide access to experience. The
reasons given are that speakers can lie about their experience, that they may not possess sufficient lin-
guistic skill to articulate their experience, and that language filters and thereby distorts experience."
With regard to a concern for knowledge, the asylum process is profoundly entangled in this complex
relation between language and experience.

[34] It is worth noting that bare life as such does not exist, but it is a product of the machine as well as
its fundamental activity. The philosopher behind the concept of bare life, Giorgio Agamben (1998:
90), differentiates between *zoē*, which signifies the simple act of living common to all living beings,
and *bios* signalling a form of living proper to an individual or group thus referring also to the sphere
of politics and political life, *polis*. Bare life is neither political *bios* nor natural *zoē*, but represents the
zone of indistinction in which the two constitute each other in including and excluding each other.
Sovereign violence is based on the exclusive inclusion of bare life in the state, and in a sense we are
all bare life (see Agamben 1994).

of political life within the state (cf. Agamben 1998: 111, 140; Agamben 2005: 28; Walker 2006b; Bigo 2007). In fact, both receiving a B permit and being detained actualise concrete spatial relations, as failed asylum seekers cannot freely choose their place of residence. They are confined to reception centres or the detention unit (see Perera 2002; Rajaram & Grundy-Warr 2004; 2007; cf. Edkins 2005a: 10).

The space of the centre is similar to the Agambenian 'camp', which symbolises "the new, hidden regulation of the inscription of life in the order" (Agamben 1998: 175). Agamben uses the notion of the camp to describe an emerging political paradigm. For him the camp represents a threshold; it is a space of indistinction, where the difference between life and politics becomes meaningless. The camp turns politics into a decision concerning the unpolitical and, hence, it represents a pure space of exception, an absolute and impassable biopolitical space of modernity. It implies the emergence of biopolitics or *thanatopolitics*, where the sovereign's decision on life turns into a decision on death (also Norris 2000b; Masters 2006). In refugee relief efforts, the notions of the camp and bare life have been problematized, among others, by Jenny Edkins (2000). According to her, the camp and the operation of power which gives rise to the camp, means that refugees are produced as 'bare life'; "life that could be 'saved' but not life that had a political voice" (Edkins 2000: 14; cf. Edkins & Pin-Fat 2005). Michel Agier (2008: 65) claims similarly that notions such as the camp and bare life annihilate any political space on shared speech and obstruct a world of relationships that seek to recreate this space.

Like the camp, also the centre marks the growing disjunction between birth and the nation-state. Nevertheless, the reception and detention centres bear a particular relation to the state in that they represent some of its "mezzanine spaces of sovereignty" (Nyers 2003: 1080) – spaces, which are in-between the inside and outside of the state and in which the assessed or rejected, but yet tolerated bodies wait (cf. Agamben 1998: 168–175). Benjamin's case that was taken up at the beginning of this Piece illustrates the way sovereign politics turns into a project, which invents various biometric forms of control and security in its attempt to govern people's movement (cf. Guild 2003; Epstein 2007: 152–153; Haddad 2008: 132). This bodily politics of the international transforms the failed asylum seeker's body into a form of luggage transported between countries by "the international police of aliens" (Walters 2002).

> Abubakar begins his story, and I get the feeling he has already told it many, many times before. He tells that he arrived in Helsinki 8th September 2004, but spent only some days there in the reception centre. From there he was transferred to Imatra, until 7th December 2004 when he arrived at this centre. Abubakar does not smile, express any other feelings or gesture when he speaks. He does not look at me, but past me. His pace of speech is calm. He tells that he is almost 27 years old, born in 1979. He came to Finland

alone: his mother, father, brothers and sisters are still living in Somalia.

Abubakar says that this is not what he expected from Finland. He explains that to-morrow he is going to meet with the social worker, to make the second application for the temporary residence permit. He confesses being afraid of tomorrow: in case another B will be issued to him. In two months his B status will expire, and he says that a new B would complicate things. Suddenly Abubakar looks me in the eye. He tells that this centre will now be closed: another bad decision according to him. This overall situation makes him think, and he says clarifying further: "too much thinking is not good, because then you just want to sleep all the time".

(Interview with Abubakar, August 2006)

In Abubakar's case the metaphor of the body turned into luggage functions at two levels. On the one hand, Abubakar mentioned worrying about receiving a second B permit or being deported. On the other, he reflected upon the effects that the B and the closing of the reception centre would have on him. He experienced having no control over his body's mobility, which discouraged his spirit. Abubakar articu-lated the concrete corporeal and sensuous consequences that follow from spatial relations initiated in various political categorisation processes. Therefore it is no wonder that the asylum interview, which defines the applicant's possibilities for political life in relation to the state, becomes loaded with pressure and stress. For applicants these interviews are experientially complex indeed.

2.2.2.   *The asylum interview as an event of the ontological gap*

In Finland the Directorate of Immigration conducts asylum interviews, which examine the applicant's right to asylum and also to a residence permit on other grounds. These interviews seek to complement the application lodged at the border or police station, and the applicant can also correct or add to the information given in that first interview, which is designed to determine the applicant's identity, travel route and entry to Finland[35]. The asylum process can lead to a positive outcome with the applicant being granted asylum, international protection, or a residence permit or, to a negative outcome, resulting in deportation or removal from the country with a further ban to enter the Schengen area.

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[35] The discussion concerning the content of the asylum interviews is based on my interview with two officials from the Directorate of Immigration (interview 8) on private discussions with them on 22nd February 2008 and on material collected in the spring-autumn 2011 about asylum officers' experiences and views of the dynamics of the interview situation. The interviewers were invited to deliberate on their own attitudes, patterns of behaviour and things that enhance or subtract from the impression of the applicant's account, gestures and behaviour being reliable. They were also asked to point out elements that in their view hinder understanding between the parties or that complicate decision-making.

Difficulties embedded within the ontological gap might arise right at the beginning of the asylum hearing or even before the actual interview has begun. As the applicant's account is examined against the profile created for a refugee, the logic of the interviews operates in a mode that answers the question what, rather than who one is. The process is not interested in the person as him/herself per se, but as a potential representative of a certain political identity/label. During the asylum process experience is translated into knowledge and reason – administrative cases emerge from personal stories (see Zetter 1991: 44). The ontological gap, therefore, reflects the way in which the asylum interview serves to translate complex experiences into "endistic narratives" (Sylvester 2007: 565–566) characteristic of the sovereign dichotomous logic of inside/outside (cf. also Sermijn, Devlieger & Loots 2008). The asylum applicants, however, voice their *whoness* in these interviews and do not necessarily, as in Abdi's case (below), understand that it is actually their *whatness* that is under examination. What is important for the asylum officer might not be so significant at that particular juncture for the applicant, who might be preoccupied with completely different questions:

> Abdi states, "the [asylum] interview was weak. I just talked about my children. I did not understand clearly the meaning of the interview, and did not state my problems – just talked about my children. My decision says that I had no problems in Somalia, and I got a B." I asked if he complained about the decision. "Yes, I also got a doctor's description [testimonial] after showing my scars [points at his legs, arms and stomach] and explained my situation in Somalia." Abdi stands up, goes to one of his suitcases, opens it and pulls out an envelope. It is a ruling that the administrative court gave on his appeal concerning the B status. He asks me to read it and tell what it says. The paper is in Finnish with no translation included. It presents Abdi's personal history from 1991 to 2005. In conclusion, the court thinks that the applicant is entitled to asylum either on the basis of his need for protection or for individual, humane reasons. The court thinks that there has been new evidence that wasn't there when the Directorate of Immigration made its decision; evidence that could, and should, have affected the result.
>
> (Interview with Abdi, August 2006)

Abdi's concern for his family back in Somalia was the cause of the misunderstanding between the parties. In fact, his account did not provide the evidence deemed necessary by the officer in order to determine whether Abdi's situation made him 'deserving' or 'worthy' of asylum or protection. This, quite understandably from the interviewer's point of view, led to an outcome that, from Abdi's perspective, was negative. He appealed, and the court found his account plausible and convincing enough for him to be granted protection or a residence permit for individual, humane reasons.

Despite the view of the court, objectively speaking there cannot be any "new evidence that was not there" at the time of Abdi's original asylum interview. The

only thing that had changed was the state of his mental health; Abdi now suffered from acute depression. Rather than this being a case of new historically based evidence, it is far more likely that the purpose and role of the interview remained fundamentally unclear to Abdi and the two communicating parties talked past one another. One question was asked, and a different one answered. Yet it was Abdi in particular, who had to cope with the consequences of this miscommunication: when I met him, he had lived for nearly two years with the B status, and even after the Court found him eligible for an A permit, he was not granted one, but left waiting to hear whether the Directorate of Immigration shared the Court's view. At the very end, he was granted protection because of his deteriorated mental health and the medical certificates that gave further credibility to his account. It can thus be concluded that is not easy to state one's case clearly or, as Tahir's story illustrates, reliably enough:

> Tahir describes the interview: They ask maybe forty times, in different ways, the same thing, but there is but one answer. I remember, when I was interviewed, it was some thirteen times he asked and I answered. [...] And then my [statutory] representative [minors have one present in their asylum interviews], he said: "you can't, when the question is so obviously similar [to the previous one]."
>
> (Interview with Tahir, my translation, April 2007)

Tahir's account reflects well the stress under which the applicant is placed during the asylum interview. In order to determine whether the applicant is telling the truth some interviewers ask further questions or want to know about specific details to test if the account is consistent and coherent. Most frequently this strategy is utilised with regard to the most relevant information in terms of the application: the reasons for applying, such as experienced persecution, torture and violence. The pressure of the hearing intensifies, when every word or mismatching detail can potentially be considered as a sign of 'false' pretenses. A different answer, a minor change in detail or a change of terminology can possibly have a negative impact on one's application and be taken as a sign of fabrication.

Any mediation between the parties is made difficult or impossible, because the logic on which the political institution of asylum relies does not recognise the existence of the ontological gap, namely the fact that there are different ways of approaching the issue. Rather, the asylum interview reflects an idea that only one language exists to describe experiences of exile and that the two parties share it. Adopting a different voice, ethic or reason has been deemed inappropriate, illegitimate or silenced (cf. Gatens 1996: 23–27). Their different ways of knowing and articulating their case practically exclude asylum seekers from the sphere of the sovereign body political pact, and therewith from political and ethical relations within this sphere. So even though the applicant had understood the scope of the

interview, it may not be so simple to state one's 'case' and represent oneself within the expected and acceptable parameters (see e.g. Perera 2006: 638; Bohmer & Shuman 2007: 607; Puumala *et al.* 2011).

> Ayan: And they make, you know, in the interview, questions that are impossible, really for the people.
> Eeva: What kind of questions?
> Ayan: They ask you for, you know, this is a street, if you are a child, you know, maybe like me, I never see the city, you know. The city of Mogadishu. Where I live, I stay there, I don't go anywhere, because when I was... at that time I was a child. They ask me the biggest mosque in Somalia. And I say, "why". I don't go to school; I don't go anywhere. How can I study? How can I know? [pause] They're asking me. ... They are asking me other things that I don't know. It's, eum, you know, old things.

> (Interview with Ayan, October 2006)

Besides the requirement to tell consistently about what has happened, the applicant is expected to give historical, social or contextual facts to support their personal history. Ayan had her experiences from Somalia, but as Finnish officials considered some parts of Somalia safe enough for return, they sought to confirm her account with 'objective information' about the country. Thus, Ayan was asked specific details about Islam, the clan system, geography and so forth; the kind of things that can be verified from other sources besides the asylum seeker's personal interview. Ayan, here, is both bewildered by these questions and dissatisfied with the fact that her narration was not considered reliable. Whereas when estimating the asylum accounts the officers rely on additional information, such as international treaties and national law, data collected in fieldtrips[36], country of origin reports and the UNCHR guidelines, applicants most often have nothing but their testimonies (cf. Pirjola 2009).

Judging the credibility of the asylum seeker's account is extremely difficult. Furthermore, the decision-making process may very well be based on incorrect assumptions about how memory works (see Herlihy & Turner 2006). The possible differences in perception – and in what is considered perceivable – are made more complex by the question of the applicant's ability to reflect what has happened against a wider political context and the historical background of the political situation (cf. Caruth 1996: 4; Frank 1995). Even though Ayan had lived amongst the chaotic everyday in Somalia, she possessed no knowledge of the political dynamics at work and thus failed to understand it. Such a situation easily turns the asylum

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[36] According to Anthony Good (2004: 362) the danger of such "brief, highly stage-managed visits" is in their tendency to replace consultation with experts in the culture and politics of those countries (cf. Bohmer & Shuman 2007).

process into a domain of experts, whose testimonies either give credibility to or take it from the person's account.

   Asylum interviews crystallise what is at stake in the ontological gap and in the politics of the international. Not abstract policies, faceless treaties or disembodied practices, but the living, breathing and sensing body measured against a set of international and sovereign political norms. The ontological gap, therefore, makes conceptions of political space and organisation fluid and also puts the notion of the international in flux. In fact, asylum seekers may tie their accounts to "different ontological stuff" and constitute "their anchor chains […] from different identity principles" (Olsson 1991: 76; see also Naas 1997) from those interviewing them. They represent an alternative political imaginary that does not follow the logic of sovereignty (cf. Epstein 2010: 336). Although the words used in decision-making and application may be the same, the lines of argument and the ways of structuring the world differ from one another. Asylum seekers, then, persuade us to imagine and believe things, which in Nasir's words "seem or sound really unbelievable or unimaginable". Is translation even possible?

Nasir: You don't get a fair trial. Or a fair process. I mean you don't get a fair process in the court. You're not even allowed to appear before the judge.
Eeva: H-hmm
Nasir: So, they just decide behind your back.
Eeva: You mean on the basis of the documents?
Nasir: Yeah, on the basis of the documents, or on the basis of your first interview. The interview that you get in *Ulkomaalaisviraston työntekijät* [the staff of the Directorate of Immigration]. But the problem is that, when they interview, they point out some-e, some things or flaws from within your, eum, your case and the information you have provided and they make their decisions. But they don't bother *ask* you again or another time or allow you to come and appear before the judge in the court [Nasir elevates his voice] *to explain why those flaws exist. You have reasons for them. Those are not…*
Eeva: Hmm, what kind of flaws do you mean?
Nasir: Sometimes they would say, yeah, you have said in your interview when you first arrived, when the police interviews first arrived.
Eeva: Yes.
Nasir: You said this thing, and in your case you have said this thing. And they are contradicting. But, it sounds to them that, or it seems to them contradicting, but there are *reasons* for those contradictions, *if there is* any contradiction.
Eeva: H-hmm
Nasir: Sometimes there isn't *any* contradiction, but they think there is.
Eeva: Hmm
Nasir: So, they just base their decision on them, and you are not allowed to appear before the judge why it is this way. I am not a crazy person or a stupid person to say two contradicting things, to give contradicting information in two various occasions. That's not what one, a wise man would not do that on purpose.

[...]

Eeva: Do you think those questions [asked in the asylum interview] are the most impor-
       tant ones?

Nasir: Most of them are not really important. Not really relevant.

Eeva: Hmm, can you give me an example?

Nasir: Well, the questions... [translation; talk] They are saying the same. [talk continues]
       Yeah, they spend most of the time asking silly questions like why you came to
       Finland, what if we send you back and, yeah, and sometimes they [pause] they
       concentrate more on very little things.

Eeva: Like detailed information?

Nasir: No, no, no, no. Not detailed information, when it comes to detailed information,
       which is important for *us*, they just go [move] on. [pause]

Eeva: Ok.

Nasir: That is because there is no more time left for any detailed discussion about *our*
       case. Things that interest *our*, things that are in *our* interest. They ask questions
       that are in their interest. Being as a police, or being as an official in the *Ulkomaal-
       aisvirasto* [Directorate of Immigration], and they try to show off, try to show that
       they are being efficient and they do their job very well. And things that, relate to
       our problems are, they just, yeah. Go very briefly.

                                                            (Interview with Nasir, March 2007)

Nasir's frustration tells about asylum policies being bound to fail in their quest to
know whom asylum seekers are, because the given answer can never fill the gap
between the parties and, thus, the received answer never satisfies completely (see
also Piece I: section 1.2.). A leap of faith is required no matter how accurate and
truthful the applicant's account might be, and the asylum interview is designed to
make this leap as short as possible. At least to an extent, differential knowledge-
claims can result from differences in perception and narrative structure (also Ser-
mijn, Devlieger & Loots 2008). Still, the ontological gap between asylum officials
and asylum seekers – namely the impossibility to unambiguously define the body
and the body not being able to articulate itself unambiguously – is not exhaustive.
It bears ontological potential if we are willing to question the relations we are talk-
ing in, i.e. the foundations of our knowledge (cf. Olsson 1991: 99).

   If we resolutely struggle with questions of knowledge, assuming that every-
body's knowledge is the same as ours, we are stuck with questions of semantics.
We need to move on. However, this is not a call to reflect on the caveats of translat-
ing experiences of persecution into coherent stories and spoken words, rather it is
a call to think about the translation, or – to be more exact – the system of knowing
in itself.

   My work suggests that the idea of political agency being conditioned by a cer-
tain institutional framework obstructs a world of political relations that emerge
from the acting body. The connection between 'politics' and the body cannot be
reduced to a top-down relationship and framed in terms of biopolitics. Rather, as

the Nancian conception of 'the political' points out, by forming relations bodies create events of 'the political' and represent political life that is not conditioned by the state as the main site of political existence. I claim that asylum seekers force us to examine the body as a place that gives rise to the event of the political. Such a stance situates us between objectivity and subjectivity, identity and difference, inside and outside; the multiplicity of finite existence and bodies is what is shared out in the senses of the international.

2.3.   The possibilities of political life

In the previous section I sought to illustrate how political distinctions between various forms of modern subjectivity are (re)produced and made to seem natural and politically necessary. I will now develop the argument further and in a Nancian spirit focus more explicitly on the political that emanates from the body, rather than on a politics inscribed on the body. On the one hand such a focus resonates with discussions on the nature of the subject, which speaks, experiences and lives within international relations, and, on the other, with the possibilities of political life in IR.

   According to Walker (2009: 32) the re-imagination of political life requires a willingness to think about boundaries as extremely *active sites*, *moments* and *practices* that produce specific political possibilities and necessities on either side. Similarly, my quest to re-imagine the possibilities of political life arises from problems associated with the spatiotemporal limits of political possibility, which are enacted within the sovereign state, between states and within a structure of sovereign states (also Walker 2009: 46). The logic of straight lines does not work anymore, and actually it was never able to achieve a monopoly over the political. In a similar vein, the illusion of borders and lines as acts of splitting is fading (cf. Agnew 1999; Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 204). As a result, more and more often scholars also in IR make calls to resist the strict separation of self and other, inside and outside, and mine and yours[37].

   As the discussion about the ontological gap illustrated, there is no privileged position from which to start the process of re-imagination; there are multiple equally 'correct' and possible viewpoints. Hence, the conditions and possibilities of political life cannot be established in advance, but they must become themselves the subject of study.

   If I am to engage seriously with the possibilities of political life, I must seek to think beyond the inside/outside divide both in space and time (cf. Walker 2009: 31,

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[37] For such contributions see e.g. Ashley 1989, Kristeva 1991, Radhakrishnan 1993, Walker 1993; 2009, Darby 2003, Inayatullah & Blaney 2004; Agathangelou & Ling 2005.

65). The task requires exploring the limits and relations between political identities, and through the failed asylum seekers' agentive bodies the line between the political and the international. Indeed, Nancy (1993a: 142) urges us to think more imaginatively about the limits of modern accounts of limits. For him separation is an affirmation of relation, which needs to be a *political* affirmation, in a sense that it remains for us to discover. This view necessitates adopting a specific ontological understanding of the political, the body and existence. The body does not move into space and time, but it creates space and time through movement (see Nancy 2008: 27; also Manning 2007: xiii). Movement, again, puts the body into a constant process of becoming. The body as such does not simply exist, but comes into presence with and in relation to others. In this light, failed asylum seekers enact multiple and multiform ways of disrupting the inside/outside logic on which international relations has been built. The body, in other words, unfolds 'being' being in common.

In IR, the ontological body invites me to explore the limits of sovereignty by immersing in corporealities created by, but also creative of the international. This discloses the body in terms of an interval (*intervalle*). The body becomes understood as the border or line of separation that allows beings to appear distinctively, and yet always to exist contiguously (Perpich 2005: 85). Questions of political agency and political life are inseparable from one another as the body is intelligible only as one with the other. Thinking about and creatively engaging with moving and sensing bodies in the spheres of the international does not, however, mean thinking outside of sovereignty. Instead, the task involves conceiving the possibilities of political life as a question of compearance.

2.3.1.   The body as a site of governmentality and resistance

Portraying the displaced person only in terms of a lack – be it of agency, voice, possibilities, control, emotions, belonging – paints too simple a picture of the experience of seeking asylum (also Soguk 1999: 9). In fact, literature about migrant struggles, agencies, solidarities and mobilities as forms of resistance to restrictive politics has gained prominence in recent years thus countering Agambenian theorisations of bare life and the camp (e.g. Pugliese 2004; Blom Hansen & Stepputat 2005; Edkins & Pin-Fat 2005; Moulin & Nyers 2007; Nyers 2008b; Zevnik 2009; Rygiel 2011)[38]. Precisely because of their liminal position as subjects of political

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[38] My analysis regarding acts of resistance to or insurgence against asylum politics, touches upon the Foucauldian idea that specific features of agency are generated, although not unconditionally regulated, by specific institutional(ised) structures (see e.g. Foucault 1978: 96; 1982: 781; cf. Zetter 1991: 40; Butler 1997b; Meyer & Jepperson 2000: 102). However, there is a significant, perhaps even

life within the international, asylum seekers carry the potential to articulate political life outside the international as a fixed space and a given field of action, and to pluralise the notion of the international in terms of a spacing that unfolds in relations between people. The rigid boundaries between states do not work as the categories of modern political analysis suggest they do or should do (see Walker 2009: 23). Let me elaborate this thought a bit further.

As the previous section suggested, the stakes are high in asylum hearings, but most often asylum claimants cannot support their application with any evidence; s/he has except one's story and body. The pressure that is experienced can result in the modification of the account in order to enhance the chances of receiving a positive decision. At this point I must emphasise that these adaptive strategies do not automatically suggest or lead to the conclusion that the person would not be entitled to protection or a residence permit in their own right. I am simply claiming that the applicant feels the pressure of the asylum interview and process so intensely, that s/he chooses to resort to the 'good' stories that circulate among refugees and that are also passed on by human traffickers in their 'briefings'. Like Stephen's story in Piece I (section 1.3.1.), stories of asylum are filled with mixed categories that do not conform to distinctions that characterise our system of knowledge. Accounts can thus function both as a means of power and as a form of resistance, as they shred the myths of the vulnerable other to be saved and the threatening other to be securitised and controlled.

The asylum interview is one of the first instances in which the applicants can start forming their political agency. It cannot (yet) happen through open resistance or confrontation, but has to take form through re-narration and re-invention. With regard to the asylum procedure this kind of agency is questionable, to say the least, but it clearly elucidates the crisis of a politics that supposes a clear distinction between inside and outside, self and other. We can start to unravel the political as a bodily and relational event with Stephen:

> Practices of return bother Stephen. He knows that in Germany some of the people he met there cannot be deported simply because the officials do not know where to take them. In his words, these people have "changed their nationality", told that they are from elsewhere, from other parts of Africa. This option was open to him also, but for some reason he did not resort to it. As a result he was returned to Nigeria, and now he is awaiting a decision whether the Finnish officials will let him stay here. His chances,

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irreconcilable difference in how Foucault and Nancy take up the question of the body. The Foucauldian approach has been criticised for equating bodiliness with the subjective experience of pleasure and pain, thus reducing it to individual sexuality. According to Terence Turner (1994) this ironically leads to a conceptual body, a disembodied subject, which he coins to be an antibody, a defensive organism that protects rather than questions mainstream Western philosophy and political thought by emphasising the private and individualistic dimensions of bodiliness at the expense of its plural and relational aspects. (Also Van Wolputte 2004: 256)

however, are not looking good, as he in his interview has given a different name from that which he used in Germany, and now his identity – together with the rest of his story – is under suspicion.

<div align="right">(Interview with Stephen, May 2007)</div>

Stephen seemed to regret not having claimed to be from somewhere else, from a region or country to which deportation is not possible or from where people are known/told to have better chances of getting an A permit. In his case, however, changing nationalities would not have made any difference, as his prints were already in the system. Besides the kind of resistance – or distortion, if one wants to adopt a more negative interpretation of this kind of behaviour – that Stephen described, there are also other means of intercepting the asylum procedure. One can try to pass for a minor as unaccompanied minors are rarely returned or deported from Finland. Or, as Farzad stated: "sometimes I think I should make trouble and disturb, maybe then I could get an A", thus referring to the belief that mental problems might aid in being granted a residence permit (although not international protection). I must, however, emphasise strongly that mental problems often follow from or are aggravated by the process and continue long after a continuous residence permit has been received.

The re-narration or re-invention of the self can also happen through the body. Not only with their stories, but also with their bodies the applicants resist the efforts of the receiving state to solve the problem their presence poses to it. Asylum seekers can, on the one hand, get into trouble for not having a valid passport as they then have no documentation to prove their identity. On the other, having a passport does not mean it will be considered valid, or the officers might consider the fact that the person has been granted this document as proof of not having problems with the officials of their own country. Thus, some applicants destroy their identity documents. If, however, the applicant – in a similar vein with Stephen – has been already subjected to biometric controls a more radical and corporeal strategy is called for:

> Hamid, an elderly Afghan gentleman, is wearing long johns – which he has put on backwards – and a men's undershirt. He has dyed his grey hair black. Hamid is sweeping the floor and when he sees me, he starts talking to me in German with no apparent accent that I could detect. He has been given an A permit some weeks ago. [...] Later on the staff members tell me that he has lived in Germany for years, and the Finnish officials know this, but it proved impossible to take his prints, for he had every time scraped his fingertips raw. The staff suspects that Hamid got the A because of individual, humane reasons.

<div align="right">(Field notes, 24th October 2006)</div>

Whether Hamid actually was granted the continuous residence permit because of his resistance to the technical screening process is not the question here. I cannot stress strongly enough that my reason for discussing these acts in the face of various governmental practices is not to romanticise them or make them seem heroic in their potential of twisting the system for one's benefit. My aim is neither to point out parts of the process, which need to be made more effective, nor to put all asylum seekers under suspicion of being 'false' and making 'manifestly ungrounded' applications. A different perspective needs to be adopted.

Of importance is the fact that even in the face of modern technological systems, which can erase the tiniest doubt of a person's 'true' identity, people find ways to resist and intercept the working of sovereign power. Just when this power is about to reach its climax and reinstate the logic of inside/outside and claim a monopoly over the possibilities of political life, a single and rather simple move of the body can undo this quest. The asylum seeking body is adamant about not being reduced to bare life, that is, to be included in the order through its exclusion (cf. Agamben 1998; 2005). Rather, *through its acts the body articulates the incompleteness of the international organised in terms of sovereign units, which outline the possibilities of political life, ways of belonging and forms of participation.*

The ultimate requirement of the corporeal narrative or bodily tuning that Stephen, Farzad and Hamid raise, is losing one's personal history, absorbing somebody else's identity or becoming no-body. In its totality such an act still entails hope of a possible future and provides a means of survival. If the price of hope is negating one's history or identity, or hurting oneself, one conforms to that, especially if it is perceived as enhancing the chances of receiving protection (cf. Bermann 1998: 173). Such a stance makes it possible to conceive all of the discussed strategies as ones that seek to provide a satisfactory answer to the official quest for knowledge during the asylum process. The ontological gap is filled, but not in the way anticipated by governmental practices. This silent and corporeal refusal to being known, defined, and located signals a reclamation of the possibility to decide on one's being and future.

In taking action that seeks to transform the improbable to the possible, the body moves in order to evade or change the grip of administrative rationality. The tuning of stories and transcending the limits of the body manifest political agency. These acts signal reaching and stretching towards a transformation. They reflect an aspiration to move away from the sphere of the politics of asylum and to fill the ontological gap with alternative ways of identification and taking action.

Perhaps I should explain why I interpret acts such as giving inaccurate or 'wrong' information, obfuscating the asylum process and other forms of negative behaviour in a positive light (see also Piece IV: section 4.3.2.). For me all of these narrative or corporeal strategies signal active directing of life, the person's search

and quest to find a place for themselves, and the possibility to define their own being and body (also Puumala & Pehkonen 2010; Puumala *et al.* 2011). However, the question remains whether negative deeds should be univocally condemned or whether it is possible to engage with their rationale. The advocated approach suggests that we should seek to understand the reasons for negative acts, rather than endorse or identify with them per se. The difficulty of responding to such acts is not foreign to IR (e.g. Chan 2003b), but it reflects the division that lies at the heart of the discipline between two poles such as true/false or positive/negative. It is curious, though, that a discipline to which the notions of anarchy and chaos are so central, is so ill-prepared to respond to agencies and narrations that defy neat categorisations or that do not follow patterns of behaviour deemed legitimate.

My attempt to engage with the failed asylum seekers' acts of 'distortion', aggression or evasion is based on a belief that when such action is termed as negative, its ontological rationale and philosophical challenge are not embraced. Instead of condemning 'opportunistic' acts, scholars within IR need to try, to take after Stephen Chan (2003b: 386), and "recognise the methodology of 'another story'". In my reading, the acts that are taken up in this section open possibilities as they situate asylum seeking bodies in the space of the political, and expose the body not only in its vulnerability but also in its connections to political structures and various other bodies. However, focusing on the political that emanates from the body does not signal that the body's aspirations are fulfilled, or that it is no more constrained by politics. The proposed focus simply reaffirms the failed asylum seeker's body as a political agent capable of leading a political life.

Stephen, Farzad and Hamid show the obsolescence of those rigid categories, which seek to define possible political relations between people and between the body and the state. As I have argued from various slightly different viewpoints, during the asylum procedure the applicant's body becomes a space of the political, a surface on which the international and its politics are inscribed. However, the space of agency is fluid and relational because the body does not belong to a political label or a collective entity, but rather exposes political existence as an ontological condition (cf. Cavarero 2002: 525). The potential that opens with the ontological gap is in the acting person always being able to tell an unrepeatable story of him/herself, various others and relations within the international. As the stories from the field have illustrated, the asylum seeking body does not simply acquiesce to the operations of politics or wait for their outcome. In rejecting and contradicting the asylum process, the applicants gain at least partial authority over the process that controls them and limits their bodies.

Nevertheless, it must be asked whether the closure of the process signifies the re-enactment of a power relation, which reduces the categorised body into bare life (cf. Mbembe 2003: 12)? I would argue against this. What, then, is so 'promising'

and 'good' in being a *failed* asylum seeker?

2.3.2. Tweaking the focus on failed asylum

The political effects of asylum seeking do not finish with the asylum decision. Receiving the label 'failed' means that the body comes to represent a political misfit in the puzzle of political life that relies on the correlation of state (belonging), nation (identity) and territory (place) (cf. Malkki 1995). In a sense, failed asylum seekers face a double exclusion, when returning to one national community is not possible, but immersion into another is just as impossible. By virtue of this ambiguity the body of the failed asylum seeker is invested with the potential for ontological enquiry. I will now start to pave the way towards discussing failed asylum in terms of its reformative potential of disciplinary IR.

Being labelled does not annihilate the body's political condition, or its political potential since the person is not one with the assigned label. Rather the act regulates and shapes some of the manifestations of the asylum seeker's political potential, while enabling others (see Rygiel 2011: 4–5). Moving beyond the ontological gap marks a change of direction from sovereign and governmental politics towards the question of agency in the political. The latter approach accounts for the pluralistic and relational dimensions of politics, thus destabilising the focus on "constructed visibility" (Rajchman 1988), i.e. the labels given.

Conventionally, as Judith Butler (2004: 5) points out, political analyses have situated agency in terms of a singular subject, who is personally responsible for his/her actions. Within this imagery agency is connected to valid interests, which give rise to authority, responsibility, and the capacity to act (Meyer & Jepperson 2000: 106). The coming together of these two aspects denotes what is meant by political life within a specifically modern form of politics. The problem with this approach is that failed asylum seekers are not acknowledged to have 'valid' interests – that is why they have been 'failed' in the first place – and thus they are often seen as having lost their status as political beings in their own right.

Ayan: I don't know really, what they think. […] You go to doctor, he give you mu-u-uch medicine, he say "you feel good, you don't think much". But we think. We think the life back. We think the life for our family. We think this life and the future. I see the future is not so good. Two years. I say, "the first year, maybe the next year they change". But the next year is the same. Really. I don't know. This is bad. What [do] the people [Finnish migration officers] they think, really? I don't know. […] One day I want to see a meeting for [with] social and *Ulkomaalaisvirasto* [Directorate of Immigration], really.

Eeva: Hmm. So, you would like the people from *Ulkomaalaisvirasto* to come here and

see…

Ayan: Yeah, to see how the life for people is. And what they think. I like to see really the…we want to talk really like us, meeting, big meeting really. The *Ulkomaalaisvirasto*, the social [worker] and the nurse and all the things [officials]. What [do] they think for this people? What [do] they want to know [in the asylum interview] really?

Eeva: So you would like to know why [this kind of politics is implemented]?

Ayan: Why. And I ask myself really the question why, really? But if I… I go [to meet the] social [worker], she don't answer me, because she don't want to answer these questions. If I go to nurse, she give me the medicine for the person who's mad. And I don't want to become mad really, I want to save really my life, us, you know, the other people who… [pause] I don't know. […] You know, I have problem for the thoughts, this problem that I think. This medicine don't save for my life. Maybe it make for another bad condition. That I make like, you know, animal. That I sleep like this [Ayan keeps her eyes wide open].

Eeva: hmm

Ayan: I don't know. I like to really this meeting, all we come together and we see the director for the *Ulkomaalaisvirasto*, and this director for the camp, and the socials, really. And we would ask much questions, and why. I want to know for this really, why? They don't make, I believe, they don't make. […] I don't know what they think for. I want to know really. I say, the last time I say, really, "I want to know". I want to make for my decision really, and I want to see face and face, and I want to ask questions really.

(Interview with Ayan, October 2006)

Ayan's lengthy quasi-monologue begins with her puzzlement over the intentions of the Finnish policy makers and legislators in introducing the B permit. Consequently she raises the fact that many asylum seekers need to be treated for depression, insomnia and anxiety. As can be grasped from her reference to "the life back", her past life in Somalia, it is not her – or my – intention to claim that asylum seekers' mental problems begin after their arrival or during the process. The intertwining of the past life, this present life of waiting and an uncertain future make the everyday life particularly difficult for the failed asylum seekers. Up till now, it would be easy to remain with biopolitical notions such as bare life, discuss the abjection of failed asylum seekers or treat them as nothing but humanitarian objects. But then Ayan shifts from these frameworks by saying sternly that she *wants* (instead of would like to or hopes) to witness a meeting with the Directorate of Immigration. Wanting refers to a need and a requirement, whereas wishing and using the conditional form are more meek and consensus-seeking expressions. Ayan wants to know "why they make this people. [...] I have never seen that they talk for this". Her quest of information is not directed at the current Finnish policies, but in fact at *the rationale that gives rise to such politics*.

Ayan is of the opinion that failed asylum seekers are not really listened to. Even

those who treat them and are interested in their wellbeing easily prescribe medicine, which in her mind equals treating the symptom, while leaving the problem aside (cf. Piece V). Ayan's account encourages me to widen Laura Junka's (2006) argument in terms of the "discursive poverty" surrounding discussions of Palestinians' political voices and agency and to apply it to the case of failed asylum. Junka claims that the many shifting ways of experiencing, negotiating and contesting the Israeli occupation in Palestinians' day-to-day lives are excluded from the dominating discourse on this conflict (Junka 2006: 349–350). Ayan is capable of moving beyond a similar discursive poverty and creating a fuller and more complex picture of failed asylum seekers' political agency. The governmental discourse – most notably the asylum interview – expects asylum seekers to provide legitimate justification for their presence, whilst the public discourse depicts them as mere victims, or, alternatively, as sheer culprits violating the dichotomous logic according to which borders are supposed to function in international relations. In bringing her dissatisfaction to the surface, Ayan questions the conditions of speech assigned to failed asylum seekers. She contrasts the logic and needs of the nation-state with those of asylum seekers themselves (cf. Piece III).

After meeting with Ayan and hearing similar viewpoints from others, I approached the director of the reception centre and suggested organising a meeting between the B permit holders and the Directorate of Immigration. This was in October 2006. The director considered the meeting worthwhile and introduced the idea to the Ministry for Labour under which reception centres administratively belonged at the time. From there the message was passed to the Directorate of Immigration, under the Ministry of the Interior. Also the permit holders themselves started promoting such meetings actively in early 2007, when the reforms to the Aliens Act and changes to country of origin reports were being discussed in public. When the Directorate responded positively and as the news spread that such meetings might materialize, the failed asylum seekers felt that their views had been taken seriously and that they had a chance to make their cause heard and get answers to their questions.

There was a sense of agency among the failed asylum seekers generated by them feeling the possibility of change in politics and being capable of effecting political decisions concerning themselves (cf. Sullivan & McCarthy 2004: 301). The stated objective of the meetings (meetings 4 and 5) was to enhance communication between the involved parties, as well as to clarify the existing norms and recent policy changes for the B permit holders[39]. The Afghan permit holders (A),

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[39] In addition to the failed asylum seekers and representatives of the Directorate of Immigration, also other interested parties took part in the meeting that I will address here (meeting 4; also meeting 5). Two police officers working in the field of residence permits and a person from the Employment and Economic Development Centre (since 2010 Centre for Economic Development, Transport and

who were preoccupied with a set of on-going policy developments, adopted a very active role in the meeting:

> A: I'd like to hear, what are the latest changes on the status B and other statuses as well, that the Directorate of Immigration has given thus far, and afterwards we can ask our questions. Of course, we have questions.

By inquiring after updates in asylum policies and practices the permit holders' first question examined the ground for communication and sought to position the parties in relation to one another. The question was not openly hostile, but it pointed out that the person asking was well informed that there had been changes and that the role of the Directorate of Immigration had changed concerning the granting of the B for a second year. Yet the question was asked in a rather meek and non-confrontational way giving the representative of the Directorate (DoI) a chance to determine the nature of the meeting.

> DoI: Apparently most of you have been given a temporary B permit in line with section 51 of the Aliens Act, and this has most likely been justified by the fact that for technical reasons you haven't been able to be returned to your home country, but otherwise you haven't got any grounds for receiving a residence permit, so that you could stay in Finland. [interpretation] And after that, it is so… [general restlessness in the audience, talk] Ok, I haven't finished yet. I want to continue. Let's take it in sections so that you can hear the translations.
>   So, after one year your situation is reconsidered and then it is still possible that you'll get a temporary permit for another year, and then once again the situation is assessed. This legislative situation has not changed at all. [interpretation] In the Directorate of Immigration country profiles are made. And the one concerning Afghanistan has been updated. And, in practice that means that we no longer consider there to be any technical impediments preventing a person's return to Afghanistan. So, if a person has no grounds for a residence permit here in Finland, s/he can be deported or returned to Afghanistan. But this does not mean group deportations or returnings, but each and everyone's situation is individually examined. [interpretation] And in practice this means that all applications made by Afghans concerning the B for a second year will be sent to the Directorate of Immigration, that the Directorate of Immigration has reserved the right to make these decisions, which means that the police will send them to the Directorate for consideration. [interpretation]
>   Then, as for Somalis, we have updated that country's profile as well. And that

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the Environment) participated in the meeting. The EED Centres are tasked at the regional level with receiving asylum seekers and promoting the integration of migrants into society and working life. All in all 88 people participated in the meeting, 68 of whom were residents at the reception centre, the other 20 included officials representing the police and the EED Centre, and in addition nurses, staff from the reception centre, interpreters and myself were present. The director of the reception centre chaired the meeting.

means that the situation in Somalia is currently so unstable that all Somalis com-
ing from the Southern or Central parts will be given international protection, if
the requirements for asylum aren't fulfilled. [interpretation] But this is also con-
sidered on an individual basis with reference to the current situation. It depends
on where one comes from. […]

The officer's claim that people sitting in front of her had no valid reasons for being
in Finland moved the focus of the meeting from dialogue to confrontation. Identi-
fying the B permit holders as people whose only grounds for residence in Finland
were based on some technical impediments, the officer's answer put the status
beyond political debate and denied the permit holders a status in the debates about
asylum and deportation (cf. Squire 2009: 60). The Directorate of Immigration in
effect negated communication through the officer's refusal to engage with people
by treating them only as representatives of a certain nation or label. The officer
sought to establish the Directorate as the only source of authentic knowledge by
giving an answer, which monopolised the talking about the Finnish asylum politics
and also about everyday life in Afghanistan (cf. Moulin & Nyers 2007: 369–370).

A: How do you know that the situation in Afghanistan has ameliorated, because
        don't you know that the officers have reported in the media, that year 2006 was
        the worst year in Afghanistan, since four thousand ordinary people have been
        killed. And people are still suffering from hunger and thirst. And why are we
        returned, if we will still have trouble and problems there and the war is still going
        on? [interpretation]
DoI: There is a country unit in the Directorate of Immigration, which follows the situ-
        ation of every state very closely. And we also have our own researcher, who has
        visited, done a so-called fact finding trip to Afghanistan, so that we should have
        very up-to-date and reliable information about the situation in Afghanistan[40]. [...]
        And over four million refugees have voluntarily returned to Afghanistan.
        […]
A: So as to Afghans there is a possibility technically and otherwise, since the situ-
        ation has calmed down, to send us back to our home country or deport us. This
        means that you think we are lying about everything we have told you and you
        think that life is going to be good, that we'll have a chance to study and work.
        Why in the world would a person leave one's home country, if one has a right
        and possibility to either work or study there? Nobody came to Finland, or any
        other country, but we're talking about Finland, just to get married or to work;
        it is a question of security and every one of the Afghans came here just because
        their lives were threatened. [interpretation] […] Actually you are lying when you

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[40] In my interview with Nasir this view was countered: "We know that he has not been able to [pause]
to collect any genuine information or talk to [pause] real people, who are living a very harsh life
under those war-lords, and have suffered at their hands. So, if he or she, whoever it was, had talked
to those ordinary men and women this everyday life, everyday torture, then he or she would have
come to another conclusion."

say that there's peace in Afghanistan and all kinds of possibilities, you are lying. Believe that you are not right.

It is fairly obvious that the failed asylum seekers cannot escape the effects that the B permit has, thus their agency is not solely about freedom of action or self-control. This kind of agency is easily reduced to frustration and anger, if it is read in the light of sovereign power (cf. however Piece III: section 3.4.1.). What happens above, however, is not an affirmation of bare life. Even though the Afghan permit holders felt the values and attitudes that had been placed on their bodies through the asylum process, they were not willing to consider themselves in those terms. According to Paul Sullivan and John McCarthy (2004: 303) this is agentive, because through inscription one is able to search for one's voice[41]. When this claim to agency is ignored, the body can still resort to its potential of casting itself outside the political label, move towards other bodies and evoke the necessarily political connections and relations between bodies (cf. Brigg & Bleiker 2010: 785). These relations exceed the frames of both governmentality and resistance, and also the spatiotemporal logic of sovereignty.

DoI: If you have a negative decision to your application, first we examine if you have any other reasons to stay in Finland, working, other bonds, or for how long you have been here. And every situation is individually considered. And then we also see which part of Afghanistan you are from, and if you could return and what would be your future possibilities there.

Chair: It's continuing. Hey, it's not finished yet!
        [The fuzz in the audience is growing.]

DoI: If you get a negative decision you can appeal to the Administrative Court.

Chair: It is still continuing; let the interpreters work in peace!
        [It has become virtually impossible to hear anything.]

DoI: This whole process will take approximately one year, so you don't have to fear, nobody will be leaving at least immediately. I'm not finished yet! [said in a raised voice]

Chair: [orders in vain the audience to be silent]

A: [in a raised voice, almost shouting] I want to know what is happening, she's not answering!

DoI: I will just say that when the moment of deportation comes, we will check the situation in the country. It is always checked if returning is possible on that day. The police will consider that and nobody can be turned back to areas in which their lives are at danger.

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[41] Sullivan and McCarthy emphasise establishing and searching for one's undivided voice. However, I consider the scope of their argument problematic because it seeks to construct a sovereign subject in control of him/herself and as an independent whole. For me, the process of searching for one's voice does not result in an understanding of a person becoming whole or their voice becoming undivided. Rather, I take this search to emphasise the inherent incompleteness of the attempts to develop determinate characteristics for political life and agency.

> Afghans stand up one by one very excitedly. Chairs are pushed over when they jump to their feet. The meeting has gone on for about 45 minutes. There is excited speech and gesturing, and also the police officer stands up and goes into the corridor and makes a call. After the meeting the policeman explains that due to the clear aggression in the air, he has called the station so that if there is any form of unrest in the centre, several patrols will come by during the evening or night.
>
> (Meeting 4, taped, my translation)

Leaving the meeting as a group was an act of protest. The failed asylum seekers sought to challenge the hierarchical power relation imposed between bodies during and as a result of the asylum process (cf. Moulin & Nyers 2007: 365). By countering the given identification the failed asylum seekers sought in fact to make the Finnish officers recognise that everybody is entitled to and capable of leading a public and political life (cf. Pulkkinen 2000: 17). Even when the communication between the parties faced a dead end, the permit holders managed to prove their capacity and quest for agency in terms that cannot be reduced to resistance. As the act of leaving the meeting spurred a reaction, the B permit holders forced sovereign power to engage with the "turbulence of migration" (Papastergiadis 2000). Calling police back-up to the neighbourhood after what was a symbolic act rather than a threatening one, represents a governmental effort to claim a monopoly over the political and reinstate the state as a provider of security to the members of the community. From another perspective, leaving the meeting after open verbal confrontation signalled a shrugging away from the governmental logic of inside/outside to the sphere of relational politics, which cannot be contained unambiguously. The act showed that both bodies, that of the failed asylum seeker and that of the officer, are ultimately mutually exposed – although not equally vulnerable – to one another's moves and presence.

A critical reader is bound to ask what happens when open confrontation with the representatives of sovereign power does not carry fruit, and when the two sides of the ontological gap seem to be separated by an unbridgeable divide (cf. Foucault 1978). Are failed asylum seekers' protests and gestures then nothing but politically insignificant individual acts? How is their effectiveness to be estimated? Or is it to be estimated at all? When remaining within the existing political imaginary or the structure-agent debate, the failed asylum seekers' claims and corporeal acts can be interpreted as nothing but reaffirmations of their marginality (cf. Orford 2006). This means that the failed asylum seeker is understood to act according to the assumptions of the "sovereign ban", i.e. to remain within the logic where sovereignty constitutes and marks all life that falls within its political sphere (Agamben 1998: 58–59, 111, 140; cf. Walker 2006b; Sparke 1998: 310–314; Nancy 1993a: 36–47). Within this imaginary politics represents a realm of giving form to life, which

again, reflects Nancy's conception of common being, where commonness is in-scribed upon the body from above and the body is reduced to an identity.

In Agamben's thought the original activity of sovereign power is the production of a biopolitical body; everyone has to have "a body to show" (Agamben 1998: 122–124). The biopolitical body is a governable object, a social entity inscribed with notions of normality, control and discipline (Parr 2001: 160; also Foucault 1978). In other words, every body – especially those seemingly out of place in relation to the prevailing political imaginary – is evaluated and subjected to sov-ereign decision, which seeks to limit the field of human action by suspending law in the state of exception (Agamben 1998: 83; also Dillon 2004). At first sight, this Agambenian frame of interpretation seems persuasive; it seems to represent exactly what is at stake in the question of failed asylum. Nevertheless, it fits rather poorly together with the accounts of the failed asylum seekers themselves as it adopts an all too totalising notion of sovereign power and situates this power in the state or in the figure of Leviathan, i.e. a form of sovereign authority. Therefore, the approach fails to acknowledge that political agency and the agentive bodies are in a constant process of becoming: never finished, never complete or final. A politics of becoming, or perhaps a becoming politics, represents a shared and felt way of being in the world for those bodies that expose themselves in various dynamic encounters. The key claim here is that *political life unfolds in relations that evolve, on the one hand, between people and sovereign practices and, on the other, among people as they act and come into presence in relation to one another*.

Failed asylum seekers' ontological potential lies in understanding that being displaced fosters a particular take on the world, which makes asylum seekers high-ly attuned to and conscious of the frailty of those social and political structures upon which they stand (see Huynh 2010: 54). There is, then, no refugee experience to be revealed or a singular question of failed asylum to be solved. Instead, there are various corporeal and experiential struggles, which go on simultaneously at multiple sites and which defy simplistic interpretations, clear-cut subject positions and rigid boundaries. The limits of political life set through sovereign practices are not exhaustive as the body can through a politics of its own disrupt these limits and expose the frail ontological foundations from which our notions of the inter-national arise.

Moving away from the idea of a sovereign subject towards relational politics offers a means to conceptualise the failed asylum seekers' political agency and forms of engaging with various others in a way that interrupts and exceeds rigid boundaries between selves and others. So, although that agency does involve a sense of empowerment reflected through the failed asylum seekers acting "as po-tential agents of their own history" (Gamson 1992: 7, cited in Dugan & Reger 2006: 469), a notion of self-empowerment does not properly characterise their

agentive dynamism. The failed asylum seekers' political agency is layered and infused with contradictions, ambiguities and ambivalences (cf. Chatterjee 2004). There are shifting strategies of taking and claiming agency that are characterised by incessant re-negotiations of the field of action – the social/political context – and of one's positions.

Stories similar to the ones presented in my work abound in the lived world of those seeking asylum in Finland. They are not rare in other parts of the world either (e.g. Pugliese 2002; 2004; Evans 2003, Solomin 2005; Moorehead 2006; Nyers 2008b). These stories raise the question of the failed asylum seekers' political agency as a means to negotiate and transform their daily lives and identities often overshadowed by official definitions and categorical labels (see Pehkonen & Puumala 2008). That agency stems from sensations of incoherence and incompleteness. Considering it in a political context and in terms of its political potential requires emphasis on multiple sites and forms of political authority, which might not be often associated with visible (sovereign) politics (see Campbell & Heyman 2007; Takhar 2007; Zevnik 2009; Joseph 2010). The corporeal struggle that emanates from the ontological gap bears disruptive and transformative potential within IR because it tweaks the spatial focus of the international from national borders to the body as a limit. This signals moving from the notion of a singular and determinate international towards multiple relations within the international.

2.4.   Combining the international with the singular: agentive body politic

Failed asylum seekers' presence no-w-here within the international exposes fluid and ambiguous political relationalities in terms of both space and time (cf. Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 44; Walker 2009: 20–21). The international is not an already existing space, a stable framework for or even just a particular project of political life, but an open-ended political *process* that comes to exist with singular bodies coming into presence together (cf. Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 165–166). Through a Nancian lens my work, then, constructs a collage of *the ways in which the compearance of bodies, as singular plural beings, shapes the limits and relations between the singular, the political and the international*. I pursue this task by engaging with those ways in which the failed asylum seekers exceed the perceived limits of political life and gesture towards shared, relational and overlapping political spaces and authorities.

In this work the kind of acts count as political, which *in their potential effect* can be understood to contest, interrupt or exceed the logic of straight lines and articulate a condition of 'with being' or compearance between different bodies. The adopted focus does away with the prerequisite of intentionality for an act to

be considered political. The failed asylum seekers seek to re-establish the bond severed by governmental processes and sovereign politics both of which signal the negligence of singular plurality. Their agency is always already political, but never free from the sphere of politics (cf. Manning 2007: 63). I call this specific understanding of political agency *'agentive body politic'*. It does not privilege the real, but illustrates a potential politics that emanates from the moving, sensing and experiencing body and therefore marks an understanding of the political that every body is. The failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic challenges static notions of identity and belonging, and instead of occurring in a fixed, bounded framework, it creates that very framework.

Although there is no singular strategy or common identity on which agency is built and from which it arises, most debates concerning failed asylum seekers' agency seem to assume that people sharing the same status form a community within which they can form their subjectivity and from which they can acquire a political (speaking) position (cf. Sudbury 2001; Butler 2004: 11; see also Piece III)[42]. Within this imagery the political community is an ultimate end, which is essentialized and put beyond question (see Nancy 1992, 2004a; Kellogg 2005; Panelli & Welch 2005, 2007). In this politics failed asylum seekers cannot construct themselves as political agents because their bodies are made intelligible only by making them appear common (cf. Manning: 2007: 62). Another equally problematic approach is that the effects of the label are swept aside and replaced with claims about a cosmopolitan or global humanity. This is how the claims of particularity and universality enabled by the notion of the international materialise through the phenomenon of failed asylum. Both remaining with the "sticky sign" (Ahmed 2004) and disregarding the label altogether would make my attempts of exploring the failed asylum seekers' means of adopting political agency to no avail. Both approaches fail to scrutinise the political dynamics at work and ignore the question concerning what we take politics and political life to be, and where we expect to find them (cf. Darby 2004: 1; Agier 2008: 64–65).

Within an imaginary that draws inspiration from Nancy's thought, political agency is about the undulation of the body in relation to others – their being with one another – and the tensioning and loosening of these relations through engagement and through corporeal conjunctures no-w-here. My interest in the complex relations between the failed asylum seeker and the international means exploring bodies' ontological compearance and both the international and the acting body as

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[42] Not supposing identities to be substantial, according to Nancy (2000: 147), is to do right by identities. He sees the task being enormous and yet extremely simple; it is the task of a (political; my addition) culture remaking itself. Nancy notes that this task means mixing together again "the various lines, trails, and skins, while at the same time describing their heterogeneous trajectories and their webs, both those that are tangled and those that are distinct". (See also Devisch 2011; cf. Zevnik 2009: 90–93.)

events of the political. The limit between the international and the (singular) body is an extremely active site, undoubtedly one of the many possible ones, in which the exploration of possibilities of political life can begin. Let Soran help me make this claim concrete:

> Soran contends: "I am not happy. [E]verybody here treats us bad. Everybody hates us." Omar has come to sit with Soran and me just in time to hear Soran's lament. "You cannot say that, Soran", Omar objects. "Not everybody hates us. You cannot generalize like that. Not everybody here [in Finland] is bad, we just live here [in the reception centre], and that affects us." Soran nods, but does not seem convinced.
>
> (Field notes, September 11th 2006)

Soran felt that he represented the 'unwanted' part of the society, which put him in a vulnerable position. His could be taken to represent an experience of a situation, in which the body has been reduced to nothing more than a set of stereotypes that the labelled body cannot mediate (see Noland 2009: 199). Omar, however, countered Soran's interpretation by spacing the problem and saying that hostility stems from their living in the centre. Omar sought to point out that their positioning in the Finnish society, not their being/presence as such, generates the feel of being hated. The failed asylum seekers are, then, by no means unaware of the fact that at the level of public debate they are made to look culpable for taking advantage of the system and aggravating already existing social problems (cf. Uçarer 2006; Squire 2009: 139; see also Pirjola 2009).

Whether Soran's claim of everybody hating (failed) asylum seekers is true, or to what extent it is accurate, is not under scrutiny here. Through Nancy's philosophy opens an alternative avenue to the relation between body and knowledge and also to the possibilities of political life within international relations both as they are lived (ir) and theorised (IR). The body, according to Nancy (1993a: 200), does not "belong to the domain in which 'knowledge' and 'non-knowledge' are at stake". Bodies belong to the domain of experience, which does not translate into truth sought in the asylum process. Therefore, even though the body being categorised might signal an administrative closure, for the person a struggle over and of the body has merely begun. We are always free for the unexpected, or in other words we infinitely resist politics, if politics signals the appropriation of essences (Wurzer 1997: 98).

The ontology of bodies does not imply neglecting the sphere of power relations, in which we are always caught up (also Nancy 2004a: xxxvii). Thus, Nancy's thought does not evacuate or annihilate the element and relations of power. Rather, his ontology is a call to remedy oppressive power differentials by mobilising counter-energies, which however must never be allowed to become totalising and oppressive in turn (also Dallmayr 1997: 183). With the emphasis it places on open-

ness, the ontology of the body offers an experience-based venue to the questions of agency and political existence within the international. In Nancy's (1993c: 4) words experience signifies "being born to the presence of a sense, a presence itself nascent, and only nascent". It means going through, moving from one side to another (Nancy 2008: 97–103). Experience and body cannot be separated; it is always a body that experiences. Hence, Nancy's ontology persuades me to ask what it means to be(come) many, to be-with-one-another (cf. Piece I: section 1.2.).

A focus on the meanings of the plurality of existence enables tweaking the question of political life – what and where we take it to be – in such a manner that sovereignty as its founding and affirmative principle loses its hold. In other words – and importantly for our understanding of the international – politics must not be surrendered to the self-interest of atomic agents – whether states, corporations or individuals – or to a totalising globalism (also Dallmayr 1997: 193). Thus, as a tentative expression of compearance, the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic suspends both the claims of particularity and the claims of universalism within the sphere of the international.

The relation between sovereignty, the individual, the political and the international is revealed to be a process, a set of various practices and struggles, and the failed asylum seeker's body is a point of intersection where all of these elements come together and unfold. As with Soran and Omar, the person's ability to know their body beyond the label, to sense its positive presence, enables them to move outside the label (see Noland 2009: 199; also Takhar 2007: 123). The body constantly exposes itself with multiple means, at various fronts – with, in relation to and towards others. Thus, it is not that the (failed) asylum seeker re-discovers his/her agency and existence as a political body, but that s/he always has been capable of political agency and performed political acts (cf. Dolan 1995; Cavarero 2002).

When considering agency in the political – agentive body politic – the acts of saying and doing and the relationality and sharing that they establish are privileged. Accounts of failed asylum tell about the processes of making oneself, being made by others and the possibilities of becoming. These accounts resist reifying the state of being an asylum seeker into a definite identificatory marker. Although the space of agency is not readily available for failed asylum seekers, by engaging with and relating to others they open this space, which however always remains incomplete and subject to change. Exploring the question of political life through the ontological body necessitates (re)framing skin and touch politically, and thinking of the international and its relations in terms of 'the political'. Such a focus means moving from the politics of 'in-common-being' where the common is the essence of being and political existence, towards 'being-in-common' where being is what unites all people and constructs them as legitimate political bodies. It offers a way to explore critically the ontological foundations that give rise to our conceptions of

possible and meaningful ways of political participation and belonging as expressions of political life.

The body maintains its capacity to reach towards others even if it is rejected. The challenge lies in understanding 'with-being', not only as 'in relation to', but as a 'relation' or 'being-towards', which is ontological. Because it puts into play the differences between presence and absence, inside and outside, self and other, the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic both reaffirms and calls into question – although not systematically – the system of metaphysical oppositions on which IR as a discipline was originally founded (cf. also Naas 1997: 73).

2.5.   Which comes first: IR or ir?

This Piece has claimed that the (impossible) quest to know asylum seekers' true identity reflects a rather rigid understanding of identities and political existence within the international (cf. Campbell 1997; 1998a; Manning 2000; Doty 2006; Walker 2006b). In addition, I have suggested that the detained or temporarily permitted/tolerated body invites us to step outside familiar categories, and that we need to explore what the Nancian idea of ontological compearance can do and mean for our understandings of the international.

As I have argued, most often the emergence of the disciplinary field of international relations is connected with a political organisation of the world around the nation-state (see Walker 2009: ch. 4; Nayak & Selbin 2010: 125; cf. Tickner 2003). The assumptions of mainstream IR – and ir that rests on and functions according to those assumptions – tend to perpetuate a dichotomised world. This perpetuation results from regarding the state as a primary unit of analysis, dividing into an inside and an outside of the state, assuming a common progression of humanity to one end-state and the existence of a universal rationality, stressing structure over agency and searching for explanation rather than understanding (see Smith 2004: also Agathangelou & Ling 2004a). This makes IR theories stories of how the world works and how the international becomes practiced and enforced on a daily basis. These theories are used to recommend certain types of decisions about the problems and pressing issues of the world. (See Nayak & Selbin 2010: 7.)

As a discipline, a source of knowledge-production and a field of practical politics, international relations is founded upon colonial erasures, unequal social relations and violences (Agathangelou & Ling 2004b: 34–35). This is the reason for my emphasis on the world and the international not being synonymous concepts. Failed asylum, or asylum seeking more generally, is merely one outcome that follows from this political organisation of the world. At the disciplinary level failed asylum is, because of the logic upon which IR works, most often conceived as

either a question of security, freedom, citizenship or governance, each approach suggesting a somewhat different solution to the 'problem' of the moving body.

Through various agentive strategies the failed asylum seekers expose every body's ontological condition and point towards an understanding of seemingly separate bodies existing only with one another. However, before pursuing this thought further one more clarification is still required. I need to explain my perception of the connection between ir and IR: international relations as they are practiced on a daily basis and International Relations as an art of explaining and understanding the dynamics of the previously mentioned relations (cf. Isin & Turner 2007: 16).

My collage alters the relation between IR and ir as it turns to the latter to gain perspective of the former, instead of simply applying the former to analyse the latter. As I shall argue in the three subsequent Pieces, ethnographic explorations into international relations bear the potential to challenge some of the ontological assumptions that found IR. Engaging with the failed asylum seekers can bring to light something meaningful about the discipline. Yet I am not claiming that one study based on Finnish policies has the potential to reform the whole field, although the importance of 'singular' or 'local' cases should not be downplayed either (see Acharya 2011: 631).

The failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic unfolds those moments and spaces of overlap between self and other that coexist with the logic of straight lines (cf. Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 205, 213–215). It is crucial to note that in availing myself to the field and Nancy's philosophy I am not rushing to announce the end of 'sovereignty' or the death of the 'subject'. Rather, I seek to stretch, revise and rethink these concepts within IR through the singular-plural body of the failed asylum seeker and through the ontological compearance of bodies. I approach this task by addressing those corporeal conjunctures no-w-here that come into being when people move within the international and shape it through their movements.

Episode 3

Uncomfortably close to the fragmentary demand

When I meet him standing in the hall, I decide to ask if he still wants to talk with me. "No", he says, "there is nothing to talk now." He smiles, but is not happy or even content.

He contends that the centre is not good, that I cannot possibly understand. "Not everybody is the same." I ask what he means; that me as a Finn and him are not the same. "Yes, we are not the same. Or what do you think?"

I feel that I am inadequate in my roles, work, and being there, for there is nothing that I can do to ease the sorrow, hopelessness, anger or frustration that he is going through. I cannot own his pain or feelings.

I tell him that "in principle we are all the same, but...". He cuts in: "What does that 'but' mean?"

I can only listen, offer an ear, and be there, but not really help. The things he desires are not big, but rather simple ones, and yet so unobtainable to him, and out of my control and power.

I tell that the difference that most bluntly separates us is my living somewhere else and he being placed in the centre. He nods and we agree that we are not

the same. I cannot pretend that we are in a
similar position. This is one aspect where I
rise higher; where the benefit is on my side.

> I don't know what to say when he suddenly exclaims "B, mikä vitun
> B? [The B, what fucking B?] Everybody
> goes crazy here."

I ask if he lived in his own apartment, would we then be the same.
"Maybe," he hesitates, "but here we are not.
If I ask somebody here they don't answer,
my lawyer doesn't answer, they just say that
it's the culture that's different. I don't think
that."

> He says something in Arabic, looks at me and asks
> "mitä tarkoittaa?" [What does it mean?]
> I tell him that as he knows, I don't under-
> stand. He smiles and says that it meant that
> everybody dying would be better. How am I
> supposed to react?

He needs me to answer him; to hear me say that I do not have the answers
or that I do not know what he is supposed
to do.

> I cannot say that everything will soon get better, that
> his current state "goes with the fact that you
> are an asylum seeker".

I cannot say to him that there are no justifications, no reasons to be given.

> I cannot look him in the eye and say that.

(Talk with **Soran**,   (Talk with **Hussein**,
field notes, 11th September 2006)   field notes, 14th November 2006)

Maurice Blanchot defines "the fragmentary demand" as a demand, which does not
exclude but rather exceeds totality. It is an apt starting point for my examination of
the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic as a set of relations and practices.
This body politic requires – not necessarily coherently and intentionally, but in a
scattered and incomplete way – that we think of the failed asylum seeker's pres-
ence in terms of an expression of the 'real' of the world that cannot be reduced

to essential identities. Such a reality, as Soran's and Hussein's voices suggest, emerges from a sense (of place) that takes us in the 'movement of presentation and withdrawal'[43] and exposes us to one another as singular plural beings.

In order to scrutinise what actually is at stake with the before mentioned exposure, the following Piece begins with an examination of the failed asylum seekers' conditioned potential to establish themselves as bodies capable of politics. The result of the asylum process seeks to determine what kinds of political relations are possible between the asylum body and others. My discussions with Soran and Hussein made me confront the fact that the effects of the body's placing are concretely sensed, and yet without a solid foundation.

However, instead of remaining with a purely governmental frame of analysis, the following Piece will perform a Nancian reading of the failed asylum seekers' conditioned but relational field of public action. As noted, the ontology of the body does not negate power relations, the existence of which both Soran and Hussein sense. Rather, it enables studying these relations without remaining captive to the dichotomous logic of sameness/alterity, identity/otherness and inside/outside that still, at least to some extent, characterises the system of knowledge within IR. In order to depart from that logic, the Piece also addresses how experiences of injustice and ontological essentialism shape voices and give rise to emotional agencies that take form in bodies coming together. In theoretical terms this means rethinking politics as a bond as it is lived and imagined (see Cavarero 2002: 519–520; Butler 2003a). Sometimes failed asylum seekers expose the politics of the international uncomfortably close to those of us leading 'normal lives', apparently untouched by the troubles of the world. Whilst their demand may be fragmentary, it is a powerful one:

Nasir: And all...all of us have one thing in common that we all strive to live a normal life, just like any other normal person. So, we have this thing in common.

Eeva: Hmm, I think all people have that in common. But many people…have their normal life and they don't have to look for it.

Nasir: Yeah, they take it for granted. […] And we strive for it. And I guess we have a right to have a normal life. Just like any other person.

(Interview with Nasir, March 2007)

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[43] For Nancy this movement governs all philosophical gestures that seek to present in a direct fashion the purity, self-identity and self-groundedness of thought. Therefore, consciousness occurs only in the rupturing of self-identity; a secure ground for knowledge and thinking presents and withdraws itself at the same time. (See e.g. James 2002: 46, 226.)

Piece III

Voiced claims for a relational politics

> In poisies, worlds emerge from constant interplays, both interpretive and material, between selves and others. They create ceaseless, multiple constructions of being and becoming that transform familiar boundaries – material, geographical, social – into unfamiliar reconstructions of We. Poisies resembles other ancient epistemologies like the Buddhist principle of *pratitya samutpada* ('co-dependent arising'). Both emphasise the necessarily mutual nature of subjectivity and its construction. Subjectivities reverberate with one another to transform into entirely new entities; indeed, one cannot be without the other.
>
> (Agathangelou & Ling 2005: 846, italics orig.)

The above quote introduces the concept of *poisies* that is generally used to denote "creativity" or "poetic inspiration", but in fact its ancient meaning is wider; poisies marks creativity that comes from an act of reverberation or setting language in a state of emergence (see Agathangelou & Ling 2004b: 21). Such a state of emergence manifests life in its vivacity. It enables envisioning the process of becoming in a way that exceeds rigid and firm limits, which, in turn, allows us to conceive the possibilities of political life being a matter of constantly changing scripts and voices. So, in some respects my work does resonate with already extant theorisations on the possibilities of alternative epistemological and ontological approaches within IR. However, even in the case of poisies the analytical focus seems to be primarily on language and voice, while the notion of compearance evoked by Nancy's ontology emphasises the corporeality of human existence.

Although also the present Piece centres the question of voice, a wider focus on the bodily is necessary, since only a part of the possible articulations of the failed asylum seeker's relational presence are shaped through voice or mediated by lan-

guage. Also, as we will see in this Piece, a Nancian understanding on voice is inseparable from the body (section 3.1.). As a whole this Piece explores the senses of the international that emerges from voiced relations between people. From such a premise this Piece begins my journey to the ways in which compearance dissolves the logic of sovereignty and the ways the notion of relational presence makes hierarchies and discriminations between subjectivities obsolete. I claim that if we wish to address the relations within and senses of the international, it is absolutely essential to engage with the failed asylum seeker's voice and explore its political potentiality. However, these voices are often left beyond political analysis because of their fragmentation and openness and because they are seen to fall outside the scope of IR.

This Piece maintains that the possibilities of political life are exposed through all apperance being appearance towards others and towards the world. The examination of these possibilities requires a creative envisioning of the possible forms of political community that do not succumb to 'in-common-being' or the logic of inside/outside. Thus, the argument of this Piece is two-fold. On the one hand, the Piece takes up demonstrations and the failed asylum seekers' appearances in the media with the aim of shedding light on the variety of social and political relations that they participate in and form through their actions. This discussion is necessary in order to grasp that the failed asylum seekers are not isolated bodies that exist only in the space of the Agambenian camp. The relations in which they engage are not devoid of politics, but – quite the contrary – the very space of the political. On the other, this Piece examines how public appearances easily reinforce the conception that failed asylum seekers form a unitary group, a community in the conventional sense of the word. This understanding fits poorly with my interviewees' experiences. In order to present a picture more true to their accounts, the Piece addresses the multiplicity of voices that a focus on social movements sometimes loses and thus it illustrates the potentiality of ethnographic inquiries within IR.

3.1.   Voicing shared existence

The possibility of identity, in Nancy's thought, is necessarily related to multiple others and the world, which signals that identities are shared between people (also Perpich 2005). In raising the element of sharing (*partage*) Nancy plays with the double sense of the French word *partage* as both an act of sharing and dividing, which takes me back to the question of the international. The international is both universal and particular – a political act of sharing and dividing. Bodies that are divided into different nationalities, statuses and positions are yet joined together in their singular plural condition. Thus they are all equally political and capable of

politics, even though their ways of engagement and articulation may differ.

According to Nancy (1993a: 234–247) voice is not equal to speech. There is no speech without voice, but there can be voice without speech. Furthermore, because each voice is unique, there is no singular voice that can speak for failed asylum seekers. Instead each of them has several possible voices and thus also several ways of articulating themselves politically in relation to others. Like meaning and identity, also voice is always shared. Indeed, for Nancy (1993a: 239) theorising voice comes down to an understanding "that being is not a subject, but that it is an open existence spanned by ejection, an existence ejected into the world". A voice, contrary to an account or a story, cannot be challenged for it is an imprint of a body's presence. This change of focus is necessary, because – as noted with regard to the ontological gap – words can never completely convey exactly what the person wants to say. Indeed, Charlotte Epstein (2010: 336) notes that people need to voice themselves by "words that hold generic meanings and are thus fundamentally ill-fitted for that unique and immediate impulse that led the subject to want to speak in the first place."

A Nancian approach on voice relies on the figure of the speaking mouth (*la bouche*). Through the figure of the speaking mouth, Nancy rethinks space and spatiality as exteriority and 'extension' in terms of a bodily instance within which distinctions such as mind/body, sensible/intelligible or transcendent/immanent cannot operate (James 2006: 60–62, fn. 57; also Nancy 1993a: 234–247; 2008). To put it otherwise, the speaking mouth voices bodily existence, which is always already political. It calls the other to come out in one's own voice, as a singular-plural being, not as a representative of a nationality or as a holder of a certain political status (see Nancy 1993a: 245). For Nancy, then, the speaking mouth figures an instance of presentation and withdrawal of an 'I', which can never coincide with the subject of discourse produced in a fable (cf. Lyotard 1984). This moves subjectivity into an exteriority in excess of any subject and allows us to think of the giving of being as "a temporal unfolding in which singularities, prior to any logic of a subject expose themselves to each other" (James 2006: 61–62). Through its ontological exposure to others, the body manifests being as it occurs, which can never be told exhaustively and which will never be completed.

Besides breaking the connection between voice and speech, a Nancian framework withdraws also from the understanding that political speech/voice must take place in public and result from cognition. This elaboration informs my attempt to transcend the ideas of a sovereign speaking subject and his/her identity, and yet explore voice as a modality of political agency (cf. Smith 1992; Teleky 2001; Epstein 2010; also Agathangelou & Ling 2004a). In the Nancian frame, bodies do not signify an identity or mark a presence or substance. Rather, they mark an excess of signification and obey a paradoxical logic of presentation and withdrawal. (See

James 2006: 64.)

The intertwining of the bodily and the political in Nancy's philosophy implies that voicing oneself politically involves an understanding of voice as embodied exchange, which gives rise to a 'we-world'. In the we-world the value and meaning of a story depend on whom, where and how it is told, as well as the other's reception of it (cf. Piece I: section 1.3.1.). For Nancy, the we-world is a socially constructed and maintained space, which however, is never homogeneous, totalising or monolithic (see Perpich 2005: 77). Within this imaginary interaction requires mutual transformation – a sense of bodies coming into presence together – not only opening up space for different voices (see Muldoon 2001: 52). Meaning, then, appears between bodies and through the body adopting an attitude towards the world, i.e. the body placing itself in the world (see Kellogg 2005: 352; Nancy 2000; 2004a; also Csordas 2008: 113; Epstein 2010: 329; cf. Merleau-Ponty 1994; Watkin 2009).

Inspired by Nancy's take on voice, the rest of this Piece will explore voice in terms of sonorous touching, which builds connections between people. The failed asylum seeker's voice remains always somewhat open in that its scope and meaning cannot be fixed. I will address the way voice changes depending on the intended audience. It is necessary to come to terms with this fragmentation and the various tones that the failed asylum seekers adopt so as to grasp their demand as being one for compearance. This signals fathoming the political in terms of a relation that the body exposes. In order to make my claim a tad more concrete, I will next move to the sphere of the international and explore the way voice can rearticulate political relations between bodies.

3.2.   The reaching body articulates shared solidarities

The body constantly exposes itself with multiple means, at various fronts, with and towards other bodies. It needs, then, to be examined how the failed asylum seekers' voices – both as representing a label and as singular-plurals – are with and unfold in relation to the voices and accounts of various others, including myself (see McCarthy, Sullivan & Wright 2006). In line with the elaboration presented in the previous section, of importance is not so much what is said – the story or account – that matters, but the relations that voice creates between bodies and the way it puts the meanings and senses of the international in flux. The failed asylum seekers' fragmentary demand calls for a questioning of the meanings, rather than the practices, of the power to separate between bodies (also Episode 3).

The present section will connect the body of the failed asylum seeker with social movements and the wider society. The failed asylum seekers do not simply

exist in the space of the camp in isolation from others, but notwithstanding their marginal position they participate in a variety of social and political practices and seek to transform them. In order to ground the argument, I will address two demonstrations organised to protest against recent Finnish policy developments and two documentary films that gave voice to the B permit holders. My writing, however, does not analyse the demonstrations and documentary films in themselves, but merely presents a limited reading of them in order to expose the ways in which the failed asylum seekers at all times exceed the strict binary logic that seeks to outcast them from the Finnish society and from the sphere of politics. The presented interpretation reveals the political and international occurring at unexpected sites through rather mundane practices.

3.2.1.   *A plea draws closer: demonstrations*

It is practically impossible for failed asylum seekers to challenge experienced injustices through law, when the legal code enables their reduction into a state of marginality and abjectivity (cf. McNevin 2010: 143). As noted in the previous Piece, the Afghan B permit holders were severely disillusioned by the failure to interact with the Directorate of Immigration (see Piece II: section 2.3.2.). The incapacity to create even a basis for debating and discussing the rationale behind the B meant that the failed asylum seekers were denied the possibility to take part in the debate around Finnish asylum policy. Later on, Nasir reflected upon the meeting and described the frustration in the following manner:

> Nasir: We wanted [the meeting] because we disagreed with this B, we were going to talk about this B and this everything [...]. Then she came, but anyhow we wanted to talk, we wanted to question and we wanted to hear from her, and unfortunately she didn't have [seize] that opportunity. Yeah, you don't insult that way to a group of people. Maybe we don't have our own homes in Finland, but we have our dignity, we have our self-respect, all people have that. We are no less, or worse than normals, superior or inferior. And we are not some idiots, don't you think?
> (Interview with Nasir, March 2007)

Rather than accepting the outcome of the meeting, the Afghan B permit holders sternly set out to reach towards others. Demonstrating became their means to build solidarities[44]. Stepping out in public signalled an effort to position the body outside

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[44] With regard to the detention unit, this kind of 'misplaced' act operates on the basis of 'bottom-up' solidarity. The detainees cannot themselves argue their cases in public, not to mention demonstrate. However, NGOs (e.g. Free Movement) have organised demonstrations outside the unit. These demonstrations have addressed both individual cases and the overall practice of detention. Detainees

the atmosphere of hostility and, importantly, to reverse the logic of in-common-being in which the state authorities are allocated the authority to define 'a people' (see also Moulin & Nyers 2007: 365).

> Save Humanity! Help Refugees!
>
> Join us in the demonstration on 15-02-2007 on Thursday, to protest against the unlawful and unjust Govt policy. Refugees are threatened to be sent back to war-torn Afghanistan, just to face persecution, torture and murder. Mujahedin, War Lords, War Criminals, Drug Mafia and perpetrators of genocide keep violating people's human rights.
>
> Voice your objection at the hypocrisy of the Govt who wants to make helpless refugees pay the price of their politics.
>
> The event will start at 12:00 in front of Tampereen Yliopisto [the University of Tampere]. The demonstrators will then march to Keskustori [the Central market place].

The Afghan B permit holders drafted and distributed the above call to action in order to bring people together to protest against the Finnish policy over the B and the plans to enforce deportations to Afghanistan. Albeit the summons evoked an account of victimisation and vulnerability, with words like "threatened", "violating" and "helpless", it also allowed the failed asylum seekers to undermine the sovereign's right to decide who can and cannot speak, to whom and with what voice[45]. Keeping in mind the ontological premises of my study, I claim that the demonstration was a means of re-establishing the bond that was broken as a result of labelling. Next, I will discuss the actual act of demonstrating in order to pave the way towards a conception of the relational nature of political existence as it unfolds through the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic.

During the spring of 2007 three demonstrations took place: the demonstration in Tampere summoned by the above call to action was ensued by similar events in Helsinki and Turku. In publicly advocating their case the failed asylum seekers hoped to mobilise people for a shared cause, that is for questioning the human effects of Finnish policy. In the demonstrations slogans such as "*Afghanistan; safe for drug mafia*"; "*Afghanistan; safe for terrorists*"; "*It's my life, don't play with it*"; "*Justice for refugees*"; "*Don't sacrifice me for your politics*"; "*Save 150 lives*" and "*If you send us back, you're cooperating with the perpetrators of genocide*" abounded. These slogans resonate with the efforts to harmonise European asy-

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have participated in the demonstrations by opening their room windows – strictly prohibited in the unit – and reaching out towards the demonstrators through the bars.

[45] It is noteworthy that most of my interviewees spoke of themselves as refugees. This represents a political move, which undermines the state's right and ability to unilaterally discriminate between bodies.

lum policies and discussions about 'safe' countries of origin, which bury bodies seeking refuge under legislative terms and technocratic innovations making the refugee their first casualty (cf. Dauphinee & Masters 2006). The slogans materialized the failed asylum seekers' voice. Their voiced worries were not abstract and disembodied, but resonated closely with the perceived bodily consequences of deportation. The nature of the presented demand illustrates that even in cases where transformation seems impossible, hope allows people to feel that the cause of their anger and pain is not inevitable (Ahmed 2004: 184). In fact, in the demonstrations the failed asylum seekers, and others protesting with them, voiced their hope for a different politics; one which would account for a messy, finite and shared existence. Thus, even when the body's potential to voice itself and relate to others has been minimised, the body remains resistant to the totalising logic on which asylum as a political institution relies.

The prime audiences targeted by the demonstrations were unarguably the Finnish politicians and those deciding on the scope and content of asylum policies. The failed asylum seekers' 'misplaced' acts of reaching and protest distorted and recontextualised their bodies and presence in political terms. As a strategy of interruption, direct forms of protest disrupt the myth of securely placed citizens and 'threatening others' living alongside and yet separate from one another (see Morris 2009: 377). Involvement in demonstrations can open bodies – both those demonstrating and those witnessing the demonstration – to the world (see Roseneil 1995: 99). In coming together with others the failed asylum seekers not only protested against the Finnish policy, but also exceeded the limits of both governmentality and resistance; they voiced 'relational becoming' as a political condition between all bodies.

The protest that echoed in the streets during the demonstrations articulated corporeal conjunctures and relations between bodies which are scattered differently within the spheres of the international (cf. Sudbury 2001: 31–32, 38–40; also Sudbury 1998). It is as if the failed asylum seekers contested the logic on the basis of which their bodies faced the threat of deportation. They questioned the essential difference between the self and the other, and claimed implicitly that the spatiotemporal logic on which the international is built is without foundation. Therefore, as a form of agentive body politic demonstrating evokes the notion of the speaking mouth, which articulates relational presence here and now through reverberating with governmental discourses.

Demonstrating, as an act of reaching towards others, brought out the failed asylum seekers' fragmentary demand for compearance. This demand exposed a form of political agency that does not unambiguously conform to the logic of sovereignty, but works along different lines (see Squire 2009: 153; McNevin 2010; also Moulin & Nyers 2007).

3.2.2.   *The mutuality of address: documentary films*

While the demonstrations were organised in order to make specific claims with regard to Finnish asylum policy and force the politicians and decision-makers to hear these claims, through the media failed asylum seekers target a wider social response[46]. By appearing in the media failed asylum seekers aim to break the to-talising logic of the label and establish a starting point for a political discussion of their presence (cf. Squire 2009: 40–41). Although the undertone of the presented demand does not change, the mediated voice and its meanings are more ambiguous and less goal-oriented than what was the case with the demonstrations.

> Eeva: Do you think that people in Finland, I don't know how much you talk about this with friends or others, that they understand how it is to be an asylum seeker?
>
> Tahir: Yeah, it's difficult. I don't know whether you've seen the documentary Asylum? Mm, I was in it. I explained there how we have problems here. [...] Even though I thought we might have problems, if the movie went to Afghanistan, perhaps I was afraid... But people here don't know that there are problems here also, and they don't know why we are here. Then it is better if some dare, or somebody dares to do it [the documentary]. I'm happy that we got to do that video for sale, and I know it has been broadcast in many places. […]
>
>   A lady had so much fun the last time I was there [in town] last Friday or Saturday: I was in a disco and in the morning when I left home and this woman was a bit tipsy and she asked me "have you been on telly?", and I said "yeah, I have". Then she started talking with me, it was a bit cold outside, [...] and she said "before we were racists the whole family, and then we saw your documentary, and we cried for you and after that we decided that we are for your case". And then she wanted to give me hundred euros, and I didn't want it, and she said "because I was like guilty, when I thought wrongly about you and I wish to repair that". And I told her "no, because now you know how things are, that is what..." And then she got us a taxi, and she paid it. And it was thirty euros.
>
>   (Interview with Tahir, my translation, April 2007)

Tahir's encounter with this woman at a taxi stand after a night out illustrates how stories once shared have the potential to move people. Furthermore, his account expresses that the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic does not lie only in openly political acts (Puumala & Pehkonen 2010; also Puumala *et al.* 2011). Failed asylum seekers' voices cannot be reduced to resistance, nor can they be always connected with cognition and conscious goal-oriented reflection (cf. Jabri 2005).

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[46] Asylum seekers appearing in the media can result in a phenomenon of *sur place* (on the spot) refugeeness, when publicity makes returning/deportation practically impossible. The pressure of the public opinion might also lead to the court granting a residence permit. (Interview 9) *Sur place* refugeeness is problematic also from the point of view of the asylum seeker, for not all (failed) asylum seekers have the strength or the means to question and advocate their cases in public.

Just as Soran and Hussein in Episode 3, Tahir voices a demand to think of appearance in terms of compearance. This demand, however, is fragmentary and cannot therefore be conceived as an expression of the "right to claim rights".

As Tahir's story suggests, the failed asylum seeker does not necessarily need to claim anything, but yet the body articulates shared presence. What the media appearances thus crystallise is the failed asylum seeker's capacity to engage with others both through and beyond the label. Such an understanding rests on there being no privileged question or place from which they could start, and therefore the rules and conditions of dialogue, as Michael Naas (1997: 72) in his examination of the sharing of voices between East and West points out, cannot be established in advance. Rather, these rules and conditions themselves become the subject of inquiry as people engage in a dialogue or voice their being. For this claim to become comprehensible and to clarify the fragmentary and ever changing nature of voice, I will take up two documentary films broadcast on the Finnish television: "*B-ihmiset*" (the B people) an episode of the documentary series Silminnäkijä (2006) and "*Turvapaikka*" (Asylum, directed by Jenni Linko, 2006)[47].

Before presenting my own reading of 'the B people' and 'Asylum', let me first very briefly introduce the films. Both documentaries examine the legal limitations embedded in the B permit together with the experience of living far away from home, traumatised and hurt by both the past and the present. In 'the B people' holders of the temporary residence permit voice the everyday effects of being categorised. Interviews with the director of a reception centre, the director of the Refugee Advice Centre and an officer from the Directorate of Immigration give further administrative context to the permit holders' personal stories. The permit holders talk about waiting and uncertainty, about not being entitled to an official ID and not having the right to work.

In addressing the limitations of the B permit, 'the B people' highlights the contradictory nature and effects of asylum legislation in Finland. Often asylum seekers are reproached for taking advantage of the social security benefits of which only Finnish citizens or permanent residents are perceived as the rightful recipients. Yet, as the documentary persuasively argues, it is precisely the Finnish system that makes failed asylum seekers dependent on social assistance. The film, then, focuses mostly on elements of distress manifesting the contradictory nature of the B permit which permeates the failed asylum seekers' everyday lives.

Jenni Linko's documentary 'Asylum' tells the stories of three minors who have

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[47] Besides the two films, there were many more appearances in the press and TV in which failed asylum seekers spoke of the permit and of their lives with it. Also, the documentary film "*Sormenjäljet*" [Fingerprints] (directed by Kati Juurus, 2009) could be added to this discussion. It takes up the use and human effects of the Eurodac system, and Dublin II Regulation. It follows the lives and lived trajectories of people known as 'Dublin hits' as they are moved and move from place to place, from one centre and country to another.

the B permit, and who live in a home for under-aged asylum seekers. It skillfully presents the different emotional elements embedded in the lives of the protagonists, while they wait for their decisions. 'Asylum' illustrates the mix of tears and laughter, fear and joy in their everyday lives, and thus it seeks to show the human face of people who are often hidden behind labels and statistics. The protagonists tell about the touch and effects of violence and exile on their lives, about losing family members and missing their mothers. 'Asylum' takes the viewers to work and school with the three youngsters, showing them in the midst of 'normal' life, which yet is shadowed by the permit. The documentary shows the multifacetedness of being an asylum seeker; the everyday joys, compassionate acts and gestures between people at times of extreme distress. Director Linko makes effective use of silence and, instead of relying only on speech, pictures the bodily experience of the political practices. Not everything can be explained, and the shared sense of the world is perhaps expressed most forcefully through a lack of speech and language (see Piece V). This aspect is most persuasively pictured through the deportation of one of the youngsters to Greece and his subsequent struggles and life there.

As said, I will not analyse the documentaries as such, but simply present a reading of the ontological potential of the films. In the films, the failed asylum seekers exceed both the borders of the individual and those of any identifiable community in the conventional sense of the word (cf. Librett 1997: 132). The kind of (fatal) eventuality – death as a possible outcome of deportation – that they expose interrupts the entire system of categorical oppositions on which our political imagination together with our notions of the international have relied for so long. To put it otherwise, the depth of humanity and the relations that the failed asylum seekers' voices evoke counter and exceed their label. In the documentary films the failed asylum seekers break down the notion of the sovereign subject and evoke touch and sharing between bodies. Their media exposure is a call to other bodies to come out in their own voice, and therefore it signals the need to examine the limit of the sovereign political subject. In practice this examination dissolves the hierarchy between the subjects.

Not even the element of victimisation present in the films does away with the fact that these voices resonate with a register that seeks to expose the 'whoness' of the person hidden behind the label (cf. Edkins 2003: 9; Schick 2010). It could be, though, that evoking an account of victimity is a necessary move, which stems from the status that leaves the failed asylum seekers without political authority. If a move is made from what was openly stated in the documentary films towards voice as Nancy fathoms it, a different tone arises. It is, thus, significant to note that the victimity evoked by the films is not synonymous with that of the humanitarian discourse, where asylum seekers are often pictured as hapless and dependent on our hospitality. The difference derives from it being the failed asylum seekers

themselves voicing the distress, displacement and discontent that they are going through.

So, whilst the demonstrations revealed the failed asylum seeker's body as resistant to the logic of sovereignty and presented an intentional political challenge that eminates from an experience of injustice, the voice emerging from the documentaries adopted a different tone. This tone evoked affective bonds of familiarity and relationality between the failed asylum seekers and the targeted audience. Unlike the demonstrations, the documentary films do not present a clear problem. Instead the failed asylum seekers seek to sensitise the viewers to their presence. In so doing, these mediated appearances surpass the conditioning effect of the label in showing the similarity between the failed asylum seekers' and our immediate everyday lives, joys and fears and also how our lives are politically entangled with one another. In accordance with this logic, the voices do not actually seek to convey a message, but in fact they are reaching(s) towards others. As the audience which the films address is larger than was the case with the demonstrations, the failed asylum seekers represent their being and stories in terms of a "mutuality of address" (Nancy 2010).

The mutuality of address – as a Nancian counterpart of representation – signifies the intensification of presence in the sense of intense presence that is received, rather than perceived, by others. Therefore, it is different from Emmanuel Levinas' face to face (see Levinas 1969) and from Martin Buber's side by side (see Buber 1993). In Nancy's thought, the speaking body presents itself by opening itself, which means that it exposes itself to others, projects something out of itself in front of itself. Speaking bodies open tensions. A presentation of bodies' 'being together' is a declaration of existence, which allows itself to be felt. (Nancy 2010) This declaration acknowledges that 'I', the self, exists only with a multitude of others, which makes a different ethics possible. In this regard the failed asylum seekers' media appearances highlight the vagaries of the political structures, on which also those of us, who are more privileged within the sovereign imaginary, stand.

The voice transmitted by the documentary films repeat the thought that the failed asylum seeker's body is simultaneously exposed to politics and an exposure within that politics. The story that the body aims to pass on is that just like any other body it feels, bleeds and trembles. The failed asylum seekers' voices articulate a sense of being hurt by our politics. They demand that we acknowledge the pain our politics causes (see Moon 1991: 225; also Salis Gross 2004: 152; Philipose 2007: 61). We – as human beings – are invited to acknowledge that the international is not a democratic concept and that its politics is based on exclusion. This is an existential responsibility for which we are answerable. The failed asylum seekers' voices require an emotional-volitional response, when the recipient of the story must make ethical and moral choices concerning the messiness of lived experience. Besides

one's place in the system – within the international – these choices depend on the possibilities inherent in concrete moments. (See Sullivan & McCarthy 2004: 304; cf. Bakhtin 1984: 242.) By placing and representing themselves in the world in ways that exceed the label, the failed asylum seekers evoke a shared sense of us all being vulnerable and 'culpable' in various ways.

The deliberative space that the failed asylum seekers' voices form between bodies reflects the tension between the body being subjected to the sovereign politics of the common and the body presenting itself intensely and articulating shared becoming. In this space an abstract political 'question' carnates and turns into a corporeal struggle.

3.3.   From the subject and the 'common' to subjectivity and the 'together'

In a failed asylum seeker, or refugee of any category, we encounter what Arthur Koestler has termed the "exposed nerve of humanity" (see Huynh 2010). Whilst the failed asylum seekers in the demonstrations and through the documentaries presented themselves through the label, they also withdrew from the totalising logic upon which the label is founded. And yet *my* writing constantly seems to refer to "the failed asylum seekers" as a unitary group, as if the label was decisive in defining my research participants and establishing a commonality among them. This is not my intention. In fact, doing so would be in a clear contradiction with Nancy's thought, which highlights the importance of "not making the in-common into a substance or a subject" and instead "understanding the indissolvable praxis of sharing" (Nancy 1992: 382). The community does not precede its members and the person does not come to exist politically by being included in the existing community (see Nancy 1992: 395). Community is not a question of presence, as at the heart of things we are rarely together. Indeed, community is always nothing more or nothing less than a matter of us coming-together, compearing. (See Wurzer 1997: 97.) In Nancy's thought, then, the reality of otherness is what a plurality of agents has in-common; these agents expose themselves to this reality, which, in turn, makes them compear.

In somewhat more concrete terms, the suggested approach requires that we move our thinking from the subject and 'the common' towards subjectivity and 'the together'. Subjectivity exists only in relation to other singularities, which means that the 'giving of being' is an event of temporal unfolding marked by moments of exposure (see James 2006: 62). It is thus possible to argue that failed asylum seekers are not defined by their categorical placing, but that the meaning of their being begins to unfold only when bodies come together and form points of contact with one another. Being labelled does not connect the body with or separate it

from others, because political relations are a question of every body's existence. As Hussein and Soran implicitly argued (see Episode 3) the casting of the label provides no sense of commonness, but is more likely to lead to incomprehension and discontent. The routes that the bodies have travelled are too diverse and their positionings too different for a community of failed asylum seekers to emerge as a distinct political actor. Yet, momentary compilations with some communal characteristics can occur when a specific cause, interest or nationality brings people together (see Piece II: section 2.3.2.; this Piece: section 3.2.1.).

My fieldwork does not allow me to claim that the label was embraced or accentuated in the failed asylum seekers' daily lives. Instead of building their identity or subject position primarily on the B permit or being detained, my research participants articulated multiple other relationalities. These relations were subtle and represented shared experiences instead of a common identity. Fadi, for example, described the life in the detention unit like this:

> Fadi: Because I, you know, we try every day, we make something new. We even try to have like some, some, discussion, some read the book, I teach some person French, some others, they don't speak good English, but they try to speak English, they try to speak English also, and French. So I do some job, help somebody. So, we make, we try to make some little family now.
>
> (Interview with Fadi, May 2007)

Fadi was by no means the only one who told of helping others. Also Abubakar mentioned translating for other Somalis, who had just arrived at the reception centre. He conceived it as "a favour; I could help somebody". These acts of relationality do not rely on a contained status, although clearly they are not totally detached from the placing of the body either. Rather the acts represent a more compassionate form of affection – Fadi used the word 'family' – in that they point out *the meanings* that are attached to the sharing of the label and that give rise to acts of empathy and compassion. While the body withdraws from the sphere of 'the common', it articulates 'togetherness'. Forming a sense of self is more about action and incessant becoming than about substance and identity. In Nancy's thought the act of sharing makes the community; it does not exist prior to the sharers, nor do people share a common being prior to the act of sharing (see Caygill 1997: 24).

The demonstrations and documentaries served as examples of bodies reaching out to others, resonating with one another and relating to one another socially, as singular-plurals. The failed asylum seekers' singular, varying and multiple voices build relations in the everyday, on multiple fronts, in relation to numerous other bodies that represent various political identities. Hence, they demand that we start thinking about the ambiguous and shifting nature of all political identity categories and, ultimately, question the political logic, which divides people into different

nationalities, ethnicities, classes, groups and 'peoples' (cf. Nancy 2000: 101–143). The failed asylum seeker represents the world in giving a sense to the world because of being already exposed to the world (cf. Kellogg 2005). On the basis of that thought, it is possible to claim that speaking bodies engage in world-making as they speak "for the world", "to it", "on behalf of it" and "in order to make it a 'world'" (Nancy 2000: 3; cf. also Raffoul & Pettigrew 2007). These bodies both articulate a sense of the international and seek to transform the logic of its functioning.

The failed asylum seeker's voice articulates togetherness in that it crystallises the presence of a body to an other body. Togetherness does not have a singular form, it does not imply a long-lasting contact or even physical presence. Yet it invites us to consider how even small and seemingly insignificant words and voices can articulate political existence as it occurs. Failed asylum seekers' potentiality to voice togetherness and represent the international through various corporeal conjunctures lies in not relying on a form of intentionality of human aims and possibilities (cf. Kellogg 2005). For the possibilities of political life to be thought, absolute claims of authenticity, essentiality and integrity need to be postponed. As a result of the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic relational moments are exposed. During these moments the self-evidence of the body is questioned and the issues related to its finiteness, limitations, transience and vulnerability are raised. This suggests a move from the abstract or ideal(ised) body (a citizen body) towards a philosophical-praxical challenge to political life (cf. Van Wolputte 2004; also Shildrick 2002).

Furthermore, interpreting the failed asylum seekers' voices as political involves a decision on the nature, scope and place of politics. Conceiving voice in terms of a bodily exposure and a point of contact disconnects it from the public sphere. Disconnecting 'politics' from 'public', again, means that politics is detached from the political system, but yet the body articulates 'the political' through relations and shared presence (cf. Nancy 2006: 4). The failed asylum seekers voice their existence politically, although not always in public. Next I will dwell into this thematic and explore the potential of ethnographic inquiries into the international.

3.4.   Vague voices full of emotion: disconnecting 'politics' from 'public'

At this point it is still worth stressing that voice is never monological. In any voice there are echoes of various other discourses and voices, as well as traces of other agencies. In other words, the value placed in these other voices and the role given to them gives rise to our sense of agency and characterises the forms that our agency adopts (see McCarthy, Sullivan & Wright 2006: 430). Voice, as an expression of

relational presence, represents the failed asylum seekers' struggle for self-control. With self-control I intend that the failed asylum seekers seek to keep themselves in the centres of their spheres by adopting various different voices, some idealist and some passionate (cf. Cohen 2007: 118). This variety and fragmentation signals that the failed asylum seekers' public expression or presentation of themselves may differ significantly from its private counterpart. Neither public nor private elaborations, however, can disclose 'the failed asylum seeker'; for me to claim so would restore an understanding of the subject as a complete and bounded entity which I have persistently sought to transcend. The 'truth' of the subject is its existence without a solid foundation and always in relation to others. This 'truth' is shaped through the body adopting an attitude towards the world and others; because of this displays of emotionality and sense carry tactical and political potency.

In order to grasp what this means in terms of political life, I will look at the ways in which voiced emotionality and affects constitute corporeal conjunctures between bodies and articulate being in the world.[48] Indeed, within Nancian thought sense is constitutive of the body. As the body is in my work both constituted by and constitutive of the international, it is meaningful to explore the relation between sense and the international. So even if I do not discuss affects, feelings or emotions as such, dismissing the emotional, felt and sensuous would annihilate one key dimension through which the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic takes shape (see also Ahmed 2004; Hall 2010; Ross 2010; Svašek 2010).

As my discussions with Soran and Hussein suggested (Episode 3), the failed asylum seekers needed me to answer to the demand presented by the nearness of their body (see Nancy 1993a: 310–318). The following discussion of three different emotional voices – angry/frustrated, discontented/needy and loving/emphatetic – functions as an expression of the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic. My reading of these voices begins to (materially) raise the potential that a Nancian frame opens with regard to the possibilities of political life within the international. In terms of IR this signals an ontological tweak from the modern international and its underlying logic as it concerns and regulates relations between bodies. The suggested tweak signals a move towards bodies creating the space of the international through their acts of relating and by this placing themselves within its spheres.

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[48] Sara Ahmed's *Cultural politics of emotion* (2004) is probably the most well known effort to incorporate emotions as subjects of political interest. Although I occasionally lean on her writing, I must note that my approach differs from hers. Whilst Ahmed conceives emotions to be historically constructed and giving context and articulation to our choices, I focus on the corporeal materiality of emotions. My approach, hence, is closer to Paul Sullivan and John McCarthy's (2004: 307) conceptualisation of felt agency, where through dialoguing (engaging) with others, we get a sense of who we are and how our being is with others.

3.4.1.   *Anger and frustration*

Nasir: I'd like you first to introduce yourself and tell…

Eeva: My name is Eeva Puumala, and I'm a researcher at the university.

Nasir: H-hmm [Nasir listens to me his eyes half closed, with a little smile on his face, which makes it impossible for me to guess from his facial expressions what he thinks of my account. This makes me feel a bit insecure.]

Eeva: I do my work on the B-status in Finland, and I want to talk with people who have it, how they feel about it, what they think about it, what they think about their lives here in Finland and before [coming here]. And, of course, about the-e new decision that has been made concerning Afghanistan: how does that make you feel, and what do you think about that, and do you think it's… Well, the different kinds of things and thoughts that you have about that. A-and, I have been here in the centre since August, talking to many people who have the B, and they have told me about their lives and about living here in the centre, living here in Finland, about their lives before and the lives that they were hoping to have, about the disappointments that they have had to face and, about this kind of things. I'd like to learn more from you.

Nasir: H-hmm

Eeva: If I ask something that you don't want to talk about just say so. You don't have to answer all my questions.

Nasir: Oh, I know that! [Both of us laugh after the comment.]

Eeva: Yeah! Ok.

Nasir: I don't have to do it.

Eeva: [still laughing] Yeah. So, is there anything more specific that you'd like to know?

Nasir: Yeah. Have you also worked in *vastaanottokeskus* [the reception centre]?

Eeva: No. No. I don't work here. I only occasionally…

Nasir: Voluntary work?

Eeva: No, not even that. When I come here, I usually spend time at the [counsellors'] office. I might help [the staff] if I don't talk to people. But I don't work here, I don't work for *Ulkomaalaisvirasto* [the Directorate of Immigration], or any ministries, nothing like that. Just the university.

Nasir: And you are allowed to help [at the centre]?

Eeva: I'm allowed to help, yes.

Nasir: Ok.

(Interview with Nasir, March 2007)

As noted in Piece I, in most cases the initiative for the interview came from the failed asylum seekers. During my fieldwork I struggled with the question whether my 'passivity' in looking for participants distorted my research results, for people are not equally active. The value of my choice was that it left the failed asylum seeker with a sense of control. In the above interaction Nasir is not made a passive subject whom I summon to talk, but could decide for himself whether and on what terms he wished to express himself (cf. Dossa 2003: 52). The voices that the failed

asylum seekers adopted, thus, reflect their readings of me and my presence and the value and meanings that they placed upon that reading. Therefore, their adopted voice reflects a creative act of reverberation, an event in the political. Or, to put it another way, the failed asylum seeker voices a ceaseless process of becoming and being that transcends rigid boundaries between selves and others.

My vague and confused description of the scope of my research, roles and position in the centre had an effect on the way Nasir presented himself in relation to me. The feature that in the end came to characterise my interview with Nasir was his reading of me as *a Finnish citizen*. He, however, interpreted my interest in hearing the opinions and thoughts of the failed asylum seekers as a signal that I was open to persuasion (also Piece I: section 1.3.1.). Within this frame of interpretation, Nasir's angry and frustrated voice questioned and countered the official interpretation of his presence and the possibilities open to him in the future.

> The report: The circumstances are stable in the sense that the prerequisites for international protection are not met solely on the basis of the current situation in Afghanistan. Even though some regions and provinces remain so unstable that returning is not a valid option, there are parts in Afghanistan where returning is possible.
>
> Nasir: The [Finnish] government is just ignoring everything. And I received this rejection. They said that the district I came from, it is safe and you can return. And, I wondered. I said, where the hell I talked about the place being safe or unsafe? I never talked about it being unsafe. I don't care if it's safe or unsafe. It is not safe for me. I have problems there. I never mentioned this, this, this issue. *I have talked to you about my problems! And you are telling me it is safe! Who the hell cares!?* I will talk to you for hours, for *days*, if you understand reason and if you understand logic. They don't even think for a second that they could be wrong. They have this prejudice that we are lying and they're always right. If they could think as an educated person, that he or she could also be incorrect in her judgements, in his judgements, or that we could also be right. We could also be telling the truth. It is not that always we are wrong, and that always they are right.
>
> (Interview with Nasir, March 2007)

In this interplay of voices, the 'report' is the very document on Afghanistan according to which deportations to the country could be enforced (the Directorate of Immigration 2006). In the above quote Nasir's voice transforms the language used in asylum politics and makes it his own. Nasir basically agrees with the view presented in the report that some districts in Afghanistan can be considered safe enough for return. Then he continues that he has never claimed that *the region in itself* is unsafe, just that it is not safe *for him*. Nasir's voice manifests a shift from the realm of truth to the realm of meaning: from what it is like in a particular region to what does it mean for a particular body to live there. Nasir's account of

everyday life in Afghanistan is based on local colour, which does not relate to the official view that the report represents. Obviously, Nasir is not a part of that "over 80 per cent of Afghans" who, according to the report, feel positive about the future. Nasir's feelings are especially negative, if he is made to think of his possible future in Afghanistan.

In voicing his anger Nasir expresses political agency, which in its singularity is emotional and private. This interpretation of mine counters the often presented view that passion (anger) is an irrational force that obstructs, annihilates or negates political agency (e.g. Dugan & Reger 2006: 470; cf. however Ross 2010). Yet, this agency is always plural as anger is a commentary on *the relations that have been constructed between bodies through the asylum process*. Therefore, anger manifests hopes, fears and grievances. Understanding anger as an agentive position is easier, when the failed asylum seekers' profound experience of distrust and their fear for their lives are kept in mind (cf. Ross 2010: 120).

If we take anger to be focused on a unified object, we miss the force of that agency together with the demand that the failed asylum seekers present (see Ross 2010: 117). Anger is extremely easy to ward off, which is perhaps why in their public appearances the failed asylum seekers are more likely to advocate a sense of compassion and vulnerability (see section 3.2.2.). Nevertheless, it is crucial that we also learn to hear the anger of others without turning it into defensiveness of our own positions (Ahmed 2004: 178). This is not easy as anger exposes the limits of our being.

Anger might actually be the political sentiment *par excellence*, and yet it is most neglected in its philosophical mode (see Nancy 1992: 375; also Zarowsky 2004: 201). It is the prime sentiment of resistance (Abu-Lughod 1985: 251–252). Besides the Finnish asylum policy Nasir's anger is directed at a particular operationalisation of the international and its practices, as well as at the political instrumentalisation of the human body. His anger carries traces of earlier experiences of injustice, which intertwine with a sense of alienation, vulnerability and powerlessness (see Piece I: *Lines of life*). Nasir's anger brings out emotional connections and relationalities that for him are inadmissible and intolerable. In fact, his refusal of and resistance to where he has been placed represent a step that goes "beyond all that can be accomplished reasonably – in order to open possible paths for a new negotiation of the reasonable but also paths of an uncompromising vigilance" (Nancy 1992: 375). Without anger, politics and communities created through current policies would be nothing but "accommodation and trade in influence" (ibid.).

As expressions of the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic, emotional voices are normatively complex. This brings me to Soran, whose frustrated agency is multidimensional involving various 'levels'. Through his voice Soran actively engages and responds to various others all at once (cf. McCarthy, Sullivan &

Wright 2006: 433). His frustration represents the way that the act of taking the asylum seeker's fingerprints turns into a corporeality, which again initiates various emotional, fluid and open-ended relations between bodies:

> I meet Soran when I enter the counsellors' office. He has come to ask Lumi to write a note stating that he would like to cancel his asylum application and leave the country.

He looks tired, fed up, frustrated.

> He wants to know if his fingerprints will be deleted from the Eurodac-system when he leaves. Lumi tells him: "no, the prints will stay".

"Why?", he wants to know.

He repeats time and again that he is going to leave Finland
and "go to Europe". For him "Finland is not Europe.
The Finns do not think. I don't want to be here, I will leave".

> *[He has burnt the back of his left hand with a cigarette,*
> *and while we are talking he keeps picking the spot:*
> *pink flesh in the middle and burned skin around the edges.]*

> I ask if he has a particular place in mind.

"Sweden."

> I ask whether he is aware of the fact that Finland and Sweden together with several other European countries have agreed to share the prints. People are returned to the country where they first applied for asylum. I say that he must know about those people in the centre, who live there just for some weeks, after which they leave. I tell him that many of them are people like him; people who have wanted to go and live in another country, but that is just not possible as an asylum seeker in the EU.

He gets increasingly frustrated.

(Field notes, 19th October 2006)

Soran had received his first temporary permit some months before the above interaction. Our talk indicates that the waiting and insecurity were starting to weigh on him. During our discussion about the Dublin Convention, the Eurodac system, the Common European Asylum system and the B, Soran gets frustrated with me as well as with the situation he finds himself in. Feelings of frustration, anger and disillusionment affect Soran's reading of the present and have made him resort to self-harm, which opens his pain for others to see (cf. Piece V).

In a similar vein with Nasir, Soran opposes the official reading of his presence in the Finnish society and acts accordingly. Under the conditions of failed asylum, anger and frustration are directed at everything that makes the story of that particular body politically possible (cf. Ahmed 2004: 38). Soran's reading of what he is against affects his perceived space of agency and forms of action and invokes them as inherently relational (see Ahmed 2004: 174–175). Soran feels he is against the Finnish and European systems, society, people and at least momentarily me, but he has not yet conceived what he is for. This inarticulateness cannot be turned into 'positive' action – campaigning for something – and it has not, at least for the moment, made him turn into himself. Negative feelings keep Soran's body verbal and in arguing with me he tries to express the experienced frustration.

Soran accuses me of not knowing anything, since "life has always been easy for you, when has it ever been difficult?". With this view, Soran presents an understanding of our being and political identities being related, but not being mutually exposed. The interpretation is in line with the Nancian conception of voice, according to which it is not enough to study the said, but to entertain the wider context in which something becomes said. Political agency is always situated in a body that has lived and moved through borders and categories, but it also occurs *between* bodies.

The dialogue between me and Soran is not a simple exchange between an interviewer and an interviewee, but it represents a dialogue that exceeds us and puts our identities at risk (see also Naas 1997: 64). In such a dialogue, roles are often reversed and privilege is given to the paths along which these roles and identities travel. The task, then, is not to evaluate Soran's account, but to take note of our voices intertwining, and to explore them as a corporeal exposure.

"I have been to Greece,
where I lived with two other people,
and before that I was in Italy.
In Italy they took my prints,
but nobody found them here."
                         His ideas about living in Italy and Greece are ultra-positive.
                         There everything was good, whereas here everything is bad.
He says that any place else would be better than Finland.
He would maybe like to go to Iceland,
his friend told him that there they don't take the prints. Or then to Canada. [...]
                         I ask Soran if he then has thought about going back to Kurdistan
                         to live with his family.
         He starts thinking about that.
                         I ask if he misses his family, and he looks at me bewilderedly, as if he
                         didn't understand my question.
"No, I don't, I haven't lived with my parents in Kurdistan for a long time.

I lived with my aunt, who didn't have a husband or children.
Why would I miss my parents?"
                                    He tells that he has decided to leave, and I say that he should think:
                                                            go some place outside the centre,
                                                            calm down and think.
            He says that he is still going to leave, but what if
            he buys an expensive ticket and then is returned to Finland?
                                                            (Field notes, 19th October 2006)

Soran's intention of leaving Finland after cancelling his asylum claim signals a determination to take control over his future and to move on in his search for more promising life prospects. Because his fingerprints are saved in the Eurodac system, Soran's agency cannot be directed towards a goal, but it is left hovering between different choices, which all seem equally undesirable. He begins to grasp the grip of politics over his body through my presence (see Sullivan & McCarthy 2004: 295). Soran's activity is expressed through weighing up alternative possibilities and considering one against the other (see Sullivan & McCarthy 2004: 306–307). This type of activity was not limited to Soran alone, but Ayan, Benaz, Hussein, and Abdi also pondered similar options. Stephen, Fadi, Shiva and Ahmed had moved from words to deeds in order to face deportation once again (see Piece IV). In philosophical terms, Soran's voice actually charts his body's agentive potential and simultaneously in interacting with my voice it creates complex corporeal conjunctures of responsibility and relationality within the international.

    A Nancian understanding of voice actually designates nothing but the interval; the space between us ('us' meaning here both you and me, and every other body), which makes 'us' possible in the first place. In other words, existence, which is always plural, takes place in the interval (Heikkilä 2007: 15; Derrida 2005: 111–130; also Nancy 1993a: 318). All being is being-towards, which means that *senses emerge out of relations between singular beings* (Heikkilä 2007: 76; also Nancy 2004a: 9–10, 27–28; 1998). The frustrated and angry voices are hence no more mine than they are Soran's or Nasir's. They were sonorous meeting points we built together and that articulated shared and relational presence. Such a reading emphasises the ontological relation between those who can be accommodated in the spatiotemporal logic of the state/system of states and those who cannot. Treating either one of these bodies as singular or existing in isolation can never result to a compelling and comprehensive account of political agency, its preconditions and shadow practices. The senses and insensitiveness of the international emerge out of relations between bodies and through their (neglected) compearance.

3.4.2. *Necessity and discontent*

The political debate around the question of (failed) asylum tends to couple needs to (national) security and asylum policies (cf. Squire 2009: 105). On those occasions we hear talk about the need to 'solve' the 'problem' of asylum; the need to introduce new screening techniques; the need to build more secure detention units, and so on. However, the failed asylum seekers voice another set of needs, which yet bears a point of connection to the sovereign demand for control and security. In appropriating the need-based discourse, the failed asylum seekers seek to go beyond a structural form of violence in order to negotiate their marginality (cf. Agathangelou & Ling 2004a: 521). In fact, any talk of necessity needs to be situated on the undecidable limit between possibility and reality, for the concept of necessity – as Jeffrey Librett (1997: 104, italics orig.) persuasively argues – is nothing more than "the concept of the *limit* between the possibility and reality with which it is regularly confused". Accordingly, the meanings of all three concepts – possibility, reality and necessity – are mutually dependent. Yet, as mentioned above, the discourse of political practice seeks to establish its own privilege by emphasising reality over possibility as the necessary. In other words the use of political power attaches necessity in specific forms to specific populations (Librett 1997: 110).

In voicing their needs and discontent the failed asylum seekers do not ask for a different political project. Instead, in a Nancian spirit, they represent the political outside any possibility of grounding, any collective identity or any possibility of a project (see James 2006: 186; also Nancy 2004a). Their claims undermine the notion of rights (possibilities) and duties (realities) on which our sense of necessity has been built; what is real is not the same as 'the necessary'. Therefore, their existence as failed asylum seekers is possible only in relation to the political subject hiding behind the collective body of the state, secured with the practices of migration control. Consider, for instance, my presence in the centre: the reading that my interviewees made of my presence and body when they chose to voice necessity and discontent is not totally detached from the sphere of citizenship discussed in the previous section. Instead of my citizen-status determining the nature of our interaction, I was addressed as *a Finnish researcher*, who was not directly involved in the process of categorisation and thus potentially able to relate to the distress and the sense of injustice that the casting of the label had given rise to.

My interviewees voiced necessity and discontent in many ways, but by far the most pressing element of distress in their immediate everyday were the experienced punitive effects that resulted from the need to live in the centre (see Squire 2009: 123–128). Farzad, for instance, asked "why do we have to live like this?". He felt that having to share a room with several others disrupts one's sense of privacy as there is always "someone dancing, praying" or causing other disturbance.

Also Soran brought up the living arrangements when he lamented that "with the B you need to live in the centre". For him, as well as for Abubakar, Benaz and Nasir, the dirtiness of the common spaces – showers, toilets and kitchens – was a problem. Ayan raised an explicit concern for her personal hygiene by stating that "kitchens are dirty", which made her worry about "getting some bacteria". Benaz's woe was similar in needing to share the bathrooms with 15–16 other people.

To the administrative mindset, living in the centre goes together with being an asylum seeker. In addition, the living conditions and the restrictions posed to working and schooling are some of the perhaps unintended and yet de facto punitive techniques of Finnish asylum policy (cf. Squire 2009: 126–128). In my interviews the failed asylum seekers questioned the need to live in the centre as a natural consequence of applying for asylum. This lament voices a profound philosophical question of the rationale behind asylum policies and the exlusive logic of inside/outside, when in material and physical terms the outside is in fact an internal space: the centre represents a mezzanine space of sovereignty situated in between inside and outside (see Nyers 2003).

In expressing a different sense of what is necessary in asylum politics, the failed asylum seekers displaced the sovereign claim to a monopoly over the political. My interviewees reversed the governmental style of argumentation that focuses on the need to introduce new tests for asylum seekers or the need make Finland appear as a less attractive country of destination. Instead, the failed asylum seekers raised a completely different set of needs, which echoed with, but by no means repeated, the governmental logic. Their voices illustrated the fact that 'the political' cannot be reduced to the state or state-instituted practices. It is a bodily relation, an ever-unfolding event, not an idea or a project that can be promulgated.

In their interviews, Stephen and Shiva highlighted the need to apply for asylum, and Abuukar, Tahir, Fadi and Ahmed mentioned the need to leave or keep moving. Their voices, hence, reveal that 'being' an asylum seeker or 'becoming' one is not a matter of free choice, but results from a perceived necessity. This counters strongly the idea of asylum seeking being an 'easy avenue' or providing a 'free pass' to people. As one possible form of migratory movement, asylum seeking results from divergent necessities (see Salis Gross 2004: 151).

Fadi, Benjamin and Nasir, for their part, emphasised the need to wait. This particular necessity echoes with the efforts of the state to process the applications as meticuously as possible. The process takes time, which for the body translates into waiting, but does not signal the body becoming passive and subservient to the sovereign quest. Rather, it illustrates that the logic of sovereignty actually creates the body that it so heavily criticises for exploiting the receiving society. These failed asylum seekers, with whom I came into contact, did not speak about needing or wanting social support. They felt that the Finnish system reduced them to humani-

tarian objects. The only thing they explicitly demanded from the state was help in the form of protection. Benjamin, Nasir, Ahmed and Fadi all raised this need, but highlighted the need for help also from one's family, friends or employers. This signals the body being always towards and in need of others. Being human and leading a political life become matters of relations, both broken and enacted.

> Ayan: I don't know, how the people [Finnish migration officials and other professionals] they help me, they help only by giving money and the medicine. And the people they don't need these things, really. [...] It is not that you need medicine. We need to make peace for the mind. Really I don't forget my life, I have to know, because I have not come here to take medicine to forget all the things. It's my life. I can't really…I mean how can I forget my life and the problem[.]
>
> (Interview with Ayan, October 2006)

Ayan articulates above the most intriguing need: the need to have a life that does not involve negating the life one once had. Also Abdi and Benjamin underlined the need to remember what had happened and instead of repressing their trauma, they accentuated the need to come to terms with it and acknowledge its role in shaping their self-perception. Often asylum seekers are either regarded as inhabiting the past because of the experienced trauma or, quite controversially, expected to immerse themselves in the receiving society without any difficulty. Even though traumatic experiences undoubtedly leave their marks on the body, it is problematic to reify trauma as a constitutive element of, and thus substantial for, the body. But, as Fadi and Benjamin point out, overcoming the past trauma is not easy as 'normal life' is out of reach for the failed asylum seekers:

> Fadi: [E]veryone tells "you must be optimist, optimist, optimist". Till when? That is the question. ... I don't ask you to give me a positive, or that A status [on the basis of international protection], you give me some paper and say you have worked good here. And I will pay that vero, the tax, and everything and I make your life better and I make you keep in good health. If you don't do that, people will find another way.
>
> (Interview with Fadi, May 2007)

> Benjamin: My message is [...]: not that because I am black, I want to exploit somebody or something, but I am a truly born Rasta-man, and I have to see the truth everywhere I go. You know people like to get their destiny. [...] I don't know you, you don't know me, but once we meet, we know each other. That's friendship. So, I'm telling the truth. […] I was in this country for two months, and I start work. In the winter, I don't have a car myself, so I have to go to Imatra and ride a bicycle from Joutseno to Imatra, eight, nine, eleven kilometres. [...] So, my message that I want to send and what I tell you: that is what I have in me. And I have nothing to hide [. I]f you see somebody who can do

something, at least you have to give him a chance. Because [being] an asylum seeker is never easy. For you to get opportunity. [...] I want to send a message across like some of the asylum seekers have something to give. So definitely, if they come, or if we come to seek asylum, they [the locals and migration officers] have to try and know what we want to do and what we are doing. Not that to leave them [asylum seekers and local people] apart. That's the message anywhere I go.

(Interview with Benjamin, June 2007)

In pointing out their willingness to benefit the Finnish society, both Fadi and Benjamin appropriate the ever-more prominent talk of the pressing need to recruit foreign workers to Finland. It is said that our aging society needs a skilled workforce from abroad[49]. Yet, the opportunity for Fadi and Benjamin to *continue* working was declined, and they were detained. Coming to Finland as an asylum seeker and then changing the application to a work-related one, is not generally well received, but becomes easily seen as an attempt to breach the entry regulations (interviews 1, 9). In this respect, the rupture of asylum politics lies within its limits, as the politics seem to possess qualities that are equally undesirable for everybody concerned[50]. In other words, the needs of sovereign power and the state do not always coincide even with those of its own citizens, and are often in clear contradiction with the needs of asylum seekers. Benjamin demands explicitly that we ought to envision a politics that would engage with those arriving and understand the complex corporeal points of contact between people.

By appropriating the language with which discriminatory practices are justified and made to seem necessary, the failed asylum seekers articulate a discursive poverty in debates concerning reception and asylum (cf. Moon 1991). In evoking a different set of needs from those of sovereign power, the failed asylum seekers present emotions and emotional responses as parts of the interval, in which they can speak out, relate to others and expose political agency that occurs *between* bodies. They expose the limit of the citizen-subject, and present an implicit demand to explore the violence involved in maintaining hierarchies and discriminations between subjects. Through their experiential knowledge and bodily perceptions the failed asylum seekers cast into question the foundations of the current asylum politics and its practices together with the international that such politics upholds. This claim of mine rests on understanding discontent and unhappiness as lived

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[49] On the difficulty to determine skill and who counts as a skilled migrant, see e.g. Kynsilehto 2011: 81–122.

[50] With regard to certain popular and political debates, it is fair to argue that blaming asylum seekers for taking advantage of refugee law, causing instability in Finland, abusing the social security system and welfare services is not a productive way of engagement. Neither can these claims be unproblematically proven, social stability achieved nor the future of the Finnish welfare state guaranteed by excluding failed asylum seekers or making asylum seeking and getting one's need for protection recognised increasingly difficult.

political responses, generated in the pulse of everyday life (cf. Ross 2010: 120).

Instead of solely opposing the Finnish policies the failed asylum seekers point out the plurality of existence. Even when this plurality is neglected, it cannot be completely annihilated. The voice that stems from discontent and that articulates necessity withdraws from the sphere of political praxis and demands that we move from a universal 'truth' to multiple and shared meanings, webs of affect, interactive processes and relationality (cf. Ross 2010: 124). The thus formed agentive position is authoritative because the body – as a place of knowledge – enables the failed asylum seekers to voice their relational presence. In fact, the failed asylum seekers' relational presence takes shape through the interstice – the minute gaps and ruptures – of various governmental practices and their logic.

3.4.3.   Dissolving hierarchies and separation without a word

The last voice that I take up focuses on everyday relations between variously categorised bodies. It is also the most autoethnographic in tone, as the relations discussed are primarily between me and Adan. In openly emphasising hope, empathy and love the addressed voice exposes the ways in which at least some senses of the international take shape through acts of sharing and care. Indeed, immersing in ethnographic inquiries can reveal such acts as capable of exposing some of the more unexpected senses of and relations within the international.

In her study on the Partition of India, Urvashi Butalia (1998: 16) found out that whilst men tended to speak of broad political realities and relations between communities, women brought forward the minutiae of their lives. I am not sure whether this division holds in terms of my interviews, if for no other reason than I only managed to talk with two B permit holding women. Also men spoke of their everyday lives, but perhaps more often related it to the status than anything else. Both Adan and Ayan, the two women I interviewed, also raised broad political questions and connections. It is curious though, that it was Adan, who initially made me ponder acts of sharing and love as the 'failed' body's exscriptive move towards other bodies. In my interview with her, the absence of a shared language did not allow us to have an in-depth discussion about her B status.

We get started a bit later than planned, because Adan had to finish cooking and eating, and then hang the laundry out to dry. She comes to meet me with a smile on her face and asks if Khaleel, her son, can be present for she has nobody to baby-sit him. Adan apologises for her weak English. When I ask where she has come from, Adan tells that she used to live in Southern Somalia, where it is very unsafe. She can remember the feeling of insecurity from her childhood and that there were plenty of guns around and shootings going on. She

then confesses to me that after rain, especially in the mornings when it has rained during the night, it smells like Somalia here. She says that she likes the smell; it makes her feel that she is back home again.

When she left Somalia, Adan first went to Ethiopia where she stayed for two months. When Khaleel was 8 months old – now he is almost three – Adan reached Finland. In the next instance the interview is interrupted: Khaleel, completely ignoring his mother's orders, runs to the other end of the corridor making Adan rush after him. Adan returns to her seat carrying Khaleel, wipes his nose in her veil, and gives him a kiss. Khaleel looks at me curiously while sitting on his mother's lap, and starts pointing at my pen with which I was taking notes. I give it to him together with a sheet of paper, and he starts doodling contently. He smiles happily after finishing one part of the drawing and screams in Finnish "*kato, kato, kato*" (look, look, look). Adan seems bewildered, so I translate. "Oh, it was in Finnish, he changes languages so quickly that sometimes I have a hard time understanding him," Adan says.

Adan explains that at the time she arrived in Finland, she didn't know any other language besides Somali. When she tried to talk and take care of her business, people couldn't understand and she said that she used to return home (the reception centre) crying. "But, the next day I tried again." I ask where she learned English. She tells that she lived (shared a room) with a Nigerian and a Russian woman. They used to speak in English with one another and "little by little" Adan learned the language too. She says that nowadays it is much easier than in the beginning. "If I go out, I can buy milk and other things on my own."

When we start wrapping things up, Khaleel approaches me. I knee on the floor and he pats me in the back, timidly gives me a kiss on my cheek and runs down the corridor giggling.

(Interview with Adan, August 2006)

My interpretation of Adan's voice breaks the link between voice and speech almost completely. The interaction between the three of us reveals voice in terms of a corporeal exposure. Indeed, Khaleel's presence brought an everyday perspective to the situation and offered me an insight of agency at an intimate and mundane level, beyond the constraints of the label. Most likely because I took time to play with Khaleel in the midst of a 'serious' interview, my gender and Adan's reading of me as a potential mother or someone who is fond of children came to characterise our interaction (cf. Zarowsky 2004: 198).

Adan talked a lot of Khaleel keeping her from worrying too much about the future, because he lives so very much in the present. The hope of Khaleel getting an education and making a life for himself in Finland, and him being able to play in the yard and remain safe and sound were issues of great comfort and joy for Adan. Contrary to most of my interviewees, Adan's voice was future-oriented. It was not any more the B or issues of asylum that mattered the most, but what became central was the everyday life and the way Adan engaged with others instead of merely acting in accordance with or against the label (cf. De Certeau 1984). Adan assumed and continued political life, not in a direct and open relation to the state or the sys-

tem of states, but via the creation of alternative channels of belonging beyond the grip of sovereign power. And yet she was by no means indifferent to or ignorant of the perceived injustices and actual limitations that the B permit carried.

Adan's feelings and personal understanding of her current condition modified, rather than simply constrained, her agency (see Smith 1992). It is also of importance to note that my interaction with Khaleel actually created a shared affinity between myself and Adan. At least momentarily, without a word or an intentional claim, the separation between us was dissolved, although it was no less 'real'. The interview with Adan, then, illustrates that the body actively creates relations despite the exclusionary narrative of sovereign politics. In Adan's case the 'truth' of the label was countered by the multiple meanings it can gain, as her body refused the scripts of victimity and vulnerability as characteristic of 'being a failed asylum seeker'.

My reading of the relation between emotions and the political departs quite a bit from the more familiar literature within IR on "the politics of emotions". In this tradition, the main emphasis is on the role and effects that emotions have in inter-state politics and the ways they inform foreign policy decision-making (e.g. Cohn 1987; Crawford 2006; Mercer 2006; Leep 2010; cf. Finnemore & Sikkink 1998: 916; Ross 2010; Steele 2010)[51]. Within international relations, stemming back to Thucydides, Hobbes, Morgenthau and Clausewitz, the emotions deemed most prominent are fear and hate (see Crawford 2006: 118; Lebov 2006; cf. Bleiker & Leet 2006; Panelli & Welch 2007). Yet, as Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchison (2008: 116) point out, thus articulating a poverty within the disciplinary debates, there exists hardly any systematic examination of, for instance, the significance of fear in the construction of security threats. Unfortunately such an examination also falls outside of the scope of this present work, but I would still like to claim that the relation between emotions and politics is far more complex than a formulation of "the politics of emotions" suggests.

Let me now generalise the argument put forward here and also in the two preceding sections: the failed asylum seekers are not merely making emotional calls for political action or even that their emotions would give rise to political agency.

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[51] For instance Neta Crawford (2006: 119) conceives studying emotions within IR worthwhile because, firstly, it allows us to depart from regarding actors as primarily rational; secondly, it helps us to understand that fear and other emotions are not only attributes of agents, but institutionalised in the structures and processes of world politics and, thirdly, it enables us to take emotions more systematically into account with regard to the processes and analyses of diplomacy, confidence building and peace-building. For her part, Liz Philipose (2007) makes an attempt to situate the concept of emotions within global politics. She claims that emotion, understood as the feeling plus the additional recall of a previous experience from memory, is not opposite to reason and rationality, but rather it is both a reasonable and revealing response to structural violence. Ultimately, then, understanding emotion is necessary if we wish to understand the effects of structural violence in the production of political agents. (Philipose 2007: 62–63.)

Rather, within the kind of framework adopted for the purposes of the present work I will go as far as to argue that *expressions of emotion are in themselves agentive stances and manifestations of political agency when other means of political participation are out of reach* (see also Piece V). Accordingly, as Adan's case suggests, expressions of emotions are not 'deviations' of rationality, but can offer creative political insight and illustrate life in its vivacity and, through this, exceed the constraints of the logic of inside/outside. Love and empathy do not only evoke humanitarianism, but are forms of political relationality and as such give rise to a Nancian politics that begins and ends with bodies (cf. Sherman 1998).

Having said this, it is clear that the advocated approach is not concerned with whether it is possible to gain objective or measurable knowledge through emotions, or describing the 'real' by engaging with emotional expressions. Instead, I claim that expressions of emotion can reveal something about the way that people experience their being with regard to others, and thus emotional expressions expose the relational nature of politics. Such a focus does not remain captive to the debate whether emotions depict 'real' political phenomena or whether they are mere subjective representations (see Bleiker & Hutchison 2008: 129); they call for an exploration into the ontological relationalities between selves and others. These relationalities necessitate exploring *the political within emotions*. In fact, the suggested approach comes close to Liz Philipose's (2007: 64) claim that we need both a political literacy of emotions that would read emotions as political claims, and an emotional literacy of politics that would read politics infused with the emotional life.

Let me return again briefly to Adan's case and discuss the potential of emotions to dislocate fixed notions of the subject and also the wider frame of essential and substantial identities. During our talk her positions alternated between those of failed asylum seeker, provider and mother. She moved between these roles and showed how they function side by side (see Harker 2007: 64–65). Because she embodied a plethora of identities, Adan was capable of recombining them in a way that became subversive in relation to governmental politics (cf. Noland 2009: 183–184). No single identificatory marker defined her body; her body did not belong to a totalising and substantial identity. This reading of mine marks an important twist in understanding political agency not as a standpoint of a rational and intentional subject-mind, but as something created through the body's movement, which can be non-teleological or, quite controversially, even unintended. Within this imagery, political agency becomes a matter of the body moving in relation to and together with others, rather than a pattern and process of reasoning performed by a disembodied sovereign subject.

3.5.   Evanescent expressions of the political

In this Piece I have argued against concentrating on the said and stressed the need to engage with the relations that voices evoke. With their voices the failed asylum seekers demand that we respond and relate to their presence. In all its simplicity this is a powerful demand, not easy to meet. Such a demand requires that the notion of the singular subject is abandoned, and the line of separation between selves and others and thus also the (bodily) points of contact we share with others are explored. In articulating political life in terms of compearance the ontology of the body departs from the social theoretical view that actorhood is a given condition or attainment (cf. Meyer & Jepperson 2000: 101). Rather, these multiple enunciative positions that the body can adopt allow room for presenting oneself in unpredictable ways and for projecting political life in unforeseen ways (Noland 2009: 185; see also Schwarzmantel 2007: 471–472).

We can now contend that within IR ethnographic inquiries can make it possible to question the foundations of the logic of inside/outside and sensitise us to take note of the international working and taking form at a level, which more traditional approaches fail to explore. The insight thus gained can have important consequences for our notions of how bodies are created, marked and categorised. Furthermore, when we scrutinise our 'findings' from the field through Nancy's philosophy, we can see that even the apparently 'excluded' play a part in the spheres of the international. Failed asylum seekers' fragmentary demand makes it immensely important to explore how the space of being-with is created through various everyday practices and interactions together with the way this creation unfolds the possibilities of political life through corporeal conjunctures (cf. Tate 2007; Tabar 2007: 17). In terms of IR we must, then, refrain from conceptualising the international in terms of the sovereign state/a system of sovereign states and from framing failed asylum as a matter of categorical administrative identities capable of disclosing the subject. Departing from this view I suggest that all of the voices that were taken up in this Piece creatively articulate with-being as a necessary element of political life.

Whether expressed in public with a political purpose or in a more intimate and emotional context, voice is a point of contact between bodies and bodily surfaces. It articulates relational presence and the many senses that the international can gain and to which it gives rise. It can be a word exchanged on the bus, a nod to a question, a sweeping touch or a move towards. It might be nothing but an evanescent moment, in which two people cross paths, touch momentarily, sometimes tenderly and gently, sometimes violently and in anger. Be that as it may, bodies leave traces on one another. These traces are the remnants of various other voices, words and discourses. In mixing with other traces they remind us of shared existence. The international unfolds and takes place in daily bodily relations instead of solely being

an impersonal or institutionalised environment for action.

> Eeva: What about here in Finland, have you had any trouble in your day-to-day life? [...]
> Tahir: [Tahir sighs] Yeah, I think it is a little bit hard, when you see a Finn, you [the Finns] take very little contact when they encounter a foreigner. And then they talk very little and that is why it is difficult for us: like if we don't talk with Finns, how are we supposed to learn the Finnish language? It would be better, if Finns talked more [Tahir laughs, and his laugh catches me too]. When they talk, I'm curious, all the time curious. I go on the street, meet a person who's all quiet; I go straight to talk to him/her, even if s/he is frightened [Tahir laughs]. I tell him that I'm nothing dangerous. I wanna speak in Finnish, learn about the society and ameliorate my Finnish.
> Eeva: Hmm-hm. What do people say, when you go talk to them?
> Tahir: We-ell. [Tahir laughs], they laugh like "yeah, yeah", some leave and go away, others talk a bit.
>
> (Interview with Tahir, my translation, April 2007)

Tahir's determination to talk with people underlines the body's capacity to articulate its presence to others and establish multiple points of contact between politically separated bodies. These contacts can be transnational, international or local, thus spanning from sending countries, via transit countries to target countries (also Squire 2009: 162). Stephen, for instance, told of having friends "all over; in America and London"; they are always ready to help, if he needs something. He stated all his life being about friends. For his part, Shiva had a network on which to lean when fleeing from Nepal to India, as "in Delhi, there are many people, who have left their home in Nepal because of this Maoist insurgency". He received shelter and work from them. Abdi, again, had been able to rely on his countrymen in Finland to loan him money so that he could help his family in Somalia. And during his years in Norway Ahmed had come to know a woman, "who took care of me and has stood by me till now", and whom he regarded as his step-mother. When moving beyond the constraints and limits posed by the status B, Farzad told of joining a local theatre group and having performed with them, which had enabled him to act (literally) beyond the label. Therefore, insisting that the political act of splitting and dividing is effective and claiming that the body of the failed asylum seeker is a singular, isolated one is a call far removed from people's daily lives.

> Eeva: [...] But what about when you think about the Finnish people? Do you think it's easy to get to know them or is it…?
> Benjamin: No, the Finnish people are shy. They are shy, they feel so shy. And, you know, it's not easy to get to them, not that it would be so hard or something, they can talk to you alright, but to see a Finnish person – if you need attention for him to attend to you – they speak English, but it is not easy for him or for her

> to talk to you unless you approach him. Then you [the Finns] get "oh, no no, I am not thinking [...] like that". Finnish people they are good, because the reason why I say they are good, it's not easy for somebody to trust you, from the first day they see you; like my employer. The first day we'd sit together like this, she get a trust in me and it's never easy to. So, I like Finnish people, and definitely, in anything there are bad ones and good ones. Yes, so, I take it like that.
>
> (Interview with Benjamin, June 2007)

Benjamin's story is indicative of the way in which the act of bodies coming together bears transformative potential. His voice disrupts the idea that political identities within the international would be fixed and static. Engaging in a relation with others and receiving their presence affect the ways in which people place themselves in the world and what they make of their own being. Such an interpretation makes it crucial to account for the multiplicity of voices that the failed asylum seekers can adopt so as to understand that no voice is more characteristic of the failed asylum seeker, but each represents the connectedness of one body to an other.

This Piece illustrated that the voices that failed asylum seekers adopt both touch upon and exceed the practice of asylum politics and the logic that grounds our notions of the possibilities of political life within the international. The failed asylum seeker's body is exposed to politics, but simultaneously it exposes itself as a speaker capable of voicing the international and speaking for/against/of its relations. However, we cannot afford to limit our understanding of the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic solely or primarily to the verbal realm. We must explore what other forms it takes, if we aspire to grasp the constantly changing scripts of political life within the international.

Episode 4

Gaining a sense of the "turbulence of migration"

Ahmed is a tall young man wearing an army cap and trousers, a grey t-shirt and a heavy gun-shaped pendant around his neck. He speaks through clenched lips. Ahmed was detained thirteen days ago. He tells that he will soon be deported to Norway, but at the same time he has the chance to appeal here in Finland. This makes no sense to him. He has applied for asylum in Norway as well and received several negative decisions. There the process took five years and after reaching its completion Ahmed was ordered to leave the country. So he came to Finland for the second time. In 2006 he spent three months near Vaasa, in Oravainen [he uses the Swedish name Oravais], in the reception centre. Ahmed tells that he didn't know anybody from Finland when he came, but then he made new friends in Oravais. He protests against the Norwegian and Finnish policies of not accepting refugees and giving protection: "I have travelled all over Norway and I saw with my own eyes that the earth is empty. And Finland is empty, too. I saw that too. Why don't they give people who come a place to live? You see people killed, but then you tell that they cannot stay. I came trough Ivalo, Tornio, all the way to Oravais, and I saw an empty earth. There is nothing but trees. Why are you sending people away?" Ahmed explains that he would understand, if there was nothing but houses everywhere, that there would be no space. But there is space, he says.

Ahmed tells about having lost his brother, friends and some family members in the fighting in Somalia. He says that he was very small when his brother died, but that he still remembers him being taken from home: "when I think about that, I can still remember the faces of the people who took him". After his brother was killed, Ahmed and his mother ran to Yemen. It was the first time he was in exile. Ahmed claims that growing up in a place where one sees dead people is different. However, he thinks that people who haven't personally witnessed violence and war still cannot claim to be ignorant of them; nowadays with the TV, news and the Internet, people all over the world know what is going on. "People can see, listen and understand what other people are going through. Then, of course, they can act as if they don't. If you just close your eyes and feel and imagine how it would feel to lose a brother, sister, mother or family and then escape your home, not knowing what will happen or has happened, then you would get your answers."

When Ahmed was seventeen years old, his mother decided to send him away so that he

wouldn't grow up seeing killing, violence and getting into trouble. She paid someone to travel with him to Norway. Now Ahmed has not heard or been able to contact his family in five years – since he left. He tells that many people leave. Some go to Australia, some to Europe, some get killed on the way. Before Ahmed left Somalia, his mother used to sit and talk with him for five hours every day. "Five hours every day," repeats Ahmed. "She told me: trust yourself, don't do bad things, try to be friendly with everybody, to respect everybody, to do right things, to treat everybody in the best way, to help others who have problems and whose problems are even bigger than your own and don't give up till you die." He pauses for a while after each one of his mother's points making sure that I have enough time to write it down. Ahmed says that his mother told him about things that would happen to him, and that life wouldn't be easy after leaving. He confesses that then he didn't believe all that his mother told him, but later these things happened, and he now notes that she was right.

Now Ahmed would just like to find a place in any country that would protect him. He states that "if you have peace, we can live there. We're all human beings."

<div align="right">(Interview with Ahmed, May 2007)</div>

Ahmed's story could be broken down into a number of different aspects within international relations. It would be possible to talk about the conflict in Somalia and the failure of the international community to establish peace and rebuild this 'failed' state. Examining the impact of refugee 'flows' on Somalia's neighbouring countries would be an equally possible alternative, and a third option would be discussing the European asylum system and its role in constructing the phenomenon of 'illegal' and 'undesirable' migration. Yet another aspect opens through exploring various transnational networks and the rampant business of human trafficking. Each of these approaches, however, splits the moving body into segments. As a consequence, "the turbulence of migration" (Papastergiadis 2000) and those ways in which its different dimensions come together in and are sensed by the body are easily omitted.

Ahmed's story promotes an understanding of the international as multiple relational bodily practices, that are constantly made, unmade, remade and negotiated in various corporeal conjunctures. This relational negotiation of space is a political event – an event in the political that resists the atomisation of the body. Ahmed's trajectories and movement expose one possible expression of political life within the international that cannot totally escape, but that yet withdraws from a linear and bounded conception of space-time proposed by the logic of sovereignty (cf. Manning 2007: 59). By moving around Finland and Norway Ahmed has come to notice that just like the world and the international, space and place are not synonymous concepts. During his travels him coming out with "the empty earth" serves to illustrate that albeit there is space, there is no place, which could accommodate

his body. This perceived contradiction makes Ahmed profoundly unhappy and dissatisfied, but it does not completely dampen his will to move on as he, while being detained, claims always to be thinking "about the life and what's the next step".

Inspired and informed by Ahmed's views, the following Piece seeks to think political space and spatiality, not as objective and measurable, but in terms of exteriority and 'extension'. This change of focus rearticulates space as a sphere in which dualisms such as mind/body and sensible/intelligible cannot operate. Space transforms into a temporal unfolding, in which the singular-plural bodies mutually expose themselves and negotiate their being in the world. (See James 2002: 136–137; also Manning 2007: 128.) This means that instead of resorting to any of the analytical perspectives listed above, the failed asylum seekers' fragmentary political agency requires a different category of analysis: movement. With movement I do not intend massive flows, but the moves and even minute gestures that the failed asylum seekers' singular plural body takes on and performs.

Piece IV

Space and movement, space in movement

Eeva: What about your dance, does it have a message?
Benjamin: Yes, it does have a message. Every movement has a message. [...] Every step
           and move that you do, you have to give a message.
<div align="right">(Interview with Benjamin, June 2007)</div>

Every move has a message. A move is a message. From this premise this Piece addresses the moving body as capable of articulating a sense of space that bears transformative potential for our conceptions of the possible forms of political life within the international. As Piece II discussed, the spatiotemporal logic of sovereignty requires that nations and identities are imagined in a particular and selective style and assumes that every body is subjected to the collective body of the state[52]. Conceiving political space through movement reveals that actually the modern experience of society – a statist expression of political community – loses or dissolves the immediacy of the 'communal' (see Nancy 2004a: 9). This Piece explores the capacity of the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic, as it is manifested through movement, to expose borders as far more complex sites and practices than any regulative ambitions anticipate. In another light, the line of separation is, in fact, a bodily event of compearance.

  My writing addresses, firstly, the spectacle of the border and, secondly, takes up the minutiae of various practices designed to control human mobility within the spheres of the international. However, I am not interested in the actual practices of control, but in the ways in which the body both senses space and articulates space on the basis of sensuous experience. The suggested take on the issue tweaks our

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[52] On these discussions, see Anderson 1991; Walker 1993; 2009; Vidler 1993; Campbell 1998a; b; Smith, A. 1999; Evans 1999; Isin & Nielsen 2008; Weber 2008; Squire 2009; Sylvester 2009: esp. 28–31, 41.

conception of the international as it becomes addressed in terms of a local bodily spacing (cf. Sullivan & McCarthy 2004: 291; Nancy 2008: 15). This localisation arises from the international being situated in and emerging from the body, which is necessarily located – present – somewhere.

With the adopted Nancian focus this Piece seeks to think about *a spatial experience of community, which exceeds the principle of identity or any figure of totality* (see James 2006: 175–176). By being displaced and put beyond accommodation, the failed asylum seeker gains a sense of the international as an inherently relational sphere. As I have already claimed, the body's ontological potential lies in its capacity to expose political community in terms of shared existence. Empirically speaking, then, this Piece examines the body of the failed asylum seeker as a site from which the struggle over the limits of the political unfolds (see Puumala & Pehkonen 2010).

4.1.   Movement and the political project of sovereign communities

My exploration takes its cue from a notion according to which asylum reconstructs the political community through exclusionary relations of governance and belonging (Squire 2009: 21). Considering the international politics of nation-building from the perspective of the moving or re-moved body, we can gain a sense of the myriad ways in which various institutions and actors regulate, practice, administer and (seek to) shape the body of the (failed) asylum seeker[53]. Within IR my approach, although it stems from a different philosophical starting point, comes quite close to Sandro Mezzandra's and Brett Neilson's (2003) view in which migratory movement is a spatial form of political agency capable of initiating transformation and political change. Movement across borders both causes the rise of reactive political practices and emphasises the nature of bodily movement as a form of resistance, protest and relationality.

My writing relies on the two-fold nature of the relation between borders and the body. On the one hand, the body is a point of differentiation in relation to which those 'inside' can build their sense of belonging and identity. On the other hand, and more importantly for the purposes of the present work, the body is also a point of connection illustrating borders and lines as lived relationalities. Borders are not simple geographical markers, but they regulate also the broader society: they thicken both against the body and in it (see Andreas 2000: 3; Soguk 2000; Ahmed *et al.* 2003; also Howarth 2006; Walters 2006; Haddad 2008). The community that

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[53] Only recently has movement emerged as a topic in itself within IR, although mostly in the form of mobility. See e.g. Aradau, Huysmans & Squire 2010; Squire 2010; cf. however Soguk & Whitehall 1999; Agnew 1999.

is constructed through the politics of borders is not a static unit, but a precarious political project based on a particular political idea of how the world works or how it should work. In a similar vein, the international takes shape as an act or an event, rather than being an ontic unit or sphere of political action.

We thus face once again the tension between in-common-being and being-in-common. In the first case, political communities are formed through the collective body of the state. Actually, Nancy refers to such entities with the notion of 'society', that is community founded upon an idea of a shared identity, origin and destiny. However, such an understanding of community – or more accurately *commonality* – dislocates or loses the ontological political relationality between bodies. Instead, being-in-common is a matter of community taking place as a result of compearance. In philosophical terms, the above elaboration between 'society' and 'community' signifies that the sense of community on which the modern international is based leads to a particular experience of the 'communal'. In fact, putting Nancy's thought into practice within IR calls forth a critical reflection on both totalitarianism and democracy as bases for political community (see Raffoul & Pettigrew 2007: 17–21; cf. Schwarzmantel 2007).

4.1.1. Restricted mobility

Asylum is one instance of the 'spectacle' of the border, which illustrates the idea of states extending their sovereign borders without actually doing so territorially (see Haddad 2007: 132). The aim of that spatial spectacle is to reduce people's possibility to constitute themselves as political agents and claim access to socio-economic services and goods in a particular community (Isin & Rygiel 2006; Salter 2006; Butler 2004: 51–52; also Squire 2009: 152–156). In fact, the asylum procedure transforms the moving body into a site where political relations are (re)produced.

In the field of asylum the administration of human mobility is extended and dispersed through technical practices, such as biometrics, that are applied according to a rationality of deterrence (Squire 2009: 93; also Isin & Rygiel 2006; Salter 2006). Consider, for example, Charlotte Epstein's (2007: 152–153) claim that biometrics is designed to enable and enhance the movement of the right kind of bodies, which at the same time means filtering out risky bodies, such as asylum seekers. Indeed, the creation of productive populations is possible because of biopolitical practices and their deterring effects. The administrative efforts of the state illustrate that the logic of sovereignty procreates a conception of politics as an expression of an identity; a conception that Nancy so heavily criticises (also Wagner 2006: 90). Such a conception transforms space into a question of territory, and politics into a question of the condition of possibility of a collective form of life. Accordingly,

attempts to control the expression of political existence or identity and to build a political order on a particularly bounded conception of community become the prime scopes of politics.

Let me now reflect upon the experiential consequences of this administrative rationality through scrutinising how the practices of migration control restrict the body's moves and mobility. Migration controls are, in fact, one example of the state extending its boundaries without territorial expansion, and reception provisions and practices in all their variety fall within the sphere of this control. The following discussion reveals sovereignty as a form of authority to make separations and as such it resonates closely with the logic of inside/outside that prevails in IR.

> There is a knock on the door at five minutes to noon. I answer the door and meet a lady and her two sons who wish to know what they are required to do. The lady shows me her work activity form (*työtoimintalomake*), which indicates that she is responsible for mangling[54]. Kristiina, a counsellor who has overheard our discussion, asks the family to wait till noon, that is till the office opens for the residents. She tells me that after that I can attend to their matter. The family leaves the office and returns in about 15 minutes. I take them to the laundry, show them how the machine works together with the pile of sheets that the mother is supposed to mangle. After an hour, her other son returns to the office and asks me to come with him to see his mother. She seems to be quite worried, pulls up a sheet and unfolds it in front of me. She points at the sheet and looks at me; she seems terrified because she has noticed that the wringer has left wrinkles on the sheet.
>
> (Field notes, 14th November 2006)

As becomes obvious from the above quote, I was not able to remain outside the disciplinary system involved in the regulation of movement (also Episode 1). To an extent I had to assume the policing role assigned to the staff of the reception centre. During my fieldwork I had to be careful not to alienate the staff more than it was necessary or to alienate the residents through helping the staff. As the issue of the wrinkled sheet illustrates, practices of control are not only about overarching policy guidelines, but also about regulating and disciplining the body of the asylum seeker in the very smallest of ways.

The specific political character of the centre is reflected in Engin Isin and Kim Rygiel's (2006: 193) notion of a "zone". They conceive zones to be spaces in which the rules of freedom have been suspended and which render those living in the centre inaudible and invisible. It should, then, be no surprise to learn that living in a reception centre or detention unit entails multiple elements of surveillance and

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[54] Officially the requirement that the residents of the reception centre perform a certain amount of work each month is designed to keep people active and to make sure that they are not getting something for nothing. If they refuse or neglect their duties twice in a month, their monthly living allowance can be cut by 20 per cent.

control. In the detention unit the staff supervises movement both within and outside the unit via surveillance cameras – all of my interviews were conducted under these cameras – and most reception centres have a surveillance system as well (see also Norrback 2008). As opposed to the reception centres, the detainees' physical movement is restricted: in addition to their rooms detainees can only access the toilet and bathroom facilities, the diner, the TV room and the lobby. Another main difference between being detained and living in a reception centre is that in the latter asylum seekers are expected to take charge of their daily lives – e.g. shop for food and prepare it and clean up after themselves. Yet, in many minor everyday situations – such as collecting one's post or borrowing the remote control for the TV in the communal living room – they still were required to turn to the staff of the reception centre[55]. I must stress, however, that the counsellors and social workers sought to keep people active by organising a variety of free time activities, such as football, volleyball, swimming and woodwork, and they also sought opportunities for people to study or work (meeting 3; interviews 2, 3, 6 and 7). As for the detainees, they could buy prepaid mobile cards, play table tennis or play with a games console, read, go out and receive visitors during scheduled times, use the Internet and watch TV (interview 8).

Thus far I have illustrated the complex and multifaceted governmental technologies that the securitisation and government of asylum entail. These technologies and practices are instituted at a technical and administrative level, but their effects permeate people's everyday lives (see Bigo 2005; Huysmans 2006; Huysmans & Buonfino 2008). So, even though the body's potential for physical movement might not be totally restrained, the sense of having control over one's own life is severely disrupted (see Lukkaroinen 2005: 18; also Valtiontalouden tarkastusvirasto 2006). Besides the practices within the centres, the rationality of deterrence functions through different "symbols of success/integration" (Hirsiaho & Ogu 2010). These symbols could also be interpreted as symbols of political life, as they in some respects determine the body's potential for participating in society.

> Ayan: Last time I go for the *Kela* [*Kansaneläkelaitos*, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland] and ask for the *Kela-kortti* [the Kela card], they say "you don't have, you know, the right to *Kela*, because you have status B".
>
> (Interview with Ayan, October 2006)

> Farzad: [P]eople always ask for the Kela card. I don't have one, can't have one. Then at school everybody looks at me: "oh, how come you don't have the Kela card?" My teacher knows my situation, but sometimes she forgets, and just the other day I had to explain again my situation, not having the Kela card, and living in the centre.
>
> (Interview with Farzad, September 2006)

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[55] These examples are based on my fieldwork, but it should be noted that the set of rules varied from one centre to another.

The Kela card – the Finnish health insurance card – is perhaps the most outstanding example of the de facto exclusion that follows from being given the B permit. Not having this card, and thus not being entitled to most social security benefits, constrains the body's access to the health care sector and schooling (with no right to the study allowance). Crossing the geographical border does not, then, mean that one is 'in', just as the right to free movement within the country does not mean that the B permit holder can move independently of the status. The constraints concerning work and education embedded in the B permit are part of the rationality of deterrence as their primary intention seems to be that of restricting the person's integration into Finnish society until they can be deported.

This rationality adds to the experienced punitive effects that go together with being a failed asylum seeker (cf. Piece III: section 3.4.2.). The next passage is from my interview with Adil. The Finnish efforts to fix his body within a political order based on a particular conception of community placed Adil between states and in a sense even outside the whole system of states.

Adil is upset, but still jokes about his situation and laughs at it. For him it does not make any sense. He tells that he used to work for *Helsingin Messut* [Helsinki Fair Ltd.] and the ISS Office Services in Helsinki, but then he got the B and had to stop working. Now Adil has signed a new permanent contract with the ISS. He is supposed to start working the next day, but that is not possible because of the B. Adil says that he cannot even rent an apartment with the ID-card that he gets from the centre. He explains to me that he just met with his social worker who sent a request to Helsinki asking if he could stay in one of the centres there, but the answer will not be given till the following Monday. He explains that his employer has called the centre's social worker and told that Adil will be paid and thus, he can afford the rent, but with the B [i.e. without an official ID] it is virtually impossible to find anyone who would rent an apartment to him. "I don't understand, why B", Adil says.

Adil is from Palestine, officially without nationality. He tells that he has applied for an Alien's passport in March, but it will take approximately six months for them to process the application. With the passport [official id] he could rent an apartment. Adil starts to pile his documents in front of me: the B-decision showing he cannot for the time being be removed from the country; the lawyer's fee 35 euros; a copy of the passport application submitted to the Malmi police station in Helsinki with a receipt for the 65 euros paid; the signed contract of employment with an hourly wage of just over 7 euros. His work would consist of cleaning and other such maintenance work, and Adil has agreed to do overtime and Sundays if necessary. On top of the pile he places an earlier pay cheque for approximately 650 euros for a month's work after tax.

Adil sees his future being in Finland. "Now it is not normal here; but then I think that it is not normal there either, so what's the difference", he says and starts laughing.

(Interview with Adil, August 2006)

Adil's case illustrates the sense of place and form of a person's lived experience arising from the body coming into contact with politics that seeks to put the question of the moving body to rest (cf. Foster 1996). When Adil pondered the apparent contradiction between not being granted asylum or a continuous residence permit, and there not existing a country where he could be deported, he stated that maybe the Finnish asylum officers know something the rest of us do not. Adil laughed full-heartedly at this thought, as the notion of an independent Palestine does not seem likely to materialise in the near future.

Adil could, ultimately, move to a reception centre in Helsinki, start working and striving towards a somewhat more 'normal' life. In the kind of politics of mobility that Adil's story exposed, movement can be both restricted and forced – this applies equally well to entry, exit and movement within the country. It might be legislatively correct to state that for example working, education and schooling are subject to other laws than the Aliens Act, and that the asylum officers are not responsible for determining a person's rights within the country, but only their right to asylum. Even so, Adil put into question the *ethico-political* correctness of the rationale that the previous statement is based on, rather than resisted the practices of deterrence per se. He pointed out that at the everyday level it makes no difference, which law the deterrence results from, as its effects are concretely felt on the body.

Occasionally movement means risking life and limb as entering Europe to apply for asylum is not easy. However, it is no easier to stay in Europe and get asylum or protection. Adil's account inspires me to explore the ways in which the administrative rationality at work in asylum politics forces movement, rather than simply restricts it.

4.1.2.   Forced mobility

The political attempt to make sovereignty the ground on which to think of 'community' relies on the premise of national cohesion and its ability to "provide a sense of the lost home" (Manning 2007: 52) – or perhaps a sense of a home to be lost if this cohesion is not upheld (cf. White 2002; Agnew 2007). For Benjamin the experience of this spatiotemporal logic of sovereignty being unfolded against and unfolding on his body translates into hurt and incomprehension. In his story sovereign politics meets and entwines with the body in the form of two people coming together:

  Eeva: Do you know when you will hear something new about your case, or do you
            just have to wait for…? [Benjamin interrupts]

Benjamin: Yeah. […] There was one police lady down there, so she brought her camera. She's the person who's going to prepare my documents, because I don't have travel documents, so she's the person who's going to prepare my documents to travel and so. […] You people give me chance to work, when I have the chance to work, and now after finishing everything [the asylum process], you tell me that it's negative. They didn't even consider my work or the people and I'm living with them. And now you are trying to prepare my documents to send… So what do I say? I have nothing to say. If I leave, with almighty Allah, and I'm waiting for that. That's what I told her. And she "snap, snap" [snaps his fingers three times to illustrate the sound of the policewoman's camera] and she said I have to wait three weeks' time.

Eeva: Hmm. When did she come?

Benjamin: I don't know. She said in three weeks' time. […] But I met her last week. I didn't even figure the day. So that is what… So, I'm here like a hungry lion, who's waiting for his meat. Yes.

(Interview with Benjamin, June 2007)

It can be claimed that sovereignty and the idea of a common national home are naturalised as the normative features of the political structures of our time (see Walker 1990: 172; Manning 2000; 57–58; 2007: 52; Howarth 2006). Within this spatial construct the practices of detaining asylum seekers and deporting them to their home countries represent themselves as legitimate political acts. From another perspective, the act of detention is a practice that inscribes culpability, illegitimacy and susceptibility on the body. (See De Genova 2002; 2004; 2007; Welch & Schuster 2005; Squire 2009.) Yet a pure form of nation-state is perhaps nowhere to be found except, as Walker (2006b: 57) claims, in the "regulative ambition for a specifically modern political life". Asylum politics is one example of such an ambition. Benjamin encountered this regulative ambition in the flesh: it wore a police uniform, took pictures of him and left him waiting "like a hungry lion".

The regulation of movement illustrates the border as a set of practices which seep out into everyday life and manifest themselves in relation to the human body. Transfers between centres are perhaps a tad less clandestine example of the sovereign quest to govern movement as they take place within the society. Be it as it may, transfers and deportations reproduce the same logic of 'commonness' that grounds any divisions between inside and outside, national and foreign. In both acts of forced movement, common-being is inscribed on the body through creating limitations to bodies and positioning them in a particularly constrained way in political and politicised spaces (see Ahmed 1999: 87–106). Let me illustrate with Fadi:

Fadi: When I came back to the centre, he [a reception centre worker] said [...] "you must move to Ruukki." [...] When I move there, small small village, they have nothing there.

Eeva: Yes. And it's up in the north.

Fadi: Yes, in the north. Even if it was in Oulu, or in Kokkola, it doesn't matter. But, in that place, they take you to the bank to take your money, and take you back. …S-market, K-market…R-kiosk, pharmacists, and one *ravintola* [restaurant]. This small bus, not a car. They take us two time, Monday and Friday. Shopping two times in one week. Shopping and you go back. See, for me, it's not possible. I come from a big city, Algiers, about now 6 million people. And you put me in some place, like that…

(Interview with Fadi, May 2007)

The Ruukki reception centre was situated in a rural area with scarce public transportation available. There was a minibus connection, which took the asylum seekers twice a week to Raahe to do shopping and run other errands. Initially I thought that Fadi's complaint concerned the geographical location of the Ruukki centre, as generally in the interviews people had stated their preference to stay in the south of Finland. Fadi, however, corrects me in stating that Oulu or Kokkola, the nearest towns of reasonable size to Ruukki, would have been fine with him. He complained about the physical *distance* between the centre and everything else, and thus being made dependant on others even in respect of his basic needs. The physical distance disrupted Fadi's sense of living a normal life and made him feel completely cut off from normality and other people. Indeed, the deterring effects of transfers engender an understanding of an isolated body. However, as this politics can never fix the body in space and keep it from moving, the always incomplete and indefinite nature of sovereignty begins to take form. The sensory experience of the 'communal' procreated by Finnish politics, combined with Fadi's efforts to transcend the limits of political possibility that are set for his movement, turn his body into a limit:

Fadi: […] so I said to the boss, I don't have right to work. But he said that we must do something to continue your work. I worked in Raahe, it's near Ruukki. I asked the boss, the director [what I could do]. That was about 30 days ago. [He said that] I must go to Helsinki to UVI [the Directorate of Immigration] to leave the application, [the] worker's license.

Eeva: Yes

Fadi: [...] I do it on Tuesday, and Wednesday the police, they come. I was in the class room, *suomen kieli* [the Finnish language], we have some *kurssi* [course].

Eeva: Yes – and they brought you here?

Fadi: Yes. I say "what's happening?" The police said: "we are here to deport you". My final decision was in October 2006, so it's about seven month. Why you don't deport me in that seven month? When I want to make that application to work, and I get a work you say: "now we are here to deport you".

Eeva: And what happened with the work permit? If you get it, will you…?

Fadi: I have the *sopimus* [contract], I have everything. The work contract, *todistus* [certificate], I have this one number, the social security number. Everything. […]

Those seven months, it's a long time. The police said [that the reason for deten-
tion was]: "because we are scared that you might run away". If I knew where I
can run away, I run away eight month ago. That [the reason stated by the police]
is not some evidence to put me here. I don't accept what they do to people. […] In
2004 they state me "you must leave the country". So in three days, in three days I
leave. I was in Denmark, there also I work [for] fourteen months.

Eeva: H-hmm, did you apply [for] asylum in Denmark?

Fadi: Yes. So, [after] the first three month [in Denmark], I go to work. The boss give
me some room in the garage. So, when they control [Fadi refers here to the act
of comparing his fingerprints with those saved in the Eurodac system], they say:
"we can't accept, we ask Finland". In two weeks Finland give the answer, "ok,
give him back". When I was in airport, the woman, she said "do you know why
you are here?". I said "yes". She said "we are also responsible to deport you to
Algeria". I said "you get me back from another country doing something, after
you say 'move to another place', and when I move, in 14 months you send me
back here, and say 'no, we send you back to Algeria'."

(Interview with Fadi, May 2007)

Fadi's story represents European asylum politics at its best and worst, depending
on the viewpoint one is willing to adopt. His account corporealises what is meant
by the asylum seeking body giving evidence against itself as Fadi's fingerprints are
used against him in order to control his movement within and out of the EU area. In
addition he was subjected to one of the variety of methods – punitive technologies
– used by the police to keep suspects secure: detention[56]. Fadi demands to know
where he could settle, as he does not consider that his body belongs to Algeria,
but it is not allowed to remain in Europe either. Fadi's experience of the regulative
ambitions through which the sovereign logic seeks to institute itself gives rise to
a strong sense of dislocation and rupture. So, no matter what one thinks of people
like Fadi, who travel from country to country seeking asylum, trying to make ends
meet and in some cases benefiting the receiving societies by working (and paying
taxes), one can claim with reasonable assurance that this politics is not functional
from anyone's perspective.

    With their moving bodies failed asylum seekers complicate the limits between
places and disrupt the notion of political life as something that takes place either
between fixed insides and outsides or within stable communities. The moving body
undermines the spatial regime in which different expressions of what it means to

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[56] Other possible measures are e.g. the duty to report to the police, the confiscation of passports or
tickets and the setting of bail. According to the guidelines of the Ministry of the Interior (Sisäasi-
ainministeriö 2004) a person's rights must not be limited more than necessary when the decision
of returning or deportation is enacted and, furthermore, the process should respect family unity. In
practice, however, these guidelines are not always followed, but people have been picked up during
the night or some family members – usually mothers – have been taken into custody so as to prevent
the rest of the family from fleeing. (Interview 10)

lead a political life and be a human are flattened out and obscured by a vocabulary of security, organisation and efficiency (see Dolan 2005: 370). Movement can thus create new frameworks for a discussion on what belonging, displacement and being out of place mean and what their relation to political life is (cf. Manning 2009). Thus understood movement is characteristic and constitutive of the relations between bodies and worlds. It rearticulates political community in a way that exceeds sovereignty both within the state and within the system of states. This notion now needs to be elaborated more thoroughly.

4.2.   A finite experience of the international: the body as a limit

The discussion in this section takes its cue from Nancian thought, where sense/ meaning (*sens*) is constitutive of the existence of space[57]. For Nancy, sense exists as a passage, as a movement-to, which "is the space of the world as meaningful, intelligible and experiencable" (James 2006: 102, italics orig.; also Nancy 2003b: 8). Being, the world and the spatiality of being-in-the-world are about an infinitely open-ended relational spacing of sense, where being is always *being-to* or *being-toward* (Nancy 1998: 8; also James 2006: 93, 103). Through their bodies the failed asylum seekers postulate that not everyone has similar space to move; the senses of the international are dependent on the experiencing body. But the failed asylum seekers' movement also unfolds the space of the international in terms of an opening of sense. Sense makes it possible for us to gain bodily know-how through which, prior to cognition, we orient ourselves within an intelligible space (see James 2006: 106; also Wall 2008: 58; Manning 2007: 10). Rather than a point of separation, the border represents a bodily point of contact in the Nancian ontology:

> On the limit, singulars are side by side. They touch each other, that is to say that they part from nothing. The edges are all one for the other in a double rapport of attraction and repulsion. Through the edge, one can approach the other edge, even engage in boarding. One can also spill over or go overboard, precisely in order to go over to the other side, unless one spills out only into the nothing of the limit: it all depends on the energy, the impetuousness with which one starts or leaps out. The edge is the exposed and exposing part or dimension of the singular: it exposes to the limit, it is, finally, the limit itself, not as a line of no width, but as face, manner, gait and aspect of the delimited being.
>
> (Nancy 2004b: 47)

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[57] Nancy's thinking is situated in the realm of factual and pragmatic worldly engagements and ultimately seeks to address the world in terms of a multiplicity of sense (see James 2006: 94).

In a Nancian light border practices imply a relation that unfolds constantly and that exposes the limits of political subjectivity in terms of singular beings. In fact, as Georges Van Den Abbeele (1997: 15, italics orig.) points out, Nancy envisions a community "founded upon the compearance of singular beings in the commonality of their *difference*". Through Nancy's thought, hence, opens a radically different way of thinking of otherness, namely because his philosophy disconnects communal identities from demarcated geographical spaces. Such an inscription of identity on topography still ultimately founds the international, as every body is supposed to belong within a state.

   Within the sketched frame of thought, movement does not have to be directed towards a particular goal or a nameable place or to follow conventional routes in order to be considered politically prominent. Let me take a cue from Nancy's philosophy: in order to think about the postnational – and not merely post-topological – space we would need to engage with a poetics of space. Such poetics denotes an experience of spatial and communal differences, which speaks of the "unheard-of verticality of sense" (Van Den Abbeele 1997: 16–17). The political potential of movement, then, lies in the body's ability to contest and exceed those processes of historical change that a particular political order has fixed in space. What becomes central is movement as a form of exposure. Movement exposes the world in terms of the separation and distancing of sense, which is simultaneously an event of touch, spacing, sharing, position and disposition (James 2006: 138). The body moves in relation to and against other bodies and through this it exposes the limit that the body in itself is:

> Eeva: For how long did the journey take? Since it is not, it must not be all...
> Tahir: Yeah, it is no... twenty-five to thirty days.
> Eeva: Hmm. Several weeks.
> Tahir: Yes.
> Eeva: What then, when you reached Finland, how did that feel? Did you think that you had reached safety or was everything still too close...
> Tahir: No. No, like, I remember thinking that I am in a neighbouring country of Afghanistan and then when I go to the police station, when the trafficker told, that I must go to the police station to meet the police, and they would like help me. And then when I go there, I think that maybe I am in a neighbouring country and there then... When I looked, he asked where I was from, and I told him I am from Afghanistan. And then when he showed me on the map; like how so far? Like I felt that I might never meet my mum again and now remembering that, it was a huge thing. Thus far it has been two years when I haven't met her.
>
> (Interview with Tahir, my translation, April 2007)

Tahir articulates a world of bodies in motion, bodies weighing on one another, against one another. In Nancy's philosophy weight represents the materiality of the

body, the carnation of philosophy and politics. The body's weight exposes a finite experience of the international and manifests its local (be)coming and construction. (Cf. Nancy 2008: 93–97.) With the notion of exposure Nancy thus seeks to make sense of finite bodily sense. In the context of my writing this sense discloses the international in a movement of dispersal or passage, which articulates an experience of the limit, experience as the limit. Sense is an event of being, which occurs as an infinitely open-ended relational spacing. (See James 2006: 132–133.) Tahir, in fact, articulates the international in terms of a space of bodily contacts when he describes the shock of realising where his movement has taken him and what it has come to mean. Meaning, within the philosophical framework that I have adopted, necessitates the existence of a limit through which both the identity and difference of the thing are constituted. For something to appear as a determinate something entails spacing and separation. Hence, meaning is relational. In Nancy's philosophy meaning is created through a network, a circulation, of contacts and touches. It therefore signals the intensification of the body's presence in relation to others. (See Perpich 2005: 84–85.) Tahir's concern about never seeing his mother again ultimately becomes the moment in which *his body* turns into a limit.

A moving body, claims Susan Foster (1995: 16), puts into motion also those bodies that observe this movement. Movement, therefore, exposes every body's agentive potential to participate in, resist or exceed the forms of cultural and political production that are underway (Foster 1995: 15; also Foster 1996; Noland 2009). Moving is a gestural act that brings in a type of experience that subverts and interrupts the logic of inside/outside and inserts a corporeal language of its own (cf. Noland 2009: 194). Thus conceived, movement represents a form of political practice and the moving body is inherently politically agentive.

The failed asylum seekers' moves expose the international in terms of a spacing, or a spatiotemporal event that is bodily. This means that the international is not a space within which we move, rather it takes form as our bodies, to which it gives form, move (cf. Massey 2004). The failed asylum seekers move against the spatiotemporal logic of sovereignty not necessarily by asking us to believe their accounts, but by demanding us to engage both with their moving bodies and with what set these bodies in motion in the first place. Both Nasir and Fadi presented me with this demand:

> Nasir: [The men talk amongst themselves, then one of them turns to me and interprets] Ok, he was saying that these authorities here, *Ulkomaalaisvirasto* [the Directorate of Immigration], they don't believe refugees, the stories these refugees tell when they take interviews. If they don't believe that, they don't even need to believe, ok, we can be content. Just, if they just go and see how these people come and reach till Europe, these safe countries, if they just go and see them, observe them on the way, then they would think that… They would understand, why they have

left their country. This is not for some silly reasons, stupid reasons. They take risk, great risks and, yeah, endure many hardships and difficulties, which would be reason enough for them to understand that these people do have some problems from which they leave their countries and try to reach safer places. […] It is not…yeah, you have to be very lucky. Many people have died after they have survived in their own country but they could not survive on the way to a safe place. They died on their way. To some safe place. People have, yeah, drowned in rivers, drowned in oceans. People have come with those, [talk] those balloon-boats, yeah?

Eeva: yeah

Nasir: People have crossed the sea with those boats, balloon-boats almost… many. Yeah, many. From Turkey to Italy or Greece. They have come on those balloon-boats. Just imagine. [talk] And they would pump it with their own mouth. From Turkey to Italy on those boats. It's...

Eeva: It's a long way to come.

Nasir: Very few reach safely. Many drown.

(Interview with Nasir, March 2007)

Eeva: So, what will happen to you if you will be taken back to Algeria? Will you try again in Europe, or are you going to stay in Algeria, or…?

Fadi: Yeah, I don't think I'd come back here in North. But also I don't imagine, I don't think to go to Algeria. No. The people they pay plenty of money, lot of money to come here, it is not easy to send somebody back like that. The people they die, they take ship, you know, from Tunisia, from Morocco, from other place, and they lose their life, you know.

(Interview with Fadi, May 2007)

Both Nasir and Fadi describe the moves that people have to perform before they can even present their claim for asylum. Surpassing the physical dangers of the travel does not equal overcoming one's troubles. Movement is initiated by the troubles people have faced and by the hope of a better future and a normal life somewhere else. The moving body, thus, exposes a sense of necessity involved in an asylum claim. Through Fadi's and Nasir's stories asylum seekers demand with their full weight that we rigorously engage with the thought of the body-as-a-limit that does not conform to the flattening representations that the political order of sovereignty seeks to impose. The story that Nasir and Fadi voice, is about an exposure to the distant and the uncertain, to the perils of movement and to the possibilities of drifting and an arrival. The moving body measures and senses space, monitors pressure and friction and accommodates shifts of weight (Noland 2009: 2).

  'Irregular' migratory movements represent one possible form of the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic that subverts fixed notions of space (see e.g. Mezzandra & Neilson 2003: 22; also Walters 2006: 153). Asylum seekers cross borders and inhabit places without authorisation, resist deportation and move in

unexpected ways in unanticipated directions. Theories of (political) agency and political life would need to focus on human mobility in order to understand how people are embodied within and impress themselves upon (the political organisation of) the world. Because an experience of movement transforms the moving body, it might in the end transform the political culture itself. This thinking launches a cartography of beings side by side; beings "dispersed in an ocean that is each time and at once an other and the same, configured around a different shore" (Nancy 2004b: 51).

However, the accounts that Fadi, Nasir and also Tahir presented beg one important epistemological and methodological question. Can sheer corporeality – the movement, exposition of the skin (ex*peau*sition) and their senses – be imagined without taking account of the sacrifices involved in language that endeavours to describe this movement, exposition or corporeal extending? (Cf. van der Walt 2005: 289; also Nancy 2008.) *Can the body and its finite experience of the international as a bodily disclosure or spacing be named in the first place?* It is fair to state that my collage sacrifices at least some of the moves and corporeal gestures that the failed asylum seekers performed. The omission results from language – both as speech and a medium of representation – never being an exhaustive or even adequate substitute for the vitality of the body and its expression. Despite the difficulties that thinking and writing that touch the body might face, we cannot restrain ourselves from trying to answer the demand that the body presents.

The idea of every body's shared ontological exposure that has been introduced in this section signals arriving and departing with no given coordinates. Such an exposure articulates a temporal spatiality of coming and closing, which raises the question of political life. Who and where are the actors in ir: the statesmen who pose in front of flags in various international meetings and whose biographies fill the shelves in libraries? If we answer in the affirmative, then what about those people who are curled up in a tent in a refugee camp, who seek shelter from each other's backs in the Atlantic and who cover themselves with heavy jackets in the freezing cold February weather in Finland and wait to be deported? Is there no space for them and their bodies within the narratives of the international, its histories, politics and relations? What are we afraid of when we seek to secure the boundaries and borders between bodies to the extreme?

Bodies crossing oceans with "balloon-boats" articulate a presence, which signals nearness and coming close. These bodies are a sense in action and their movement represents the sharing of sense between singular-plurals. This is the element of with-being that the moving body represents (cf. Manning 2007: 44–45). Movement enables the experiencing body to explore its conditions of possibility within which its political existence and agentive potential can appear (see Pehkonen & Puumala 2008; Puumala & Pehkonen 2010; cf. Junka 2006: 357). In the subse-

quent section I will bring this argument closer to the ground.

4.3.   Movement and community in terms of togetherness

> If sovereignty is the grand, political term for defining community […] that has nothing beyond itself, with no foundation or end but itself, what becomes of sovereignty when it is revealed that it is nothing but a singularly plural spacing? How is one to think sovereignty as the "nothing" of the "with" that is laid bare? At the same time, if political sovereignty has always signified the refusal of domination […], how is one to think the bare sovereignty of the "with" and against domination, whether this is the domination of being-together by some other means or the domination of togetherness by itself […]? In fact, one could begin to describe the present transformation of "political space" as a transition toward "empire," where empire signifies two things: (1) domination without sovereignty […]; and (2) the distancing, spacing and plurality opposed to the concentration of interiority required by political sovereignty.
>
> (Nancy 2000: 36)

In the light of the above quote, sovereignty can no more be a concept that describes a community in the sense of an entity that imposes a common order on itself, that understands this order to be its own project and that constantly (re-)invents itself through this project (see Wagner 2006: 96). All things considered, it might be fair to argue that this is exactly what is going on in IR through the naturalisation of space as a territorial place (also Walker 2009: 172). Yet, it is equally fair to claim that the political project of sovereignty always is and will remain incomplete in the face of the singular-plural body. In the end, sovereignty is "nothing but the *com-*", "always and indefinitely to be completed" (Nancy 2000: 36). Singular beings can, therefore, deconstruct the spatiotemporal horizons of the sovereign state as the necessary prerequisites of political life (see Walker 2009: 180; cf. Schwartzmantel 2007).

Sovereignty, through the Nancian lens, should describe that which articulates the being-in-common of a community of singulars (cf. however Wagner 2006: 96–97). In what follows, I will try to articulate what the failed asylum seekers' movements make of sovereignty as a presentation of being-with. Here compearance exposes its spatial dimension: if there is something or someone, there are several who always already concern, touch, confront and flee one another (see Nancy 1992; Wagner 2006: 97).

My attempt will, once again, necessitate a more creative approach than just analysing the lack, direction or scope of movement and gestures. Instead, I will introduce a corporeal poetics of space in order to connect with the spatial character of compearance.

4.3.1.   Bodily articulations of space

The following is by now a cliché: in these times travelling to far away destinations has become an everyday experience for many. The cost of plane tickets, the number of flight connections and the overall ease of booking trips has made it possible to travel more often and further away from home. More and more people identify themselves as citizens of the world, which makes transnationalism one of the hot topics of our time. However, travelling with valid documents, for business or pleasure, is a completely different world from the one which confronts someone travelling via unofficial routes, with unorthodox documentation and means of transportation in order to seek political asylum.

The importance of borders has not, by any means, diminished but merely shifted (see Andreas 2000: 3). Aspects of the international that for the previous groups go unnoticed, gain a corporeal and less smooth, but an extremely sensuous, form. Within our current vision of the international, the possible modes of legitimate identities materialise most concretely in flesh-and-blood individuals, whose actions and movements are limited by the figure created in governmental discourses (cf. Foucault 1979, 1983). The apparently simple lines separating states from one another produce very specific forms of subjectivity, which yet are extremely complex and contingent (cf. Walker 2009: 186).

"I am a journalist of mass communication, so I write news in the local newspaper." So begins the journey of detained Shiva, who was interviewed in June 2007. Through his movement I will illustrate the way states are constructed of, on and against bodies, but also the way bodily movement forms and transforms them. The shape of my writing highlights the fact that states are, ultimately, formed through narratives imagined in selective styles. Shiva's represents a shadow narrative, not usually accounted for in IR. First his words take us from Nepal to India:

So, I have
worked   four years
in that newspaper. There is
riot in the parliament before our
country goes under the, you can say, ter-
rorism of the Maoist. I was writing in this
newspaper during that time. I wrote both good and bad.
They evacuate the children from the schools, and they
come to the terror camp and they were given trainings.
Now the supreme commander is going to be the president
of Nepal and they will all receive a proper salary, very
good job, and in this way they were motivated. More than
2.000 children. And, similarly, they had taken, with   the   help   of the
Indian Maoists and Naxalites, weapons for making bombs and guns. I took the
pictures of the children in the camp and the weapons, and in this way it
was   pub-   lished And they accuse our newspaper as enemy
for Maoist and for the republic of Nepal. Most
of this news are written by me. They declare the
death   punishment. They declared the
death punishment. Didn't hang
me,   I was out at the
time.

So in
order to save
my life, I came to
India. And we meet in
India and we come here.
But we didn't come here
directly.
From Nepal we im-
mediately, from that night, my wife was
not …, because they traced her, my neigh-
bours also, if anybody gave her shelter. The   home
was not secure, so they told me to go to India, so I came to   India. And
later, she can run away from the Maoist camp, she go to our place and our neighbour told
that I'm in India. So she come to India. And in India, we came to   Delhi at first.
In Delhi, there are many people who have left their home in Nepal because   of this Mao-
ist insurgency, and we meet among them who are our cover… and we   were
introduced   to him and he takes us to his home. He [the contact] came about
three years ago to India. He migrated with his family. We lived
in their rented house and we helped in the hotel. They have
a hotel, a small hotel in Delhi, India. It was near the
railway station. We helped them. We stayed about
20 or 30 days in India to make this process to
come here. We sold all our property; tell our
parents to sell it. And we collect some money.
India is not our home land, and we can
meet some Maoist even in
India, because they have
good connections.
So it is also not
so secure. For
that we make
the decision
to come to
Europe
…

There are times when the only means for a person to constitute themselves as a po-litical agent is by moving within, between and across borders. When Shiva reaches Europe, he discovers soon that its borders rise higher for people coming from other parts of the world (cf. Balibar 1991). The sense of the international is produced at the border, but at the same time that sense is also contested and alternative senses are exposed. In other words, the border defines both a particular political reality and multiple political possibilities. The limit of meaning lies at the border, which is revealed to be as much a site of inscription as a site of exscription. In ac-cordance with this line of thought, Shiva's moves between countries articulate a choreography, which counters topographical mappings and politics (cf. Pehkonen 2007; Pehkonen & Puumala 2008; Puumala & Pehkonen 2010; also Olsson 2007; Parviainen 2010).

The moving body articulates various "relationscapes" (Manning 2009) that arise from the organisation of the modern international with sovereignty as its found-ing element. This body opens the door to a different set of actions, which have the potential of restructuring (inter)national imaginaries (cf. Tyler 2006: 192). Shiva's moves enable the examination of political life at those sites where the modern po-litical imagination has come to think that hardly anything – apart from routine-like border formalities – happens (see Walker 2006b: 57). The border is, however, an extremely active site as we are about to find out, when Shiva and his wife reach Lithuania:

>   ...using our relatives' passport. We   came
>   as a student, but we managed everything with them already,
> for we contacted some Lithuanian colleague in Nepal. There nobody
> knows that well where is the country in the world called Lithuania. In India
> they have the connection to the school, and they pay a very huge amount, the
>   college fee, and so I came to Lithuania as a student. The level of education is
>   very different, so I came to complete my Bachelor's degree. And we came only to
>   stay like for the time being. We paid for our trip 6.500 euros. But the man did not
>   pay the college fee. So when we came after two, after three months the college told
>   me that we have to pay the balance amount, and I told I already paid and they said
>   there is nothing paid for one year, or for six months and this is not true. And we'd
>   have   to pay the balance money in two months. If we could not
>   manage it, we'd be sent back. It was around four
>   thousand euros. And they will send me back
>   into the migration office and they will take us
>   back to Nepal. And for this reason, we take the
>   time one month. We try to convince   our
>   parents to sell their property,   but we
>   couldn't get four thousand
>   euros.

Shiva: So, safe life means if you can walk freely, if you have the right to express your opinion freely. Now, if you do not feel the pressure of anybody else, if you do not feel the pressure that you might be killed or somebody may take for example your money. Now you can say, freedom to move and freedom to express your opinion, is safety.

Ultimately Shiva's movement, or what his moves actualise, is a narrative of the modern international: where its boundaries are located, how its relations function and are put into operation (see Walker 2006a; b). The body of the failed asylum seeker – a B permit holder or a detainee – articulates a different ontology, which questions the basis on which people can make claims in relation to societies and political communities. Listening to Shiva's account and following his wandering body between states makes it obvious that security comes in many forms and that safety for some means insecurity for others. Borders are not simply a set of policies or governmental practices, they are carnal sites in which certain political and socio-economic relations are enforced and in which desire, fear, hope and desperation intertwine (see Walters 2006: 150). In fact the moving body undermines the whole rationale of a bounded and sovereign political community. The difference between a desirable and undesirable body becomes inscribed in the flesh.

                                             So we
                                                    went to Austria to take
                                 asy   lum. And in Austria we saw
                         whatever the documents that is … for us, and
                            they say that Lithuania is your first country to take
                         asylum, so you must take asylum in Lithuania. In Austria,
                         when I go to Austria, I came to know that there is a new law.
                             That where you come first, you should take asylum there.
                                 So they didn't give me the asylum. They did not lis-
                         ten to my   problem at all. Because they say, it's not our
res   ponsi   bility to give you asylum here. We don't want to run your case over
 here.   We would go to Austria with the same passport and we buy the air tickets and we
go, we travel by airplane, we came by airplane, we buy the ticket, the transit, and we come
    to the airport and   the policemen and the immigration are there to
             lis   ten our problems.

Shiva: There are many people who want to come to Europe without any reason. Or, you can say, that are not eligible for taking asylum. And it is hampering the people who really need the help. Or protection. [...] Now they say it's [his situation] because of the Dublin Convention. Now, maybe this is true for the country. Because there are background, because you have people who don't have problems. [...] And I think this is the main reason why they say that the first country where you entered to take asylum. This may be the reason. But it sometimes create a problem, like for me.

Shiva's moves materialise the Foucauldian statement "where there is power, there is resistance" or rather "where there is resistance, there is power" (see Foucault 1978; Abu-Lughod 1989). The act of crossing a border, sometimes even arriving to the space of the border (e.g. airports, transfer zones), can annihilate one's identity and make one a susceptible body without identity in the eyes of the receiving state (cf. Nast & Pile 1998). The country's 'truth' and the person's 'truth' – their bodily know-how – are two different things in Shiva's account. In his story, 'the political' is reflected in the body creating and being involved in a mobile network of relations. Hence, the body is capable of actively seeking alternatives and gesturing towards an internationalisation of every body, from 'below'. After being rejected in Austria, Shiva and his wife return to Lithuania.

...and we demand for asylum. But   they
    say, at the Immigration office, they say once you had al-
 ready applied in Austria, you cannot take asylum here, so you lose the
 right to take asylum here. So they make the decision to send back to Nepal
after we the visa is killed. And so we request them to give us one month's time,
 and we try always to pay the fee. Otherwise you can send us back. They say, no,
  you don't have this right also. When they make the decision, they give the decision
   paper to us and we say all the problems why we cannot go back to Nepal. They call
   the police director, and they say that we must pay within one months, and in this way
    they leave. And then we try to collect the money from our parents and they were not able
     to send money. So, with the help of some, you can say, friends we got three-four
        hundred euros and came here to take asylum here [in Finland]. And in
       Lit   huania, me and my wife, they ask us to write a petition
                 to the name of the Migration department, to the
              Migration office in Lithuania about asylum case
              and that I am citizen of Nepal declare that I will
               not take any asylum in Lithuania or apply asylum
                in Lithuania. And they make us signature.
                 And if they send us back, we have al-
                  ready declared, they asked us to
                   write that we don't take
                        asylum.

No state that Shiva and his wife entered was willing to examine whether they were actually in need of protection. Instead, the prime concern of the representatives of these states was locating the state to which his case administratively 'belonged' and shifting the burden of the asylum process there. When viewed through a sensuous perspective, Shiva's movement gives shape to a body that understands itself as international and possesses agency within its spheres. Shiva and his wife are in fact negotiating with more than one sovereign on the potential of their bodies. Their movement raises an awareness of an international more physical and sensuous than what political programs and documents – such as the international and European treaties that govern asylum seeking – suggest.

Shiva's movement is a response to sovereign politics that regards community as a project. It is a form of resistance in the sense that the body refuses to accept a particular collective form of life and instead articulates political life that transcends statist boundaries. Shiva's movement, however, articulates also a sense of disorientation and dislocation: a being-here at a time when one would rather be elsewhere (cf. Curtis & Pajaczkowska 1994).

Continuous movement, when viewed from a Nancian perspective, is a refusal to conform to the practice and function of the border. Movement is a form of the corporeal struggle that the body takes on so as to represent itself – to intensify its presence with regard to others. It is a carnal and sensual way of acting politically, or rather, a way of enacting 'the political'.

Yet, there is scant romance in movement as resistance (cf. Abu-Lughod 1989). Seeking asylum is constant struggle and awareness of always being on the verge of movement. Movement, in fact, enacts the possibility, which the body is (Sartre 1984: 403, cited in Noland 2009: 204). The moving body is capable of transforming and appropriating political space and presenting nuanced interpretations of it (also Piece III). The border is not only a separating element, but also a point of connection and a space for transformation.

So,
when I came
to Finland and
the police asked
why   I came to Fin-
land   actually, why
not   another country,
this is the main reason: because
Finland is a good friend of
Nepal. The Finnish govern-
ment has given about 192
million rupees, to help the
peace process in Nepal. In this
way, Finland is best friend of
Nepal. And, for me, I hope
they consider our problem.
Now I'm here… humble
minds. First of all, they say
I don't have identity. So they
are accusing me of misidentifi-
cation. Now they are telling
that they had got my identity,
but they want to send me
back to Lithuania,
because it's the first
European country that I
entered. But they are giving
this decision that my wife can
stay here. They are making sepa-
ration. I'm quite dissatisfied be-
cause we came here together, me and
my wife. Now we sought asylum to-
gether. But the police made the decision
that she can stay here, but I have to go back.
There is disparity, in my opinion. Why you try to
separate us? And another thing, the lawyer give us the
reason that if I go back, no problem, because later I can
come. ... It is impossible to come here from Nepal. I
spent 6.500 euros, and I don't have anything else now.
If I can come later, why can't I stay now? She is
under aged and they cannot deport her. I don't
know, they do not tell clearly. Even when you
ask the reason. I came to know from [my wife]
I don't want to give the name, but some
people they have advised to give a divorce
to me, also. Now my main worry that if
they send me and my wife back to Lit-
huania, because yesterday I talked
to my wife, she don't want
to stay here alone.

...

As a whole Shiva's account of his movement signals a crossing, which is the fundamental sense of experience "as the chance of an *arrival* upon some other shore, close to another proximity" (Nancy 2004b: 50, italics orig.). The condition of the failed asylum seeker is about movement and oscillation between here and there, past and present – no-w-here (cf. Manning 2007: 2). Movement is not simply dislocatory or displacing, but it connects bodies to other bodies (see Ahmed 2004: 11). In dislocating fixed notions of the 'communal', the failed asylum seekers expose the slippery social structures on which political life has been constructed and on which we all stand. The thought of membership of a society as a secure ground from which we can articulate our political existence with a firm foothold is nothing but an illusion that might one day be there and the next day be gone[58]. Ultimately we are all equally vulnerable.

After hearing Shiva's story and considering his movement as an articulation of space, it is painstakingly obvious that the international and the world, as I argued already in Piece I and many times after that, are not synonymous. Equating the two concepts puts the international beyond political consideration and naturalises the spatiotemporal spectre according to which the state or the system of states seek to orchestrate bodily movement. It is clear that Shiva's body falls victim to the exclusionary logic of sovereignty, but yet it manages to articulate a different ontology of the international. An engagement with Shiva's moves turns the question of 'otherness' from a problem of containment into an ontological and ethical exploration into the possibilities of political life within and between bodies variously positioned within the international. Such a claim is possible because at heart Shiva's story emphasises the exchange that in movement comes to take place between bodies and the multiple ways in which bodies resonate to/with one another. This resonance turns the sensing body into a limit through which meaning takes form and travels; the border loses its grip in monopolising the sphere of the international. This thought merits some further examination.

In the first pages of this collage I mentioned that the 'crisis' of our political imagination is the body. I will now seize the opportunity to return to that thought through Shiva's moves. His movement, in fact, actualises one of the greatest fears among nation-states, namely that they lose 'control' of their borders. Yet, this same movement actually highlights that the supposed difference is *not* a difference, the separation between bodies is arbitrary and at best precarious. Indeed, Shiva's account illustrates that the border is always already out of control, because no border

---

[58] This approach is close to a nomadological one, which implies an understanding of movement that goes nowhere for no reason. Muldoon (2001: 49–50) states that with no authentic core of human experience resistance can, then, only be an idle pursuit, a pointless alternation between different voices, which builds on "the uncertain pleasure of movement itself". My approach, however, stems from a different philosophical position, where ideas of togetherness and relationality give rise to a different analytical frame.

can be controlled nor people's movement successfully contained. As movement questions "the immanence of nationhood and those discourses that are evoked and maintained to legitimise it" (Van Den Abbeele 1997: 15), the moving body actually exposes the existence of a nation as a-real, without foundation[59]. According to Van Den Abbeele (1997: 16), the arealisation of the nation leaves it exposed on the limit between a variety of differences. Thus, contrary to Agamben's thought where sovereign power turns the human body into bare life, Nancy's philosophy makes sovereignty vulnerable to the body, which in its movement is always beyond practices of control. So, whilst it is true that the effects of international borders place people between or within state territories (e.g. Haddad 2008: 113; Nevins 2008: 27, 78), and therefore asylum seekers are an inevitable consequence of those borders (e.g. Doty 1999: 597), people's bodily movement nevertheless lays bare the impossibility of separating out the real, areal and a-real senses of the international (cf. also Puumala & Pehkonen 2010: 62). Reality, necessity and possibility intertwine in the political vision of the world that is built on the system of states and, as became clear from Shiva's story, the relation between the three is not stable.

4.3.2.   Spacing the sensing body

The body, for Nancy, is the site or place where sense and meaning take place. The world of bodies is a world, in which bodies "initially articulate space" (Nancy 2008: 27). In Nancian thought the world is a 'tension of place' where space is in bodies. But the body is neither to be understood as being constructed within discourse or within a social symbolic order, nor as the material and physiological object of medical science. The body discloses existence in an interrelation between discourse and matter. The corporeal, hence, represents an event at the limit of sense, an opening or spacing of discrete places, i.e. the failed asylum seeker's body represents a rupturing or fracturing of the international (See James 2006: 131.)

With such a perspective on the body, I will now take up the failed asylum seekers' bodies as sites of contestation that seek to withdraw from and exceed the attempts to control the possibilities for political expression. Can the moving and gesturing body, then, seek to understand something about the very gesture that the movement is, the political environment this movement creates and affects, and the capacities and limits of the body concerned (see Noland 2009: 106)? In case voice cannot adequately communicate one's feelings or thoughts, the body can through movement or gestures seek to resist and contest, but also understand the

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[59] The concept of areality (aréalité) arises from Nancy's thought. It signifies the nature of an 'area', but it also serves to suggest a lack of reality, or perhaps more accurately a suspended reality. This reality is one of localising the body, a displacement within the body or a faint reality of 'ground'. (Nancy 2008: 43.)

political dynamics at work. Movement does not necessarily signal a conscious effort towards a goal, but it is a political and relational gesture in itself. It spaces the body, which then moves to fill the space with alternative meanings; the body exscribes and exposes itself in a different light. A political engagement with movement requires us to change the rhythm of our own thought. Sometimes this change of rhythm is nothing more than a tweak of focus.

In the section 4.1.1. the 'zone' was defined as a space of isolation or distinction, but it is also a space of contact (see Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 210). I will use Benaz's moves to articulate a shift from politics as something that takes place in a delineated space to the body as a space that unfolds political life. The point of departure for the following discussion is Squire's (2009: 72) notion that even if securitising moves and exclusionary politics lacked continuity, they can have political effect and limit the scope of contestation. I will develop a counter-argument to that notion and claim that the body's agentive moves and gestures do not have to be continuous or even intentional to have political significance. Indeed, Benaz exposes multiple forms of political engagement as his body's creativity in enacting itself politically looks for alternative expressions. Another lengthy journey based on my fieldwork will thus follow, but it is a journey that accurately plays with relationalities and points of contact between bodies.

> Benaz is a journalist by training. While in Finland he has written a book on "how having black hair affects you negatively here: I look outside and see the other building where similar people to myself are living in their own flats where they have their own showers and bathrooms. And then I think about myself and us living here in this centre. Why do we have to share the shower with 15–16 other people? Why can't we have the same life as Finns? Couldn't more foreigners fit into Finland?" He explains that when he meets with the staff, who tell him [to do] something, he smiles, but inside he is extremely angry. He would like to shout. Benaz describes the thing that he finds especially upsetting: "I take showers, and I clean my room. And then they [the staff] come to my room [there are regular room checks in the centre], put on rubber gloves to protect themselves and start sorting through my rubbish. I am clean, why do they put those gloves on?" Benaz tells that he cannot get into bars, because they ask for his ID. He has only the resident's card from the centre. It is not an official document, and hence most places do not accept it. "Then they ask me to leave. People here do not want to touch you because of your hair or skin colour," he adds.
>
> (Field notes, August 24th 2006)

During our discussion Benaz often elevated his voice and gestured wildly making his frustration and anger obvious. Yet, instead of suggesting that the story is indicative of a newly developed awareness of the restrictions to movement and the possibilities of action, I would like to claim that Benaz's gestures and movement indicate him having gained a sense of those forms of power that become operative

when the body is categorised politically (cf. Abu-Lughod 1989: 49). Benaz, hence, does not become suddenly aware of the restrictions placed on his body, but perceives the political power at work in relation to and on the surface of his body. Yet his body is capable of changing its direction, (s)pace, rhythm and choreography. The body unfolds constantly, and in this sense it always outdoes sovereign politics that seeks to fix it firmly on a grid. Benaz's agentive body politic, even though it at times took on even gruesome verbal and corporeal forms (see below in italics), exposed the materiality of every body and also the fleshiness of politics.

> A week after first meeting with Benaz I was informed that during a recent talk with a staff member he had acted in a threatening manner. Soon after his transfer to this centre he was involved in *a knife fight* and caused other disturbance by *lowering his trousers in public*. He is also suspected of *setting off two false fire alarms* in the centre. When the staff has took these things up with him, Benaz claimed that he was a bohemian character. He then told that if the staff tried to restrict him, he had a knife in his room and he might *kill himself*, but wanted *his eyes to be sent back to his home country*. Or, then he might get his knife and *slit somebody's throat and take the head with him back to his room*. Heidi, a counsellor, tells that Benaz can be stable and friendly, but in a couple of hours he might come to the office and start *miaowing like a cat* there. The staff considers him to be unpredictable, and they are not quite certain about the state of his mental health.
>
> Immediately after my talk with Heidi, I run into Benaz in the lobby. He is talking in his mobile, but hangs up in order to greet me. I tell him that I now have the information for him concerning his publishing prospects in Finland. He promises to wait for me in the lobby while I go and get my papers from the office. When I return Benaz is sitting on a sofa. We shake hands. I take a seat on the other sofa facing him, but soon move next to him as I try to explain his publishing possibilities in Finland from my papers. He seems to be interested and grateful. I have a hard time relating those things that I have just heard with this person. Undoubtedly some characteristics are there, but I am not sure whether there is something 'wrong' with his mental health or if he is just lashing out his frustrations with the help of his imagination and his wild visions/ideas. Are his just different strategies for survival and taking/claiming space in the exceptional space of the centre?
>
> (Field notes, 1st September 2006)

In my interpretation Benaz's hostility to the practices of surveillance, control of movement and requirements to behave in a particular manner exhibits resistance. However, I do not intend to suggest that the kind of action to which he resorts, threatening or assaulting others, is in any way laudable or justified. My key claim, in fact, does not concern Benaz's acts in themselves at all. Rather, I take his behaviour that happens in wanton disregard of the regulative ambitions and the disrupting effects of that behaviour to illustrate a protest against the rationale that has debased him and views his presence and body strictly in terms of a political order, which he himself is not ready to accept. Benaz's agency and gestures thus may

arise prior to cognition, from a sense of dislocation that the loss of control causes. As the failed asylum seekers contest, resist, and interrupt the working of disciplinary mechanisms through their irregular movements, they keep their potential for politics open. Moreover, their movement reveals the centre as one place where the struggle between politics and the agentive body culminates on a daily basis. In terms of the dialectics between movement, the political and the international such a view suggests that movement is characteristic and constitutive of the relations between bodies, communities and worlds (see Manning 2007: 132; 2009).

A protest does not have to be explicit in its expression, and still it can be understood as resistance to a particular spatial organisation of political community[60]. When put alongside mass protests or social movements, the body's corporeal resistance and its acts of exscription are perhaps less romantic or heroic. Because of their ambiguity and multiplicity, however, the singular body's ways of political expression are all the more disturbing for those who witness them. Through a minor defiance, a reach toward or a move beyond the body discloses existence in ways that displace or rupture the spatial frame within which our political existence is supposed to occur. Consider, for instance, Benaz's miaowing: the act caused consternation and made the reception centre staff powerless in the face of his protest. They did not know how to read and react to this behaviour. Through his body Benaz momentarily dissolved the separation between people, exposed the limit of the sovereign subject and the relationality between various political subjectivities.

The contradictory forms of resistance, contestation and transformation address the notions and corporeality of politics. They mark the international, sensing body and political community coming into existence and gaining meaning only with and in relation to one another (cf. Van Wolputte 2004: 258). Resulting from this, also the researcher's body becomes explicitly entangled in the webs of sovereign power. Thus, whilst the centre was a 'natural' place for me to meet with the research participants, it was also a site of control with certain expectations of my presence. As mentioned, my fieldwork consisted of more than formal interviews: it involved also informal chats that took place in the lobby and the corridors – as with Benaz. But hushed conversations in order to guarantee at least some privacy did not match the staff's idea of the kind of fieldwork I was permitted to do in the centre. Therefore, also my body and the relations I developed turned into subjects of surveillance. In the end I found out that the staff's concern was not just about me

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[60] In my interview with the director and counsellor of the detention unit (interview 8) I was told about some detainees cutting themselves, which was interpreted as an effort to postpone the inevitable and not as a 'real' suicide attempt (cf. Piece V). Another way of postponing deportation is to exhibit aggressive behaviour in the aircraft, e.g. kicking the seat in front of you, yelling or screaming. This is usually enough to cause the pilot to forbid the travel of the person and the accompanying police officer.

and my position but also about the potential results of my presence:

> When I get back to the office after finishing an interview, Heidi asks to talk with me. We go into the room which is used in the meetings between residents and their lawyers. There Heidi voices her concern. She explains that because I don't have experience of this kind of work [work in the reception centre], 'they' are now a bit worried that my sample or group of interviewees doesn't represent the whole very well. In other words, they are worried that the material I collect will be biased because certain people (Soran and Benaz mentioned by name) seek contact with me. In addition Heidi reproaches me for confusing the 'clientele' with my research practices. I ask where the concern stems from and whether any residents have said so themselves, but she merely contends that this is how the staff feels.
>
> (Field notes, 26th September 2006)

To a great extent, Heidi's latter concern sprang from a methodological choice I had made: the use of visual ethnography. I wished to explore and use it as a tool and an ethical guideline to address the relation between the researcher and the research participant by reversing their positions in terms of knowledge production. The experiment was short-lived, because of the concern presented that it might compromise the anonymity of both those working there and the (failed) asylum seekers living in the centre. In order not to make my stay in the centre impossible, I sensed I had no choice but to conform to this view, discard visuality and settle for a written form of ethnography (making the work at hand a verbal collage). However, in a different light, Heidi's concern was about me disrupting the order of the centre. The other major source of concern was to do with my connections with the 'wrong' people. Whilst Heidi mentioned Soran and Benaz by name, they were not the problem as such. What worried her were the relations that evolved and began to unfold between me and them during our talks, and the encouragement that the staff felt that Soran and Benaz got for their actions through my attention.

What I encountered, or what my field strategy and contact with Benaz and Soran made me encounter, was the reactive nature of sovereign politics and its project, the state. This politics will never arrive at its scope, because the body's movements and the political relations that take shape through those movements expose that sovereignty as a form of authority is without a firm foundation; it is a-real (see Nancy 2000: 36). When a relation starts evolving between a citizen-body as an ideal 'design' of political belonging and the asylum-body as deviant from this norm, the surveillance and disciplining efforts of sovereign power extend to control this relation and the possible forms that it might take[61]. This stance spaces political agency as a corporeal-relational articulation of with-being. Thus, it is not adequate to conceptualise political agency in terms of self-empowerment,

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[61] On the relation between design and citizenship and the politics involved in designing (safe) citizens see Weber 2008.

self-worth, self-emancipation or resistance (cf. Muldoon 2001: 38). Surely, all of these dimensions can be present in bodies expressing themselves politically, but concentrating on one body alone or even a collective body formed through the idea of 'common-being' is never enough.

Like with Benaz, the body's experiences are outcomes of involvement in diverse, potentially changing activities and institutions (cf. Solis 2004: 197). The failed asylum seekers' moves and gestures are perhaps best conceptualised as passages, that is as movements-to, which open space and construct it as meaningful, intelligible and experiencable thus representing the relationality of our existence (see Nancy 2003b: 8; cf. also Soguk 2005: 433). In other words, gestures and movement are aesthetic and political stances, which contest and exceed the ideas and practices "associated with the singular, the original, the uniform, the central authority, the hierarchy" (Benterrak *et al.* 1984: 15, cited in Muldoon 2001: 46). Benaz's unpredictability is a subversion of the body allegedly 'known' and placed within the Finnish political order. His acts are not only gestures and moves that try to do the impossible, but interventions into the social reality in Finland. These interventions change the coordinates of what is perceived to be possible in the first place (see Žižek 2000: 671–672). Indeed, the body can redefine what counts as political and what is the space of politics. This is possible just because it can opt out of moving in synchrony with practices of surveillance and the sovereign logic of inside/outside.

Unlike with voiced claims when the demands that failed asylum seekers present can be ignored, the gestures and moves of the agentive body force a response (also Piece II: section 2.3.2.). At any given moment failed asylum seekers are capable of disrupting the smooth and frictionless functioning of the sovereign logic and disclosing togetherness between bodies. Thus, their agentive body politic gestures a relational understanding of politics and further frames the international as a web of relations and corporeal conjunctures as has already been pointed out a number of times in my work. Seemingly minute acts are extremely powerful in indicating some of the foundational problems of the modern conceptions of politics. The politics of borders never defeats the body or its movement, but instead the body constantly pushes through, evades, resonates to and withdraws from this politics and renders it incomplete.

The Nancian politics that begins and ends with bodies, is a politics of touch and potential, senses and meanings. It is relational, unfolding and open. It is unstable in the sense that it cannot be written onto agendas or formulated into dogmas, like the projects of sovereign politics, which give certain stable bodies a voice (see Manning 2007: 31). The presence of the failed asylum seeker's body no-w-here demands that our citizen selves are exposed to the touch of a body that moves according to a different tune.

4.4.   The fluidity of political space

As this Piece has argued, the failed asylum seekers' movements make evident that a conception of political identities in terms of either particularism or universalism is burdened with discrepancies and ambiguities (cf. Walker 2009: 20–21; Inayatullah & Blaney 2004: 44). I suggested tweaking the focus of interpretation and thinking differently about political space. Such a focus means not founding our thought of political community on either the state or the system of states. So, while the practices of the border exceed the territorial boundaries of the state, the same applies to the experiences that arise from these practices. Whether we, then, address the arrival or the deportation of the asylum seeker, movement must be understood to engender a much more complex spatial spectre than the logic of rigid lines suggests (cf. Walters 2006: 153).

For Nancy, politics is a matter of thinking in terms of the interval between the common and the political (see Wagner 2006: 102). As this Piece has sought to illustrate, instead of focusing on identity, the politics of nation-building or the destiny of the 'common', the interval puts 'politics' – also that practiced by the body – in charge of space and spacing. Politics becomes the site of an articulation of non-unity and detotalisation. A Nancian understanding of politics represents the distance between and incommensurability of the figurations of the 'common' and the ontological condition of being-with. In line with this incommensurability, the Piece has suggested that the label 'failed asylum seeker' is intelligible only in relation to a certain political project, its operations, reconstructions and reinstitutions on a daily basis. And yet, the multiple, ambiguous and contradictory corporealities and life strategies that mix constantly, testify to the shortcomings of the "border's capture" (Soguk 2007).

Instead of simply pointing out the deficiencies in the logic of inside/outside, I have sketched an alternative approach on movement as a form of bodily exposure that is capable of rearticulating political space. In its own way this Piece has critically reflected on the question of spatialised identities and sought to provide an answer to what being many might mean in terms of the international. The exploration exposed political agency, resistance and engagement as matters of co-existence between two or more bodies. Movement, then, not only articulates the consequences of those bodily spaces that divisive governmental practices in asylum politics create, but it also exposes the body as always being-towards other bodies in a multitude of different ways, fleetingly:

> Benjamin: I teach white people, but I have never been to Europe before. [...] I ran to Accra that very night, and told my uncle that this is what is happening. And he is a businessman, so he said that he can't keep me there, because he is afraid about his doing and everything. So he will have to try and abscond me out from the country. [...] My uncle

told me that I should follow this man, so [...] he [the man] took me to Ethiopia and there the man give me the passport. [...][He] asked about my case and we booked the ticket. And he told me that this is what I'm heading towards, and I'm going to Finland. I said "Finland?" Because I've never heard anything about Scandinavia before. I know Holland, Germany, but [...] And all of the sudden he told me that as soon as I arrive, I have to send the passport back to him. So I told him: "once I don't know anybody, how do I manage to do such a thing?" [...] I came to Finland, I don't know anybody. [But] it goes so good, [with the passport] because that guy that I met in the flight, because we met in Russia, and he was also coming to Finland. So, I talked to him and he told me that he is also a Muslim, so that trust that I have for him and I told him that I should do so [to send the passport back]. So I even asked that man [to do it for me], I don't know, [if] he have sent, he haven't sent. I don't know. And since that time, I have never seen him or talked [to him]. But I have trust in him that, the way he spoke to me, and sent me to this place [the reception centre], I owe my life [to him]. I'm sure that he did such a thing for me. So that is the trust that I have in him. To do such a thing. [...] He even drive me [to the reception centre] because his friend was coming to meet him to take him to-o Kotka. So he said: "ok then, let's go. I show you that place".

(Interview with Benjamin, June 2007)

Benjamin's account illustrates well that, in the end, there is no singular form or way of being-in-common. The togetherness suggested by the ontology of the body does not have to be a long-lasting commitment, or be based on 'knowing' the other person. Rather, as Benjamin's words point out, being-in-common is about bodies' movement towards one another, but them being always on the verge of movement that physically separates them. Being-in-common does not signal physical immediacy. It is, in fact, *an ethical commitment* without moral superiority. It is responsibility – or better yet "response-ability" (Sullivan 2001: 103) – for others, which can take multiple forms and give a plethora of different shapes to international relations and politics. In the Nancian ontology bodies are all "sliding, opened, spread out, grafted, exchanged" (Nancy 2008: 107).

With various means, this Piece has suggested that the politico-corporeal struggle of failed asylum concerns the possibilities of becoming (cf. Biddle 2001: 188; Tate 2001). This struggle signals sensing the international as always open and in its happening yet to happen. Thus, failed asylum seekers corporealise the Nancian politics beginning and ending with bodies. In this politics the body as a limit moves but never acquiesces to the limits it encounters. The limiting status – similar to what Nevzat Soguk (2007: 285) addresses as the unfolding of the border "in time, across place and space in form and content" – constrains movements of the body, which yet seek alternative forms of appearance in the face of the prevailing limits. This reflects a politics where the body, although subjected to governmental practices, opens the possibility for a controversial politics. Nancy (2008: 15) defines this process or quality of the body as "local being", where local does not refer to a particular place, but to the unfolding of the world on the body in the sense of

local colour.

In this Piece it has been also argued that for failed asylum seekers the formal channels of political representation are not available, so informal and expressive forms of resistance and engagement are important aspects of political agency (see Ross 2010: 124). The failed body is not given the possibilities available to citizens and residents to stop, pause, root or speak from/of place. Instead, the failed asylum seekers enact movement as a form of engagement and as an ability to speak out of place. This movement exposes togetherness and articulates bodily points of contact. By coming close to others, the failed asylum seeker's body presents a demand for reciprocity in action and thought. The possibility for transformative politics is then already embedded in the sovereign efforts to capture and limit, which cause the body to expose itself, to place itself outside itself and in front of other bodies. This is how Nancy's thought of sovereignty as the 'nothing' of the 'with' that is laid bare materialises within IR. A re-imagination of political life through Nancy's philosophy would, actually, be a fruitful starting point for thinking of difference in terms of postnational and yet political space. Indeed, a focus on movement reveals that the international as a political project will always remain incomplete as the failed asylum seekers constantly exceed its scope. Ultimately, their agentive body politic is a commentary on 'commonness' that this logic seeks to impose as a basis for political community.

The thurst of the argument in this Piece allows one important conclusion to be made: the border is not where it is supposed to be. Resulting from that, also another conclusion is possible: the body is not where and what the border practices suppose it to be. Engaging the politics of the international with the challenge that bodily movement presents, hence, exposes complex choreographies and corporeal cartographies. Because it is ultimately nothing more or less than a political idea, the international can be everywhere and anywhere. Just like the moving body. Wherever they are, they remain only briefly. But where there is one, there is also the other; perhaps not easily visible, most certainly not always the same, but still involved in a complex constellation of political relations with other bodies.

Episode 5

Facing pain and suffering

On 3rd August 2004 Abdi's life was to take a turn for the better; he had reached Finland. The trip had lasted a month. His pregnant wife and children were left behind in Mogadishu. His asylum application signalled a possibility for the whole family – a new life in Finland. However, some nine months later, 9th May 2005, Abdi's dreams were crushed as he received a temporary residence permit with no prospectives of family reunification. Instead, receiving the permit brought about a sense of his subjectivity to deportation. The irony is that at the time Abdi arrived, the B permit did not exist. It was introduced later in 2004, and he was among the first to receive it.

Abdi looks older than his age, with heavy shades of grey in his hair and beard. He left Somalia to escape the civil war, but after that he was left in limbo. According to him "the B is not a life; not a good life". For him, the change of life has been total as back home Abdi was an educated man with a house of his own and a good job.

Since his arrival in Finland, he has lived in a reception centre. There Abdi also began to suffer from insomnia, depression and other stress-related illnesses. The scars on his legs and stomach reminded him of Somalia, of the beatings that he suffered from early 91 till the late 90s. They also reminded him of the situation in which he left his family. All this exacerbated his mental condition and he was prescribed anti-depressants and sleeping pills to cope with his pain. As the medication did not seem to help, he started to consume alcohol in rather large quantities. Then Abdi got bad news from his family. His eldest son had been killed as the result of a shooting, his daughter had been raped and was pregnant with an 'illegitimate' child and the family had lost their house and been forced to flee the city.

After his son's death and the loss of their home in Mogadishu, Abdi's family needed money and was counting on Abdi sending it to them. He had been sending monthly all he could afford from his social allowance, but this time the sum was too big. Consequently, Abdi had to resort to the Somali community in Finland to lend him a couple of hundred Euros. Abdi's pride was hurt when he had to rely on his countrymen to help his family; a duty that he considered his own, but one he could not fulfil. This made him feel that he can never return to his family.

As Abdi's situation with his B status and his complaint to the administrative court dragged on, he started losing even that little hope he had left. The uncertainty, prolonged

waiting and his perceived shameful situation in relation to his family and their expectations of him, which he could not meet had all begun to weigh on him heavily. His permit was about to expire in a few months' time, and nobody knew what was going to happen after that. Would he be deported? Would he receive yet another B? The future seemed to disappear from his grasp. So, Abdi took a handful of pills and flushed them down with alcohol, gathered all the blankets and textiles from his room into one big pile and set it on fire.

He was saved at the last minute.

(Interviews with Abdi, August 2006)

The interviews and fieldwork that lie behind Abdi's story made me realise that in many cases the price of survival was shame (also Bohmer & Shuman 2007: 625). Along with other distressing factors, negative emotions and affects, the shame that Abdi experienced led him to resort to self-harm and to attempt suicide. When I first started my ethnographic exploration, I was not prepared for the asylum seeking body in its corporeal and carnal politics to come so close to mine. It seemed too harsh and unbearable for me to think and write about stories such as Abdi's. For a long time, I did not think I could personally face and cope with the amount of pain and suffering that had begun to surface. Furthermore, I felt that writing about these vulnerabilities might easily cite the failed asylum seekers as mere victims of sovereign politics and reify their trauma and suffering.

> In the bus I continue reading Caroline Moorehead's book *Human Cargo*. The chapter is about the Australian policy of mandatory detention and the conditions that asylum seekers live in. It tells about their anxieties and behaviour caused by mental distress and trauma. I read about self-inflicted violence and pain. I think about the couple sewing their lips together in the centre, the abuse of medicine, the suicide attempts, and Soran burning the back of his hand with a cigarette. He did this not long before he was determined to leave Finland (see Piece III: section 3.4.1.). When I asked why he had done such a thing, his simple answer was "*because I felt like it*". I read on, feeling nauseous. The feeling of emptiness that has accompanied me in the field comes back to haunt me. Moorehead's book tells about a person who has similarly burnt his hand with a lighted cigarette. His answer to the question "why" had been "because I can't feel anything".
>
> (Research diary, 31st January 2007)

In time I realised that I had to find a way to relate to acts of self-harm, because they clearly were part of the everyday experience of being a failed asylum seeker. But how was I to make sense of the scars and of the immense emotional distress I had come to witness? How to approach the stories of self-harm and suffering? The books and articles I read related self-harm, pain and suffering with the release of pain from within. In this literature self-harm was explained through medicine or psychology, but its embeddedness in political conditions was not systemati-

cally explored (see Grimwood 2004: 67, 69; cf Pugliese 2002, 2004). A pressing question started haunting me: Could the failed asylum seekers' scars, wounds, emotional suffering and the various practices of self-harm be concieved without endorsing the narratives of victimization and without adopting a foundationalist politics (cf. White 2007)?

When I started to go through my notes, after several months of not being able to read, reminisce or consciously ponder the interviews, certain events, notes and sub-tones caught my attention. I realised that self-harm and the apparent lack of agency could perhaps meet most forcefully the philosophical challenge the failed asylum seeker was representing. Could self-inflicted violence and emotional distress be indicative of the Nancian body politic and of 'being-with' as our shared ontological condition? Could acts of self-harm evoke the sense that we compear?

Ultimately, stories such as Abdi's that addressed extreme vulnerability and distress made me want to move beyond the label. It became imperative to explore further what the limits of 'the political' were as well as to stretch my own understanding of political expression and engagement. Therefore the subsequent, and last, thematic Piece became my attempt to conceive of the Nancian idea of 'togetherness' as something that cannot be named or made present through words.

Piece V

Acts of corporeal poetics

In this Piece my focus on and reading of the body are of a nature that IR has remained silent on, or expounded in a very different manner. I will investigate the consequences of applying Nancy's thinking on shared finitude, as an important element of his ontology, to the possibilities and expressions of political life within IR. Paraphrasing Stephen Chan (2003b), this Piece will, then, consider why IR should take account of the self-harming and melancholic body and its acts of corporeal poetics (see also Acharya 2011: 633–636).

Albeit Nancy's treatment of sense (*sens*) has already been touched upon in the two preceding Pieces, one last task remains. It is imperative that I connect with mortal flesh in order to expose the thing that is shared by each and every one of us: "a potentiality for death" (see James 2006: 121)[62]. This potentiality is inassimilable to the logic of a subject, and the community it articulates cannot be reduced to any principle of identity or communal existence (James 2006: 181; also Nancy 2004a: 15). It denotes shared finitude and, therefore, through the potentiality for death our being-in-common materialises with most force. At stake in this Piece, then, is the most profound challenge that the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic presents to our thought about the possibilities and manifestations of political life.

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[62] Chan (2003b) has challenged the closure of history within IR by engaging with Paul Ricoeur's "ontology of the suffering subject". Ricoeurian hermeneutics has points of connection with my approach, as Ricoeur's thought would also enable thinking about "oneself as another", places emphasis on embodiment and regards death as the ultimate point of connection and separation – we all die alone, but yet everyone dies. Nevertheless, his philosophy is bound by the notion of the subject. (Also Watkins 2009: 76–105.) Indeed, as mentioned several times before, Nancy's philosophy undermines the whole notion of the subject and, therefore, enables thinking about the community in terms that fundamentally question the entire system of thought from which our notions of the international arise.

The title of this Piece refers to the ways in which the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic both defies and claims our understanding. Poetics, in this context, refers to a sensuous element, which carries with it unexpected ways of elaborating and expressing political life. The "acts of corporeal poetics" (Pugliese 2004) carnate political expression and articulate resistance and protestation against politics fathomed in terms of a project that aspires to create a common-whole into which individuals can merge and out of which their political identities emerge. These acts are events of political existence, instances of the agentive body politic and relational political statements (cf. Nancy 2008: 16–17).

It is nowadays rather commonplace to lament that the philosophical tradition of the West tends to concentrate on speech and language rather than the body (Nancy 2008; also Perpich 2005: 84; James 2006; cf. Van Wolputte 2004: 254; Ahmed & Stacey 2001). However, sense can never be captured linguistically, which for me repeats once again the thought that political life and agency cannot be explored or conceived simply in terms of language or verbal and intentional expression (also Manning 2007: 20; cf. Pugliese 2004: 27).

In relating pain, suffering and the political, this Piece takes its cue from the condition of singular plurality as an inextricable part of political life. Bodily existence and traumatic loss, then, are not irrelevant to IR (see Schick 2010; also Caruth 1996, 2001). Because they articulate community as togetherness that unfolds in the "immediate present" (Junka 2006: 358), the failed asylum seekers' acts of corporeal poetics move the singular-plural body beyond the corpus of the nation (cf. Pugliese 2002). In so doing, these acts expose our thinking to the fact that through our mortal bodies we are all equally exposed to death. This question touches upon the senses and the sensuous forms that the international as a particularly organised frame for political life can assume.

5.1.   The flesh becomes a mirror of politics

Self-harm and bodily mutilation are neither new topics in the social sciences nor are they completely without political interpretation (see e.g. Caruth 1996; Sullivan 2001; Pitts 2003; Brandt 2004)[63]. Although self-inflicted harm is still commonly perceived as a failure of self-discipline, it can also be considered as seizing a part of the biopower invested with the state into one's own hands. A number of studies that offer self-harm a social or political interpretation have envisaged it as 'a voice

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[63] While self-harm has inspired some discussion, the question of political expression in terms of a shared finitude, at least in IR studies, is still virtually non-existent. However, the related questions of grief and trauma have gained prominence within IR and social sciences. See e.g. Scarry 1985, Levi 1989, Edkins 2003, Fanon 2003 and Butler 2004.

on the skin', which may arise when the actual voice has been silenced (McLane 1996); a form of resistance (McAllister 2003); a form of expressing one's identity (Hewitt 1997) and a plea for social recognition (Kilby 2001). Within IR self-harm has been addressed from various perspectives, some with a focus on agency, others on biopolitics or abjective subjectivities (see Edkins 2000; Pugliese 2002; 2004; Edkins & Pin-Fat 2005; Nyers 2008b).

As has been pointed out, within the philosophical framework of the present study material bodies exist in a relation of exteriority to one another. In all its simplicity, this means that two bodies can never occupy the same place and therefore they are able to come into relation or contact with one another[64]. Ultimately the 'taking place' of bodies is a matter of the creation of a shared world, which in turn is a question of community (James 2006: 143; see also Nancy & Connor 1993; Morin 2009: 44–46). In fact, Nancy thinks of community as a space left empty by the withdrawal of a foundation, which would guarantee forms of political organisation or historical becoming (see James 2010: 173; Nancy 2004a). Such a conception of community demands us to think of the political beyond or in excess of those foundations on which it traditionally has relied in IR. Instead, community is recast as the opening of an absence of identity in the spacing of shared finitude. To put it crudely, in coming into contact with others we begin to grasp that there are no substantial and foundational identities and, moreover, that the space between us exposes our existential and bodily vulnerability to one another. For my purposes such a conception of community has two important consequences. Firstly, it precludes the possibility of any overarching identity narratives that would provide the community with either a sense of continuity or a common destiny. Secondly, instead of territorial belonging community comes to signify the taking place of our existence, our coming-into-presence only with others.

The failed asylum seekers' acts of corporeal poetics question the capacity of the modern political community to instantiate itself in terms of the communication or sharing of an essence (cf. James 2010: 178). I take these acts to expose the plurality of finite sense that our current narratives of political life do not account for (cf. Wall 2008). Accordingly, acts of corporeal poetics are radical expressions of the relation between community and the political. In this frame of reference, the international is always prone and exposed to new forms of articulation, which bear the potential for alternative modes of political life to emerge. This is so because in the end the state and thus also the system or community of states are myths without foundation. In order to flesh the argument out in more detail, the first section of this Piece addresses self-harm as an event of the flesh becoming a mirror of politics.

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[64] Nancy denotes this structure with the concept *parts outside parts* (*partes extra partes*), which is central in the spacing of sense.

5.1.1.   *The political sense of self-harm*

Also in the case of asylum seekers the practices of self-harm are often regarded as questions of medical science and mental health (e.g. Keller *et al.* 2003; Steel *et al.* 2004; Gerritsen *et al.* 2006; Bohmer & Shuman 2007; Herlihy & Turner 2007). The uncertainty, unsatisfactory living conditions, lack of privacy and differences of opinion between nationalities that characterise the condition of asylum seekers have been connected with re-traumatisation and various depressive reactions such as aggression, hopelessness, self-destructive behaviour and difficulties in sleeping and concentration (Lukkaroinen 2005; Rauta 2005; Valtiontalouden tarkastusvirasto 2006; Halla 2007; Pirinen 2008; see also Salis Gross 2004: 155). Detention and the temporary residence permit have both been noted as being especially harmful to asylum seekers' mental health (e.g. Keller *et al.* 2003; Valtiontalouden tarkastusvirasto 2006; also Steel *et al.* 2004; interviews 2, 12). In fact, the prevalence of mental health problems amongst asylum seekers causes considerable challenges within the everyday functioning of the Finnish reception centres (Lukkaroinen 2005: 21).

My approach to the question of self-harm among (failed) asylum seekers differs from Pugliese's (2004: 28; cf. Hewitt 1997) claim that through self-harm asylum seekers seek to reclaim and resignify their exilic bodies. According to Pugliese (2004: 32) acts of closure that result from the psychic reaction to trauma mark corporeal poetics. He suggests that acts of self-harm are "a *verso* relation to the *re-acto* of this daily, institutionalised, legal violence", with which the refugee invokes agency where none was supposed to exist.

However, I maintain that even when people have been deprived of almost all possibilities for deciding over and controlling their own lives, they still yearn for this possibility and use the available means left at their disposal in order to interrupt the functioning of an essentialist and foundationalist politics and expose those witnessing their acts to the finiteness of being. Therefore, acts of self-harm suspend any notions of exile and belonging; rather these acts highlight the fact that sense cannot be given to the body, but bodies are sense in action and as such they open the political space that must be re-negotiated *between* bodies.

The interpretation that I have adopted towards self-harm is based on the idea that people inherently reach out into the world with their bodies, and on the understanding that because the senses cannot be regulated, it is always possible for the body to reach out to others (cf. Tatman 1998: 27; Manning 2007: 86). This approach of mine necessitates going beyond the division between mind and matter. Upholding that division would deny the political agency that self-harming might suggest and through that obscure the more 'positive' aspects that might be read from the lives of failed asylum seekers (see Grimwood 2004: 63).

I claim that the meanings and senses of self-harm are created through a network, a circulation, of contacts and touches (cf. Perpich 2005: 84–85; also Honkasalo 1998: 38–40). Moving the frame of interpretation beyond intentionality and individuality allows room for considering practices of self-harm as something more than conditioned responses to a set of limitations. Self-harm articulates the body's capacity to transcend those limitations and find ways of communication and agency in and through the limited body[65]. Later on, the marks on the body – the scars and wounds picked open time and again – can be seen as constituting in part the failed asylum seeker's body as a politically positioned site of being. Such an understanding counters the notion of self-harm as irrational, pathological or a lapse in control of the self (see Tatman 1998: 29; cf. McDermott, Wernimont & Koopman 2011: 124). Acts of corporeal poetics are, then, to be conceived as the failed asylum seekers' means to make felt pain concrete, carnate and visible. Self-harm can, therefore, prove to be a meaningful form of political expression.

Thinking the political in terms of carnation does not mean, however, that self-harming is a necessary part of political expression or a necessary practice in challenging foundationalist politics (cf. Tatman 1998: 32). Rather, it means thinking about the ways in which the pain experiencing body seeks to *reassume and reorganise its relations to others* by turning itself into an "active agent of meaning-giving" (Honkasalo 1998: 41; also Noland 2009: 191–205). Indeed, practiced self-harm and the failed asylum seekers' other acts of corporeal poetics communicate some of the possible meanings of political life in the spheres of the international.

The adopted view arises from us all being ontologically exposed to one another, that is from "a sensuous contact with the carnal materiality of the other and the world" (Sullivan 2001: 101). Such a contact poses practical challenges to the ways in which mental health problems among asylum seekers are treated, and also questions philosophically what is made of our ontological exposure. Ayan provided a good concrete example of this challenge:

> Ayan: [W]e don't have help in this country really. […] If I go to doctor, she [the nurse] give me medicine. How much medicine I have! I say "I have *pää kipee* [an aching head]", they say "you have to take this, this, this, this", I say "This *pää kipee* never go, if I think. If you think, this never go, this *pää kipee* really." I don't know really, what they [the Finnish policy makers] think. [pause] And I think, this is so hard life. [pause]

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[65] Self-harm can actually be divided into two different types: *self harm by omission* and *self-harm by commission*. The previous refers to avoidable injury or damage to one's health that arises from significant lapses in self-care. The latter, again, means self-directed violence either towards the interior of the body, e.g. intentional overdosing, or the exterior of the body, e.g. self-cutting and self-scalding. According to Maggie Turp (2007: 229, 231) also self-harm by omission may affect either the interior or the exterior of the body and lead to injury or disability. Hence, omission involves something being neglected, whereas commission means something being undertaken. Both forms of self-harm are present in the case of failed asylum.

And the life has not changed, really. It's the same. Only I have peace, that I know that I don't die… I have that…if I go outside, I don't see someone who says "I want to kill you". Like this I have. But, I don't know, really. It's the same in my life. […]

Really I don't forget my life, I have to know, because I have not come here to take medicine to forget all the things. It's my life. I can't really… I mean how can I forget my life and the problem? [...] I come for [around] only when I get my future. But if I don't get a future, and I stay in here, I don't forget really, I remember. If I take medicine much, or drink to forget something, I don't forget, really. He [the doctor] give me one medicine, Cipralex [a medicine for depression], and this Cipralex is for, they say, "you don't think, you forget". […]

This doctor, he don't believe me. He give me medicine, but I don't want to take it really. I want to know my future. Because I lose my future in my country, you know, when I was a child, I don't go school…because the war begin in 1991 and now I am 22. […] Sixteen years. […] I don't get really my future. Then I come here. They told me this [the B and what results from it], I don't need the social [assistance] [Ayan laughs].

(Interview with Ayan, October 2006)

Above Ayan questions the Finnish politics of asylum, which assigns her to the space of the 'camp'. Furthermore, she is extremely critical that her condition is treated as a medical one, when her body begins to show physical and mental symptoms in its rejection of being politically categorised (see Scheper-Hughes 1992; Dossa 2003; cf. also Fox O'Mahony & Sweeney 2010). In her account Ayan refuses to allow her situation to be reduced to a matter of medical care by stating that she has to remember her life (who she was) and know her future. The Finnish policies now negate the latter possibility thus preventing her from feeling better. In fact, Ayan reclaims both her life and her body by rejecting the political practices and medical professionals' diagnoses and asserts herself as capable and entitled to know what is best for and what should be done with her.

Ayan, consequently, is balancing between two forms of narration. She understands her biography to be political, but the Finnish professionals persistently treat it as medical (see also Salis Gross 2004: 160–161). Towards the end of her account Ayan makes a political claim and persists that although in Finland she is physically safe, nothing else has actually changed in her life, since she still does not have stability and emotional security. Abubakar's concern is similar to Ayan's, but he frames it explicitly in terms of the senses (i.e. hearing and taste):

Abubakar asks me to listen. There's silence. "There's no noise, no voices here," Abubakar says. He confesses that he is missing the normal bustle of life. "Life doesn't have a good taste," he concludes. Abubakar tells that he was expecting something better than this. In Somalia, he just wanted to get away, "but there my brain was clear, all I was worried about and thought about was my security". Now things have changed: he doesn't worry about his physical security, but his brain is not clear any more.

(Interview with Abubakar, August 2006)

Whilst Ayan mentioned thinking so much that her head started to ache, Abubakar states that his brain has become blurred and his thought has lost its clarity. Together these two stories expose some of the corporeal effects of sovereign politics and underline the political significance of bodily sensation. For instance, smell can evoke memories of home or cause repulsion to one's surroundings. Adan told me that especially in the morning after it has rained during the night, it smelled like Somalia, while Soran claimed that the smells in the reception centre and in his room were bad, thus causing a sense of alienation. In a similar vein, noise of a certain kind, or the lack of it, may accentuate the feeling of displacement as in Abubakar's case above. But it can also bridge the distance between the present and the past and hence create a sense of continuity as listening to music did according to Benjamin. Physical touch can be made sterile by the wearing of rubber gloves like the reception centre's staff does for some chores. This act can be interpreted as a sign of impurity or contamination as we already saw with Benaz in Piece IV. In accordance with this line of thought, bodily senses can either mediate the experience of being out of place or aggravate it (see Zarowsky 2004; Herlihy & Turner 2006: 84–86; Herzfeld 2007).

Occasionally the failed asylum seekers exposed the kind of experienced sensuous anxieties upon which Ayan and Abubakar reflected through self-harm. Hence, self-harming gains its political meaning as a practice of re-establishing the broken relation between bodies (see the next section). In the same fashion an interviewee laughing or crying during our talk – or telling of having done so otherwise – was a radical manifestation of their agentive potential. Sensations and their manifestations suggested simultaneous awareness of the limitations set for the body and of the possibility, which the body in itself is. Laughter functioned in my interviews as a means for Adil, Ayan and Tahir to take an ironical swipe at the Finnish policies and to escape its totalising grip. Tears and crying, for Abdi, Soran and Adan, were another way of sensuous political self-expression.

Sensation and the expression of emotion can be understood as people's means of contracting and releasing their bodies politically (cf. Tabar 2007: 19; Noland 2009: 205; also Reischer & Koo 2004). This interpretation is possible, since emotions and sense are not 'in' the body or the social, but produce those surfaces and boundaries that allow the delineation of the individual and the social as if they were objects (Ahmed 2004: 10). Senses, on that account, emerge from relations between bodies. Such an interpretation turns political expression and life into "matters of tact" (Nancy 1993a: 198) and not questions of knowledge, or matters of fact.

In my interpretation of the practices of self-harm and other acts of corporeal poetics, I am fiercely against precluding (apparently) singular acts from the space of politics and from the spheres of the international. I maintain that such approaches miss the philosophical challenge that the failed asylum seekers present, because

agency within the political is more than subjectivity or subjective experience. Still, it might not be a surprise that advancing a focus on the bodily at the 'level' of an 'individual' asylum seeker faces criticism within IR.

The approach I advocate can be reproached for not providing an alternative account of either asylum or political community and thus for failing to engage with wider mobilisations that politicise such resistances (see Pugliese 2004: 32; Edkins & Pin-Fat 2005; Huysmans 2008: 179; Squire 2009: 158–159). However, fathoming the body in a Nancian sense, as singular-plural, means that the body never is an individual entity. Bodily relations always invoke the political as togetherness and in terms of sharing (see Turner 1994; Hewitt 1997: 122; Reischer & Koo 2004: 303; Van Wolputte 2004: 256; cf. however Pugliese 2004: 32). My reading, then, does not conceive the body as the primary site of resistance. There actually are no primary or secondary sites of resistance. Rather there are various ways of engaging with the wider social framework, be it 'singularly' or 'plurally'. It is up to us to explore what this might mean for our understanding of relations between human bodies and for political communities within the international.

There are, however, three significant caveats in my approach. Firstly, analysing and engaging with the failed asylum seekers' practices of self-harm can affirm 'deviant otherness', 'savagery' or 'passive victimity' on the body (cf. McNevin 2010: 147). I hope to avoid doing this by stressing the need to respond to, relate with and receive the acts of self-harm as ones revealing the poetics of a political body and underlining the importance of thinking about the meaning of sense and touch in political studies. Secondly, it is necessary to acknowledge that my analysis arises from western constructions of subjectivity and the subject. Although I seek to contest and problematise these constructions, there is a risk that my reading remains captive to the very categories it criticises. In other words, the adopted approach might be completely foreign to my research participants, so I may well be forcing them and their experiences into a framework that their gestures never intended to fit into.

The third caveat might be the most profound – and for some readers even an insurmountable – one. Despite the fact that the acts of corporeal poetics now assume a large role in my writing, I did not in any of the interviews directly ask the failed asylum seekers about self-harm, suicide attempts, suicidal tendencies or thoughts, self-inflicted wounds or the abuse of drugs or alcohol. Neither did I pursue these lines of enquiry to any significant extent, if they arouse during the interview. My reading of the topic, hence, relies on – besides the failed asylum seekers' fragmentary stories and my field notes – an interview with a team of mental health professionals working with migrants (interview 12; personal communication 13th and 27th May 2008). Turning to the professionals was an ethical choice, which resulted from the concerns I had regarding the effects of prying into these areas directly

with my participants. In my view, professional curiosity is not a good enough reason to justify the potentially harmful effects of any research.

In engaging with acts of corporeal poetics and practices of self-harm I am not only exploring the ways in which bodies are produced in and through the dominant social and political imaginaries. Also and more importantly, I am interested in the ways in which the body exposes shared finitude, which exceeds those imaginaries and articulates political life in terms of compearance and togetherness. Acts of corporeal poetics put forward a sense that there is no politics without the body. Within this frame, politics becomes a matter of exposition: putting oneself outside oneself and inserting something of oneself into the space between bodies. The adopted stance enables the conception of self-harm as a yearning and action towards becoming whole-enough, not primarily within oneself, but *with others and one's surroundings*.

5.1.2. Challenging foundationalist politics: self-harm as an event of bodily exposure

Attempting suicide, scalding, burning or cutting oneself, self-destructive thoughts, overdosing prescribed medicine, consuming excessive amounts of alcohol, tearing wisps of one's hair, pounding one's head into a wall or onto a table, anxiety, psychosis and desperation; this was the everyday expression of self-harm among asylum seekers at the time of my fieldwork (interview 12). Only successful suicide attempts were absent from the wide spectrum of self-harm.

It must be emphasised that in interpreting self-harm in terms of bodily exposure I do not wish to close down the meaning of the self-harming body. Instead I play with the multiple storylines that may arise from acts of corporeal poetics, but none of which are complete and neat. My intention is by no means to glorify suffering as a transcendental political experience. I seek to read the various practices of self-harm without feasting with pain or evoking a sense of voyeurism (cf. Dauphinee 2010; Doty 2010). I hope that my reading evokes a sense of bodies being always towards one another and that it manages to articulate the political potentiality of this relationality (cf. Burkitt 1999: 108). So, even if I bring acts of corporeal poetics within a framework where both the body in pain and the self-harming body are sites of radical political relationality, it needs to be remembered that the human suffering is very real. This is something that we cannot lose sight of, but yet we must avoid speaking about self-harm purely in medicalised, individualised or marginal terms and thus simply victimising those who resort to it.

Practices of self-harm resonate closely with the experienced pressure of the asylum process and the state of uncertainty associated with the temporary residence permit. The failed asylum seekers often referred to a feeling and fear of

becoming crazy and losing one's mind in the face of the prolonged pressure[66]. Indeed, many of my interviewees were treated and given medication so as to alleviate this pressure (see e.g. Ayan in the previous section and Abdi in Episode 5). Ayan protested against this reductive reading, but Abdi's response was different and he began to abuse the prescribed medicine so as to make his condition more bearable. As a form of self-harm the abuse of prescribed medicine results in a condition of "affective anaesthesia" (Krystal 1988), which is a strategy of survival in the face of violence or prolonged trauma (see Elsass 1997; Pugliese 2004). This conceptualisation fits perfectly also with Omar's case:

> Omar has missed school for two weeks, and his teacher is worried. At a meeting with a psychiatrist, Omar had reminished something so traumatising, that now it won't leave his mind making him feel anxious and anguished. He was prescribed medicine for this. Omar, however, constantly overdoses the pills, which makes him passive and apathetic. He has said that he is aware of the problem, but the pills make him feel good, or not to feel anything.

> (Field notes, 31st October 2006)

It is often claimed that (failed) asylum seekers wish to be included in or integrate with the receiving society. This is certainly better than to be 'failed' in one's claim for asylum. Nevertheless, I feel that the failed asylum seekers might present us with a more profound philosophical problem, which concerns our willingness to change our perceptions of political belonging and thus to frame the discussion of asylum under different lines from 'hospitality'. Nobody wishes to be(come) an asylum seeker. Integration into another political community is not a rosy path either, even though it might be the best option currently available (see Teleky 2001: 209–212). As Omar's case illustrates, the body is not a clean slate (a tabula rasa), which is always open for new beginnings. Even if desired, is integration always possible? What Omar's story makes me ponder, are alternative ways of belonging politically, without one's body necessarily belonging to a state or a limited number of states.

If the combined pressure caused by the asylum process and the memories from the past is so intensely felt that it is best to feel nothing at all, the spatiotemporal logic of sovereignty and the associated project of nation-building are not without sense (sentiment). Insensitive they certainly can be in their quest to solve the problem of the moving, border-crossing body. Missing normality is felt deeply by the failed asylum seekers and made even more complicated with the intertwining of both structural and political violence and abuse in their condition. The experience of the body being cut off from both the past and the future leaves it unambigu-

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[66] For an analysis on the role of madness within IR see e.g. Howell 2011.

ously residing in the 'lacking' present, with no promise of a better tomorrow. The relations of the body have been broken to both timely directions, but yet it cannot live fully in the present either. The label constrains the body's means of political expression in the present and, moreover, its limiting effects can heighten the experiences of trauma and being out of place (cf. Väyrynen 2011a; Das 1998):

> Ayan: And sometimes you meet for person that you can't…really one day I say "today's the last day that you are in the war", because I see a man and I see one militia man have a gun. And I run, and he ran for [after] me. [This] man, he keeps talking to me. [...] I say "I want to take the bus". He says "you can't take the bus, if you take the bus, I will kill you." And I say "why? I don't have money, why do you… what do you need from me? You want to kill me?" And I say "ok, I don't take the bus. [But] I close the door [of her home]", and he says if I close the door they make it open. It's really, so hard life, really. And in the morning when I get up, I remember these things: "you want to kill me?" I remember this, these things. I say "how can I make?". I go under something, you know, you know, something cover… so that he can't see me. And, ok. Then I get up and say "you stay in Finland, you don't stay in Somalia" [laughing, the laugh catches to me too], but these things you don't forget, but you think these things still. You have these things to remember.
>
> (Interview with Ayan, October 2006)

Because of her memories from Somalia Ayan described her fear that somebody might break into her room and threaten her also in Finland. She confessed to feeling that somebody was following her in the street, which made her rush to her room and hide under the table or bed. She told of imagining where to hide, if such an instance ever came about, and then having to remind herself that in Finland she is physically safe. Edward Said (2000) has theorised this carryover of habits as an unavoidable by-product of being out of place (also Huynh 2010). For me, Ayan's story raises the question of how pain and trauma enter politics and how lived experiences of them are shaped by contact with others (Ahmed 2004: 20).

An engagement with self-harm and pain exposes bodily surfaces as sites of political and communal exchange. As such they are capable of challenging and perhaps also transforming sovereign politics through "questioning the boundaries of what it means to touch and be touched, to live together, to live apart, to belong, to communicate, to exclude" (Manning 2007: 9; also Ahmed & Stacey 2001; Butler 2004: 26; Schildkrout 2004; Turp 2007: 237). I claim that the failed asylum seeker's act of corporeal poetics is not an attempt to redeem the person in terms of sovereign politics. These acts are not pleas to be included in the "circuits of citizenry" (Pugliese 2004). Rather, the practices of self-harm reflect the figural voice of the other on one's body and seek to inverse it (see McLane 1996; Hewitt 1997; Sullivan 2001: 167–178; Ahmed 2004: 39). My approach, therefore, invokes a notion of resistance beyond intentional resistance to something nameable and

obvious (see Takhar 2007). The resistance is perhaps best conceived in terms of a philosophical challenge to foundationalist politics. With such a practice of resistance begins community as we do not yet know it (Wurzer 1997: 100).

Acts of self-harm threaten the binary opposition between inside and outside, public and politics and thus expose the body as a site upon which trauma, politics and their meanings are negotiated (see Oliver 2010: 119, 126). In corporeal acts of self-harm gesture replaces language, skin becomes voice and the relational body becomes an event in the political. Therefore, these acts make a demand for a politics that would respond to sense and touch. The failed asylum seekers' practices of self-harm require emphasis to be placed on the various political relationalities that take place in and through the sensing body. Let me return to Abdi's story, which began to unfold already in Episode 5:

> When I ask Abdi about things that he is looking forward to or things that make him anxious, he mentions the threat of being transferred to another centre first. He says that when he thinks about the transfer or about his future "it feels like something is moving up and down". [Abdi points at his chest and throat]. He then speaks of Somalia. "In Somalia they think that in Europe everything is better. They think that Europe is a paradise. Here, you have peace, but nothing else. The problems are different like the weather, people… I cannot imagine life, future, right now when everything is complicated." He is about to start crying. "After getting the B, I always lay on the bed. I have no morale left, no morale to work. […] My mind is in Somalia, but I am here. I still feel I am a Somali. […] Everything is hard for me. […] I am a human, you know, I feel. When I eat, I feel, I wonder if my children are eating or if they are hungry. I think what they are doing during the days while I am here. My children were expecting a better life when I left." I ask whether he would like go back to meet his family if it were possible. Abdi replies in the negative: "it's shameful. I am ashamed that I haven't been able to help my family. I cannot go back, it would be shameful."
>
> (Interview with Abdi, August 2006)

Abdi's account makes concrete the intertwining of the various stress factors involved in asylum seeking. He mentions the troubles in his past life and those now created by his B status both in Finland in his immediate everyday life and also in Somalia in relation to his family. He perceives having 'failed' as a father and a provider for the family, but at the same time his family thinks that Europe is a paradise. His state, or his perception of it, has made Abdi unable to imagine his future, to direct his life and with his morale so drained that he does not even want to try. He conceives his situation, himself, to be 'shameful'. For me, Abdi's story exposed the need to explore the acts of corporeal poetics in terms of an opening for the possibilities of political life. This interpretation of mine necessitates a particular understanding of sensation, in this case shame. Shame makes Abdi feel that he is a failure. To dispel this felt badness, a person can seek to expel himself

from himself (Ahmed 2004: 104–105). In fact, the effects of traumatic stress are far-reaching and prolonged experiences of shame can bring people perilously close to suicide (see Ahmed 2004: 105; McDermott, Wernimont & Koopman 2011: 126; also interview 12). Abdi attempted it.

Nonetheless, a suicide attempt, no matter how tragic, is not automatically a manifestation of political agency or of interest to IR. A further prerequisite for this reading of mine is Abdi's status as a B permit holder and more importantly the relations that his cross-border movement now enables, disables and forces his body to form. It needs to be understood that feelings of shame, as in Abdi's case, stem from a perceived disappointment one has caused for others and from an imagination of their reaction (relating) to the disillusionment thus created. The gaze of others upon the failed body is felt intensely. Interestingly enough, Farzad, Benjamin and Benaz all described noticing people looking at them differently, if their status as failed asylum seekers was revealed or was known to the other. Through the practices of self-harm the failed asylum seekers seek to counter an imposed identity, ultimately seeking to exscribe themselves from it. Thus understood these practices are corporeal expressions of one's vulnerability and exposure to the practiced politics (cf. Zarowsky 2004: 204). A story from the field fleshes this argument of mine out:

> Sampo tells that two days ago a young Afghan B permit holder has attempted suicide. On a stormy and dark February afternoon – making it practically impossible for the drivers to notice him in time – he had laid down in the middle of the road in front of the reception centre with a note taped on his chest. The note had stated: "it's better to die quickly than to die little by little". A passer-by had come to inform the staff about him and he was brought back inside. Later that day he had been sent to the hospital, where he took an overdose of Marevan, a warfarin-based oral anticoagulant. After this he was committed to a mental institution.
>
> (Field notes, 1st March 2007)

This particular suicide attempt openly protested against the failed asylum seeker's body being exposed to the possibility of death through the Finnish policy proposal of starting to enforce returns and deportations to Afghanistan. In exposing himself to death the young Afghan man exposed to the proximity of death also those who witnessed his acts. This proximity is our shared existential condition, which can be evoked even when the body's means of exercising agency are severely limited. In some occasions, the line between resistance and suicide is blurred. Thus, the exercise of control over one's own body – and ultimately death – can be a meaningful form of political agency (Junka 2006: 355; also Mbembe 2003; Soguk 2006).

I claim that in the case of failed asylum self-harm expresses the lived/sensed contradictions of abuse and simultaneously (re)tells or (re)inscribes bodily-being in terms of openness and a possibility of being otherwise. This calls for an under-

standing where neither the meanings inscribed on the body nor its reduction to
being a sign are privileged. Instead we are invited to think of the body of a sense.
(Nancy 1993a: 198; also Sullivan 2001: 171). This body is in the process of be-
coming and unfolding as it seeks to expose our shared finitude and thus articulate
a shared world. The body of a failed asylum seeker gestures being-in-the world
through bodily sensation and activity rather than cognitive reflection. Therefore
it becomes possible to consider practices of self-harm and other acts of corporeal
poetics as failed asylum seekers' articulations of a "different kind of inhabitance"
(Ahmed 2004: 39) within the spheres of the international. These acts gesture a
politics in which we are not one – be it in the form of a sovereign subject or a col-
lective body of state – but many.

5.2.   Towards alternative scripts of political life: the body as shared finitude

Instead of self-harm, I will next discuss some of the more subtle, but extremely
sensuous, ways in which the failed asylum seekers' bodies expose our shared fini-
tude. My focus will be on *melancholy*, *silence* and *passivity* as alternative manifes-
tations of the failed asylum seekers' corporeal poetics and the ways in which these
emotional states represent an existential or ontological questioning of our shared
finitude (see James 2006: 174)[67]. As possible forms of corporeal poetics melan-
choly, silence and passivity are interrelated concepts, which tell about the body's
relations to and with others. Contrary to my interpretations of self-harm that were
discussed above, these other manifestations of corporeal poetics are not perceiv-
able as protest. Instead they reflect a wish to numb oneself to the practiced politics
as it takes shape and surfaces on one's body. Numbness is a way of exceeding or
escaping the grip of this politics (cf. Tatman 1998: 29–30; Pugliese 2004: 29; Turp
2007: 240).

   The discussion in this section continues to map the failed asylum seekers' politi-
cal forms of narration, which however are interpreted most often in purely medical
and individual terms in Finland. Differing from that interpretation, I take melan-
choly, silence and passivity to result from our incapacity to grasp what is politi-
cally at stake with failed asylum seekers' biographies and their presence. Namely,
as the nature of the failed asylum seekers' voiced demands is dismissed, their bod-
ies begin to show symptoms that cannot be ignored, but that at the same time resist

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[67] I want to emphasise that it is well beyond the scope of this work to engage silence, melancholy
and passivity in their full philosophical mode. In my writing these concepts figure strictly as analyti-
cal categories through which different manifestations and corporeal strategies of taking agency are
highlighted. The concepts thus work so as to widen the horizons of political life, and as such they are
used in a similar vein that e.g. frustration, anger and intimacy were in Piece III.

unambiguous interpretations. Let us consider, for instance, Omar's situation that was taken up in the previous section. His optimism or perhaps an attempt to convince himself as much as Soran of not everyone hating asylum seekers in Finland (Piece II: section 2.4.) gradually transformed into passivity and apathy. His mental 'relapse' (addressed in the previous section) resulted from overdosing prescribed medicine to ease the pressure caused by a sequential trauma.

Besides the pretraumatic life, traumatic memories and the posttraumatic process, the notion of prolonged or sequential trauma reflects also the wider social and political context. Resonating closely with the views according to which the B permit and detention bear harmful effects to asylum seekers' mental health, the notion of sequential trauma in the context of my writing is based on three premises: a) a prolonged situation of insecurity or stress can reawaken the initial traumatisation, b) the discourses of medicine, social services or, more abstractly, the humanitarian apparatus pathologise the body by atomising it, and c) the person becomes further traumatised by the appropriation of his/her body as an object to be disciplined in the prevailing political order, its practices and procedures. (See Salis Gross 2004: 157.) Such a stance on trauma combined with Omar's case incites me to examine passivity, melancholy and silence as politically relevant[68].

5.2.1.   Melancholic bodies

First of all it needs to be noted that it is not a new idea to connect migratory movement with melancholy. Multiculturalism has even been criticised for making people unhappy (cf. however Ahmed 2010: 121–159). Migrants both challenge and are challenged by what 'we' think a good and happy community is. Becoming a subject of political life/political agent in Finland, is within the politics of migration connected to a requirement to become Finnish, or as Finnish as is humanly possible (cf. Mbembe 2001: 24–39; Ahmed 2010: 129). Within this framework, identifying with a nation makes people individuals and gives them a place of reference from which to act (see Ahmed 2010: 137–138). We, then, end up with the idea that all people in Finland should embrace the 'common' culture, which is already given and somehow stable. Migrants become melancholic figures, who either refuse or are not allowed to play a part in "the national game" (Ahmed 2010: 142). Such an approach to migration reflects the nature of the Finnish political project

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[68] This interpretation of mine departs from most conceptions of (political) agency. For instance Meyer and Jepperson (2000: 107) contend that "[t]he proper modern agentic individual manages a life, carrying a responsibility not only to reflect self-interest but also the wider rationalised rules conferring agency. Helplessness, ignorance, and passivity may be very natural human properties, but they are not the properties of the proper effective agent."

and belongs to the sphere of in-common-being, where community is thought essential or substantial for 'the political'.

In a mental framework where all migrants are potentially threatening from the point of view of the nationalist project, being labelled 'unwanted' does not put one in a happier position in relation to the local population. Hence, within this imagery, failed asylum seekers might be the most melancholic of all. Such an approach reflects well some of those assumptions on which the Finnish politics of migration is based, and makes it worthwhile to address the way in which melancholy is connected to the Nancian idea of shared finitude. I will illustrate this with Abdi's words:

> Abdi: "You know we Muslims believe that our faith is in Allah's hands. But, I would like to have a profession, family and that I would be able to take care of my wife and children. I would like to educate and teach my children. And I would like me and my family to live in happiness and safety. I do not expect anything great, just normal life and small things. But my brain and heart will be fixed only, if it will be better; if something changes for the better in my life." Abdi feels frustrated that his hardship has not ended, but just differs in kind. "I am not thinking about death, but looking for a life. Everybody dies; I do not know when I will die. I might get hit by a car, or then one evening go to bed and in the morning not wake up again. That is ok; I do not have to think about that. But when alive, you need a life."
>
> (Interview with Abdi, August 2006)

When alive, you need to feel alive and have a life. With that statement Abdi voices the source from which melancholy arises in the case of failed asylum. Indeed, his hopes for the future and what he would like his life to be like are not surreal or irrational. Yet, Abdi is keenly aware of the fact that he, in his present state, cannot do anything so as to bring the life of which he dreams within his reach.

In the case of failed asylum the notion of melancholy already arises from the ontological gap (see Piece II: section 2.2.). The gap is what emerges when the spatiotemporal logic of sovereignty is enacted and the body of the asylum seeker is labelled in terms of the Finnish political order. Through the asylum process governmentality becomes a part of the gap, which in turn takes form as a "melancholic translational space" (Tate 2007: 10) within which the meanings of politics, the body and agency are negotiated. Any form of agency – a gesture, move or voice – that originates in the label bears a trace of loss: loss of family, a sense of self, a future or control. In fact, Abdi's view that one needs to have a life reflects how the label effectively cuts one off from others and destroys the idea of shared being and finitude. The label thus violates one's possibilities for fully reaching towards others and retaking one's life as an agentive body. Instead, being identified as a failed asylum seeker easily places the person within the frames of victimisation and criminalisation: one becomes either a charity case or a mere object of sover-

eign politics.

As a sensuous experience melancholy refers to indeterminate sadness and the incomplete. The failed asylum seekers long for what is irrecoverably gone, unattainable or inarticulate (see Tabar 2007: 23; Butler 2003b: 467; Lash 1998: 157–159). Melancholy is, therefore, connected to a radical ambivalence or ambiguity of political experience (cf. Agamben 1993: 20; Žižek 2000: 658–660). So, here lies the opening: as a type of longing and sadness melancholy "indicates the creative and inherently political ways in which loss is conveyed" (Tabar 2007: 6). This brings me back to Nancy, for whom (2003b: 82–86) melancholy is a form of incorporation, the body is always relational, relations are intrinsic for the political and the political gains its most profound expression in the condition of shared finitude.

Biographical narratives and bodily experiences can give rise to political agency through a melancholic translation of difference (exclusion) and rupture (cf. Tate 2007: 11; also Butler 2003b; Tabar 2007). Moreover, melancholy offers the potential to understand how the boundaries of political expression and life are instituted and maintained (see Butler 1997b: 167). The melancholic, posits Judith Butler (1997b: 186), is communicative just because that what cannot be taken or accepted as a part of one's being and body – that what is inassimilable or beyond accommodation for the body – becomes the site of agency (see Tate 2007: 4). This agency is not manifest in the failed asylum seekers merely conveying a sense of loss and sadness or them criticising the existing political practices and processes. Melancholic agency can just as well – or perhaps more often – emerge at moments when engagement beyond the label is perceived to be impossible and the most forcible expression of one's political existence takes place through the body turning away from others. The failed asylum seekers' withdrawal to melancholy can, therefore, both signal an effort to avoid further violation of their being and express the political in the body, which cannot be completely subsumed under the efforts of control.

Melancholy and the political in it are actually about limits. Besides being a politics of the "outcasts" and "wild zones", states Scott Lash (1998: 159), melancholic politics of the body is one of innovation. Melancholy politicises the space of the present, making the failed asylum seeker's body expose itself controversially through 'introverting' itself. When various other means of influence have resulted in nothing, a refusal to accept and content oneself with the functioning of the Finnish policies gains carnality in the melancholic body. Melancholy becomes the relation that the failed asylum seeker's body adopts towards the Finnish society. As such it forms a corporeal way of viewing the world, the possible space of politics and political engagement. (Cf. Tabar 2007: 19–20.) Melancholy exposes "multiple and overlapping belongings that allow for more inclusive identities and

community" (Tabar 2007: 12). These belongings, in turn, allow new potentialities for solidarity and relationality to emerge.

In the light of the above elaboration, I am tempted to suggest that melancholy signals the failed asylum seekers' refusal to incorporate that sense of the international, which the putting into practice of the logic of inside/outside inscribes onto their bodies. Thus understood, melancholy is a refusal to accept loss as a characteristic part of one's political being, that is to reiterate asylum-seekerness as a definitive and persistent feature of the body. In this context, then, the radical ambivalence of political experience actually reflects the failed asylum seekers experiencing 'the political' and their bodies articulating 'the political' as a relational event.

5.2.2.   Silent bodies

In the case of failed asylum I perceive melancholy to be closely related to silence[69]. Whereas melancholy is both an attempt to translate oneself to others and an affective relation, silence withdraws from the verbal domain, but does not signify retreating from others. This reading is based on melancholy and silence being both related to experiences of pain and suffering – vulnerability – that intensify in the political struggle that failed asylum seekers fight over their bodies. Interestingly enough, in Nancy's thought our ontological exposure is ultimately a site of suffering; we suffer the world (also Wall 2008: 59; Devisch 2011: 2–3). Furthermore, pain and suffering are temporal in that they place time at the heart of experience, resist definition and at times also language (see Wall 2008).

In fact, Illan rua Wall (2008: 69) claims that in pain "we are abandoned to the world, with nothing to do but transform it". In the temporality – openness – of pain and suffering lies politics, because pain opens the body to the world. Nancy thus does not regard pain as something that separates the suffering body from others. Through this he breaks the notion of pain as something that is either subjective or objective. But what does this suggest in terms of the relation between the silent body, the international and the political?

For failed asylum seekers voice is not the only, or perhaps even the primary, means of articulating the political and engaging with politics. The 'speaking mouth' (see Piece III) can remain silent, its voice equally non-existent sonorously as it is un-heard of or un-listened to. In line with this logic, silence is an extremely

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[69] My thought on silence and its potentiality in politics and within IR has been greatly influenced and inspired by the work of Tarja Väyrynen (2011a, b) and our discussions on the topic. For other methodological and theoretical perspectives on silence that are of significance to me see e.g. Butalia 1998; Das 1998; Muldoon 2001; Teleky 2001; Mazzei 2003; Skjelsbæk 2006; MacLure *et al.* 2010.

powerful political gesture. It bears the potential to multiply the spaces of politics and the forms of political exchange and, therefore, silence can contradict the notion that political being is constituted through clear and distinct ideas or projects, which are publicly and verbally articulated (see Palladino & Moreira 2006; cf. Butler 1997a). My interviews with the failed asylum seekers revealed silence as a crack between words, an interrupted sentence, a refusal to talk or an inability to answer my questions:

> Pirjo, a social worker at the centre, suggests that I interview Rashid, a young Afghan. She calls him to come to her office. Before Rashid arrives, Pirjo tells me that he has suffered from severe depression and is still in need of acute psychiatric help. Rashid enters the office, and Pirjo leaves us alone to talk. He takes a seat on the sofa and crosses his arms. Rashid appears to be reserved, a bit suspicious towards me and somehow disappointed to see me. I get the impression that he was expecting somebody else to interview him, not a young woman who doesn't look as if she has anything to offer, or who has no authority on these issues. He might just be right. Pirjo told me that Rashid quit school some time ago, for he felt that it was all in vain if he was then deported to Afghanistan. After I have finished introducing my study to him, I ask if he would be willing to participate. Rashid speaks for the first time: "No, I don't want to talk to you. *Ei mitään apua*. It's of no help". He leaves the office closing the door behind him. I am left sitting alone in the room.
>
> (Field notes, April 3rd 2007)

My encounter with Rashid made me think of silence both as an instance where language fails, i.e. something cannot be verbally expressed by virtue of it being beyond speech, as a deliberate refusal and a means of self-expression. Rashid was the only one who explicitly refused to talk at all, but many people chose not to answer everything I asked. For instance Abubakar evaded a question concerning his travel by stating: "could you ask something else, I would not like to talk about that". Tahir, for his part, chose not to disclose in detail why he was granted a continuous residence permit: "that, what happened there, what I don't want to tell, why I was accepted here and so, a personal reason." Also Nasir contended that "I don't want to talk about those very gruesome horrors, because it's, yeah, really nasty" when I asked about his life under the Taliban rule.

With various means Rashid, Abubakar, Tahir and Nasir all made a decision not to talk. Each of these decisions represents a political event, or perhaps more accurately, an event in the political. Erin Manning (2007: 49: also Wall 2008) claims that making a decision is a moment of reaching-out. This reaching is political, since 'the political' as an instance of decision engages the body toward the world and others. The silence of my interviewees, them choosing not to talk *with me*, is both an act of reaching toward and withdrawing. On the one hand, it signals withdrawal because the failed asylum seekers point out that their experiences are not

accessible to others just by virtue of them being traumatic or painful. This is an ethico-political statement, which disrupts the logic that often, perhaps implicitly, guides research: that we must make the 'subaltern' – our own construction at least in the case of failed asylum – talk and show that behind the label there is a human being accessible and intelligible to us. On the other, silence gestures reaching, because it makes the interviewer, or any other witness of the body's exposure and intense presence, reflect on their own complicity in the setting (cf. Dossa 2003: 66–67). Within such a framework silence establishes an existential, instead of epistemological, sense of sharing and being-in-common (cf. Dossa 2003: esp. 71).

Accordingly, in terms of corporeal poetics silence appears through cadence that articulates an interval between those who share the story. Whilst the person might be perfectly capable of telling about the addressed issues, they still refuse to answer in terms of those principles. My interviewees may, then, not have opposed my questions as such, but the logic which my way of questioning evoked. Therefore, silence became a political strategy, a form of (poetical) opening that left ample space for multiple interpretations and that reflected non-disclosure in the face of a demand to speak (see Muldoon 2001: 43; cf. Dossa 2003: 60). To a great extent the histories of asylum seeking result from the logic upon which the political organisation of the world is based as well as from legislative treaties between nations drafted and ratified so as to govern the movement of bodies. It is not, actually, possible to theorise asylum as a question of the singular subject, because fathomed as a corporeal struggle it exposes singular plurality and shared finitude.

In addition to active refusals, other silences figured in the interviews as well. They articulate well the adopted focus on bodily existence and the challenge to foundationalist politics. Consider, for instance, Nasir's statement that "being born and raised in war and being a refugee... those are things that cannot be described in words". Nasir did not refuse to answer, but rather he pointed out that the experience of seeking asylum bears with it a sense of a history that cannot be totally owned by or reduced to an individual subject (see Dossa 2003: 53; Pugliese 2004: 33; also Feldman 2004: 176). *Whose silence is it?* Nasir resorts to it, but it is not *his* silence. (Cf. MacLure *et al.* 2010: 492–493.) It is not certain whether he resisted my question, chose not to answer it or was not able to disclose this particular experience. Nasir's view aptly reflects situations, in which speech is not cathartic or liberating. Emphasising the need to voice these experiences and histories or stressing the need to give voice to failed asylum seekers means that we do not grasp the demand that they present us with (cf. Das 1998: 88; Teleky 2001).

Furthermore, silence can present itself as a gap – an open space – between two words; a gap which needs to be heard in order to understand what *is* being said (also Teleky 2001: 207–208; Mazzei 2003). This makes silence a way of knowing, giving meaning and articulating it to the other (see Dossa 2003: 53). All of my in-

terviewees at some points struggled to tell about their experiences. They started a sentence, left it hanging, and then continued with another sentence. The following vignettes function as examples of this:

> Farzad: And now I don't know where they [his mother and two younger brothers] are. After my father… [pause] Who's going to take care of them now?
>
>   (Interview with Farzad, September 2006)

> Tahir: Well, like when I had a dad. Then I thought our life was really good. We had, like, I went to school and hung out with my friends, and everything was just fine. And then when the Taleban came, and then when … [pause] Then life is [pauses and sighs], goes somewhat badly.
>
>   (Interview with Tahir, my translation, April 2007)

> Soran: What am I supposed to do? [Soran fights the tears, remains silent for a moment and pounds his knee continuously with his fist.] Now I'm twenty, in two years I am 22, and I have nothing. What if I am deported?
>
>   (Field notes, 7th September 2006)

> Abdi: [Gestures that it feels like something is moving up and down in his chest. A tear runs down his cheek when he tells that he cannot help his family.] I tell him that I am sorry if I have caused him to feel so sad. He says it is ok, "maybe it is good to do this". [He takes off his glasses and wipes his eyes. We stay silent for a moment.] Then Abdi speaks: "I would give my life, if my children could have a good life."
>
>   (Interview with Abdi, August 2006)

> Ayan: It is so hard… I don't know what they think. [She pauses and then sighs] […] I don't know really. I think so…, it's so… [pause] I don't know really. It's so hard. The people [referring both to the asylum officers and the Finns in general], they close their eyes, they don't see well. […] It is wrong, really. [pause, Ayan sighs again]
>
>   (Interview with Ayan, October 2006)

The experiences that escaped furthest away from verbal expression, were related to family life before and after leaving, the present day in Finland, and future plans. Besides Nasir and Tahir, it was not so much that my interviewees did not want to address these questions, but that there was something about these issues that escaped language. The gestures and emotional outbursts that often accompanied these silences suggest that these occurrences should not be interpreted in terms of inadequate language skills. These silences represented affective responses and scattered sensations rather than organised narratives. In other words, my interviewees could not articulate themselves in a way that would adequately represent the pain and suffering evoked by particular events or experiences and which would at the same time make sense to me (cf. Das 1998: 84).

Whilst for example Stanley Cavell (1998: 94) adopts a focus on language in the

study of pain, my claim here is that pain may escape linguistic disclosure and yet
be political. Trauma, then, does not univocally break the connections of the body
to others by destroying language (see e.g. Philipose 2007: 63; cf. Scarry 1985),
but has, in fact, an inherent sociability to the experience of pain (Ahmed 2004).
The experience of pain is individually lived, but socially derived through specific
political conditions. In this light, as a corporeal-poetical strategy silence exposes
us to the fact that we exist only together, but this togetherness can never be named
or exhaustively told. The way our lives intertwine with those of others always
exceeds language. Forcing a language, and signification, onto an experience that
by nature defies description, does not disclose an 'authentic' experience or lead
to emancipation (see Abu-Lughod 1985). Instead such measures can, through a
"mentality of erasure" (Bohmer & Shuman 2007), deny agency from those un-
der scrutiny (see Grimwood 2004: 65). In fact, any view that considers language
as a privileged means for political expression constitutes some identities as pre-
eminently and prominently political, while simultaneously erasing certain bodies
from the realm of politics.

When the arguments presented in this Piece are combined with the discussion
in Piece III, it becomes possible to claim that for the failed asylum seekers speech
carries the risk of being positioned against others and silence the potential of being
toward (cf. Baronian & Rosello 2008: 3; also Spivak 1988; 2006; Rancière 1992).
Such a claim takes note of the potentiality of silence to incorporate language, voice
and meaning in the body, which again turns the body into a mark of the politics
to which it has been subdued. If there is no way to exceed the logic of sovereign
politics or resist being framed by it, silence signals a way to disrupt that particular
politics at work. This is so, because it is not possible to rationalise silence, and
thus sovereign politics is left without closure. Accordingly, silence represents all
at once both an act of ultimate resistance and a site of proliferation, a gap and
open(ed) wound (MacLure *et al.* 2010: 493). It spaces the body as a site of the
political, as an open and always-unfolding relationality.

The multiple forms of expression and the various spaces of political life that
open through the body invite us to explore being-in-common and sharing. Silence
carries the potential of referring us to others, making us share "our naked exis-
tence" (Nancy 1990: 48). A focus on the expressive and experiential body conveys
a register of various affects, gestures and silent languages of pain and compassion.
In the case of failed asylum seekers such a focus also reflects the political commu-
nity – built upon the sovereign state – losing its foothold and the space of the po-
litical being reopened (cf. Kellogg 2005). The asylum seeking body, regardless of
its status, is not only wounded by sovereign politics, but also a wound within this
politics. The bodies beyond accommodation are a living proof of the failure of the
modern political logic to unambiguously organise political relations and life. Yet

as that failure does not necessarily signal a change for the better – or actually any change at all – I will move to explore passivity as an expression of shared finitude in situations where all active measures of the body have been dismissed.

5.2.3.   *Passive bodies*

Benjamin: So me, I do dance anytime. Yeah, you can see me walking, and because if they see a dancer looking like this on the street [choreographs some moves while walking around the room], they are saying "you're sick", because there is no rhythm there. But I know what I'm doing. Yeah. So, that is how it is.

Eeva: Do you feel it helps you? To express your feelings and…

Benjamin: Yes, it helps me a lot. Because if I can't express my feelings, it's like, you know, I have something bad in me. Like thinking about something bad whereby…I don't like it.

<div align="right">(Interview with Benjamin, June 2007)</div>

Benjamin emphasised a felt need to express his feelings, to let them out, even though that meant that his behaviour seemed irrational or deviant in the eyes of others. Having to hold his feelings inside for Benjamin equated with his body being forced to incorporate "something bad". He thus came close to the understanding that pain should never be held inside and that such a condition should never be allowed to exist (e.g. Das 1998: 85) Such an approach suggests movement from the surface of the body to deep inside and vice versa. It reflects both violence – be it structural or political – being inflicted on the body so that it becomes embodied and these experiences of pain being resurfaced by the body in pain. In the case of failed asylum, these two processes need to be brought together in order to see the political within passivity. As suggested through the notion of sequential trauma, in the context of my writing the move from the surface to the depths involves the production of refugee populations at the international level and through specifically organised international relations. In my work, it has been taken up mostly with regard to the process of labelling. The second move from the depths to the surface, in turn, entails the thus produced identity becoming lived, sensed and exceeded.

As an act of corporeal poetics passivity, as noted in Omar's example (section 5.1.2.), can arise from self-harm in the form of abusing prescribed medicine. It can result from melancholy and silence, namely, from the failed asylum seeker losing all his/her will to try, feeling that there is nothing more to say or no words with which to accurately express him/herself. Such an understanding resonates closely with Veena Das' (1998: 86–87) view that despite the fact that one carries one's body wherever one goes, the body's weight can sometimes become too great to be supported. The interpretations presented by the staff of the reception centre did not

take note of the fact that Omar was intentionally overdosing on his pills, which in time resulted in apathy and passivity. His agency was denied and he was turned into a victim (cf. Grimwood 2004: 62–64). Abdi's loss of morale could easily be interpreted in the same way, especially when he, describing his activities during the day, stated that:

> the [sleep and depression] medicine makes one sleepy in the mornings. I cannot get up early like when going to work. I always sleep till two or three in the afternoon, and then sit in the lobby or outside.
>
> (Interview with Abdi, August 2006)

Nancy (1993a: 27), however, writes that passivity can only exist in relation to others. One can never be passive alone. Gestures bear the potential to transform the bodies that perform them (see Noland 2009: 212). In the Nancian frame passivity is not an opposite of activity as neither one is 'of the individual'. Even when still and expressionless, the body comes into contact with others. This inherent relationality is due to the fact that the body is always materially situated in a place which cannot be occupied by another body.

Within the philosophical framework that I have sketched, passivity represents perhaps the most radical act of withdrawal, as it generally suggests a total lack of movement and even apathy. Therefore, it is often precluded as an agentive position or as a form of political expression. However, passivity is not necessarily indicative of a relapse or an act of isolation, at least when it is regarded as an ethico-philosophical challenge to current politics. It might rather be an example of a specific type of (political) disruption, a state of mind, which in psychology is known as dissociation. In psychological studies dissociation is thought to play a role in the phenomenology of traumatic experience and stress, especially in situations of perpetuated violence (see McDermott, Wernimont & Koopman 2011: 129). Thus understood, passivity is a commentary that is made in terms of bodily existence, on the politics that regulates the failed asylum seekers' speech and acts. It advices against conceptualising the international as a closed and consistent space in which the role of humans is mostly written in terms of the citizen.

Passivity signals neither a lack of agency, nor total marginalisation and depolitisation. It can also, in certain contexts, signal a refusal to move or act in accordance with those limits which delineate our notions of what politics is and where political life is supposed to occur. In fact the failed asylum seekers' passive – and yet always relational – bodies are refusals. Omar's, Abdi's and Abubakar's (below) bodies articulate dissatisfaction with the Finnish policies and also with the logic upon which these policies are founded. Reinterpreting refusal in this way is not possible unless the body is understood, not as subserviently 'retreating', but instead as expressing passivity in relation to something (cf. Grimwood 2004: 74). In this case the refusal

concerns the superiority or prominence of the (national and privileged) political subject that compears with the production of a failed asylum seeker.

> I ask Abubakar what he sees himself doing in ten years. "You know we Muslims be-lieve that our faith is in Allah's hands. We cannot know when we are going to die, so we do not think too much about the future that way. We do not anticipate the future. I do not know if I will die tomorrow, I might even die before walking back to my room there," Abubakar says, nodding towards the open door on the other side of the corridor.
>
> (Interview with Abubakar, August 2006)

Abubakar's 'passivity', or his refusal to plan his future and actively guide his life, seems to stem partly from his religious conviction. His status obviously limits Abubakar's possibilities for planning, but yet in not envisioning a future he re-fers himself to another community. Abdi signalled a similar viewpoint by saying "you know, we Muslims believe our faith is in Allah's hands" and also Benjamin pointed out that if he were to be deported, he would leave "with almighty Allah". Religion exceeds the logic of sovereignty, although I am not so sure it exceeds the idea of in-common-being. My point here is simply that passivity does not neces-sarily tell about an incapacity to act. Rather it might more aptly represent an act that resonates to a different register of political life that cannot be grasped through the imagination foreclosed by sovereign politics. We need to engage with the body so as to come to terms with the futility of our efforts to 'know', fix, locate and understand it exhaustively.

Passivity can articulate even unexpected possibilities for political life, because it orients one's body towards alternative and less decisive forms of political ex-pression. The challenge that arises from the failed asylum seekers' corporeal poet-ics is more complex and more difficult to engage with than what is assumed in the frameworks of equal participation and political inclusion. Through questioning the foundations of our knowledge and those relations on which that knowledge relies and from which it stems, passivity concerns the nature or structure of our politi-cal existence. Passivity represents a demand for social transformation, which has an ontological resonance. Therefore, it cannot be reduced to an idle attempt that would necessarily result in collective despair (cf. Elliott 2011).

In terms of IR, I would suggest that passivity is a powerful and political demand to think about the shared finitude of all bodies and as such it is related to under-standing that political lines of separation are also lines of connection. These lines are always extremely active sites of political production. In this way melancholy, silence and passivity all are corporeal commentaries on the annihilation of singular plurality and on the reduction of community to a political project of in-common-being. I am tempted to call passivity, together with other acts of corporeal poetics, an affective and sensuous bond, which reaches beyond the frame of in-common-

being provided either by the state or by the system of sovereign states.

It is important to consider the conditions of appearance of singular beings in order to come to terms with the potential that lies in them. 'Singulars' are, come to presence and represent themselves, plurally. They compear. Acts of corporeal poetics emphasise the need to think the contact, even an apparently lacking one, between bodies and its political potential. Through a Nancian lens, then, the international can be thought as the taking-place of what must remain senseless, escape our thinking. In the notion of the international politics and the political come together whenever and wherever our political existence is exposed to the finiteness of our being (cf. Kellogg 2005: 355). What thus becomes central are bodies: fragile, broken, shattered and exposed bodies and the spacing between them that makes their being possible in the first place.

For me, the international represents one possible sphere within which political life occurs, but which comes into existence only through bodies coming together. These bodies are often guised under substantial identities and nationalities, but occasionally they are exposed in their 'naked' existence, which arises new possible horizons of political life. In somewhat more concrete terms, the failed asylum seekers' sensations of melancholy, silence and passivity highlight that bodies come into presence together, but that for some this process causes concrete pain and suffering. Together with practices of self-harm, melancholy, silence and passivity disclose "politics as intermittency" (Gibson 2005) and expose carnal and corporeal sensations of the international.

5.3.   Political life through carnal and emotional poetics

The main argument in this Piece has been that the failed asylum seekers' acts of corporeal poetics involve a reading of contact (cf. Ahmed 2004: 8). I have called these acts poetical because of their openness and fluidity: they express hope for a different world, beyond international politics and relations as we know them. This world is not, however, within the reach of the failed asylum seekers, and it actually might be unimaginable to both the failed asylum seekers and the rest of us. This political world cannot (yet) be named. As the Piece has suggested, the uncertainty of a change and its destination is not easy to bear. It means that there is nothing explicit towards which to strive or what to resist, there is only a sense of a profound injustice and distress. This exposure to the openness of (political) existence can lead to acts, which often are considered to move the failed asylum seeker's body beyond politics.

Regarding acts of corporeal poetics as forming a possible, although not a necessary, part of the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic disrupts the mind-set

of an apolitical and individual asylum-body. In fact, the suggested approach draws attention to those spaces and processes that are designed to complete the erasure of failed asylum seekers' political existence and then reads these spatiotemporal constructions so as to lead to contrary effects. My work, hence, maintains that instances that evoke carnal and emotional poetics are sites and moments for political expression even in the face of exhaustion and despair (cf. Ahmed 2004: 186). As far as it is understood to express grief, distress and the pain of politics, this poetics suggests a critical engagement with the practiced policies. And, further still, it criticises the hierarhical logic established between various political bodies (cf. Schick 2010).

The failed asylum seekers' acts of corporeal poetics are instances of "the flesh becoming a mirror" (Nancy 2010; also Farber 2006: 247–249). In the process of the flesh becoming a mirror the failed asylum seekers reflect their being and the representation of this being through the eyes of others. That reflection exposes everything in the failed body and testifies to the relatedness, rather than the remoteness, of all bodies. The acts of corporeal poetics display the failed asylum seeker's agentive body in a sensuous way, perhaps without clear purpose and direction, which however never suggests a lack of movement or connection. The 'failed' body resists the closure of both meaning and sense. It resists being closed into an essential political identity and excluded from yet another political community.

The failed asylum seekers' corporeal poetics provokes us to think about the possibilities of political life that would not arise blindly from perceiving the other as a subject of either incorporation/integration or exclusion/abjection. Engaging with the agentive in silence, melancholy, passivity and self-harm not only offers insight into those political relations between people that already exist. Moreover, the task that falls upon all of us is to imagine the possible forms of political togetherness that these acts might articulate within the international. Therefore, scars, wounds and the sensuous body are indexes of the international yet to be fully engaged with in their philosophical mode. They tell stories of what it means to live within the international and the potentialities that sensing and moving bodies articulate in unfolding different relationalities. Acts of corporeal and emotional poetics do not signal the body's subservience to oppressive circumstances or conditions, but represent its ways of leading a political life and participating wholly and corporeally in this world (Tatman 1998: 38).

By seriously considering and engaging with the kind of acts discussed in this Piece, it is possible to explore alternative ways of both knowing and thinking and to picture agencies and solidarities beyond the constraints of sovereign power. The sense of fragmentation that the failed asylum seekers experience may just allow space for that what is irrecoverable to become the condition of a new political agency (see Butler 2003b: 467). The 'singular' body as a site that is capable of

spacing the international – international relations certainly where we do not think them to be – becomes intelligible when we are ready to accept that even apparently personal experiences, like the experiences of one's own body, are concretely shaped by relations of power and domination (cf. French 1994: 69; also Dossa 2003). The ultimate surface of the international is the body, which yet reveals the international as something that compears through and with sensing bodies and their political relations.

The failed asylum seekers' capacity to articulate possibilities for political life stems from the body being exposed to and exposing constant processes, gaps and openings. Their acts of corporeal poetics should not be read in terms of what they mean, what caused them or how to come to terms with them. Rather the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic requires that we begin to think both the challenge and the potential that the body in itself is. The demand of this agentive body politic, therefore, goes well beyond the scope of the contemporary political debates around migratory movements.

Acts of corporeal poetics sum up the "ambiguity between resistance and complicity" (Farber 2006: 249) both in the singular body and – because of its ontological plurality – between bodies. These acts gesture and reach toward a potential politics to come, rather than articulate an affirmative possibility or transformation. As the Episodes between the Pieces have illustrated, my ethnographic encounters with the failed asylum seekers affected me profoundly. What shook me was the experience of being exposed to the limits of my being and having to face in the flesh those others who are brought into being, who compear, with the Finnish political project. My feelings of incompleteness and finiteness reflect me gaining a sense of our shared finitude. I was exposed to the fact that my being was ultimately just as precarious as that of the failed asylum seekers, although for the moment our situations did not begin to compare. My work, hopefully, transfers this feeling to the readers and incites reflection in our ways of responding to the presence of others no-w-here even in the absence of a direct physical contact.

I am tempted to claim that as long as we refuse to think of the implications of shared finitude for our understanding of the nature of political community, the politics of asylum, its scope and operations will leave both asylum seekers and citizens equally unhappy. Therefore, it might not be a too far off claim that the politics of multiculturalism does make people unhappy. This does not, however, mean that contacts between people should not be encouraged. Quite the contrary, it means that we need to question the foundations of the international and tickle our brains with the idea that the political separation of bodies is ultimately without foundation. Bodies coming together and building connections with one another would need to be thought of in terms of shared finitude, not in terms of multiculturalism.

Episode 6

No-w-here

Here.

     Or   *here*.

          Now.   – Or now.

Here and now.

       Now –   here?

          Know where.

             Nowhere – or now here.

Both – and or *either – or*
perhaps *neither – nor*?

          Presence, absence
          and the incessant process of becoming.

Now. Here. Always unfolding.

This collage has addressed from various angles the thematic of being and acting 'here and now', in a determinate place, at a determinate time. Yet, as Werner Hamacher (1997: 38) points out, evoking both *now* and *here* already places the person in a community, in a long historical continuum and in a place defined by that history. Such an understanding means that a given society has stamped the expression here and now with its 'here and now', thus it evokes a politics of continuation, not one of transformation. However, as pointed out throughout the Pieces, the failed asylum seekers cannot continue from anywhere, they cannot rely on the parameters of acceptable behaviour or ways of acting. They must begin their own politics from a 'here and now' different, but yet not totally separate from the 'here and now' of the Finnish society.

In fact the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic, discussed in the three preceding Pieces, opens up both the 'here' and 'now' in which something can appear and be addressed (cf. Hamacher 1997: 40). Even if they within the imaginary, which frames our notions of political life, seem to be nowhere, they make space and time through corporeal conjunctures no-w-here and expose the senses of the international as these senses unfold between us.

In weaving together various perspectives, strategies and views my collage is merely one possible articulation of the international. Therefore, it provides a particular answer to the question that has driven my endeavours: namely *how does the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic affect understandings of the possibilities and sites of political life within the international*? Concepts that have gained most prominence include the body, the political, relation(s), sense, movement, voice, the corporeal, space and life. These are some of the key aspects that have been exposed through the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic, and that gesture towards the international that, just like sovereignty, is nothing but the with that is laid bare. Such a conclusion suggests that the international gains its sense through becoming a site of political compearance in which various political subjectivities come into presence only together with one another, in relation to one another.

Even if offering an interpretation or aspiring for a synthesis goes against the spirit of a collage, it is clear that the choices I have made are indicative of how I myself interpret the struggle of failed asylum. Instead of leaving and requiring the reader to make his/her own conclusions, it might still be useful to provide a personal account of how this collage now pieced together unfolds in front of me. The reader is, however, welcome, invited and encouraged to adopt different frames of interpretation and analysis.

What will follow represents my understanding of a politics that both begins and ends with the human body, the thus created sense of the international and the

overall meaning of this kind of work for international relations and IR. The relation between the body and the international is at all times fluid and open as the shifting nature of the title of my collage suggests. Whether constraints or possibilities become pre-eminent, depends on the frame of preference that the reader holds. Committing one's thought exclusively to one frame of interpretation results in a lopsided picture of the relation between various corporeal conjunctures and the international. The constraints and eventualities need to be considered together if we wish to achieve a fuller understanding of the various senses that the international gains in the course of people's daily lives, in and through their relations.

The Collage

Corporeal conjunctures no-w-here

> What is coming to us is a dense and serious world, a *world-wide* world, one that does not refer to another world, or to an other-world, that is no longer 'international' but already something else, and that is no longer a world of appearances or aspirations. But it's still a *world*, a *proper place* for real extensions, for the spacing of our bodies, for the partitions of their existences, for the sharing of their resistances.
>
> (Nancy 2008: 41, italics orig.)

The above quote from Nancy's book *Corpus* does not suggest that the international and the world are synonymous. It calls for something else. It requires that we start to imagine what the relations of the international could be and what forms they might take, if appearances and aspirations were put aside. The world would still be a politically organised place, in which real people could negotiate their being together. It would not be a world free of bickering, conflict and injustice. Just one, in which these might be negotiated according to a different logic. Applying Nancy's thought to IR reveals that all attempts to affirm the international – as a project that seeks to constrain our thought of the possibilities of political life – are always thwarted.

The most pressing question that I have addressed in my collage, and that would need to be addressed and thought about in IR much more thoroughly and from various perspectives, is: *What becomes of political life and the international when they are reconfigured so that they originate from the singular-plural, from being-with and compearance?*

For me this question had two major consequences that have been reflected throughout this collage. The first concerned methodology and the site of IR. I felt the urge to meet with, talk to and write about real people and connect the question

of the international to the pulse of everyday life. Focusing on the political forms and expressions of human existence meant moving away from the conception of the theory and the practice of the international as isolated entities. IR and ir are not totally and unambiguously separable issues, which is why this collage has oscillated between lived relations and philosophical approaches and claimed that the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic potentially reveals relevant aspects of both.

The second, although related, consequence involved the actual 'matter in hand', or the focus and subject of this collage: the nature and structure of human existence. Inspired by Nancy's thought, the materiality or corporality of this existence gained prominence and turned my collage into one which sought to explore the possibilities of political life within the international as they take shape through corporeal conjunctures.

6.1.   IR informed by ir: the bodily relations of the international

Nasir: You, in the western world, you in Finland, have unfortunately [pause] only heard about Taliban, because their politics were in contradiction with, or in conflict with that of the west or Americans. But, eum, prior to Taliban, there were *mujahedins*, jihad-fighters. They were there when Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. And they were supported by the west. They were supported by the Americans. And, eum, there were no negative propaganda about the *mujahedins*, while according to the Red Cross 50.000 people died in Kabul, in the capital in just four years. From 1992 to 1996. In the civil war between the *mujahedin* themselves. And, before that time how many people were killed? What atrocities were committed by those *mujahedins*, you can only imagine.

Eeva: hmm

Nasir: If you can. But Taliban unfortunately got publicity in the media, in the western media. So you think that all the problems that are there in Afghanistan, are because of the Taliban. While, while you forget that *mujahedin* were even worse. Than the Taliban. And these are the same *mujahedin*, who are now in power. They didn't get that kind of negative publicity like the Taliban got. So these people are those who killed like thousands, like [Abdul Rasul] Sayyaf, the biggest opposition leader in the parliament now in Afghanistan. He killed like 8.000 men, women and children. We have a video here; you wouldn't want to see that. [...] He, like his men, slaughtered in the district of Afshar, south-west of Kabul in a few weeks 8.000 men, women and children were slaughtered. Cut off their breasts, cut off their heads, and yeah, so babies... And he is now in opposition, he is now a parliamentarian, a respected member of the parliament. This is not democracy.

(Interview with Nasir, March 2007)

Nasir's is a fleshy story of international relations, of *corps* – jihad fighters, Soviet troops, peace keepers, foreign troops fighting against terrorism – and *corpses* – civilians losing their lives in more horrid ways that one is willing to imagine and soldiers/peace keepers dying in missions. It is a story of all kinds of *corpuses* (bodies); some residing comfortably in peace and others dying, suffering, torturing, being tortured and dismembered, fighting, fearing, fleeing and seeking asylum, some far more privileged than others (cf. Agathangelou & Ling 2004a). In Nasir's story, the politics of the international is about connections and relations both violent and caring.

Through the limits embedded in the modern spatiotemporal logic I framed my collage conceptually under the international. Instead of merely criticising this logic I set out to explore the relations with and through which it expects us to talk about the possibilities of political life. Empirically this insinuated focusing on those relations and conjunctures both possible and already existing among variously categorised bodies, and exploring how the body exceeds this logic and opens alternative channels for political expression and existence. The relationality that characterises existence guides us towards an understanding of the international as a sphere of bodies that are with one another and that strive to surpass their artificial separation. The singular-plural body questions strict boundaries between the self and other, inside and outside.

Often the body tends to be cut up by or caught up in competing narratives and various theories of International Relations. Yet the body always, and this includes this collage, escapes totalising representations and exhaustive telling. At the very end it is the body that lives, feels, fears, flees, moves, suffers, carnalises and engenders those relations at various locations, with variant manners. Through the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic all of the Pieces of my collage have engaged with the ways the international spills out in and is exposed by corporeal relations and bodily encounters. Some of these ways are more familiar and others almost unrecognisable to disciplinary IR. This is due to the fact that instead of choosing to stick with a theoretical framework that had an established position in IR, I resorted to the Nancian philosophy of carnation, which discusses the body in its materiality and complexity. Therefore, the frame of this collage does not at all times follow the logic in which the question of political life and existence have traditionally been addressed within the discipline. Instead, the Pieces and Episodes of this collage have suggested that tackling the question of the agentive body is not one of being a sovereign political agent, but becoming politically agentive within diverse networks of relations.

Connections, touch and acts that cross and cut through borders time and again in unforeseen places and in unexpected ways undermine that politics of the international, in which the body is contracted to a state. Taking the body as the fo-

cus and analytical starting point signified an ontological tweak from the sovereign state and the political subject towards being-with and our ontological compearance. For Nancy, beings are always articulated through their (bodily) junctures, through the 'with' that exposes the bodies to one another and that makes them compear (see also Morin 2009: 48). The international and ourselves as constitutive parts of it are accessible and meaningful through our relations with the world and others in it. This means that the practices and institutions of sovereign politics exist only through and as the 'singular-plural becoming of sense'. So whilst the division between inside and outside that founds the international makes bodily surfaces, bodies in turn sense and materialise the international as a relational corporeal practice. Therefore the collage postulated that we might understand the international as a complex set of corporeal conjunctures. Its sense is constructed, deconstructed and made obsolete from many different directions with innumerable strategies and even by those, who sometimes are seen to play no part but that of either being saved or abjected.

The failed asylum seekers' presence, that is always relational and open to change, evokes agentive body politic, which in turn suggests change in the political organisation of the world and not only in one of its manifestations, the state (cf. Nancy 2004b: 53). That body politic is about bodies tensioning, exposing and intensifying in coming together. It is necessarily open, indeterminate and incomplete by nature. The opening of the space of 'the common' and its many spacings (*espacements*) is the place of our compearance, or our coming into presence together (Nancy 1992: 389). The international compears in various bodily relations rather than independently pre-exists. The ontology of being-in-common and sharing, writes Nancy (1992: 374), is nothing but the ontology of 'Being' radically removed from all ontology of substance, of order and origin. The quest for true knowledge, for one truth, for one mode of political belonging and for one international, needs to be abandoned, and another perhaps more 'chaotic' and dispersed politics called for.

The international fathomed as a space of being-with or a site of compearance signals the international realising itself, coming out from its separation from ordinary people, activities and relations. The fragmentary demand that the failed asylum seekers expose, forces us into silence with our theories and quest to organise people and the world in the way suggested by the spatiotemporal logic that founds IR. Through their agentive body politic the failed asylum seekers enact both the present international and one that might emerge.

The relation between the body and the international, however, is a retreating one; there is a double-bind at work between the concepts. On the one hand, the connectedness and relations between the two together with the implications and potentiality of this connectedness and relationality need to be readdressed. On the

other, it is as important to understand the withdrawal of both the body and the international from being completely and exhaustively defined one through the other.

As the discussion of the three thematic pieces (Pieces III–V) makes plain, the failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic cannot articulate a comprehensive or systematic account of the international or disclose all the senses and meanings attached to this concept. Rather their voices, movements and material bodies expose everybody's relational condition which cannot be accommodated by the binary logic according to which the politics of the international functions or was supposed to function. These articulations necessarily remain inadequate in the sense that they do not provide a systematic rethinking of the international nor do they succeed in changing their current condition. However, that does not make these responses, expressions and articulations meaningless. Thinking about political life in terms of compearance exposes the connections between the international and the body as more complex than previously thought. Even people who are seen to be at the margins of the political community are not only objects of power, but participate in the community and, as argued, philosophically question its foundations and rationality.

I am not suggesting that the singular-plural body and the question of our compearance should replace more mainstream approaches to IR. Still, as the present study reveals, the body can also be a possible and a meaningful field of study within the discipline of IR. We should not preclude the singular from disciplinary discussions just for the sake of its 'singularity', but rather examine the possible ways in which the 'singular' cuts through questions that are more familiar within IR. Our lives are politically entangled with those of others, which calls for reflection on how each and every one of us responds to the presence of others and thus takes part in either maintaining or dissolving the logic of inside/outside. Perhaps we could then end up with a more complete picture of human political existence that takes place in and beyond the state and the system of states.

To my mind exploring the intertwining of the variety of emotions, which arise with the politics of asylum, the process of applying for asylum and the experiences related to seeking asylum, would be an extremely interesting topic for further research. Firstly, it is imperative to explore if and how emotions, such as fear, have been institutionalised within the European politics of asylum. Secondly, it involves studying if and how distrust and fear matter in the asylum process both from the asylum officer's and the asylum seeker's perspectives. And, thirdly, if and how the two previous elements affect or direct people's agency so that certain behavioral patterns begin to evolve, and whether these acts in turn add to the fear and distrust that charecterises the politics of asylum.

6.2.   From IR back to ir: know where, nowhere, now here

Bearing in mind that in the first Piece of this collage I highlighted that the question of the human is always necessarily an ethical and normative question, my work has thus far said surprisingly little of any direct practical value. I maintain that we cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that there are people in need of protection. Some may require protection more urgently than others, but this does not mean that people are 'abusing' the political institution of asylum or 'our hospitality'. Thus I feel an urge to say something about the praxical consequences of the challenge that the failed asylum seekers present us with. At the same time the thought of doing this is somewhat daunting and intimidating as I do not consider myself as someone having the authority to assert my views and make recommendations on behalf of failed asylum seekers. How valid is the assumption that I shared an affinity with my interviewees, that I understood correctly what they told me and asked from me? Further still, making prescriptive statements goes against the philosophical framework of my collage and conceives politics in terms of a project from which substantial identities arise. And yet, I think it is my ethnographic and ethical responsibility to state my case also in terms of the practiced asylum policies.

The questions whether political life should continue to be articulated in terms of sovereignty and, relatedly, whether asylum should be a matter of hospitality, lie at the heart of many of the responses to asylum seeking. Politicians, security professionals and states attempt to solve the problem presented by the body by introducing various restrictions and punitive practices. The politics of asylum is a project characterised by exclusion and by the tendency to fathom political community in terms of a closed unity or a politico-historical project. It is impossible to say what the specific practical characteristics of an alternative politics might be, since nothing of the sort is even being contemplated.

I must underline the fact that I am not advocating a complete dissolution of the state and suggesting a romanticised illusion of a perfect world. I do claim, instead, that something has to change regarding the politics of asylum. The 'problem' is not going to disappear. The decision we – each and everyone of us including the political decision-makers – have to take is whether we wish to continue on the current path of growing administrative controls, technical developments and governmental operations in the efforts to maintain a political community based on territorial citizenship, permanent residence and national belonging. These efforts are, as argued, always incomplete and lacking in the sense that they are always bound to fail in the face of the agentive body. It seems that they lead nowhere in terms of finding a sustainable solution. This *nowhereness* easily leads to an impasse which stifles creative thinking and prevents us from seeing the body's political potential in its full variance.

The failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic can articulate a movement beyond the logic of sovereignty. The sphere of now here – the failed asylum seekers' presence and their relations to others – involves acknowledging the existence and worth of various corporeal conjunctures and their potential in rearticulating political life. This potential arises from an understanding that everybody is capable of political articulation through multifaceted political engagements and relations.

Engaging with the international through corporeal conjunctures is a matter of tweaking the perspective a little. It means seeking to find solutions that, as the failed asylum seekers through this collage have shown, might seem to be nowhere in the current politics, but which, under a different eye, already here and now take form through bodily relations. The failed asylum seekers have illustrated the means whereby the already existing notches and cracks of the current political order can be found and the points where a discussion of political life and participation constructed around compearance can begin. It seems evident that somewhere this discussion must begin, as the growing discontent among citizens – both against and for increased cross-border movement – and asylum seekers – under categorisation or already categorised – signals a profound failure of the current politics of asylum.

Let me now introduce a naïve idea. It seeks to clarify at a very concrete level what this collage has attempted to argue philosophically. This thought aims to point out the crisis of the political existence and role of the human body. I am continuously puzzled by the way relations between people are supposed to function, when thought in terms of the politics of asylum or migration. In the political, public and popular debates migration is often addressed as a question of integration, accommodation or assimilation. In principle, this might sound perfectly reasonable and enforceable. It is neither, however. Think of almost any other human relations and encounters: people moving (together), having children, people dying and moving away/apart. Think of your everyday lives and those encounters that they entail. Nobody seems to presume that arrivals and departures change nothing; that the dynamics at work is merely one adjusting to the ways of the other. One cannot remain the same and expect only the other to change. The question does not concern merely tolerance, either. Instead, in our daily lives arrivals and departures mean that new relationalities, new dynamics and new spaces for agency are born and negotiated in the space that the bodies open in the very act of coming together or parting from one another. In such a way the Nancian interval materialises in daily life.

How can we then think that any sustainable politics that addresses human mobility could function differently just by virtue of it being situated within the international? The ontological principles of any form of common-being distort the relationality between people just because relations do not happen between two

sovereign subjects. To the contrary: because people come into presence through their relations, the political turns into a relational event. It signals the taking place of a relation. Our responses to asylum seekers should not, then, annihilate or ignore people's own sense of political engagement and their various ways of acting politically. Among asylum seekers there are those who notwithstanding their vulnerability are ready, eager and perfectly capable of participating in the community and political practices that are now reserved for the citizens and permanent residence permit holders.

In the most concrete terms, I am tempted to suggest that a political debate concerning those asylum seekers who in spite of various restrictions have found a place to study or work would need to be opened. As a result, the possibility of granting them the right to reside in Finland despite their original reason for entry would need to be discussed. In practice this means that the asylum officials' right to interpret legislation in unclear or borderline cases needs to be evaluated both in its positive and potentially derivative implications for the applicant. Furthermore, opening the debate would involve scrutinising the limits of the asylum interview and the overall bureaucratic process together with raising the issue of their incapacity to arrive at the 'truth' about the person. We must move beyond mere criticism and blame – neither of which is a productive way of engagement – and ponder creative alternatives that would take account of the various stakeholders' views and ideas concerning the process. This would involve hearing besides the asylum officers and applicants also the views of legal representatives, interpreters, doctors and other experts.

The failed asylum seekers demand that we explore our conceptions of the place and subject of knowledge and of the right and possibility to claim them. But their demand reaches still beyond these epistemological concerns. It raises the ontological question of the political becoming lived and taking place on a daily basis, in multiple ways, through various relations. The failed asylum seekers' agentive body politic forces us to face the limits of our political logic and imagination that frame the current politics of asylum. Furthermore, we need to acknowledge our own complicity in the corporeal struggle of (failed) asylum and in turning asylum seekers into passive objects of our 'hospitality' by not letting them participate. By adhering to strict and rigid politics and to a division between domestic and foreign, we only make things worse for all involved. This is every body's loss.

Eeva: Well, now... What now that you have an A permit? How do you... what do you think of life now?

Tahir: Well, quite fine. I have an A permit, and I try always be like... that I can say that I am a proof of if foreigners come to Finland, it doesn't mean that they are just violent and problem-riven and live with social money. When I had the decision [the B], two years I lived in Finland, at the moment I study there at the tenth grade

with Finns. And when, hopefully when, I'll get, I'll surely get the diploma from the comprehensive school. So far, out of all of the subjects I get eight point five, the medium grade. That's really good and...

Eeva: That really is a lot better than many Finns!

Tahir: It is, it is! At least in our class. With that I can get into a high school easily, I don't wanna go to high school. I wanna go to a vocational school, I think one gets a little bit easier, perhaps, work in the future, and then it is again a bit difficult for us in that vocational school, with the language test. That's quite hard the test, like they say "a red car, write two hundred words". Like I'm Finnish, but a red car, two hundred words. [I laugh] What am I gonna write about!? Like that! That's a bit [laughs]... I'm worried, but I hope that everything goes fine.

<div style="text-align: right">(Interview with Tahir, my translation, April 2007)</div>

6.3.   Epiphany (by way of conclusion)

Estragon:	He should be here.
Vladimir:	He didn't say for sure he'd come.
Estragon:	And if he doesn't come?
Vladimir:	We'll come back tomorrow.
Estragon:	And then the day after tomorrow.
Vladimir:	Possibly.
Estragon:	And so on.
Vladimir:	The point is—
Estragon:	Until he comes.
Vladimir:	You're merciless.

I cannot think of a better way to bring this collage to an end than an extract from Samuel Beckett's (1959) absurdist play *Waiting for Godot*. It is a story about Vladimir and Estragon facing a task which never reaches its culmination: Godot never arrives. In the play, the two men waiting argue whether they are waiting by the right tree, on the right day and time of the day. The play can be interpreted as addressing the fundamental question about the meaning(s) of human existence. It obliges us not only to ponder the complexity of 'reality', but to affirm and sketch the meanings of this 'reality' through fully living in and engaging with the world.

Albeit the play explicitly concerns a question totally different from failed asylum, I will draw some analogies between the two. Both *Waiting for Godot* and the pages of this collage present the reader with a certain degree of absurdity. Just like the failed asylum seekers, Estragon and Vladimir are waiting for something, which has no specific form and no body seems to know when, if ever, the wait will come to an end. There is no certainty as to how this waiting is supposed to finish and what its coming to an end might mean in concrete terms. There is a strong sense of the incomplete present there.

Yet, neither my collage nor *Waiting for Godot* address primarily waiting. During their wait Estragon and Vladimir engage in plenty of activities, establish relations with others and leave imprints of their presence near and on the willow by which they wait. The failed asylum seekers do not simply wait, either. In making their presence known, be it through voice, movement or the material body, the failed asylum seekers do not refrain from sketching alternative meanings to the logic that constrains their bodies and existence as subjects of political life. For them thinking or speaking about the meaning(lessness) of their condition is not enough, but the failed asylum seekers enact themselves in various ways with regard to multiple others and in different arenas. Despite their categorisation and its implication that they are supposed to wait for a change in the political conditions in their home countries or a change of the Finnish asylum policies, the failed asylum seekers yet live as fully as possible and leave marks of their presence. In so doing they expose 'failed asylum' as a politico-corporeal struggle, which represents political existence in terms of ontological relationality that takes form through various and multiple bodily junctures.

The following epiphany concerns the content and scope of this collage. It reflects a moment of surprise, or the paths taken leading both me and the reader somewhere unexpected. Therefore, this epiphany represents the richness and potentiality of ethnographic approaches within IR. When now looking back at the turns taken, the roads mapped, the impasses encountered and the empty spaces charted, I can with relative assurance note that my collage is not first and foremost an exploration into the international as such. Rather, it is now obvious that the senses of the sovereign 'I' in IR were only examined through the forgotten and taken for granted 'R' in IR. This was the essence of the ontological tweak that my collage performed: studying those less grandiose relations that so often remain in the shadows of the international and those debates that surround the concept. Perhaps it might be time for the scholars of IR to debate relations, their (potential) meanings and what they (might) stand for, when they are connected to the term 'international'.

IR (as in "I are") is about singular-plurality: the international is singular, relations are plural, but when written together they become in and emerge of the singular-plural. The challenge that thus arises before each and everyone of us as human beings is one of exploring the junctures that connect our selves with others, and the withness that makes us all compear. Within IR, again, we would perhaps need to start exploring what becomes of the international when it is revealed as nothing but a singularly plural spacing. This means thinking of the infinite possibilities for political life within the international in such a way that always leaves our thought of 'community' – its meanings, scope and content – open. In fact, the community that I have sought to address throughout the present work, is in a process of con-

stant becoming that never actually becomes. Waiting for this community to take shape is meaningless, as it gains meaning only through our ontological exposure and compearance.

When we – as I now – think having finished thinking about this, we must start anew. This merciless task is never complete, but in the meanwhile we still must live our bodies to the full. There is no point in meaningless waiting as life as lived can sometimes bring us closer to that which escapes our thought.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Field data

Tampere reception centre operated by the city of Tampere comprised of an actual centre situated close to the centre of the town and a unit for independent living in the suburb of Peltolammi. Together the premises had a lodging capacity of 250 asylum seekers (150 and 100 respectively). At the end of 2006 the unit for independent living was closed down and the centre at the end of 2007.

Turku reception centre is operated by the Finnish Red Cross and follows the organisation's principles in its work. Also a unit for under-aged asylum seekers is under the same administrative framework. This centre has the capacity of accommodating approximately 200 people.

Punkalaidun reception centre was operated by the municipality of Punkalaidun and it had the capacity of lodging 150 people. The centre was situated in a rural area and it was known of actively encouraging its residents to work and study as well as the staff being active in finding work opportunities for the residents. It was ultimately closed at the end of 2006, but reopened, this time run by the Finnish Red Cross, in 2009 as a home for under-aged asylum seekers who had arrived alone in Finland.

Metsälä detention unit is the only designated detention centre in Finland and operated by the city of Helsinki. The unit was established in 2002, and it has capacity of lodging 40 people. The unit functions in the same premises with Metsälä reception centre in Helsinki.

Participatory observation data

Meeting 1:   An information providing meeting of the closing of the unit for in-
             dependent living. There were approximately 40–50 participants, to-
             gether with a senior officer from the Ministry for Labour and staff
             from the reception centre. August 2006.

Meeting 2:   A second information meeting about the closing of the unit for inde-
             pendent living. Approximately 50–60 asylum seekers and B permit
             holders participated together with a junior officer from the Ministry
             for Labour and staff from the reception centre as well as a project
             manager from the project Becoming More Visible (An ESF/Equal
             Project of reception centres to create opportunities for asylum seek-
             ers to work and study in Finland). August 2006.

Meeting 3:   Participation at the seminar organised by NUTUKKA-project
             (Nuoret turvapaikanhakijat kansanopistossa/Young asylum seekers
             in the folk high school). The project aimed at giving possibilities for
             education for young asylum seekers and B permit holders through
             folk high schools. September 2006.

Meeting 4:   Meeting between the Directorate of Immigration and B permit hold-
             ers in Centre 1. Besides the officer from the Directorate, present were
             also a police liutenant, staff from the reception centre, officer from
             the police's permit unit, the head of migration issues from the Eco-
             nomic Development Centre, nurses and a project worker from the
             Equal project Becoming More Visible. February 2007.

Meeting 5:   Meeting between the Directorate of Immigration and Afghan B per-
             mit holders. Two officers from the Directorate had come to explain
             and answer to people's questions and concerns regarding an updated
             country report on Afghanistan. April 2007.

Appendix 2

Primary interviews: the failed asylum seekers

Abdi: A well-educated Somali from a minority clan in his late-40s from
              the Mogadishu region. He has a large family back in Somalia. Abdi
              received first two B permits, and after providing medical proof to sup-
              port his claim, he was granted protection for individual reasons. Abdi

lived in various centres for almost three years before this decision and suffered from severe depression and self-destructive tendencies. He was interviewed twice in August 2006, and in addition we had several informal talks till April 2007.

Abubakar: A Somali B permit holder in his 20s. Abubakar had lived in two other centres before being transferred to this one. After appealing from his decision he had been working at various farms. Later he received an A permit and moved to live on his own. Interviewed in English, but spoke good Finnish as well. Abubakar was interviewed in August 2006, in addition there were talks and email correspondence till January 2007.

Abuukar: A Somali B permit holder in his 40s. Abuukar had lived in two centres before being transferred to this one. His family was still in Somalia. I interviewed Abuukar once in October 2006 with Ayan's interpretive help. In addition we had several other talks spanning from August 2006 till March 2007 and I was allowed to participate to a meeting between Abuukar and his social worker in February 2007.

Adan: A 30-year-old woman from Somalia with a 3-year-old son. She received a B permit, and has lived before this centre in another. Adan has learned some English during her stay in Finland so that she manages to run daily errands. She was expecting a transfer to another centre, as the one she at the time of the interview lived in was closed down. Adan had appealed from her decision. She was interviewed in August 2006.

Adil: A Palestine asylum seeker in his early 20s with a B permit, who had appealed from his decision. In official terms Adil had no nationality, but was not seen to qualify for a continuous residence permit. He moved from one reception centre to another after finding himself a permanent job. Adil's interview took place in August 2006.

Ahmed: A Somali detainee in his 20s. He arrived to Finland from Norway, and lived in a reception centre before being detained. He was returned to Norway a day after our interview in May 2007.

Ayan: A Somali B permit holder in her 20s. Ayan studied and lived during weeks in an institute where she completed comprehensive education.

She wished to continue her studies afterwards. Ayan had appealed from her decision. She was interviewed in October 2006.

Benjamin: A detainee from Ghana. Benjamin had lived in two reception centres before being detained. During his asylum process he had managed to find a job as a dance instructor, but could not be granted a work permit due to his status and way of entry. Benjamin was expecting for his appeal to be processed. I interviewed him in June 2007. With Benjamin I have ended up using data that may compromise his anonymity to an extent, even if some time has passed since the interview. He, however, encouraged me to use his real name in my work, which I cannot do because of the constraints of the research permit from the Helsinki social services. His name has been changed, but yet his story is not made completely anonymous.

Fadi: An Algerian detainee in his early 30s. He was detained in Finland for the second time, after the first time he had gone to Denmark and worked there, until he had been returned to Finland. Here he had lodged a new asylum claim, found himself a permanent job and started classes in the Finnish language, but then he was detained. Fadi had also lived in two reception centres before the detention centre. He had been advised to return to Algeria and from there apply for a work permit – for the moment he was waiting for his appeal to be resolved. Fadi was interviewed in May 2007, and in addition we had an informal talk in June 2007.

Farzad: An Afghan B permit holder and student, who after the closing down of the unit for independent living was transferred back to the reception centre. After receiving two B permits, appealing and being language tested, he ultimately was found to be in need of protection and received an A permit. Farzad's interview was conducted in September 2006, and in addition we had smaller talks till April 2007.

Nasir: A group interview with five Afghan B permit holders in their 20s. They had arrived from various regions, lived in various centres, and before being transferred to this one in the unit for independent living. They all went to school and studied. This interview took place in March 2007.

Shiva: A Nepalese journalist in his mid-20s. He arrived together with his

minor wife with a student visa in Lithuania, and after being to Austria, they ultimately reached Finland and applied for asylum. In Finland, the two were separated and Shiva was detained. His wife would have been given a residence permit, but his asylum claim was rejected. Ultimately the two decided to leave together, when Shiva faced deportation to Lithuania. Shiva's interview took place in the detention unit in May 2007.

Soran: A young man under 20 years old, from Kurdistan. He received a B permit in 2006. Soran lived in the centre, until moved together with his girlfriend. He found a job and still after 4 years is working there. I interviewed Soran in Finnish once, in addition we had several formal and informal talks spanning from August 2006 till April 2007. Soran also took a set of photographs at my request in order to highlight the everyday life in the centre.

Stephen: A Nigerian detainee in his mid-20s. He had previously sought asylum in Germany and Norway, but been deported back to Nigeria. He had come to Finland to be reunited with his wife and child, but was detained immediately after making his asylum claim. Stephen was interviewed twice in May and April 2007.

Tahir: An Afghan youngster, who arrived in Finland at the age of 16. Tahir was first granted two B permits, but after appealing he ultimately received an A permit. At the time of the interview he was in the process of finding an apartment, had finished the tenth grade and was hoping to continue his studies in a vocational school. He had lived in a group home for minor asylum seekers. My interview with Tahir was conducted in Finnish in April 2007.

Secondary interviews I: migration officers and centre staff

Interview 1: An individual interview with a senior officer in the Finnish Ministry for Labour. May 2006.

Interview 2: A individual interview with a social worker from a reception centre. August 2006.

Interview 3: An individual interview with the director of a reception centre. August 2006.

Interview 4: A meeting with the director of another reception centre. September

2006.

Interview 5: A meeting with the director and leading counsellor in a reception centre. October 2006.

Interview 6: A meeting with the director, social worker and a counsellor in a reception centre. November 2006.

Interview 7: An individual interview with a social worker in a reception centre. April 2007.

Interview 8: An interview with the director and leading counsellor in the detention unit. April 2007.

Interview 9: An interview with two officers from the Directorate of Immigration (now the Finnish Immigration Service). November 2007.

Secondary interviews II: other professionals

Interview 10: An individual interview with the director of Refugee Advice Centre, an NGO providing free legal services for asylum seekers. May 2006.

Interview 11: An individual talk with a lawyer from the Refugee Advice Centre. August 2006.

Interview 12: A group interview with a team of mental health workers in Tampere. June 2008.

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