Moving feelings, intimate moods and migrant protest in Cardiff

Alida Payson

Cardiff University
Email: paysonab@cardiff.ac.uk

Abstract

In a public mood of marked hostility around asylum, emotion overflows protest media produced as part of recent migrant mobilisations. Protest media seeks to touch audiences, to stir public feeling for migrants, to build a sense of collectivity, and to move the collective to action, but the emotional modes used also work sideways to produce uneasy and unpredictable affects. This article examines the 'cultural politics of emotion' (Ahmed 2004) in three pieces of media produced as part of recent refugee protests in Cardiff, Wales: a book of asylum-seeking women's testimonies, a series of anti-deportation blog posts and videos, and a 'Refugee House' museum installation. Feelings declared outright, such as love, rage and despair, work to move publics outright, but also relegate participants into confined genres of action and subjectivity. Uneasy affects generated through the media's aesthetics and materiality stir up other, more ambivalent and mobile emotional modes. This article explores the qualities of these uneasy affects, and how they might alter moods around asylum for political effect.

Contributor Note

Alida Payson is a PhD student in the school of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University. Her dissertation research investigates how people make a sense of place in Cardiff, a city etched by past and present migration, through everyday creative practices. To explore these practices, her research follows arts and heritage community groups and what they make, locally produced media about belonging and migration, and archives of street photography of neighborhood life. A recipient of a Cardiff University President's Scholarship in "(Re)-Constructing Multiculturalism", she is particularly interested in the way that gender, migration status and ethnicity inflect placemaking.

Citation

Introduction

In a public mood of marked hostility around asylum, emotion fills and overflows media produced as part of recent migrant protests. Uproar over the deportation of teenager and X-Factor star Gamu Nhengu in 2010 prompted the suggestion that 'mediated intimacies' and public feelings now drive the shape of some migrant protest and its political potential (Tyler and Gill 2013). In one of the cases treated in this article, at the height of an anti-deportation protest in 2012, feeling formed the crux of an exchange between protesters and UK Border Agency officers: 'mostly we got blank faces… Eventually some of them wavered', until 'another cop was welling up…She was wiping tears away' (NBSW 2012). Despite ostensible legal objectivity, scholars argue that at the border, 'whether out in the field or in the confines of the interview, a *feeling* is typically at issue' (Epps et al., original emphasis, 2005: 18). For migrant mobilisations in Cardiff, which join 'an explosion of "immigrant protest"' around the world over the past decade, feelings are also 'at issue', as forms of protest call on emotions as part of their performance, to 'move' people, including migrants themselves, and to catalyze particular affects (Tyler and Marciniak 2013). While substantial recent scholarship has explored migrant protest tactics, stories, forms and effects (Conlon and Gill 2013; Gill et al. 2014; McGregor 2011; Nyers 2003; 2004; 2010; Però and Solomos, 2010; Squire 2011; Tyler 2013; Tyler and Marciniak 2013), the role of emotion in them is less well understood. Indeed, scholars have described 'questions of affects and emotions' as significant and under-explored forces in migrant protest, especially how feelings work to recruit supporters, unite collectivities, or build solidarity (Però and Solomos 2010: 10, 14).

This article explores three very different cases in Cardiff, Wales, in order to understand how local migration protest media articulate feelings and stir up affect. Cardiff, built and shaped by coal booms, industry and migration, is now moulting out of post-industrial decline into a self-styled 'cosmopolitan', 'world-becoming' city (Gonçalves 2008: 1). While the city is home to 'one of the oldest multicultural communities in Britain' (Runnymede 2012: 3) and refugees have a long history here, rising numbers of people seeking asylum have transformed the city's landscape of asylum politics since 2001 (Robinson 2006: 7; Winkler 2009: iii). At the same time, increasingly hostile policies on asylum have eroded rights and degraded conditions for sanctuary seekers across Britain and in Wales (Tyler 2013; Crawley and Crimes 2009). The mood around asylum became likewise fraught and hostile. In response, in Cardiff as elsewhere, coalitions of refugees and other activists have organised, joining wider activism; their tactics include forming support programmes, forcing local government policy change, creating circles of mutual care, and staging direct action protest (Payson 2015; Però and Solomos 2010; Tyler and Marciniak 2013: 143-4). As part of these mobilisations, groups in Cardiff have produced photographs, videos, books of testimonies, extensive research reports, and policy documents; they have set up media collectives and written stories for local and national press; they have organized community events with song, dance, food and parades, staged theatre pieces, developed school curricula, and crafted museum install-ations, among many other works (Moore and Clifford 2007; Payson 2015; Refugee Week Wales 2013). This variety in the

kinds and forms of mediated migrant activism is hardly exclusive to Cardiff (Nyers 2003; Però and Solomos 2010; Squire 2011), and so raises questions about how such materially different forms of protest media might move audiences differently.

This article takes up how emotion works in three cases, first exploring how protest media call on embodied feelings, and then examining how protest media work in granular, subtle ways to create uneasy or 'ugly' affects (Ngai 2007) through their materiality and poetics, that might shift the mood around asylum. The first example, a book of asylum-seeking women's testimonies called *Seeking Sanctuary: Journeys of Despair and Hope* (WSSAG 2011), promises to move readers through getting close to abject 'others' who will earn readers' love. The second, blog posts and videos produced as part of protests against the deportation of Fariman Saleh and her two children in 2012 (NBSW 2012), explores how feelings of pain and outrage, or feeling 'for' others, move from one body to another to inspire action. The third, a 'Refugee House' installation and crafting event at the St Fagans National History Museum (Oasis 2012), draws refugees in Cardiff into a 'grubby' everyday homeliness. Each case also generates uneasy affects: a shared 'cold', 'stuck' mood, unresolved, restless fury, or an uncanny moment. The three examples treated in this article, then, form part of a wider politicised contest around asylum, rights and belonging. They express something of the ambivalence and complexity of the 'structures of feeling' (Williams 1977: 128) around belonging and migration in one local place. Theoretical ideas on how feelings generate subjectivities and boundaries, and how new 'mediated intimacies' might hold political potential

to change an ambient mood (Highmore 2013; Tyler and Gill 2013), help to explain how feeling and affect move in these media.

Feelings, affects and moods: theoretical grounding

Protest media reverberate with feelings declared and named: hope, despair, rage, frustration and love, for example. Named feelings mark vivid, dramatic emotional moments in the media. In the Cardiff examples considered here, one of the asylum testimonies declares, 'I was depressed, alone and vulnerable' (WSSAG 2011: 22); a blog post signs off with 'love and rage to all people facing detention or deportation' (NBSW 2012b); the quilt for 'Refugee House' bears tags that read 'Made with Love by the Craftivist Collective' (Oasis 2012). Sarah Ahmed notes that 'feelings become a form of social presence' and that 'it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces and boundaries are made: the "I" and "we" are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others' (2004: 10). Feelings trace some of the 'surfaces and boundaries' of communities of people variously involved in or touched by asylum politics. In declaring feelings, the protest media create subjectivities: they distinguish and articulate 'the "I" and "we"' of the placed and the displaced, the person with legal status and the person without, the righteous agitators and the numb bystanders, or those who feel and those who are unfeeling. They create the figure of the impassioned advocate, the despairing asylum seeker, the righteous listener and the raging protestor.

Named, embodied feelings are only one form of emotion in protest media, however. Brian Massumi distinguishes between feelings as embodied, bounded

and named by a subject who feels them, as 'intensity owned and recognized', and the amorphous and unfixed quality of affect, which he describes as 'the unassimilable' (Massumi 1995: 88; 2003). Feelings come up in a context marked – fevered, even – by an ambient mood about asylum in Britain. As other scholars have argued, hostile state and media discourses figure asylum seekers as abject threats to the imagined national body politic (Tyler 2013; Zylinska 2004). Over the past few decades, while policies have eroded protections for refugees (Bloch and Schuster 2006; Tyler 2013), widespread national media stories have also 'scapegoated', 'stereotyped', and 'criminalised' them (Philo, Briant and Donald 2013: 1-3). Asylum seekers function as 'revolting subjects', the 'constitutive outside' of who belongs to the nation (Tyler 2013; Zylinska 2006: 523). In a study of British media coverage on asylum, researchers note that 'there appears to be no need any longer to use negative words because the word asylum now connotes negativity and is still constantly embedded in a network of negative contexts' (Gross, Moore and Threadgold 2007: 6). The mood of suspicion and revulsion suffuses public discourse regarding asylum.

Public mood moves as an affect, a sensed but inarticulate force. Mood is perhaps 'like the weather', and permeates as 'shared, collective, and social, shaping our experience of being with others' (Felski and Fraiman 2012: v, vii). Mood works as a kind of 'attunement' to the social world that filters and sensitizes us to certain modes of being (Heidegger in Felski and Fraiman 2012: v-vii). Because mood is everywhere, 'tuning in' to mood involves absorbing and registering subtle cues that structure social experience and set up genres of expectation and response (Highmore 2013). For example, 'institutional attunements' inflect the mood of Immigration Removal Centres, 'performed through, for instance, bolting down tables and chairs in the visitors' rooms' (Highmore 2013: 9). Such cues might also be the shaky sobs in the background of a video, the industrial drab of a temporary flat, or the crisp white pages of an official case file, tuning the viewer or participant into the texture and feel of a moment or situation.

If feelings make the boundaries between subjects, then mood might be said to organize those subjects, to pick out some and obscure others. Indeed mood moves instead in an 'uneven and asymmetrical' way around and over different subjects, pulling some in and pushing others out; it 'calibrates the world - focuses aspects of it, blurs other parts' (Highmore 2013: 7, 9). Another way to say this might be that moods generate what Ahmed terms 'affect aliens', or people who are not in on the mood (Ahmed 2008: 11). 'Contagious' feelings or a contagious mood can't be caught by everyone, nor caught in the same way, with particular consequences for protest media that seek to share a new feeling or mood (Ahmed 2008: 11). Sticky, stubborn forms of difference, such as gender, class, race and citizenship status, inflect who can catch a mood (or tune into it) and how (Highmore 2013; Tyler and Gill 2013). Lauren Berlant argues mood matters because 'affective atmospheres are shared, not solitary' and can therefore speak beyond the individual subject to '*historical* time' (Berlant 2011: 15, original emphasis). Berlant explains that affects touch and form every facet of what we feel as real: '[affect's] activity saturates the corporeal, intimate and political performances of adjustment that make a shared

atmosphere something palpable' (Berlant 2011: 16). That is, public moods or 'affective atmospheres' both describe and give form to public realities and possibilities. Politics are always richly aesthetic, and aesthetics always political, especially around charged concepts (Rancière 2004).

It might seem, therefore, that the antidote to the negative, 'revolting' mood around asylum lies in positive, passionately declared feelings. Indeed, many forms of protest media, including the three examples treated here, do take up this tactic, among others. Yet the poetics, haptics and other material qualities of the media – the shiver of a handheld camera phone, the use of a metaphor of 'cold' in a description, the sense of home in hand-sewn stitches - set alight potent affects of their own. As the media touch and alter mood, elements of the political affects they mobilize are uneasy, 'ugly' (Ngai 2007) or unsanctioned. 'Ugly feelings' are 'affective gaps and illegibilities, dysphoric feelings' which form 'a mediation between the aesthetic and the political in a nontrivial way' (Ngai 2005: 1-3) – as 'irritation' is to anger, 'ugly feelings' are the vague, weak, less charismatic cousins of more positive passions (2005: 1). Ngai warns against cleanly recuperating these 'ugly feelings' as radical or even politically instrumental, however (Ngai 2005: 4). In the following exemplars of protest media from Cardiff, uneasy affects have a similarly uneasy relationship to political possibility. Nevertheless, they come forward in their strangeness and openings, beginning with a slim book of testimonies published locally in 2011 by a community support group for women seeking asylum.

Feeling close: creating an 'intimate public' through testimonies, abjection and waiting

Seeking Sanctuary: Journeys of Despair and Hope (WSSAG 2011) features the accounts of seven women asylum seekers in Cardiff, along with an appended 'toolkit' of reflection activities and resources. The editor describes its contents as 'intimate accounts that reveal' (WSSAG 2011: 4) the experience of being an asylum-seeking woman in Cardiff. Even as it is clear the stories have been transcribed, revised and the interviewer's presence edited out, often with pseudonyms, the book assures direct intimacy. Like staged performances such as the *Asylum Monologues*, which offers 'a first-hand account' (Linden 2012), or Clare Bayley's 2007 play *The Container*, in which actors and audience share a dark shipping container, many texts of detailed testimony work to pull their audience close (Price 2011). Intimacy promises a sensible pleasure to the reader – not only the frisson of horror close but not too close, but also a pleasure like the pleasure of charity or multicultural tolerance, in which 'one gets to see oneself as a good or tolerant subject' (Renata Salecl 1998: 4), capable of feeling love for abject others.

Seeking asylum in Britain and elsewhere, as others have written, demands the repeated production of testimonies of trauma with a particular violent, racialized and gendered shape in order to 'work' on the asylum system (Epps et al. 2004; Kea 2013). In particular, the genre of asylum testimony often frames the deserving subject as the victim of abject, backward patriarchal practices back 'home', demands intimate details, and frames Britain therefore as a liberal sanctuary from such abuses (Conlon and Gill 2013; Kea 2013). In a story following

the asylum system in *The New Yorker*, Mehta notes: 'It is not enough for asylum applicants to say that they were threatened, or even beaten. They have to furnish horror stories' (Mehta 2011: 32). Every account in *Seeking Sanctuary* follows these generic conventions. Through vivid description of beatings, rapes, forced sex work, hunger, boredom, despair, and desperation, and a speaking 'I' full of feeling, the stories all mimic the shape of asylum testimony. Zodwa, in addition to recounting her activities in politics, describes the three days in which she was 'beaten and tortured' (WSSAG 2011: 44-46). Constance describes the threat of female genital mutilation; Hope doing survival sex work in Britain; Jenina the 'scar' from being beaten with a truncheon; and Roma being imprisoned and raped for days (WSSAG 2011: 23-27). While abjection might first provoke shock, 'to "love the abject" … makes the loving subject feel better for having loved and given love to someone presumed to be unloved, but which sustains the relations of power that compel the charitable love to be shown in this way' (Ahmed 2004: 141). 'To love the abject' creates a sense of feminist solidarity; it shapes the speaking subjects as familiar 'victims of patriarchal power structures that have punished them simply for being women' (WSSAG 2011: 4), and inspires the reader to mobilize (implicitly her) principles and resources on behalf of this cause through the book's 'toolkit'. While the moments of abject violence seem to shock, to disturb or disrupt, they instead confirm the 'relations of power' that govern the production of asylum testimony and the politics of Britain's border regime. Feeling for others here implies an active, empathetic feminist citizen-subject to complement the emotive, suffering refugee.

The accounts also work to earn 'love' through narratives of being deserving subjects. To be considered deserving requires a migrant perform herself in a rigid way: 'to occupy the place of a "clean" subject - humble, disciplined, "invisible"' (Marciniak 2006: 34). Speakers balance between representing themselves as active, and risk seeming 'calculating', and representing themselves as passive, feminized, and waiting, and therefore 'deserving' (Conlon 2011; Mancini and von Bochove 2009: 119). They draw on narratives of good citizenship, plucky hope, ambition and self-improvement. Constance, a lawyer and activist, says 'I was passionate about justice and I didn't like what I was seeing' (WSSAG 2011: 11). She volunteers in Wales in order to be 'giving something back' (WSSAG 2011: 15). Shrouk, a teenager, shares her extraordinary exam results in Egypt and her university ambitions (WSSAG 2011: 38). Jenina explains, 'I try to make myself useful. I lend a hand to my friends, I help them ironing and cleaning' (WSSAG 2011: 29). They seize opportunities to fit in, learn English, and work hard. They also repeatedly offer thanks, expressions that '"return" the love of the nation through gratitude' (Ahmed 2004: 137).

Performing being deserving, however, also involves dampening and tuning out feelings that are the opposite of reassuring, which the accounts do unevenly. Rage, frustration, disgust or distaste for British practices, despair, feeling 'stuck', and exultation in tricking oppressors or the police all leak out into the text, and contribute to the uneasy tone also resonant in the book. Katarzyna Marciniak writes about the 'taboo' feeling of what she calls 'immigrant rage' (2006: 34), a rage that surfaces in the book in ferocious descriptions of the indignities of the

asylum system. Zodwa's negative feeling permeates her body, mood and the weather of the place she's in: 'I am cold. Outside the window of my Cardiff Council flat it is cold; inside me it is always cold' (WSSAG 2011: 43). There are other examples in which Britain looks ugly, dark or rough in these accounts, or British people aggressive, impassive or unjust, which tune the reader into a new mood of asylum: not of liberal, welcoming sanctuary for which one feels love and gratitude, but of troubled, 'ugly' discomfort (WSSAG 2011; Conlon 2011).

Love queered, in the form of unsanctioned intimacies with allies, lovers, employers, fellow agitators, with other forms of closeness and new family, further contributes to the uneasy affect of the book. Many of these intimacies at the border 'we might restyle, somewhat daringly, as queer' (Epps et al. 2005: 7), to include 'prostitutes and other people soliciting sex, unmarried pregnant women, … people who love those of another race or the same sex … and so on' (Hunter and Eskridge 2011: xi in Epps et al. 2011: 7). Shrouk, a lesbian, describes a tightly knit group of other young people, many of them also queer, who form a warm circle in Wales she considers 'my family' (WSSAG 2011: 40). Another of the women, who survives by doing sex work in London, wryly notes the words of a more experienced worker: 'she said "welcome to the family"' (WSSAG 2011: 23). Several unmarried others have children during the years of their asylum appeals, some with British men; in one case, the child, as a British citizen, becomes the source of a legal right to remain (WSSAG 2011: 24; Luibhéid 2004). These queer intimacies are often perilously contingent but vital to survival and new collectivities; they create a sense of a world in 'minor' mode (Ngai 2007), uneasily outside

heteronormativity or the law (WSSAG 2011).

The texts are also marked by a brooding, tense mood of waiting. Waiting has become one of the defining moods of asylum in Britain (Bloch and Schuster 2007; Conlon 2011b), and many of the accounts in *Seeking Sanctuary* describe waiting for long, indeterminate stretches of time. Shroukie notes 'every day, every week is the same' and feels like 'prison' (WSSAG 2011: 38). Zodwa echoes her, saying 'you're stuck in the house all day' and that she feels 'like a prisoner', her time punctuated by harrowing, required weekly visits to the police station (WSSAG 2011: 48). Vague and unpredictable threats and bad news haunt and saturate the days and bodies of those who wait. Constance explains waiting as 'moral torture, living with the threat of being snatched and removed at any time' (WSSAG 2011: 16). Shrouk describes her mother as 'living in limbo, just waiting for them…she's in a really bad state' (WSSAG 2011: 39). The mood of being stuck articulates itself in the banal hostility of the city police station or the alarm clock (as Constance recounts) that wakes her before dawn to watch for deportation officers (WSSAG 2011: 16-17).

Yet waiting also holds the possibility of 'waiting it out', of managing to evade the state's effort to immobilize or remove individuals against their wishes. While these women are waiting, they act and change in ways that change their claims and circumstances. Alison Mountz points out 'the ambiguities of waiting, to waiting as it is actively experienced, and to the activism that takes place in waiting' through everyday events (Mountz 2011: 390 in Conlon 2011b: 356). Life events – relationships, pregnancy, children, joining groups and churches, falling ill, volunteering and joining campaigns in

Cardiff - happen to the various women in *Seeking Sanctuary* while they are ostensibly 'stuck' awaiting decisions on their asylum claims. These events of everyday life challenge the stasis of waiting and sometimes change what happens to them. The mood of waiting is at least open-ended. Indeed, many of these accounts end with more waiting; endings that oscillate between entrapment and possibility. Hope ends her account wishing her life was 'just a nightmare from which I could wake up' (WSSAG 2011: 30); Jenina writes, 'I am still waiting to hear about whether I will be allowed to stay. In the meantime I try to make myself useful' (WSSAG 2011: 29). The affect these endings generate is one of suspension, of a melancholic something still-to-come, as yet undetermined.

These textual asides and details might tune a reader into a shared mood. This is not 'imagining yourself in [their] shoes' (WSSAG 2011: 51), but instead a sense of being part of the same uneasy mood - cold, immobilizing, suspended and only survivable through unsanctioned intimacies. These ugly feelings might resonate with a fellow feeling of, perhaps, being 'stuck' in an untenable, grinding role in a neoliberal society, of living in a minor (Ngai 2007) or major mode outside the norm or the state; the mood might simmer with a vague discomfort and insecurity around how and whether one has any rights, should they be tested. While such a mood of fellowship elides certain privileges (of citizenship, say), it does perhaps create a less hierarchical mode of affiliation from which to build a collectivity. While attending to the capacity of asylum testimony to other and exclude the very subjects activists seek to 'empower' (WSSAG 2011), the blunt descriptions of cold Cardiff apartments, the many illegal

or unsanctioned intimate relationships, the sense of being 'stuck' and waiting, break out of the conventions of the genre to produce other, potentially more mobile, affects.

Contagious pain and too much rage: protests and the politics of righteous anger

Like the book of testimonies, protest media generated around the deportation of Fariman Saleh and her two children from Cardiff to Egypt in 2012 invoke impassioned feelings and set off 'ugly' affects. An early action-call suggests protesters 'politely explain' the case and express 'worry' and 'concern' to officials rather than outrage or frustration (NBSW 2012); when these tactics fail, the protest media express cathartic, contagious, even liquidized feelings to mobilize direct action, document the protest, and garner public support. Instead of the materiality of a book, this case makes use of the way social media like YouTube, a blog and Facebook sound, circulate, and persist long after the original event, leaving traces of a trio of uneasy affects: restless fury, heady pleasure in confrontation, and a crackle of failure.

The Saleh family's deportation triggered an outpouring of public protest. Protests included direct action, a petition with more than 700 signatures, and widespread coverage in local and independent media (Law 2012; Hall 2012; BBC Wales 2012; Gaskell 2013). Shrouk El-Attar, Fariman's eldest daughter, then 20 and an avid community organizer with a separate asylum claim, documented and publicized the events with friends. The campaign produced petitions and fliers featuring the story of 'Mrs S' distributed in a local cosmetics shop (Give Her Sanctuary 2011), two videos shot on

handheld cameras by citizen protesters then posted on YouTube (John 2012; John 2012b), calls for action on social media sites (Hall 2012), multiple stories in local newspapers (BBC Wales 2012), and a series of written accounts of the campaign posted on the blog of *No Borders South Wales* (NBSW) (NBSW 2012; 2012b).

In media coverage, feelings became as much a part of the public story as the deportation. A video of the family's removal from their home was described as 'distressing' in a *Western Mail* headline (Law 2012) and as 'terribly upsetting' by a politician for Wales (WalesOnline 2012). The prevailing feeling the media convey is righteous outrage, or 'love and rage' (NBSWb 2012) as one protester says, and its conveyance is contagious, especially through expressions of pain. Manifest in incoherent sobs or wails and in abject fluids like tears, vomit, and blood, pain overwhelms the bodies of the asylum seekers, then the bodies of the protesters, then those of some officers, then some sympathetic readers and viewers. Shrouk is 'on her knees crying in the doorway' (WalesOnline 2012) and a later blog post notes, 'Shrouk's friends recall that she passed out and vomited' (P3 2012); most awfully, Mrs Saleh 'slit her wrists' in detention (NBSW 2012b). Protesters, in turn, describe 'reeling' from news, 'falling to their knees, weeping' and, as above, feeling 'terribly upset' (NBSW 2012; WalesOnline 2012). UK Border agents, notably the women, catch the feelings, too: 'another cop was welling up…She was wiping tears away' (NBSW 2012b). In this media, the Saleh family's pain and outrage passes in widening circles to others, ultimately reaching a listening, viewing public, albeit one at times unconvinced and unmoved -the dawn

raid video has been viewed on YouTube more than 33,000 times (John 2012).

Although righteous outrage has been prized by 'numerous thinkers … for its connections to justice' (Ngai 2005: 182), it can (and here does) also burst from righteousness into a diffuse, ambient fury. Ngai notes that to be valid, anger must pass certain tests: 'it is therefore not just any person, but "the person who is angry at the right things and towards the right people, and also in the right way, at the right time and for the right length of time," whom Aristotle praises' (Ngai 2005: 182). 'Right' anger can be shared and cathartically turned into justice and action. Outrage in the Saleh protest media reads as licensed in some cases, but verges on ecstatic, rebellious fury in others; protesters' anger exceeds sanctioned boundaries when it takes the form of virulent texts, expletives, calling cops 'pigs', vitriolic exchanges in YouTube comments, threats to local UKBA officers identified in the video, and the inclusion of punk or anarchist friends as fellow protesters. The aggregate affect is a residual static of excess, unlicensed fury.

The ragged, DIY aesthetics of the YouTube dawn raid video (John 2012) and the NBSW detention centre blog post (NBSW 2012b), both of which were widely circulated online, share and impress this outraged mood. In the jumpy cell phone video, the slurring movement of the camera and the distortions of the silhouette, shadow, and flare of sunrise reinforce a tone of violence and confusion. Now we see the sun just rising behind backlit masses of officers; now Shrouk collapsed and weeping at the open door; now the dark vans and many people in uniform; now a flash of her brother's red shirt. Sonically the video feels equally raw, as the argument of the filmmaker, the choked

sobs, shouts and cursing of the family and the protesters make the officers' voices seem surreally placid (John 2012). The rough quality of the images and sounds give licence for the outrage of the film's subjects, narrator, and other protesters. The mood both churns with and exposes 'the violence engendered by border controls' by making that violence visible and political (Tyler and Marciniak 2013: 143-4). Outrage runs through the several hundred comments and debate on the YouTube page where the video was posted: for example, 'this video is disturbing to see such a thing today in the UK is shocking'; 'this has made me so ANGRY'; 'absolutely disgusting' (*sic*, John 2012). The debate in the comments section also features some who express equally unlicenced hostile anger toward the refugees: 'illegal immigrants have to be deported and that is it'; 'now they want to live in my country? NOPE'; and (of the agents) 'GOOD !!!! Now send the other 100,000 back aswell !! (*sic*, John 2012). Outrage exceeds the cause and circulates among and between sides of the issue.

The blog post recounting the direct action protest also bears a charged tone of fury and 'fugitive' thrill. There is first a sense of conviviality among the protesters in the post, especially in the repeated use of 'we', 'one of ours', and in other collective terms: preparing for a direct action, people share 'an impromptu picnic' (NBSW 2012). The pronouns include an otherwise absent audience in the feeling of being part of the collective and the scene. The writer describes the events with filmic drama: 'we turned up … approaching on foot from the north in small, discrete groups who could duck into hedges and cover the white of their faces as headlights swelled in the darkness', and goes on, 'police followed, trying to pick people out

with torches' (NBSW 2012). Headlights and torches personify the physical presence and violence of the state, while the protesters are trickster shadows that can move, dissolve, and outwit authority. However, over the course of the protest, the protesters' physical mobility gets immobilized: 'physically restrained and overwhelmed, we could do nothing but shout and struggle as the coach drove past' (NBSW 2012). While the piece closes with additional information about the Saleh family, the detail ends here. This drama and suspension – of suspense held tensely in perpetuity – is part of what produces the ambivalent crackle of this account and much of the other protest media. It moves but cannot move.

To an extent, the media vibrate with uneasy affect because the protest fails. While the protesters talk and talk, the Saleh family retreat and are deported as 'silhouettes - possibly those of the family – waving' (NBSW 2012b). Local newspaper coverage of the deportation closes with the 'last word' of the UK Border Agency officials: 'unfortunately, when families … stay here illegally, our last resort is an ensured return' (WalesOnline 2012). The institutional cool of 'unfortunately', 'illegally', and 'ensured return' clash with the violence of the videos and other accounts. As Ben Highmore notes of the relentlessly polite 'pleases' and 'thank yous' in the manner of British officers policing people at the border, such politesse produces a dysphasia around the violence at stake (Highmore 2013: 9). In contrast, the mood of the protest media lingers – perhaps still – to move viewers and readers long after the event itself, even without a cathartic outlet. Like the suspended waiting or ugly affects in the accounts in *Seeking Sanctuary*, the

threatening charge in this protest media circulates unresolved.

Homely moods, subversive stitches, and craftivism as politics

'Refugee House', a 2012 installation in St Fagans National Museum of Wales coproduced by curators, refugees and asylum seekers, works in a more muted and everyday mood. The project temporarily extended the museum's permanent outdoor exhibition of homes and structures from across Wales, which date from the 12th century to the present (Hughes and Rhys 2012; National Museum of Wales 2015). Visitors to the museum move through bucolic fields and gardens, stone barns and whitewashed farmhouses, churches, workshops, vintage offices and halls; they can visit a row of ironworkers' terraced cottages furnished and decorated as they might have been in 1805, 1855, 1895, 1925, 1955 and 1985 (National Museum of Wales 2015). In contrast, the 'Refugee House' was a bare, nondescript flat appointed with cheap furniture, haunted by a few photographs. It presented a place of non-place, a kind of waiting room (Augé 1995).

The affect the installation generated was ordinary and banal. Instead of drawing the visitor 'under the skin' of an asylum seeker or inviting the visitor to catch a contagious feeling, the installation offers more surreal 'institutional attunements' (Highmore 2013: 9) by positioning a visitor in the situation and space of the local asylum system: on the dingy kitchen table, for example, are reams of letters from the Home Office (Hughes and Rhys 2012). The exhibition thus simultaneously creates a feeling of domesticated 'homeliness' and 'love', as in fabric patches reading 'Made with Love by the Craftivist Collective' (Oasis

2012) and disrupts that domesticity with uneasy 'unhomelike' affects. As the curators note, the installation 'explored the line between "grubby" and "worn"' as the participants were 'keen to show the reality of their living conditions, but anxious not to be labeled as "dirty" or "unclean"' (Hughes and Rhys 2012). The house 'domesticates' the otherness or foreignness of refugees to defuse stigma by everyday doings and patterns, but also disturbs the myth of liberal sanctuary in Britain. Wales, the homely, civilised place of the good life, comes to feel 'grubby', 'worn', and (implicitly) 'dirty' and 'unclean'.

As part of the project, refugees and other volunteers crafted a quilt made of stitched and embroidered panels. Some of the stitching features outright political language, such as 'Everyone is a potential refugee' (Oasis 2012). In *The Subversive Stitch*, Rozsika Parker traces the way stitchers 'have managed to make meanings of their very own in the very medium intended to inculcate self-effacement' (Parker, 2010(1984): 215). The project quilt evokes a cosy, feminized idea of home, subverting anonymous and institutionalized asylum, and also invokes quilting as a Welsh folk art, drawing otherness into the nation (National Museum of Wales 2007). In the juxtaposition of calicos, plaids, batiks and prints, the quilt stitches cultural contrast into composition, and past into present. The act of doing-together further reinforces the rights of refugees to everyday life and a shared, peaceful 'homeplace' (hooks 1990). If corrosive immigration policy has been framed as necessary to 'domopolitics', or the homely safety of the state (Walters 2004), this is cheeky 'Home Office' resistance.

The homely feelings generated by the quilt and 'Refugee House' may seem to sweeten the violence of Britain's

migration regime by suggesting an ideal migrant – home-bound, feminized, industrious – and excluding others. The potential cuteness of craftivism perhaps elides more potentially threatening aspects of asylum. However, like the AIDS Memorial Quilt, 'the world's largest public artwork' made of thousands of homemade panels in the late 1980s and displayed around the United States, the quilt in 'Refugee House' works to be 'incorporative' of threatening otherness (Gambardella 2011: 219). Some critics objected to the AIDS quilt, calling the project 'sanitized', and 'seeing an "ordinariness" in [it] that is both moving and unsettling' (Gambardella 2011: 218). Yet it is precisely this unsettling affect that serves both projects. By working at 'the line between "grubby" and "worn"' and the '"dirty" or "unclean"' (Hughes and Rhys 2012), or the homely and the deadly and obscene, the installation becomes uncanny, a false home, both familiar and *unheimliche* or 'unhomelike' (Freud 1919). Like waiting in the book of testimonies, or the jittery failed rage in the Saleh deportation media, 'Refugee House' provokes a sense of suspension and 'unsettling' absence. The installation becomes a home that is not a home, a home from which the home-makers have been deliberately absented. The aesthetics of the space tune viewers into it as a heterotopia, the constitutive opposite of home, requiring rituals of official purification and waiting to escape (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986: 26).

Conclusion

The politics of emotion in all three of these cases are complex, even conflicting, as are the implications for how to evaluate their efficacy or potency. The book of testimonies follows the form of a problematic genre full of feeling 'for'

others, but also animates a host of uneasy affects through textual details. These affects – distaste, a feeling of being stuck yet still changing, the warmth of queer intimacies – offer an at times disturbing sense of 'stuckness' for a reader to share. The videos and blog post from the Saleh deportation, redolent with contagious suffering, produce an unresolved, unsanctioned fury in social media that persists despite the failure of the protest's primary aims. And the 'Refugee House' installation, while explicitly articulating compassion and 'love', also creates an affect of an uncomfortable if uncanny ordinary. In a recent piece called 'How a Revolutionary Counter-Mood is Made', Jonathan Flatley notes that media like these are 'engaged in the invention of another form and way of being together' (Flatley 2013: 519) that allows for the 'attunement' of a collective that does not yet feel its own collectivity. While less directed, their aims less obvious, these uneasy affects also blur and shift how feeling attaches to different subjects – the passionate advocate, the suffering refugee – in protest media. All three of these texts work in various ways to 'change the mood' regarding refugees in Cardiff – to show it, shift it, play it – and mobilise different feelings and affects with unpredictable (perhaps uncontainable) effects. When a mood changes, what becomes newly possible? In describing 'ugly feelings', Sianne Ngai describes the accretion of 'a noncathartic aesthetic: art that produces and foregrounds a failure of emotional release (another form of suspended "action") and does so as a kind of politics' (Ngai 2005: 9). Uneasy affects might express the active, ongoing, mutable process of 'feeling out' who belongs and who does not, and likewise feeling out the way the mood around asylum (and asylum protest) might share its tenor with other moods of the

present, such as collective unrest about rights or place. These Cardiff exemplars speak to the complexities of the process of trying to 'tune in' to a new collectivity with shared attachments to everyday rights, a sense of shared place, or perhaps a new 'way of being together'.

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