Introduction

In March 2014, Home Secretary Theresa May ordered a review of the way lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) asylum claims are handled in the United Kingdom (UK), after much criticism of the way claimants are treated and decisions are made. This step came fifteen years after the extension of asylum rights to claimants on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in 1999. Between 1999 and 2014, the social problem of LGBT asylum did not cease to evolve and be present in public arenas, through a stream of cases arising in the news, and reports and court decisions aimed at changing administrative practice and improving decision outcomes. Since the start of the research leading to this book in 2010, the proliferation of discourses on LGBT asylum has increased even further, and the field is changing fast. Many of these discourses and decisions are motivated by ethical imperatives, pushing for the UK to treat LGBT asylum seekers fairly and humanely, and rely often on British traditions of liberalism. For example, in 2010 Ben Summerskill, then CEO of LGBT charity Stonewall, called for more to be done: 'Failure to rectify this situation raises deeply uncomfortable questions about our own society and proud national culture [...] Britain has a history of compassion to those in grievous and genuine need who seek shelter on our shores. In future we hope that compassion will be extended to all' (Stonewall, 2010: 4). The discomfort he mentions, as well as the invocation of a national culture of openness and compassion, are typical of the larger discursive environment within which LGBT asylum discourses are deployed, with a gradual increase in the quantity of discourses and political contentions about LGBT human rights on the international stage. Whether concerned with the hangings of gay men in Iran in 2005, the 'anti-gay' bill in Uganda between 2009 and 2014 or LGBT rights in Russia, to mention but a few, interested individuals are routinely asked for their signatures, lobbying power or mere compassion for persecuted and discriminated queers around the world.

All these campaigns question the multifaceted ways in which the UK (the state, civil society) should act for LGBT rights on the international stage. This potential for action and responsibility is a source of profound political *dissensus*, that is of disagreement over what LGBT rights are, and for whom

(Rancière, 2004a). Among the floats of San Francisco's Pride parade in 2011, one could *see* a giant puppet of Iran's president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad being whipped by man dressed in leather and with a nuclear bomb for a penis. A first version of the poster for Paris Pride in 2011 showed the French national animal, the Gallic Rooster, wearing a red feather boa, creating controversy among some LGBT groups since the symbol is typically identified with right-wing nationalism. Stockholm's 2012 Pride included a mock scene of hanging with an executioner and a gay victim with the word 'Iran' written on him. Each of these events has sparked controversy and disagreement over the relationship between queerness and nationhood, in particular the association of queer-positiveness to Western states and the ascription of queer-negativity to so-called 'Muslim countries'. These are just examples of a rising number of discourses taking place on an international scale about queerness and nationhood that either affirm that sexuality has become a divide between more and less advanced countries, or criticise such claims. This book focuses on LGBT asylum rights in the UK, not only because they hold a central place in the wider discourses, but also because they articulate the questions of queerness, nationhood and rights in a configuration that is particularly illuminating. Indeed, asylum rights are about LGBT global rights and how people are treated around the world. However, as asylum seekers are located in the UK, asking for hospitality, they are also a domestic problem, drawing from international legal provisions, which gives a sense of urgency to these global rights. This book therefore investigates discourses on LGBT asylum not simply as a legal question of equality and fairness, but from the vantage point of these larger discursive trends. This is an illuminating object because many social actors are involved: the state needs to solve the problems of fairness and population management that this (relatively new) category of asylum seeker puts forth; civil society is mobilised through advocacy networks and practical help; and asylum and forced migration, before even the 1999 decision to protect LGBT claimants, are already a heavily configured and rich discursive space. Asylum is therefore an object of choice to investigate the role of the state in relation to LGBT people, the production of nationhood and the rights and citizenship of LGBT subjects. The starting question of this investigation therefore follows Sara Ahmed's intuition concerning multiculturalism: 'How does the act of "welcoming the stranger" serve to constitute the nation?' (2000: 95) Starting from the premise that nationhood is a cultural artefact, produced to a great extent in discourse, the 1999 decision – by making it possible to grant asylum to LGBT claimants – opened up the question of potentially welcoming queers into the nation: what does this tell us about the way the nation represents itself in relation to sexuality and queerness? How does the state fashion itself in this act of hospitality?

How to claim asylum

After years of refusing to consider LGBT people as eligible for asylum, since 1999 in the UK it has been possible to claim asylum on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, a recognition that happened slightly later than in other countries (Millbank, 2005: 116). In their present configuration, asylum rights are framed by the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1951 – the 1999 *Islam v Home Secretary* Lords' decision made it possible for LGBT people to claim asylum on the basis of the Convention. A Convention refugee is a person who:

> owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (Stevens, 2004: 127)

The 1999 decision introduced the notion that LGBT people could be considered as a particular social group. Consequently, the Home Office has developed procedures to deal with these asylum claims and, over the past ten years, LGBT claimants have gradually become a specific category of refugees for the state, with their own characteristics, needs and particular challenges. At first, the Home Office and the courts insisted strongly that asylum seekers have a duty to protect themselves by hiding their sexuality. This 'discretion requirement' allowed the state to refuse many claimants; according to the UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group (UKLGIG), ten years after the 1999 decision LGBT claimants were more likely to be denied asylum than other claimants. While 73% of all types of asylum claim made in the UK were denied at the initial decision stage, 98–99% of claims made by lesbians and gay men monitored by the UKLGIG were rejected (UKLGIG, 2010: 2). Some of these decisions were overturned by immigration courts after appeal against the Home Office's decisions, but these statistics serve to show the virtual impossibility at this point for LGBT claimants to be granted asylum. By 2010, the discretion requirement had been used for over a decade to tell claimants that even though the state recognised that they were LGBT, and that their country of origin persecuted people on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, they should go back and live discreetly, relocated in another part of the country where they could start a new life. In July 2010, the *HJ and HT v Secretary of State for the Home Department* Supreme Court decision overturned this requirement and declared that it was not reasonable to expect people to hide their sexuality, as it is a fundamental aspect of their identity. This decision meant that rather than ask claimants to live discreetly, the state shifted emphasis to discrediting the applicants' claims to be gay or lesbian (Millbank, 2009).

The process of asylum application is long and complex. The following explanation describes its main characteristics in order to provide a general, rather

than exhaustive, outline of the stages involved. Asylum application can be made at the point of entry into the UK, or later in an asylum screening unit. In the cases where the claimant has been arrested or is being detained, the application can also be made to an immigration officer. 'Screening' then occurs: the Home Office gathers basic information about the claimants' situation and their claim, and subsequently places claimants in one of three categories: (1) claimants can be asked to come at a later date to give the information needed for the decision; (2) they can be placed in the 'fast-track' process, which means detention and a decision on the case in six days; or (3) 'super fast track', with a decision taken in two days. In 2015, the use of such fast-track detention was suspended, pending review: following widespread criticism about its unfairness and court decisions made against it, the Home Office accepted that there was 'an unacceptable risk of unfairness to certain vulnerable applicants' (2015: 2). This subsequent asylum decision is taken on the basis of substantial information given by the claimants about the reasons why they should be granted asylum in the UK: for LGBT claimants, the most important document to provide is a long statement (sometimes more than twenty pages) about their lives and what brought them to claim asylum in the UK. Other types of evidence can be provided, such as medical evidence (in the case of violence, torture or rape), testimonies from third parties (for example, corroborating evidence from a partner), information about the country of origin, etc. This information is assessed by a case-worker (also called case-owner), during an interview at the Home Office centre. Claimants have the right to have legal representation to help them, and most LGBT asylum seekers rely on the availability of free representation from the Legal Aid scheme. The scheme's limited resources means that there are often waiting lists to get the most specialised lawyers through support groups such as the UKLGIG. If their claim is accepted, claimants are granted refugee status for five years. They can also obtain other forms of protection, such as humanitarian protection (for five years) or discretionary leave (three plus three years). If claims are rejected, an appeal to the Immigration Courts is usually possible: a judge will hear the claimants presenting their evidence – which can be augmented from that offered to the Home Office. If unsuccessful, the Immigration Court's decision can then only be appealed in higher courts on a material point of law and not on the substance of the claim. Finally, if substantial new information emerges about a claimant's case, they might be able to start the process anew with the added material evidence.

Methods: discourse analysis and the social problem of asylum

This book proposes looking at the social problem of LGBT asylum from a discursive perspective: it starts from the premise that public arenas[1] are a site for the production, repetition and confrontation of differing discourses and

world views concerning what is problematic about LGBT asylum and how these problems should be solved (Quéré, 1991). The method used in this book will therefore be that of discourse analysis (DA), in order to look critically at the way political responses to LGBT asylum are elaborated in relation to how the problem is framed, understood and discussed.

The first identifiable problem in DA is its object and the designation of its boundaries: what can be considered as discourse and what kind of discourse does DA aim to look at? Being at the same time a very abstract and also widely used concept, discourse is a term with many different and sometimes conflicting definitions within DA. This research follows Norman Fairclough's distinction between two widely accepted meanings of the term (1992: 2–4). The first is the use of discourse as a general term referring to means of making sense of the world, be it in books, oral speech or non-verbal communication. This first meaning can be called semiosis. The second use of discourse would refer more specifically to a text or a group of texts which have something in common, whether it is an origin (such as political discourse, academic discourse), a genre (scientific discourse, political satire), a mode (narrative discourse) or a particular enunciative situation (media discourse, interview, counselling). This commonality relies on shared rules or criteria being respected in order to recognise what kind of discourse one is looking at; a particular text can overlap several genres, origins or enunciative situations at the same time. In both meanings of the term discourse, it is clear that discourse is a social practice: in the first case, it is a collective process that organises concepts, objects, representations, etc. in order to make sense of the world; in the second case, discourse refers to the differentiation and categorisation of different forms of semiosis, based on common rules and criteria. Therefore, in both cases, discourse is a collective practice which articulates language with social order.

The delimitation of a workable set of discourses for a DA of LGBT asylum is thus crucial: what kind of discourses can be analysed? A corpus can be delimited through bearing in mind, as Dominique Maingueneau does, that 'managing the archive is a dimension constitutive of the archive itself' (1991: 23), that is to say that building a corpus is not a simple act of invention, that is of finding, but rather an act of constitution insofar as finding discourses is also choosing them. This research, in managing its archive, proposes to beware and attend to the self-evidence of *doxa* – this study has thus a paradoxical endeavour, in the Bourdieusian sense that is a work aiming at displacing the naturalised, self-evident truth about the social world (Bourdieu, 1993: 159). With this perspective in mind, the discourses about LGBT asylum discussed in this book have been chosen in relation to the question of the power relations inherent to the processes of production and reception of political discourses. They are discourses which have a certain 'density' of articulations between processes of semiosis and representation in a space of communica-

tional interaction (Maingueneau, 1991: 21–3). This position towards corpus-building is close to Foucault's, who did not choose his material on the basis of a structure or a particular conception of authorship but 'on the basis of the simple function they carry out in a general situation: for example, the rules of internment in an asylum or even a prison; disciplinary rules in the army or at school' (Deleuze, 1988: 17). The idea is to look at the places where discourses most clearly reveal social machineries – Foucault's prisons, schools, hospitals, medico-legal apparatuses. These machineries contain a series of power nexuses that this book identifies, where competing strategies are deployed and resistance is exerted: human rights discourses and teleologies of modernity; homonationalism; biopolitics of recognition; and affective economies of pity and optimism. In order to inspect these four nexuses, the archives constituted and considered in this book are characterised by their heterogeneity – they account for the diversity of rules and constraints on enunciation, as well as the multiplicity of strategies deployed within these constraints. There is a diversity of enunciators, strategies and enunciative environments in the archives considered here. Looking at a variety of enunciative environments requires attention to the way each one, by having its own enunciative rules, limits what can be said and how it can be said. For example, LGBT refugees' self-narratives, when enunciated in the media, often rely on the use of the narrative mode to be intelligible (e.g. they have a beginning and an end, *peripeteia* ...). However, the same self-narratives, when they are used by the Home Office as a means to assess a claimant's right to be granted refugee status, must follow yet another set of rules, including – but not limited to – the ability to document one's story, the consistency of one's narration or the ability to prove one's sexuality. This book will be attentive to the way truthfulness is produced and assessed in public arenas, following Foucault's concept of veridiction, giving attention to the processes of production of truthfulness. It observes the relationship between objects and subjects: the conditions, status and positions they need to have in order to become legitimate objects of knowledge (Foucault, 1994a: 1451). Foucault articulates games of truth in three ways: (1) as a relationship between truth and discourse – truth being produced in the interdiscourse of different situations of enunciation; (2) as a relationship between truth and power – truth being at the meeting point of competitive strategies and the rational exercise of power; and (3) as a relationship between truth and the subject – the truth of the subject being the socially and historically formed basis of the possible experience of subjectivity (1984: 2–4).

If enunciative environments concern sets of rules regulating enunciation in a particular field, enunciative positions refer to the respective positions of enunciators within the diagrammatic space of power relations. These power relations are constantly shifting: some enunciative positions exert power over other positions, which in turn find ways to resist this power. This research assumes that the discursive spaces it investigates are populated by such

positions, which are at the junction of discursive and non-discursive fields. The power effects of enunciative positions and enunciative environments interact, and some enunciators may bear more legitimacy to speak in some environments, having, in other words, the right to speak truthfully. One can thus wonder how such a legitimacy or right is distributed among enunciators and social actors in asylum discourses. Likewise, are LGBT asylum seekers more legitimate to speak in certain environments than other people? Do they have a heterogeneous capacity to build their own strategic positions, especially of resistance, depending on the enunciative environment they occupy? The intensive use of self-narratives by the border agencies as a means to assess asylum cases puts the different social agents involved in the assessment process in particular positions. It puts asylum seekers in a position where their self-narratives must be strategically deployed in a disciplined fashion, producing the narrative of the good refugee; it puts the administration's officers in a position where assessing the truthfulness of these narratives is crucial; and it also puts campaigners in a position where they must deploy their strategy in relation to self-narratives.

In order to build archives that are attentive to these questions, great emphasis must be placed on the idea of interdiscursivity (Authier-Revuz, 1984: 98; Maingueneau, 2004: 127–43). The interdiscourse is a web of discourses:

> [it] involves the complex interdependent configuration of discursive formations, giving it primacy over its constituent parts, and revealing properties which are not predictable from a consideration of its parts. (Williams, 1999: 190)

This work will not look at separate homogeneous texts, but will insist on their interrelation: heterogeneity is inscribed within the texts in that they are part of an interdiscourse. In order to investigate the power relations at work within the interdiscourse, one must look at both what makes a statement repeatable and how repetition transforms this statement, thereby interrogating the conditions and effects of enunciative repetition in the case of LGBT asylum rights.[2] This book focuses on public discourses – it looks at the way public speech is organised in public arenas, how it produces a semiosis of the social world and the way it organises political action. Before giving more details about each category, a caveat is necessary, which is to acknowledge that differentiating a few major sources is necessarily a simplifying generalisation of the ongoing configuration of the different discursive formations about LGBT asylum (Fairclough, 2006: 6). The categories are not independent, but rather they are involved in strategies and power relations. This book will consider the following set of enunciative environments in order to observe and map competing enunciative strategies and positions:

News media

One of the most important enunciative environments for public discourses is news media and newspapers in particular. Newspapers may not be read by the same number of people that overall consult other types of news media, especially television, but their institutional position means they remain a crucial environment: they are a place of choice for detachable statements – especially as many social actors (politicians, activists), considering them to be the best place for detachable statements, tend to treat them as such, thus reinforcing this position. News media are understood in this research as the main social field for

> the social dissemination of discourses, narratives, ideas, practices, values and so forth, upon their legitimization, upon the positioning and mobilization of publics in relation to them, and upon the generation of consent to or at least acquiescence with change. (Fairclough, 2006: 97)

The media is a social field – that is to say, it is not only a group of agents (journalists, media corporations, etc.) who use the media as a space of enunciation. It is a space of mediation, which has a major role in the functioning of public arenas as spaces of public debate. Many debates about LGBT asylum rights are mediated via different mass media. The media is commonly perceived as a space of debate that makes the democratic process happen by providing a structure for a possible public sphere; however, one can also *see* it as a field of production, distribution and dissemination of varied forms of discourses. These discourses include debates involving politicians and actors from civil society, but also encompass reports, characterisations, narratives, etc. Nonetheless, the media must not be equated with a neutral space where discourses happen to meet and confront each other. It is an enunciative environment that is ruled by many conditions, values and practices, which make it a configurative space. It configures discourses in the Ricoeurian sense, in that it homogenises a diversity of conflicting and scattered discourses within a coherent and congruent narrative (Ricoeur, 1984).

The enunciative rules used in newspapers are constantly negotiated, reproduced and reinforced through practice, including through journalistic professionalism. These rules are not homogeneous for all newspapers, or even within a single newspaper: the corpus considered here will include broadsheets and tabloids, national and regional newspapers, etc. Some newspapers, for a limited period of time, take a particularly strong stance on certain cases (as exemplified by the *Independent* during the case of Mehdi in 2008 that is discussed in Chapter 2) but sometimes entirely ignore others. News reports may often follow the paper's editorial position on a topic, but there are sometimes cases of dissonance in the reports – providing interesting points where controversy and conceptualisation of the social problem deviate from established positions. Finally, the role of the media in public arenas is seen

as generating consent regarding social problems. However, the generation of consent must be understood as a complex processes of enunciation, deliberation and agency from different social agents within public arenas.

Non-institutional online media

This research also considers less institutionalised news media sources, in particular online platforms with heterogeneous modes of engagement and intents. Most of the caveats about heterogeneity concerning newspapers are true of these enunciative environments. Enunciation depends on the type of environment considered: online advocacy, web journalism, etc. Online campaigners such as AllOut (a campaigning group concerned with LGBT human rights that keeps subscribers aware of issues around the world and asks them to sign petitions, to write to their MPs, etc.), or 38 degrees and Avaaz (similar platforms with wider remits) propose a very specific type of discourse, subject to rules that have to do with their mission: campaigning, raising awareness, lobbying, etc. (Kavada, 2012). The corpus considered here also includes blogs, such as *LGBT Asylum News* which compiles information about ongoing asylum cases from a variety of sources in order to raise awareness about them – such a platform bases its enunciation on the two modes of news writing and campaigning as 'engaged' journalism.

Governmental discourse

At the other end of the institutional spectrum, this book considers the enunciation of national governments and their representatives, political leaders, governmental agencies, but also local government and finally transnational government, together with international institutions such as the United Nations (Fairclough, 2006: 6). All these institutions have in common that they are the policy-makers in relation to asylum – at an international level with treaties and the global management of refugee populations, at a national level with the integration of asylum within the problematic of immigration and at a local level with the management of LGBT asylum seeker and refugee populations (especially in terms of access to welfare). In other words, governmental discourses, especially official documents, have the characteristic of having a more performative value than any other: this is especially the case for Home Office guidelines for claim management (for example about assessing the credibility of LGBT claimants), or for reports from the Country of Origin Information Service (COIS). This set of social actors is rich in interdiscursivity: first, between the different actors themselves across different levels of governance), but also between governmental actors and non-governmental ones (such as academics, charities, think-tanks, media agents or LGBT refugees). The core claims of this set of agents are situated at the meeting points of different discursive formations – among them, one can identify discourses on the culture of results and efficiency (Bezes, 2009; Krieg-Planque, 2010: 7); discourses on

the management of migrants (for example, managing refugees with no legal means of subsistence apart from claiming benefits);[3] and discourses on human rights for LGBT people.

Advocacy and NGO literature

Reports, websites and press statements coming from advocates have a clear aim which conditions their enunciation: this aim can vary from influencing decision makers to raising awareness or producing research, etc. Such literature oscillates between trying to set the agenda, and positioning its discourse vis à vis the dominant discourse provided by governmental agents, either to offer new interpretative frames (breach in the discursive order), or to add their voice to existing ones. For example, certain organisations deploy resistance strategies according to their perception of (1) what is the most urgent and contentious point, (2) what will result in a sustainable political response (that is, audible in public arenas), and (3) what means (political, financial, human, etc.) are at their disposal.

Marginal spaces

These are enunciative environments that exist at the margins of public discourses on LGBT asylum rights; their main characteristic is that they offer opportunities for asylum seekers to talk for and about themselves in conditions that allow for them to re-appropriate their voices, often objectified in the discursive environments described so far. The book will focus on art practices involving LGBT asylum seekers: projects such as *Staying* in which lesbian asylum seekers created characters that echoed their own experiences, feelings, ideas. These environments are marginal in the sense that bell hooks politically gives to the way that experiences of women at the margins should inform the direction of the feminist movement (1984: 1–15). This book gives a strong emphasis to such discourses because they open up spaces in public arenas for the experiences of queer migrants and refugees, and enable the production and dissemination of experiences, narratives and self-representations that subvert the processes of conceptualisation, objectivation and subjectivation at play in discourses on LGBT asylum.

A note on terms: queerness, sexual citizenship and LGBT

A few clarifications on the terminology used here must be made for the sake of precision. First, concerning the names of governmental agencies in charge of asylum, the years between 1999 and 2015 have seen a great number of changes, transformations and re-distributions of the administrative duties relating to immigration and visas. This means that asylum cases over that period of time, when referring to the administration in charge of decision making, use a variety of names and acronyms. The most common one is that of UK Border

Agency (UKBA), launched in 2008 and scrapped in 2013 – many asylum cases discussed in this book are from that era. Another term often used is that of the Home Office, which is the administration in charge of immigration and asylum; because of the way agency names change, for ease of reference, this book will often cite the Home Office.

Second, concerning the use of the terms LGBT, LGB, homosexual and queer. This book will use 'LGBT asylum' and 'LGBT asylum seekers and refugees' when talking about the asylum process and the subjects it posits. 'Queer' and 'queerness' will sometimes be used to emphasise the production of subjects that are marked as deviant from heteronormativity and will refer mainly to queer refugees and asylum seekers and queer liberal subjects. The distinction between LGBT refugee and queer refugee will mainly lie in the emphasis placed on the subjective production of the asylum system in the former, and the deviance from heteronormativity in the latter. Because LGBT is the operative category used in many discourses about asylum, my analysis of these discourses will use the same term. In certain cases, in particular around the issue of recognition in Chapter 3, the terms used are more precise and only concern LGB claimants. The use of the term LGBT in this research does not imply that it is necessarily the best term to describe the people it aims at naming, and this work acknowledges the fact that the term LGBT refers to a specific sexual ontology, which is situated temporally and spatially and may exclude many types of non-cisgender and non-heteronormative experiences. However, analysing a discourse means working within its frame of reference and discussing it critically, precisely because of what it implicitly assumes in its sexual ontology.

The basis of this book being public discourse, it is important to note here that the marginalisation of trans issues in public discourses about asylum has clear effects: although the umbrella term LGBT asylum is most often used, the majority of discourses concern themselves with the situation of LGB people, and the issues and challenges encountered by gay and lesbian people and trans people in relation to asylum in Britain are very different: in particular, trans claimants face a further lack of training and knowledge from the Home Office, a common refusal to acknowledge their gender identities and acute distress in cases of detention relating to this lack of gender recognition. Discourses on asylum for most of the 2000s have tended to leave aside the situation of trans claimants, which is reflected in the corpus considered here. In addition, the specificity of the experience of trans claimants would necessitate a separate comprehensive analysis. Since 2014, a greater acknowledgement of the under-discussion of trans issues in relation to asylum and forced migration has occurred, both among advocates and intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the latter, for example, calling in its 2015 report for more research and knowledge to be accrued on the situation of trans claimants (Nathwani, 2015: 33).

However, the UK state remains reticent in taking the specific issues of trans claimants into account. This is exemplified by the omission of the situation of trans asylum seekers from the report of the Transgender Equality inquiry by the House of Commons' Women and Equalities committee, despite evidence having been presented by two civil society organisations (Women and Equalities Committee, 2016).

The use of the term queer is ambiguous and requires a few caveats. One use of the term can be described as an umbrella aimed precisely at remaining open to types of experiences and subjectivities excluded from more closed ontologies, such as LGBT. This use runs the risk of obfuscating the discursive economy (in academia, in activism, etc.) in which the term queer is inscribed. Sexuality is understood here within the larger theoretical framework of intersectionality as racialised, classed, nationalised and gendered (Crenshaw, 1990; McClintock *et al.*, 1997; Nagel, 2003; Pryke, 1998). This research will be attentive to both intersectional positions and the production of homonormative subjectivities. In particular, it will examine the consequences of this production for the potential hospitality given to LGBT asylum seekers. This research will question the assumption that 'queer' necessarily indicates a radical position, and explore its potential relationship in contemporary public discourse with normativity and liberalism (Eng, 2010; Eng *et al.*, 2005; Halperin, 2003; Puar, 2007). Such putative queer liberalism can be characterised by collusions between queerness, imperialism and white privilege. The main effect of this queer liberalism is the production of a queer liberal subject, characterised by a complex set of moral positions, sexual ontologies, relationships to the nation, etc.

This book looks at LGBT asylum discourses as a discursive space in public arenas where heterogeneous forms of the notion of 'sexual citizenship' are discussed, the concept designating here the relationship between the state and sexualised citizens (Binnie, 1997: 238). This book will examine the way asylum is conceived as a social problem around a liberal conception of sexual citizenship, placing it as a benchmark of what ought to be achieved by the state and civil society actors alike when it comes to solving the problem of LGBT asylum seekers. For example, Eithne Luibhéid argues, mainstream LGBT organisations have taken up the issues of asylum in sometimes problematic ways, reinforcing their own claims based within liberal and homonormative frameworks. As she notes: 'queer migrants provide the material ground for dialogue among others, while becoming silenced' (2008: 180). This book will thus propose that asylum not only produces LGBT refugee subjectivities, but also queer liberal subjects who come to exist in relation to non-liberal queer subjects. This project will thus ask: to what extent does the asylum system produce subjectivities, not only for asylum seekers, but also for British liberal queers, non-queer subjects, racialised subjects, etc.? Political discourses, media narratives, biopolitical practices and technologies of the self do not

merely produce excluded subjects, but rather draw lines of subjectivation for several types of queer subjectivities: in particular the queer victim that is a moral burden on the liberal state, and the protected liberal queer subject who offers help.

Book thesis and chapter presentation

This book proposes that UK discourses on asylum are not solely organised around questions of rights, but are in fact central to contemporary discourses of queer optimism in a political environment where inclusiveness has normative effects. It interrogates the bases for this discursive construction, the forms of such optimism and its blind spots, identifying the exclusions it obfuscates. Public discourses on LGBT asylum are organised around the relationship of the state and liberal queers with refugees – in particular, the understanding and representation of sexual citizenship and the value of LGBT-inclusive politics in the UK relies on how liberal queers feel towards refugees and how they are represented in public arenas.

This work offers a multifaceted argument around queerness, hospitality, nationhood and liberalism. First, a central function of LGBT asylum in public arenas is to (re)produce the political and affective forms of queer liberalism in the UK. It provides scenes of a geopolitics of sexual rights where hospitality for refugees has a performative value in relation to the representation of a racialised queer-positive liberal state. Public discourses about LGBT asylum are not just about the refugees concerned but also, even mainly, about a liberal 'us': from the discussions of rights, to the political emotions involved in the spectacle of refugee suffering, most discourses produce representations of the UK as a queer haven, and of liberal queers as rights-bearing political subjects and sexual citizens. Second, such discourses on asylum are based on the enshrinement of certain forms of queer optimism that shape asylum seekers' (putative) longings. There is irony in this process for it obfuscates the ways in which refugees are economically, culturally and racially excluded from the gay happiness promised by lesbian and gay neoliberalism, and even prevents their recognition by the Home Office in some respects. This book therefore argues that asylum discourses are organised around a cruel queer optimism that promises happiness and yet assigns refugees to subaltern positions that make this goal unreachable. From this proposition, a question arises: can asylum counter-discourses (such as the art practice investigated in Chapter 5) disrupt the normative forms of neoliberal gay and lesbian longings? Finally, the way liberal queers feel about refugees allows for their reconstruction as potentially wounded subjects that have a claim before the liberal state, in a process where solidarity is both an act of welcoming queer refugees and one of appropriating their pain and the injustice they face. In order to deploy this argument, the book is divided into five chapters.

Chapter 1 concentrates on the way LGBT asylum is narrated in public arenas, and examines the regimes of justification that form the basis for the way asylum is discussed, framed and understood as a social problem in public arenas. This chapter unpacks the way narratives produce a certain temporality for LGBT asylum which articulates past homophobia in countries of origin with the possibility of happier futures in the UK. These narratives thus allow for the deployment of colonial imaginaries of sexuality and migration, as well as expressions of the inherent, singular position of the UK as a queer positive space. In this regard, asylum is an opportunity for the public discussion of what sexual citizenship and rights might entail: LGBT human rights thus organise asylum's discussions of what a desirable state in relation to sexual rights might be. The articulation of homonationalism and queer optimism hinges fundamentally on these narratives which shape a shared understanding of the political problem of LGBT asylum.

Chapter 2 examines critically the way asylum configures and is configured by homonationalist representations in the UK. It proposes that there are three important factors at play: (1) homonationalist discourses need victims to be actualised, and asylum produces a vast quantity of the right type of stories and images of LGBT victims. (2) Homonationalist representations, although rooted in an imaginary geopolitics of sexuality, are centred on a function of producing the UK as a happy place for queers. Activists and politicians alike use asylum to deploy different strategies in relation to sexual rights in the UK, and in doing so exploit and adapt colonial imaginaries. (3) These homonationalist formulations of asylum have effects on the possible subjectivation of asylum seekers, who are perceived as embodying a fundamental disjunction if not conflict between sexuality and race, where agency and the possibility of reinvention in more complex ways are curtailed.

Chapter 3 moves to the administrative management of LGBT asylum seekers, and proposes that the biopolitics of asylum emerge out of a contradiction between the impetus for better hospitality motivated by sexual liberalism, and a larger culture of exclusion in asylum in the UK. The chapter shows that the focus on 'recognition' and 'credibility' that has sharpened since 2010, excluding claimants on the basis of a disbelief of their sexual orientation, can be understood as a clear strategic choice for the state which needs to find a way of managing claims that accommodates human rights perspectives on LGBT asylum within a largely exclusionary asylum system.

The last part of this book's analysis commences in Chapter 4, focusing on the affective and political economy of LGBT asylum. It concentrates on the spectacle of suffering that LGBT asylum offers in public arenas, and interrogates the forms of engagement that sympathy and compassion offer between liberal queers and asylum seekers. It argues that sympathy has two main effects: on the asylum seekers themselves, for whom it is disempowering and strips their agency in the use of public arenas; and on liberal queers, for whom

sympathy is part of larger logic of universalising equivalence between asylum seekers and them, which allows for an appropriation of their suffering in the making of political claims before the state.

The final Chapter 5 proposes that, in UK discourses, asylum relies on and reproduces queer neoliberal longings and aspirations: a staging of queer liberal optimism. From the way recognition is assessed to media representations of asylum-seekers' aspirations, asylum discourses rely on scenes of longing for specific representations of happiness. The chapter examines a cruel optimism that relies on neoliberal forms of happiness and achievement, which excludes LGBT asylum seekers from its very promise of hospitality. It ends with an analysis of an art project offering lesbian asylum seekers other means of expressing themselves than those offered in public arenas, and in doing so offers the means of self-reinvention and subversion of the hegemonic narratives of LGBT asylum.

Notes

1 This book will use the term 'public arenas' rather than 'public spheres' in order to emphasise discursive practices rather than the mere conflict or opposition of different visions and discourses. Louis Quéré (1991) proposes a praxeological model where communication is a process organising shared perspectives, without which neither action nor interaction is possible. Public arenas are therefore not spaces where different definitions of social problems are in conflict, and where the most accurate representation of the world takes over. Rather, they are the meeting points of different horizons collectively constructing a shared perspective.

2 Repetition can have several forms, such as a simple presence, coexistence, latency, distanciation, concomitance, memory or heritage. Each of these types of repetition corresponds to the way the repeated statement is articulated in relation to other statements, in relation to time, in relation to criticism, etc. (Derrida, 1993; Fairclough, 1992: 32–45; Foucault, 1969: 57–99).

3 Asylum seekers do not have the right to work in the UK, they are therefore dependent on state benefits to survive in their country of arrival (Düvell and Jordan, 2002).