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The Visual Culture of Human Rights: The Syrian Refugee Crisis

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The Visual Culture of Human Rights:
The Syrian Refugee Crisis

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Arts & Social Studies
of Bard College

by
Claudia Bennett

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2016

Dedication

To all refugees around the world I hope that you find a stable home, and that the events that sent you away from your nation end soon. And to all the heroes photographing the tragedies of our times, know that what you are doing is recognized by and inspiring to many.

Acknowledgements:

To Mum and Dad, thanks for the endless support system, even though you have been 14,461 km away these past four years, you have helped the entire way. Thank you for the craziest experiences in twenty-one years that anyone could have asked for, and the constant love through it all.

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To the soccer girls, thank you for all the gossip sessions, Dunkin runs and giggles. Soccer, lacrosse and baseball boys, thanks for all the shenanigans. And everyone else, you know who you are, thanks for being there to complain, rant or talk about anything. You have made my time at Bard amazing and thanks for all the love and memories.

The camera makes everyone a tourist in other people's reality, and eventually in one's own.

- Susan Sontag

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Introduction

Anyone writing a senior project on the images of the Syrian refugee crisis might have found images of people in boats, people walking together in a line or people piled in trucks. However, in this project I have tried to select images that represent a more nuanced or complex view of the refugee crisis. I have chosen these less stereotypical images to use as a case study of human rights documentary photographs. I have three reasons for doing so. Firstly, I am interested in exploring the idea of image fatigue and wonder whether these more subtle photographs can act as a counter to the lack of interest that shocking photographs have. Secondly, and related to the first reason, I am interested how aesthetic photographs compel the viewer, and how beauty, rather than violence, could be a call to action. Finally, I am interested in these particular photographs because by and large they have been created by photographers who were with the refugees or following the crisis for a sustained period of time and therefore can convey a rich narrative of the crisis.

The Syrian civil war started in 2011 and there is still no solution in sight.¹ To escape the violence, many millions of Syrians have left the country; in the summer of 2015 alone, an estimated nine million people fled their homes.² At least half of those refugees have attempted to make the long and dangerous journey to Europe; otherwise they are in refugee camps across Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and elsewhere.³ While most of the refugees trying to reach Europe are Syrian, the wave of Syrians has led to growing numbers of Eritrean, Afghani and Iranians joining the journey to a better life.⁴ Only a small number of refugees have succeeded: just 150,000 Syrians have gained asylum in Europe with over 85% of those

¹ Zack Beauchamp, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis, Explained in One Map." Vox. Last modified September 27,

² "Packed in a Dinghy with Syria's Refugees." Sky News. Last modified September 15, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2016. <http://news.sky.com/story/1550627/packed-in-a-dinghy-with-syrias-refugees>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Patrick Boehler, Patrick, and Sergio Pecanha. "The Global Refugee Crisis, Region by Region." The New York Times. Last modified August 26, 2015. Accessed December 9, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/09/world/migrants-global-refugee-crisis-mediterranean-ukraine-syria-rohingya-malaysia-iraq.html>.

in Germany.⁵ But many more have yet to succeed: some 850,000 refugees have yet to be granted asylum and are either in transit or are stranded in refugee camps across Europe.⁶

The UN defines a refugee as those who “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence.”⁷ Between 2014 and 2015, the number of people meeting this definition jumped from fifty-one million to sixty million; with the nine million increase being attributed solely to the Syrian War.⁸ There is no trigger, no exact date or a specific event that sparked the mass exodus of Syrians from their homeland. Rather the war has simply gone on for too long and there is no end in sight to the violence. Therefore, the number of Syrian refugees is growing and arguably it is the success that some are having when they reach Europe that is encouraging the wave of refugees that are following.⁹

Most of the refugees start their journey by travelling over land to Turkey and from there; they travel by boat to Greece, or more recently Italy. Then they mostly travel by foot, or if they are lucky bus or train, through Europe, with the ultimate goal of being granted asylum.¹⁰ The preferred destination is Germany but Sweden, Austria and Denmark are also offering asylum to a number of refugees.¹¹ Most other countries are either refusing entry to refugees or only allowing them to transit.¹² While the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has attempted to create an emergency quota system that would have required

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Jamie Grierson, "Refugee Crisis: Thousands Arrive in Germany amid Calls for Action in Syria - as It Happened." The Guardian. Last modified September 6, 2015. Accessed October 4, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2015/sep/06/thousands-of-refugees-arrive-by-train-and-bus-in-germany-live>.

⁷ "What Is a Refugee?" UNHCR. Accessed April 30, 2016. <http://www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee/>.

⁸ Kareem Shaheen, "World Leaders Accused of Shameful Failure over Refugee Crisis," The Guardian, Last modified June 15, 2015, Accessed October 4, 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/15/worst-refugee-crisis-since-second-world-war-report-middle-east-africa-syria>.

⁹ Patrick Kingsley "Refugee Crisis: Apart from Syrians, Who Is Travelling to Europe?" The Guardian. Last modified September 10, 2015. Accessed October 4, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/10/refugee-crisis-apart-from-syrians-who-else-is-travelling-to-europe>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Sune Haugbole, "Denmark Shouldn't Say No to Refugees." The New York Times. Last modified September 15, 2015, Accessed October 5, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/16/opinion/denmark-shouldnt-say-no-to-refugees.html>.

¹² "The Next Level of the Refugee Crisis," The New York Times. Last modified March 6, 2016. Accessed March 31, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/07/opinion/the-next-level-of-the-refugee-crisis.html?_r=0.

all countries to co-operate and support the influx of refugees. Most governments responded negatively to this: their citizens' are worried about losing their jobs, housing and other social benefits because of the refugees or more generally, feel threatened by them.¹³

The journey that the refugees endure is difficult. Many of the refugees die on the boat between Turkey and Greece and in the transit through Europe.¹⁴ However, there is no certainty of success; the refugees have no guarantee of being granted asylum nor any way of knowing that if they are granted asylum that their lives would be better in Europe. They have to make their way through a series of legal, social, political and economical challenges in order to even begin the attempt to achieve asylum. However, the refugees are still willing to risk their lives in hope of gaining asylum and a new life free from the terror of their 'home' in Syria or elsewhere. Most importantly the refugees are looking to live somewhere where the government respects them as human beings and upholds their human rights.¹⁵

Chapter Outlines

This essay is divided into four sections; a history of refugee photography and three sections which coincide with the three stages of a refugee's journey in Europe; the arrival into Europe, the journey across Europe and the waiting to get to European refugee camps. Each of these chapters includes images from a range of photographers. While the start of the Syrian refugees journey technically begins in Turkey, because of the hazardous conflict, there are very few photographers that are documenting the buses and other means of transportation through Syria to Turkey. And with only very few refugees gaining asylum so far photographs from their new lives in Europe, such as fig. 1, are also few and far between. Adding the very

¹³ "Understanding Migration and Asylum in the European Union." Open Society. Last modified October 2015. Accessed March 31, 2016, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/understanding-migration-and-asylum-european-union>.

¹⁴ Arnold Karskens, "From Turkey to Kos on Inflatable Boats – the Refugee Crisis inside out." The Post. Last modified December 9, 2015, Accessed March 31, 2016. <http://nieuws.tpo.nl/2015/09/12/from-turkey-to-kos-on-inflatable-boats-the-refugee-crisis-inside-out/>

¹⁵ Omri Boehm, "Can Refugees Have Human Rights?" The New York Times. Last modified October 19, 2015. Accessed October 26, 2015. <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/10/19/could-refugees-have-human-rights/?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&version=Mothers-Visible&module=inside-nyt-region&ion=inside-nyt-region&WT.nav=inside-nyt-region>.

beginning and the very end of their journey would truly represent the breadth of what the refugees endure when moving from their home country to somewhere new, the three phases I will describe give an overview of the current crisis.

The first stage of the journey I discuss is “The Arrival” of the refugees from Izmir, Turkey to Lesbos, Greece, a journey of five to seven miles.¹⁶ It is a dangerous crossing; the boats, measuring just thirty-nine feet, which would normally hold twenty people safely, have been packed with close to one hundred people at times.¹⁷ It is estimated that during the boat trip “more than 5,000 women, men and children had lost their lives in 2015.”¹⁸ The arrival is the most documented part of the refugee crisis with numerous photographs depicting the refugees landing on European shores. The arrival is accessible to photographers and one of the most predictable places where the refugees will be. It is also arguably the most newsworthy event: the public is intrigued and to an extent amazed, by the journey the refugees have taken to get to Europe.

My focus is on the refugee's emotional response to the arrival and aims to analyze the range of emotions captured by the photographers, emphasizing the humanity of the refugees. The photographs add specificity to the refugees as individuals and more importantly as relatable human beings, rather than grouping them together as anonymous entities.

The second stage, “The Transition”, is the trek the refugees take through Europe from Greece or Italy to their desired country in hopes of gaining asylum. The refugees are constantly being denied access into many of the European countries, in particular Hungary, who have explicitly spoken out against taking in refugees.¹⁹ Germany initially stated that they

¹⁶ "Packed in a Dinghy with Syria's Refugees."

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Team, The Data, "Death at Sea." The Economist. Last modified September 3, 2015, Accessed March 31, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/09/migration-europe-0>.

¹⁹ Matthew Weaver, and Haroon Siddique. "Refugee Crisis: Hungary Rejects All Asylum Requests Made at Border – as It Happened." The Guardian. Last modified September 15, 2015. Accessed October 4, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2015/sep/15/refugee-crisis-hungary-launches-border-crackdown-live-updates>.

would accept as many refugees as they possibly can and has therefore become the most popular refugee destination.²⁰ But the influx of refugees moving freely is now causing political unrest and tension in Germany²¹ and as a result, the Germans are rethinking their decision to have open borders.²² The dilemma for politicians such as Angela Merkel is how to act in a humanitarian way by doing what is best for the refugees²³ without being perceived to be taking away jobs, welfare or education from their own citizens.²⁴

The photographs in this chapter show the exhausted state of the refugees both mentally and physically, and the barriers that prevent them from advancing in their journey. The barriers are not only physical such as fences or checkpoints and people of authority who can refuse the refugees entry, but also the laws and regulations that they have to abide by to achieve asylum. The refugees have overcome the most dangerous part of the entire journey, but while most photographs in the first chapter depict subjects expressing shock, happiness and being surprised after finally reaching Europe, the journey through Europe represents a new stage of uncertainty; a stage of limbo. The refugees do not know what the outcome of this stage will be, but the realization that they have to move from one problem to the next is shown in these photographs, especially as the challenges often increase as the journey progresses.

Documenting the journey through Europe poses a series of difficulties for the photographers. Unlike the Arrival where they can be on shore waiting for the refugees to arrive, in this stage they have to make a decision about where, when and how they capture the

²⁰Jochen Bittner, "Can Germany Be Honest about Its Refugee Problems?" The New York Times. Last modified January 15, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/16/opinion/can-germany-be-honest-about-its-refugee-problems.html>.

²¹Arne Delfs, "Germany Battles WWII Ghosts as Merkel Urges Wider World Role." Bloomberg. Last modified September 24, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2016. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-09-24/germany-battles-past-ghosts-as-merkel-urges-greater-global-role>.

²²Ibid.

²³Mirren Gidda, "Angela Merkel's Hard Choice: Placating Voters or Saving Refugees." Newsweek. Last modified February 8, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2016. <http://www.newsweek.com/europe-refugee-crisis-germany-angela-merkel-424026>.

²⁴Ibid.

journey. Do they follow a particular family and physically go on the journey with them? Or do they stay in a location that is known for refugees passing through and try connecting with many families? There is no easy way for the photographer to seamlessly embed themselves in a particular refugee family, and therefore achieve photographs that represent the crisis as realistically as possible.

The third stage of the journey, “The Relocation”, is primarily of the refugee camps, but also of refugees waiting to be taken to or register to live in camps. These camps are essentially a holding area for refugees often for many months, if not years,²⁵ before they are hopefully granted asylum and their new life begins in Europe. Even in countries that are welcoming refugees, the conditions in camps are deteriorating. Photographs showing these conditions are hard to find. While photographs typically representing impoverished conditions of the camps, there are also photographs portraying the happiness and joy that comes from being anywhere but their former home where violence and oppression is a daily occurrence. Even though the camps are temporary stop for the refugees, they are the most permanent living situation that many of them have had in years. The camps are the most stable part of the refugees’ entire journey, and the refugees will likely be living in them for an extended period of time.

It is difficult for the viewers to make sense of the camps: should they be happy the refugees have made it to the camps and are therefore a step closer to asylum? Or is there empathy involved, as the viewer knows the camps are not exactly homely or permanent? Or concern because of the terrible living conditions or such a large number of refugees that no country will accept? These photographs convey the struggles of being a refugee, as camps are arguably associated with refugees first and foremost. However, while the camps are usually shown in a negative light, some photographs complicate this assumption as they show the

²⁵ Elisa Odone, and Alisa Reznick. "Refugee Camps Empty as Syrians Head for Europe." Time. Last modified October 27, 2015. Accessed April 28, 2016, <http://time.com/4063674/zaatari-camps-empty-syria/>.

achievement of getting this far or indeed in some cases, happiness. Not many photographs illustrate the refugees being happy and satisfied with their circumstances but many are ecstatic that they are no longer living in fear.

The most nuanced view in the current way of thinking about documentary photography arguably stems from Ariella Azoulay. In *The Civil Contract of Photography*, she discusses the role of the photographer, subject and viewer- a relationship that is applied to all photographs. However, her thesis is focused on the notion of being a citizen of a country and a citizen of photography. It is through photography that a citizen can make a statement of a claim to someone of higher power. Azoulay believes that everyone should be a citizen of photography in order to help themselves but also others. Everyone is a “civil spectator” and she explores this notion and affirms “the assumption is that the photographs show or perform something that is already over and done, foreclosing the option of seeing photography as a space of political relations. In the political space that is reconstructed through the civil contract, photographed persons are participant citizens.”²⁶ She wants photography and citizenship to go hand in hand as people are entitled and capable of both, and both can be free of sovereign power. She strongly believes that by taking a photograph you can help document for evidentiary, historical, social, political or human rights purposes, and succeed in doing so.

In analyzing photographs of the refugee crisis, I am critiquing the photographer’s ability to allow the viewer insight into the crisis without actually being there. Photographing human rights violations and issues is vital to educate the world about what is taking place in a specific country or region. Without photography and text, past violations would be unknown to the current generation and would not be recorded historically for future generations. During every humanitarian crisis, most of the photographs in the mainstream media are

²⁶ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, (Zone Books: 2012), pg 45.

almost generic, if not identical to other human rights photographs of other crises. Therefore these images are what the viewers expect from photographs of human rights situations.

By choosing a current event to write my senior project on, I am looking at photographs as it is unfolding and at the events that are taking place every day. Photography is immediate, both in the taking of a photograph and the distribution of it, and therefore can keep up with a rapidly changing human rights breach or situation. I have therefore chosen photographs that convey a range of refugee responses in each stage of their journey. I am drawn to why the refugees are acting differently, and the affect that has on how the photographers have taken the photographs. None of the photographs are iconic as yet (with the possible exception of *The Boy On the Beach* fig. 2). But many of these images will eventually become iconic once the crisis is over. I am looking at how photographers are documenting this crisis differently than in the past; in a subtler, more aesthetically pleasing and compelling way, and consequently they are telling a much richer narrative of the refugees journey.

Chapter One: Context of Refugee Photographs

There is a rich history of refugee photographs that dates back to the 1880's, the dawn of the photographic era. Refugees have been photographed in a range of historical contexts, including the immigration to Ellis Island, the Spanish Civil War and the Great Depression, through to World War Two, the Rwandan Genocide and the war in the Balkans. Henri Cartier Bresson, James Nachtwey, Dorothea Lange, Sebastião Salgado and Gilles Peress are among some of the photographers who have captured these events. And anonymous photographers, including other refugees, humanitarian volunteers and casual observers, have also documented images of refugees. Many of the photographs from these events that I will discuss have become icons and have a well-known narrative behind them. Refugee photographs typically show a range of subjects, including children and families, mass movement, refugee camps, and the waiting that refugees encounter in their travels. The photographs vary depending on who took the photograph, where the photograph was taken and the urgency with which it was taken. This chapter provides a brief history of photographs of refugees in order to provide context for the photographs I will discuss in later chapters.

Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, while perhaps not refugees in a strict sense, were widely documented by photographers. The United States used Ellis Island as the main immigration inspection station from 1892 to 1954 during which time more than eight million documented immigrants arriving into New York.²⁷ Alfred Stieglitz and Lewis Hine recorded the movement of these migrants to the United States. True to his style and the era, Lewis Hine took black and white photographs that are mostly portraits either of a single person or a family (fig. 3.) It is a traditional portrait of a single subject staring directly into the camera, with little in the background. Her clothing adds context for the viewer as she is wearing a

²⁷ "Ellis Island History." Liberty Ellis Foundation. Accessed March 31, 2016.
<http://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/ellis-island-history#Policy>

traditional dress and headwear. However, *The Steerage*, by Alfred Stieglitz is the most well known photograph from the immigration to Ellis Island, (fig. 4). It is widely acknowledged as the classic representation of the European movement to America.²⁸ What is not generally known, however, is that this photo depicts a ship going east, meaning that it shows refugees who were being sent back to Europe.²⁹ The photograph does show the cramped conditions and the dispiritedness the refugees have when entering a new country, which are common traits in refugee images. But it is a prime example of how the photograph does not necessarily explain the entirety of a situation.

Between 1934 and 1937, a severe drought and poor farming methods created a series of dust storms in the US and Canadian prairies. As a result thousands of migrant workers were displaced from a 150,000 square-mile-area during the Great Depression,³⁰ an event that became known as the Dust Bowl. During this important refugee crisis, workers had to move from rural areas to cities in hopes of finding jobs and a stable income.³¹ This era was perhaps most famously photographed by Dorothea Lange, who was among a group of photographers who helped the Farm Security Administration (“FSA”) document how federal programs could improve rural conditions.³² Lange took a series of photographs documenting the workers and their transition from their home to their new life.³³ She is most well known for her photograph *Migrant Mother*, (fig. 5). Not only is this an iconic photograph of the Great Depression as it exemplifies the conditions in which the families lived, it is also one of the most famous images in the history of photography. The image shows a woman staring off into the distance, with her two children leaning on her shoulders but they are facing away

²⁸ "The Steerage." Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accessed April 28, 2016. <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/33.43.419/>

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "The Great Depression." PBS. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/dustbowl-great-depression/>

³¹ Ibid.

³² "Migrant Mother, 1936." Eyewitness to History. Accessed March 31, 2016. <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/migrantmother.htm>

³³ Ibid.

from the camera. The background and details of the tent are minimal. The focus is on her gaze, which seems to look into the distance, as if looking into her future. Lange talks about taking this photograph in an essay,

“I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions. I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it.³⁴

Dorothea Lange wanted to pursue taking photographs of those in need because she felt that her images would help the subjects. As a result, most if not all of the photographs that Lange took were portraits. Her ability to be close to her subjects allowed her access into their personal space, creating a more intimate feel to the photographs. Those involved in the Great Depression were not able to gain a better life by fleeing—they were stuck in the arid areas waiting for assistance. Dorothea Lange and the FSA were some of the only people to take notice of those that were striving to survive.

World War Two led to the largest refugee crisis in history as many Europeans, but especially Jewish refugees fled from violence and killings to protect themselves and their families. Many images of the current refugee crisis have already been compared to those of World War Two, such as a photograph by Margaret Bourke-White, representing an over crowded train of displaced people who are leaving Berlin after the end of the war, (fig. 6). Photographs of packed transportation are common throughout refugee crises, but also photographs of refugees walking through seemingly open landscapes, such as an image by Fred Ramage of a family trudging through snow, (fig. 7). Both of these photographs resemble

³⁴ Ibid.

stereotypical refugee photographs, because they epitomize the events that nearly all refugees experience.

Robert Cape and Henri Cartier Bresson also documented events during World War Two. Henri Cartier-Bresson photographed the refugees that were displaced as a result of the war. He was a Corporal in the French Army and part of the Film and Photo Unit and therefore he had both permission and unlimited access to photograph refugees. However, he was captured by German soldiers and spent thirty-five months as a prison-of-war.³⁵ After his escape he documented the occupation and the liberation of France. Cartier-Bresson used a technique that he called the “decisive moment” coined from the 17th Century Cardinal de Retz, “Il n’y a rien dans ce monde qui n’ait un moment décisif”³⁶ - there is nothing in this world that does not have a decisive moment. He stated "photographier: c'est dans un même instant et en une fraction de seconde reconnaître un fait et l'organisation rigoureuse de formes perçues visuellement qui expriment et signifient ce fait" ("To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression.")³⁷ He is referring to the idea that a photograph is formed within seconds and it is by capturing that specific moment that a photographer succeeds in his or her image taking. If the image is true to the situation but also beautiful, it will be a good photograph.

Cartier-Bresson took photographs of subjects he deemed important based on what he felt the refugees were most strongly reacting to. His photographs therefore focused on civilians and their lack of control over the situation. One of his most famous works is “Gestapo Informer Recognized by a Woman She Had Denounced, Deportation Camp,

³⁵ Christopher Turner, "Expert Witness: Henri Cartier-Bresson." The Telegraph. Last modified April 12, 2010. Accessed March 31, 2016. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/photography/7572563/Expert-Witness-Henri-Cartier-Bresson.html>

³⁶ Shaun Fynn, "The Decisive Moment: Understanding Convergence," Studio Fynn, Last modified September 2012. Accessed April 28, 2016. <http://www.studiofynn.com/journal/decisive-moment-understanding-convergence>

³⁷ Ibid.

Dessau, Germany, 1945” (fig. 8). The expressions and body language that Cartier-Bresson has managed to capture shows the viewer the relationships between the subjects and how uncomfortable they are in this particular situation. The caption explains that the woman with her hands extended is Jewish and is denouncing the woman who is standing by the table. The woman at the table looks embarrassed and ashamed, while the other woman and the crowd of men behind her are aggressively outing her for her connection to the Nazi’s, as she poses as a refugee. The viewer experiences intense emotions, which stem from the main subject and her passionate interaction with the other woman. Cartier-Bresson documented during and after the war with evidentiary motivations in mind. He wanted to visualize the events that took place but also the reactions afterwards and the effect that the war had on Europe.

The Spanish Civil War also was extensively documented, but Robert Capa is the most renowned of the photographers who created images of that time. He largely took photos that were focused on refugees fleeing. His photographs capture the Republican soldiers and how they tried to protect those fleeing but he also represents refugees who are running for shelter during air raids (fig. 9). Capa’s photographs create more empathy for the viewer, whose feelings are directed towards the safety of the subject. The interaction that Capa had with his subjects prior to taking the photographs is apparent in his close proximity to the people he is photographing. The tightness of the frame and cropping creates a more intimate experience for the viewer. His photographs were meant to shock the public and show them the extent of the horrors taking place: he wanted the truth to be told through the visuals.

A more modern photographer, Sebastião Salgado has taken photographs of human rights issues worldwide, travelling to one hundred and twenty countries in order to document them.³⁸ I am going to focus on two of his series: *Sahel* and *Migrations*. *Sahel* is a series that shows photographs from Chad, Ethiopia, Sudan and Mali where one million people died from

³⁸ Adriana Goldenberg, "The Salt of the Earth: A Profile into Sebastiao Salgado," Miista. Accessed March 31, 2016, <https://miista.com/blogs/miista/63419653-the-salt-of-the-earth-a-profile-into-sebastiao-salgado>

extreme malnutrition and starvation between 1993 and 1998.³⁹ Salgado spent fifteen months working with Doctors Without Borders photographing the extreme pain, but also the strength and resilience of the refugees.⁴⁰ One of most iconic photos from *Sahel* shows four figures: two are children, one is a woman and the other is turned around therefore it is impossible to be specific (fig. 10). The woman and one of the children are looking directly at the camera, with wide eyes of hopelessness. The subjects look terrified and unsure of their situation; the affect of being wrapped in fabric suggests a sense of safety that they are trying to achieve. The photo is focused on the subjects but also shows the barren landscape that many refugees experience when on their journey.

Migrations was a seven yearlong photo project that spans thirty-five countries, documenting the mass displacement of people worldwide. Salgado photographed Jewish people leaving the Soviet Union, Latin Americans entering the United States of America, Africans travelling into Europe and other mass migrations. His working process involves him embedding himself with a group of people for months are a time in order to experience their day-to-day lives. This intimacy creates a climate in which Salgado's subjects open up to him. One of his more telling photographs shows a boy looking at the camera through a shattered window (fig. 11). There is a hole to the right hand side of the boy, along with the broken glass creating an unusual mystery that attracts the viewer. The viewer is given little context to interpret the image, but the boy looks nervous and the broken window suggests that something bad may have happened. The photograph is disturbingly beautiful. The way the light and textures are adding to the unusual composition compels the viewer to look closer, and therefore see the boy's terrified fearful face.

Ingrid Sischy has primarily criticized Salgado, for what she terms his over aestheticization and attention to beauty when capturing human rights issues. Sischy states, "to

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

aestheticize tragedy is the fastest way to anesthetize the feelings of those who are witnessing it. Beauty is a call to admiration, not to action,”⁴¹ when discussing Salgado’s work in her piece for the *New Yorker* *Good Intentions*. She believes the attractiveness of the photographs takes away from their humanitarian meaning and therefore everything that Salgado has worked for.

There is no doubt that Salgado’s photographs are beautiful in terms of tone, light, composition and the relationship between subjects and their background. Therefore the photographs intrigue viewers; the black and white allows for little distraction of the colors of the places he is photographing, arguably helping the viewer to focus on the subjects themselves. In *Between the Eyes*, David Levi-Strauss discusses the beauty of human rights photographs stating, “Why can’t beauty be a call to action?”⁴² And “to represent is to aestheticize; that is to transform. It presents a vast field of choices but it does not include the choice not to transform, not to change or alter whatever is being represented.”⁴³ Moreover, Salgado’s method of photographing by interacting with the subjects for long periods of time helps his relationship with them, which becomes evident to the viewer. Although some of the photographs are posed and not as candid as Cartier-Bresson’s, he argues that because he has spent numerous days watching and learning their everyday lives, he knows that what he is capturing is truthful.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, this also means the public does not see the photographs until much later, often when the event is over. Therefore any humanitarian response because of the photographs cannot be immediate.

⁴¹ Ingrid Sischy, “Photography: Good Intentions.” In *Picturing Atrocity*, edited by Geoffery Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller, and Jay Prosser, (London, UK: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2012) pg 90.

⁴² David Levi-Strauss, *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*. 2nd ed. New York City, NY: Aperture, 2012, pg. 9

⁴³ Levi-Strauss, *Between the Eyes*, 10.

⁴⁴ “The Salt of the Earth: A Profile into Sebastio Salgado”

James Nachtwey has been a documentary photographer for Time since 1984, has worked for Magnum Photography and is a founding member of the VII photo agency.⁴⁵ Before photographing the current refugee crisis, Nachtwey has taken photographs documenting a number of different human rights situations worldwide: "I have been a witness, and these pictures are my testimony. The events I have recorded should not be forgotten and must not be repeated."⁴⁶ His works from Kosovo, Sudan and Rwanda all specifically highlight the issues of refugees. Like Lange, Nachtwey mainly takes portraits of the people meets and believes in hearing the subject's life stories and the journey that they have taken. His photograph "Kosovar deportees meeting in a refugee camp, Albania, 1999" (fig. 12), represents two men, (out of focus) and two hands interlocking around the wire of the fence. The men are looking in different directions and are not interacting with the camera, but there is a sense of nervousness and hopelessness in their eyes and facial expressions. The viewer may not necessarily know that they are refugees but it is apparent that something is wrong. The tension in the intertwined hands also provides a sense of emotion.

Nachtwey's photographs from Sudan and Rwanda are more explicit and graphic in terms of the visible violence that his subjects have endured. The photographs of Sudan show widespread malnutrition. For example, a photograph showing a full-grown man crawling on all fours (fig. 13) doesn't leave much room for the viewer's imagination. Moreover, his photographs of Rwandan refugees waiting for medical assistance in Zaire and other countries show refugees lying on the floor in agony, close to their death (fig. 14).

Nachtwey and Gilles Peress are two of the most notable photographers who documented the end of the Rwandan genocide. They returned after the atrocity and took

⁴⁵ James Nachtwey, "James Nachtwey: How Photography Can Change the World," Time. Last modified February 3, 2015, Accessed April 28, 2016, <http://time.com/3693061/james-nachtwey-receives-lifetime-achievement-award/>

⁴⁶ "James Nachtwey." Escape into Life. Accessed April 28, 2016. <http://www.escapeintolife.com/artist-watch/james-nachtwey/>

photographs of those who had survived, who were suffering both physical and emotionally, the conditions of the dead and how they were buried, and the state of the landscape. Both men photographed the destruction believing that if they did it well, the rest of the world could have stopped parts of, if not most of the genocide. The images are heart wrenching and graphic; they do not avoid any detail.

Gilles Peress took many of his Rwanda photographs facing the camera towards the ground, showing the bodies that had been left to decompose (fig. 15) and weapons that the Hutu's ditched when fleeing to Tanzania (fig. 16). Nachtwey on the other hand, continues with his style of portraiture and takes photographs of survivors with their scars and other physical aftereffects of the violence visible to the naked eye (fig. 17). The scars reflect the pain and suffering that the subject has endured and how they were treated for not supporting the genocide. In a way the Rwandan tragedy exemplifies the good and the bad refugees, the ones who were leaving to save their life compared to those who were leaving to save themselves from persecution.

Peress' book "Farewell to Bosnia" was one of his first photographic assignments, and takes the viewer through the lives of the refugees and their mistreatment during the Bosnian war. This series includes portraits of the amputees in hospital (fig. 18), as well as those fleeing the violence or being escorted away (fig. 19). Figure eighteen shows girl with an amputation who is spattered in blood looking straight at the camera, while figure nineteen only shows hands from inside the car and up against the car window. Both photographs show devastation in different ways and graphically connect the viewer to the subjects' lives as refugees.

Peress also photographed Kosovo, along with Magnum photographer Ron Haviv. While Haviv photographed in color, Peress stayed with the black and white that he is accustomed to. Most of Peress' photographs are in his book "A Village Destroyed, May 14th

1999,” and they are close-ups and details of items and objects, similar to the style of his Rwandan photographs. One favored photograph however, is of two women and a child, with the mountains in the background (fig. 20). The boy is hidden under the fur jacket that the women are wrapped in, and is peering out of the bottom right hand corner almost going unnoticed to the viewer. He is the only figure looking straight at the camera, whereas the two women are looking in the same direction, at something unknown to the viewer, with disgusted looks.

Haviv on the other hand, photographed the intensity of the chaos through citizens running away from police officers chasing them. He was in the heart of the situation and tried to document the magnitude of violence and the reactions of those involved. One of Haviv’s photographs in the series “Blood and Honey” is of a child being baptized lying down on top of a piece of cloth, placed on the grass, (fig. 21). This depicts the normal events that the refugees still want to experience even when they are running from violence. It is not typical of a humanitarian crisis, but it does humanize the subjects in the photo. Furthering the concept of humanizing the refugees is a photograph of Kosovo, of two figures assumingly a mother and son (fig. 22). The mother is staring longingly into the camera, while she holds tightly onto her son as if to protect him from whatever is outside the vegetal oasis in which they are situated. This image could be a simple portrait of any family but the direct eye contact with the camera and the sadness in the mother’s eyes suggests something is wrong.

The style of refugee photographs has changed overtime, but it will be apparent from the rest of this essay that certain characteristics of refugee photography have been consistent. Alfred Stieglitz while photographing Ellis Island initially wanted his photographs to be purely evidentiary but by focusing on specific families or people or the entire boats, he may not have been as true to the situation as the viewers thought. Stieglitz managed to completely capture the arrival onto Ellis Island but the interpretation of the photographs is distorted.

Dorothea Lange was driven by the effect of the photographs and how they could cause action and help the subjects. Whether or not she succeeded is unknown but the historical impact of her photographs has been enormous.

Cartier-Bresson and Lange are similar in the way that to a certain extent they entered the refugees' lives to take the photographs, and hoped to invoke empathy in the viewer. Cartier-Bresson didn't necessarily expect action, because his photographs were published after the war was over so the impact was not immediate. Robert Capa's photographs were also made public after the Spanish Civil War ended but they still succeeded in what he had hoped to achieve: shocking the public with a true representation of the atrocity. He wanted to show the horrors that were taking place in a graphic way, so that the perpetrators could be reprimanded and stop the events from reoccurring in the future. On the other hand, Sebastião Salgado's technique of making the photographs extremely beautiful and visually pleasing creates a different feel for the viewer. Although the photographs are of humanitarian crises, they do not always feel as if they are because of their beauty. Moreover, he spends a large portion of time with those who are in need, so his photographs cannot get an immediate response. Yet many of the issues he deals with are ongoing and the photographs do provoke interest and increase knowledge of what is happening worldwide.

James Nachtwey photos are known for the way in which he tries to represent the subjects in the truest form possible. Like Salgado, he likes to interact with his subjects and does not leave out any details for the viewer. He wants to document these events so that they do not happen again, but also so that these catastrophes are remembered and those who lost their lives are not forgotten. Gilles Peress is similar in his mindset, trying to document as realistically as possible for the viewer causing both shock and empathy. The images can depict the events that are occurring or that have occurred so that they are known by most, but by doing so in a photographically interesting way, the viewer is intrigued by the photographs.

By going through the images that have been taken of other refugee crises, I have aimed to have a frame of reference for the proceeding photographs of the current refugee crisis. Despite the fact that none of the photographs I will discuss are iconic as of yet, many do employ similar traits to the photographs in this first chapter. The photographs in Chapter Two, Three and Four, will eventually part of the entire scope of the history of refugees and although it is impossible to tell what photographs of the current crisis will be impactful on history, these photographs are a component of the history of photography and specifically human rights documentary. Photographs are now a vital aspect to educating the world about human rights violations. By chronologically going through how photographs are similar or different in the way they represent the refugee crises, I hope to gain insight into the photographs that follow and how they build upon or enhance the tradition of refugee photography.

Chapter Two: The Arrival

In 2015 over a million refugees arrived in Europe, almost all by boats after having travelled across the Aegean Sea.⁴⁷ Rather than living in war-torn or violence-ridden countries, the refugees are gambling on Europe to recognize and implement their universal human rights. They are hoping to be protected by other nations who will place more value their lives than their homeland. It is estimated that “more than 5,000 women, men and children had lost their lives (in 2015) “in search of protection and a better life.”⁴⁸ The cost of the trip to Greece could be upwards of \$2000; however, those who can afford it desire the attempt at a new life, and therefore it is a risk that many are willing to take.

There is no ‘correct’ or ‘typical’ way for a refugee to arrive at a destination that can lead them to a new home. There is no manual that states how to escape violence and safely reach another country with a guarantee of asylum. And more importantly, there is no exact way for outsiders to understand the true emotions of the refugees as they arrive to a new place, except in the unlikely event they have experienced it themselves. Photographs provide the closest art form to the reality of a situation and consequently can evoke the refugee’s arrival as close to the truth as artistically possible.

In many humanitarian crises, those being violated are visually depicted in groups as they are seen as a collective entity experiencing the same things, rather than individual human beings. The eight photographs that I have selected for Chapter One depict the immediate reactions and emotions of individuals or small groups of refugees as they arrive on shore. These photographs show the refugees’ realization that their dreams of a new life is closer to becoming a reality, especially as the most dangerous part of the voyage is over. The

⁴⁷ Lynsey Addario, "The Historic Scale of Syria’s Refugee Crisis," TheNew York Times. Last modified August 11, 2015. Accessed October 4, 2015 <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/10/16/world/middleeast/syrian-refugee-crisis-photos.html>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

refugees deal with the success of their arrival and how they process arriving on shore, in different ways.

These eight photographs, out of the hundreds that I collected through articles and photography agencies, highlight the diverse emotions of the refugees in this particular stage. While a viewer never exactly knows what the subjects were feeling when the photo was taken, or understand the motivation or manipulation of the photographer, my interpretation of these photographs is that they depict shock, fear, happiness, optimism, and apathy. While these may not be the same emotions other viewers see when looking at these images, it is almost certain that these photos are of the raw emotions of the refugees as they arrived on shore; arguably this significant moment would be very challenging to distort or misinterpret emotions.

The first two photographs show the shock of the subjects through the way they embrace or separate from each other. The first is of three women wrapped in metallic weather protection blankets taken by an unknown photographer from the Turkish-based Anadolu Agency (fig. 23). The three women are not looking at the camera, and they appear to be sitting on a ledge against a fence, with trees in the background. The figure on the left is looking out of the frame in that direction, the middle figure is looking down with her left hand over her mouth and appears to be on the phone, while the figure on the right is stretching her hijab so that it covers her eyes and nose, but is adjusted to face slightly to the right. It seems as if all the women have been crying and the one concealing her face almost gives the impression of being ashamed and not wanting to be photographed. It can be assumed that the middle figure is calling someone back 'home' to tell them of her safe arrival in Europe. Even though the women appear to be having the same response to arriving, there is a lack of interaction between them: it seems that they are too shocked to share the experience of what just occurred.

Many of the photographs from the arrival stage are of families or friends embracing each other and sharing the emotions of their success, such as a photography by Paolo Pellegrin, from a series taken in Lesbos, Greece (fig. 24). The viewer can see that three of the figures are smoking cigarettes: did the cigarettes make the journey or have they been given the subjects when they made it to shore? As smoking is a habit, are the cigarettes a calming factor for the subjects as a reminder of home? The cigarettes may be one consistent item that will be with them throughout the entire journey, and will not change regardless of where they came from or where they end up. Despite this, it is the hug that captures the viewer's attention; the personal moment that the viewer has been allowed to witness is charming. The hug seems confidential yet the viewer has been granted admission to it. The image almost feels intrusive as if the viewer should not be looking at such a special instance for the refugees.

Both groups of figures are reacting to the event that has just taken place moments before. The Pellegrin photograph is a private caress; it seems to be an accurate insight into what the refugee's experience when they have just arrived. On the other hand, the three women seem more in disbelief and a degree of sadness is evident in their expressions. They seem to be in such shock that they do not know how to react. Although both images depict a version of shock, they cause empathy or pity for the viewer in distinct ways. The concern that critics and viewers alike have is that the images won't be detailed enough to be sufficiently upsetting and attract the viewer. This stems from the notion that typical human rights photographs are meant to cause emotions from the viewer, so that they want to help the subjects. Even though these photographs create emotion for the viewer, neither group seems desperate or in dire need of help.

The next two photographs that I will discuss are of children and highlight the fear of the journey and the unpredictability of what may lie ahead. The first one, by Petros

Giannakouris, is of three figures, but only the child is fully visible to the viewer (fig. 25). The figure on the left is apparent through their right leg and hands, as they are touching the second figure, who is sitting down. This figure is presumably the child's mother but the pink rubber ring that the child is holding blocks the face. The figure on the left could plausibly be a volunteer helping the others get onto shore. This photograph is obviously taken immediately on their arrival because the two figures are still in the rubber dinghy. The girl's face peers out of the hole in the ring, and she looks as if she has been hysterically crying, in an uncontrollable way. The child is looking into the camera and is grabbing onto the rubber ring as if it is giving her physical support or perhaps a sense of emotional security. It may be that she has held on to the rubber ring for the entirety of the journey and therefore she feels protected by it. The girl clearly must not be exactly sure what is happening and why her family took a treacherous journey to an unknown place, emotions that are apparent in her expression. The image is especially moving as it is conveyed through a confused child's perspective. The viewer is probably aware that children are initially the most traumatized because they cannot comprehend the change in their life or why it is happening.

Judith Butler writes that photographs can verify what the viewer thinks they already know, "they must have a transitive function: they must act on viewers in ways that bear directly on the judgments that viewers formulate about the world."⁴⁹ The narratives of this photo and many other photographs that are taken of the refugee crisis primarily show the distraught reactions of the refugees when arriving on shore. The refugees are both physically and mentally exhausted from not sleeping or eating in days and therefore often appear delusional. But the viewer most likely does not know the backstory of the refugees nor the way that an image has the capacity to fabricate events. The photo is only a fragment in time, a prompt image of the arrival; for example, the child may have calmed down soon after. The

⁴⁹ Judith Butler *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London, UK: Verso, 2009) pg 68.

mother seems to be trying to comfort the little girl, but Giannakouris has caught her attention and she is conscious of the stranger. The image in some ways could be an illusion and not the full truth of the situation. Children arguably gives the most honest responses as they have yet to develop societal norms that determine what the right time and place is to be emotional and how to conceal their emotion if needed.

Matic Zorman, a Slovenian photojournalist, documents humanitarian issues that stem from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In order to take this photograph of two girls, Zorman positioned himself at the girls' eye level (fig 26.). The caption reads, "a child is covered with a raincoat while she waits in line to register, " representing a fraction of the refugee's journey: the immediate waiting that occurs after the arrival. The photograph has a violent and gruesome quality to it, as the plastic raincoat that is intended to protect the girl is situated over her face in such a way that the crinkles have formed creating the misconception that she is being suffocated. Moreover, the image shows her peeking through a vertical fence that almost resembles a jail cell, with her hands clasped around the poles, creating an illusion that she needs help. The girl is looking out of the right hand side of the frame, while her body is square with the camera, which adds an intriguing dynamic for the viewer, as we are unsure what has caught her attention, especially because the girl behind her is facing the camera.

The combination of the subject looking away and the plastic covering over her face creates a sinister and mysterious dimension to the photograph, and by extension the refugee crisis in general. The girl does not look like she is in pain, nor does it seem that anyone is concerned; therefore, the plastic taken at face value is coverage from the rain. But it is the way she is holding the fence and pressed up against it that seems frightful and alarming for the viewer. Due to the proximity of the photographer, the girl must be conscious of how close he is and that her actions are being recorded. While her thinking cannot be determined, her posture feels purposeful to the viewer; the eye roll to the right and the effort of clutching the

fence could almost be considered dramatic. Zorman is also responsible for the feel of the photograph and maybe wanted a more theatrical representation of the situation to be thought provoking for in the viewer.

Perhaps a less obvious take on the refugee crisis, which viewers may not be accustomed to, are the two photographs chosen that depict happiness. The first one, by Ashley Gilbertson, is of five figures that are welcoming an incoming boat towards the shore in Lesbos, Greece (fig. 27). Unlike the prior photographs, which were all relatively close to the subjects, Gilbertson has taken this from further away and from some sort of vantage point. She has managed to capture the landscape in the background of the photograph, which exemplifies the magnitude of the water over which the boats travelled. The boat looks extremely overcrowded and its instability is accentuated through the elevation created by Gilbertson. The scale is created through the use of the figures, compared to the scenery; four of them are situated in a group while the fifth is off to the side. The fifth figure is also the only one with a backpack and not wearing a life jacket, and they seem stationary, compared to the other four figures that are jumping up and down. This suggests that maybe she is a volunteer who is helping the refugees reach the shore safely and guide them to their next destination.

Glee and happiness are radiating from the figures on the shore as well as the boat; the refugees on the boat have their hands in the air and one is holding up a rubber ring signaling their arrival. Although facial expressions are not prominent in the photograph, everyone's body language conveys satisfaction and joy. The refugees are excited to arrive, and because they can finally see the shore, they are confident in their ability to make it there. This image resonates with the viewer, as it displays the epitome of why the refugee's left in the first place; to be safe and happy. It gives them a sense of hope and unlike the earlier photographs; it does not give the viewer the sense that the refugee's need pressing help as their conditions

appear to be secure. Because of this, in some ways the photograph almost captures a false sense of what is to come and how secure they really are.

The next photograph, I'll discuss, by Ron Haviv, is of a group of refugees taking a selfie (fig. 28). There are six figures in the photograph, (most likely a family). They are depicted in front of water as if to display what they have conquered. This photograph has a humorous feeling to it. The image does not appear staged at all; it compellingly depicts how they genuinely reacted once they arrived on shore. There are two humorous aspects of the image: the family taking a selfie, and the act of taking a photograph of a photograph being taken. The selfie itself will probably not make it to mass media, whereas Ron Haviv has published his photograph on VII for the world to see, and theoretically has produced an alternative perspective on the refugee crisis.

There has been a lot of discussion of refugees and cellphones in the media. One view is that, what is the benefit of cellphones in another country when only a few assets are being taken, their 'prize possessions.'⁵⁰ But other argue the importance of cellphones and how through social media they have transformed the way the world has viewed the ongoing refugee crisis.⁵¹ It seems that Haviv is commenting on the misguided views of the media: they should be focused on helping the refugees rather than commenting on their belongings. The fact is that cellphones are cheap in Syria and the use of phones through social media has helped educate the world about the Syrian Civil War.⁵² This selfie will at some point likely be sent to family members who are still in Syria to show that they are safe, but more importantly it serves as a document of the journey that they have already taken. The selfie is a recent

⁵⁰ James O'Malley, "Surprised That Syrian Refugees Have Smartphones? Sorry to Break This to You, but You're an Idiot." Independent. Last modified September 7, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2016. <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/surprised-that-syrian-refugees-have-smartphones-well-sorry-to-break-this-to-you-but-youre-an-idiot-10489719.html>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Alessandra Ram "Smartphones Bring Solace and Aid to Desperate Refugees." Wired. Last modified May 12, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2016 <http://www.wired.com/2015/12/smartphone-syrian-refugee-crisis/>

phenomenon, even in the developed world. This photo also shows the influence of popular culture even in war-torn Syria.

Smartphones have revolutionized photography, given the way they have made it easy to take and send photographs in seconds. Through free Wi-Fi, smartphones have become an essential tool for refugees: enabling communication about which camps are the best, where police officers are stationed and the quickest lines at checkpoints.⁵³ Regardless of the controversy surrounding refugees owning smartphones, and whether or not they are the most important items for them to have when travelling to Europe, the refugees are using smartphones in exactly the same way that the rest of the developed world is. By using phones for communication the refugees can internally disseminate information, but more importantly by documenting their daily events with visuals, they enable the rest of the world to know what is happening in both Syria and Europe.

Although this photograph is not necessarily visually artistic, it is telling of the refugees' journey, and humanizes the experience into something that the viewer can relate to: taking a photograph of a monumental time in their lives. On one hand, the viewer's first reaction to the photograph may be that it is ridiculous and not really depicting the crisis. But this may well be the reason many viewers are drawn to this photograph; it is very relatable and visually unique.

The photograph is outlandish because it is not what a viewer would expect of a human rights crisis as such. But like many of the photographs I have discussed, it gives insight into what the refugees are going through, in a truer and a more candid way. The notion that photographs instigating help for a human rights situation does not necessarily mean that the photograph has to be violent or atrocious to attract the viewer as Haviv demonstrates here. In *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* Butler discusses the constantly debated concept of

⁵³ Ibid

how photographs create a desire to intervene in a humanitarian crisis: “photography has a relation to intervention, but photography is not the same as intervening.”⁵⁴ I agree with Butler that taking photographs is not intervening, however I believe that photography can create a strong motivation for a country, NGO or the UN to intervene or do something to help those in need. By visualizing a crisis and seeing what is happening in the truest form, the desire to assist is greater. Photographs have the ability to transcend text and even if they are not typical human rights photographs, emotions are invoked.

The next photographs most strongly represent optimism, and show the support and effort that local and international NGO’s are putting in to make sure the refugees arrive safely on shore. The first photograph by Yantis Petrakis, was taken on September 17th 2015, and is of a Syrian man swimming from a dinghy to the shore on Lesbos (fig. 29). A hand extended towards the man who is paddling takes up the majority of left hand side of the frame. The man looks exhausted and troubled, however his head is tilted as if he looking up at or communicating with the person who is offering to help him. Most of the frame shows a landscape of the water and in the very background silhouettes of mountains, calling attention to how isolated the subject is. The man is completely alone, there are no other refugees in sight, and the water looks calm except for the waves he is creating by paddling.

There is a total lack of reports about the positive impact that NGO workers and other volunteers are having on the crisis. The conditions that the refugees have to live through and the policies of the European countries that are both refusing and accepting refugees (further explained in Chapter Two and Three) are the main focus of the global media. The refugees (as far as we know) are not dying of starvation or dehydration; they are dying during the journey at sea, in violence with police officers or when traveling crammed illegally in the

⁵⁴Butler *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, pg 84.

back of trucks.⁵⁵ The refugees are being mistreated and their human rights ignored by some of European countries, but NGO's, donors, corporations and companies who are supplying aid are doing anything that they can. Photographs like Petrakis's give viewers and general public insight into more of the 'truth,' and how they could give to those who are helping the refugees, rather than feel like they have no control over government decisions.

A photograph by Giorgio's Moutafis is captioned "volunteer doctors and paramedics try to revive a baby on Lesbos after a boat carrying more than 200 people sank while crossing from Turkey, Oct. 28th, 2015. According to the Greek Coast Guard, three bodies were recovered and 242 people were rescued". The image is visually striking as the photograph has a perfect vignette, with the baby placed under a spotlight in the direct center, (fig. 30). Four hands are touching or supporting him or her each in a different way, three of the hands have medical gloves on and one is holding their head up and another appears to be performing CPR. This photograph is heartbreaking for the viewer; a child is unmistakably under distress without parents in close proximity. The viewer cannot know if the parents are standing with the photographer, but in this specific frame the viewer sees the child as completely alone in a traumatic situation. But there is also a sense of relief as the child is being helped. Moutafis has captured this scene in a way that highlights the child with a literal light: underscoring the importance of the event. One message, refugees are not always being disregarded.

The photo gives the impression of a typical human rights photograph. The violent nature of the event and the helpless nature of the subject combine to be a horrific image for the spectator. In *About Looking* John Berger compares a camera to a gun, "the camera which isolates a moment of agony isolates no more violently than the experience of that moment isolates itself. The word *trigger*, applied to the rifle and camera, reflects a correspondence,

⁵⁵ Krishnadev Calamur, "European Refugee Crisis: A 'Systematic' Violation of Human Rights." The Atlantic. Last modified October 22, 2015. Accessed December 9, 2015.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/czech-republic-un-human-rights-refugees/411862/>

which does not stop at the purely mechanical. The image seized by the camera is doubly violent.”⁵⁶ Berger does not believe the photograph is any more violent than the moment itself, but the camera acts as a gun, freezing a moment in the same way a gun ends a life. However, a photograph enables the recurrence of those events many times over, you can look at images repeatedly. A quintessential human rights photograph is one that encompasses death or the endangerment of life, therefore one that disturbs the viewer to the point that they want to help or do something about the situation. Even though this photograph contains those characteristics, artistically it is a lot more refined than many of the model human rights photographs as a result of the lighting and focus on the child, it maintains a balance of the visual and the humanitarian.

Lastly, is a black and white photograph by Maciek Nabrdalik that looks like a still from a film noir (fig. 31). Three figures, two male and one female, are all facing towards the right of the frame, looking beyond it at something the viewer cannot determine. The male in the center is the dominant figure and is smoking a cigarette while also holding a baby carrier, although the baby cannot be seen. The female is holding a bottle and a blanket, which further confirms the presence of the baby, while the other male sure seems to be the most unconcerned of them all. All three figures look uninterested in what they are looking at, and they don't seem phased by the situation that they are currently in. In contrast to the former images, this image displays little to no emotion from the subjects. Moreover, this photograph seems almost fabulous and affluent, as the subjects are in all black wearing leather jackets and other tailored expensive looking items. Again it is a photograph that one would not expect from the refugee crisis, because of how subdued the subjects seem. Nabrdalik has arguably made these subjects iconic and a form of celebrity in the way they are framed and their features are highlighted; they appear as people to admire and look at.

⁵⁶ John Berger, *About Looking*, (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group: 2011), page 43.

The photos in this chapter emphasize the range of emotions that the refugees show when they have succeeded in arriving in Europe. Typical human rights photographs usually show negative emotions that the subjects are feeling, in tune with documentary images and how they should in theory shock the public. If the photographs are emotionally charged they might administer a response from the public, but this is usually when the photographs show the subjects distressed or upset. I have chosen images that show depict many reactions: shock, fear, happiness, optimism, and apathy. This is because not every refugee will react the same way when they arrive. These photographs inform the viewer that they need to expand their scope of looking at images of the arrival, as it so frequently photographed and the mass images are extremely similar. The typical photographs are not telling of the all refugees, the visuals are taken in a particular way, to shock the public, and therefore those that most people see are not a true embodiment of the arrival.

Chapter Three: The Transition

The next phase of the refugee's journey is the between stage of arriving in Greece and heading to somewhere in Europe, where they hope to gain asylum. The definition of transition is "the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another."⁵⁷ This particular stage for the refugees is the transitional period as they are moving from their arrival location to what they hope to be their eventual destination. Photographers are following the refugees on their entire journey, but this particular stage allows the photographers a wide range of interactions. It is easier for photographers to capture the intensity of the refugee's endeavors during this part of their journey as it is on land and photographers have the option of staying in one place or moving with the refugees. The transition photographs show the conditions the refugees undergo and how they are treated in the different countries.

The refugees usually arrive in Lesbos, Greece, and make their way through Europe in hopes of gaining asylum and creating a better life for themselves and their families. The route most commonly taken is from Greece up through the Balkan region, (Macedonia and Bulgaria) to Croatia, Austria or Hungary, then to the Czech Republic and eventually ending up in Germany (fig. 32 is a map of the most common routes).

The refugees face two challenges, firstly getting to a destination and second gaining asylum.⁵⁸ At present, there is no clear process in place for the refugees to travel through Europe in a systematic fashion. Although police, government officials, non-governmental organizations and volunteers from across Europe are constantly trying to help, or at least move the refugees along, they are exhausted and lack the financial means and resources to truly help. This is a long period of the journey, because it involves the most waiting and

⁵⁷ "Transition," Oxford Dictionaries, Accessed April 30, 2016, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/transition.

⁵⁸ "Asylum-Seekers," UNHCR, Accessed April 30, 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c137.html>.

extremely uncomfortable living situations. The refugees stop when they absolutely have to as opposed to when they safely can, therefore risking their well-being.⁵⁹ There are very few camps set up along these routes; the refugees mostly sleep on the floor or, if they are lucky, in tents. The refugees travel by foot, bus or train and some even attempt to be smuggled in the back of trucks, often with horrific consequences; sadly mass deaths occur frequently.⁶⁰ The mass movement of refugees is enormous; the documentation and placement of them cannot be done at the same speed as the migrants are arriving.

Even when they arrive at their destination, there is no assurance that asylum will be granted. European countries are reluctant to accept more refugees for a variety of economic, political and social reasons, all largely due to resistance from their own citizens.⁶¹ However, this is not deterring the refugees: they are consistently informed which countries have stated that they will take a certain number of refugees, based on their immigrant policies.⁶² For the refugees, any destination is better than the life they lead at 'home'.

The photographs analyzed in this chapter convey a range of emotions and concepts, but can be categorized into three main themes. The first group of photographs shows a sense of harmony or community and togetherness that the refugees have. Regardless if they are related to or even from the same country due to their shared experience, refugees can identify with one another. The second group of images depict two out of the three forms of barriers and obstacles that are preventing the refugees from moving forward: the physical landscape that the refugees have to travel through and the police or other authority that are preventing them from moving forward. The third barrier is the law that ultimately will prevent the

⁵⁹ Asa Bennett, "Seven Proposed Solutions for the EU Refugee Crisis." The Telegraph. Last modified September 4, 2015. Accessed October 5, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/11843234/Seven-proposed-solutions-for-the-EU-refugee-crisis.html>.

⁶⁰ Julian Borger, "Winter is Coming: The New Crisis for Refugee's in Europe", (The Guardian: Nov. 2nd 2015), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/02/winter-is-coming-the-new-crisis-for-refugees-in-europe>

⁶¹ "Can Germany Be Honest About Its Refugee Problems?"

⁶² "Understanding Migration and Asylum in the European Union", Last Updated: October 2015, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/understanding-migration-and-asylum-european-union>

refugees from remaining in Europe, but it cannot be conveyed through a camera. The third aspect of the transition captured in these photos is the tension between the hope and helplessness of the refugees, and in particular the way in which children experience both the worst and the best of the crisis.

The first aspect of the transition is somewhat unique; that of harmony. Although not everyone will have the exact same background or encounter the same events, there is an obvious bond between refugees. More specifically, my focus is on families, because they are relatable for the viewer, which encourages empathy. Though the four photographs vary in form, the importance of family and togetherness is apparent in each.

James Nachtwey has been photographing the refugee crisis since September 2015.⁶³ This particular image of his shows five figures, two adults and three children, most likely a family, who are travelling on foot, (fig. 33). The most unusual aspect of this photograph is the suitcase that is being wheeled by the father. It is often assumed the refugees are carrying next to nothing with them as they rushed to leave their native country, but having a suitcase suggests bringing multiple belongings as if for a vacation.⁶⁴ The suitcase is the defining element of this photograph because when looking at the rest of the photograph, it could be a family taking a walk through a field. There is nothing striking or alarming about the image until the viewer notices the suitcase, and what it symbolizes. Nachtwey has taken the photograph at the instant when the father is turning around to look at his family members. This signifies a moment of reassurance or encouragement as he checks up on his family through the strenuous journey. While the youngest child is on his mother's back, the other

⁶³ "James Nachtwey: The Journey of Hope", Time, Oct. 8th 2015, <http://time.com/4065597/james-nachtwey-the-journey-of-hope/>

⁶⁴"Refugee Camps Empty as Syrians Head for Europe"

two are walking, one holding an umbrella and the other an apple, items commonly distributed by the NGO's,⁶⁵ indicating that they have been previously been at a checkpoint.

The positioning of the figures is inviting for the viewer. The father takes on the role of the leader, in order to protect his loved ones and get them to a safe location. The refugees seem to be on a path, and they are moving in unison with the tire tracks that have caused erosion in the ground, implying a direction that the refugees are heading in. However, there is no context of where the family has come from or a visible destination in sight.

The remoteness of the image raises the question of Nachtwey's role and if he himself is trying to experience being a refugee. Is he following this particular family? Is he scouting a certain region that is known because refugees often travel through it? The viewer can assume that he is interacting and communicating with the refugees, which gives the subjects agency, as the refugees are therefore a part of the image making process. By cooperating with the subjects Nachtwey is making them more comfortable and the photographic decisions are not fully removed from the subject, who are the ones being exposed through these images.

In comparison, this photograph by Paolo Pellegrin portrays three figures with the facial expressions emphasized by the close proximity of the photographer to the subjects (fig. 34). The photograph is presumably of a father and his two children; they appear to be travelling from the shore and water through fauna in the direction of the photographer. The family is centered in the frame, and there is an opening in the vegetation that further focuses the viewer on the figures. One of the girls is sitting on the man's shoulders, while the other is walking behind, holding onto his hand. The girls both look terrified: the girl on the shoulders seems to be screaming, while the other is looking down at the ground as if she is or has been crying. The man on the other hand has an expression that suggests determination and an attempt at putting on a brave face for the girls.

⁶⁵ Sally Brammal, "How European Charities have Responded to the Refugee Crisis," (The Guardian: Oct 9th 2015), <http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2015/oct/09/facebook-refugees-charities-europe-collaboration-ngo>

The photograph focuses on the relation between all three of the figures, and the importance of this connection. Pellegrin seems to have either followed the family or placed himself in this specific location to take the photograph. This image is immediately after their first steps on European soil, and the photograph depicts a sense of urgency through the subjects posture as they lurch forward towards the photographer.

Similarly, a photograph by Maciek Nabrdalik shows an adult embracing a child, (fig. 35). The textures of the grass, fur coat and metallic blanket combine to make an extremely captivating image; the folds and creases of all of these components and the use of lighting attracts the viewer. The grasp and body language between adult and child suggests intimacy, as if the adult is protecting the child.

This particular photograph is one of the most obscure in terms of content, while at the same time being one of the most artistically appealing. The figures are positioned in the middle of the photograph, making them the direct focal point that, like fig. thirty-four, attracts the viewer first and foremost. The additional foliage is not related to or informing the viewer about the refugee crisis, but rather is a decision that Pellegrin made in order to contrast the textures of the metallic blanket and the fur coat. The photograph is graphically stimulating and the shape created by the bodies' together acts as if they are nestled in the vegetation, further suggesting Pellegrin thought about how he was taking the photograph. The viewers' awareness of the area outside the frame as well as the lack of facial features creates a more restrictive interpretation than the previous photographs. The way that Pellegrin took the photograph emphasizes the posture and closeness of the figures in an emotional moment. This evokes empathy for the viewer as they can empathize with the physical connection, even without seeing their expression. Nabrdalik has seemingly thought about how he is portraying the refugees. The image communicates as a tense embrace therefore the viewer is shown a more genuine interaction. However, it is unclear if the adult is related to

the child; they could be an NGO worker or volunteer who is holding the child to comfort them, which would still make it an authentic embrace but in a different way.

Many early critics of documentary photography, such as Sontag and Barthes, discuss the notion of the subject: do the subjects know that they are being photographed? And do they know if the photographs will be published for anyone to see? If not, it is a violation of privacy? This debate led to the development of an underlying question of documentary photography: if the photographer is a reporter for the rest of the world or a recorder for the subjects?⁶⁶ Pellegrin, Nachtwey and Nabrdalik seem to be recorders for the subjects first and visualizing their success, rather than reporting for the rest of the world. These three photographers appear to be interested and concerned for their subjects and want to convey a specific of their affection through these events. Their photographs give the impression of being in favor of the subjects and taking the images for them. But hopefully by publishing the photographs they subsequently reporting for the rest of the world and educating the public, the subjects will be assisted.

In contrast is a photograph by Peter Van Agtmael of two passport-sized images placed on a white background (fig. 36). This photo exemplifies how a photographer can influence an image, as he has posed the images, technically his subjects, in the way he wanted to photograph them. The photographer has intentionally used a blank background to draw the viewers' attention to the photographs. One of the photographs is of a family, containing two parents and two children, while the other is of a single young boy. It is difficult to infer if he is one of the children in the group photograph, but it is likely he is related in some way. The photographs in this image do give the impression of being professional portraits done in a studio as the people are posed. This is in contrast to the other photographs that I have

⁶⁶ John Berger, *Understanding a Photograph*, (Aperture, New York: 2013) pg. 124.

discussed, which feel like they represent more spontaneous events, that are true to the crisis, but also the subjects.

When interpreting this photograph, the caption is important to gain a full understanding. Sontag believes that “the photograph cannot by itself provide an interpretation, that we need captions and written analysis to supplement the discrete and punctual image, which can only affect us and never offer a full understanding of what we see.”⁶⁷ This particular caption reads “a migrants belongings discovered in a forgotten backpack. He was eventually tracked down through his lawyer’s number and was able to retrieve his belongings.” Despite the fact that the photographs I have discussed all include what I have presumed to be families, most of the refugees that are entering Europe are actually single men of working age.⁶⁸ Single men are the most able and therefore most likely to succeed to making the journey. They are arguably likely to be triumphant in assimilating into Europe when looking for jobs and maintaining an income.⁶⁹ Therefore, they travel alone and, once establishing themselves, their goal is to bring the rest of their family to Europe to begin their better lives.⁷⁰

The concepts of memory and recollection are apparent in this photograph. All photographs to an extent are collecting memories and historical evidence of the refugee crisis; but this photograph is portraying the memories of the refugee’s previous life and what he has left behind to make the journey to Europe. This photograph has a saddening quality to it as the viewer is not aware who the people are in the photograph and where they currently are. The vintage look to the photographs suggests that the photographs are old and have been

⁶⁷ Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, (Macmillan: 1977), 50.

⁶⁸ Maya Rhodan, “Are all the Syrian Refugee’s All ‘Young,’ ‘Strong’ Men? (Time: Nov. 20th 2015), <http://time.com/4122186/syrian-refugees-donald-trump-young-men/>

⁶⁹ Ben Hubbard, “Waves of Young Syrian Men Bring Hope, and a Test, to Europe” The New York Times. Last modified October 7, 2015. Accessed October 26, 2015.

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/08/world/europe/migration-of-young-men-poses-risks-for-both-syria-and-europe.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=b-lede-package-region@ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=1

⁷⁰ Ibid.

kept for a long time. The link between the figures to the owner of the photograph remains unknown, which increases the peculiarity for the viewer. It creates an uneasy feeling about the subjects, more so than the photographs of the refugees because these subjects' status is unclear. Is the owner one of the subjects? Are these people who came on the journey with him or were they left behind in his home nation? Or are they people who have been killed by the violence going on in the countries that the refugees are coming from? These questions cannot be answered, but the asking them recognizes how we as viewers cannot fully comprehend what it is like to be a refugee, through images.

The next theme in these photographs of transition is the idea of barriers: both physical objects (fences, rivers, doors and checkpoints), as well people (customs, border control and the police) and how they restrict the refugee's movement. Thomas Dworzak created a series of the refugee crisis for Magnum Photos with the thesis "these pictures show the physically and emotionally draining experience of the treacherous journey to seek a more secure territory and the basic human rights of protection and shelter."⁷¹ In one particular photograph, he has captured five boys, four of whom are sitting and one is standing (fig. 37). They are in the middle of a field and three police officers are in the background standing and staring at them. The boys look harmless as they are sitting on a blanket suggesting that they are taking a rest from their journey. Juxtaposing this are the police officers are all in authoritative postures, with their hands crossed against their bodies, seemingly threatening the boys, as if to prevent them from progressing.

There is little context of where this field is as there are no buildings or any other physical indicators in sight. The inclusion of the basic human rights protection and shelter in Dworzak's thesis for this series is contradictory to what this photograph shows. The refugees in the photograph are most likely trying to reach a safer place and are in the midst of the

⁷¹ "The Refugee Crisis Across Central Europe," <http://www.magnumphotos.com/Package/2K1HRG6YFWRN>

journey with few belongings and probably a lack of food and water. Yet the policemen still maintain the need to stand there as enforcers, acting as a barrier. There is no force or violence being portrayed in the image, but clearly there is some tension. The distance between the police officers and the refugees, along with the vast land and officer's attitudes emphasize the hostility. The photograph conveys an uncomfortable scene for the viewer, as they are not sure what happened before the photograph was taken or what will happen after. Will the refugees be able to continue their migration or are they in a country that wants to restrict their movements? Is their journey at an end?

Depicting similar issues is a photograph by Bulent Kilic, which represents a boy with his hands pressed against police shields (fig. 38). Kilic seems to have bent down to be at eye level with the child so he frames the image to focus on this particular boy. The viewer has a profile view of the boy, as he is pushing against the police shields that line the left hand side of the photograph. The boy is looking up at what the viewer can presume is one of the officers, and it can be deduced through his pleading look that he is asking the officer for something. The viewer can also infer that he is trying to cross a border or move through a country. His hands are half grabbing, half pushing the shields, creating tension in his arms and a slight awkwardness to his posture.

The image is significant in the way that it does not portray anger or violence like many photographs taken of police riots. Rather it shows the desperation of the refugees when they are searching for a new life. Concentrating on the child creates empathy in the viewer due to the lack of power that the child has. He is vulnerable and cannot break through this barrier, by either physically moving it or emotionally influencing those who are managing it. The barrier is more physical than the previous barrier, yet completely controlled by humans and their authority.

A more physical, yet still a government created barrier, is shown in a photograph by Bernadett Szabo (fig. 39). It is of a family of five climbing under a wire fence between Hungary and Serbia. Out of all the photographs of the transition, this one is the most direct and self-explanatory of the event that is occurring. Moreover, it depicts a typical photograph of the refugee crisis that many are exposed to. These almost generic photographs are what have shaped the public's view of the refugee crisis and how it perceives the refugees.

The action of a family of five crawling through a hole poses a series of questions. Firstly, did they create the hole or was it already there? The fence is man-made barrier. Therefore, at some point in the past, there was a decision as to where the fence should be placed. However, the original intention of the fence would not have necessarily been to keep out refugees but simply to control the nation's border. The idea of the fence as a physical boundary means that people do not have to watch it all times. But it is likely there will be a checkpoint for passport control somewhere along the fence and therefore customs officers are in the vicinity. Hungary is one of the countries that announced it did not want to accept refugees and therefore the context of this photograph becomes more acute. The refugees will most likely be stopped in Hungary and potentially their journey will end there.⁷² In spite of this, this family decided to put their lives in jeopardy and hopefully was able to advance their journey through Europe by doing so.

Secondly, the role of the photographer is vital in this situation. The family does not look like they are rushing or seriously concerned. They are not they attempting to get to Hungary in the dark like many refugees in order to be less obvious about their movements. They have decided to take that risk. However, the presence of the photographer could be what gives the refugees away to authority. The photographer is capturing the moment, but what can he achieve if the police attack the family for smuggling themselves into Hungary?

⁷² "Refugee Crisis: Hungary Rejects All Asylum Requests Made at Border – as It Happened"

What power does the photographer have? Probably very little. The photographer could be drawing attention to the family, but also he could be serving as a lookout and aiding them in their escape.

The main concern raised in this photograph is if there is a responsibility of the photographer to support human rights? The photographer typically does not want to get into legal trouble but morally they want to be of service to the refugees. But is that really their responsibility as a photographer? Many believe it is not, but James Nachtwey sees it as part of his role. He notes that, “many people in this world do jobs that are dangerous and where their life is at risk and they feel there is some kind of value to their job, I guess that is how I feel about what I do. There is a social function to documentary photography that is very important and requires people to take risks.”⁷³ He is referring to the way that photographers already endanger their lives by entering dangerous human rights situations. Nachtwey thinks that by photographing human rights violations out of their own will or interest, these photographers probably do want something to be done to prevent further harm. Because they are seeing the trauma first hand they are more conscious and may generally feel more inclined to help.

The final major theme of the photographs I will discuss is the contrast between hope and helplessness that is evoked. The photographs focus primarily on children as the center of the image, in line with David Campbell’s thesis in *Iconography of Famine*,⁷⁴ in which he concludes “children are universal icons of human suffering”⁷⁵: Campbell’s argument is that viewers feel sorry for children because they are not responsible for their situation. As an example, he discusses a photograph of boy, Luke Piri, where his stomach is protruding- the

⁷³ "James Nachtwey." Accessed April 30, 2016. <http://www.jamesnachtwey.com/>.

⁷⁴ David Campbell, “Iconography of Famine” in *Picturing Atrocity, Photography in Crisis*, ed. Geoffery Bathcen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller and Jay Prosser, (Reaktion Books: London, 2012), 82.

⁷⁵ Campbell, “Iconography of Famine” 84.

prominent sign of malnutrition (fig. 40)⁷⁶ Mike Moore, a Daily Mirror photographer, took this photograph when he was documenting the famine in Malawi. The essay describes the characteristics of a malnourished child and how numerous photographers have created a standard image depicting famine; by having the child against a blank wall by highlighting their bloated belly, holding an empty bowl and staring directly into the camera, and thus the viewer.⁷⁷

The aspects that Campbell lists have created a ‘typical’ photograph of a child suffering from famine, one that seems stereotypical, and has become what viewers conventionally think of when envisioning famine. Campbell argues that using a helpless child creates the most empathy in a viewer. But as the photograph is repeated the viewer becomes used to that specific type of image and doesn’t react as strongly as they originally did.⁷⁸ In the Syrian refugee crisis more and more children are showing up alone: either because their parents have sent them to Europe to gain a better life or many have had their parents die on the journey because their parents put the safety of their children before their own.⁷⁹

A photograph by Sergey Ponomarev and shows a boy of about six or seven standing next to train tracks surrounded by police officers (fig. 41). The boy is not in the center of the photograph but is highlighted by the blue and red striped shirt that he is wearing, which contrasts the officer’s camouflage uniforms. The boy looks lost and confused and his hands are bent up towards his face as if he was waving for help. There are no other refugees directly around him, so the viewer cannot know if he is with his parents or any other family members, or if he is completely alone. There are approximately fourteen police officers in his

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Katrin Bennhold, "Migrant Children, Arriving Alone and Frightened," The New York Times, Last modified October 28, 2015. Accessed December 9, 2015 http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/29/world/europe/in-waves-of-migrants-children-arrive-alone-and-settle-in-uneasily.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=second-column-region@ion=topnews&WT.nav=top-news&_r=2.

surrounding area, but all of them have their backs turned except for one who appears to still not be taking any notice of the boy.

The action of taking this photograph implies that Ponomarev noticed the boy and had a sense of concern for his wellbeing. Whether or not he helped the boy to somewhere safe, or to find his family is unknown to the viewer. What happens to their subjects is an increasing concern for many documentary photographers as viewers become perturbed about children and their wellbeing in human rights crises. Consequently, viewers wonder if the photographer helped the subject after taking the photograph. The most renowned example of this is Kevin Carter's photograph, *Vulture and Child*, depicting a young girl who is crouched in the fetal position and a vulture is perched on a log behind her as if to pounce and eat her (fig. 42). This photograph and the controversy surrounding it caused Carter to commit suicide. The media did not ask Carter what he did after taking this photograph; in fact, he did take the girl to where NGO's were.⁸⁰ Nor did they look at the contact sheets showing that the vulture appeared after he set up to take the photograph.⁸¹

Similarly, an image by an EPA photographer, Mohammed Badra, portrays a boy in Hungary (fig. 43). The boy is lying on a bench with his left hand extended, as he is receiving some sort of injection by a figure that is not present in the photograph. He is covered in blood and his right hand is placed across his forehead, a sign of distress. His expression seems fearful as he makes direct eye contact with the photographer, and consequently the viewer, increasing the overall emotional engagement of the photograph. The photographer has decided to stand behind the boy and take the photograph at a slight bird's eye view, so that the boy's head is tilted backwards to face the photographer. His posture in conjunction with the way the photographer has decided to position himself, gives the photograph almost a

⁸⁰ Griselda Pollock, "Photographing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis" in *Picturing Atrocity, Photography in Crisis*, ed. Geoffery Bathcen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller and Jay Prosser, (Reaktion Books: London, 2012), 65.

⁸¹Ibid.

religious and more specifically Christian feel: the posture of the boy in this photograph is similar to images of Christ's crucifixion such as *Christ on the Cross* by Velazquez (fig. 44) or *The Yellow Christ* by Gauguin (fig. 45).

It is clear to the viewer that something has happened to the boy but what exactly happened is not revealed in the image. The way the boy's hand is placed indicates that he is in pain, but the viewer cannot see any particular injury except that he is being injected in his right hand. Sontag's idea of the 'shock factor', applies to this image as particular photos that can frighten viewers, continue to do no matter how many times a viewer sees it.⁸² This contradicts Campbell's theory in terms of the repeated image, but Sontag believes that the characteristics of children and blood are two of the most 'shocking' qualities, and that the viewer is to a certain point enamored by the disturbing nature of the photograph.⁸³ The viewer wants to look at the photograph constantly because they are appalled by what they are seeing, and to an extent is debating if the photograph is real.

At the other end of the spectrum is a photograph by Reuters photographer, Antonio Bronic, representing a young girl who is leaning outside of what appears to be a train window (figure 46). The photograph is formally very linear, as the frame of the photograph mirrors the frame of the train window amplifying the girl as the focal point. This photograph is more inviting for the viewer, the colors are striking, the subdued blue and white against the bright red of the sleeve and the red and yellow of the apple. In combination with the formal elements, it is clear that the photographer was extremely conscious when executing this image. Although the photograph does not give any geographic or contextual information, the narrative is clearly told through the figures' interaction, creating an impactful meaning for the viewer.

⁸² Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (Picador: 2004) pg. 25.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

The girl has both hands outside of the train window, and is looking down at the other figure. The other figure is not fully in the photograph; only their hand is present. The girls' left hand is holding an apple, and her right hand is reaching down to probably take the apple from the other figures hand. This exchange of the apples is touching for the viewer, as it creates a sense of hope that the refugees are getting help; not all of Europe is turning them away. The photograph resonates with the qualities of an Irving Penn photograph, even though he photographed mostly in black and white the clean-cut style of photography and the focus on one person in a slightly quirky pose, such as figure forty-seven. The gesture seems heartfelt, yet the glove contradicts this kindness as it brings a sterile quality to the photograph. The glove creates a separation in the affection between the two figures. The inclusion of the glove associates the photograph with a hospital or a medical profession adding to the idea of helping the refugees, more so than just supplying apples. But the lack of actual touch falsifies the sincerity of the moment. However, the photograph still does manage to convey a sense of joy and hope for the refugee juxtaposing the usual photographs of horror in the refugee crisis.

The photographs of the transition stage of the refugees' journey are arguably the hardest to document fully. These photographs are focused on the obstacles that the refugees have to deal with and how the refugees respond to the confrontation that they encounter. As I have mentioned the photographer has to decide between following a particular family as if experiencing the journey with them, or staying in a location where refugees are known to pass through to interact with as many refugees as possible. The photographers that I have discussed made a judgment call about how they take their photograph and what aspect of the transitional stage that they wanted to capture. Historically, these photographs of movement and waiting are classic in other refugee crises, because this stage is extensive and stereotypically refugees are consistently on the move.

The range of photographs in this chapter shows how refugees interact together as an entity but also apart as individuals. The physical and mental barriers that are preventing the refugees from continuing their journey are portrayed and the positive or negative impact that the refugees are having because of these instances. The photographs vary dramatically in terms of form and meaning because there is little confinement in the transitional stage due to the scope of events that the refugees undergo and encounter.

Chapter Four: The Relocation

The ultimate goal of the refugee's journey is to successfully gain asylum in Europe, which gives the refugees the ability to start a new and stable life, free from violence and war. While a few more fortunate refugees have managed to gain asylum and integrate themselves into a more normal life, most refugees have been unsuccessful. They are in a phase of temporary relocation, either in refugee camps or on route to camps, or waiting in another location to be transported to camps. The refugees in these photographs have succeeded in being able to stay longer and in a more permanent location than the transitory phase, but there is no guarantee of asylum. The camps are a step closer to the end goal, but the refugees are still in a limbo, for months if not years.

The refugees who have gained asylum and been successfully integrated into Europe are some of the first that made the journey. The mass waves of refugees now entering Europe has created a political backlash, as citizens of Europe are concerned with how the influx of refugees will impact them and the social, political and economic status of their country.⁸⁴ As a result, the possibility of asylum is becoming more remote and even if refugees do manage to gain asylum, because of this retaliation, their lives may not be as fulfilling as they had hoped. The resistance from citizens is causing politicians, the UN and aid workers to reconsider some of the choices they have made when freely allowing refugees to enter and cross Europe,⁸⁵ while also trying to negotiate with countries who refused to accept any refugees and asking them to review their original policies.⁸⁶

For those still waiting to be given asylum, they are being relocated to refugee camps until there is a solution to the crisis. These camps are many and varied. Zataari camp in

⁸⁴ "The Global Refugee Crisis, Region by Region."

⁸⁵ "How Europe's Charities Have Responded to the Refugee Crisis."

⁸⁶ Steven Erlanger, "Growing Migrant Crisis Prompts Call for Urgent Meeting of E.U. Officials." New York Times, Last modified August 30, 2015, Accessed October 4, 2015.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/31/world/europe/growing-migrant-crisis-prompts-call-for-urgent-meeting-of-eu-officials.html>

Jordan is the largest camp for Syrian refugees, accommodating over 156,000 people.⁸⁷ The largest refugee camp in Europe right now is known as “*The New Jungle*”, in Calais, France. At first glance, it appears very livable; there are nurseries, schools, shops, a restaurant bar, library, three mosques, a church, medical services and even an art therapy tent.⁸⁸ But the reality is that over 6,000 people are living in slum like conditions. The effort to help the refugees already lacks funding and as political tensions continue to rise, investments have been halted or decreased dramatically.⁸⁹ This creates an environment that affects the refugee’s safety, health and other basic human rights. Despite the facade of livability, the poor condition of the camps and the uncertainty of the continuation of their journey ahead must be causing the refugees to reconsider if it was worth endangering their lives to come to Europe.

Unfortunately this period of the refugee’s journey through Europe is the least documented of the three stages that I have analyzed, because photographers have a harder time entering into the camps. Human rights images are meant to mobilize people to take action to help those in need and the photographs are arguably some of the most stereotypical documentary photographs that I have discussed. The photographers have tried to immerse themselves in the refugee’s lives to visually represent the crisis to their truest extent and are trying to give viewers a glimpse of this more certain part of the journey. However, while the camps are the most concrete form of a ‘home’ the refugees have had for a long period of time, it is still not permanent. And the conditions that they portray are often not appealing,

⁸⁷ "Refugee Camps Empty as Syrians Head for Europe."

⁸⁸ Amelia Gentleman, "The Horror of the Calais Refugee Camp: 'We Feel like We Are Dying Slowly'." The Guardian, Last modified November 3, 2015, Accessed March 31, 2016.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/03/refugees-horror-calais-jungle-refugee-camp-feel-like-dying-slowly>

⁸⁹ Larry Buchanan, "Europe Tries to Shut down Routes as Migrant Flow Intensifies." The New York Times, Last modified March 11, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/11/world/europe/europe-tries-to-shut-down-routes-as-migrant-flow-intensifies.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=photo-spot-region@ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=1.

hopefully enough for the viewer to act. These images are all extremely narrative as they encapsulate what it truly means to be a refugee and the strain that it takes for them to rebuild their lives.

Despite the fact that the camps are impermanent and in all likelihood do not feel like home for the refugees, they are the closest thing that they have had to a secure location for weeks, months, or maybe even years. Physically, the most strenuous and challenging parts of their journey are over, but their emotions are still fluctuating widely; are they are happy with their new lives, or perhaps sad and regretful of their decision to leave their native country, or simply frustrated they are still living in unstable conditions with no certainty around gaining asylum.

For this chapter I have separated the ten photographs into groups of two or three images. The photographs are of the varying points of this phase of the refugee's journey. Winner of the World Press Photograph of 2015 (fig. 48), Warren Richardson spent five days at the border of Serbia and Hungary photographing and listening to the refugee's stories. The photograph that I have chosen (fig. 49) is in Richardson's typical photographic style; black and white, blurry but focused formally on the light and conceptually on the subject's emotions. This particular photograph shows a line of people, separated from the photographer and the viewer by police tape. They are presumably waiting for something or someone, but it does not seem that orderly. Richardson captioned the photograph "refugees were waiting for a bus to take them to a camp"; therefore although similar to photographs in the previous chapter, the refugees now know where they are heading.

Due to the obscure effect of the light, it can be inferred that this photograph was taken at night with a long exposure. Consequently, the subject's faces are covered with the light streaks, and therefore are indistinguishable. There is one face that is shown is of a little boy,

who looks no older than seven or eight, and he is looking down at the ground in a very unsettling way; portraying his concern for the situation.

The way that Richardson took this photograph clearly evokes the unpredictable path of the refugees. The mysterious approach gives the viewers a vague understanding of what is going on, much like the refugees are not fully aware of their surroundings. The use of the low light to create the textural elements indicates that the subjects are moving, even though it is clear they are waiting. However, the long exposure would capture slight motions of the refugees. Richardson appears to be commenting on the mass media representation of refugees. This typically makes them anonymous, and generalizes their experiences. The media coverage of the refugee crisis has rarely focused on the individual stories of the refugees, but rather portrays them as a collective entity, which inevitably reduces the concern for them by the reader or viewer, as it is harder for a viewer to empathize with a huge group of people, empathy is more prevalent when it is a single or a couple of subjects.

In a similar anticipatory phase, a photograph by Sergey Ponomarev is of a group of people who are sitting down, except for two men who are standing in the center of the frame (fig. 50). The two men are also the only subjects directly looking into and facing the camera. Everyone else is either looking at the camera but their bodies are turned elsewhere, or they are physically facing the camera yet are looking in a different direction. Like the previous photo, police tape segregates the refugee's from Ponomarev and indirectly the viewer. In the very background of the photograph there is movement of people as well as two thick clouds of smoke. The viewer is unaware of the cause of the smoke, nor is Ponomarev focused on it; instead it is the people have captivated him. He does not seem troubled with what is taking place behind the subjects, communicating to the viewer that it could be a fire to keep warm or something of that nature, rather than immediate danger. The refugees are in clusters of two or three and are huddled in blankets, suggesting this photograph was taken during winter. Many

of the blankets are a similar grey suggesting that maybe they were donated by NGO's or the government of the country that the photograph was taken in.

The two figures that are standing seem to be the most aware of the photographer. Ponomarev was clearly trying to capture these two men, but the interaction between him and them is unknown. Did they see the camera and stand up? Were they standing when he took the photograph? Was there communication between the subjects and photographer? The viewer does not know these specific details, but regardless the photograph is captivating. It shows the viewer circumstances that the refugees are forced to endure, even after they are have reached a milestone in their journey. The subjects seem to be indifferent about what is going on, they are not visually showing any extreme emotions.

In 1978 Roland Barthes published his shortest essay in "Image, Music and Text", titled *The Photographic Message*. In it he expresses, "truly traumatic photographs are rare, for in photography the trauma is wholly dependent on the certainty that the scene 'really' happened: the photographer had to be there (the mythical definition of denotation)."⁹⁰ This applies to this photograph, as there is an uneasy feeling that the viewer receives by looking at this photograph. There is no apparent danger or violence that is occurring in this specific frame, but the portrayal of the refugees being outside in the cold for long periods of time without any shelter is a basic violation of their human rights.

Barthes when writing in 1978 was in some ways almost ahead of his time. This issue of creating image fatigue and how true to the situation these types of photographs are often arises in human rights photography. Even if the viewer feels empathetic for the subject, they may not react strongly enough to want to help them. Viewers then start to ask questions about what happened before and after the photograph was taken. This changes the interpretation of the photograph and as Barthes alludes to the "certainty that the scene really happened,"

⁹⁰ Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," in *Image, Music and Text*, (Fontana Press: London, UK, 1977) pg 18.

therefore it is a real representation or is it an anomaly? What happened outside the time frame of the photograph is completely unknown. It is unlikely that this photograph is an anomaly, as there are other photographs similar to this one, and it would be a lot of people to organize to take this particular photo. In this case, Ponomarev has determined where he wanted to take the photo and what to include so has visually chosen what would be appealing to the viewer without interfering.

A photograph by Paolo Pellegrin, further exemplifies the poor conditions the refugees are dealing with, (fig. 51). The photograph is of eight figures asleep on the ground and is split into two relatively even portions, the bottom half contains the figures, while the top half is of the bare ground trash and discarded belongings. The subjects themselves do not seem to have any belongings near them, except blankets and clothes. The photograph itself is aesthetically pleasing for the viewer; the contrast of the black and white and the cropped frame and slight bird's eye-view reflect Pellegrin's photographic expertise. Although it is not a photograph of violence or atrocity, it does portray uneasiness for the viewer, as the refugees are enduring terrible conditions.

In *Frames of War*, Butler states, "if there is no photographic evidence, there is no atrocity."⁹¹ While she is referring to wars and other more violent human rights crises, her comments nevertheless apply to these photographs. By documenting the refugee crisis, photographers are providing viewers with a graphic comprehension of what the refugees are going through. The photographs give the viewer evidence of the refugee's wellbeing; what is being provided to them and what else they might need. Without photographs, videos or textual information from reporters, most of the public would in all not likelihood be aware of many of these events. While crises or atrocities can be shown through testimony or written or forensic evidence, but in terms of the present moment, photographs are the most powerful

⁹¹ Butler *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* pg 49.

medium in the attempt to be a driving force to help those in need as immediately as possible. This is what is arguably the most interesting about working with a contemporary crisis, as the photographs the best way of knowing what is happening now and can lead to initiatives to help.

Given the subjects are asleep, many viewers looking at this photograph may question Pellegrin's motives. Did he sneak up on them to take this photograph and therefore did he not get their consent? The general rule of thumb is that if you cannot fully identify someone's face, everyone is subject to being photographed.⁹² But in this case, the faces are identifiable. Is this photograph a violation of the refugees' privacy? Or did Pellegrin encounter the refugee's before and ask if he could take their photographs, therefore the permission extends over time? But does it truly extend to when the subjects are sleeping? As a Magnum Photographer Pellegrin would be aware of the norms associated with taking someone's photograph. However, the obvious counter to this argument is that by taking the photograph he may get publicity and consequently help the refugees, which could override any privacy concerns.

But are these photographs ever truly enough to cause action? Sharon Sliwinski disagrees with the common notion about human rights photography and how it can invoke action from viewers that will actually benefit those in need. Sliwinski states, "some nurture the belief that media attention can arouse public concern which can subsequently bring about humanitarian response," whereas she believes that photographs cannot be rendered true enough to the crisis and cannot be fully relied on for humanitarian efforts.⁹³ One single viewer is unlikely to make a huge impact unless they have the financial ability to do so. Moreover, if the viewer does help, it is unlikely that their funding will go to the exact person in the photograph that they saw.

⁹² Bernard W. Gerdeman, "Legal Issues in Photographing People." Pbc Law Firm. Last modified October 15, 2013, Accessed April 28th 2016 <http://www.pbcLawfirm.com/legal-issues-photographing-people/>

⁹³ Sharon Sliwinski, "Human Rights in Camera," (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2011), 67.

Media reports in February and March of 2016 highlighted the terrible conditions in the Calais camp including outbreaks of violence and attacks on the refugees.⁹⁴ On March 1st French officials tore down and burned off parts of the camp, which left 3,500 of the refugees homeless, (they were not relocated to other shelters.)⁹⁵ The officials originally described it as a humanitarian effort, but the photographs that emerged, such as (figs. 52 and 53), contradict them. They then said that it was to make room for tents that were not shipping containers, which has also been refuted.⁹⁶ Activists argue that if it weren't for the lack of structure in the European asylum system then Calais would not need to exist⁹⁷, and until the system is drastically improved camps like Calais will continue to be built and then destroyed.⁹⁸

The next photograph is a close up view of one particular shelter in Calais, taken by Markus Schreiber (fig. 54). The tent, in the photograph, is stark white and looks to be covered in plastic that is pinned down, appearing somewhat unstable. There is one gap, presumably the doorway, and a girl is peering out, staring at the photographer. This photograph exemplifies the 'jungle' aspect that Calais has been nicknamed for both factually in terms of the vegetation surrounding the tent, but also descriptively given the belongings, trash and general disarray that is around it. The sense of scale is not obvious in this photograph and it is also not clear to the viewer how many people live in this tent. Through the gap, the viewer can see piles of things, and more belongings are spilling outside of the tent. This tent does not convey a sense of being a home or a place that someone would want to restart his or her life. The tent looks shocking for one person to live in for a short period,

⁹⁴ Nshria, Turkson, "The Dismantling of a European Migrant Camp." *The Atlantic*. Last modified February 29, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/02/calais-migrant-camp/471549/>

⁹⁵ Amanda, Taub "The Humanitarian Crisis in Calais Is a Symptom of the EU's Biggest Failure." *Vox*. Last modified March 8, 2016. Accessed March 31, 2016. <http://www.vox.com/2016/3/8/11180232/jungle-calais-refugee-camp>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Glimmers of Civilization as Calais Migrants Brace for Winter." *Ryot*, <http://www.ryot.org/glimmers-of-civilization-as-calais-migrants-brace-for-winter/946467>

let alone if it is for a family of four or more for an unknown length of time. This photograph explicitly portrays the brutal reality of what the refugees are living in.

The caption reads, “In this Thursday. Nov. 5th 2015 photo, a four-year-old Eritrean girl looks out from a shelter at the migrants’ camp near Calais, northern France. Residents of France’s biggest refugee camps near the English Channel port of Calais must combat hunger, filth and illness in a tent village as they scramble to build hard roofs for winter.” Unlike the general population of the refugee crisis, it is mostly Eritrean refugees in Calais as they are most eager to get to the United Kingdom to try and gain asylum.⁹⁹ In January 2016, one hundred and twenty-five container housing units were supplied by the French government, which will somewhat improve sanitary conditions and provide housing to one thousand and five hundred people. Nevertheless, in March the units were mostly still vacant because the refugees had to register to live in them and registering could prevent the refugees from being allowed into the United Kingdom.¹⁰⁰ Despite the fact that so many refugees have relied on and will continue to rely on the Calais camp, this photograph highlights the horrific conditions that continue to deprive the refugees of their human rights, especially given what they what they are entitled as a stateless human beings.

In contrast is a photograph by Warren Allot depicting a woman at a refugee camp in Hungary (fig. 55). Compared to the previous photograph, the camp appears clean and not chaotic. However, this photograph portrays a sterile feel to the camp, which does not exhume the qualities of a ‘home.’

The woman is grasping a rectangular fence, but there is another diamond patterned fence between her and the photographer. She is not looking at the camera and is turned to her left. Her gaze seems thoughtful as if she is contemplating her surroundings. While the viewer cannot know what the woman is thinking, through her facial expression and the way she is

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

holding the fence, it could be that she is considering her decision to leave her native land, or reflecting on her past life. The viewer is also unaware if the photographer told her to pose in a certain way, as the photograph does have a stylized feel to it. Sebastiao Salgado would disagree with this notion as he has stated, “the picture is not made by the photographer, the picture is more or less good in function of the relationship you will have with the people you photograph,”¹⁰¹ conveying his perspective of the importance of the interaction of the subject and the photographer. This connection determines how the photograph turns out. Arguably this is not always the case as the subject and photographer may not have the exact same intentions or desired outcome for the photograph; often there isn’t any connection at all.

Regardless if the image is staged by Allot, and therefore not necessarily demonstrative of the subject, it is still telling a story of the refugee crisis. The background and additional information provided by the photograph contrasts with the previous photographs. This inconsistency challenges the stereotypical connotations that the rest of the world has about the terrible conditions of the refugee camps. This camp does not seem to have masses of trash and the structures of the tents in the background look established. Even though she is not interacting with anything except the fence, the consistency of the tents suggests a better situation for the refugees. There is something about the identical housing that, although seems deplorable and not somewhere where you would want to create a home, is comforting for the viewer. On the other hand, fences have a tendency to remind viewers of prisons and a barrier between those on the outside and those on the inside. Although this photograph does not have a scare quality to it to suggest a prison, the fence could allude to that interpretation.

There are unidentifiable people in the background of the woman, but the way the photograph has been formed, she seems completely alone and collected in her own thoughts.

¹⁰¹ Larry Rohter, "Sebastiao Salgado's Journey from Brazil to the World." The New York Times, Lens Blog. Last modified March 23, 2015. Accessed April 28, 2016. http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/23sebastiao-salgados-journey-from-brazil-to-the-world/?_r=0

The closeness of the photographer to the fence produces tension between the viewers being intimate with the subject, as they are still on the outside looking in. The viewer cannot truly appreciate what the refugee is going through; hence it is empathy not sympathy that is conveyed in these images of refugees.

This photograph in comparison to a photograph by Samuel Aranda for the New York Times of the Zaatari Refugee Camp is intriguing (fig. 56). It shows a family of four and they are standing in a garden, planted by the father, which looks like an oasis against the uninspiring camp buildings. The infrastructure of Zaatari advances past the development of Calais, and the photograph establishes itself as more of a portrait of the family, in the historical sense, of posing and adjusting themselves for the camera. This family looks settled and rooted in the camp, compared to this woman who although does not look worried or scared is not showing satisfaction, she seems to still be seeking something.

Three photographs represent refugees who are going about their daily lives in the refugee camps. The first photograph is of two young adults having tea and smoking inside of one of the tents, from a series by Stefano De Luigi titled *Wind Up in Calais* (fig. 57). This photograph is a rare image of the inside of a tent. The figure on the left is looking at the camera, and the only light source is from the top right hand corner, most likely from a window, is highlighting him. He is smoking and holding a can of tea, confirmed by the caption: “inside the squat of Tioxide, two migrants having a tea.” The second figure on the right is looking at the first figure, so that the viewer has a profile view of him. Because of where the figures are looking, it creates a three-way interaction between the subjects and the photographer, and by extension the viewer. This photograph generates a sense for the viewer of being in the subjects ‘home’, which gives a deeper level of significance for the viewer, in how they experience refugee life.

The photograph appears mysterious as it has a dark blue hue, and the smoke from the cigarettes incorporated with the light generates a textural element. The smoke comes across as an illusion of the first subject speaking to the second; it travels across the center of the photograph developing a narrative between the two figures. Luigi is close to the figures, suggesting that he also communicated with them and was given permission to enter the tent and take this photograph. This is a concept that human rights photography constantly struggles with as to whether or not it is right to represent the subjects, and how much say do the subjects really have in the final image. David Levi-Strauss is perturbed about this, and in *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*, he concludes “when one, anyone, tries to represent someone else, to ‘take their picture’ or ‘tell their story’, they run headlong into a minefield of real political problems. The first question is: what right have I to represent you?”¹⁰² The counter argument is that if photographers did not represent people, like these refugees, would the world many not know about the crisis in depth as they do. And inevitably, the question would be asked, would they care? Even though I have selected photographs that are not necessarily mainstream in order to challenge what viewers know about the refugee crisis, the broader question is, are photographs that don’t follow established norms, such as this, better than none?

A visually engaging photo, by Marciel Nabrdalik, is a black and white image of a single man (fig. 58). He is standing on what seems to be a prayer rug, and facing to the left of the frame, which without doubt is probably north, the direction of Mecca. Behind the man is foliage of trees and leaves, a common trait in Nabrdalik’s photographs, so that the emphasis is purely on the subject. Most Syrian’s are Muslims,¹⁰³ and therefore this photograph presents

¹⁰²Levi-Strauss, *Between the Eyes*, 99.

¹⁰³ Daniel Greenfield, "No Muslim Country Wants to Take in Syrian Refugees.," FrontPage Mag. Last modified November 11, 2013. Accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.frontpagemag.com/point/209111/no-muslim-country-wants-take-syrian-refugees-daniel-greenfield>.

a usual occurrence among refugees. Devout Muslims pray five times a day¹⁰⁴, which is difficult when constantly on the move, but when the refugees have arrived at a camp, reestablishing their worship is a priority. This photograph shows that dedication, but also a peaceful moment in a refugee camp that is not necessarily conventional. The man has taken his shoes off, a sign of respect and his eyes are closed as he is focused on praying. The photographer appears to have caught this distinct instance of an inspiring moment of the refugees moving forward with their life.

This notion of capturing a specific instance, as discussed in Chapter One, is termed by Henri Cartier-Bresson as “the ‘decisive moment,’ approach to photography in which a scene is stopped and depicted at a certain point of high visual drama, is now possible to achieve at any time”¹⁰⁵. Nabrdalik has specifically chosen this ‘decisive moment’ to pick not because of the interest in it photographically, but because of its unusual characteristics. In spite of the fact that it is formally a beautiful photograph, the photographer is communicating the return to normality for the refugees. In this way, the photograph connects the refugees to the viewer in a more humane way, because they can see how the refugees are coping and trying to return to a normal life

The final photograph of this group is also against a backdrop of leaves but this time does not showcase humans. This color photograph by Matic Zorman displays articles of clothing haphazardly draped across vines (fig. 59). Even though there are five items, the only recognizable ones are two bras. At first glance the items could have been discarded or lost, but when looking closer there are two wires stretched across the top of the vines, which are acting as support for the clothes. The viewer can deduce that the clothes are drying, as this is taken at a refugee camp, where the refugees are being to again undertake daily chores such as laundry. This photograph seems visibly happier with the use of colors and the juxtaposing

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Fred Ritchin, *After Photography*, (W. W. Norton & Company: 2010) pg. 100.

shapes, attracting the viewer's attention. Because there are no human rights violations that are obvious to the viewer, the photograph might be seen as eerie and the underlying meaning is distorted for the viewer.

Once at a secure camp the refugees have to consider how they are going to get asylum: what country might grant it and inevitably what they will do if they do not get it. Hanging laundry on wires supported by vines seems mundane, but in reality it is a huge step forward in the journey as it implies some sort of stability. But will chores comfort them that they have made the right decision to leave their native country? Is the ability to do dull chores enough to convince refugees of stability? This photograph portrays a lot more of the deeper emotions of being a refugee than simply presenting laundry against leaves. It highlights the issue that the refugees could theoretically stay in camps for many years, as that is technically what the UDHR allows them to do, but is that the end goal? Or is it just the realistic if not ideal outcome?

Almost as a contradiction, the final photograph of the relocation illustrates the happiness and joy that can be felt when living at a refugee camp through the eyes of children. The first by, Jerome Sessini (fig. 60) is of children playing in an apparently open and natural setting. The scene is of a field with a single side of a building on the top right hand side of the photograph, but other than that the landscape is arid. There are six figures in the photograph, three female and three male, although two of the boys are the most prominent. They are in the center of the frame, and one is standing in a ditch looking at the camera, while the other is jumping across the ditch traversing the photo. The other four figures are on the left hand side of the photograph and are all on the ground above the ditch. The children appear to be content and are having a good time as if the worries of being a refugee does not affect them.

Another one of the concerns with photography that Ritchin addresses in *After Photography* is the issue of truth, particularly in a human rights context where a slight change

in one factor could highlight, or otherwise downplay, the severity of a situation. He says, “I always believed that photography was subjective, interpretive and certainly did not represent the ‘truth,’ but I did think that its status as a societal and historical referent needed to be both safeguarded and illuminated... now photojournalism is devolving into yet another medium perceived as intending to shock, titillate, sell, distort.”¹⁰⁶ While this photograph does not shock the viewer in the way that Ritchin is suggesting, it is shocking in the way it is portraying peace in a refugee camp. The complication arises as Sessini’s temporal motive is questioned, did he take this photograph because it showed glee? Is this a split second of a moment that euphoria is shown? And unlikely so, but did he ask the boys to create this false sense of hope? Or are they truly content? Can you be content in a place that isn’t really home? Or at least that doesn’t feel like home yet? Historically this photograph captures an abnormal moment of the refugees but can still be the ‘truth’ that Ritchin refers to.

These photographs convey the most permanent state of the refugees’ journey but their journey is still in progress. The refugees are not living permanently in Europe, but they have arrived and transitioned through it to get to this more stable juncture. The living conditions are not ideal, and probably not what the refugees expected when leaving their homes. The events that take place in the camps are almost secret to outsiders and are almost purposely kept under the radar. However, the waiting in these shelters is arguably going to be worth once they gain asylum which is more likely now that they are at this particular point in the journey.

The photographs reflect the uncertainty that the refugees face in this stage, but also throughout the entire journey. The waiting and various modes of transport combine to reflect the uneasiness of getting to a refugee camp, but the agitation does not stop there. These photographs contain the largest range of events that the refugees are experiencing, because of

¹⁰⁶ Ritchin, “After Photography,” 62.

the constant fluctuation that occurs in their daily lives. I have aimed to not only convey all these situations in the photographs that I chose, but also select photographs that contradict one another in this chapter. Refugee camps are arguably the most obvious connection that someone would make in relation to refugees, but the camps are not always horrific and troublesome for the refugees. It could be disputed that the photographs of refugee camps are the most stereotypical because of this prominent relationship between refugees and camps. And therefore this chapter has been an effort to test the boundaries of the norms in refugee photographs.

Conclusion

In this senior project I have explored human rights documentary photography through the lens of the current Syrian refugee crisis. I have analyzed images of the crisis through three different stages of the refugees' journey; The Arrival phase when the refugees land in Greece, The Transitional stage during which they make their way through Europe and The Relocation phase when they are housed, or in most cases waiting for extended periods of time for asylum.

In choosing images from this crisis, I deliberately avoided mainstream or stereotypical refugee photographs- as many of these quickly become generic. In Chapter One I reviewed the history of refugee photography to provide a sense of the characteristics of iconic refugee photographs and how they have changed over time. Some of the photographs I discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Four do resemble characteristics of those in Chapter One, but they border on the line of 'artistic and visually pleasing photographs' and 'humanitarian mainstream photographs.' Every photograph I have selected has an intentional feel to it; the photographer is attempting to capture what is happening to their fullest capability. And the entirety of all the photographs together combines to embody the refugee crisis and how it is portrayed in the media.

I have argued, along with many photography and human rights critics, visuals surpass text when attempting to educate the world about an event. It is quicker for a viewer to look at one or two images to get a sense of the situation rather than reading pages of text. As a result many people think they are informed through the photographs with little work involved. This is challenging as text can add circumstantial information and evidence about what is taking place that maybe cannot be inferred just from the image: for example figures twenty-six figure fifty-nine by Matic Zorman. Photographs are the closest to the reality of an event, but

they are not the only medium that we as viewers should rely on, to be enlightened by something that is happening elsewhere.

The current crisis and images of it are at the center of the debate about whether human rights photographs can still motivate action from the viewer. The two major traits of human rights photography are that they invoke empathy and the inevitable shock factor of the image. However, many critics argue that the shock factor is fading because viewers are becoming acclimatized to photographs of violence. And even if the shock factor still exists is it too morbid and therefore deters viewers from looking at the photographs? If this is the case, is the empathy strong enough for the viewer to want to do something? And if this is the case, what do they do? Is it truly humanitarian to just send money overseas? Or should viewers go to the countries where these occurrences are happening? But how can their safety be ensured and how can it be expected that people discontinue their daily lives to help others? Morally and ethically intervening is the right thing to do, but logistically it cannot always be done. Moreover, even if someone does go to help will they make a large impact? Is it possible for an average viewer to help those in need? Arguably even if empathy is provoked that does not mean that the viewer will actually do something; they may only think about it for a few minutes or hours, and are not ultimately moved by the images. Just because the photographs may truthfully represent the human rights violations, the photographer cannot control the reaction of the viewer.

The photographs from this current crisis are atypical in that they take a different approach when representing the human rights violations. For example, figure twenty-eight by Ron Haviv is shocking but not in the traditional sense, it is shocking because of the humor it exhumes. On the other hand, figure forty-three by Mohammed Badra, is the most typical because of the violent shock factor it conveys for the viewer. And figure thirty-eight by Bulent Kilic creates empathy through the subject of a struggling child. While a general

assumption of more contemporary human rights photographs are becoming less and less violent and 'shocking' for the viewer. The photographers are focusing more on the aesthetics of the images and how they can entice the viewer to look at them and consequently might result in a response, such as figure thirty-five by Marciak Nadrdaik. Rather than creating photographs that remind viewers of what they have already seen multiple times, photographers want to make sure their photographs are looked at and not ignored because of their aesthetics. But rather the photographer wants to entice the viewer to look at their images again, hopefully triggering a response.

Some critics and viewers struggle with aesthetically pleasing human rights photographs, as viewers tend to focus on the way that the images may have been manipulated or adjusted by the photographer in order to beautifully capture an event. How is the viewer certain that the photograph is true to the crisis? The images I have evaluated were all taken by professional photographers, who have a strong visual sense and an awareness of the importance of conveying the aspects of the refugee crisis in a truthful way. The photographs are not archetypal; they blur the line between being documentary human rights photographs and visually artistic photographs. Viewers are routinely repulsed and feel disgusted when looking at the quintessential human rights photograph portraying violence and extreme human rights violations. But viewers are also attracted to more aesthetically pleasing photographs, especially if the photographs are engaging.

Photographers in human rights crises are finding it more difficult to get to the root of the issue and be allowed access or given permission to photograph. Photographers can join NGOs or can travel on their own accord or with an agency, but protection for photographers is lacking. While the refugee crisis is not unsafe for photographers like war or a violence driven humanitarian crisis, gaining access to where the refugees are and assimilating themselves into their lives is challenging. But in this current crisis a number of photographers

have managed to follow refugees and create a consistent narrative for the viewer. Figures thirty-three by James Nachtwey and thirty-four by Paolo Pellegrin show how this can be achieved. These types of images have the ability to evoke empathy and a desire to help the subjects but the issues are not as obvious to the viewer compared to photographs of blood and gore. Representing the most disturbing aspects requires time spent with the refugees; hence the photographs I have discussed do not come from a huge assortment of photographers, but from a small group who have followed the crisis and to an extent infiltrated the journey to create these images.

The new generation of human rights photographs are characterized by first reducing image fatigue, moving away from the generic to the specific, so that the viewers are more interested in the photographs. The photographers can do so in a more aesthetically pleasing way, and by creating a narrative through persistently following the crisis rather than just photographing one event on one particular day. As I have written about a current crisis, it is impossible to predict if the images have had a huge influence or have ultimately changed the public's perception of the crisis and therefore the governments' decision to intervene. These changes may be very beneficial- we just cannot see the results yet.

Through these photographs of the Syrian refugee crisis, I have documented the evolution of human rights photography. Regardless of its effectiveness in the current crisis, the problematizing of documentary human rights photographs will continue to evolve. If viewers are becoming unaware of photographs that should theoretically disturb them, then human rights photography may have to take another direction. Maybe photographers will have to alter the way they photograph to get the public's attention? The public should want to know what is taking place around the world and care about human rights violations; however this is of course not always the case. Photographs have historically documented and created concern for human rights violations and will continue to do so.

Figures:



Figure 1: Hellen van Meene, The Mzayek family outside a shelter in Eisenärzt, for the New York Times, April 6th 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/10/magazine/the-new-europeans.html?rref=collection%2Fspotlightcollection%2Fgreat-reads&action=click&contentCollection=us®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=2&pgtype=collection



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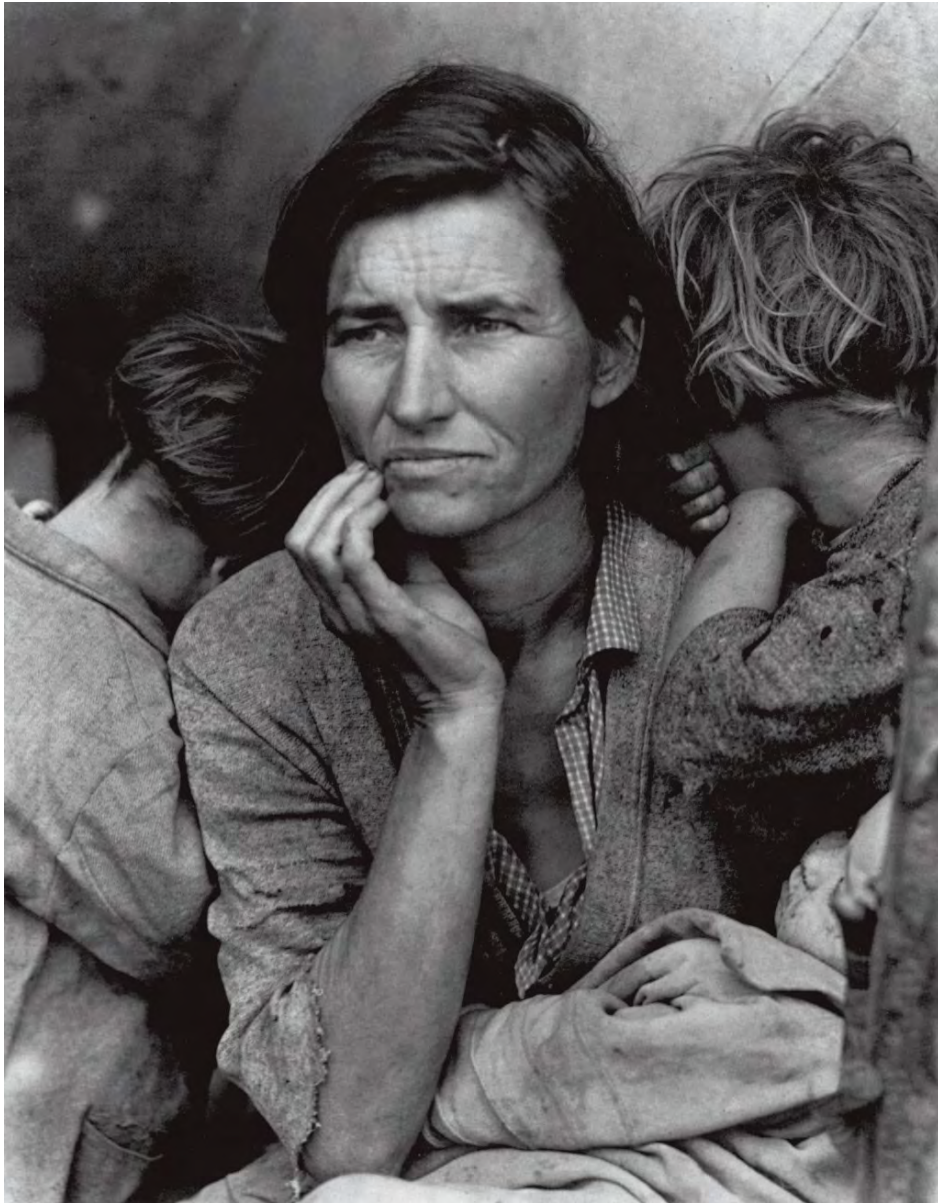


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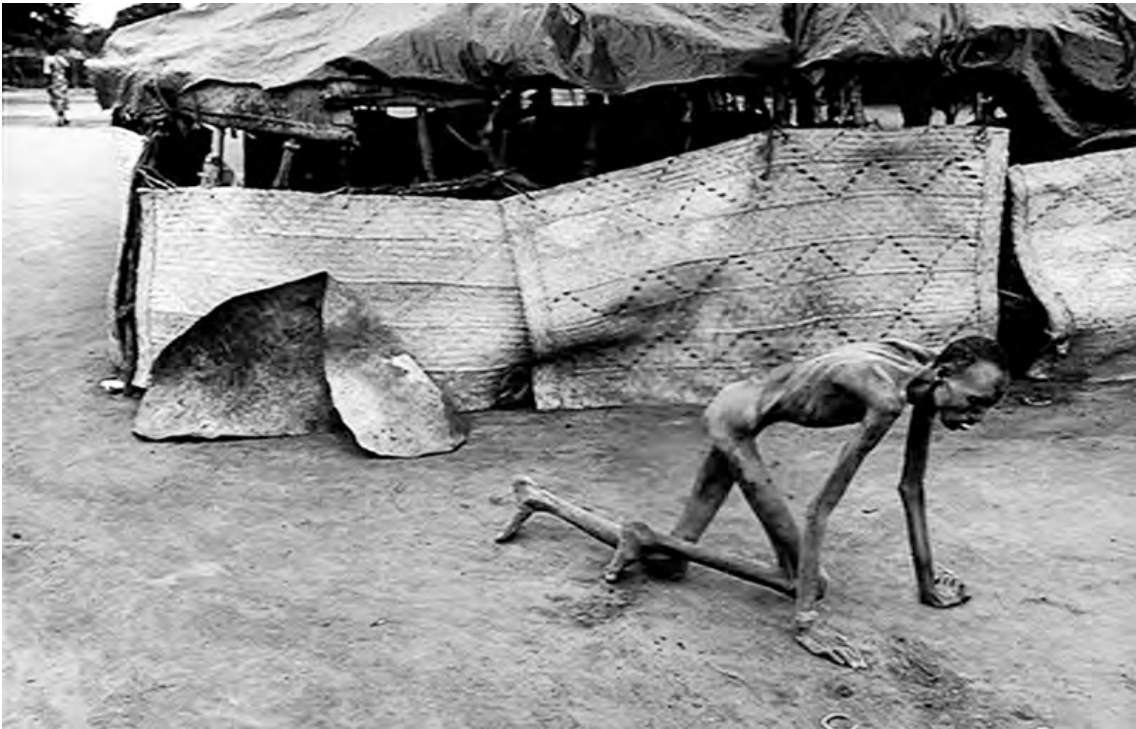


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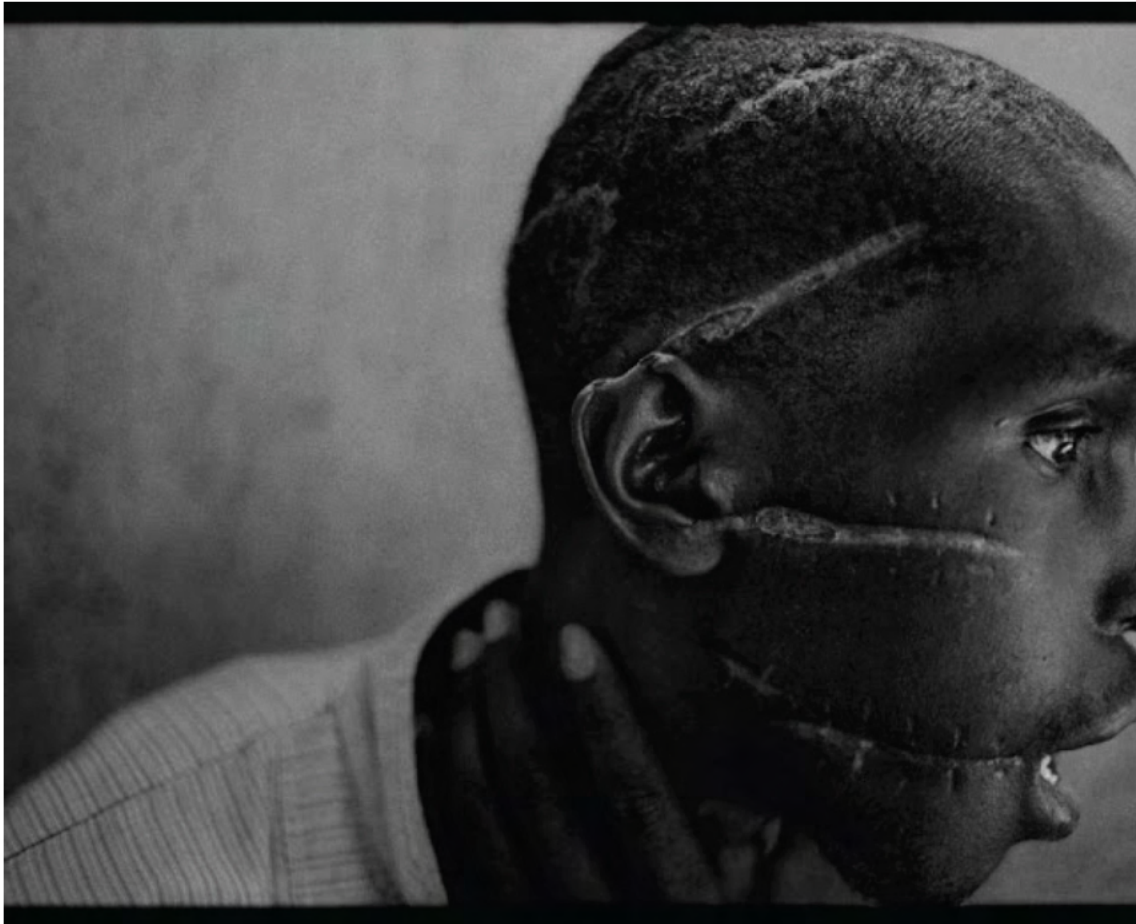


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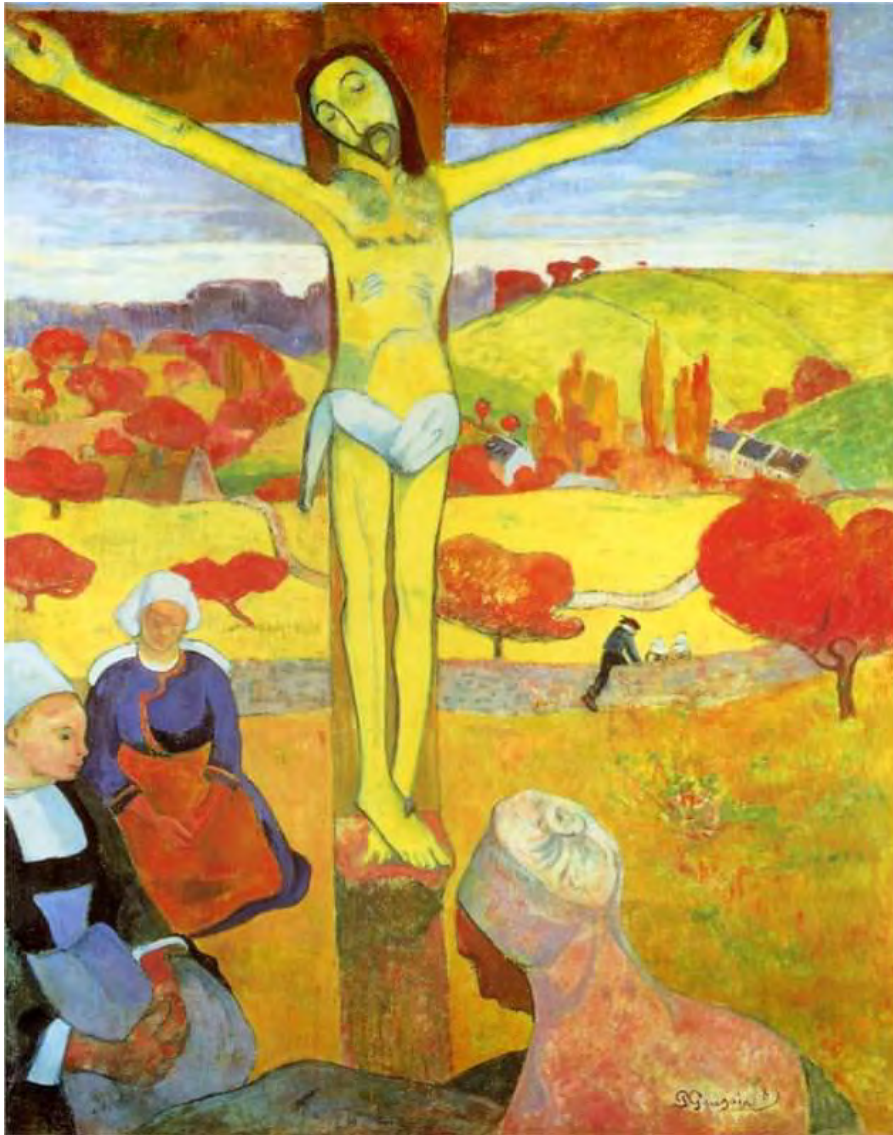


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