Iconic Photographs, Unwitting Subjects: Roles of Photography in the Representation of Displaced Persons within the 2015 European Refugee and Migrant "Crisis"

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5 April 2019

Word count: 20,189

The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as foreign land

Hugo of St. Victor

While we live in a time when division is the norm when biases and beliefs seem static and immobile; when hard science is debatable; when journalism is devalued; when humanity is stripped from those in cells, centers and shelters; when it's all just too much to organise in our head, art calls to the optimism within us and beckons us to breathe

Ava DuVernay

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Introduction

On the 22nd December 2015, The BBC issued an article on its website entitled "Migrant Crisis: One million enter Europe in 2015" (BBC 2015). The headline succinctly reflected the reality of that year, one in which Western European nations such as Germany, Italy, France and the United Kingdom faced unprecedented levels of asylum claims from people fleeing war-torn or economically unstable countries such as Syria, Iraq, Eritrea and Pakistan, in what has come to be commonly referred to as the European refugee crisis.[1] According to an opinion poll from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], in October 2015 alone 221,000 people arrived to Europe over land or sea (UNHCR Operational Portal 2019). Since then, although the number of people migrating within a specific period of time may have decreased, the bleak reality of those fleeing their homelands in search of safety and security has neither abated nor progressed towards resolution. Instead, within four years multiple migration routes have appeared throughout Eastern Europe heading west, and refugee camps have arisen in countries from Turkey to France and Serbia to Sicily. Due to the extremely high number of people searching for safety and the dangerous journeys

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[1] I refer to the ongoing situation as the 'European refugee crisis' due to the ubiquitous employment of this title by European and North American news media platforms, as the heading for their reportage on the situations of refugees and migrants from Syria and neighbouring countries, since 2015 .

they take in search of it, this so-called "crisis"[2] has been reported through mass media outlets to a worldwide audience.

The wretched conditions that displaced persons[3] within this "crisis" face along routes through Europe, from deadly sea crossings in overcrowded dinghys to squalid conditions in makeshift camps, make it clear that this is a humanitarian problem requiring aid and assistance from Western governments and the citizens of their societies. In 2015, 1,321,560 claims for asylum were issued to countries such as The Netherlands, Denmark and Hungary (BBC 2016). As an issue of political and national concern, this "crisis" demands reportage and documentation in order for European nations to understand as fully as possible the nature of the problem, so to think about how to alleviate it. Furthermore, the ongoing nature of the "crisis", which saw Europe receiving over 100,000 individuals in as recently as 2018, calls for immediate and hard-hitting representation in order to keep up with the rapidly evolving complexity of the situation. In many ways, the distribution of the latest news through photographs in mass media outlets such as newspapers and

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[2] From now on, when referring to the so-called European refugee crisis I will shorten it to "crisis". I will make use double quotation marks because as has been widely argued, there are significant issues and consequences to terming the situation a *crisis*. Nicholas de Genova, Martina Tazzioli, Charles Heller, Maurice Sterl and Huub van Baar have elaborated on the plethoric problems. From their argument that 'the term "crisis" is commonly used to denote a situation of disruption of the norm within a prior situation of presumed stability [...] and thereby associated with imminent danger demanding immediate action', it becomes clear that by linking *crisis* and *refugee* [or] *migrant* together as the headline for this documentation, the latter immediately become the 'disruptor(s)' posing a significant and unwanted threat. Further, given the complexity of the situation of mass migration and refugee movements, they suggest that 'it is doubtful that the "crisis" label can serve to clarify anything, and rather more likely that it serves instead to further obfuscate'. Such gives an indication of the many levels of depersonalisation exacted upon displaced persons on account of their implication within this so-called crisis. There are a great deal more complications associated with the use of *crisis* especially to do with [European] political intervention and control, which is important yet outside of the parameters of this thesis. (De Genova & Tazzioli, eds., 2019).
[3] In order to avoid repetition, I will use both *displaced persons* and *refugees and forced migrants* when referring to people who have fled or migrated from their original countries as a result of war, persecution, political or environmental chaos.

news websites therefore offers an effective mode of representation, communicating a visual and clear summary of the facts as they unfold, to societies worldwide.

However, there are evident issues over the way visual mass media reports on and represents the current events unfolding at European shores; especially with regards to how it tends to exploit the aesthetic aspects of the refugees' and forced migrants' desperate or dreadful circumstances, by turning them into sensational or spectacular events. Further, it has been noted that in this era of global instant communication and mass information consumption, journalism increasingly favours pace and shock-factor over accuracy and truth of the events or subjects it is reporting on, often to the subjects' detriment (Mortensen 2017). Photographer Daniel Castro Garcia, whose project will provide one of the three case studies for the second chapter of this thesis, has written

> more often than not, the coverage [of the refugee crisis] on channels and in publications is governed by external influences and obligations, that result in the sanctification or vilifications of the people involved. Furthermore, the situation is always oversimplified and do [sic] not really scratch the surface of the reality faced by the people who have a legal right to be in Europe (D. C. Garcia, personal communication, 9 July 2018).

Scholar of Media, Cognition and Communication Mette Mortensen claims that "in the current era, journalism appears to be increasingly driven by visual priorities, with the sheer volume, spread and re-inflection of newsworthy imagery expanding exponentially" (Mortensen et al. 2017: 71). Mortensen was writing in response to the publication of a series of images in 2015 which showed the lifeless body of a young refugee named Alan Kurdi, who had washed up on a beach in Bodrum, Turkey, after the boat he was crossing the Mediterranean in along with his family overturned. Subsequently investigating the issues and effects of image representation of refugees and forced

migrants, both she and further Scholar of Media, Cognition and Communication Hans-Jörg Trenz raise questions over the role of mass media, which they say has become "the main outlet for images of unbearable suffering and inhumanity" (Mortensen & Trenz 2016: 345) that have come to epitomise this "crisis".

These photographs, and platforms upon which they are published to a mass audience, either restrict the extent of what can be told of the shocking real-life situations and events or indeed reveal all too much in graphic detail. Due to the nature of news today in our globally interconnected world, the plight of displaced persons are commonly represented in photographs which, although harrowing, realistically only exist in the public consciousness for a matter of hours or days. At the same time, the ongoing nature of the "crisis" has engendered somewhat of an over-saturation of its visual representation in the mass media. The overall result of this is not only the desensitisation of the distant spectator to the often difficult realities apparent in the images they are seeing, such as refugees and migrants scrabbling for safety in overcrowded boats or endless crowds of people standing at the borders of European countries[4], but it further belittles the personal and sensitive specificities of each individual refugee or forced migrant's situation.

Such issues of photographic representation of displaced persons are at stake in this thesis. Although the nature of each of their experiences is personal and unique, when documented by photographs intended for publication on mass media platforms they are often either subsumed within the wider "crisis", or rather categorised by one-dimensional or stereotypical motifs of desperation, victimhood and vulnerability. As a result, questions are being raised by contemporary theorists over the ways in which one can or should depict refugees and forced migrants, and more

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[4] By google image searching 'European refugee crisis' you will be able to see a plethora of the type of images I describe here.

specifically whether the current representation by those working to distribute news to a mass audience is suitable, or rather detrimental, to building an ethical understanding and awareness of the European refugee "crisis" and those within it. Does photojournalistic representation, which seeks to provide fast-paced information about the unfolding scenario or event it is portraying, compound the complex and vulnerable identity of the refugee or forced migrant and aggravate the possibly already hostile conception of them generally adopted by a non-refugee spectatorship?

In this thesis I will therefore investigate the differences between photojournalism and art or documentary photography, to see whether various practices of art photography can provide more beneficial and positive modes of representation for displaced persons within the European refugee "crisis". This first necessitates an understanding of the figure of the refugee or forced migrant, in order to see why it is crucial to consider and challenge the ways in which they are represented photographically and to upick why the way in which they are represented matters. Ultimately, the purpose of this thesis arises from a question of representation. How to portray an identity as complex as that of the refugee or forced migrant, without adding to their suffering through visual appropriation or objectifying tropes; and photographically visualise a phenomenon that is so far removed from so many spectators' realities, in order to make those spectators concerned on an empathetic level necessary to safeguard the lives of those caught up in it? Is there a way to avoid the ethical pitfalls, such as stereotyping and de-individualisation often resulting from mass media representation, through different forms of photography in order to make refugees and forced migrants the protagonists of their own story? Can art photography combat what are becoming increasingly unfavourable forms of (mis)representation of one of the most pressing humanitarian

and political issues today, such which increases the polarisation between, as scholar of Media and Communication Esther Greussing puts it, "us" and "them" (2017: 1753)?

In Chapter One, I will begin by looking at what happens to a photograph's meaning, that being one's reading and understanding of it, and its effect on both the viewer and the subject captured, when it gains iconic status. This will involve a look into the definitions of icon and iconic within a photography-based context, and what they mean in relation to the spectator. I will then analyse two iconic images of the 20th Century as so named by *TIME* Magazine in *100 Photographs: The Most Influential Images of All Time* (Goldberger, Moakley & Pollack 2018: 30 & 140) and both taken by photojournalists on assignment, Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother* and Eddie Adams' *Boat of No Smiles*. I use these photographs as examples of press photography, which cultural theorist Roland Barthes argued are comprised of both a denotative message and a connotative message; connoted because "chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms" (1977: 19) while on the other hand denoted by being "received, perceived, [...] read, connected more and less consciously by the public that consumes it to a traditional stock of signs" (1977: 19). Barthes suggested that the photograph has a second-order message, which is not necessarily active or visible at the level of initial production, "that gives it every chance of being mythical" due to "certain levels of phenomena that occur at the levels of the production and reception of the message" (1977: 19). Using this analysis, I will argue that the iconicising of these photojournalistic images, both of which depict mothers in states of enforced migration or seeking refuge, abstracted the realities presented within the photographs and thus served to further marginalise the subjects. The images' elevated statuses proved thus somewhat detrimental, because

of the consequential stereotyping of their subjects as the helpless, "Marian" figure, to the ways in which the specific situations in which the photographs' subjects were considered and addressed.

Next, I will research theories on the subject of refugees and forced migrants and how the nomenclatures have come to be considered. In a theoretical analysis I will draw on the reflections of political theorist Hannah Arendt and philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who have studied and defined the multifaceted elements that constitute the refugee and migrant status, in order to see what rights, if any refugees and forced migrants are considered to possess when outside of the political sphere. Thereafter my visual analysis takes a series of what are now world-famous images taken by Turkish press photographer Nilüfer Demir, of a three-year old Syrian boy named Alan Kurdi, who died after drowning from the capsizing of an overcrowded vessel that was transporting both him and his family and scores more refugees from Greece, on the 2nd September 2015. The series of photographs she took show his deceased body as it washed up on a beach and subsequently a Turkish coast guard taking him away. In a matter of hours, the images appeared on social media and in the ensuing days illustrated the front page headlines of print and online news around the world. The pictures were retweeted 30,000 times in the first 8 hours and consequently, they quickly gained iconic status: one of the photos is included in *TIME's 100 Photographs: The Most Influential Images of All Time*. Suddenly, the world appeared to turn its attention to the European refugee "crisis".

In this case study I will explore damaging effects of the iconicisation of the Alan Kurdi images, and the wider issues of photojournalistic representation of this "crisis" through the perspective of the sensationalised reception of Demir's images. Ultimately, I will look at what happened with regards to the individual depicted, Alan Kurdi, and more generally to the way in which refugees and forced migrants were considered and discussed within wider society, on account

of the multiple subsequent appropriations of the original images. Did Demir's images change the perception of refugees and forced migrants travelling to Europe? Or did they force a realisation that the depiction of refugees and forced migrants through photojournalism for mass media platforms falls short, on a compassionate and responsible level in representing them? In *On Photography,* writer and activist Susan Sontag wrote that "to photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed" (2008: 14). I will discuss the relevance of this statement in regards to the objectification of the 3-year old boy subject of these photographs who, already widely misidentified (he was initially reported on with the name *Aylan* Kurdi) and therefore misrepresented, then came to symbolise something much larger than himself. In a matter of hours, his small body became loaded with allegorical connotations that projected him as a symbol for the whole of humanity suffering within the European refugee "crisis".[5]

In order to provide a comparison to the representation and reception of images of displaced persons in photojournalism, in Chapter Two I will conduct visual analyses on the work of three art or documentary photographers who are working *with* refugees and forced migrants as their subjects. The images made by these practitioners do not "represent large swaths of historical experience" and most probably will not "acquire their own histories of appropriation and commentary" (Hariman & Lucaites 2007: 1) as does the iconic photo, argue scholars of Rhetoric and Public Culture Robert Hariman and John L. Lucaites. Instead, each photographer draws out the personal, private moments

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[5] The hashtag that emerged along with the pictures' retweets in the hours after the pictures first began to circulate online was the Turkish '#KiyiyaVuranInsanlik' which translates to *humanity washed ashore*. Through this process, the images and their principal subject main quickly became synonymous with the refugees and migrants as a mass or collective body and thus adopted a more powerful connotative aura, over its objective, denotative depiction which would instead perhaps have engendered a hashtag like #alankurdideath.

within the [possibly] era-defining event that is the European refugee "crisis". Sicily-based photographer Daniel Castro Garcia has produced a body of documentary work culminating in a photobook entitled *Foreigner: Migration Into Europe 2015-16*, representing the experiences and identities of refugees and forced migrants from camps all over Europe through slow, medium format photography. Syrian photographic artist Omar Imam, currently based in Amsterdam as a resident artist at the Rijksakademie, has created a project entitled *Live, Love, Refugee,* which seeks to provide alternative narratives of displaced Syrians through a conceptual and surreal approach working with black and white film. Finally, in *Passengers* photojournalist and documentary photographer César Dezfuli depicts in a striking tableau format, the individual moments of 118 refugees' rescue by a rescue ship in the Mediterranean, in a series of simple but nevertheless profound portraits.

In these studies I will look at the visual language of these photographers' works, both independently and in comparison to the images of Alan Kurdi, in order to establish a dichotomy between the visual language in mass media and art photography. I will examine whether the portrayals in Castro Garcia's, Imam's and Dezfuli's images example ways in which photography can ameliorate, rather than further degrade refugee and forced migrants' already ill-protected and tenuously held identities. As art-historian T J Demos asks, how do we represent those who "have been severed from representation politically [...] denied the rights of citizenship and the legal protections of national sovereignty?" (2006: 3). Can art photography provide a better solution over photojournalism to this both political and aesthetic problem?

Chapter One

Iconic photography, mass media and the refugee as subject

1.1.1. From image to icon

Scholar of Photography and Visual Anthropology Terence Wright has discerned that over the past

two decades, "worldwide [...] technological innovation moving from the analogue to the digital has

resulted in dramatic changing patterns in the *media landscape*". (as cited in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al.

2014: 470). The media landscape to which Wright refers points to the extensive amount of

platforms in the 21st Century that provide access to the news, from internet search engines and

social media sites like Google, Twitter or Instagram to print newspapers and magazines such as *The*

Guardian and *TIME*. The sheer abundance of possible information makes it understandable, as

Mette Mortensen argues, that the most effective and popular forms of mass media reportage often

take the form of photographs and videos; those which require shorter and less critical engagement

than densely worded and lengthy articles (2017: 1143).

Yet, photography in the mass media is not so much symptomatic of modern times in its

essence but rather its proliferation, for since the former half of the 20th Century photography has

been a crucial element of news reporting. It was during the latter half of the Century that the notion

of photographs as icons or iconic began to spread, for the visual representation of notable people

and important events through widely disseminated images, in differing ways started to change the

experiences and perceptions of the people seeing them. Take Robert Capa's image *The Falling Soldier*

from 1936, which (contestably) marks the exact moment of a Spanish Republican soldier's death by

a bullet to the head, Nick Ut's *The Terror of War* from 1972, of a young Vietnamese girl running

naked through the streets after a napalm attack by US forces burnt through her clothes, or Kevin

Carter's *The Vulture and the Little Girl* which depicts a starved child in Sudan in 1993, appearing as a piece of carrion for an onlooking vulture. These photographs have all assumed fame and iconic status as symbolic representatives of a certain time and an historically important event. Further, all three are included in *TIME's 100 Photographs: The Most Influential Images of All Time*, a photobook which was created in order to explore "the stories behind 100 images that changed the world" (Goldberger, Moakley & Pollack 2018).

The very fact that such a project can exist attests to the power that images exert in shaping our understanding and experience as human beings. Their categorization as representations of a specific time or event that is considered of global importance means that they attain a power and identity that reaches far beyond their literal content; becoming not only an object of visual testimony or documentary verisimilitude but also a metaphorical symbol of an important socio-historical context. The earliest photograph in *TIME's* selection was taken in 1826 by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, entitled *View from the window of Le Gras*. Selected not because of its visual information but rather its pioneering status as one of the first known photographs ever taken, it nevertheless reveals an element of what it takes for an image to become iconic: in some way, it must set a precedent. Moreover, it is notable that the majority of portraits in TIME's collection, when not of global celebrities like the four members of The Beatles or Muhammed Ali, are of civilians in states in victimhood, distress, despair or indeed death. Certain criteria is thus evident for photographs to appear in the selection, yet this raises obvious concerns over the ethics of photojournalism, photographic exploitation and turning individuals into symbols. To what benefit to the subjects, if any at all, are these photographs made iconic?

By definition in the Oxford English Dictionary, icon is an "an image, figure, or representation; a portrait; a picture", "an image in the solid; a monumental figure; a statue" or "a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol, esp. of a culture or movement; a person, institution, etc., considered worthy of admiration or respect" (OED Online 2019); and iconic as "pertaining to an icon, image, figure, or representation; of the nature of a portrait" or to an "image used in worship" (OED Online 2019). In an art-historical context, icons and iconic imagery generally refers to representations of religious figures, and in Christianity, the figures of Jesus Christ or Mary or indeed them both together are by far the most common (Drainville as cited in Vis & Goriunova 2015: 47). Yet iconography, which is the the study of the identification, description and interpretation of the content of images not specifically religious but rather regarded as integral to the socio-historical context of the time in which they were produced, came to prominence as a field of study in the 19th Century. Since then, the definitions of icon and iconic and their associative meanings have undergone significant transformations. From referring largely to religious and devotional painting in the 19th Century and earlier, in the 20th Century they grew in use as a definition based on a far broader and atheistic set of principles, most evidently in representing era-defining moments and people. By looking at Google Ngram Viewer[6] it is possible to see how both words, icon and iconic, have increased exponentially in utilisation in the English language in the past 70 to 90 years. It is in the context of 20th Century iconic imagery then, where we can begin to look into the iconicity of photographs and the reasons why they come to be known as such.

In *On Photography,* Susan Sontag has written "images that mobilise conscience are always linked to a given historical situation" (2008: 17). Although Sontag does not explicitly refer to those

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[6] Google Ngram Viewer or Google Books Ngram Viewer is an online search engine that charts the frequencies of any set of comma-delimited searches, using a yearly count of *n-grams.*

images as being iconic or making icons out of the subjects they refer to, reflecting on the meaning of mobilising conscience suggests a link to Robert Hariman and John L. Lucaites' definition of iconic photography; "those [images] produced in print, electronic, or digital media that are recognized by everyone, are understood to be representations of historically significant events, [which] *activate strong emotional identification or response*" [italics my own] (2001: 7). Media and Visual Culture scholars Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright have said that "an icon is an image that refers to something outside of its individual components, something (or someone) that has great symbolic meaning for many people. Icons are often perceived to represent universal concepts, emotions and meanings" (2001: 36). Images, they argue, "produced in a specific culture, time, and place might be interpreted as having universal meaning and the capacity to evoke similar responses across all cultures and in all viewers" (2001: 36). Collating these various theories together illustrates a view of an icon as a resemblant reproduction of any given thing, and iconic imagery as the power of a photographic representation to pervade public consciousness and connote to this public a number of meanings outside of its objective depiction, those which have the capacity to ignite strong emotions and common feelings amongst a mass audience.

The possibility of stirring the emotions and conscience of the viewers are important factors in what makes a photograph iconic. Yet theoretically speaking, how do images acquire iconic properties? From the OED definition of icon as a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol, Roland Barthes' self-reflective epiphany in *Camera Lucida,* that "in certain photographs I believe I perceive the lineaments of truth, [such…] happens when I judge a certain photograph *a likeness*" (2000: 100), suggests that photographs can become, create or produce icons. Yet photographs are both objective and subjective. They re-present the reality in front of the camera's

lens, and yet as Sontag claims "it is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, to frame is to exclude" (2003: 54). Therefore, the creation of an iconic photograph must be partly too on account of its personally selected composition by the photographer. Barthes says that a photograph can never be wholly denotative, in a similar vein to how Sontag argues the reality depicted in a photograph is always a chosen reality, and he therefore muses on both the denotative and connotative qualities of the photographic image in particular reference to news photography. In *Image-Music-Text* he writes,

> on the one hand, the press photograph is an object that has been worked on, chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms which are so many factors of connotation; while on the other, this same photograph is not only perceived, received, it is *read,* connected more or less consciously by the public who consume it to a traditional stock of signs (1977: 19)

In this we can infer that in a photograph like the kind Barthes was referring to, that of a news photograph, there is a dialogue between the image-maker and the image-viewer regarding the reality versus interpretation of the image. When not represented but simply experienced, reality is personal, rather than public and thus possibly iconic. In evaluating the many properties of iconic photographs Hariman and Lucaites suggest that "photojournalism might be the perfect ideological practice" for "while it seems to present objects as they are in the world, it places those objects within a system of social relationships and constitutes the viewer as a subject within that system" (2007: 2). Meaning by this that the photojournalistic image creates within the viewer a network of associations between the photograph's objective depiction and the wider, possibly era-defining context of the times in which it was produced, thus evinces its both denotative and connotative properties that facilitates the process of its iconicisation. Such an analysis thus makes understandable Mortensen's claim that

"icons typically fall within realistic photojournalism" (2017: 7) rather than, for instance, art or commercial photography.

A number of theorists have suggested that a large part of an image's road to iconicity also relies on its widespread circulation and reception, which allows the photograph to assume a new identity or meanings beyond that of its original subsequent to its initial publication. In the 20th Century, during what is popularly considered the golden age of photojournalism, before the creation of the internet which then quickly became the most prolific and powerful form of mass media and irrevocably changed the way we consume images, it was through physical platforms such as weekly newspapers like *The New York Times* and monthly magazines like *LIFE* and *National Geographic,* that powerful images were circulated and thus gained iconic status. As scholars of Media and Communication Nicole Smith Dahmen, Natalia Mielczarek and David D. Perlmutter (2018) state, "traditionally, news photographs became iconic largely through their prominent placement on the front pages of elite newspapers across the globe". Sontag traces the beginnings of photojournalism and mass circulation to the Spanish Civil War from 1936-39, "witnessed (covered) [...] by a corps of professional photographers whose work was immediately seen in newspapers and magazines" (2003: 28), which brought a new understanding and interest in war for the mass spectator. It was the 20th Century that marked the beginnings of the mass visibility of images, seeing the concomitant rise of iconic imagery as a result.

Reflecting on a number of 20th Century iconic images, Hariman and Lucaites suggest how the study of such images should include an account of how they are "appropriated for communicative action" (2015: 10), emphasising the cruciality of their reproduction and appropriation by mass popular visual culture. As they contend, appropriations are a defining trait of

icons; "[c]opying, imitating, satirizing [...] are a crucial sign of iconicity" (Hariman & Lucaites 2017: 1144). This plasticity echoes Barthes notion of the press photograph's capacity for connotation; having a life beyond that of its original production on account of its ability to be re-used by a public audience in creating a new social understanding or emotional response. We are therefore reminded of the importance of the image's plurality of meaning, for as Hariman and Lucaites argue, "icons are created through extensive reproduction and circulation", first becoming so as a result of their particular aptitude to "carrying multiple effects" (2015: 11). Further, they state that the "icon is built for tracking reception: it contains multiple patterns of identification" (Hariman & Lucaites 2015: 11), which strongly calls for the involved role of the spectator to engage in the communicative, dialogical aspect of the work in order to find that moment of identification.

In In *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture,* Cartwright and Sturken posit that "to interpret images is [...] to decode the visual language that they *speak*" (2001: 43). From this, they argue, an image's possible "many layers of meaning, which include formal aspects, their cultural and socio-historical references, the ways they make reference to the images that precede and surround them and the contexts in which they are displayed", can be drawn out by and influence the spectator (Cartwright & Sturken 2001: 42). It is through such a process that a photograph has the potential to become iconic, and from this, Cartwright and Sturken propose that "practices of looking [...] are not passive acts of consumption, [for] by looking at and engaging with images in the world, we influence the meanings and uses assigned [them]" (2001: 42). Such an analysis implicates the critical role of the viewer, both in their connoted reading of and emotional reaction to an image, to its consequent iconicity. Furthermore, a photograph's dissemination has a large part to play in its capacity to remain in or even dominate the collective memory of an event, for the more an image is spread about, the

greater the chance of it being seen and accordingly, read. In a 20th Century pre-internet society, when there were far fewer platforms and thus possibilities to circulate images, pictures gained traction far more on the basis of their singular power to shock and affect the viewer. Yet since the creation of a global communication network at the turn of the 21st Century, we can assume that a photograph's iconicity is based not only on its symbolic referral or emotional gravity, but is further reliant on its circulation and visibility, from which are born the multifarious modes of reception and interpretation by the multitudes viewing it.

In this section I have drawn certain theories together in order to give ideas about how and what makes an image iconic. From both past and contemporary thinkers, we have seen that in line with the vicissitudes of the media and its platforms throughout the 20th and 21st Century, a photograph's iconicity relies on both its informational content and emotional impact (through denotation and connotation) upon the viewer, and its abundant distribution; attributes that, as has been argued, are most commonly associated with press photography. However, in *Camera Lucida* Barthes reflects that in news photographs there is

> no *punctum:* a certain shock- the literal can traumatize- but no disturbance; the
> photograph can "shout", not wound. These journalistic photographs are received (all
> at once), perceived. I glance through them, I don't recall them; no detail (in some
> corner) ever interrupts my reading: I am interested in them (as I am interested in the
> world), I do not love them (2000: 41)

The image's punctum as coined by Barthes, is repositioned and reinterpreted by American photographer and writer Deborah Bright within the context of mass circulation and in her words, societies' "rampant consumerism" (1998: 207) of photographs. Bright writes

> by its very definition as a private, haphazard, accidental meaning, a *punctum* isn't a
> punctum if it's the same for everyone; then it's the studium (Barthes): the coded,

public, official meaning. Part of the pleasure this work offers is to allow the viewer to feel like an 'insider', an intimate, partaking in an experience that is neither public nor official. When the same images are reproduced too many times, in too many places, and are liked in the same way by too many people, this intimacy is inevitable compromised (1998: 207)

This is an important consideration when reflecting on the iconicity and effect of news photographs. When a news photograph acquires iconic status, it inevitably becomes part of a public consciousness and symbolises a plethora of connoted meanings that effect the systematic erasure of the personal, idiosyncratic features of the thing depicted. As a consequence, what ethical sensibility is compromised for the subject of an iconic image? What happens when the subject of an iconic image is interpreted beyond or differently from what it is objectively depicting? What damage does this do, especially when that subject is a refugee or forced migrant?

1.1.2. Iconic photographs of the 20th Century

Two photographs taken by prominent photojournalists of the 20th Century can be examined in order to discuss the iconic photograph and the issues and effects of its status as such. Both images have as their subject refugees or forced migrants, reflecting the key issue at stake in this thesis: the implications of visual photographic representation of displaced persons, and as previously mentioned both photographs are included in *TIME's 100 Photographs: The Most Influential Images of All Time*. Of course not the official nor irrefutable definition of what makes an iconic image, there are nevertheless few publications that have produced anything similar to the selection that *TIME* have made in regards to photographs' iconicity and fame for representing defining moments in global history. The selection by *TIME* suggests that the photographs' iconic statuses were on account of

their visibility. Extrapolating this further indicates that it is a result of their extensive circulation and somewhat crudely, their popular appeal, for "part of the iconic power of [a photographic] work" with iconic "referring not so much to the verisimilitude of the image but to the symbolic value invested in it" - derives from its 'multiple appearances over the years, in many contexts and forms" (Wells 2000: 44). Taking Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother* as an example of an iconic photograph, Historian Paula Rabinowitz says "Lange's "Migrant Mother", told and retold, offers with acute poignancy an example of discourse as repository of meaning" (1994: 87), which illustrates the importance of the image's reception and interpretation by a great many people, in it becoming an iconic photograph. Such speaks to Barthes' notion of the dichotomy of the explicit and implicit message in press photography, for it is perhaps arguable that only an image which reached the kind of vast spectatorship as those of newspapers and magazines, could possibly be received and read to a point where its connotative message or meanings could become more powerful than the denotative reality depicted.

In 1936, while on assignment for President Franklin Roosevelt's Farm Security Administration, a New Deal agreement set up to combat rural poverty in America as a result of the Great Depression, photographer Dorothea Lange took a series of images of Florence Owens Thompson and her young children, one of which came to be known famously as *Migrant Mother* (Fig. 1.1). Thompson had migrated to the West along with her seven children in order to look for work on farms as a result of severe drought, formally known as the Dust Bowl. As the Great Depression persisted throughout the 1930s, resulting in severe economic hardship combined with extreme drought, a mass human displacement occurred within the United States creating nearly 500,000 refugees and forced migrants. Lange came across Thompson and her family in Nipomo, California,

where they had temporarily set up camp outside a farm advertising for pea-pickers, and she made the image, along with seven others, in a matter of minutes. Art Historian and Media scholar Sally Stein notes that "since the early 1960s, [*Migrant Mother*] has been reproduced so often that many call it the most widely reproduced photograph in the entire history of photographic image-making" (2003: 345). In the *TIME 100* book, the description reads "*Migrant Mother* has become the most iconic picture of the Depression. Through an intimate portrait of the toll being exacted across the land, Lange gave a face to a suffering nation" (Goldberger, Moakley & Pollack 2018: 30).

However, later scholarship and study of the image largely contradicts *TIME'* summary of Lange's image and has found both the story behind the photograph and Thompson's ancestral roots (she was from a line of indigenous Cherokees) to have been subject to a wide variety of incorrect interpretations since its original publication. What is incontestable, is the image's iconicity, for dividing icon into three definitions: in the vernacular sense, as a shared cultural symbol; in the semiotic sense, a resemblance or likeness; and in the most traditional, religious usage, an icon is an image intended for veneration, *Migrant Mother* is an icon according to all three meanings. As Stein notes, through the latter half of the 20th Century, the photograph had a serviceability "as a shorthand emblem of [...] the depths of misery once widespread in this [American] society and its heartfelt recognition by socially engaged New Dealers" (2003: 345). Semiotically, it resembled the struggle of a mother and her family during a time of economic and social hardship in America, and in a religious sense, the figure and her pose is "reminiscent of sacred Marian imagery" (2003: 345). Yet, despite the image's fame and insurmountable reproducibility, Thompson herself and the reality of her plight, one which she and hundreds of thousands of others suffered during the era of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, remained anxiety-filled and difficult for years to come. Such

raises important questions over the damaging consequences of iconic images for the indigent

migrant or refugee subjects that they represent.

50 years after *Migrant Mother* was first published, a doctoral student named Geoffrey Dunn

set out to discover the real life of the woman depicted in the photograph, for up until then it has

been noted that little else was known of Florence Thompson than her full name. Through his

investigation, Dunn was "shocked by the gulf between her actual situation and the minimal details

Lange had recorded" (Stein 2003: 348). By the time the image had been published and garnered

attention for the situation of the pea-pickers in Nipomo at a political level, which saw the camp

receive 20,000 pounds worth of food from the federal government, Thompson and her family had

moved on to Watsonville. Once Thompson was found and interviewed by Dunn, he recorded her

recounts of the day, "*[Lange] didn't ask my name. She said she wouldn't sell the pictures. She said she'd send me

a copy. She never did*"; and the after effects, "she felt *exploited [...] I wish she hadn't taken my picture. I can't

get a penny out of it*" (Dunn 1995). The disproportionate success and acclaim of the photograph itself

and for Lange as a photographer, (Roy Stryker, who managed the FSA Project, called the

photograph the "ultimate" symbol of the Depression Era and said "you could see anything you want

to in her, [Florence Thompson], she is immortal") (Hariman & Lucaites 2007: 8) raises considerable

ethical questions over turning people, and in particular forced migrants and refugees, whose sense of

personal identity and security is already tenuous and vulnerable, into symbols. Rabinowitz states

"whatever reality its [*Migrant Mother*] subject first possessed has been drained away and the image

become icon" (1994: 87), and indubitably, the fact of the image's enduring iconicity greatly outstrips

that of the subjects in it and the important historical event that caused them to be there.

Further, in becoming iconic in the way that Barthes referred to iconic press photography as both denotative and connotative, the objective reality of Thompson's situation is engulfed by and between these opposites, removing the chance of Thompson herself becoming the photograph's most important aspect. The image has been reproduced more times that any other photograph in history, and has thus been appropriated time and again as an icon symbolising a variety of different meanings. As Hariman and Lucaites argue, "*Migrant Mother* quickly achieved critical acclaim as a model of documentary photography" (2007: 10), yet this is to the detriment of an empathic understanding or respectful awareness of the individual in the image. Thompson's real identity was completely divorced from the woman in the picture and subject to extensive misrepresentation. She was heralded as the prime example of an Euro-American woman and the ideal maternal figure of the nuclear American family, when in actual fact she was of Native American descent and at that moment struggling to feed her seven children (Jentleson 2012). Hariman and Lucaites suggest that "any subsequent narrative should be a story of how the condition was alleviated, not just for that woman, but all those mired in poverty" (2007: 10), yet on account of fact that this was certainly not the case, *Migrant Mother* is an example of how the iconicity of a photograph of a forced migrant can be exploitative of their situation and often, their desperation.

Yet it is not only that the global fame of Lange's image swept Thompson's identity aside in an act that dehumanised her identity and individuality which reveals the problematics of her representation, but also that this was further exploited through a number of (mis)appropriations of the original that sought to make use of its iconicity. As Hariman and Lucaites say, "whether it is due to the more continued circulation of the photo or the implicit promise it offers about the political function of photojournalism, the icon seems to have become a template for images of *want*"(2007:

65). For example in 1964, a repainting appeared as the front cover of a Mother's Day special issue of Hispanic magazine Bohemia Venezolana in order to reflect upon the oppression of the Latin-American immigrant community in America, and later in the 1970s an artist working for the Black Panthers turned Thompson into an African-American mother for the frontpage of the group's newspaper, to symbolise the unjust victimhood of an innocent American family, epitomised in the form and subject of the original photograph, now enforced by racism and segregation. The photograph's appropriations speak to its universal visual structures and motifs; motherhood, family and innocent victimhood, and therefore "it outlines a set of conventions for public appeal that can in turn go through successive transpositions" (Hariman & Lucaites 2007: 67). Yet in the process the original loses its distinctive message, and it is such that must be considered when assessing the effects of these appropriations, exploitative or detrimental to the understanding of the genuine subject's objective reality. At what cost do appropriations of the original photograph, which both stem from and generate its iconic status further, emerge? Is Thompson's identity, already vulnerable and significantly unknown, then further concealed?

Eddie Adams' *Boat of No Smiles* (Fig. 1.2.) is another example of a 20th Century iconic image whose connotative meanings stretch far and beyond that of the denotative presentation of the subjects in the photograph. Once again, the photograph, which Adams took on Thanksgiving Day in 1977, depicts a mother and her children; this time a South Vietnamese woman, cradling her seemingly asleep or unconscious child with another boy by her side, on a fishing boat packed full of refugees heading for Thailand. Unlike Lange's *Migrant Mother,* which was connoted with universal ideas of white motherhood and matriarchal strength which gave it an iconic, because resemblant, quality to all and every White-American mother, the mother in Adams' photograph speaks more

indicatively of the refugee. In TIME's description of *Migrant Mother,* the first indication of the subject's identity is revealed by the use of "mother", yet in *Boat of No Smiles* the first line reads "It's easy to ignore the plight of refugees. They are seen as numbers, not people, moving from one distant land to the next" (Goldberger, Moakley & Pollack 2018: 140). In this image, the subject therefore almost immediately came to represent not the stoic matriarch, but the suffering refugee.

In their chapter 'Image Icons', Cartwright and Sturken suggest that "Icons do not represent individuals, [...] nor do they represent human values" (2001: 36). Adams' image, which through one woman made a symbolic representation of the millions of Vietnamese "boat people" fleeing poverty, oppression and war (in which nearly 250,000 people died during the sea-crossings) attests to their claim. If the status and identity of the individual refugee or forced migrant is already, by virtue of their meanings, markedly unrepresented in global modern society as so defined by the political status quo, then surely it is to a detrimental extent for the refugee or forced migrant in question that the image becomes iconic; in the process, separating the reality of the denoted content within the image and leaving it far behind the fame and acclaimed status of its subsequent reproductions and appropriations. Further, as Terence Wright has argued about the documentation of displaced persons, "many of the media representations of refugees appear to have been left in a time-warp, often visually represented in a manner reminiscent of biblical iconography: the much repeated 'Madonna and Child' image, for example" (as cited in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2014: 462). Such strongly implies the fact of these photographs' influence upon the still conventional conceptions of refugees being drawn today, and the damaging effects such are still having in understanding the nuances and specificities of their personal plights.

Both *Migrant Mother* and *Boat of No Smiles* depict either forced migrants or refugees in a moment of personal despair. The images became iconic, yet as has been established, this did little to relieve- and perhaps even exacerbated- their situations. The photos' iconic statuses conversely elevated [or reduced] their content to an intangible, mythical level that thus erased the precarious reality that the photographs were denoting. As Hariman and Lucaites say, "iconic photos acquire mythic narratives" (2007: 3). What are the ethical implications of a photograph representing a refugee or forced migrant becoming an icon? If a photo's iconic status is based on its popular appeal, does this abstract the already unfamiliar and difficult-to-empathise-with situations that refugees and forced migrants find themselves in? If an image is iconic because of its ability to be connoted with a range of subjective, secondary meanings, then what does this mean for forced migrants' or refugees' genuinely bleak realities? To answer such first calls for a deeper investigation into theories on the identity and status of the refugee and forced migrant.

1.2.1. Theories on refugees and migration

What constitutes the identity and status of a refugee or forced migrant? In *Homo Sacer: Sovereignty of Power and Bare Life,* Giorgio Agamben proposes to consider the refugee as a human being living outside of the citizen body of a nation state. The very concept of the citizen, he says, is crucial to the understanding of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, and of human rights as it was defined within it. Agamben unpicks the 1789 constitutive document in order to claim that a person becomes a citizen at the moment of their birth; and it is then based on that citizenship that the nation in which they were born is obligated to provide rights and protection. Via the power of political declaration, the concept of Man, the "very natural life that, inaugurating the biopolitics of modernity is placed at the foundation of the order, vanishes into the figure of the citizen, in whom

rights are *preserved*" (Agamben 1998: 75). The rights of Man, therefore, could be perceived as synonymous to the rights of the citizen, or rather the rights of the political subject, outside of which, the refugee, who has fled their nation-state and thus lost the citizenship that comes with it, enforcedly sits. Agamben therefore uses the term "bare life" to describe the identity of the refugee, for as a non- or "flawed" citizen, and therefore outside of the protection endowed to all people given the possibility of human rights, such status brings to light "the difference between birth and nation [...] man and citizen, *nativity and nationality*" (1998: 75). The status of bare life which Agamben confers to the refugee illustrates their separation and exception from the prevailing order of a society or nation-state, and from the fundamental concepts of what is considered a *subject* in modern political democratic discourse: a citizen or a people living under a Sovereign power. As he has argued, "the refugee must be considered for what he is: nothing less than a *limited concept* that radically calls into question the fundamental categories of the nation-state, from the birth-nation to the man-citizen link" (Agamben 1998: 75). How to, therefore, represent the identity of one defined politically by incompleteness and fragmentation?

During the 20 years of "uneasy peace" (Arendt 1962: 267) between the First and Second World Wars, migrations reached unprecedented levels and ushered in a new understanding of the identity and status of a refugee. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Hannah Arendt draws an unsparing picture of the status of the refugee in this period: "Once they had left their homeland they remained homeless, once they had left their state they became stateless, once they had been deprived of their human rights they became rightless; the scum of the earth" (1962: 267). From Arendt's perspective, part of what constitutes the makeup of a refugee is the utter totality of their loss, and further, their

rejection by citizens of a nation-state because of a lack of understanding of what constitutes human life outside of that of the established notion of the citizen.

Born in Hanover, Germany to a German-Jewish family in 1906, Arendt was subject to the increasing anti-semitism spreading throughout the country as Hitler grew to power, and after a brief imprisonment by the Gestapo because of her active opposition, she fled to Paris. For 13 years between 1937 and 1950, Arendt remained without citizenship (having been stripped of it in Germany in 1937) and travelled throughout Europe in a state of transient exile until she settled in New York in 1950, thereafter gaining citizenship and remaining until her death. This experience had an indelible influence upon her fundamental thinking and writing. In a seminal article entitled *We Refugees* that she wrote for a small Jewish periodical in 1943, Arendt reflects on the identity of refugees from an autoethnographic point of view. The essay allows us to see a significantly underrepresented perspective of the conditions of refugees and forced migrants; what it really means to exist as such, and in it Arendt speaks of the refugees' anxiety, despair and their frequent self-denial of their status. It is crucial to consider such a standpoint if we are to understand the issues of their representation. Writing from her own experiences, she discloses the feeling that "If we should start telling the truth that we are nothing but Jews, it would mean that we expose ourselves to the fate of the human beings who, unprotected by any specific law or political convention, are nothing but human beings" (Arendt as cited in Robinson 1994: 118). Her feelings echo the words of Agamben in their relation to the concept of bare life, of refugees as those excluded from sovereign spheres that uphold the Rights of Man as synonymous with the rights of the citizen: *bare* or *naked* because derobed of the defining cloak of nationality.

Going on, Arendt writes "very few individuals have the strength to conserve their own integrity if their social, political and legal status is completely confused" (as cited in Robinson 1994: 116), emphasising the ambiguity and complexity of the status of a refugee and thus the ethical grey areas involved in the question of how to represent such. Written once she had emigrated to New York, Arendt's preoccupation in *We Refugees* was with the specific way in which especially Jewish refugees fleeing the Third Reich would assimilate into their new chosen countries. Yet her astute reflections pertain not only to refugees from Nazi Germany, but to wider notions of refugees which have thus proved influential for later theorists such as Agamben.

Bringing Arendt's and Agamben's theories together forges an image of the refugee as defined by an identity possessing little more than a basic human existence, and without political subjectivity. As Arendt says, refugees "have really lost every quality and every specific relation except for the pure fact of being human" (1962: 299). Arendt's article brings up two pressings matters regarding the possibilities and limitations of representing refugees. The first, how may it be possible to represent the identity of a human being with the status of a refugee or forced migrant, who has lost all of their subjectivity, be that personal or political? Furthermore, how to represent their existence when the one representing or documenting them is *not* a refugee, and thus remains on the *inside* of a nation's society while they exist in a very particular, ostracised sphere? Do, or rather can empathetic representations exist?

1.2.2. The refugee as a visual subject

The main concern of this thesis is the way in which refugees and forced migrants have been documented through photographs during the European refugee "crisis" since 2015, and what ethical

implications arise from their representation. Having examined the refugee in a political context as the noncitizen subject, it is now possible and necessary to discuss the refugee or forced migrant as a visual subject. It has been noted that there is an estimated 68.5 million forcibly displaced people living in the world today. Over 50 million are refugees fleeing war or persecution, and out of the total number, around 10 million are currently stateless people who have been denied a nationality and access to basic human rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement (UNHCR 2018). Having considered the vulnerable status and somewhat limited identity of the refugee as defined by Arendt and Agamben, the latter of whom writes in response to the increasing numbers of refugees and forced migrants, that

> bare life [...] is more and more driven to the margins of the nation-states [...] every time refugees represent not individual cases but – as happens more and more often today – a mass phenomenon (Agamben 1998: 78)

this notion of seeing refugees a blanket, individually un-identifiable phenomenon is a crucial point to consider in their visual representation. How to portray the identity of a person widely considered as symbolic of a mass of people?

Theories on representation of the oppressed and vulnerable in photography are well-established, having been argued by thinkers such as Sontag, Sociologist Luc Boltanski, author of *The Civil Contract of Photography* Ariella Azoulay and scholar in Ethics and Human Rights Bishupal Limbu. In a brilliant essay, Limbu claims that "the word "refugee" has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance" (2009: 268). Going on, he states "the refugee conjures up the image of a large mass of people linked [...] in the popular imagination, to an overwhelming influx of unwanted persons" (Limbu 2009: 268). This point reminds us of the kind of detrimental verbal language used in the mass media when

talking about or reporting on refugees, not only by David Cameron[7] but also tabloid newspapers

such as *The Sun*, who referred to a situation in Calais in 2016 with the headline "Huge mob of 300

migrants storm port in Calais in violent bid to smuggle their way into UK" (Royston 2016). Such

language ensures that the victims involved remain widely regarded as an overwhelming and

ungovernable mass of people.

The refugee exists outside of the conventional forms of representation because their

personal accounts are displaced by authoritative narratives of despair, grief and the mass, common

experience faced by them all. As has been shown from the analyses of Adams' *Boat of No Smiles* and

Lange's *Migrant Mother,* the photographic documentation of refugees and forced migrants has

historically tended to neglect to provide insight or clarity into the personal nature and subjectivity of

the persons depicted, focusing instead on their general suffering and collective plight. Further, by

typing in 'European refugee crisis' into Google Image Search, we instantly see Agamben's mass

phenomenon, from which it is understandable why it is that public opinion and tabloid media

consider the "crisis" in metaphors associated with a deluge; the images almost exclusively present

large groups of people, standing in endless lines, squeezed together in inadequate boats or scattered on

beaches or in makeshift refugee camps.

Visual Culture theorist Anthony Downey proposes that "Human rights are the rights of the

citizen, not *homo sacer*- the latter being our modern-day refugee, the political prisoner, the

disappeared, the so-called 'ghost detainee' and unlawful combatant, the victim of torture and the

dispossessed" (2009: 124). The designations he gives to the status of refugees epitomise the ethical

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[7] In some cases, those with the most powerful voices given a public platform from which to reflect on the situations of refugees and migrants have ended up exacerbating their situations further. Speaking to ITV News, British Prime Minister David Cameron referred to the groups of peoples coming across the Mediterranean as 'swarms of migrants'. (ITV News, 20 July 2015).

struggle of their visual representation, for they all illustrate an idea of a human who possesses a vulnerability on account of, in the words of Hannah Arendt, their "abstract nakedness" (1962: 275). Anthropologist Liisa Malkki comments that "the visual conventions for representing refugees…have the effect of constructing refugees as bare humanity- even as merely biological or demographic presence" (as cited in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2014: 462), suggesting that although it is possible to represent this abstract nakedness, such is nevertheless harmful in the way it devalues them to mere statistical data for a scientific study. From a moral or ethical perspective therefore, is it *right* to visually represent the true nature of those who have become refugees and forced migrants, statuses that are based on definitions of invisibility, non citizenship and limited existence? As Azoulay argues,

> to give expression to the fact that a photographed person's citizen status is flawed, or even nonexistent (as is the case of refugees, the poor, migrant workers, etc.), or temporarily suspended [...] whoever seeks to use photography must exploit the photographed individual's vulnerability. In such situations, photography entails a particular type of violence: The photograph is liable to exploit the photographed individual, aggravate his or her injury, publicly expose it, and rob the individual of intimacy (2008: 119)

What follows accordingly is an analysis of the visual representation of the death of a young Syrian refugee named Alan Kurdi, captured in a series of images taken by photojournalist Nilüfer Demir. Azoulay places belief in the idea that "from time to time, we can witness photographs that make it difficult to resist or avoid their urgency [...] By looking at such photographs, we can see traces of extreme violence, since what is at stake is bare life itself" (2008: 69, 72). Was this the result of the Alan Kurdi images? Did they instigate a change in the way we (the Western spectator and non-refugee subject) considered and responded to those possessing little status beyond that of Agamben's 'bare life'? Further, did their sensationalisation and subsequent acquirement of iconic

status prove beneficial, or rather problematic, in a moral sense, to the difficulties that refugees and forced migrants already face?

1.3.1. Case study: The circulation and appropriation of the Alan Kurdi images

In the early hours of September 2nd 2015, the body of a 3-year old Syrian boy washed up on the shores of a beach in Bodrum, Turkey. Alan Kurdi had drowned in the Mediterranean during an sea-crossing from Turkey to Greece, having fled from Syria with his brother and parents. The event was immortalised by Turkish photojournalist Nilüfer Demir, working for the Doğan News Agency, who found herself on the beach as his body washed ashore. The series of images documented two crucial moments of the event: the first, of Kurdi's body lying face down, alone on the edge of the crashing waves, and the second its retrieval by a Turkish coast guard (Figs. 1.3 & 1.4). In a matter of hours they were published online and within the next 12 hours they had reached the screens of 20 million people worldwide (Proitz 2017: 552). The images became, as Mette Mortensen and Hans Jörg-Trenz have noted, an "instant news icon" (2016: 348) that at once came to symbolise the violence and injustice of the European refugee "crisis" and desperation of those suffering it.

Although initially, the reportage on the images focused largely on facts like the boy's age, virtue, his untimely death and the moral and ethical issues over the fate that had befallen him, after a short time the photographs began to stimulate responses and reactions that referred to the wider situation and political issues of the European refugee "crisis" (BBC 2015). The importance of the objective reality of the scene that the images depicted, that of the death of an innocent young boy, was quickly supplanted by their global iconicity, loaded with connotative meanings and referrals to the desperation of refugees, the violence of the Syrian Civil War and Western nations' inertia. This is

evident in the creation and prolific use of the hashtag #humanitywashedashore, translated from

initial Turkish #KiyiyaVuranInsanlik, which was used as the caption to the images by the some

30,000 people who recirculated the images on their twitter feeds in the hours following their initial

publication. Just days after his death, the personal identity of the 3 year-old Alan Kurdi, whose name

was initially widely broadcasted incorrectly spelt as *Aylan* Kurdi, was repositioned within the global

consciousness as a public icon representing the millions of currently displaced or asylum-seeking

persons. As Anne Burn notes, "Alan Kurdi's death function[ed] as a *tragic symbol*" and in that

process, it became "depersonalised- he [was] no longer just a 3-year old, but [...] representative of

the thousands of lives lost in the last few years" (as cited in Vis & Goriunova 2015: 39).

In the weeks following, the type of discussions ongoing in both online and physical news

platforms veered from focusing on the personal tragedy of the event to public and political debates

over what action must be taken on a political level, by Western European nations in order to

alleviate the suffering of refugees and forced migrants. Such were the positive effects that the images

had on the public awareness and acknowledgement of the European refugee "crisis", a term which

swiftly became represented by the photographs themselves. Yet it is crucial to consider the fact that,

as a result of this, the identity of the young boy was sidelined by and subsequently lost under the

iconicity of the very same images. What did the sensationalised press mean for the non-refugee

spectator's understanding of the actual plights of the refugees and forced migrants?[8] Did the

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[8] By sensationalised I mean the kind of reporting on the front pages of tabloid newspapers. On the immediate days after Demir's images were published online, British tabloid newspapers re-broadcasted them on their front pages under the sensationalised headlines "It's Life & Death" (The Sun, 3 September 2015), "Unbearable" (Daily Mirror, 3 September 2015) and "Tiny Victim of a Human Catastrophe" (The Daily Mail, 3 September 2015).

sensationalisation create an irreparable distance between those seeing the images, and the subject (representative of millions more) of them?

In this section, I will analyse the effects of and responses to Demir's images in regards to their global circulation through mass media, and subsequent multiple appropriations by multimedia artists, looking in particular at the controversial reinterpretation by artist and activist Ai Weiwei. First however, I will explore the nature of the images' dissemination through both online and physical mass media platforms to suggest that the images were sensationalised to an extent that effectively reduced Kurdi's identity to a symbol; of the refugee, the European refugee "crisis", of suffering and finally of death. Did this allow the audiences of these images to engage in a "moral spectatorship" that comprises of observing "suffering at a distance" (Boltanski 2004: 4), that further problematised the reality of the plights of refugees and forced migrants, and reduced an understanding of the issues they face?

In *Distant Suffering: Media, Morality and Politics,* Boltanski writes that "when confronted with the spectacle of suffering, the moral attitude is not necessarily governed by the requirement to end it' (2004: 11). Boltanski's claim is in reference to Arendt's phrase "a politics of pity", which she coined to speak of a kind of humanitarian response summarised in two ways; by "a *distinction* between those who suffer and those who do not" and a "focus on what is seen and on looking, that is, on the *spectacle of suffering*" (as cited in Boltanski 2004: 1). Thus Boltanski says, in regards to the "recent debate on humanitarian action" of the past 30 years, there is a common habit of "dealing with suffering from the standpoint of distance, since it must rely upon the massification of a collection of unfortunates who are not there in person" (2004: 13). Such speaks to the problem of the kind of publicization and resultant spectatorship that Demir's images were subject to. The lifeless body of

Alan Kurdi was presented to millions of people around the world, a great number of whom expressed their personal and emotional reactions via retweets, comments and artistic interpretations of the images through online platforms and social media. The majority of these responses were communicated by people far removed, both physically and emotionally, from the problem itself. Consequently, as Mortensen and Trenz remark, the photographs "raised questions of distant spectatorship and moral responses with renewed urgency and immediacy" (2016: 343). Yet, there were perhaps visual elements of the images of an innately spectacular nature, which could indicate a certain inevitability to their subsequent sensationalisation by the press.

What has come to be arguably the most famous image within the series that Demir took, is that of Alan Kurdi's lifeless body lying alone on the beach, at the edge of the water. He is face down on the sand, his head tilted just to the right, so that a small part of his facial features is just visible; one eye and ear. His arms seemingly rest comfortably by his sides, yet his hands are turned up so that his palms face up to the sky, and this may be the only indication that this is an unnatural pose, rather than a natural, sleeping posture. It has been noted that Kurdi looks like a young child asleep (Drainville as cited in Vis & Goriunova 2015: 47). There are no marks of a struggle or signs of any physical injury, apart from the fact of his soaking wet clothes and there is nothing evidentiary of a fight for life nor any bodily abuses to which a drowned body is often subject. Visual Communication scholar Ray Drainville has noted that this image in particular is an aestheticised image of death, akin to the thousands of images of Christ that appear to omit the physical torture that his body was victim to during the passion, which therefore allows it to become somewhat "photogenic and cleansed" (as cited in Vis & Goriunova 2015: 47). It becomes clear then that this image is in line with Barthes' belief in the connotative aspects of a press photograph, revealing, on account of its

implicit references to Christ and the suffering of an innocent, one of the ways in which it became

iconic. Drainville argues that it is the somewhat sanitised aspect of this photograph that allowed it to

capture the European (and global) imagination; yet I would further add to its *sanitised* aspect, that it is

its dissemination and spectacularisation facilitated by the mass media*,* in the sense of being made

"exciting and interesting because of being large and extreme" (OED Online 2019), that gave the

image its global iconicity and fame.

In *Regarding the Pain of Others,* Sontag consults Marxist theorist Guy Debord's seminal theory

of the Society of the Spectacle, to suggest that during the latter half of the 20th Century, and in

particular reference to the iconic imagery depicting the disasters of war from Vietnam to Bosnia,

"each situation has to be turned into a spectacle to be real, that is, interesting to us [...] Reality has

abdicated. There are only representations; media" (2003: 97). Like much of Sontag's writing on

photography, this is a vociferous attack on the nature of photography's violence, not physical, but

rather its capabilities for transforming the objective, devastating reality into an palatable, aesthetic

and mythical moment for the mass, distant spectator. In the case of the Alan Kurdi photograph, the

media played an integral role in the image becoming a spectacle, and consequently iconic. According

to NPR [National Public Radio], the images mobilised empathy and concern; "The number of

average daily amount of donations to the Swedish Red Cross campaign for Syrian refugees, for

instance, was 55 times greater in the week after the photo (around $214,300) than the week before

($3,850)" (Cole 2017). The galvanising effects were, as noted by Dahmen, Mielczarek and

Perlmutter, strongly influenced by today's global media network; "in the age of digital news, mobile

phones/ tablets, and social media, the media component has changed the equation for the formation

of iconic imagery and collective visual consciousness. With the speed, ease of access, and abundance

of information sources available in the current age", so-branded iconic images "quickly turn into standard frames of reference in news and popular culture, seem to require no particular explanation, and are often proclaimed to *speak for themselves*" (2018). Yet as Psychologist Paul Slovic has deduced from statistical research in the weeks following the images' publication, the humanitarian responses waned quickly (2017). Such demonstrates the remote and short-lived effect of the emotional engagement with the Alan Kurdi images, due to the considerable media spectacle that it became.

Mortensen argues "the media spectacle of suffering detaches the spectator from the victim" (2016: 416). If we are to acknowledge that the media spectacle around Alan Kurdi's drowning came about due to the images' prolific publication on both online and print media platforms around the world, as Art Theorist and Practitioner Simon Faulkner has so claimed in saying that "the force of images is not just to do with their iconic content, but also with how their affective power accrued through their circulation" (as cited in Vis & Goriunova 2015: 54) then the mass circulation and global response to the Kurdi images can be seen as an example of the kind of moral spectatorship Boltanski outlines in the introduction to his book. In noting the radical difference between the one suffering and the one not, he argues that it may be "absolutely necessary [...] that the spectator be defined as someone uninvolved, as someone personally sheltered from the adversity which produces the unfortunate's suffering" (Boltanski 2004: 37).

Perhaps therefore, in order to forge some kind of emotional response or attachment to these spectacularly sensationalised photographs, it seems, as was the case with Alan Kurdi that the original images must be appropriated, for it is the appropriation that allows the horror and tragedy depicted in the original to be reduced to a de-sensationalised and digestible form. However, appropriations of iconic images often make use of the original visual form by removing it from its original context and

replacing it in either recontextualised or de-contextualised forms (Mortensen & Trenz 2016: 345). In the process, it is therefore possible that the primary subject is erased and forgotten, because aestheticised or pencilled over by louder and more powerful voices. Through the original images taken by Demir, Alan Kurdi became representative of the millions of refugees and forced migrants innocently embroiled in the "crisis", and the photographic documentation of his tragic experience was significantly employed to call for greater awareness, understanding and attention towards refugees and forced migrants. Yet, if "to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed" as Sontag says (2008: 1977), what does it mean to appropriate the appropriation which is the original photograph of the thing photographed?

1.3.2. Ai Weiwei's appropriation

Arguably the most iconic of Demir's images, which shows Kurdi's body lying alone at the edge of the water in a sleeplike position (Fig. 1.3), was not only retweeted 30,000 times in the first 8 hours of its online publication, but also appropriated at least 97 times by a plethora of multimedia artists worldwide in the following days and weeks. It seemed that in order to assimilate the shockingness of the original image, many amongst the millions that viewed it over online social media platforms took to artistic endeavours, introducing the image, and what it showed of a young boy's deceased body, into an aesthetic regime that took it far beyond the objectively representational order to which it was first allotted. As Cultural theorist Yasmin Ibrahim maintains, when an image, which shows "death, disasters, and corpses cross[es] ethical boundaries to produce new aesthetic modes, its social and political contexts are entwined and consequently the latter is stripped away." (2018: 3). The appropriations ranged from drawings and paintings of the pose his body lay in, recontextualised

within a range of new backdrops, and photographic constructions where Kurdi's body in the original photograph has been extracted and again placed in new settings, such as in the middle of a European Parliament meeting or on a sunbather's instagram feed (Figs. 1.5 & 1.6).

The specific case of the Alan Kurdi appropriations displays the democratic structure of the online world, for every person who has access to it is able to upload their personal response to any image uploaded there. What they further reveal are the questionable effects that the reinterpretations had on the original image, for through the appropriations, Demir's original photograph lost its initial form and meaning and thus the emotional impact and gravity that came with them. Mortensen contends "by transforming genres and modes of expressions, appropriations confer a 'verfremdungseffekt' to iconic images. They 'de-naturalize' the matter-of-course air iconic images quickly obtain through ubiquitous media presence and repeated claims about their impact on public opinion, policmakers [sic]" (2017: 1149). Verfremdungseffekt, a German term coined by playwright Bertolt Brecht meaning a distancing or estrangement effect, is certainly appropriate to describe the effects of these multiple appropriations of the Alan Kurdi images. After just a few months since their publication, it has been found that the general view of refugees and enforced migrants deteriorated to a point worse than before the event of Kurdi's drowning. For instance, Slovic has analysed data collected from the weeks prior to and then 5 weeks after the publication of the images, during which the appropriations emerged, and has concluded that although the initial amount of daily donations increased massively in the week following the publication, "this effect was sustained until 5 weeks after the photo's appearance, when the number declined to a level no different from that in the week before publication" (Dahmen, Mielczarek & Perlmutter 2018).

However, my main point of contestation here is not with the way in which the internet's role played a part in the appropriations and consequential distancing effect or moral spectatorship of the initial tragedy of Alan Kurdi's drowning. Rather, it is with how the iconicity of the image became a root for appropriation; and how this is both unethical and harmful for the reality of the situation and the subject within it. Four months after Demir's photographs appeared on the internet, Ai Weiwei produced a photograph for the Indian fortnightly magazine *India Today,* which renders the artist adopting the pose that Alan Kurdi was in when he was photographed. In it, he is lying on his front on a pebbled beach in Lesvos, (where Weiwei erected a studio in order to work on projects to do with the arrival of refugees to Greece) with his hands upturned, his head just away from the edge of the water, eyes closed and therefore appearing, like Kurdi, either dead or simply asleep (Fig. 1.7). The photograph is an evidently forethought composition akin to a studio shot, with crisp detail, aesthetic cropping and the post-production decision to change the image into high-contrast black and white.

Reactions to Weiwei's artwork were varied yet vociferous. Co-owner of the India Art Fair Sandy Angus branded the image as positively haunting because "it represents the whole immigration crisis and the hopelessness of the people who have tried to escape their pasts for a better future" , and also iconic because it "features an incredibly important artist like Ai Weiwei" (Tan 2016). Yet Weiwei's own celebrity is perhaps one of the most problematic aspects of the work. Mortensen has collated a list of negative feedback; "a crass, unthinking selfie" [...] "crude," "thoughtless," "egotistical" , "overt[ly] insensitiv[e]" and "vulgar" [...] "blunt," "deluded," "very frivolous," a "very cold-hearted exploitation", "bad taste," "victim porn" [...] and a way to "sensationalize" and "aestheticiz[e]" the refugee crisis that was reminiscent of a "fashion shoot" (as cited in Mortensen

2018: 17), which when combined give an air of deep anger at Weiwei's interpretation of the tragic event, and further annoyance at the fact of his celebrity which replaced and unsurprisingly erased the lesser-known identity status of Kurdi himself.

Moreso, the image is as an example of just how ill-protected the identity of Alan Kurdi was. On account of its visual information it appears that it was not Alan Kurdi himself who Weiwei was attempting to embody, for in his photograph the artist is dressed in warm and expensive looking coat and trousers, remains dry and of course presents, as he is, a "rather portly, middle-aged man" (Dabashi 2016). The connotative unspeakable violence that emerges from the original image is thus lost within Weiwei's representation, which appears as an aestheticised, peaceful and carefully constructed scene, (on the contrary to his expressed intentions for the work[9]) and thus as a self-reflective exploration by the artist on what it is to be, or have the status of a refugee. To a large extent, Weiwei's appropriated image therefore maintains stereotypical notions of refugees and forced migrants' identities as invisible and their experiences as indistinguishable from the mass, thus keeping them commonly understood as an unidentifiable collective of people, rather than individuals with agency.

Mass media representation of refugees and enforced migrants often turns them into symbols, and photographs of them into icons in their own right. The fact of their iconic statuses then allows the images to be appropriated to a point, as was the case with Alan Kurdi images, where the appropriations take on a life of their own and replace the singular importance of the original photograph in fame or notoriety, even if at the same time keeping alive the original within the

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[9] Ai Weiwei has said that his aim in creating the image was to "show that Alan Kurdi was not just one person. It's very important [he says] to put myself in that condition and I always believe you have to be involved, you have to act". According to Weiwei, Kurdi stood for all young refugees drowning, some as many as two each day in 2015 (Mortensen 2017).

collective public consciousness. Yet on account of the statistics collected that reveal the dwindling political and humanitarian responses in the ensuing weeks of Kurdi's drowning, it appears that appropriation is not activist, as perhaps Ai Weiwei would have hoped to imply through his artwork, but rather a form of consolidation or an attempt to deal with the horror and shock of the original image. Moreover, in the present age of visual overload and "e-democracy", where anyone with access to the internet can view the image for themselves and therefore become aware of any given global situation while literally thousands of miles away from it, appropriations are a way for any member of the internet public to give their personal opinion on a matter. Yet, as Sontag has argued, "wherever people feel safe, they will be indifferent" (2003: 89): are the Kurdi appropriations therefore an embodiment of the indifference of global society in the 21st Century?

Appropriations force us to ask questions about the ethical sensibility and correctness about iconic images and the exploitation of refugees emerging from their symbolisation. Through the multiple appropriations of Nilüfer Demir's images and even before that in their exponential rise to iconicity, Alan Kurdi was exceedingly dehumanised and rendered effectively invisible, and thus along with him, the many hundreds and thousands of refugees and forced migrants that his lifeless body had come to represent. In an article for *Al-Jazeera* responding to Weiwei's photographic artwork, which he says "raises a fundamental aesthetic question", philosopher and author Hamid Dabashi asks "how do we represent tragic realites in this time of terror and in this age of visual saturation?" (Dabashi 2016). In the next and final chapter, I will analyse new and emerging narratives going against the grain of the mainstream visual media representation of refugees and enforced migrants, in order to see whether there are possible answers to Dabashi's question.

Chapter Two

Alternative photographic representations of displaced persons

2.1.1. The role of art in photographic representation

In Chapter One I researched the effects of visual mass media representation of refugees and forced

migrants, both in terms of negative stereotypes and superficial depictions of extreme suffering and

victimhood. I also looked at the kind of global reception photojournalistic reportage receives, which

allows images to become iconic with little concern over the harmful, or rather insignificant

consequences upon the subjects of the photographs. It is perhaps in part as a result of these

detrimental ramifications, examples of which we have seen with the sensationalisation and

appropriation of the Alan Kurdi images, that art or documentary photographers are seeking

different modes of representation of displaced persons that provide alternative and more productive

narratives for the subjects photographed. In a structured framing of the European refugee "crisis"

Media scholars Esther Greussing & Hajo G. Boomgaarden have noted that "crises are regarded as

exceptional events that are able to interrupt journalistic routines and create opportunities for

promoting newly emerging interpretations of an issue", which has lead them to conclude that in this

particular "crisis", "new and uncommon frames [have been seen] to evolve" (2017: 3).

Associate Editor of *Migration Studies* Nando Sigona illustrates the diversity apparent in any

given group of refugees or migrants: "age [...] different abilities [...] 'race', ethnicity, and social class"

(as cited in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2014: 372). All of these obvious differences contribute to

making their experiences plural and diverse, and which makes a case for more specific and intricate

representations in order to combat the generalising humanitarian, academic and media discourses

which they are so often subject too (Sigona as cited in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2014: 372). The

photographers I will analyse in this chapter can be seen as responding to this need. Each in various ways dignify the refugees and forced migrants caught up in the European refugee "crisis", whether by projecting them as the protagonists of their own experiences or finding the quiet moments within the temporary chaos which is so often the focus in mainstream coverage. I will look at the images of three photographers working in art and documentary photographic practices respectively, whose varied techniques reflect more ethical approaches and thus constructive representations of displaced persons. The work of these photographers is both important and necessary, for through their images the fragmentary identities of the people whom they portray are in various ways reconstructed and resultantly, their individuality is made manifest. Such practices are consequently able to facilitate the process of understanding and empathising with these subjects as fellow men, women and children, rather than an 'othered' group of people, by which the very status as a refugee or migrant already renders them significantly marginalised and misunderstood even before their visual photographic representation.

Susan Sontag posits that there are inevitable distances within the act of photographing. First, between the one photographing and the thing photographed, but also between the thing photographed and the one viewing it. In *Regarding the Pain of Others,* Sontag proposes that "our [the viewers'] capacity to respond to our experiences with emotional freshness and ethical pertinence, is being sapped by the relentless diffusion of vulgar and appalling images" (2003: 97). Yet, as Ariella Azoulay has recognised, Sontag was writing in the latter half of the 20th Century, when photojournalism had already experienced its 'golden age' in the middle of the century and photography had become democratised and widely practiced through the ubiquitous availability of the camera. As such, Sontag "bore witness to a glut of images that caused her [and many others] to

fall prey to a kind of *image fatigue*" (Azoulay 2008: 11). On account of this it is unsurprising that she questioned the emotional weight and impact of photographs. Yet the amount of images in circulation is greater than ever before and shows no sign of ebbing. Rather (and what Azoulay fails to recognise is a sure problem of the lack of emotional effect of photographs in the 21st Century) the superabundance of photographs today and the worldwide accessibility and use of cameras is engendering a second level of desensitisation on the part of the viewer to the images they are seeing; especially to those circulated instantaneously across various platforms to a global audience, and which are therefore seen most often.

Image fatigue is thus part of the reason as to why images circulated in the mass media, such as those of Alan Kurdi's death, have been criticised as more detrimental or even violent to their subjects*,* rather than seen as inviting empathic responses or being ethically sound. Mass circulation engenders visual saturation and consequent distortion and misunderstanding of what it is that we, the viewers, are actually seeing. The problematic consequence of this visual fatigue is a distancing effect between the thing photographed and the one looking, and therefore the possible deterioration of the latter's empathetic sensibility. As such, a number of contemporary critics and scholars have advocated for new forms of representation in our photographically saturated, 'post-truth' era, where the photograph-as-evidence no longer holds the weight it once did. Writer and photography critic David Campany has suggested that currently "the photographic image circulates [so] promiscuously [that it is] dissolving into the hybrid mass of mainstream visual culture" (2008: 44).

While Campany could evidently lament this as a largely unsolvable problem of the 21st Century, he has instead detected a trend in the photographic arts, "where photography attempts to separate itself out and locate a particular role for itself [and as such] decelerating, pursuing a

self-consciously sedate, unhurried pace" (2008: 44). Such reveals the new possibilities and employments of photography today, and we will see an example of the emerging trend of slow or "late photography" (2008: 44) that Campany mentions in the work of documentary photographer Daniel Castro Garcia. In this particular photographer's work, where he has clearly taken his time to look carefully at the hidden moments of refugees' daily lives, such a practice reveals an intimacy between himself and his subjects that then enables a level of empathy between the subject captured and the viewer of the resultant photograph. As Magnum photographer Olivia Arthur has found from her own working method, one solution for achieving empathy through photography is "to forgo highly edited and curated images in favour of the slower, more honest approach of showing the real in all its complexities and mundanities" (Arthur, n.d.).

Lens-based art is gaining traction as a medium to evoke that which is increasingly difficult to induce through the purely evidentiary, photojournalistic lens: empathy, in the sense that such produces understanding or, as psychologist Lauren Wispé states, "whose *object[ive]* is understanding" (Wispé 1986). When regarded in this respect, empathy can become a vehicle for social change, for rather than finding an identification through similarity, which would in turn effect little real change if the one identifying finds not much needs changing (as could be the case with the distant spectator looking at the refugee "crisis"), what is instead exposed are the discrepancies between the self and the other that could consequently manifest and impel the changes needed. Further, through a Rancerian framework of rethinking the nexus between politics and aesthetics, Anthony Downey sees the possibility of lens-based art as altering established political structures, by "re-imagining (or envisioning) the possible (or the *thinkable)* [...] with the potential to effect shifts in thinking [...] to not

only re-frame the visible but, perhaps more crucially, to en-vision the invisible, interstitial and contested sites (sights) of modernity" (2009: 135).

Certain properties innate to photography can aid and advance empathic and political responses that can then potentially lead to positive change. Yet, influenced by the fact of photography's widespread presence within our global visual culture, and the visual fatigue that consequently occurs, contemporary theorists are therefore looking for new avenues through which to discuss its role and ethical stability in representing in modern times. Daniel Castro Garcia, César Dezfuli and Omar Imam are wading in on this debate in a different way, each exploring the diverse qualities inherent in the practice of photography in order to draw out the individual from amongst the great numbers of people currently making their way to Europe; creating sensitive depictions and comprehensive narrations of their (diverse) experiences. In this way, the personal stories of these photographers' subjects are given centre-stage and come to define the images, rather than the typical, characteristic portrayals conventionally attributed to refugees and forced migrants that perpetuate the idea of their extreme suffering, victimhood and mass identity.

2.2.1. Case study: Daniel Castro-Garcia and "slow" documentary photography

In *Foreigner: Migration into Europe 2015-16,* Daniel Castro Garcia draws out the distinct personalities of the refugees and forced migrants who as a result become the lasting, individual subjects of his lens. Photographing in medium format film, Castro Garcia's work exhibits elements of slow photography, a term used to describe a current trend in the photographic arts towards taking one's time when photographing, in a counteractive move away from the rapidity and prolificacy of digital photography. As discussed in an article *The Slow-Photography Movement. What is the point of taking pictures?* journalist Tim Wu suggests that "step 1 in slow photography is spending a long time

studying your subject" (2018), and such is evident as a chief concern in Castro Garcia's images, where the subjects and their subtle corporal characteristics are the conspicuous features amongst simple, understated surroundings.

As a result of the photographer's protracted process of looking, moments that could have possibly been missed reveal themselves and thus end up in the image, often becoming its most powerful feature. This is especially important when the subject is a person, be that woman, man or child, for through the process of the photographer seeking the distinct characteristics of what constitutes and subjectivises that particular individual, their identity is made palpable to the viewer. Such expedites the ability for the viewer to gain an insight into and forge an empathy with the subject in the photograph, for through seeing both a common humanity and apparent differences, the possibility of seeing the "crisis" in such non-specific or 'mass' terms, that which denies an understanding about the individual people involved, is consequently eroded.

Campany writes that slow photography often takes place in the aftermath of a big event. By photographing that which remains, from which humans are therefore often absent, these types of images assume an "aesthetic closer to forensic photography rather than traditional photojournalism", which "as a result [makes them] quite different from the spontaneous snapshot and has a different relation to memory and to history" (as cited in Green 2003). As Campany argues, "in the popular culture of mass media, the frozen image is often used as a simple signifier of the memorable" (as cited in Green 2003), yet as we have seen with the publicization of the Alan Kurdi images, no sooner than a few days later was his personal identity lost through its subsumption into the multiple appropriations that then greatly abstracted and iconised it. The kind of slow, subject-orientated photography that Castro Garcia employs in *Foreigner: Migration into Europe 2015-16*

allows him to find the humanity within the "crisis", to discover the moments that are so often overlooked and draw out the elements that, in creating a relatable awareness and understanding, are thus crucial.

The manifestation of *Foreigner: Migration into Europe 2015-16* is a photobook comprising of around 200 images that vary between both street and staged portraits, landscapes, still shots and day and night-time scenes from refugee camps around Europe. The pages with photographs are interspersed with additional written information and line maps on thinner, tracing-like-paper, and the book is divided between 6 geographical locations: Lampedusa, Lesbos, Catania, The Balkans, Calais and Idomeni, all of which Castro Garcia travelled to in 2015. Writing in an interview last year, the photographer says that he sought to put a human face to the "crisis", "after seeing the incessant, monotonous imagery coming from the Mediterranean of faceless, mass-crowd shots" (D. C. Garcia, personal communication, 9 July 2018) which one can see easily by searching 'European refugee crisis' in Google Image Search. As such in many of the portraits, the distinct visual characteristics of the subjects are given a clear focus, thus calming the extreme perspectives of refugees and forced migrants produced in the mass media and forcing the possibly inured spectator to relate empathetically or even perhaps personally to this "crisis".[10]

We see one such example in an image within the chapter 'Catania', where Castro Garcia has photographed a 19-year-old Eritrean refugee named Zekarias, sitting on a makeshift cardboard bed

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[10] There are significant and studied debates over the (im)possibilities of empathising with refugees and migrants and their highly distinct situations, as discussed and explored by Intermediality and Cultural theory scholar Janna Houwen (Houwen 2016). I do not wish to argue that through these artists' photographs it is possible to empathise, for a distant/Western spectator, with the plights of the victims of the "crisis"; but rather, to understand that either share a common humanity in their bare essences as human beings, from which starting point individual life is constructed and subjectivised. Overarching representation of refugees and migrants enforces their status as such and consequently facilitates the polarisation between them and the *non*-refugee/migrant subject. I argue that it is through artists working to draw out their personal individuality and human subjectivity that such a chasm can be remedied.

in a car park that has become the temporary living space for mostly young men fleeing from Northern African countries (Fig. 2.1). In the portrait, the immediate and most noticeable feature is the look on Zekarias' face. Having told Castro Garcia how he had been kidnapped in Libya and spent 3 weeks inside a cell with 150 other people before crossing the Sahara desert in the back of pickup trucks, when you observe the image closely you can almost see Zekarias reliving this experience; looking at the centre of the image reveals Zekarias staring directly into the camera lens, with a posture that speaks of courage yet a facial expression that reveals fear. It appears that the photographer has knelt down to take the portrait so to perhaps place Zekarias firmly as his equal, for the subject is ever so slightly raised above the centre of the frame.

Further, his calm yet reserved posture, in which he sits up with knees bent and surrounding them with his long arms, speaks of the deliberation and slowness involved in the image-making process. As a result, Castro Garcia endows his subject with the role of creating his own narrative for the photograph, in which Zekarias does not therefore appear as a one-dimensional helpless victim, but rather a multifaceted being: a private and reserved, yet also brave and resilient young man. His evident authority and personality in the photograph gives Zekarias his individuality. Most importantly, this individuality allows his personal characteristics to come through, and as a consequence his identity as a human being becomes stronger and more definitive of him than his status as a refugee. By focusing on his individual identity, Castro Garcia thus removes the possibility of Zekarias taking on a symbolic identity as representative of the millions of refugees 'like him', and avoids the group polarisation of displaced persons facilitated by images in mass media.

Further on in the photobook, a photograph showing a young child lying on a beach stands out in its markedly similar subject matter to Nilüfer Demir's most famous image of Alan Kurdi (Fig.

2.2). Here, we see an infant asleep on a life-jacket on a rocky beach in Lesbos, looking as if placed there after having just reached land from crossing the sea. There are evident comparisons to be made between this photograph and Demir's; in either one the subject is a young child, and both the locations and physical positions of Kurdi and the unnamed infant somewhat mirror each other, for the baby is also lying flat on a rocky beach, near to the crashing waves. However there are clear differences between them that reveal the nuanced effects of slow looking, and the advantageous and less stereotyping effects of subject-focused, rather than situational observation.

Demir's image speaks of the extreme trauma and violence done to refugees. The snapshot moment that she caught shows Kurdi's exanimate body, yet not his whole face due to the fact of chance that he was lying on his front. As has been formerly discussed, the image is so shocking that its subject starts to embody something more-than-human, so to perhaps allow the spectators to comprehend what they are seeing. Thus it is the unspeakable horror of the fact that the young and innocent boy is dead that quickly becomes the strongest feature of the photograph, yet in its brutal and emotional intensity, it also quickly becomes an image that people want to forget. As such, the way in which Alan Kurdi's identity was lost amongst the appropriations of the original image was perhaps an upshot of the way in which the general public attempted to come to terms with, or consolidate, the shockingness of the event. The wider repercussions of this are that the public image of the plights of refugees and forced migrants is ably sustained as a blanket, faceless problem, rather than one comprised of many individual and personal situations, and is perpetually considered a crisis with albeit dreadful consequences but from which many global spectators are both physically and emotionally detached.

Castro Garcia's photograph of the young baby on the beach, on the other hand, depicts the singular character of the infant that thus both individualizes and humanizes the "crisis". In the bottom-centre half of the frame, the baby lies on its back with its eyes closed, looking as if basking in the midday sun. It appears peaceful, laid out on a fleece and a life-jacket with outstretched arms outstretched, and in the surroundings there are men and women sleeping or sitting amongst copious belongings like shoes and rucksacks. Due to what the photograph shows, a beach which is full of possessions and people in the background of the sleeping baby, it becomes clear that Castro Garcia would have had to take his time walking through the scene and closely extending his gaze to the many possible subjects. Through the photographer's extended sensitivity, the image emits a feeling of calm and stillness which one feels could only come from Castro Garcia's close observation of the scene with his eyes first, without the camera. The fact that the central focus of the photograph is the tiny child's face, with its eyes closed, makes it reminiscent of every resting baby; yet unlike the Kurdi image which is also reminiscent yet actually not representative of a living being but rather a lifeless one, this subject therefore gives a living or survivor image to the "crisis". Through such an image, the problematic sensational narratives of catastrophe and death are mitigated and resultantly, the refugees and forced migrants subjects' stories are made less shocking and therefore more easily relatable to a distant audience.

This image does not possess the iconic properties of the Kurdi images: such which materialised as a result of the initially hidden identity of the young boy, the fact that he had died in a most inhumane manner, and the photographs' both denotative and connotative features. Its denotative information, that of a young and innocent refugee's death by drowning, made the world stand up and turn their attention to the European refugee "crisis", which was then sustained

through the image's connotative qualities that enabled its multiple artistic appropriations. Yet its resultant iconicity also engendered the original's somewhat erasure from the public consciousness, and along with it, the awareness that this "crisis" is an acutely humanitarian one in which millions of distinct individuals are affected.

Castro Garcia's practice of slow photography, focusing on the aftermath of a traumatic scene in which time the subtler, less iconic moments start to unfold, gives his images a sensitivity which also allows the identities of the subjects photographed to remain secure. The images themselves become far more stable in their original form, which enables the distinct personalities of those he depicts to remain the most prominent feature of the photographs. As a result, his images are perhaps therefore harder to forget. The majority of Castro Garcia's photographs in *Foreigner* reveal the moments in-between the refugees' and forced migrants' worst experiences, where we can therefore see the humanity intrinsic to most situations where there is a group of people together, be they refugees or not. By portraying his refugee and migrant subjects with paradoxical elements innate to all human beings, such as Zekarias' fear and courage, Castro Garcia manages to an extent to reconstruct their undermined personal subjectivity.

2.2.2. Case study: Omar Imam and conceptual narratives of externalised inner worlds

As a very modern phenomenon due to its global reach and relevance, the European refugee "crisis" has garnered attention and representation via multiple differing mediums that have subsequently engendered a complex and at points incomprehensible impression of it. Speaking from a perspective focusing on the representation of modern warfare, Media scholar Bernard Hüppauf has suggested that "the abstract nature of modernity [...] seems to require conceptual modes of representation

rather than a pictorial duplication of visible reality" (Devereux & Hillman 1995: 96). Due to the complicated and individual nature of peoples' migrations within the "crisis", which has seen photographers seeking out the many possible atypical narratives to counteract mainstream representation, Syrian photographic artist Omar Imam has engaged in a form of photography that speaks to Hüppauf's proposition. In his project *Live, Love, Refugee* Imam dissolves the repetitive characterisation of refugees as powerless victims with no agency, which is for the large part an inaccurate depiction of their day to day reality, by repositioning them in roles that mimic or reflect their inner feelings, hopes and dreams. The resultant images depict the surreal and concealed nature of his subjects' thoughts that provide a fresh and vastly dissimilar ideas to the identity of the refugee, as someone whose inner world speaks of universal thoughts and opinions.

In one image Imam has photographed a woman and her wheelchair-bound husband (Fig. 2.3), who became paralysed after falling from the fourth floor of his own construction workshop, in a large snow-covered field. The woman is dressed in a doctor's coat, standing but resting her hand on the back of the man's wheelchair in a pose that exhibits the gender-role reversal in their relationship; after his accident, Faten became her husband's sole and full-time carer. In both the fore and background of the black-and-white image float balloons, tied to which are wrenches and screwdrivers that once seen transposes the image from a depiction of reality to a rather surreal scene. From the accompanying text, we learn that when Faten took her husband Ahmad to the hospital, the doctor said that the surgery could not begin because he could not find the right screwdrivers. As a result of this, Faten revealed to Imam that she wished to become a physiotherapist in order to help both her husband and those like him, and in an ironic response to the doctor's revelation, "to have all the screwdrivers around me" (Imam, 2018). Through the construction of this image, the inner

worlds of Imam's subjects have been externalised and made explicit and as such, their identities as refugees have been exchanged with those of the common man or woman who all have wishes and dreams. Further, in conceptualising Faten's aspiration by putting her in doctor's uniform, the photograph deconstructs the conventional image of the refugee when representing its definition as "a person who has been forced to leave his or her home and seek refuge elsewhere, esp. in a foreign country, from war, religious persecution, political troubles, the effects of a natural disaster" (OED Online 2019). In this image, there are explicitly no associations to the idea of seeking refuge, migration or displacement.

In another photograph, Imam depicts a young man sitting in the shallow section of water where an unidentified beach meets the sea, with waves crashing around him and a woman sitting in his lap (Fig. 2.4). The man confronts the camera directly as she lays her head back, resting it on his outstretched arm, and their intertwined pose communicates a feeling of private and sexual intimacy which is then further conveyed in their written testimony that "in Lebanese society we are outsiders, we are not able to have the same privacy in Syria" (Imam 2018). The poignancy of this photograph again comes from the exteriorisation of the subjects' inner worlds, for in their private life they appear to reflect ubiquitous human desires of love and physical closeness, and such is illustrated in the romantic, film-like quality of black and white scene.

Literature scholar Ernst Van Alphen has decoded the complex theories of affect to propose that visual images can have affective impacts. By envisioning a dichotomy between the affective power of material images and the conceptual nature of language, Van Alphen argues that it becomes possible for an image to not only provide information or messages, "but also to raise feelings [in the viewer] and work[...] through them" (2008: 27). By suggesting to look past approaching an image

purely through the content it reveals, that is, its allegorical 'read' meaning, Van Alphen shows how it is possible for an image to act as an "active agent[s], transmitting affects to the viewer or reader" (2008: 27) that results in an embodied, or physical experience.

It is interesting to consider Van Alphen's theory in the context of Imam's images and especially with regards to the young couple in the sea. In the photograph there is a sure scarcity of visual information and yet it invokes in the viewer a *felt* reaction, and from my personal experience, a markedly tender one. Preceding one's interpretation based on the knowledge of the subjects' context (that being their lives and experiences as refugees, no doubt) is an intuitive and pre-logical response that invites a visceral reaction within the viewer. Affect is crucial, argues Van Alphen, for it provokes a reaction that is necessarily *pre*-morality (or pre the ability to act on an established set of linguistic and philosophical conventions, that defines morality), and is instead constituted on a basis of ethics. As such, it can be argued that the viewer's response is stronger, because instinctive and personal. With the Alan Kurdi images, their global spectatorship almost unanimously agreed over the immorality of the scene depicted and that what happened to the innocent young boy defines the difference between "right" and "wrong". Yet as has been discussed, over time their emotional weight began to lift and little actual change was seen to occur, and the image was lost among many appropriations. In contrast, the affective characteristics of Imam's image perhaps goes some way in ensuring its permanence and stability, through its ability to harness the ethical, and thus distinctly individual, sensibility of each and every viewer.

Furthermore, Sontag has written that "harrowing photographs do not inevitably lose their shock factor or power to shock. But they are not much help if the task is to understand. Narratives can make us understand" (2003: 86). It may seem therefore that what is needed, in order to garner a

real awareness for the lives and experiences of displaced persons, in a similar vein what Hüppauf was proposing through conceptual representation, is perhaps staged narratives within the photographs, because although not truthful in their depiction of the reality of the subjects, they nevertheless realise the worlds of the refugees and forced migrants different to how they are generically and thus passively considered. Although Imam's representations of the refugees he photographed reveal their inner and abstract worlds which do not give thus accurate representations of the political or statistical 'newsworthy' facts, it is this very fantastical aspect that makes them important photographic documents representing refugees. In his images we see refugees within scenes from their past or possible future lives, restoring their identities as defined by profession, companionship and aspirations rather than statelessness and suffering.

2.2.3. César Dezfuli and face-to-face encounters in straight portraiture

Similar to Imam's surreal scenes that draw out the concealed and thus underrepresented sides of refugees' experiences and identities, César Dezfuli's images reveal the emotional and physical strain of refugees' and forced migrants' experiences, that which is discounted by more visually explicit and shocking, and thus perhaps *un*real images in mass media. Yet it is not so much the 118 individual pictures, which show single portraits of young men immediately after a Dutch ship rescued them from the brink of capsizing in the Mediterranean, but rather the photographer's decision in post-production to present all the images together in tableau format (Fig. 2.5) that becomes the project's most striking feature. The force of the images comes in their placement side-by-side in what resultantly starts to feel like an endless line, mimicking both the unfathomable journeys which these young men embarked on and the countless numbers of those who made them. Further, the singular images are remarkably alike in their visual language, for all 118 have exactly the same

backdrop of the sea's infinite horizon, and each portrait appears the result of the photographer's repeated instruction for the subject to look directly towards the centre of the camera lens. As a result, one gets the feeling when looking at these portraits of the immeasurable numbers of people fleeing or migrating their homelands as a consequence of adversity and strife. Yet, unlike the sweeping portrayals of them in large and unidentifiable groups, often seen alongside propagandistic campaigns against their seeking asylum in Europe, within Dezfuli's vast tableau, each and every one of his subjects' stares pierce the camera and make you feel as if you, the viewer are in a face-to-face interaction.

20th Century Philosopher Emmanuel Levinas proposed that the face-to-face encounter is a social and ethical experience. In the presence of a face-to-face encounter, the other [person] "is an undeniable reality" (1979: 200) that cannot be reduced to wider images or ideas; in a way therefore, the face-to-face encounter is an *affective* one, because it evokes feelings in the viewer that are pre-emotion, pre-thought and pre-logic and forces a personal response that is undetermined by conventional or wider thought. Levinas opined that

> To manifest oneself as a face is to *impose oneself* above and beyond the manifested and purely phenomenal form, to present oneself in a mode irreducible to manifestation, the very straightforwardness of a face to face, without the intermediary of any image, in one's nudity, that is, in one's destitution and hunger (1979: 200).

In other words, the face is a primordial expression that embodies resistance and infinity in the face of what is in that moment being presented to it. Levinas believed that such an encounter was ethical because through the face's expression and self-exposure in its utter nudity and vulnerability, it invokes an awareness of the "irremissible weight of being that gives rise to [the one looking's] freedom", doing so by "arousing [their] goodness" through the "order of responsibility" (1979: 200).

For Levinas therefore, the face-to-face was also a levelling encounter, exposing the equilibrium of humanity through compelling the one looking at the Other into a system of relations between themselves; of giving oneself up to the other, of submitting to and serving them. The kind of face-to-face confrontations presented to the viewer in Dezfuli's images to an extent embody Levinas' philosophy, for in the naked vulnerability of the confrontation between subject and viewer the former claims a basic existence, opening up thus a "primordial discourse whose first word is obligation" (Levinas 1979: 201). Perhaps when looking at these images therefore we feel compelled, from a place within us that precedes established or conventional ways of looking and addressing someone [markedly] different from ourselves, to help and ameliorate the terrible conditions these subjects are at the mercy of.

One photograph in the tableau shows Amadou Sumaila, a 16-year old migrant from Mali, in what is certainly one of the most intense and memorable portraits from the entire series (Fig. 2.6).[11] Sumaila's unflinching gaze extends so directly into the camera that one feels as though he is addressing and interrogating you and you alone. In *Camera Lucida,* Roland Barthes reflects on a moment when, trying to write some kind of commentary on the latest "emergency reportage", he tears them up in exasperation because searching, fruitlessly, for "a look, a subject's look, if only someone in the photographs were looking at me!" (2000: 111). The photograph, he writes, "has a power [...] of looking me straight in the eye" (Barthes 2000: 111), and it is indisputable that the force of this particular image has a great deal to do with the fixed, central gaze of its subject. The clear-cut line between the sky and the sea's horizon accentuates Sumaila's powerful stare and echoes the horizontal linearity of his eyebrows, an overall facial pose that makes obvious both his determination

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[11] This particular photograph has won numerous awards in the past few years, including the Taylor Wessing Portrait Prize in 2017.

and grit and hardship and vulnerability, in equal measure. Sumaila's stance speaks of both strength and frailty; his eyes look deep into the viewer in a resolute gaze yet his lack of adequate clothing, wearing just a t-shirt that reveals the top of his thinly veiled rib cage, certainly connotes vulnerability.

The composition and expression of Sumaila's portrait is one that Dezfuli has managed to capture, with nuanced differences, in the 117 others in the tableau. As such when viewed all-together, the often unseen elements of the European refugee "crisis" are emphasised for we see both the mass, collective experience of those victim to it and the particular, non-identical characteristics of each individual person within the group. Through the visual repetition Dezfuli illustrates the well-known, and well-represented fact that the European refugee "crisis" has affected millions of people, yet the difference in Dezfuli's portrayal of this fact is that his images do not render the victims as a faceless mass, but rather as individuals first, which when then put together make up a collective group. What the tableau format also enables us to see is the refugees' inherent perseverance and strength of character, for the clarity and intensity first exhibited in Sumaila's portrait becomes a framework that is closely repeated in the following photographs. As a result of this, by the end of the viewing one understands the kind of strength that defines the refugee or forced migrant, rather than purely powerlessness and despair.

Bishupal Limbu calls for "finding alternative narratives [...] that provide different perspectives on the refugee experience" (2009: 272) as a result of what Liisa Malkki has pointed out are the refugees' personal accounts being "disqualified almost a priori" (as cited in Limbu 2009: 272) for more powerful narratives intending to symbolise a mass humanitarian and political crisis. Further, Barthes asks rhetorically in *Camera Lucida,* "What- nothing to say about death, suicides, wounds, accidents? No, nothing to say about these photographs in which I see surgeons' gowns,

bodies lying on the ground, broken glass etc" (2000: 111). Although specifically focusing on the power of the "photographic look" (2000: 111), it is notable that Barthes cannot find such when looking at sensational or shocking emergency reportage, in other words, press photography. Perhaps it is an element specifically found in straight portraiture or slow photography typified in the images of Castor Garcia and Dezfuli, such as seen in the examples Barthes cites in *Camera Lucida*.[12]

Yet why is it important to seek new modes of visual representation of displaced persons? Mette Mortensen and Hans-Jörg Trenz have noted that "images of refugees shape perceptions of and responsibilities towards asylum seekers and frame political discussions on the subject" (2016: 344). If, as has been noted by Luc Boltanski, the view of a victim's suffering through a media spectacle "detaches the spectator from the victim" (2004: 345) and thus prevents any effectual action or change as we have seen was largely the case with Alan Kurdi, then it is time for those representing to seek out the many possible alternative narratives of their subjects in order to try and introduce some actual change to their realities. When refugees' and forced migrants' polarizing characterizations are replaced by more levelling aspects or characteristics common to all humanity, we no longer find ourselves engaging in a strictly passive contract with a politics of pity. Rather, the ability to identify and thus empathise with the subjects on a basic human level is markedly increased. This is surely a better place to start if we want to build an understanding and acceptance of refugees and forced migrants as part of a shared humanity, and to restore to them their subjectivity and

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[12] In Chapter 46 of *Camera Lucida*, while discussing the photographic look Barthes references two portraits by Andre Kertész, the first *Piet Mondrian in his studio, Paris, 1926* and the second *The Puppy, Paris, 1928*. Both images reveal their subjects in pensive states with expressions of restraint, which Barthes says emerge from the fact that they are 'looking at nothing', *seeing* nothing in front of them but the 'piece of black plastic'. The young boy '*retains* within himself his love and his fear, that is the Look' Barthes writes. The same could be said for Dezfuli's subjects, whose identities and experiences can be read not *explicitly,* but rather through their 'Look', on account of their unequivocal address straight to the viewer (Barthes 2000).

individuality, that which is presently being abraded through the current most visible representations in mass media.

Conclusion

Issues surrounding photographic representation are multifarious and debated. The purpose of this thesis has been to evaluate the differences in photographic representation of the complex identities of displaced persons, through both the photojournalistic and art or documentary lenses. The portrayal of the identity and experiences of a refugee or forced migrant does not lend itself easily to the camera lens. It underlines the general ethical problems of photographic representation and also forces us to address a more specific and pressing question: how does one depict the vulnerable, victimised and oppressed without exacerbating their situations further? I have compared differing photographic practices that have been employed in the visual documentation the European refugee "crisis". The first, photojournalism intended for a mass audience through publication on mass media platforms and the second, art or documentary photography that commonly speaks to a smaller audience. I have conducted this comparative research in order to see whether art or documentary photography is a more constructive and ethical medium than photojournalism and the mass media, to represent refugees and forced migrants. I took as my starting point the publication of Nilüfer Demir's images of Alan Kurdi, which marked a definite shift in the public understanding of the plights of displaced persons and also engendered many people to investigate and question the impact of mass media in their representation.

In Chapter One, I sought to bring to light the issues and impacts upon the subjects of an iconic photograph. I first explored the ways in which images become iconic, reaching the conclusion that iconic photographs are most commonly created by the photojournalistic lens. From this, it was then possible to assess the negative impacts of an image's iconic qualities upon the subject within it, which become further compounded when the subject, as was the case with the Alan Kurdi images, is

a refugee. We have seen how an image's iconicity leads to a significant misunderstanding of the original and its consequent abstraction, through a discussion of the multiple appropriations of the Alan Kurdi images and in particular, Ai Weiwei's controversial interpretation. The images spawned thousands of reactions online and hundreds of appropriations, transforming his identity into a global symbol of the horrors of the European refugee "crisis" and in the process, de-individualising and possibly even dehumanising Kurdi himself. Moreover, the visual information in the photographs that reveal the distressing nature of Kurdi's death yet nothing of his personal or distinct features as an individual, allowed for the perpetuation of commonly produced narratives of refugees and migrants as either helpless victims or simply a vast and anonymous group of people. This point provides an important comparison to the three art or documentary photographers, Daniel Castro Garcia, Omar Iman and César Dezfuli whose work provided the case studies in Chapter Two.

In the photographic projects that have been analysed for their slow, conceptual or documentary approach, there is a marked absence of the sensational or spectacular that defines the images of Alan Kurdi and which feeds the ambitions of dominant narratives of, as Malkki so-names, "relief, policy science and development" (as cited in Limbu 2009: 272). Daniel Castro Garcia's work is sensitive in its nature, with his images revealing their subjects in a tender rather than shocking or graphic manner. This allows the subjects' subtle human characteristics, those which reveal their individuality, to shine through. In this way, Castro Garcia assumes the subordinate role between the one photographing and the one photographed dichotomy, thus exhibiting a respectful approach and ethical awareness to the issues of representing those in fragile states or with fractured identities. Omar Imam's conceptual approach momentarily removes the refugees out of their compromised realities by allowing them to act out their inner worlds. Such gives his subjects a dignity that they are

not often afforded; to establish them as not only the protagonists of their own stories, but the authors of them too. In Dezfuli's work he positions his subjects in face-to-face encounters with the spectator, giving the portraits an *affective* quality which consequently forces those looking to engage critically and ethically with them. Notably, in all three works there is a clear lack of iconic-making elements to the images. In the absence of connotation there is instead straight and uncomplicated denotation, and the quieter, less spectacular compositions strongly suggest that they will not reach the attention of a worldwide audience, as did the Alan Kurdi photographs.

In various ways, their photographs reveal a more subject-focused, identity-specific representation of refugees and forced migrants which reveals the subjects' characteristics and own experiences, those things that underscore a person's individuality. Such portrayals humanise the European refugee "crisis" and thus provide a more multi-layered understanding of the experiences of the people involved, resultantly allowing the distant viewer to craft a deeper and more comprehensive awareness to the problems that refugees and forced migrants face. It is only by bridging the polarised gap between 'us' and 'them' through visually presenting characteristics inherent in all people, without the trauma so often seen in the pictorial representations of refugees and migrants in the mass media, that their mass stigmatisation may start to be abated.

I have attempted to show that there is a trend of contemporary photographic approaches currently emerging that are proving more constructive and beneficial, because ethical and empathetic, in representing displaced persons. Yet, an initiative established by the Institute for Public Policy Research has found that "the policy and public mood towards migration is often more negative than it was 10 years ago", much of which stems from "inconsistent media coverage" (Wright as cited in

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2014: 463). Evidently, visual media plays a crucial role in the way that we, the viewers, construct notions of those it depicts. Daniel Castro Garcia, Omar Imam and César Dezfuli are some among a yet still small number of photographic artists responding to this fact, practicing the kind of extended sensitivity and de-sensationalised representation that appears necessary to forge an appropriate understanding of the plights and identities of those caught up in the European refugee "crisis". However there are still steps yet to be taken by photographers and theorists alike, in order that greater awareness can emerge over how to and why it is important to represent the fragile identities of displaced persons, who today make up an unprecedented estimated 68.5 million of the world's population. In this thesis I hope to have claimed a small stake in this ongoing process towards a future in which more positive visual narratives (existing outside of mass media) and consequently better understandings about the intricacies of refugees' and forced migrants' situations, may proliferate.

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Appendix

Fig. 1.1.
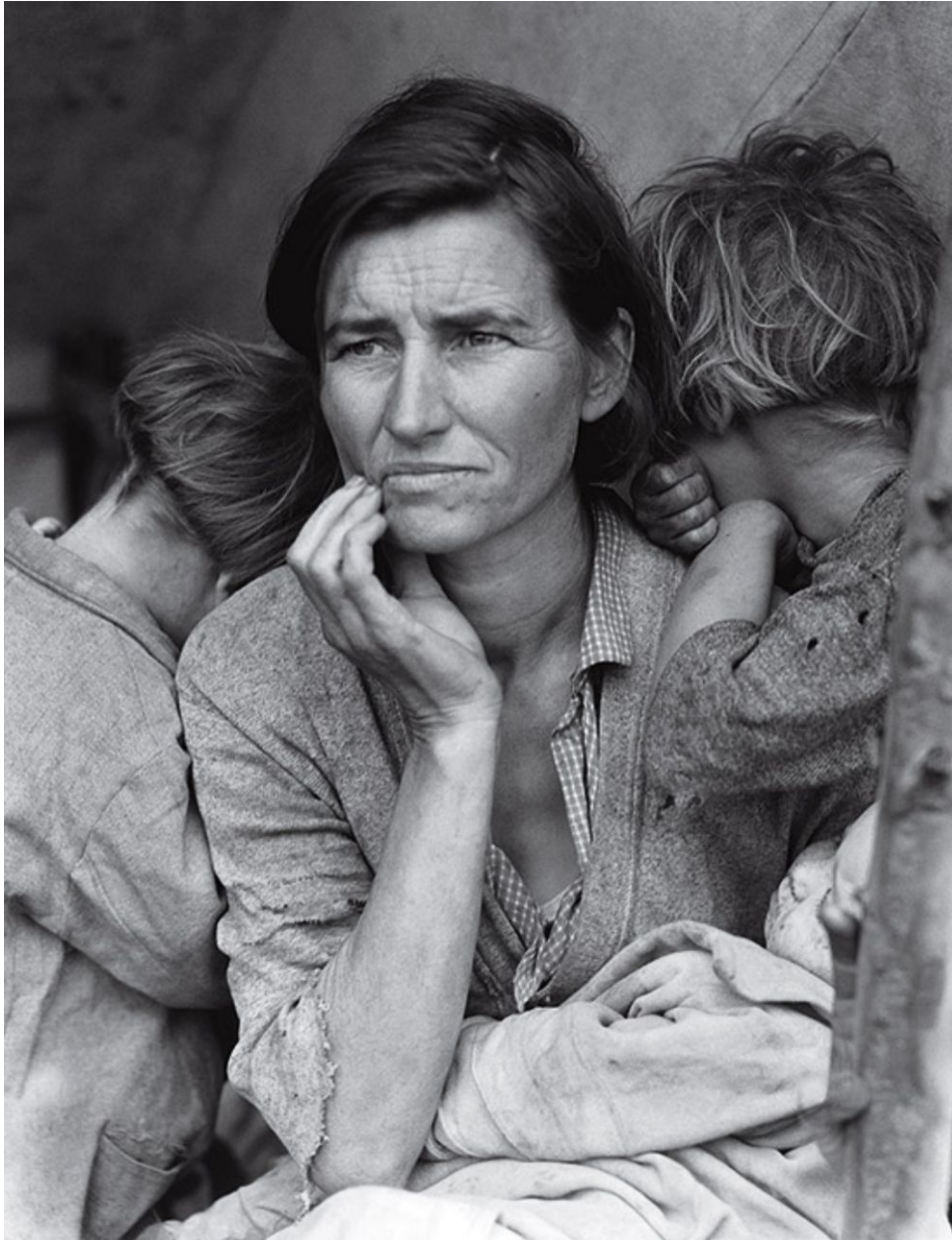
Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother,* 1936. Retrieved from
http://100photos.time.com/photos/dorothea-lange-migrant-mother

Fig. 1.2.

Eddie Adams, *Boat of No Smiles,* 1977. Retrieved from
http://100photos.time.com/photos/eddie-adams-boat-no-smiles

Fig. 1.3.

Nilüfer Demir, *Untitled,* 2015. Downloaded from

Fig. 1.4

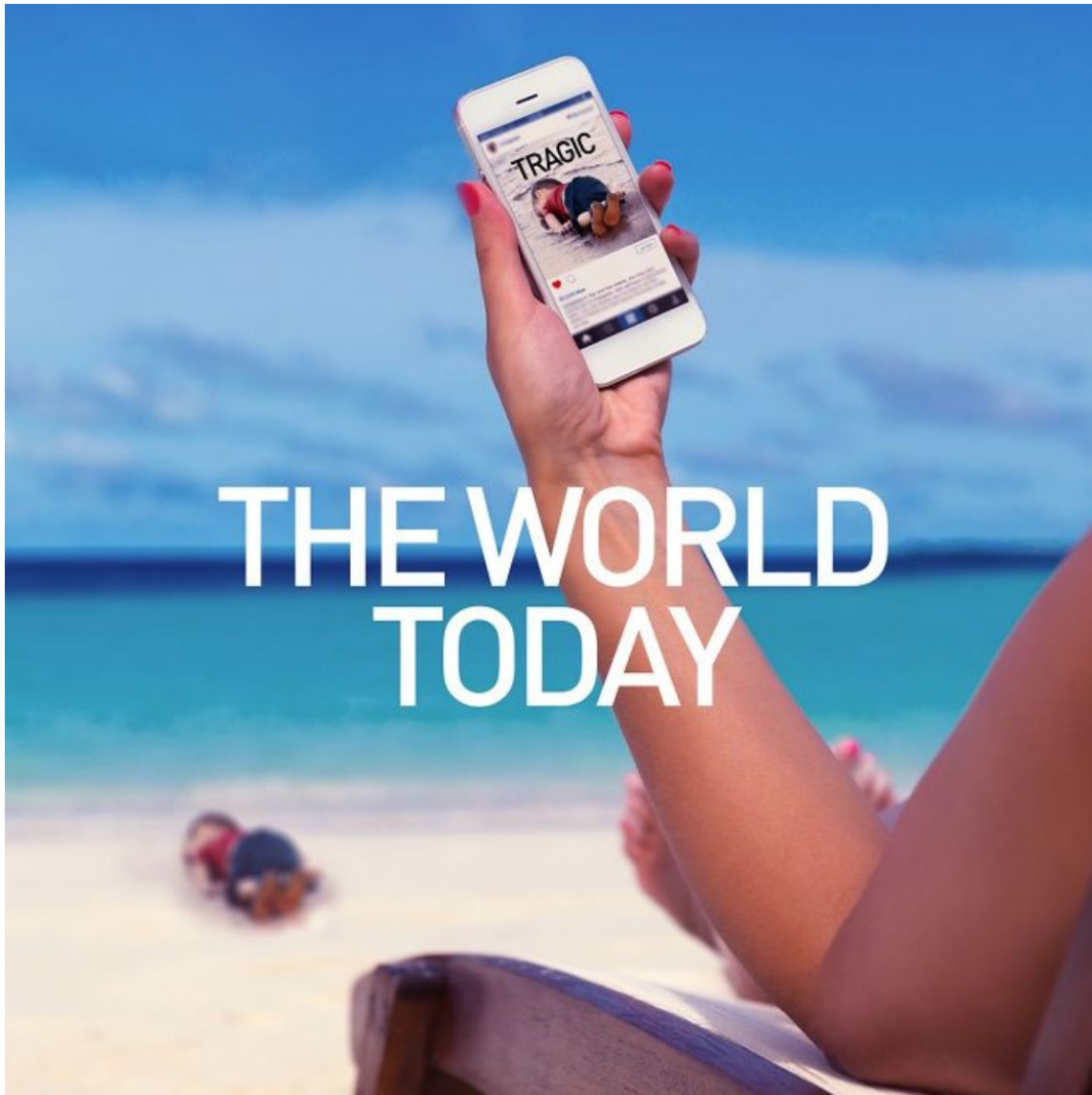Nilüfer Demir, *Alan Kurdi,* 2015. Retrieved from
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Fig. 1.5

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Fig. 1.6

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Fig. 1.7.

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Fig. 2.1

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Fig. 2.3

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Fig. 2.4

Omar Imam, *Untitled.* Retrieved from http://www.omarimam.com/live-love-refugee

Fig. 2.5

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Fig. 2.6.

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