Telling Stories: A Critical Analysis of Humanitarian Documentary Photography

Vivian Collis

1708878

Photojournalism & Documentary Photography

Independent Inquiry ADAD6001

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA (Hons)

University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Swansea, 11th December 2019

Paul Duerinckx

Word Count

5773

Table of Contents

List of illustrations…….3

Summary……5

Introduction……..…….5

Chapter 1……...8

Chapter 2…….……15

Chapter 3……...……..21

Conclusion…….…..27

Bibliography……...…..31

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Nilüfer, D. (2015) *Alan Kurdi* [Photograph]. Available at: http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/aylan-kurdi-the-syrian-toddler-drowned-bodrum-beach

Figure 2: Carter, K. (1993) *Starving Child and Vulture* [Photograph]. Available at: http://100photos.time.com/photos/kevin-carter-starving-child-vulture

Figure 3: Stoddart, T. (1998) *Sudan Famine* [Photograph]. Available at: http://tomstoddart.com/gallery/sudan-famine

Figure 4: Moore, M. (2002) *Luke Piri* [Photograph]. Available at: https://www.mikemoorephotographer.com/photo_4031141.html

Figure 4a: Getty Images. (1968) Untitled [Photograph]. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/nnamdi-kanu-indigenous-people-of-biafra-conflict-1967-a9169196.html

Figure 5: ICRC Photo Library (1921) *Malnourished Russian Children* [Photograph]. Gorin, V. (2012) 'Looking back over 150 years of humanitarian action: The photographic archives of the ICRC', *International Review of the Red Cross*, 94(888), pp. 1349–1379. doi: 10.1017/S1816383113000568.

Figure 6: Stoddart, T. (1999) *Albania – Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo* [Photograph]. Available at: http://tomstoddart.com/gallery/ethnic-cleansing-in-kosovo

Figure 7: Fazzina, A. (2007) *Bir Ali, Yemen* [Photograph]. Available at: https://www.noorimages.com/a-million-shillings

Figure 8: Sestini, M. (2014) *Operation Mare Nostrum* [Photograph]. Available at: https://time.com/3543082/italy-navy-mare-nostrum-migrants/

Figure 9: Lega Nord (2014) *Abbiamo Fermato L'invasione* [Photograph]. Available at: https://populismobserver.com/category/germany/

Figure 10: Ukip (2016) Breaking Point [Poster]. Available at: https://www.thesun.co.uk/living/3201491/famous-image-used-on-ukips-breaking-point-migrant-poster-showing-terrible-plight-of-refugees-fleeing-war-torn-countries-helps-jeff-mitchell-win-photographer-of-the-year-2016/

Figure 11: Open Arms NGO (2019) Lesbos [Photograph]. Available at: https://www.openarms.es/en/our-missions/lesbos

Figure 12: Fazzina, A. (2008) *Al-Kharaz, Yemen* [Photograph]. Available at: https://www.noorimages.com/a-million-shillings

Figure 13: Mosse, R. (2012) *Safe from Harm* [Photograph]. Available at: http://www.richardmosse.com/projects/the-enclave

Figure 14: Mosse, R. (2014-2017) *Incoming* [video]. Available at: http://www.richardmosse.com/projects/incoming

Figure 15: Kennedy, S. (2016-2018) To Set Fire to the Sea [Photograph]. Available at: http://www.sineadkennedy.net/ptt7c9fwfz0467mk177181l4ynpbb8

Summary of Topic

A critical and historical over-view of humanitarian documentary photography and the practices of Governments and NGOs, in the creation of narratives about mobile people. An exploration of contemporary theories, politics and practices that impact on these narratives with examples of both historical and current images form humanitarian documentary photography. A reflection on personal practice going forward.

Introduction

My own photographic practice has led me to explore representation and how I might portray the people I photograph in portraits. What messages am I conveying, why have I chosen these images, what editing did I carry out and why? Through recording interviews and representing the individuals both in images and words, listening to and conveying some of their personal stories, I had considered how homeless people might be better represented. I had purposefully aimed to ensure the individuals had dignity throughout the process. I also become involved in a local charity, in raising funds for homeless people, during the process. This research also bought me into contact with homeless asylum seekers and economic migrants. I decided to explore how these people are represented and what stories they told. Throughout my research I kept coming across the word humanitarian, which took my research further into the areas of 'suffering as a spectacle'.

This enquiry uses books, images, peer-reviewed journals, newspaper and magazine articles, images, interviews and the Internet to inform the debates. It will focus on mobile people, humanitarian documentary photography, the politics behind and driving the images, the role of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the stories they tell. I will look at current humanitarian documentary photographers and their practice.

The term mobile people will be used to frame all the different aspects of displacement and migration to capture both historical and contemporary movements of people. During research it has become apparent that media and social media freely interchange words used for mobile people, describing them as immigrants, migrants, asylum seekers and not necessarily in context.

The enquiry will be applying theoretical frameworks of representation, exploring iconography, the role of the self in humanitarianism and analysing political and statistical discourses on the so called “politics of pity”.

Humanitarian images of mobile people have dominated the awards for photojournalism over the years, capturing the international plight of mobile people and in the west focussing on the European migration crisis of recent times. Traditional humanitarian and social media have published countless pictures of starving people, poor people, migrants and those attempting to access Europe, the list goes on. Internationally the “politics of pity” (Boltanski, 1993, p. 2), as discussed by Hannah Arendt, has driven the aid agenda and in Europe the Brexit discussions around borders, freedom of movement, solidarity in supporting migrants to the European Union (EU) and The Lisbon Treaty have all impacted on how these are received, mirrored and mediated through the social and political backdrop of image making.

The demand for the visual image in our electronic, fast moving social media world has enabled photographs to be with an audience in seconds. The plight of Alan Kurdi (Fig. 2) and the image of him dead on the beach, which was taken by a Turkish photographer Nilüfer Demir, when she was working for the Dogan News Agency.

The NGO, Human Rights Watch (HRW), decided to tweet the image which then, quickly, went viral. There are reports that the amount of donations flowing into NGO's at this time increased dramatically.



Fig. 1: Alan Kurdi

Chapter 1. Will explore the historical and statistical situation for mobile people

Chapter 2. Considers the political and human consequences of politics and the use of images

Chapter 3. Reflects on how NGOs impact on the images of mobile people and the work of photographers. Then looking at the work of three contemporary humanitarian documentary photographers: Alixandra Fazzina, Richard Mosse and Sinead Kennedy. Followed by a consideration of personal future practice.

Chapter 1

Historically people have moved around the world for economic, political, conflict, persecution and natural disaster reasons for 1.75 million years. There is nothing new in the principle of mobile people. However we have seen surges in movements during industrialisation, wars and imperialism, increasing exponentially at the end of WWII. From the 1990's to 2018 a further exponential rise has been seen in displaced persons, reaching over 70 million (UNHCR, 2019, p. 4) for the first time in world history, an increase of over 50% in five years. According to UNHCR this is due to the increasing time length of wars, as in Syria, which is now entering its ninth year of conflict, and the international responses declining. Of this 70 million, 13 million (UNHCR, 2019) were displaced Syrians, looking for security and protection. Total worldwide numbers of migration, which include economic migrants, was estimated at 272 million in 2020 (World Migration Report, 2020, p. 20) with almost two thirds being labour migrants.

Humanitarian documentary photography has a long history of recording mobile people and dates back to the 1850's when wealthy travellers started to record what they were seeing across the globe. In the 1880's images of the "unseen" relating to people started to be used in newspapers and magazines and this bought about the development of the humanitarian campaigns. Many of these images have become iconic for example Dorothea Lange's Migrant Mother, taken in 1936, recording the difficulties of migrant farmers during the American Great Depression

Kevin Carter's Pulitzer Prize winning photograph of the Sudanese child and the vulture (fig. 2), taken in 1993, shows the famine in Sudan that internally displaced approximately 4 million people and created 350,000 refugees (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants,1998).



Fig. 2: *Starving child and vulture*

Tom Stoddart goes on to depict the same countries 1998 famine, with another shocking image that became iconic, of the starving child having their food stolen by a well-fed man at the NGO Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) feeding station (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: *Sudan*

Sebastião Salgado's book "Exodus" shows images documenting mass movements of people, from his visits to 35 countries over 6 years in the 1990's and despite their highly stylised black and white, grainy effect, have become iconic.

The iconic status of these images illustrates "the spectacle" of humanitarian documentary photography as a meta-narrative, that lingers in the minds of people, viewing distant suffering. Where images are initially contextualised and therefore indexical, they can act as memory devices, but once these "contextual linkages of photographs are loosened", (Cabañes, 2017, p. 35), for instance moved into the realm of news and social media, they can bring iconicity into what becomes the collective memory, some moving into "symbolic" status. However when these images are put alongside the statistics, this analysis, brings into question the ability of photography to impact on the situations of mobile people. The further exploration of the role of humanitarian organizations in constructing narrative sheds light on the images and stories of mobile people.

Humanitarian documentary photography and photojournalism has been a major actor in the depiction and representation of mobile people. Analysis of press images has shown that they frequently depict migrants in tropes and the narrative alongside them as binary portrayals of threats or victims, either threatening borders in boats described as "mass" or "illegal" (Pierigh and Spreicher, 2017, p. 13) and Susan Sontag (2004, p.20)talks of the "hunt" for images that will grab attention and "shock" as part of this depiction.

As threats or victims it is easy to see these roles played out in Karpman's Drama Triangle of "Victim, Persecutor and Saviour or Rescuer" (Karpman, 2014). This quickly translates to the role of aid agencies and NGOs, seeking to cast the, usually western European and American public, as rescuers and saviours. Karpman identifies these roles in several

European cultural fairy tales (Karpman, no date) and how they all use the technique of switching roles to create the drama. This can be seen on the national stage with continually changing policies and sentiments as images go viral of the persecutor, coming to steal our jobs in boat loads or the victim, a dead child washed up on the beach.

As victims mobile people are depicted by NGOs or the press as helpless, with no agency. Historical photographs from NGOs demonstrate how the categorisation of victims changed over time, from the suffering of wounded soldiers during conflict to the civilians caught up in the effects of war, mainly women and children. Later the victims were naked children (Fig. 4), used to depict famine and innocence and are again reproduced in 2002 using the same archetypal format but the child has a name (Fig. 4a).



Fig. 4: *Biafra untitled*



Fig. 4a: *Luke Piri*

These images are designed to engage the public in supporting the causes of agencies.

Reference was also made to classical paintings in images referring to a “Christian code” (Gorin, 2012, p. 27) of charity such as the Pieta (pity), women cradling dead or dying children in their arms (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5: *Malnourished Russian Children*

This was found to enhance the compassion of the general public and increase giving, thus contributing to forming what Gorin calls the “aesthetics of compassion” (2012, p.27). The Red Cross, who own a photo library and archive of 780,000 images of which 120,000 have been made public, set up it’s own photographic laboratories in 1958 to ensure it could meet the demands of the organisation, newspapers and other humanitarian organisations, supplying images taken by it’s own staff. Many NGO’s, including The Red Cross, went on to employ professional photographers as the correlation between the right image and higher level of donation was made.

Most of these images are aimed at western audiences. Many of us have suffered in some way, severe accidents, illness and discrimination or have known it with families or friends, even witnessed it on the streets with people we have no connection to. Most EU countries have not been involved in major suffering since the end of WWII on a large scale, unlike

eastern Europe which was captured in Tom Stoddart's images of “Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo” (Fig. 6) showing the plight of the 1.5 million Albanians forced to leave their homes by the Serbs in 1999.



Fig. 6: *Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo*

According to (Cabañes, 2017, p. 34) images have “denotative, explicit meaning and connotative, secondary meanings” within cultures. Western readings of mass suffering may no longer be directly linked to our own experience and therefore subject to media representation, again sending images of the unseen. The concept of the “spectacle of the other” (Hall, 1997, p. 225) includes ethnocentricity, power, stereotyping, amongst others and plays to Saussure’s “semiotics”, the means by which we create meaning and how that is created dependant on our social and cultural circumstances. Barthes refers to the “punctum”, something in a photograph that is unexpected and may connect with a viewer in a way not predicted. It is suggested that the photograph of Alan Kurdi may have become iconic because of its ethnocentric similarities to white Europeans.

The director of Human Rights Watch, Peter Bouckaert, told Time Magazine:

> "The week before, dozens of African kids washed up on the beaches of Libya and were photographed and it didn't have the same impact. There is some ethnocentrism [in the] reaction to this image, certainly."
>
> (Laurent, 2015)

The outcomes for the African children did not make the press, nor go viral. Award winning photographer Alixandra Fazzina's work "A Million Shillings" (Fig. 7) shows an image of four dead men on a Yemeni beach (Fig. 7), fleeing Somalia in 2010 but not surviving the journey, it has never made iconic status however touching and quietly shocking it is.



Fig. 7: *Bir Ali, Yemen*

History shows many events, especially those involved in slavery, where the perpetrators were, or are, living alongside the victims of horrific and cruel treatment but were/are unable or unwilling to recognise it for themselves. In Fazzina's scenario it is often the Somali smugglers who have taken money for the trip, here 1 million Somali shillings, that show little respect for their passengers. Fazzina uses passages of narrative to communicate the depth of the image and give context.

Chapter 2

Political parties, governments, political movements, economic states, business, the press, media and individuals can all be involved as actors on the world stage of humanitarian or non-humanitarian actions towards mobile people.

Borders are cultural and social creations. They are not physically real and yet in the west we hold fast to the idea of maintaining our borders for a whole variety of reasons including threats such as; taking our jobs, using our health service, criminality and terrorist attacks. Trump wants to build a wall between Mexico and America, despite most Mexican immigration into America being people legally visiting by aeroplane, who then don't return. Many of these 'threats' are created around the idea of unwanted mobile people coming into our territories, often focussed on "legitimacy" or "illegality" (Cooper et al., 2017, p.78). Bruno refers to the "invasion frame" and "the first threat posed by the foreigner is represented by the entry into a socially constructed territory perceived as "ours"." (Bruno, 2016, p. 48).

Statistically only 3.5% of the world's population are refugees, despite what seem like huge numbers (world population 2019 approximately 7.7 billion) and according to UNHCR (2019, p. 17), 84% of these refugees are hosted in the worlds least developed countries. Turkey hosted the next largest population in 2019 of 3.7 million, followed by Pakistan at 1.4 million. These statistics seem surprising given the media reactions to refugees arriving in the EU over recent years, which is around 1.2 million. Musarò & Parmiggiani (2017, p. 244) comment that there has been a failure for EU countries "to translate the change of their status from "emigration lands" to "immigration countries", potentially especially true for those colonial countries such as the UK, Italy and Spain, with a colonial, maritime history.

A states ability to accept asylum seekers and migrants “is often exercised in accordance with public opinion” (Musarò and Parmiggiani, 2017, p.242).

Here examples from EU countries including Italy, and the UK and other predominantly western cultures will be explored to see how the changing narrative of attitudes towards mobile people and the threats to borders has been effected by the use of images, narrative, political and public opinion.

Italy is has a vulnerable sea border along the Mediterranean and boats land there, illegally transporting mobile people. In actual fact the statistics demonstrate legal entry predominates and only later, those failing to leave become unlawful, much the same as the Mexican arrivals to America.

Italy started a naval and air force program in 2013 called Operation Mare Nostrum (Fig. 8), with some financial support from the EU, following the death of over 600 migrants in two shipping accidents of the coast of Lampedusa. Of the 80 women on board one ship only 5 survived and none of the children under 12 were found alive.



Fig. 8: *Operation Mare Nostrum*

The humanitarian program focussing on ‘search and rescue’, which NGOs claim saved thousands of lives and was started in response to images and reports of the migrants drowning in the Mediterranean, and these events lead to considerable public concern. A states ability to accept asylum seekers and migrants “is often exercised in accordance with public opinion” (Musarò and Parmiggiani, 2017, p. 242)

The EU “Dublin Regulations” on migration and asylum states that the country of arrival is the country that has to deal with the claim. This makes it much more difficult for countries like Italy and Greece whose borders are on the edges of the EU and easier for countries like Germany that have no non-EU borders.

Operation Mare Nostrum ended after only a year and was replaced with a boat that was sent out to stop migrants from landing, a non-humanitarian mission called operation Triton. What bought about such a radical change in the behaviour of Italy towards mobile people? Here we need to understand the political framework further. The rise of the right throughout Europe and America since the economic down turn of 2008 has increased poverty and poor working conditions amidst programmes of austerity, which in turn have reduced support and funding of the welfare state. These conditions have throughout history seen the rise of the right including Nazi Germany. Padovani suggests the resultant lack of challenge to these conditions is not one of “structural and class inequalities” but one that is “based on strategies that divide the electorate and incite fear” (Padovani, 2018, p. 2) often attributed to race, biological traits and culture or religion.

The EU’s policy of the country of arrival having to deal with the initial claim was starting to be recognised as one sided and there seemed to be no “solidarity” in the process or further support coming from the EU countries without external borders. This was an opportunity

for the far right in Italy to act upon people's fears often using documentary images. Andrea Pogliano (Burbridge, B. and Pollen, A. 2018) in her analysis of "photojournalistic representations of immigration" identifies Italy's "centre-right parties" and the "Lega Nord of being involved in anti-immigration rhetoric as a main theme for their political stance for many years." The Lega Nord produced a poster (Fig. 9) in 2014 proclaiming "ABBIAMO FERMATO L'INVASIONE" translated as "We stopped the invasion", following the end of "Operation Mare Nostrum".



Fig. 9: *Abbiamo Fermato L'invasione*

This image and others in their poster campaigns have obviously been manipulated. Matteo Salvini has been Federal Secretary, of what The Guardian in the UK describes as the "far right" Lega Nord since 2013 and was also Deputy Prime Minister of Italy for 15 months from June 2018. The Lega Nord have led the anti-immigration campaign in Italy and the UK has seen a rise in right wing parties and ant-immigration sentiments over recent years. Brexit campaigning added to similar anti-immigration posters being produced in the UK by Ukip (Fig. 10), the right wing organisation lead by Nigel Farage, the most notable being the 2016 "Breaking Point"



Fig. 10: *Breaking Point*

This image is in fact of refugees crossing from Croatia into Slovenia, walking to a holding camp. Mitchell discusses the use of his image in a Guardian article saying that what happens to his images in a digital age is beyond his control:

> The people in the photo have been betrayed by Ukip, rather than me personally but it has backfired on Ukip. People are very intelligent – they could see this was clearly not a group of people coming to the UK. (Mitchell and Beaumont-Thomas, 2016).

Bruno argues that migrant "irregular (unlawful) flows take on a high profile" (Bruno, 2016, p. 49) and the images are very suited to media. "Operation Mare Nostrum" was replaced in late 2014 by the EU's border surveillance project "Triton", for a third of the cost, to patrol borders. "Project Mare Nostrum" had retrieved 100,000 refugees or more form the Mediterranean in 1 year. There were outcries from NGOs at the ending of the operation and they published many images of refugees on naval boats in large numbers, drowning in the sea (Fig. 11), to elicit compassion about the number of people who could potentially die in the Mediterranean without this project.



Fig. 11: *Open Arms NGO image*

In October 2014 the British Government said that these types of operations would only encourage refugees to take precarious sea journeys from Africa to Lampedusa and they would not support an operation like Mare Nostrum. Scant evidence of a humanitarian approach or policy here. An Ipsos MORI (2018) poll evidences a softening of British attitudes to immigration since the Brexit referendum with more people saying immigration has had a positive effect on the country but still a majority wanting a reduction in the numbers of immigrants. Current elections in the UK may see changes in these polls again.

The German Government decided to take more refugees following the Alan Kurdi photograph (Fig. 1), this image softened peoples attitudes and they saw themselves in the humanitarian role of saviour.

Chapter 3

The NGO role in using humanitarian documentary photographs has been long and widespread, as we have seen in previous chapters. Here we will look at some of the famous interactions between photographer and fundraising.

Tom Stoddart tells of how he gave three copies of his, now iconic, image of the starving child in Sudan (see Fig. 3) to the London Guardian following a public outcry, including letters from primary school children, that he should have done something to help. Stoddart replied, “Look this is just a case of shooting the messenger. Don’t write to me. Write to your senator.” (Bogre, 2012, p. 95). The donated images were publish in the newspaper and went on to raise £100,000 in less than a week, which was donated to MSF.
Alfredo Jaar in his original “public intervention” called the “Gift” from 1998 created 15,000 cardboard boxes, which were given to people in Stockholm in collaboration with the NGO Doctors without Borders. The outside instructed people to open up the box and remake it inside out. It then showed images of two boys hugging but not the atrocity they were witnessing in Rwanda. Nancy Princenthal states that Jaar is known for not showing “readily recognisable images” (2005, p. 18) and discusses the pervasion of images that “retail power or vitiate suffering” create, referring to “fatigue” and over-saturation of these kind of images. The boxes raised over “$200,000 in donations” (2005, p. 19). Jaar goes on to use the same idea with a plain blue box for the “Gift 2016”, after the drowning of Alan Kurdi, where he shows images of the same beach on the inside, but empty (see fig. 1). The inside asks for donations to Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) based in Malta that rescue people in boats on the Mediterranean that are about to sink. Jaar, on his website says donating is a way “to exist outside of one’s self”. (Kohler, 2013)

Another approach is from the artist JR who goes into areas such as the Favelas in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro where no NGO or journalists would go at the time. He emphasises that he is not selling any brand, product or charity, working with the people to express what he sees. Of course he raises a lot of money from his art sales but he says he uses it to fund the next project.

Hannah Arendt in her concept "the politics of pity" differentiates between those that are suffering and those that are not and the distance between "seeing" and "looking". Using this framework we start to see the role of documentary and humanitarian photography more clearly. Do these images throw light on the situation and add to the public knowledge and understanding or to they just create weariness and a "distant gaze"? The truth of an image is often questioned, as the public has become more media and Photoshop savvy. This in itself can create doubt in the mind of the onlooker. Chouliaraki identifies a crisis in the presentation of appeals for donations. In the past NGOs were accused of creating "negative imagery", then too many positive happy smiling images that denied the suffering and finally to the "commodification of solidarity" (2016, p. 54). More recent iconic images have had both negative and positive effects. Chouliaraki argues that there has been a "paradigmatic historical shift from a framework of pity to one of irony" (Andersen, 2014, p. 116). Chouliaraki explains her terminology of irony as being a "disposition of detached knowingness" (Chouliaraki, 2016, p. 4) and here she suggests that the meta-narratives of distant others no longer exists, they have been replaced by the commercialisation of humanitarianism, driven by the acts of solidarity that meet the needs of the individual. Examples given here are large music concerts, celebrity visits to poor and developing countries, the use of social media, wristbands and marketing, to fulfil a more egotistical "spectator of irony". Many of these actions are fulfilled by the large NGOs

who play a big part on the global stage of the western actors where there is a clear west (wealthy), south (poor) divide. Celebrity plays a big part in presentation for NGOs, many sending famous people to witness the suffering and send back reports, often of poor or malnourished black children, who they are being compassionate to. Madonna epitomises this genre with her adoption of 4 black children from 2006-2014 from Malawi one of the least developed countries in the world.

It could be argued that without NGOs reporting atrocities we would not always be made aware of them. Cohen describes the news media as a "beast". "Coverage is so selective that the media in effect create a disaster when they recognise it" and this he says means they "do not tell us what to think, but they do tell us what to think about" (Cohen, 2002, p. 169).

Contemporary photographers have explored new ways of thinking about humanitarian and documentary photography. Alixandra Fazzina who started as an official war artist for the British Army and went on to focus on photography in under-reported and forgotten conflicts, she wanted to record "what was going on behind the picture" and now teaches and runs workshops and master classes whose attendance has included NGOs. Fazzina's book "A Million Shillings" reports on the emigrants from Somalia using images and text. The price for this journey is $50 or "one million Somali shillings". Each striking image has a paragraph of text under (Fig. 12) that details the date, location and if applicable and where possible the name of the person in the image. Alixandra openly talks about being a woman in a man's world on the front line of war in an interview Ben Smith (A Small Voice Podcast - 089 - Alixandra Fazzina, 2018) and how she was "quickly getting fed up with doing anything to do with this testosterone fuelled environment". At

times she was photographing for media companies and was subject to their wants of a particular kind of image. Alixandra decided to leave that behind, as she wasn't really "seeing" just framing, to spend more time with people and listen to their stories. Her images depict more depth than her own earlier ones and those of other war photographers. "I'm trying to tell people's stories".



Fig. 12: Al-Kharaz, Yemen. Utterly exhausted, a group of Somali refugees crouch down beneath an illuminated signboard reading, "You are welcome to UNHCR Kharaz".

Richard Mosse is a contemporary photographer and filmmaker. Mosse has appropriated military film and video cameras to make documentaries of war, atrocities and mobile people, using infrared film and thermographic video. Mosse took images in the Congo in his projects entitled "Infra" 2011 and "The Enclave" 2013, where he spent 5 years in the country immersing himself in people's stories, recording what he considered "unseen conflict" (Mosse, 2017) with images that he describes as speaking strongly to the "colonial gaze" (Fig. 13). Mosse describes wanting to make images that speak to "the mind and the heart" as there was no "simple sound bite" and he is conscious that he comes from a documentary background, but looks for ways to explore the failures of the medium to record under-exposed subjects.



Fig. 13: *Safe from Harm- member of Mai Mai Yakutumba posing in a camouflage headdress made from foliage.*

In 2017 Mosse produced “Incoming” documenting the European “refugee crisis” using the thermographic video camera that had a range of 18 miles and is operated by remote control. Mosse says that he wanted to use the tool against itself and all though it is designed ultimately for “killing the enemy”, it tells eerie tales under his direction (Fig. 14). He describes the medium that picks up the heat from people’s bodies, showing their sweat or their “marble” like coldness, as one that “foregrounds that mortality, that bodily vulnerability, the physical vulnerability of these people” (migrants on a sinking ship) (Mosse, 2017)



Fig. 14: *Incoming*

Sinead Kennedy is an Australian photographer who's has taken an original approach to documenting humanitarian issues, describing her work as "expanded documentary". Australia has had a very controversial approach to mobile people with automatic detention of mobile people arriving illegally by boat. These immigration detention centres are the focus of Kennedy's work entitled "To Set Fire to the Sea", in which there are no portraits but she focuses on objects and adds text that she describes as "non fiction visual storytelling". The outcome can be quite chilling even though it is a total departure from "literal depiction" but notably observation within her own country, on the impact of Australia's immigration policies.



Fig. 15: *Guards in some detention centres are required to have a Hoffman Knife. These are used to cut down detainees found hanging.*

Conclusion

If we don't look at humanitarian and documentary images of human suffering and atrocities do we get the same information from words alone? The text or narrative that goes with the images can give them context but words alone cannot have the power of some photographs. If we don't take pictures of these events are we denying their existence? Is this the best way we can convey the "the pain of others" (Sontag, 2004)? Rebecca Solnit in her essay "Words Can Kill" (Batchen, G. Gidley, M. Miller, N. K. Prosse, 2014, p.17) studies the captions used about the Haitian earthquake and those of the New York Times "whose captions keep deploying the word "looting"" one alongside the image of a man with a can of milk. What other interpretations could be put on this image? Solnit suggests he may have taken it to feed a starving baby? The images do not necessarily depict crime but "desperation" they also frame people in desperate situations as criminals. This is apparent in news articles about mobile people and by creating this frame it shifts the public gaze from fear and governmental social control away from any attempts at integration and support from communities.

There are many arguments that suggest image fatigue and that we no longer respond to archetypal humanitarian photographs, the image of Alan Kurdi broke taboos of showing dead children, how far do we go to make people take notice? Is this the dilemma for humanitarian documentary photography? However I have given many examples where this hasn't been the case and the role of NGOs, in the face of government's lack of action, needed to raise funds to act. Then there are arguments to say that without NGOs governments would have to act and make additional monies available through their foreign aid budgets. Yet we have seen that governments will support actions according to their

political leanings and given a far right government we could see people fleeing that country and needing aid themselves. The “othering” of people, as in the “Breaking Point” poster, where the image is imbued with deceptions implying, racist ideas that all migration is of “non-white” (Dr Morrison, J. 2016) people, that it’s young males coming to “steal jobs” and the middle eastern appearance (Syrian) leans to Islamophobia and the threat of terrorism. Some commentators have also drawn links to Nazi anti-Semitic 1930’s propaganda. The text urging people to “take back control of our borders” is also a deception as Britain had refused to be part of the EU Schengen agreement so therefore Syrian refugees could not legally enter the country. These are the ways documentary humanitarian images can be used to distort meaning. Is the relationship of NGOs and humanitarian documentary photographers symbiotic or is the tail wagging the dog?

There is also the potential situation where NGOs keep mainly educated middle class, white people in well-paid charity sector top jobs. The CEO of UNHCR reports a salary of $325,966 per annum, plus expenses in 2017. (*Charity Navigator - Rating for Ipas*, 2017) Many campaigns are focussed on the image in our minds, often stereotypical and prejudiced images, not the voices or stories of those concerned and without any self-representation.

> New discourses favouring the development of an image of immigrants and refugees as people with their own story and identity, active subjects who have a voice and an idea concerning their own lives, who make choices and fight to carry them out, determined to reach, despite the difficulties, important objectives, and therefore, as people deserving of our respect, attention and empathy.
>
> (Musarò and Parmiggiani, 2017, p. 16)

With contemporary photographers we have seen that these discourses are being portrayed, Kennedy working within her own country, JR without sponsorship, Mosse creating a new style of image, Fazzina moving away form the male macho interpretations of war. We need to be moving beyond othering and possible tolerance to a world understanding of the issues. Chouliaraki says we are still raising the question of "what to do"? She proposes a move towards a world that Arendt describes as a "common shared world" (2013, p. 173) where people in the West no longer think of their own feelings toward the suffering of others but how collective action may bring about a real change in the situation of others.

In relation to my own practice this "Independent Enquiry" has opened up so many discourses for me to consider. We may need to see mobility as a way of life in much the way that historic records of Swansea show that it has been for many years and that the documentation of people will continue in various forms.

I am intending to look at mobile people and economic migration to Swansea for my "Major Project" and I also have an internship with Race Council Cymru to support the recording of the Windrush generation in Cardiff.

I am really interested in people's stories and find that conversation and the recording of conversation as well as images enable me to create more depth to the representations I am making. Mosse has prompted me to think about how I can do this by giving time to make sure that I more than adequately engage with the subject. Considering "praxis" (Atton, 2003) in relation to "routinized" approaches to journalism and other ways of doing journalism will develop my approach. Kennedy has made me realise that what is close to

home is equally as important and needs to be seen. She has also demonstrated that it is not always necessary to have a portrait of a person. This is really relevant when engaging with people who don't wish to be photographed; symbolism through objects and short text can be very powerful. Mosse also talks about privacy and anonymity in his video and how using the thermographic imaging enable them to show the footage, as people were rendered unrecognisable by the technique. He discusses the "narrative dilemma" (Mosse, 2017) and I need to ensure that I have developed my critical thinking, awareness, skills and creativity to meet the needs of the people I engage with, to tell their story without prejudice, nor with a colonial eye or an elite voice. Not to render people speechless.

Bibliography

Andersen, R. S. (2014) 'The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism', *European Journal of Communication*, 29(1), pp. 116–119. doi: 10.1177/0267323113511899c.

Arendt, H. (1998) *The Human Condition.* 02 edn. London: University of Chicago Press

Atton, C. (2003) 'What is "alternative" journalism?', *Journalism*, pp. 267–272. doi: 10.1177/14648849030043001.

Batchen, G. Gidley, M. Miller, N. K. Prosse, J. (ed.) (2014) *Picturing Atrocity Photography in Crisis*. 02 edn. London: Reaktion Books.

Bogre, M. (2012) *Photography as Activism Images for Social Change*. Abingdon: Focal Press.

Boltanski, L. (1993) *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*. 9th edn. Cambridge University Press. Available at: www.cambridge.org (Accessed: 5 December 2019).

Break-point for Brexit? How UKIP's image of 'hate' set race discourse reeling back decades – EU Referendum Analysis 2016 (no date). Available at: https://www.referendumanalysis.eu/eu-referendum-analysis-2016/section-5-campaign-and-political-communication/break-point-for-brexit-how-ukips-image-of-hate-set-race-discourse-reeling-back-decades/ (Accessed: 27 November 2019).

Bruno, M. (2016) 'Media Representations of Migrants in Italy: Framing Real and Symbolic Borders', *REMHU : Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana*, 24(46), pp. 45–58. doi: 10.1590/1980-85852503880004604.

Burbridge, B. and Pollen, A. (no date) *Andrea Pogliano: Immigration Photography in Italy | Humanism | Either / And*. Available at: http://eitherand.org/humanism-dead/immigration-photography-italy/ (Accessed: 6 December 2019).

Cabañes, J. V. A. (2017) 'Migrant narratives as photo stories: on the properties of photography and the mediation of migrant voices', *Visual Studies*, 32(1), pp. 33–46. doi: 10.1080/1472586X.2016.1245114.

Charity Navigator - Rating for Ipas (2017). Available at: https://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=8166 (Accessed: 9 December 2019).

Chouliaraki, L. (2013) *The Ironic Spectator : Solidarity in the Age of post-humanitarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge : Polity.

Chouliaraki, L. (2016) 'Solidarity and Spectatorship', *Questions de communication*, (30), pp. 359–372. doi: 10.4000/questionsdecommunication.10816.

Cohen, S. (2002) *States of Denial Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering*. 02 edn. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Cooper, S. *et al.* (2017) 'Media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers in regional Australia: a critical discourse analysis', *Media International Australia*, 162(1), pp. 78–89. doi: 10.1177/1329878X16667832.

Gorin, V. (2012) 'Looking back over 150 years of humanitarian action: The photographic archives of the ICRC', *International Review of the Red Cross*, 94(888), pp. 1349–1379. doi: 10.1017/S1816383113000568.

Hall, S. and Open University. (1997) *Representation : Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage in association with the Open University.

Ipsos MORI (2018) *Attitudes to immigration have softened since referendum but most still want to see it reduced*. Available at: https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/attitudes-immigration-have-softened-referendum-most-still-want-see-it-reduced (Accessed: 24 November 2019).

Karpman, S. (2014) *A Game Free Life.* Self Published.

Karpman, S. B. (no date) *Fairy Tales and Script Drama Analysis*. Available at: https://www.karpmandramatriangle.com/pdf/DramaTriangle.pdf (accessed 23 November 2019)

Kohler, S. (2013) 'The Gift', *Salmagundi*, pp. 163–168. doi: 10.5040/9781501397004.ch-005.

Linfield, S. (2012) '*The Cruel Radiance*' London: The University of Chicago.

Laurent, O. (2015) 'What the image of Alan Kurdi Says About the Power of Photography', Time, 4th September. Available at: https://time.com/4022765/Alan-kurdi-photo/

Mitchell, J. and Beaumont-Thomas, B. (2016) *Jeff Mitchell's best photograph: 'These people have been betrayed by Ukip'*, *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/jun/22/jeff-mitchells-best-shot-the-column-of-marching-refugees-used-in-ukips-brexit-campaign (Accessed: 8 December 2019).

Mosse, R. (2017) *Richard Mosse | In conversation*. Available at: http://www.richardmosse.com/projects/artist-statement# (Accessed: 10 December 2019).

Musarò, P. and Parmiggiani, P. (2017) 'Beyond black and white: the role of media in portraying and policing migration and asylum in Italy', *International Review of Sociology*. Taylor & Francis, 27(2), pp. 241–260. doi: 10.1080/03906701.2017.1329034.

Padovani, C. (2018) 'Lega Nord and Anti-immigrationism: The Importance of Hegemony Critique for Social Media Analysis and Protest', *International Journal of Communication*, 12, p. 27.

Pierigh, F. and Spreicher, S. (2017) *Changing the Narrative: Media Representation of Refugees and Migrants in Europe*. Available at: www.ticktock-design.co.uk (Accessed: 16 May 2019).

Princenthal, N. (2005) *Alfredo Jaar, The Fire this Time, Public Interventions 1979-2005*. 01 edn. Milano: Edizioni Charta.

Smith, B. (no date) *A Small Voice Podcast - 089 - Alixandra Fazzina*. Available at: https://bensmithphoto.com/asmallvoice/alixandra-fazzina (Accessed: 9 December 2019).

Sontag, S. (2004) *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London: Penguin.

UNHCR (2019) 'Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2018'. Available at: www.unhcr.org/5c6fb2d04.

US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (1998) *1.9 Million Dead from Sudan's Civil War; More Than 70,000 Deaths in 1998, Report Estimates - Sudan | ReliefWeb*. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/19-million-dead-sudans-civil-war-more-70000-deaths-1998-report-estimates (Accessed: 3 December 2019).

World Migration Report 2020 (2020) *World Migration Report 2020*. doi: 10.18356/c22be2da-en.