The Written Word, the Painted Wall: The Calais Refugee Camp and the Messages from and about the ‘Other’

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For my dissertation, I will be discussing the importance of graffiti within Calais, noting the language, the materials used and the praise and criticism that arise from these messages.

Although considered illegal by the authorities and needless vandalism by many, graffiti have been a medium long used by humankind, indeed even before it was given the name. Cavemen depicted hunts and journeys on walls and runes left in churches which were thought to translate into profound messages have since been translated as blasphemous terms. Up to and continuing throughout the present day, humankind has written their messages anywhere that is possible and the messages left provide us with a glimpse of the lives that were lived and events that occurred, but for the writers, the graffiti was written for a multitude of different reasons, offering a snapshot of their lives at that time.

Before I discuss the graffiti itself within Calais, it is important to make the distinction between graffiti and street art due to the purposes that these styles of artwork have and the attitudes attached to these.

Strongly associated with hip-hop culture, the stylistic graffiti that we see today quickly spread across the world, and became a fast and reliable way to draw attention to your identity and your message. However, due to the fact that graffiti has a targeted audience or acts as a territorial marker, it has become commonly associated with ‘vandalism’ or ‘violence’ as well as often being regarded as a self-centred proclamation of one’s own existence. Out of graffiti, street art was developed – a version of graffiti which has a wider audience than its predecessor, and is commonly used by artists to discuss political matters and make us reflect on world events or current crises that have arisen. However, as Weisberg states: ‘Street Art is a subset of graffiti writing. Although there is a distinct difference between the two, they are closely related and there is a great deal of crossover between the genres.’¹ For this reason, much of graffiti could be seen as street art, and much of street art can be seen as graffiti.

¹ Jill C. Weisberg, The Difference Between Street Art and Graffiti, schriftfarbe.com, May 16 2012, p.3 [Accessed 29/04/2016]
Although both are displayed in public, the main difference between the two is intention. As I have stated before, street art aims to engage the general public, whereas graffiti are more fixed on directing their messages at other graffiti writers (or anyone at all), and so the terms differ slightly. This is why when people discuss Banksy, he is often given the title of a ‘Street Artist’, due to the fact that his messages are often portrayed through images and provide a reflection on society as a whole, aimed at the public.

Generally, most people would not be readily able to provide the names of graffiti writers unless they were actively engaged in graffiti writing themselves, so although graffiti are in the public eye, for those not actively involved in this ‘secret society’ of graffiti writers it is often considered ‘background noise’. However, street art and graffiti are not completely separate entities and often we witness how they blend into each other.

When worldwide events occur, it is no surprise that graffiti and street art serve as popular tools to discuss the world and society, as well as to offer messages of solidarity to those at the heart of the crisis or event. The recent events of the refugee crisis in Europe have been no exception, with messages written on walls, cardboard, tents and sheets from refugees and volunteers and messages from those for and against immigration in general. Many of the refugees are fleeing lives of poverty, or war-struck areas due to civil war, and many refugee cases are a direct result of the actions by the terrorist group known as ISIS (Islamic State or Daesh). Due to these world events the topics of immigration, the Calais Refugee Camp, and the threat that ISIS poses to the West have been debated in public discourse.

Using sources surrounding graffiti in similar situations (the separation wall in Abu Dis for example), I will examine and explore graffiti from the Calais Refugee Camp from the views of the British and French public, the refugees and the media. However, do I use the word ‘graffiti’ or ‘street art’ within this dissertation? As I have stated before, both of these terms often overlap and so it is necessary to draw some kind of distinction. Due to the fact that street art is supposed to encourage reflection on society, street art in my dissertation will require an image within the piece, and can be embellished with words.

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2 Weisberg, p.7.
What appears as just plain written words will be named ‘graffiti’. Although this distinction is not perfect, the distinction between graffiti and street art arguably could take up a whole paper in itself.  

Within my dissertation I will be focusing on answering three main questions which have arisen: Firstly, how are the refugees making themselves visible in a world intent on silencing them and rendering them invisible, placed in a camp which was created with the sole purpose of ‘tidying them away’? Secondly, how are they surviving when the British and French authorities are reluctant to give the inhabitants of the Calais Refugee Camp any construction materials for fear of encouraging them to extend their stay? Finally, what are the refugees coming up against in terms of protests and media response to the refugee, often labelled as ‘migrant’ crisis?

I have divided my dissertation into five sections:

Firstly, I will discuss Calais and the camp, where I will examine the city within a city created by the refugees, and discuss the infrastructure that the refugees have achieved in creating. Following from this, I will discuss the materials used in writing their messages as well as exploring the few constructions which are not inscribed upon. This will lead me to explore the text and language of the graffiti, where I will comment on the various forms of message written, the language in which they are written and the awareness of the impact of social media that the refugees within the Calais Refugee Camp possess. I will then follow on by examining the representation of the refugees by volunteers and the media, in addition to the anti-immigrant rhetoric and the effects of these. I will also explore the racism and xenophobia portrayed by Right-Wing groups, fed by the media when discussing the refugees, referencing the racial profiling and stereotyping of those committing sexual assaults and acts of terrorism, and the way that the graffiti from the side of the refugees speaks back to this. Finally, I will compare two examples of graffiti/street art within the Calais Refugee Camp. One is a piece by Banksy, the famous mural of Steve

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Jobs holding an early apple computer whose appearance was first reported 11th December 2015\(^4\), and the other is the famous quote written on a concrete wall: *France is dog life, England good life* created by an anonymous writer and reported around 31st July 2015\(^5\). With reference to the separation wall in Abu Dis, I will discuss political tourism, the capitalist society that Banksy represents, the commoditisation of iconic pieces of history and the effect of the merging of Banksy’s street art and the refugee’s graffiti on the wall within the Calais Refugee Camp.

Of course, I must underline that I have not taken any of the photographs that I will be using, so this must be taken into account when analysing these messages. The fact that the graffiti and street art appear in photographs means that these products have been re-mediated and so hold the opinions and views of the photographer that took them (and in some cases, by those that commissioned the photographs to be taken). By this I mean, for example, that there is a difference between a piece of graffiti without debris around it, and the same piece of graffiti photographed with debris around it. In the first image we are not provided with context within the photograph and can interpret it how we wish to, in the second example we would have some background knowledge given to us within the photo. The impact of using these photographs means that I must be vigilant to not let the structuring of photography cloud my judgement and I aim to provide a clear, detailed and unbiased analysis of the images of graffiti and street art within my dissertation.

Terminology is also an important factor of my dissertation. As Jaworski argues, the media carefully selects terms to turn certain issues into ‘stories, moral panics and debates’, and does this through the simple method of creating the ‘other’\(^6\). This ‘other’ is shaped through the news outlets feeding us the same rhetoric of Middle Eastern (or, rather, non-white) men being predators and/or terrorists to evoke feelings of anger and fear. Similarly, Schuster writes that certain words act as emotive tactics to drive the British


public opinion against refugees (who leave their countries for fear of danger, terrorism or poverty, among a multitude of other reasons) as media outlets have done in the past. For these two reasons, it is important to reflect on the language used to describe the current situation and therefore I must highlight the words which I will be using and the words which I will not be using.

The term that many have used to describe the Calais Refugee camp is ‘the Jungle’, and this name has been greatly disputed as many argue that this name furthers the dehumanisation of the refugees which in turn affects attitudes towards the representation of the refugees in everyday discourse. For the sake of the respect of the refugees, to respect their wishes and in order to no longer dehumanise them, I will be referring to what is known as ‘the Jungle’ as the Calais Refugee Camp, or simply ‘the camp’. On a similar note, the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ are not synonymous. The Right Wing media favours the term ‘migrant’ or ‘immigrant’, when in reality these people do not fit the definition of either of these terms which evoke hatred and disgust of the ‘other’. The term ‘refugee is far more respectful to those who live in the camp as it stresses the risks, trauma and violence that these people have fled from, and so I will be using this term.

Due to the nature of this dissertation, there is very little written regarding the graffiti within the Calais Refugee Camp, so I shall be referencing scholarship from the fields of the separation wall in Abu Dis, previous Calais Refugee Camps and general discussions on graffiti and street art.

Lying on one of the outer frontiers of the EU, Calais is the interface between Schengen and non-Schengen territories, with many of the refugees aiming to reach the United Kingdom as their final destination in order to continue with their lives free from the threats that forced them to initially leave their countries.

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8 For a more comprehensive view of refugee vs. migrant, please see United Refugees, "UNHCR Viewpoint: 'Refugee' Or 'Migrant' - Which Is Right?", UNHCR, 2016 <http://www.unhcr.org/55df0e556.html> [accessed 2 June 2016].
The current Calais Refugee Camp is not the first of its kind. Sangatte, set up in a warehouse and opened in 1999, was home to thousands of refugees and constantly surpassed its limit of 800 people, acting as a measure to ‘tidy away’ the people ‘hanging around’ in Calais.\(^9\) The idea of ‘tidying people away’ is already damaging, as it suggests that they were rubbish that needed to be swept off of the street and were not worthy listening to or understanding. When Sangatte was forcibly closed in 2002, these camps created to accommodate refugees proliferated, with each closure sparking the necessity for new camps.

The current Calais Refugee Camp that I am describing within this dissertation is in the process of being cleared, and this has sparked the necessity for a new permanent camp to be built. It is clear that this view of ‘tidying the refugees away’ continues through to today.

As well as ‘tidying’ the refugees away, the British and the French authorities refused to supply the camp with the necessary construction materials, to act as a ‘deterrent’ for the refugees – if the camp is not seen as an habitable place to live, the refugees would surely not arrive, although according to French authorities, the United Kingdom provided a ‘soft option’ and was therefore an attractive end goal, as highlighted by Schuster.\(^10\) The same situation appears today, with authorities withholding construction materials and aid\(^11\), and people continuing to head towards to what was once named the ‘El Dorado’ of Europe – the United Kingdom, which resulted in the tightening of the United Kingdom’s immigration laws.\(^12\) However, this lack of materials has not deterred the refugees, who manage to create makeshift structures with the limited resources at their disposal, having created an infrastructure which is comprised of necessary buildings for a thriving society and aims to equip refugees with an outlet as well as the skills necessary for their new lives in European countries: a library named ‘Jungle Books’ with donated books from various countries, a school which offers both French and English lessons, restaurants, religious structures and a hospital all make up the society. There is an element of tongue-in-

\(^9\) Schuster 2003, p.509
\(^10\) Ibid., p.513
\(^12\) Jessica Reinisch, "'Forever Temporary': Migrants In Calais, Then And Now", The Political Quarterly, 86 (2015), 515-522 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-923x.12196>, p.519.
cheek humour within the camp, stemming from unofficial street signs named after famous landmarks and politicians. This infrastructure helps to create a city within a city.

Although the idea has been to ‘tidy’ the refugees away, the hidden city created to house and to secret them away has only meant that they have become politically visible due to the poor living conditions being documented by human aid workers, coupled with the refugees striving to be seen or heard through the medium of written messages on any surface possible due to the fact that they are aware of their situation and the media ‘frenzy’ that surrounded them in the past year (which I will describe further within a later section). It is possible to make a comparison between the camp and the French urban ghetto which accommodates a large number of different ethnicities and is ‘forgotten’ about by the French government. Much like the French banlieues, the Calais Refugee Camp has become a habitat for an array of different cultures, has developed its own infrastructure and has become stigmatised in the media and among the general public, with the people living within being stereotyped and dehumanised. Minca discusses the role of the custody, care and control within camps, including refugee camps, arguing that these camps are aimed at controlling mobility and governing life through coercion and direct or indirect violent means.13 When watching the control of the people in these camps, we start to recognise a power shift, a dehumanisation of people within the camp. As a response, the refugees produce signs declaring their innocence when treated like criminals. These messages highlight one of the greatest inequalities within the camp – the fact that those who have been forced out of their homes are looking for help, but are instead finding themselves treated like prisoners at best, cattle at worst by the authorities.

As highlighted in Destination Europe, within the camp there is a constant need for basic human needs, such as shelter, medical care and food supplies, all of which is supplied by volunteer networks.14 The issue that arises from this is that there is forever a shortage of donated materials and volunteers, and so as the numbers increase and the services and supplies are depleted and for this reason, the refugees of

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14 Cathryn Costello, "It Need Not Be Like This", Destination Europe, 2016, p. 13 <http://www.fmreview.org/destination-europe> [accessed 10 May 2016].
the Calais Refugee Camp are resourceful with what they write their messages of visibility on and what they use to create shelters and makeshift constructions.

**Sites of Inscription and Materials Used**

Space within the camp is limited, and it is for this reason that we see the camp filled with inscriptions on every available surface. Walls, steel fences, tarpaulin and sheets (among other materials) are inscribed with advertisements, names of various structures (e.g., names of shops or restaurants), calls for peace and solidarity, as well as messages to other refugees. Their messages are clear to us, no matter what language they are written in: We are human. We have experiences. Let us live. The messages come in many languages and mostly appear to be in French, English or Arabic script.
For a refugee camp with such few resources, it is important to note that the graffiti have taken precedence. There appears to be an order of preference with the materials depending on the type of message. When showing their support for Parisians (Figure 2) after the ISIS attacks of October 2015, they use cardboard and paper to display their messages, materials which are not useful for much else. Messages which are more permanent but hope not to be in the future (for example, showing their desire to live in France or the United Kingdom in figure 3) are written on reusable materials such as sheets or
tarpaulin, whether these are held up in protest for photographs or act as permanent fixtures of the camp. Messages which are permanent and could be described as ‘diary entries’ due to the presence of feelings or opinions are written on materials with longer durations, such as walls or metal structures (figure 4).
Figure 3: Pascal Rossignol, A Message Reading 'Where Is Our Life Here?' Is Written A Tent In Calais, 2016 <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/signs-hope-desperation-refugees-migrants-calais-dunkirk-refuse-abandon-dreams-england-1545737> [accessed 15 May 2016].
For example, in Fig 4 the message 'We just want to go in England please' is written on a permanent fixture due to the fact that this message is a common goal shared by most of the refugees, and for many it seems less and less likely that they will be able to reach their desired destination. In fact, it is one of the first messages to be seen when entering the camp, by tourists, journalists, volunteers and state authorities, and it sums up a very distinct message pushed by the refugees -- they are begging to be accommodated in England. Whereas cardboard and bedsheets will gradually disintegrate into the earth and their messages will be lost forever, the messages that appear on walls and permanent metal structures have to be forcibly removed or painted over to erase these messages. The refugees are aware of how photogenic their images are, and so these messages are created with the purpose of addressing the media, who will disseminate their locally written messages to an international audience and thus promote the visibility of these refugees and provoke a reaction from this international audience. At the
time of writing this dissertation, the Calais Refugee Camp is in the process of being demolished, with the messages of solidarity, pleading and humour being reduced to refuse and rubble.

We should ask ourselves the following question: why do people write on walls? Firstly, huge walls in the Calais Refugee Camp stand like those of a prison. By reclaiming this wall as their own, and decorating and embellishing them with personal, social and political messages, the refugees create a permanent monument to their nomadic state and reclaim the walls that are designed to hold them in, something which has been described within the realms of the banlieue, where the inhabitants push the boundaries as much as possible in order to stretch them and claim it as their own property. As Docuyanan states:

Graffiti writers actively engage in place-making activities. Like other private interests, they use urban spaces to fulfill their own personal desires, needs, and motivations.

In this context, the inhabitants of the camp make a non-place a place, this place that they have been forced to live in is just a collection of tents, but when they add their own personalisation to it, through the medium of graffiti, they are claiming it as their own and making it into a habitable space that is full of people, and therefore full of emotions, opinions and objectives.

As I have mentioned before, the Calais Refugee Camp was not constructed to permanently house so many residents and instead it was meant to be a ‘stop gap’ for the refugees whose cases would be processed and they would disperse to their allocated destination, and so while the sea of bodies arriving in the camp is supposed to be fleeting, the messages stand rigid and concrete where the refugees cannot When people add their messages on this wall, a form of ‘political tourism’, a term which I will discuss later, they are adding an element of permanence to their situation; they make themselves more concrete and visible. By leaving a trace, they are adding to this collective hive of opinions, messages and emotions that flood the surfaces of the camp. Destroying messages written on paper is easy and unnoticeable, but demolishing a whole wall laden with different languages all telling stories and reaching out to the

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intended audiences means that people will notice, as will the media, and thus the refugees become even more visible than before.

The demolition of the Calais Refugee Camp has meant that the camp has become a topic of debate. This is problematic for several reasons: naturally, the act of forcibly removing these messages is comparable to destroying historical records, and evokes ethical dilemmas: by erasing these messages the forces of order are erasing the lived experiences and traces of those who lived there. For this reason, photography is an important tool to preserve these messages of solidarity, hope and anger virtually as opposed to physically through Social Media and news sites.

As important as it is to highlight what has been written on, it is important to note what has remained intact. Religious structures within the Calais Refugee Camp remained intact until they were demolished in early 2016. Why did no one inscribe messages upon these religious structures? It is probably that these structures necessitate a degree of respect, as well as the fear of appearing disrespectful to religions and angering the media, as well as damaging the current goodwill that sympathetic people may hold. Desecrating religious buildings is seen as an attack, and for the refugees stereotyped as coming from ‘Muslim descent’, graffiti writing on a religious structure would be seen as an attack and evoke a strong emotional response from the media, authorities and the general public. When thinking of people defacing religious and sacred buildings, even the least religious of us are more than likely to agree inscribing messages upon church or mosque walls is rarely positive.17

Text, Language, Message

Although considered a genre of graffiti, the inscriptions that appear on the walls of the Calais Refugee Camp (as well as tents and signposts) hold a completely different goal than the graffiti of taggers. This version of graffiti is a form that promotes social or personal expression, as the graffiti writers hope to declare either personal feelings (personal expression) or wish to comment on the state of their own

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17 In fact, inscribing messages upon religious structures is often done to illicit hate, and after the terrorist attacks such as the Charlie Hebdo shootings in February 2015 or the Paris Attacks in October 2015, there was a significant increase in the number of attacks on mosques.
situation (social expression)\textsuperscript{18}, whereas the role of taggers is leaving a trace behind them, demonstrating a simple ‘I was here’.

As I have stated before, graffiti writing is a political act used to convey messages, stories and opinions, and it documents their journeys as they aim to reach their goal destination, something which Fieni (2012) refers to as \textit{mobile geography}\textsuperscript{19}, which he describes as ‘a new way of relating to the earth and marking one’s position on it in a way that does not presuppose a fixed, sedentary writer or reader’. That is, that both the audience and the writer are constantly flowing through the area in which the graffiti remains still. This idea of political geography has been furthered by the studies carried out by Derluyn, Watters, Mels and Broekaert (2014)\textsuperscript{20}, who documented the graffiti left in police detention centres by ‘illegal immigrants’. Do the refugees within the Calais Refugee Camp use graffiti as a form of mobile geography?

The answer is yes. I suggest that the graffiti employed by the refugees within the camp can be divided into two categories: the graffiti aimed at the Francophone and Anglophone world, and the graffiti aimed at other refugees. Much like the graffiti left by the ‘illegal’ immigrants in detention centres, the messages left by refugees to other refugees who speak the same language could offer a number of things: messages of courage to other ‘migrants on the way’, or they could be used as a way to alleviate the anger, frustration or despair that the refugees feel within the camp, much like those found in detention centres.\textsuperscript{21} As Alderman and Ward state (in Deluyn et al.): ‘writing in their own mother tongues, unintelligible for ‘outsiders’, gives these migrants on the way to their “promised land” an effective way of coping and a mechanism to express their deepest feelings and thoughts.’\textsuperscript{22} The walls of the Calais Refugee Camp offer the refugees a ‘reclaimed space for her or himself to express personal grief’, the same way that Salti describes Beirut’s walls.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{19} Fieni 2012, p.79.
\bibitem{20} Ilse Derluyn et al., ‘“We are All the Same, Coz Exist Only One Earth, Why the BORDER EXIST’: Messages of Migrants on their Way’, \textit{Journal of Refugee Studies}, Vol 27(1) (2014), 1-20, p.11.
\bibitem{21} Derluyn et al., p.16.
\bibitem{22} Alderman and Ward, cited in Derluyn et al., p.18.
\end{thebibliography}
The wall itself has become a site of ‘political tourism’ where people travelling to the camp can add their messages of support, much like Hanauer describes in his article on the separation wall of Abu Dis. This form of political tourism means that the surfaces of the refugee camp are open as what could be described as a public forum, an interactive space where thoughts are shared and traces are left. Naturally, the wall becomes more and more photographed and famous, with ever changing messages covering up others and acts in a multilateral way, with messages being swapped and shared by many as opposed to a bilateral writer – reader relationship.

Although it is impossible to verify from the limited data that I have at my disposal, the predominant languages within the camp appear to be in English, French or Arabic, whether these messages offer support, advice or general statements commenting on the conditions of the camp or immigration, it is to distinguish between messages left by refugees and those left by ‘political tourists’, a term employed by David Hanauer to refer to those who inscribe messages upon the separation wall in Abu Dis. These messages constantly enter media discourse and allow the refugees to ‘reclaim’ the walls that hold them in, to push their boundaries further and claim a wall that acts as a separation – and at times a cage – as their own, a tactic employed by graffiti writers everywhere who feel trapped and need to share a message to those in the same situation – such as those living in cités or in detention centres.

However, the refugees differ from those detained in the police detention centres in that they are aware of this media ‘frenzy’ that surrounds them, and so they cater to the second category of their audience: us. Us being the general public scrolling through Social Media on our phones or computers, the journalists selecting ways to frame the graffiti and represent the ‘other’, the politicians deciding upon the fate of these refugees. By writing us these messages, the refugees cannot be misinterpreted and instead have the opportunity to state their goals clearly. As they are our ‘other’, we are theirs, and therefore the distance is acknowledged, despite these messages in non-standard forms of English and French paraded to us. Messages signposted around the camp call for understanding and peace and they plead for the

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24 David I. Hanauer, "The Discursive Construction Of The Separation Wall At Abu Dis: Graffiti As Political Discourse", JLP, 10 (2011), 301-321 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/jlp.10.3.01han>. p.302
basic human right to life. By targeting the media in such a way, the refugees regain the voices that they lost, and the invisible gain visibility due to the written word.

As Hanauer describes in reference to the separation wall at Abu Dis:

> The use of English and the reference to specific countries and cities suggests that a lot of this graffiti was written by political tourists and for international observers. The graffiti on the wall at Abu Dis is predominantly in English, suggesting that the graffiti were written for international consumption by direct observation of political tourists or by extension through news media outlets and internet sites.27

Much like the wall at Abu Dis, the camp is full of messages in French or English despite these not being the first languages of many living within the camps. Why? The graffiti predominantly call for ‘no borders’ or to actively go to the United Kingdom. The final border remains in front of the refugees – the border blocking off the ideal destination: the United Kingdom. The refugees are aware that these messages in English and French are likely to get more hits through social media sites than those written in their mother tongues, and so the largest number of messages are written in either English or French.28

The length of the writing is equally important when discussing the ‘impact’ that these messages directed at the target audiences have. The messages must not only be in a language that is readily accessible to the target audience, but they must also be short enough to draw attention, yet long enough to put across an important message – in a way these sentences are the 140 character Tweets for the refugees of the camp. Messages such as “Nobody deserves to live this way!” (fig 5) are quick to the point, outline the issues and will be spread through social media and newspapers alike due to the simplicity of their statements as they form a bond between the reader of the message and the anonymous writer. We can identify with the person writing it because we are forced to ask ourselves if we should condemn anyone to living ‘this way’ and thus, it evokes empathy and a social conscience among the target audience.

28 For a more comprehensive study on the linguistics of the Calais Refugee Camp, see: Jo Mackby, “Cries From The Jungle: The Dialogic Linguistic” (unpublished Masters, University of Kentucky, 2016).
The theme of being equated with animals is prevalent throughout the graffiti portrayed in the media. The idea of being separate from animals is an important distinction to make as not only are these refugees invisible, but many in power have used several words equated with vermin to describe them, such as David Cameron employing the word ‘swarm’. Another example of this dehumanisation is the fact that we do not know their names or backgrounds, and therefore we do not see them as individuals: they are one collective mass of bodies moving through Europe. We routinely hear of drownings, of starvation, of sexual assault within the camp, but the authorities do nothing to stop this. This dehumanisation employed by those in power is seen as a coping strategy to protect their privilege. However, I also believe that it is a distancing strategy, so that people in power can live comfortably without feeling guilt.


The refugees do not have names, and so with the lack of this individuality, as well as the term ‘jungle’, the refugees must repeatedly distinguish themselves from animals to gain sympathy and empathy from the rest of the world, as well as to assert their human agency. A recurring form of graffiti that occurred within the camp was the type that highlighted the difference between the refugees and animals due to the language used to describe the refugees as well as the living conditions. It is obvious that the refugees have no choice but to live with barely any shelter or decent construction materials, but they are also supplied with harsh words and criticisms from the media that associate them with barbaric and animalistic language. To combat this dehumanisation and depersonalisation, the refugees hold large messages sprayed on white sheers stating “we are not animals”, “why are we criminals?” (fig 6) or “nous sommes des humains, pas des animaux” (fig 7). Written in both French and English, it is clear that the refugees wish to reach English and French audiences, to hear them and to see them denounce this injustice, and to draw a distinct line between the refugees and animals.

Figure 6: Philippe Huguen, People Hold Banners Reading 'We Are Not Animals' And 'Why Are We Criminals?' During A Demonstration Of Migrants In Calais, Northern France, On World Refugee Day On June 20, 2015, 2016 <http://www.gettyimages.fr/detail/photo-
Another aspect of these messages, aimed at the public to encourage empathy, is the use of ‘I am’ or ‘My name is’ placards. In a prison setting, denying people their names (and instead supplying them with numbers of sequences of digits) ensures a hierarchy is put in place: those who assign the numbers and strip away the individuality have the power. If we are to believe Minca’s (2014) assumption that there are parallels between Refugee Camps and Concentration Camps, then we must touch upon the dehumanisation due to the lack of individuality. The media did not know of the toddler Aylan Kurdi until his lifeless body became an icon for the struggle of refugees and news outlets sought to discover his identity, instead they see masses of brown bodies in the water, storming fences and traipsing along roads

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31 Claudio Minca, "Geographies Of The Camp", Political Geography, 49 (2015), 74-83
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2014.12.005>
to reach their destination. Therefore, by claiming one’s name back, writing about their background and
genre projecting their identity to whoever will take a photograph, the refugees are committing a rebellious
act of refusing to be seen as a statistic and demanding to be seen as an individual (fig 8).
There is no doubt that the refugees are aware of the fact that they have a strong media presence. Not only do they reclaim their names, but they also draw similarities between us and them. They state that they just want to find a better to life, that they are not terrorists and they demand to know where our democracy lies. Demanding to be heard with eye-catching messages on walls and shelters means that the refugees are sure to appear on social media sites, where their messages can be retweeted, shared or pinned by thousands, possibly millions of people on a daily basis. The refugees have not suddenly been introduced to technology upon their arrival in the camp, they are aware that the Internet is a powerful tool to spread a message quickly. Of course, they also know when to stop photographs from being taken as they are aware of the negativity that surrounds them. Whereas some areas allow people to take photographs, others have restricted this. Signs saying “no photos please” (fig 9) within the refugee camp demonstrate their claim to their right of privacy, and in fact a sign that has been erected by French and German volunteers highlights the power of photography. They state that a photograph of a refugee will cost you, however it will be free if you can take them to the United Kingdom, and that the Daily Mail can ‘fuck off’, in response to the Daily Mail crossing boundaries and taking photograph of intimate and distressing moments for those inside the camp. The right to privacy is another element which fights against the dehumanisation and criminalisation of refugees. Those who have their photographs taken without consenting are those who have few or no legal rights – that is, animals and criminals. The act of taking a photograph is considered an invasion of privacy and the fact that they are rejecting such photographs being taken without their consent and also maintain a level of privacy indicates that the refugees are stressing the importance of still being human. Graffiti allows them to communicate their messages without compromising on their privacy; these written messages can be captured with no negative effects on the refugees themselves.
Responses

Responses from the general public have largely adopted a positive role, with signs welcoming refugees and calling for the borders to be eradicated. Although no correlation between the refugees’ graffiti and the positive response from the public has been explicitly stated, the overwhelmingly positive response from those accepting the refugees must be due to the amount of awareness surrounding them, which has greatly increased the voices of the voiceless. Adding their own graffiti throughout Europe has furthered this interactive space of communication that has erupted during the refugee crisis, opening a
concrete dialogue pertaining to the fate of the refugees as well as their living conditions. However, the presence of the refugees has also attracted the negative attention of various anti-immigrant groups within France.

To any political movement, there will always be those against it. However, for even the most ardent xenophobe it is difficult to protest the refugees’ right to life without the daily threat of terrorism or poverty from which they have escaped. For this reason, those against immigration have sprung into action, sowing the seeds of malcontent and terror among the general public. Within this section I will be focusing on the French Right-Wing extremist group Génération Identitaire\(^{32}\) which has been prevalent throughout the Refugee Crisis in Calais, and use graffiti and banners to ‘fight back’ against the immigration in France, and do not limit themselves to protesting in Calais, much like those for the refugees.

This section can be summed up with a quote by Renisch, stating that the Calais refugee Camp ‘brought out a number of more or less predictable responses: political scaremongering, complaints about transport disruption, more general accusations and blame, soul-searching and humanitarian concerns.’\(^{33}\)

These responses have been in the form of banners and graffiti, which have also been remediated through social media. They too are seeking to have their voices heard in the same way that the refugees are. In light of the refugee crisis, several right wing groups have appeared in France, such as Génération Identitaire, which use Facebook groups and Twitter accounts to provide this multilateral communication, where members can interact with the group admin as well as each other.\(^{34}\) Within these discussions they can react to news stories regarding immigration and the Calais Jungle, as well as organise rallies with their more professional banners and signs and distribute their slogan among their members in the same way that the refugees do, it is a sign of ‘we are not alone, we are a community’. Moreover, the symbol of the arrow within the circle is prevalent, and they create a brand for themselves, a logo that is easily

\(^{32}\) A Right-Wing anti-immigration group founded in 2012 in France, it largely targets young people. For more information, please visit their website: "Génération Identitaire", Génération Identitaire, 2016

\(^{33}\) Renisch, p.515.

recognisable on the streets and simple enough to be disseminated quickly through reproductions. In this way, we can recognise the graffiti of Génération Identitaire as a series of taggers, and this fight to ‘reclaim space’ (from the refugees who are also claiming space) is relevant.

Figure 10: Generation Identitaire, Les Murs De France Portent Nos Slogans ! De Paris À Molenbeek En Passant Par Marseille : On Est Chez Nous #OnEstChezNous, 2016 <https://scontent-lhr3-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t1.0-9/13239034_864959466946197_7955933338141750608_n.jpg?oh=54d81a3ab3ceb1b5c409b1834fc59705&oe=57CEC0EE> [Accessed 3 June 2016].
In a similar manner to the graffiti of the refugees, the members of *Génération Identitaire* also write their messages for the media. Not only is their graffiti with the slogan easily recognisable in figures 10 and 11, but they couple their images on their Facebook page with the hashtag #OnEstChezNous, which can be used to disseminate media relating to their cause and also guide people to their cause, which could be seen as an example of hashtag activism.\(^{35}\)

Another example of *Génération Identitaire* addressing the media is something that I discussed earlier: the language that the signs for their 12\(^{th}\) March protest is written in: English (fig 12). For a group that started in France, and is a French branch of the Génération group\(^{36}\), why would they choose English? I suggest that the location of the protest is the cause for the language choice: as the final frontier before the ‘El Dorado’ of the United Kingdom, *Génération Identitaire* use English because they can ensure that their message will be seen by both British and French people, and adopting simple English phrases that will be disseminated through the press and social media sites, coupled with their logo, will push their movement across the frontier. With large anti-immigration sentiments in both France and the United Kingdom, it is probable that *Génération Identitaire* is not only reaching to the English-speaking media, but also the English-speaking anti-immigration groups.

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\(^{35}\) Hashtag activism is a phrase used to describe activism that takes place on the Internet, in particular on Social Media sites, such as Twitter. For more information please see: Irina Raicu and Miriam Schulman, "Hashtag Activism: The Ethics Of Online Campaigns - Resources - Internet Ethics - Focus Areas - Markkula Center For Applied Ethics - Santa Clara University", Scu.edu, 2016 <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/internet-ethics/resources/hashtag-activism-the-ethics-of-online-campaigns/> [accessed 3 June 2016].

\(^{36}\) Similar groups have appeared in other Europe countries, such as Austria.
Within these anti-immigration movements forwarded by Right-Wing groups, their arguments are often conflated with racism and islamophobia, attempting to evoke fear of immigrants using references to terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State. For this reason, anti-immigration groups erect protests surrounding the ‘Islamisation’ of the country, calling for a ‘stop’ to Islamisation’, which they see as infiltrating France and poses a danger, such as in fig. 13 and 14.
Figure 13: Generation Identitaire, Generation Identitaire Auvergne Alerte Les Clermontois Sur La Creation D'une Nouvelle Mosquee Et D'un College Coranique Dans Leur Ville. Face À L’islamisation, #OnestchezNous !, 2016 <https://scontent-lhr3-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t1.0-9/13083186_853502318091912_7215242253477980015_n.jpg?oh=f79b77ab50349d2854cfe57280e4b172&oe=580b5409> [Accessed 3 June 2016].
But are these protests purely against the refugees? I argue that they are not and that these images feed into and are in turn fed by Right-Wing media publications which promote this ‘danger’ that refugees pose to Europe\(^\text{37}\). Media outlets run stories about dangerous men who commit violent sex attacks on young women and children, highlighting their ethnicity, or highlight that they are refugees or ‘migrants’.\(^\text{38}\) There is little doubt that these events took place, but these events happen every day and newspapers would not pick up on something so small unless it had a person of colour attached to it. It is something which is described by Bernhardsson and Brogen (2012), where the white men who commit such crimes are

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psychologically disturbed, but non-white men are a real danger.\textsuperscript{39} Although this study took place in Sweden, it is plain to see that this idea also takes precedence in the French and British media, and is used as a tactic for Right-Wing groups to provoke a strong reaction from the public, as seen on Génération Identitaire’s website:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Vols, agressions sexuelles, violences et viols, voici le prix payé par les Allemandes. Après les attentats commis en France par des terroristes infiltrés parmi les clandestins, les Européens paient une nouvelle fois le lourd tribut des décisions irresponsables de leurs dirigeants politiques.}

\textit{Génération Identitaire condamne très fermement ces attaques. Nous appelons à stopper sans délai les politiques migratoires actuelles et à préparer la remigration de ces populations vers leurs pays d’origine, sous peine de voir l’Europe sombrer dans la guerre civile.}\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

It is arguable that these messages portrayed by the media and then swarmed by the Right-Wing anti-immigration groups have been detrimental to the case of non-white men in Calais, with ‘intensified policing of ethnically African or Arabic men’.\textsuperscript{41} With the threat of the Islamic State sweeping through Europe, the messages that the media sends us and the lack of education and understanding surrounding the influx of refugees in the Calais Refugee Camp, coupled with the fear and anger evoked by the Right-Wing demonstrations, it is no surprise that the rate of racial profiling has increased under the guise of ‘security checks’. As Rettburg and Gajjala (2015) note:

\begin{quote}
The emphasis on visual displays of male refugees is particularly strong following the extreme spread of images of drowned children on European beaches in August and September 2015. In contrast to the mainstream media coverage of the war against Afghanistan and Iraq, in which the war was justified in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{39} Josefín Bernhardsson and Alexandra Bogren, "Drink Sluts, Brats And Immigrants As Others", Feminist Media Studies, 12 (2012), 1-16 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2011.558344>.
part through an explicit focus on images of oppressed women, on #refugeesNOTwelcome women are less visible.42

We see that refugee men are considered ‘dangerous’ by the Right-Wing media, whereas the images of women and children represent ‘real’ victims. This is why men are being used to highlight the threat of the Islamic State and the presence of women is greatly reduced, as not to incite sympathy in the general public.

Case Study

The privileged position of certain groups contrasted with the position of the refugees is something I wish to comment on next when discussing two famous pieces of graffiti/street art that has appeared in Calais within the last year. This is the piece by an anonymous graffiti writer that states ‘France is Dog Life, England Good Life’ (fig 15) and Banksy’s mural of Steve Jobs (fig 16).

Figure 15: Rob Stothard, *France Is Dog Life, England Good Life*, 2016

Firstly, let us examine *France is Dog Life, England Good Life*. The message is short and evokes an emotional and reflective response: we are forced to ask ourselves why we have let someone live like a dog, and we feel sympathy and anger for those who are being treated like animals. This means that the author was possibly aware of the impact of his or her message, that it was easy to read, straight to the point and in large and clear enough letters that it could be read and reread from a distance away or on a computer or smartphone screen. Banksy’s piece is more intricate but has a similar impact. Partly because Banksy is a well-known street artist, but also because his piece is bright and features another famous person: Steve Jobs. However, with Banksy’s piece, there is a level of background knowledge that needs to be explained: Steve Jobs was the son of a Syrian immigrant. Banksy has the privilege of being so well-known that his art can require an explanation and the general public will wait for it. However, the author
of France is Dog Life, England Good Life does not have that option – they are anonymous and so this explains the succinct phrasing of their message.

Comparing the living conditions to that of a dog evokes images of living outside, being obedient and waiting for the ‘master’ to make the decisions and distribute aid and affection. Contrasted with ‘England Good Life’ means that we draw the conclusion that if France is so awful in its treatment of refugees and England is so close and provides a better alternative, why are they not allowed in their chosen destination? Similarly, it also tackles the dehumanisation issue – a dog life is not a human life, and how can we expect someone to live in it? Furthermore, it turns this ‘uncivilised’ stereotype back at those who encourage it: we cannot claim that the refugees are animalistic or uncivilised if we do not provide them with adequate living conditions.

This message only serves to further highlight the image of England being the ‘El Dorado’ of refugees and therefore has a simultaneously positive and negative outlook. It reinforces the idea of poor living conditions and general depression that encircles the Calais Refugee Camp, however it does further the cause of Right Wing media and protests claiming that refugees are arriving in ‘swarms’ and declaring that Britain is too much of a ‘soft option’.

It is also crucial to consider where it has been written and on what. A solid wall, where we can see that behind this writing, previous messages have been washed off. This is a powerful message in itself, the fact that it is on a concrete wall means that it has this permanence that I described earlier, and the fact that it is on top of some writing that has clearly been washed away means that the refugees are not going anywhere and they will not stop gaining out attention and demanding to be listened to with the written word, despite the constant erasure of their lived experiences.

As is already known, Banksy’s piece depicting Steve Jobs holding an older Apple computer is not the first political charged message that Banksy has provided the world with. In fact, in a similar manner, Banksy added to the separation wall in Abu Dis to highlight the prison that Palestine was confined to. However,
here Banksy was told to leave as he was making the wall ‘beautiful’ and the Palestinians did not want the wall to be attractive, they wanted it gone.43

The Steve Jobs piece, although seen to be a positive reflection on the refugee crisis, has also been criticised for its capitalistic message. As Kibria states on muslimgirl.com, ‘the fact that Steve Jobs has to be used in an effort to turn heads towards this urgent, global crisis, speaks volumes of the capitalistic and individualistic world we live in’44, meaning that our drive to safe refugees should be because they are people, not because they might become the next billionaire tech mogul. This is something which many people have ignored, considering the fact that this image of Steve Jobs can already be found on t-shirts, mugs and similar items online, or that when demolishing the Calais Refugee Camp, the Steve Jobs mural (as well as Banksy’s pieces) was preserved. Not all these graffiti risk the same level of iconicity, and the fact that Banksy’s Steve Jobs which was supposed to highlight the cause of the refugees has been turned into a logo means that the message is lost. People will not see the message or the context that Banksy wanted to portray, instead they will see a stencil drawing of the billionaire Steve Jobs.

Prior to this preservation, many people were outraged to witness the fact that refugees were using the Steve Jobs mural to raise money, as they were charging people to see it and photograph it. Many highlighted this as greed or unfairness45, forgetting that the refugees have little to nothing, and not understanding that they should be able to make money from something that has been created in their ‘territory’. Similarly, there was a huge outcry when Steve Jobs was supposedly ‘vandalised’ by those living in the camp, with his body making up the ‘I’ in ‘LONDON CALLING’ (Fig 17)46. The outcry from the public seeks to foreclose the interactivity of the graffiti and street art that is so important to the discourse surrounding the plight of the refugees. The re-appropriation of this image only further highlights the goal of the refugees – to become valuable members of society in their new destination.

43 Fieni (2012), p.84
The combination of LONDON CALLING and Steve Jobs is an example of the ‘visual mobility’ given to the refugees that Fieni describes when referencing the separation wall of Abu Dis with the Arabic slogans and Banksy’s images, and as he claims about the wall in Abu Dis, the combination of LONDON CALLING and Steve Jobs ‘indicates the excruciating proximity of the world’s prisoners and tourists’ and highlights the importance of the wall ‘as a strategy of division’\(^\text{47}\), and perhaps this is the issue. The fact that Calais is so close to the United Kingdom must prove unsettling for many who wish to distance themselves and Banksy’s piece acknowledges this and capitalises on it. So, although many do not agree with the fact that Banksy and by extension, Steve Jobs, has more impact on the world than the refugees do, in terms of making others aware, Banksy’s piece does in fact highlight the plight and the proximity of those within the Calais Refugee Camp in a world that would rather ‘tidy them away’.

\(^{47}\) Fieni (2011), p.84.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the political and social graffiti that the refugees have created and gathered within the Calais Refugee Camp provide them with the necessary tools to survive. Their own messages, mixed with those of political tourists, evoke reflection and empathy, create a platform for their voices and stories to be heard, and sway the political decisions and opinions by all those who hear the voiceless and see the invisible, elevating donations and volunteers heading towards the camp to aid those in need. The issue is however, that although this has prompted a humanitarian response from some, it has had a limited or even adverse effect on politics. EU borders are hardening against refugees, the United Kingdom threatens to leave the EU, with one of the major reasons being immigration.

So these images, while they have provided short term aid, they have also just provided us with an insight into the refugees’ lives and have fulfilled out voyeuristic tendencies and have allowed us to exploit the refugees to sell newspapers. Through creating their own infrastructure, they have created a visibility that exists in a place that can never be wiped or destroyed. Although the camp is in the current process of being demolished, their presence has left a firm and permanent footprint on Social Media, on newspaper websites and blogs. Although, as I have discussed, the refugees have watched their makeshift homes be torn apart and destroyed in sections to displace them, their graffiti live through the medium of photography and their messages have been furthered through their awareness of Social Media.

I have argued that the refugees have struggled against the commoditisation of their plight and the Right Wing views of their situation. However, these opinions and examples of political tourism have in fact helped their cause, with the outpouring empathy that has provided them with aid and supporting their cause. I have argued that the refugees have fought to keep their voices afloat when the authorities wish to drown their messages through destruction and dehumanisation, and that they have reminded us through their written words that they are neither animals nor criminals. I have shown that the refugees in the Calais Refugee Camp have fought to create an understanding and welcoming atmosphere for their families, themselves and those in the same situation.
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