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The Politics of Distinction and Exchnage in Displacement: How Aesthetics Become Ethical

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**THE POLITICS OF DISTINCTION AND EXCHANGE IN DISPLACEMENT: HOW
AESTHETICS BECOME ETHICAL**



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

by
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Introduction

The First Camp Tour

It was the day after I arrived on the island. I drove up along with several Vathy Volunteers to the Hotspot refugee camp. The NGO's Director led me and the other volunteers towards the camp's main gate.¹ The volunteers and I were about to receive our first camp tour that morning.² All long-term volunteers, those with a minimum commitment of one month, receive this tour because they gain access to the camp.³ As soon as we approached the main camp gate, the Director politely greeted the Greek police and army members who were crowded together outside their station. He led our group to sign-in at this station, where we each wrote our names, the date, time in (and eventually time out), the organization we work for (Vathy Volunteers), and our initials. We were instructed to do this every time we enter and exit the camp.⁴

After logging ourselves in the large log book, the Director began our mini tour of the camp towards the top of the hill, where many of the encampments are located. The tents were set very closely to one another, barely making enough room for a path that two people could walk

¹ The Director is a tall Romanian man in his early thirties. At that point he had been volunteering for Vathy Volunteers (VV) for almost a year and a half. After he worked several months on the island, he took on the main Director position after the former Director had to leave. The unpaid work of this small charity makes it extremely difficult for individuals to commit to this project for sustained periods of time. He is a serious man with a pragmatic approach to solving problems. He invests many hours at least six days a week into overseeing VV operations, fundraising for VV, intervening on issues in the camp (such as deteriorating infrastructure and disease outbreak), and acting as a liaison between the VV organization and the Hotspot refugee camp administrators. In his limited free time, he enjoys going out for drinks on the weekends and socializing with the volunteers.

² Each of the volunteers is required to wear an identification card that is laminated and hangs around their necks on a black lanyard. In order to get this ID card, a volunteer must work for an approved organization in the camp and submit a copy of their passport for processing.

³ Interestingly, the coffee delivery people can walk into the camp and deliver the coffee order to staff at the UN, Medina (clothing distribution), and the Greek army/police. I have never seen them wear a badge. Sometimes those that order the coffee pick it up near the main camp gate, but other times the delivery people drop it off at their posts.

⁴ Although volunteers were reminded on over two occasions during my month's stay in Samos to be diligent about logging in, most people got away with not doing it. This log was intended to help the camp officials account for who is in the camp and when they are there.

side-by-side along. Along the edge of the level was a barbed wire fence. Some migrants had placed their laundry over this fence or stuffed it between the openings, in order to avoid having it fly away from the wind. Apple cores littered the ground alongside the drying laundry.

As we were walking up the concrete hill, a Kurdish boy of maybe five years of age ran up to each of us shouting, “My friend!”⁵ He reached into his pocket and pulled out some peanuts. He handed one to me first and then offered the rest he had left to the other volunteers on the tour. After this moment, the Director gestured to keep moving forward with the tour. The boy walked up with us for a few seconds and then deserted us in order to go play with other children that he encountered along the way.

The first day I arrived to the Hotspot refugee camp I was given a peanut and called a “friend.” Saying “my friend” is an attempt to reach out to me in English, despite linguistic, national, and cultural differences. In the context of squalor and destitution, this child chose to forge a connection with strangers. The child made the aesthetic assessment that the peanuts were worthy gifts for his new friends. These gestures of hospitality are inextricably tied to ethical decision making. There is a powerful moral imperative to circulate and forge relationships. In this sense, the boy made an ethical decision to welcome and give to the volunteers, rather than reject them and keep the peanuts for himself. The convergence of aesthetics and ethics as it relates to different forms of welcome and hospitality within the refugee camp has become the core of my project.

⁵ I learned that this boy was Kurdish from a Syrian Kurdish refugee at a later point in time than referenced here. Unfortunately, I could not verbally communicate with this boy because he does not speak English or Arabic. From attending Children’s Activities, I learned that many of the children in the camp (and even adults) knew what “my friend” means. The children often say it to greet the volunteers or shout it to get the volunteers’ attention. After doing this, they will often make physical gestures to try to describe what help they are seeking. On many occasions, children of all backgrounds will yell “Ali Baba (meaning in this case thief)” and point to the individual who stole the item. The volunteers are seen as friends or helpers who are trusted to address different situations. That said, I have seen the children show favoritism or affinities for certain volunteers over others, which influences who they do and do not reach out to for help.

The Project That I Entered My Field Research With

My current project is relevant to my past project. I moved from one to another in a systematic channel. I wanted to understand journalistic action, but as it turned out, I shifted the main actors of my study into refugees and changed the frame from ugliness to beauty. In 2016, Nicholas Kristof published an article in the New York Times titled “Anne Frank Today is a Syrian Girl” (Kristof 2016).⁶ This article inspired my initial senior thesis topic early on during my junior year of college. Although my current project looks much different, I approached my field research as an opportunity to interrogate representations of the contemporary migrant crisis produced by Western journalists in Greece. In order to fulfill its larger purpose, my study was framed by two research objectives. The first was to trace when, how, and why the term “crisis” is employed by Western journalists to migrants. The second was to critique rhetorical comparisons that some journalists have drawn between the genocide of the Syrians with the Holocaust, each framed as atrocities within recent global consciousness which the world witnessed yet failed to address in time. With these research objectives, my ethnography was designed to explore some of the additional vulnerabilities that migrants not of Syrian nationality face, as the plights of Syrians are disproportionately covered relative to migrants other nationalities. By investigating the comparisons drawn between Syrian refugees and the Holocaust, one can better understand how not only migrants from Syrian descent, but also those of other nationalities come together within imaginaries under the guidance of the Western media. Through the repeated acts of exclusion from this comparison, one sees where migrants of non-Syrian nationality lie within the priorities of the journalistic publishing houses, which are ultimately responsible for approving them to print. However, despite the effective 'conflation' of the contemporary migrant crisis with

⁶ Nicholas Kristof, "Anne Frank Today Is a Syrian Girl," The New York Times, August 25, 2016, accessed April 30, 2018, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/opinion/anne-frank-today-is-a-syrian-girl.html?_r=0.

the Syrian refugee crisis, my research also considered the precarious position of migrants from predominantly Islamic societies due to enduring Orientalist conceptions of the Middle East.⁷ Therefore, regardless of the disproportionate coverage of Syrian refugees to other nationalities, I wanted to show how Orientalist prejudices serve to undermine many efforts to support these groups. Lastly, my research wanted to trouble distinctions made between memes and photojournalism by recontextualizing visual representations of the migrant crisis employed by journalists.

Part of this study still explores some of the additional vulnerabilities that migrants who are not of Syrian nationality face. Many of my interlocutors and I assume that these ‘additional vulnerabilities’ are in part a result of Western journalism, which disproportionately covers the plights of Syrians relative to other nationalities. Although a significant number of migrants to the European Union are seeking asylum from nations other than Syria, the disparity in the amount of news coverage and sympathies offered to Syrians renders the struggles of the others more invisible. However, during my field research, I found that today Syrians are in a really difficult situation in regards to getting asylum in Greece. My interlocutors claimed that this is because the EU-Turkey deal initially prioritized the asylum papers of Syrians, leaving other asylum-seeking communities neglected. However, the formerly neglected applicants are seeming to take precedence today, making the newer arriving Syrians having to wait longer to get processed, if they even get accepted at all. To this day, rejected asylum applicants are being deported back to Turkey, a place that hundreds of thousands of people decided was worth making the risky journey to Greece in order to flee.

Migrant Crossings in the Mediterranean: Samos, the Forgotten Island

⁷ Said, Edward W. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Samos has the least amount of news coverage compared to the other Greek islands, even though it is the closest island to Turkey. While other islands, such as Lesbos, have double the amount of migrants, the conditions that the migrants face is comparably as severe even though it is at a smaller scale.⁸ Lesbos also gets significantly more coverage than the other Greek islands possibly because it has the most migrants flowing through it. Even Greeks receive very little coverage of the condition of the migrant crisis in Samos. Samos has a local population of conservatives who are often unsympathetic towards the migrants.⁹

Faced with both an economic and refugee crisis, Greece provides a unique opportunity to understand how ‘crisis’ is embodied, represented, and intervened on by humanitarian aid organizations. Mediterranean crossings are not a recent phenomenon, even as migrant flows peaked between 2015 and 2016.¹⁰ Today, Greece's refugee and migrant population numbers roughly at 65,000.¹¹ As of November 2017, the Greek island of Samos holds approximately 2,000 migrants in the Hotspot refugee camp. This former detention center, a barbed wire and concrete encampment nestled along a steep mountain, only has the capacity to hold 700 people.

⁸ Chris Leadbeater, "Which Greek islands are affected by the refugee crisis?," *The Telegraph*, March 3, 2016, accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/greece/articles/greek-islands-affected-by-refugee-crisis/>.

⁹ Giorgos Christides and Olga Stéfátou, "The Greek island camp where only the sick or pregnant can leave," *The Guardian*, accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/04/the-greek-island-camp-where-only-the-sick-or-pregnant-can-leave>.

¹⁰ According to a report by the UNHCR, migrant crossings from Turkey to Greece (otherwise known as the Eastern Mediterranean route) have been rising since at least 2004, which was around 10,000 people. See, Derek Gatopoulos and Elena Becatoros, "Refugees, Migrants Evacuated From Old Athens Airport Site," *US News*, June 2, 2017, accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2017-06-02/refugees-migrants-evacuated-from-old-athens-airport-site>. Since the 1990s, the European Union has been creating policies to more strictly manage illegal migration. Refer to, Antonios Alexandridis, "Routes Change, Migration Persists: The Effects of EU Policy on Migratory Routes," *Alsharq Forum*, March 28, 2017, <http://www.sharqforum.org/2017/03/28/routes-change-migration-persists-the-effects-of-eu-policy-on-migratory-routes/>. However, these crossings have existed since ancient times, which some archaeologists argue to be as far as 130,000 years ago. See, Heather Pringle, "Primitive Humans Conquered Sea, Surprising Finds Suggest," *National Geographic*, February 17, 2010, [Page #], accessed April 30, 2018, <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/02/100217-crete-primitive-humans-mariners-seafarers-mediterranean-sea/>.

¹¹ There are over 65,000 refugees and migrants stranded in Greece due to the EU Turkey deal and Balkan border enclosures. Refer to, Gatopoulos and Becatoros, "Refugees, Migrants," 1.

In order to make room for the “new arrivals,” non-waterproof United Nations tents pop up along the concrete pathways and unlevelled dirt patches on the mountain.

Broad Contours of the Project

My goals in this project are multifold. Through this project, I disambiguate the systems and normative structures that allow humanitarians to produce migrants’ subjectivity. I push back against existing literature on humanitarian organizations, which perceives migrants as migrants in almost every other dimension other than humanitarian workers. This one-dimensional analytic falls victim to the subjecthood that they are critiquing. Because the migrants engage in projects that go unseen by the humanitarian organizations, they remain interpellated in the migrant position. I choose to look at mundane things like clothing, nationality, and titles to say something about how migrants make ethical decisions, judge others, and are subjectivated. Based on these small observations, I seek to show how migrants pass judgments and make decisions where aesthetics and ethics converge.

This project questions how to draw a line between problems of ethics and aesthetics. For Immanuel Kant, aesthetics and ethics are both acts of judgment (1970). I propel my project from a Kantian perspective, and I push his claim even further by arguing that these judgments can be one in the same. An aesthetic is a position that migrants can take on and appropriate to their liking. Not only an embodied form, aesthetics manifest within materials as well.

In chapter one, I ask, how is differentiation produced through clothing and employment opportunities in the context of this refugee camp? Through unavoidable, quotidian acts, such as wearing clothing and styling hair, migrants produce social identity and difference. However, structural constraints, like regulations on what a charity can distribute, limit their options. At the point where migrant appearance meets administrative rules, it becomes possible to investigate

the social forces that intersect to construct their identities. This is because humanitarians mediate how refugees make some of their aesthetic decisions. I focus on what migrants wear in order to provide evidence for how aesthetics play a meaningful role in choice-making. I also pay close attention to the kinds of circulations that make these choices possible. By making aesthetic choices, migrants can create a sense of belonging and community. Aesthetic choice-making also helps migrants establish a individual sense of identity and forge relationships with others. Clothing, then, is a crucial medium through which migrants demonstrate their agency in material form.

In chapter two, I explore ‘victimhood’ as an aesthetic that migrants can appropriate. Aesthetics refers to sensibility for material and embodied form, relating to how people present themselves in the body and how they aspire to inhabit the world. Authenticity is a salient factor in how some migrants morally assess one another. I take a look at some of the judgments and interventions made by bystanding migrants, as they decide whether an attempted suicide is a cold calculating action or one made out of genuine despair. By analyzing ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ circulations within the camp, I offer a glimpse at how overlapping ethical worlds are produced by migrants. I find that these worlds are not dissimilar from the individuals and institutions that regulate migrants. I demonstrate that nationality shapes how circulations are read by migrants as permissible and or not.

In chapter three, I interrogate the category system employed by Vathy Volunteers that distinguishes volunteers from migrants. I argue that ‘volunteer’ work is subject to the institutions that name it, making humanitarianism as a kind of aesthetic. Although the migrant versus volunteer dichotomy is ruptured when migrants perform acts of voluntary labor, the categories still persist. This false dichotomy begs us to question what it means to engage in volunteer work.

Some refugees can make themselves into moral actors by associating with volunteers and engaging in exchanges outside of the volunteer realm. Some of these exchanges get coded as hospitality, which is an alternative to the category system introduced by Vathy Volunteers.

Throughout this project, I am inspired by a number of Michel Foucault's works in order to understand how relationality and the normalization of power contribute to the production of migrant subjectivation by both migrants and non-migrant volunteers.¹² For Foucault, power and resistance mutually constitute one another as two sides of the same relationship (1978: 95-96). I situate this project within the broader frame of postcolonial theory in order to explore how the relationship between colonial apparatuses and colonized people manifests in humanitarian interventions to manage migration in Greece.

My project seeks to de-essentialize migrants by conveying some of their thoughts and experiences about aesthetics and ethics as they have relayed them to me. Migrants both challenge and reinforce the structures of power that they are subjugated to. Saba Mahmood proposes that a subject's exercise of agency is predicated on their subjective assessment of a matter, rather than their ability to actually act 'freely' in a neo-liberal sense (Mahmood 2004). Mahmood opens up the possibilities for analyzing power and subjectivation. My project shows how migrants both welcome and reject elements of the discursive terms that are imposed on them by regulatory institutions. For instance, rejecting the status of a "migrant-worker" taking on the title of a "volunteer" is an opportunity for migrants to both claim and rearticulate their identity in displacement.

This thesis seeks to implicitly critique the emphasis on following the narratives of migrants. In the following pages, I will show how the refugee camp itself is an experience that is

¹² Foucault, Michel, *Discipline And Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977; Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

worth inquiring about and documenting. When you describe migrants as the encoders of a single trajectory you presume that the heart of history is a forward-moving individual. By doing this you reject social facts, connections to others, structures of relationship that define them. By not offering the migrant's background story, I do something different. My story is not about a beginning and an end; it forces us to remain in an intermediary space of the camp, to read it on its own terms. The camp tells us about what it means to linger there.

Part of my project seeks to disrupt the liberal-secular analytics of resistance and oppression that undergird scholarship on migrants to Greece. I refuse the liberal-secular analytic of 'resistance' that characterizes migrants as people whose lives are either disempowered or resistant. Applying such a narrow frame on the lives of migrants shows more about what is relevant to the liberal-secular imaginary than it does about the lives of these individuals. I disrupt this assumption by arguing that Arab migrants critique their reception in Greece with idioms of hospitality from their homelands. In so doing, the Arab migrants also reaffirm their self-respect and values in displacement. Such statements, as migrants make them, do not amount to resistance to oppression, but can be interpreted as a confident claim to deserving better treatment.

Relevance of My Own Subject Position to My Research

In writing this thesis, I have been forced to acknowledge my own class privilege, appearance, and nationality. Upon beginning my research and volunteering on the Greek island, I made the decision to introduce myself as "Farah" (Joy) to Arabic speakers. Most of the time I would share my legal name and then tell the Arabic speaker that they could just call me Farah. I made this decision based largely from my experiences with several Arab relatives who prefer to call me Farah because it is easier for them to pronounce than Joy (which sounds more like Joey when they say it). When I would introduce myself to other Arabs on the island, I would also

share my “asl,” or ethnic and familial origin. My family history seemed to organically emerge from our conversations because some migrants were curious about how I learned to speak Arabic. A majority of the individuals I met in Samos, both Arab and non-Arab, were surprised by my Levantine roots. Perhaps my pale complexion coupled with the visibility of my long flowing hair did not fit the Arab stereotypes that various interlocutors imagined. I told all of the Arab migrants who were curious to know my origins that my mother’s family are Palestinian refugees to Jordan and that my father’s family are Jordanian with Syrian and Lebanese roots as well. Some conversations included more specific details like the names of my towns and relatives, in addition to questions regarding what my religion was. While I shared that I was raised a Greek Orthodox Christian, not a practicing one, I was called a “Al-Maseeha (the Christian woman).” The migrants who befriended me would typically call me “Farah,” “Anisa Farah (Miss Farah),” and “Farooha (a cute and affectionate way of saying Farah by changing the vowel of the name).” It is interesting why “Al-Falastinia,” or my Palestinian roots, resonated the most, especially among Palestinian and Syrian refugees. No one ever called me “Al-Amrekia (the American woman)” or “Al-Ourdunia (the Jordanian woman)” even though my citizenship is American and my father’s roots are mostly Jordanian. This may be an evocation of common experiences in displacement.

Certain spaces and opportunities were made available to me by virtue of being a woman. I would not have been able to enter female spaces as a man. Although I did interact with men and boys while in Samos, I often did it in the company of other volunteers. My pale and relatively neat appearance never made me mistaken as a migrant in the camp, neither by the migrants or camp administrators. Other volunteers who appeared to be more ‘ethnic’ looking were sometimes assumed to be migrants, which played out in interesting ways.

My Western and liberal understanding of empowerment and dispossession affected how I listened to my interlocutors. I interpret my ethnographic field work through my own political agenda and curiosity. By sharing this, I am openly acknowledging that this project does not claim to be unbiased and objective. On the contrary, I do have an agenda, while also trying to remain true to my subjective experiences during my field research. Ultimately, my project attempts to represent the lives of my subjects in a manner that they have deemed important in an account that is respectful and accurate.

A Note on Methods and Field Research

The information I will present in this project is based on over a year of research, in addition to over two months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted during the summer of 2017. My research draws upon anthropological methodologies, such as participant observation and interviews. The fieldwork for this study includes interviews I conducted in English and Arabic with migrants on the Greek island of Samos, in addition to Western journalists, volunteers, and volunteer coordinators. Many of my Arabic-speaking interlocutors spoke colloquial Palestinian and Syrian dialects. Most of my interviews ended up taking place with male migrants and non-migrants. This may be because I met more men than women. Importantly, I rely on pseudonyms for all my interlocutors and most of the titles of the organizations that I use in this thesis in order to protect their identities.

I took extensive field notes throughout a majority of my time in Greece. I always had a notepad, sticky notes, or my cell phone on hand in order to document information. I gained the most insight into the normalization of migrant subjectivity during my interactions with the other volunteers and migrants while ‘on the job.’ I conducted research in a refugee camp, NGO, and public spaces on a Greek island. In addition to volunteering in a Greek refugee camp and

institutions outside of the camp that serve migrants, I also spent a significant amount of time with migrants in public spaces accessible to them. I found many migrants spending time in town squares, restaurants, parks, hiking trails, and beaches. The public and private space comparisons offer rich material for disambiguating how ‘crisis’ is embodied by migrants, as the conditions are dynamic in various ways. For instance, because I conducted research over the summer during a heat wave, I witnessed how migrants coped with these living conditions both within the camp and outside of it. I learned that the island’s major city, with its public parks and beaches offer free access to a quiet and refreshing respite from the camp.

A typical day of research began at 7 am. I would get ready and walk to the Alpha Centre in order to pick out some books for Children’s Activities.¹³ By 7:30 am, I would walk up to the refugee camp with the books and sign in at the police station outside the main camp gate. I would meet the migrants who would volunteer to co-lead Children’s Activities with me in the camp. After several hours, I would finish this activity and move on to several other tasks, such as translating for the doctors at the camp medical center, sorting clothes in the warehouse, or cleaning the Alpha Centre. Most of my work days ended between 7 pm - 10 pm. Although I had lunch breaks, I would often skip these or cut them short in order to do more translation work, which felt like my most important job. I conducted many of my interviews in the Alpha Centre, as it was a comfortable space that had many nooks to carry private conversations. I commonly interviewed others in restaurants or public parks in Vathy as well.¹⁴ I also took notes in the camp after having casual conversations or observing remarkable things. I was able to do so by always carrying a drawstring bag or purse that held sticky notes and pens.

¹³ The Alpha Centre is the main center run by Vathy Volunteers. It has many classrooms where the language, art, music, and women’s fitness classes are held.

¹⁴ Vathy is the town in which the Hotspot refugee camp and the NGO Vathy Volunteers are located.

Beggars Can't Be Choosers: Clothing and Distinction in Displacement

In the Hotspot refugee camp, the humanitarian aid organizations operate on a discourse that claims to see all people as human and deserving of the same basic human rights. However, life in the camp shows that this 'protective' notion of human unity actually creates distinctions between migrants and non-migrants. Humanitarians often imagine migrants as people who ought to be grateful for the handouts that they receive, as contesting aid is considered inappropriate. This observation is a central point of analysis in this chapter, as I seek to elucidate how one's legal status influences notions of propriety surrounding choice and preference making.

The tensions resulting from the limitations imposed on a migrant's ability to choose has to do with the types of humanitarian circulations that they are a part of. The refugee camp is unsettling for both humanitarians and migrants because it is a space of distribution, not necessarily of exchange. The discomfort is the residue of a failed exchange, which gives no bargaining power to migrants who are forced into positions to receive things as they are. Exchanges, on the other hand, enable migrants to give something back to the humanitarians; which may dignify their circumstances.

With these considerations, this chapter pays attention to how migrants differentiate themselves through clothing and employment opportunities within Samos. I ask, why do migrants insist on distinguishing themselves from others and what can distinction mean to and offer them? I also question, what kinds of relationships emerge through efforts of self-differentiation and acts of exchange? I argue that aesthetic choices of self-differentiation are what make exchanges possible, as migrants that I analyze in the following pages change something about themselves in order to participate in giving. I also argue that exchanges are more egalitarian than distributions because they allow migrants to engage in mutual circulations

and forge relationships with others. Besides the possibility of verbal back-and-forth, there is nothing circulating back from the migrants within distributions, as they end within the physical act of handing out items.

De-humanizing Humanitarians: Clothing Distribution As Non-Exchange

Although clothing distribution in the camp is understood by the humanitarian workers through a discourse of fairness and equality, many migrants have a contrasting opinion about how it is done. On several occasions, speaking with many migrants, I encountered a repeating list of issues in the camp. The top three concerns that migrants expressed to me were a lack of water, lice shampoo, and clothing. This chapter focuses on the last -- clothing -- because this topic intersects with all three of these concerns, as they all connect to the body and keeping it clean. Maintaining a certain standard of hygiene was important to these migrants. Thus, this chapter considers the maintenance of appearance is because this topic overlaps a common priority for the refugees themselves. Migrants prioritize taking care of the surface of the body through clothing and certain forms of hygiene, which subordinates other forms of preserving the body.¹⁵

One afternoon I played blocks with a six year old Afghani girl. I noticed that she had been wearing the same clothes for at least five days. Her outfit had never been washed and had accumulated more dirt and stains with each passing day. I looked over to an Iraqi girl, who may have been about 10 years old. While her clothes were caked in dirt as well, her hair was neatly tied back with butterfly clips. I learned from both migrants and Vathy Volunteers that these conditions were because several Sorani Kurds were running a “mafia” in the camp. The Greek clothing distributors had hired a few to help them with their jobs because they spoke Sorani Kurdish, Arabic, and English. However, I learned that the men helping with clothing distribution

¹⁵ That said, drinkable water allows for the maintenance of better hygiene and health, in addition to comfort during the ongoing heat wave.

continuously refuse to give clothing to other demographics in the camp. Not only that, but the Greeks in charge of hiring them are fully aware of this and show disinterest in making any changes. There were repeated occasions where the director of Vathy Volunteers as well as several English speaking migrants pled for change to the camp administrators, but with no avail. The clothing distribution issue was compounded by the total lack of access to water in the camp. The water tank was reported to be off most of the day, with the exception of maybe a few hours at night and sporadically throughout the day. This was done in order to allow the water tanks to fill up with water, as the 1,500 inhabitants of the camp strained its 700 person capacity. Hand washing clothes was nearly impossible. There was no running water in the bathrooms either, which made it difficult to maintain a healthy level of hygiene.

Vathy Volunteers operates as an “emergency response team” for “new arrivals,” or migrants who just reached the island of Samos.¹⁶ This small independent Spanish charity is made up of anywhere from ten to thirty temporary volunteers from around the world who seek to provide the most essential and “overlooked” materials and services for migrants on the island.¹⁷ New arrivals often appear in the middle of the night after traversing the Mediterranean Sea from Turkey and possibly other countries. Upon landing, these migrants are soaking wet and may be in immediate need of dry clothes, medical attention, and specific needs (such as baby care items for nursing mothers). With this in mind, Vathy Volunteers prepares and distributes

¹⁶ The temporality of the “new arrival” title typically lasts until a new boat of migrants arrive to the island. For instance, if a group of migrants arrive by boat to Samos and a new boat arrives about a week later, then the newest boat of migrants will often be referred to as the “new arrivals,” whereas the migrants proceeding them will lose this title. However, this naming is complicated when multiple boats arrive very close to one another. I assume then, that the migrants who were processed and given care kits would not be referred to as “new arrivals” over those who are still waiting to be processed.

¹⁷ Vathy Volunteers is registered as a Spanish charity because one of its most dedicated volunteers, who has volunteered for several months on several occasions, was able to formally register the charity in her country of citizenship: Spain. That said, all of Vathy Volunteers’ operations are conducted by volunteers who speak English. Also, Vathy Volunteers publicizes on its website that its current projects seek to meet migrants’ basic and unmet needs.

kits for the new arrivals, which include a plain tee shirt and jogger pants, socks, underwear, and a pair of plastic slip-on sandals. It is noteworthy that hijabs are not part of these primary care kits.¹⁸ While the Vathy Volunteers' warehouse does have a small box of hijabs, I was informed that they are not allowed to distribute them in the camp because they do not have the mandate to do so. This is a testament of what are viewed as 'vital' and 'necessary' articles of clothing to be distributed within the refugee camp, rather than the 'privilege' of a woman to be modest and observe her religion as she pleases. Nonetheless, these kits are prepared in the Vathy Volunteers' warehouse, about a five minute drive away from the Hotspot refugee camp, and are distributed to men, women, and children alike.¹⁹ They are made in advance in the warehouse, as it is unpredictable when and how many migrants will arrive on Samos. Both used and new donations are sorted in this warehouse by the charity's volunteers and volunteers are instructed by the Warehouse Supervisor on how to prepare these kits. While working for Vathy Volunteers, I had put together some of these kits myself. We were told to cut the tags off of new donations, so as to make used donations less discernible from brand new ones.²⁰ Additional sorting instructions with pictures and supplemental text are taped along the shelf directly beside the sorting table that the volunteers make the care kits on. The items in the kits are gathered, rolled neatly together, and secured with tape that is labeled with their general size (i.e. small, medium, large, and even extra-large in more limited cases). These kits are then placed in separate bags labeled by their respective sizes. The children and adult slippers are placed together in a separate bag as well.

¹⁸ I have also never seen hijabs distributed at the clothing distribution center operated by the Greek charity Medina. This is not to say that Medina does not possibly distribute head scarfs because I may have not seen them.

¹⁹ Notice, hijabs, bras, and feminine napkins are not included in these kits. Additionally, no special kits are prepared for infants, although there are materials for infants that are stored in the Vathy Volunteers warehouse. Perhaps, materials for infants are distributed as part of the "special needs" assistance given to new arrivals.

²⁰ This subtle distinction was seen by the organization as important based off of past instances where migrants would get jealous and upset when some would receive brand new items, while others would obtain older ones. The practice of removing tags would make these distinctions less easily detectable.

These kits are stored by the warehouse front entrance for easy retrieval once they need to be distributed.

While some volunteers may be called to go to a beach to distribute the care kits, there are many occasions where the care kits are distributed by Vathy Volunteers at the Greek police quarter in the Hotspot refugee camp. Once new arrivals make it to the refugee camp, they are encaged in the police quarter, so that they may get their “police papers,” or their official form of identification that they must carry at all times. These papers are in English and Greek, often languages that many of the migrants do not comprehend. Sometimes the migrants are placed in the police quarters for hours, no matter the time of day. There are many instances where migrants will be asleep on cardboard boxes or under UN blankets as they await their police papers. During these moments, some Vathy Volunteers are given special permission by the police to distribute the care kits within the police quarters. The volunteers will meander around sleeping migrants holding up shirts and pants beside them in order to try to estimate their appropriate size. These care kits are then placed beside them. The registration process for new arrivals is often lengthy, so distributing the care kits are seen by Vathy Volunteers, according to their website, as a “vital” part of what it does “in order to make people feel a bit more comfortable in an often stressful situation.” The existing situation, however, provokes the critical discomfort of the volunteers. I have heard volunteers complain about how “dehumanizing” this process is, in addition to brainstorming more ideal and practical alternatives. There have been numerous occasions where migrants will wake up with their kit stolen or perhaps the wrong size. This “dehumanizing” process is marked by an utter lack of exchange between the migrants and volunteers. If the migrants were always awake and could make requests, then perhaps the situation would be less awkward to everyone involved. Not only that, but the migrants do not have the opportunity to

give anything back to the humanitarians in this act of distribution, which reinforces the hierarchies of power within the camp.

Although the far majority of migrants lack many options of what to wear, there was some diversity in what some wore in the camp. Many migrants wore items that seemed to indicate that they were from home, which often was a context to the east or south of Greece. These items included more ‘traditional’ or ‘ethnic’ looking clothing that had unique patterns or stitching on it.²¹ These pieces stood out in the camp because no one else had the same exact items. Also, there were occasions where I recognized articles of clothing that were distributed by Medina or Vathy Volunteers through the care kits. These articles of everyday clothing were worn by multiple people in the camp and carried the same colors and brand logos. The clothing distributed by Medina were gendered according to the male-female binary. These articles of clothing were typically monochromatic and lacked patterns and more vibrant colors for adults, while children’s clothing was more colorful and diverse. This situation reflects patterns of clothing donation for the children and adult males, while adult women tended to also receive vibrant colored clothing.

Migrants’ clothing options are mostly limited by the institutions that regulate their bodies. Some migrants are resentful and may even get angry about these limits. In addition to carrying these negative feelings, some migrants may also come up with creative ways to subvert these limitations. For instance, the UN provides each migrant with 90 Euros a month that they may spend however they please. Migrants have used this money to purchase food, cigarettes, clothing, medical services and supplies that are not provided within or by the refugee camp, and

²¹ For instance, I observed women in black dresses that had different patterns embroidered on them. While I could not tell what culture these patterns specifically emerged from, they could have likely been from the Levant. Refer to: Leila El Khalidi, *The Art of Palestinian Embroidery*. London: Saqi Books, 1999.

other items. The town center of Vathy, located within walking distance from the camp, is covered in gift shops that cater to both locals and tourists. Many of these shops carry light scarves that could be used as head scarfs. These scarfs range from about seven Euros to thirty-five Euros, depending on which shops you look through. The living stipend from the United Nations gives migrant women the ability to purchase a new scarf, although it may not be a priority to obtain one because it would cost a significant amount of their limited funds. That said, there is a one Euro store within a five minute walk from the refugee camp and they may sell scarfs or cloth that could be used as a headscarf. A marker of privilege and distinction is the ability to join the market. In many ways, migrants are excluded from capitalist circulations. Although migrants in Samos receive their small stipend from the UN, it is not enough to support their needs. The majority of migrants on the island have no jobs and cannot make an income. Some of them also do not have the privilege of getting money wired to them from relatives and friends.

Clothing and grooming practices are ways that migrants beautify themselves and present themselves to the public. Appearance management allows for migrants to change the image of their subject positions. By wearing 'nice' clothes, getting haircuts, and applying hair gel and perfumes, migrants 'pass' themselves as part of a different socio-economic class. The appearance of their subject position shifts from that of a vulnerable migrant to a middle-class tourist. While this shift is not apparent on all migrants for various reasons, it nonetheless is possible for some of them. For instance, it is easier for a male migrant with European-looking features to 'pass' as a middle-class tourist than a Muslim woman with Eastern features. By making this claim, I do not mean to undermine the fact that anyone from regions outside of Europe can be a tourist to Greece, but rather point to the fact that some of the local Greeks may be more suspicious of

people who look like they are from Eastern and African regions, as these are contexts that most migrants flee from.

Up until now, I have laid out key details that surrounding how migrants have access to clothing in Samos. There are some instances where it is easier to see how some migrants struggle to articulate a sense of personhood and separation from others by the structural limitations on their ability to dress differently. In the following section, I will further elaborate on the tensions between humanitarians and migrants at distribution sites.

An ‘Inappropriate’ Request: Where Aesthetics and Ethics Converge

The warehouse felt almost as violent as the sea.²² Thick layers of dust and rodent droppings caked the exterior of worn cardboard boxes. I was told to cut off the tags of children’s winter accessory sets in an effort to make new donations less discernible from used ones. I severed these sets from each other by storing them in their appropriate boxes. I knew that they would sit idle, while children would remain bereft of their comfort. The Vathy Volunteers’ Warehouse Supervisor informed me that this charity is permitted to bring in goods to the camp through organizations that have the “mandate” to distribute them. If any single volunteer gets caught transgressing this rule, they jeopardize the charity’s presence in the camp. Although the resources to manage the refugee crisis are there and attainable, sometimes they seem so far out of reach.

²² This warehouse is located outside the Hotspot refugee camp and belongs to the charity Vathy Volunteers. It stores clothing and supplies both within the interior and semi-enclosed exterior of the building. The interior of the building mostly holds clothing for men, women, children, and infants, in addition to medical and hygiene supplies. The semi-enclosed exterior of the building is the large space between an outside portion of the building’s wall and the cement fence, which is covered by a metal ceiling. This section also carries clothing, in addition to books, toys, writing utensils, and a limited number used baby strollers. The conditions of the boxes are worse in the exterior of the building due to weather damage and possibly more exposure to rodents.

Around twenty migrants clustered outside of the Greek clothing distribution center within the refugee camp.²³ I politely squeezed through the crowd, asking people to step aside so that I could reach the door. I did not pick up on any explicit negative responses from anyone waiting their turn to enter the center. One reason for this may be because my Vathy Volunteers identification badge was in plain sight, as it hung from a black lanyard over my neck.²⁴ A second reason could be due to the notoriety I received from many Arab migrants as “Al-Falastinia (the Palestinian woman).”²⁵ After about two weeks of volunteering in the camp, migrants who I have never met before would approach me for help asking if I was “Al-Falastinia Farah (the Palestinian woman, Farah).” I was approached by male and female migrants for Arabic-English translation assistance, legal advice for imprisoned migrants on Samos, and to intervene on a miscommunication that led to the false registration of a Syrian teenage girl as an unaccompanied minor in the camp.

The clothing distribution center lacked cool air and ventilation. It had floor to ceiling cardboard boxes filled with clothing and food supplies. The garbage containers were often overflowing with rubbish, many of which included empty Greek coffee containers that were delivered daily by young men on motorcycles. Although the cramped center did not carry a foul odor, the utter lack of sanitation was startling, especially because food and hot tea were distributed from it every day.

²³ This clothing distribution center is located within the refugee camp. It is referred to as “Medina” by camp authorities, volunteers, and migrants. Medina is the name of the Greek charity that manages this center. Food is also distributed here, and this space also stores some of Vathy Volunteers’ supplies: materials for Children’s Activities, Children’s Reading Circle, and Tea Distribution.

²⁴ Although a significant number of refugees could not read English, this badge signified that I myself was not a migrant and that I was permitted to volunteer at the Hotspot refugee camp.

²⁵ Refer to the “Relevance of My Own Subject Position To My Research” section in the Introduction to this thesis.

Upon entering the clothing distribution center, I found Nicholas and Christina struggling to communicate with two migrants. While these middle-aged Greek clothing distributors are fluent in English, they do not have the ability to clearly speak with all of the people they interact with. I had stopped by that day in order to offer Arabic-English translation for a few hours. One of these migrants was a middle-aged Arab woman. She wore a black long-sleeved tunic and headscarf. After I introduced myself to the migrant, Nicholas informed me that this migrant and her mother had very recently received asylum in Greece and were preparing to go to Athens the next day.²⁶ The migrant told me her shoe size, which happened to be the same as her mother's. I translated this information for Nicholas and he handed me two identical pairs of black Toms shoes to give to this woman. The box from which Nicholas retrieved the shoes was visible to everyone who entered the center, as it was right behind the table that separated the distributors and their supplies from the migrants and the translators that possibly accompanied them. The migrant asked if one pair of shoes could be navy, since there was a box of navy Toms displayed on the shelf in front of her. She explained that she would like both colors because she wanted to be able to distinguish her pair of shoes from her mother's pair. As soon as I explained this request to Nicholas he shook his head "no" and asserted that she ought not ask for what she receives. The migrant woman frustratedly persisted with her request over the course of a few verbal exchanges even after I explained to her that their shoe size does not come in navy. The tension was palpable in the room. The migrant woman shook her head in distaste and stated, "mish haram? (is this [treatment] not bad/unjust/unlawful or forbidden by Allah?)." ²⁷ This

²⁶ It is typical for migrants on the Greek islands who are granted political asylum to be moved to a refugee camp in Athens or Thessaloniki.

²⁷ "Mish haram?" is being used as a rhetorical question here that takes on several meanings. It is significant that this phrase is framed as a rhetorical question because it's as if the migrant is asking Nicholas, "I don't understand how you don't feel ashamed, embarrassed, or bad for the injustice you bring to me." It is even as if the migrant is asking, "Do you not see how unjust you are?" Although the phrase is framed as a question, the migrant is not looking for an

statement is typically made rhetorically in order to invoke a sense of shame and embarrassment in the wrongdoer for their actions. It is also made sometimes with the intention of compelling the wrongdoer to pity their victim or who they disgraced.²⁸

Nicholas' wrenched face turned red from frustration. He was under the impression that he was already giving the migrant woman and her mother the best shoes in the camp because the Toms shoes are better quality than the generic plastic slippers the migrants receive when they first arrive to the island. His actions show that he thinks that there is a limit on what can be asked for by migrants. In this scenario, Nicholas very narrowly perceives himself as the gift giver and the migrant woman as the ungrateful recipient. The migrant woman's desire for two pairs of shoes, to be able to choose between a navy or black pair, is assumed to be entirely aesthetic and not sincerely practical. Here, Nicholas imposes some of the limitations on choice for migrants, as they are not viewed and treated as the kind of subjects who have legitimate claims on choosing for themselves. Additionally, Nicholas and the migrant carried different ideas about what constitutes a reasonable request. In other words, they had competing notions of 'appropriate' requests. The migrant knew that the navy slipper did not come in her mother's size and Nicholas knew that the migrant purported that she wanted the navy shoe for more than an aesthetic reason. By repeatedly challenging Nicholas' refusal to meet her request, the migrant woman increasingly irritated him by seeming frivolously selective within a 'crisis' situation. While both parties were fully aware of what the other person had said, the migrant ultimately walked away with two identical pairs of black Toms shoes. Perhaps this was seen by Nicholas as 'enough' of a 'win' for

answer or approval from Nicholas. The use of the term "haram" invokes Allah, who offers her the moral guidance that she needs to conclude that Nicholas' actions are unjust.

²⁸ While I cannot recall if this migrant woman said "ayb," it would have been fitting for her to do so. Also, the "mish haram?" rhetorical statement essentially means "ayb" or "How rude of you! You should be ashamed of yourself and I am embarrassed to witness this."

the migrant and her mother, as they were given the best shoes in the camp even though they were about to leave for Athens, a place that is generally understood by migrants as providing more opportunities and better standards of living.

There is a tension between the logic of humanitarian regulatory regimes and migrants' moral evaluations and differentiation efforts. Migrants are careful to insure that aesthetic acts do not differentiate themselves too much from the group. The migrant who wanted the different colored Toms shoes wanted to distinguish her belongings from her mother's, not be 'better' than other refugees. This aesthetic problem of distinguishing belongings within the household caused the Medina staff member to react strongly to the idea that the migrant has the right to question the handout. There is a sense of a lack of entitlement in having a say in what migrants are given because they are in such desperate need. The migrant woman is rejecting this logic, as she wants to be able to adopt an embodied form that does not comply with staff member's visions of migrants' unmitigated need. There is a struggle for which embodied forms that refugees can and cannot take on. The administrator is expressing a much more pervasive humanitarianism perspective, one that the anthropologist Lisa Malkki argues is a "de-historicizing humanism," or an ahistorical, "depoliticized," and "archetypal" refugee figure imagined by humanitarians (1996: 398). These perspectives are problematic because they do not represent the complicated and varied living conditions and experiences of the migrants.

This story highlights how distribution is a different kind of action than an exchange. Shoe distribution to masses of migrants does not allow for reciprocity, which removes part of migrants' agency as actors. The Arab woman has no recourse when she is in the clothing distribution center because she cannot give anything back to Nicholas. This lack of exchange blocks the formation of a more complex relationship between the Arab woman and Nicholas

because it ends right there. There is no ongoing relationship between these people because there is a direct, rather than cyclical circulation of objects.

The migrant's plea for a different shoe is a gesture of hostility, but also a moment of self-separation. The heated verbal exchange that occurs between the Arab woman and Nicholas is because of their incompatible views. Although they are engaged in a material distribution, the Arab woman exchanges back her own a moral judgments and consequentially challenges Nicholas' authority. This verbal exchange begs us to question the moral grounds of Nicholas' judgments. Why is it, then, that migrant subjectivity is limited by humanitarians not only through structural limitations on what migrants can and cannot have, but also on what they are allowed to want and ask for? This point of contention is made apparent by the materiality through which migrants are often differentiated by NGOs, as it often has more to do with the migrant's sizes, than their tastes or desires.

Much More Than Apparel: Clothing's Many Meanings

Comfort and camp is not an adjective-noun pairing within the Hotspot refugee camp. It is commonplace to find young children, between the ages of three to ten, walking throughout the refugee camp barefoot.²⁹ The slippers they received from Vathy Volunteers and possibly Medina would often break easily or may be stolen when unattended. While it is not atypical to find kids walking around the camp barefoot, it is uncommon to find adults doing this. I recall an instance where a group of four toddlers were running down the concrete hill of the camp. They each took turns kicking a yellow bottle. Some of them were not wearing shoes. Despite the heat and

²⁹ It is also commonplace to find children, even toddlers, walking around the camp unattended. The ability for children to move around the camp unattended poses various dangers. Many children are covered in cuts from jumping onto and off of walls. Sometimes the kids scrape against the barbed wire fences or scratch themselves from tripping over the concrete. There are also many instances where kids run into the forest to recover lost balls from Children's Activities, to unfortunately encounter snakes, poisonous shrubbery, rodents, small mammals, etc. The most unnerving of these dangers is that the children can be touched and harassed by others when left unattended.

pebbles that littered the path, they showed no signs of visible discomfort. When I asked a migrant watching them about why they were not wearing shoes, the young man told me that “al-afal at’wado min al-meshi al-hafe ‘la al-ard al-hami min al-harb (the kids got used to walking barefoot on the hot ground from the war).” The war that he was referencing was the Syrian War, although I cannot confirm whether or not all of these children were Syrian. I am also not certain if this man knew these children, although he very likely could have as people eventually become familiar with one another over the course of some time. This statement is a claim towards the children’s acclimation to wartime conditions.

There is a meaningfulness to slippers that exceeds their utility as shoes. Despite the fact that many of the camp’s children walk barefoot, at the end of the book reading circle program the children run to get their slippers before they leave. During Children’s Activities, many children take their shoes off, on their own accord without instruction, before they walk onto the UN tarp and pick their books to read or peruse through. Perhaps this is a courtesy they learned in their homes or a practice they do before they step into their tents. While kicking off their shoes beside the UNHCR tarp is the similar to how some migrants neatly line their shoes or sprawl them beside their tents, it is an act that demarcates both “public” and “domestic” spaces. In delineating spaces, slippers can also be mobilized for resistance. Ruben Anderson argues that broken and missing slippers were a central aspect of a “strike, not protest” that occurred at the Ceuta refugee camp, a city on the North-African coast at the border between Spain and Morocco. The African migrants from this camp saw themselves as working without a wage for the camp and the authorities, who in turn believed that they were working for the migrants that they made “illicit” profits from (2014: 190). In this way, slippers, in both their worn conditions and even the lack thereof, have meanings that can influence people’s behaviors and how they carve out spaces.

There was one day when an out-of-the-ordinary event occurred during the book reading circle. A Syrian girl who was about twelve years old was reading an Arabic book beside me. She was one of the strongest readers who consistently attended the book reading circle. I observed her read them on multiple occasions being particularly drawn to reading a colorful book series that quotes the Quran. That day she was wearing a colorful hijab with a flowery print on it. She was also dressed in a multi-colored long-sleeved tunic that reached just above her knees and pink leggings. What was unique about this day was that she asked me if it she could read her Quran aloud to the children who attended the book reading circle. I told her that this was a great idea and that she certainly may. She immediately went to her tent to go fetch her Quran, which one of her parents or older siblings must have brought over from Syria or Turkey. Not only that, but she returned in different clothes and hijab. She was now wearing a black hijab and a dark brown long-sleeved tunic over her pink leggings. The tunic had golden brown beading along the neckline and was a bit loose on her. I presume that she might have borrowed it from one of her older sisters or perhaps another female migrant. I am not sure if this young girl was advised by her relatives or perhaps another individual from her tent that she ought to change her clothing when reading the Quran. This act could have been made by her own volition or under the guidance of someone else. Nonetheless, this wardrobe change demonstrates the variety of options available to migrants on Samos in the circumstances that they face.

By changing her hijab and tunic, this young Syrian girl makes a meaningful distinction between a colorful hijab and a darker one. Perhaps wearing a darker color is her way of showing reverence to her God by presenting herself to Him in 'fresh' attire as she prepares to read Holy Scriptures. The darker colors could have been a gesture of being more somber and respectful as well. Or maybe this wardrobe change was not entirely meant as a personal gesture of reverence

to Allah. Perhaps she wanted the children and others to notice her wardrobe change, so that they could observe and possibly follow her example as a pious Muslim that is able to recite the Quran and dress according to Allah's standard of modesty. The wardrobe change could even be because this recital of the Quran is in some senses her opportunity to give a performance on humble stage to an audience of children and the adults at the peripheries. It is customary in music performances, for instance, for people to dress up in dark colors. Despite the plurality of speculations that I have drawn in order to attempt to understand this story, choice-making in all of these instances are a dignified human action. Clothing is a medium through which the social worlds of the public, private, and sacred are carved out. The young migrant in this section creates these distinct spheres through the aesthetic act of putting on and taking off the hijab. Thus, the act of self-differentiation allows migrants to generate different social worlds by making choices.

Importantly, the hijabs that the girl possessed or could get her hands on seemed to be ones that were carried and worn by migrant women on their journey across the Aegean Sea. By borrowing a hijab, the young girl may have accrued a debt with that person that lended it to her. This shows that one way that migrants can make themselves different from one another is by forging a relationship with someone else. The process of changing the hijabs is an aesthetic form of self-differentiation in a manner that is socially acceptable to other migrants. Aesthetic action consists of acts of self-differentiation that can sometimes be a moral because they do not disturb the status quo in the camp.

Hijabis Cannot Work Here: An Employment Opportunity With A Cost

A hush-hush employment opportunity just opened for a female migrant on Samos. The Lebanese cafe Falafel Hut is in the heart of Vathy, the central touristic town on the island. The cafe is located within Lion's Square, just across from the iron lion statue. This area is sprinkled

with restaurants, bars, bakeries, and trinket shops. The Mediterranean Ocean is less than twenty feet away from the cafe and the square was bustling with tourists, locals, and migrants. Along the cafe's window a painted message reads: "Falafel is cool. Falafel is fun. Falafel beats anything on a bun." The owner of the falafel cafe is a thin Lebanese woman in her thirties. It is unclear whether or not she was raised Christian, but she does not dress conservatively. She often wears jeans and a casual blouse, in addition to tying up her hair in a loose bun. While the owner manages the business, she most often can be found cooking in its small kitchen. Her demeanor is warm and inviting, as she is usually smiling and engaging in conversations with others.

The cafe owner tries to create an open and welcoming atmosphere for refugees of all backgrounds. She does this by allowing them to sit in her cafe without ordering food and using her wifi for free, even after hours. However, one evening she was sitting outside her cafe at one of the tables with one of her chefs. She called me over and asked me if I was able to find her a refugee who could work in her kitchen. She was looking to employ a female Arabic-speaker who would be willing to work without wearing a hijab. When asked why no hijab, she simply answered "nsuriya (racism)." After a brief pause, she went on to explain that she did not want to deter locals and tourists from coming to her cafe by having a Muslim foreigner work there. Additionally, she stated that it would be too hot to cook in the cramped kitchen with a hijab on. She desired to support a refugee in the camp and this intervention was the way that she thought she could. Although I found it morally compromising, I took on the request. The cafe owner was grateful for my help and insisted that I was best suited for this because I am a likeable young woman that has access to the camp. Interestingly, the cafe owner did not seek help from Majida, a refugee with political asylum and who is active on the island, because Majida would have likely refused this request. Majida has a fiery and strong personality and wears a hijab every day,

despite the racism she encounters. The cafe owner also did not ask Majd for help on this project either, as he is a male and would not have been able to comfortably access female spaces.

Within a few days, I found the cafe owner two potential candidates. I was able to find them from one of the Vathy Volunteers publicity runs I did in the camp. These women were both “new arrivals” to the camp. The cafe owner loved the fact that they were new because that meant that no one really ‘knew’ about them. This meant that if they decided not to wear a veil in public, no one would really take notice of it because of their limited presence in the camp. The first applicant did not wear a veil, while the second applicant did. However, the second applicant claimed to not have a problem with not wearing a veil at work, as she confidently explained how she had to take hers off during a former job she had in Iraq.

These prospective applicants were also mothers and arrived to Samos with their children. The first prospective job applicant could not make two of her informal interviews with the cafe owner because she had to care for her sick daughter. This woman was on the island alone with her daughter and had to prioritize directly looking after her young child, over supporting her with a salary. After missing the second interview, she expressed that she was no longer able to apply for the job. That said, the second job applicant had two young children as well, but they were also accompanied by their father. In case of an emergency, the father could look after her children. Additionally, this woman claimed to make child sitting arrangements with some of her new friends in the camp. This cushion of security allowed for the second applicant to get the job, despite having children and bringing them with her to the interview. The cafe owner was surprised that the applicant brought her children to the interview. I sat with the children at a public bench close by, while the cafe owner talked with the applicant a few feet away. The cafe owner expressed that her only hesitation with hiring the applicant is that she would need to miss

work because of issues that may arise with her children. The cafe owner said that “biddi asa’dik, lakinane bahaja ila musa’da aydan (I want to help you, but I am in need of help as well).” The applicant assured the cafe owner that she would be able to report to work because she had a support network back in the camp that would ensure the wellbeing of her children. That day, the second applicant was offered the job and she would begin once her police papers were completed. She had to wait for her police papers in order to avoid any legal issues regarding her employment and movement to and from the camp.

For some migrants, the relationship between choice and employability is negotiated through clothing. To become employable is to distinguish oneself, as the work realm offers the potential for upward social and economic mobility. Self-distinction is made through appearance, and part of this process is tied to being legible as a worker who is not associated with foreign signs, such as a hijab. For instance, the fact that the falafel restaurant owner is seeking a migrant who is willing to dress more legibly as Western is emblematic of the fact that she desires employees who can ‘pass’ as ‘local’ Greeks, rather than foreign migrants.

The migrant’s class position is shaped both by how she is perceived by her employer, ‘locals,’ and humanitarian aid givers in the camp, in addition to her legal condition as a migrant. Class is a productive way to think about the status of migrants and the alternating statuses and classes they are capable of inhabiting. The hijab story shows us that the ability to choose, to decide which values one is willing to subordinate over others, can be expressed through the sartorial act of unveiling oneself. To be able to differentiate oneself, in part, is to leave the camp and the non-local and precarious associations that come along with it. One way to symbolically and literally depart from the camp is through professional opportunities. Workers, both migrant and non-migrant, are the ultimate separate category from quintessential migrants, who often do

not ‘work.’ These working populations are part of the greater hierarchies based on distance from the camp.

By taking the job, a whole network of exchanges are also produced. While the migrant woman is at work, her children have to be watched by someone. Although she has a husband and friends in the camp, she must entrust them to watch her children for a price. Indebtedness is also invoked by the falafel cafe owner, when she says, “I want to help you [the migrant woman], but I need help as well.” In so doing, the falafel cafe owner is offering an extended exchange to the migrant woman, so long as she meets her professional needs. This story highlights that what is missing in the logic of distribution is a sense of mutual exchange and relationship forging.

The stories I offer in this chapter show some instances where the humanitarian organizations in the camp pushed back against the migrants’ options to choose and differentiate themselves. These humanitarian organizations were constricting the humanity that these migrants were ‘supposed’ to have, in addition to the parameters through which the migrants could express this humanity. As Erving Goffman maintains in his book, *Asylums: Essays on the Condition of the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmate*, I argue that people are strategic choice makers that want to differentiate themselves from others despite the regulatory regimes imposed on them. In this book, Goffman argues that asylums are examples of “total institutions,” or enclosed worlds that ‘make’ people through management practices (1961: 22-26). Many different systems produce the idea that everyone ought to have a choice, although some of the humanitarian organizations in the camp contradict this notion. That said, Saba Mahmood, in her book, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, troubles traditional assumptions about choice by arguing that even choosing the act of submission is a form of agency (2004: 6). For Mahmood, the ability to choose is a more important indicator of a person’s

agency than whether or not the result of the decision is ‘oppressive’ according to normative Western standards. Mahmood’s argument helps us reconceptualize and challenge what oppression may be or look like, especially since these understandings are often defined by a neoliberal framework.

The materiality of being a migrant reproduces the subject position that makes choices so difficult. Migrants need certain clothes to be legible to an employer as a legitimate employee. This closed circuit is central to understanding the importance of choice for migrants. However, migrants transcend this closed professional circuit through entrepreneurial work. Many migrant women in the camp use a portion of the small living stipend they receive from the UN in order to purchase materials to knit and crochet with. Many of these women have made articles of clothing in their countries of origin, making this a smooth transition into work. Others have learned this trade from other migrants, so that they may support their families with a supplemental income and perhaps even make clothes for their own use. By working on the adornment of other people’s bodies migrants can step out of the ‘helpless’ subject positioning that is applied to them by others potentially because of their unemployment. A sustainable income provided through a job may help migrants transcend some of their precarious living conditions. Waged labor may also allow migrants to alter their passive non-working subjectivity to that of an active worker.

Conclusion

This chapter seeks to show some of the ways in which self-differentiation matters to migrants. I have described how aesthetics play an integral role in differentiating migrants from one another. These distinctions help produce the migrants’ subjectivity, which are further complicated when they engage in circulations. I demonstrated that distributions and exchanges are different forms of circulations that assume migrants as dissimilar kinds of actors. On the one

hand, distributions suppose migrants as beholden receptacles of humanitarian aid, whereas exchanges afford migrants the ability to transcend this perception by engaging in mutual exchange.

I also highlight how the process of distributing handouts is dissatisfying and taxing to both migrants and volunteers. Selection is a privilege that migrants have limited opportunities to make. While migrants are able to make some choices, their desires may not fully align with their practices. Ultimately, a greater sense of equity is embedded in exchanges, rather than distributions. The joint participation in giving is a moral and dignified process for all. Acts of hospitality are common instances where migrants engage in exchanges. I will explore this idea further in the following two chapters.

Violence and Legibility: Assessments of 'Deservingness' Across Migrant Communities

This chapter offers a look at how migrants are moral actors and construct moral worlds. I argue that migrants construct moral worlds through staying, leaving, or returning to the refugee camp. This circulatory morality reproduces some of the national divisions amongst migrants, which also have a historical precedent. Processes of circulation and identification enable migrants to engage in moral action and assessment. For some migrants, moral action is comprised of circulations within the migrant group that foster sameness and belonging. While I have witnessed this to be true, there are also certain forms of distinction that are exceptions to this claim.³⁰ The moral assessments made by migrants can highlight national distinctions, despite the coexisting universalist rhetoric of equality applied by camp authorities and humanitarians. Nationality, then, manifests as an administrative classification that is an aesthetic marker for moral judgment made by migrants.

During my field research in the Hotspot refugee camp, I observed several instances where the camp administrators lacked the internal procedures for dealing with different forms of violence within the camp. In other words, while some forms of violence were fully visible, they were ignored and unacted upon. While considering the legibility of violence in categories of governance, this chapter endeavors to expand and refine analyses on migrant 'deservingness.' Although many anthropological studies focus on state officials, medical workers, and members of the mainstream national public as the people who make judgments of deservingness, I attempt to highlight the

³⁰ An example of palatable exception to the sameness rule, is the young Syrian girl from chapter one who changed her tunic and headscarf when she read the Quran to the children. This form of distinction is a public performance of religious piety that seeks to create community by inviting others to listen to the word of Allah. Although the Syrian girl's dress and action are distinctive, she is fostering a sense of community that she chooses to remain in and not depart from. The quality of belonging to and remaining in the community is another aspect of what I argue that some migrants find moral.

assessments that asylum-seekers themselves make.³¹ In the following pages I will examine the moral discourses that some migrants produce in the wake of the suicide attempt. This story reveals that there are internal distinctions made across migrant communities based on national lines. I argue that refugeedom as a contemporary condition in Europe may heighten national distinctions, rather than promote notions of Pan-Arab belonging and solidarity. Thus, in some instances migrant ‘deservingness’ is contingent upon nationality and circulation, rather than the act of violence itself. Despite shared struggles of diaspora and destitution within the refugee camp, violence is seen, or rather unseen, according to nationally charged prejudices.

The Attempted Suicide of an Algerian Migrant

It was a hot afternoon like any other. I was sitting under some olive trees outside the main camp gate and playing chess with a young man. We were about half way into Children’s Activities and the kids were helping themselves to the coloring books, balls, and jump rope that Vathy Volunteers provides them during this limited time.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a man move up the forest behind us, as if with purpose. He briskly walked through the bush with his eyes fixated on the foliage in front of him. He did not look around, greet, or make side conversation with anyone that he passed by. At the time, I paid no mind to this; I knew that sometimes asylum seekers go into the forest to pray, meditate, or sing. A few minutes later, I heard two young boys below me shout over and over, “‘laq haloh (he hung himself)!” A couple of men joined them in calling out this statement. I learned later

³¹ Miriam Ticktin, *Casualties of Care: Immigrants and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2011); Yarris, K. and Castañeda, H. (2015), Special Issue Discourses of Displacement and Deservingness: Interrogating Distinctions between “Economic” and “Forced” Migration. *Int Migr*, 53: 64-69.

that the two preteens who spotted this man had seen a “wijeh azraq (blue face)” in the mountain. They knew that his face turned blue from a lack of oxygen, presumably from hanging himself.³²

All of the sudden, what seemed like fifteen men shot up the mountain to go and help the man. The Supervisor of Children’s Activities called me over and instructed me to follow so that I could translate any critical information. My trusted coworker Greg followed me in order to assist in any way that he could and also assure my well-being. We were moving up the steep mountain so quickly that my lower arms and legs were covered in abrasions from the thorn bushes. I found it difficult to gain a gripping with my foot at times and Greg helped me overcome these obstacles.

Within one minute of the shouting, we arrived to the scene.³³ I found the man who hung himself sitting on the ground gasping for air. There was a tree branch with a white electrical cord hanging as a noose above his head.³⁴ The men who rescued him had circled around him and were talking with each other. My impulses from Basic Emergency Medical Technician training kicked in, and I paid little attention to the men’s conversations. None of the men who came to help seemed to know what to do next. As soon as I got to the scene, I did an initial patient assessment. I checked for breathing abnormality and obstructions to his airway, inspected his cervical spine for injury, and measured how alert and oriented he was. He placed his arms close to his chest as he coughed and slightly shifted from side to side. There were dark marks on his neck that showed signs of him hanging, but they were not open wounds that revealed his flesh. His face was a reddish-purple hue when I first saw him, but the tan color returned to it within a few minutes. After about two minutes

³² I am unclear whether or not they saw the instrument the man used to hang himself with.

³³ My heart was beating deeply in my chest, the way it always does when I am dispatched to a call. By then I had over three years of experience as a first responder, with a year of training as a Basic Emergency Medical Technician. While I have had several suicidal calls, each of these incidents were uniquely complex.

³⁴ Extension cords are found throughout the camp. This one may have been purchased by the 90 Euros that the migrants receive every month from the United Nations. Although people live outside in flimsy tents, they still have access to electricity. Despite this ‘accommodation,’ the likelihood of getting electrocuted runs high and is a testament for the conditions that the camp administrators are willing to allow the migrants to live in.

of gasping and coughing, the man was able to answer my assessment questions completely and accurately.³⁵ I found it remarkable not to detect any major abnormalities during the assessment. From everything I observed, I surmised that he could not have hung himself for more than a minute and a half.

As I was doing the patient assessment, I realized that I was the only woman there. A man tried joining me in assisting the patient by offering him some water to drink, even as he was coughing. I disagreed with this hospitable gesture because it went against my medical training. I pushed back against his repeated insistence and allowed him instead to pour a little water on the back of the patient's neck in order to cool him down from the beating sun. After pouring about half of his water bottle, the concerned man lightly tapped the patient's back a few times and repeatedly said "saha (health)."³⁶ After doing this for a few seconds, the man moved aside in order to give me ample space to complete the patient assessment.

The suicidal man was still trying to catch his breath with his head facing the ground. Various side conversations were taking place around us at this time, most of them were within earshot of the gasping Algerian man. I heard someone say, "Al-jazaire bess biddo yerooh ila Athina (the Algerian just wants to go to Athens)."³⁷ Many of the other men nodded their heads and said

³⁵ These questions included: "What is your name?," "Where are you right now?," and "About what time is it?" These questions are part of the official Basic Life Support protocol for First Responders from New York State.

³⁶ In this context, "saha" means "good health to you." This Arabic term is also said after individuals choke or cough, in a similar way that English-speakers say "God bless you."

³⁷ It is interesting to think about the word "just" in "just wants to go to Athens." Does the speaker indicate that he is responding to some other, presumed and possible, moral interpretation of the situation? (E.g. you might think that he is sad, but really he just wants to go to Athens.) Maybe the speaker is thus acknowledging a world of moral-interpretive possibilities and foreclosing on some of them. If so, that makes this kind of moralizing very different from a moral approach that presumes itself to be the only interpretive option. There's a kind of pluralism here. (You might in good faith think that this man is sad, but really, he just wants to go to Athens.) Notice that the metric for choosing the right option, moreover, is simplicity (rather than goodness per se): he just wants to go to Athens; you should believe that option because it is simple and clear, it's just the truth.

“ah (yes)” in order to express their agreement with this statement.³⁸ Although I cannot recall other direct quotes, there was a generally dismissive tone in the comments that were made by some of the rescuers within minutes of the incident. Their comments focused on the opportunities that the Algerian man was assumed to seek through the suicide attempt, rather than the mental and emotional state that brought him to this act.³⁹ Many of the Arab bystanders who saved the Algerian man suspected that he wanted others to *see* his suicide attempt because of general prejudices within the camp surrounding Algerians and the context he committed the act in.⁴⁰ They may have supposed that he intentionally hung himself in the mountain during Children’s Activities because he was easily spotted by the people socializing just below at this time.⁴¹

The Algerian man did not verbally respond to the comments made about him. While remained silent, the anguish on his face was highly detectable. His eyes were fixed on the ground, as though he was not really looking at what he ‘saw.’ He did not seem to be present with me and the other rescuers. At times, his facial expressions were troubled and overwhelmed, as he would clench his jaw and squeeze his eyes. The lines on his face showed that he could not have been more than thirty years old. While his mind seemed to be somewhere else, there was an uneasy calmness about him too. Although he showed signs of holding himself together, the energy he exuded was deeply troubled.

³⁸ The reason why the others were referring to the Algerian in the third person while he was present may be due to the fact that while they do not know his name, they are aware of his nationality. Alternatively, they might have known his name, but purposefully referred to him by his nationality in order to demean him.

³⁹ I, as the observer assume that the feeling state of the man is the most relevant context, while others look instead for utilitarian motives.

⁴⁰ It may be safe to assume that these men were familiar with one another before the attempted suicide incident because there were approximately 1,500 people in the overcrowded camp at the time.

⁴¹ Children and adults attend Children’s Activities, which is located by the police station at the main gate of the camp. Adult males will play chess under the olive trees above the children’s area just below. I have also seen many adults sit in the shade along the street that leads to the camp gate. This area is right beside the police station, where Greek police and army officials post in the camp.

After the Algerian man had settled and caught his breath, I asked him if he would allow some of the men to carry him down the mountain so that he could be seen by the doctors. The man agreed without any hesitation. Three men picked him up and brought him down the mountain. Greg and I followed right after them. There was a few feet of distance between us and the first group.⁴² We walked through Children's Activities, which had not been cleared up by this point. Children were still outside confused about or aloof to what had gone on above them. A few curious adults had arrived to the area in order to see what was going on. Unbeknownst to me, someone allowed the Algerian man to walk to the medical center. At some point as we were walking along the paved road that led to the main camp gate, the Algerian man had a fit. He convulsed in an intense panic attack that could have been triggered by emotional distress. He screamed and jerked his body onto the pavement. He was squirming, rolling around, and bashing his head and limbs on the ground. Some of the noises he made were strained and lamenting. I could not make out any words, although he could have said some things.

I immediately ran over to him. Within seconds, a crowd of thirty people circled us; including men, women, children, and the camp police. I instructed a man to restrain the Algerian man, so that he would stop squirming. I proceeded to do another patient assessment, only this time some men watching behind me scoffed at the questions I asked in order to check the patient's orientation level. Perhaps they did not agree that it was the most appropriate intervention to make at that time. Within thirty seconds of the fit, Ahmad, an asylum seeker who translates Arabic and Sorani Kurdish for the English-speaking doctors at the Boat Migrant Foundation, had arrived with a doctor. Within a minute, a few more doctors had arrived to the scene. They brought a stretcher

⁴² I broke protocol by not being beside the patient at all times. Keeping my distance would be considered an act of "abandonment," as I cannot leave a patient's side until passing him up to equal or more advanced medical care. However, there was no way for me to be right beside the patient as he was carried down the mountain because the tight path was too narrow.

with them and rolled the patient over to the medical quarter in the camp. Throughout the entire incident, not a single migrant shed a tear or took a moment to gather themselves. Not the migrant rescuers, migrant bystanders, or camp doctors that intervened. Although a few Euro-American volunteers were tearing up by the olive trees, Children's Activities continued as usual once the crowd cleared.

Contradicting Reactions to the Suicide Attempt: To His Health, But Not His Wealth

The story that I described above begs us to ask, how is morality produced by migrants in various social situations? What are the controversies considered worthy of moral conversation, and what does not rise to the level of moral reflection? In order to try and answer some of these questions, my analysis will pay close attention to specific words used and the details of the interactions that took place.

The seemingly mundane material dimensions of the suicide attempt offer important considerations for understanding the conditions facing migrants in Samos. The forest is an area where other suicide attempts have been made in the past. Because migrants face months and even years on the island due to slow bureaucracy and overwhelming management responsibilities with depleted resources, many of them often hear of or witness suicide attempts during their time in Samos. The lack of surveillance of the vast forests on the part of the camp authorities is also an indication of the lack of care that goes into maintaining the wellbeing of migrants. These factors show that migrants must contend with the fact that suicide is something they may happen in the camp and that they can react to this situation as they see fit.

The suicide attempt shows that some migrants find a 'good' moral actor as the person who ultimately belongs to the migrant community and chooses to stay within it. On the other hand, a 'bad' moral actor is ostracized for appearing as merely an economic migrant and for

wanting to leave the group from which he is not fully accepted into. As a medic, I focused on figuring out how oriented the Algerian man was, despite some of the other bystanders finding this to be irrelevant. Perhaps they thought this way because the suicide attempt is seen as a self-serving human action. Because this situation is presumed to be calculated for the Algerian man's benefit, one that is not a part of the collective, it is simply judged as disingenuous. Within this camp, constructions of deservingness of sympathy, precarity, and suffering are directly linked to a migrant's nationality. By "just wanting to go to Athens," the Algerian man is not afforded the ability to have a sincere manifestation of anguish. This logic deems the suicide attempt as a purely economically-motivated activity, which consequently does not allow the Algerian man to be a complicated moral agent from their point of view. At the same time, maybe the person who claims that the Algerian man "just wants to go to Athens" is responding to a world of moral-interpretive possibilities and is foreclosing on some of them. If so, that makes this kind of moralizing very different from a moral approach that presumes itself to be the only interpretive option.

The suicide attempt disturbed the quotidian order of the camp, to which some migrants responded with hospitality in order to restore it. This interaction between the rescuer and the Algerian man connotes a positive intention and warm wishes. While there is no direct invocation of God, I think that it would be wrong to analyze this interaction without the possibility of a call to a greater power. "Saha" is a linguistic and cultural gesture that is used more extensively when food is offered to others as a wish of good eating. There is a dual version of the term, "saHateen," which literally means "two healths" to you. "Sahateen" is a hyperbolic expression that enthusiastically emphasizes good health and happy eating. There is an automatic reply to "saha" that the receiver of the good wishes is tacitly expected to give back. This expression is "ala albak," literally meaning

“on your heart.” In this exchange, the receiver of the “saha” circles back the wishes of good health onto the initial giver’s heart and greater bodily health.⁴³ Under the trees, the Algerian man did not reply “ala albak” to his rescuer. Perhaps he was incapable of speaking at those moments during his coughing fit. It might have also slipped the Algerian man’s mind to thank the rescuer after he caught his breath because the rescuer had moved aside in order to give me room to assess the patient’s health.

There is an effort to rebuild a moral world through water. We must ask why the man who offers the Algerian man water is so insistent. The impulse to circulate water is an invitation to welcome the Algerian man back into the world. The compulsion to give is a cultural obligation, one that the man is willing to fight me for. “Good health to you” is a direct reference to trying to kill himself. Health is brought back to the home through this hospitality phrase. “Saha” invokes the home, and in so doing the man saying it is sort of de-escalating the situation. When the Arab man offered water to the coughing Algerian man, he interpolated him during this recuperative moment with his “health.” While the Algerian man is interpellated through the term “health,” the indirect ‘you’ embedded in the non-literal translation of “saha” intensifies part of the Algerian man’s alterity. The quiet and mute Algerian man is addressed as a third person, never by name. The fact that he only answers my questions intensifies his distinction from the bystanders who speak. Despite these distinctions, the simple gesture of offering water and attention indicates a hospitality relationship. While the Algerian person's health is dwindling, the Arab caretaker addresses the health of the Algerian man, which is what is keeping him alive in the world. Even the men who are

⁴³ Deric Gruen, "5 Arabic words I wish we had in English," *The Seattle Globalist* (blog), entry posted April 22, 2015, accessed May 1, 2018, <http://www.seattleglobalist.com/2015/04/22/5-arabic-words-i-wish-they-had-in-english/35883>.

skeptical of the Algerian man's intentions linger out of curiosity, which may indicate a form of concern.

There is a tense interplay of a hospitality ritual - the circulation of water inside the migrant group - which allows the moral world of circulation to be shared. The suicide attempt is an indication that the Algerian man is trying to leave the camp in a way that everyone else cannot. Suicide itself is an effort to leave the social world. In attempting to kill oneself, one remove oneself from the social world and social exchanges of life. There is an effort to reintegrate the Algerian man into the camp through the circulation of water by the hospitable Arab man, all while assumptions are being made about his intentions by some of the onlookers. "Saha" communicates a sense of responsibility to a neighbor. There is a temporary moment of equivalence, as the Arab man is huddled over the Algerian man while he tries to comfort him at the same physical position. The evocation of hospitality, generation of a sense of equality, sitting in the same posture, and sense of welcoming are a range of positive interpretive frames to try and make sense of this incident.

Rupture and Self-Harm: Shared Assessments Made By Camp Administrators and Migrants

While many of the Euro-American volunteers were crying, I did not observe any refugees shed a tear during the suicide attempt. The starkly contrasting reactions to this incident ought to make us question what constitutes a social rupture to a migrants. After enduring unthinkable trauma, migrants may recalibrate what they consider as spectacle or rupture. There is a spectrum between what is quotidian rupture and spectacle. The suicide attempt I recounted in this chapter was in many ways a spectacle. A flagrant example is the crowd of migrants that circled together as they watched the Algerian man collapse on the pavement before being seen by the doctors. The same reaction cannot be said about migrants who mutilate their bodies in less dire attempts.

Self-harm in the Hotspot refugee camp is pervasive and some acts of self-inflicted violence are more visible than others. The arms of young men, often unaccompanied minors, were covered in fresh cut marks and tattoos. These markings were visible because of the articles of clothing that these men would wear. Many of them owned short-sleeved shirts or rolled up their sleeves. While rolling up the sleeves could be an invitation for others to see and potentially inquire about the marks, this might have also been done in order to cool off from the summer heat. Although I have spoken to about five people with cut marks on their arms, I never directly asked them about their wounds. Instead, I took the opportunity to inform them of the psychological services offered at the local Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) and would help them schedule therapy sessions at the camp. I was told by humanitarians working in several organizations within the camp that the local MSF was the “best” place to get evaluated. They often justified this by claiming that the MSF psychologists were not only well trained, but sincerely cared for their patients. That said, the MSF office is about a ten minute walk from the camp and all of the migrants are not aware of its presence. Additionally, the psychological support in the camp was unreliable because patients would wait hours and often days to see a specialist, even after having scheduled their appointment. This was due to the fact that there was a severe lack of translators who could foster communication between the migrants and specialists. I wondered how anyone could possibly heal in a place where access to psychological support was so limited.

The reaction to acts of self-harm, like cutting oneself, by the Greek police and other regulatory bodies is much different than suicide attempts. I have several speculations as to why the suicide attempt was ‘worthy’ of police intervention, as opposed to other forms of violence. Firstly, forms of self-harm, such as cutting, are not legible in terms of bureaucracy. Many migrants who cut themselves are able to do this undocumented, and thusly unacted upon. Flagrant displays of self-

harm, such as a suicide attempt, inspire distinctive police responses because no one can pretend to ignore them. Ultimately, the attempted suicide was legible in terms of bureaucratic procedure in ways that the cutting was not. This course of action may also reveal a concern with the public representation of Greece both within the state and internationally. Institutionally, Greek state agencies might be concerned about what an incident like this reveals about the management of asylum seekers, as it has received critical attention for its handling of migrant flows.⁴⁴ It may be a priority for the locals and Greek administrators in the camp that Samos remain the ‘forgotten island’ in order to promote the island’s tourism and economic stability.

The disparate treatment and reaction to violence within the Hotspot refugee camp mirrors Miriam Ticktin’s analysis on compassion in her book *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France*. This text sheds light on how vulnerability is assessed by humanitarian aid organizations in ways that privilege certain forms of suffering over others. Ticktin shows the material repercussions and inequalities produced by humanitarian aid organizations as they classify displaced people and recognize precarity. For instance, France only legally considers “well-founded” state persecution, which can be physically demonstrated or documented, as the legitimate basis for gaining refugee status (Ticktin, 135). Ticktin highlights throughout this book many instances where migrants fabricate stories to make themselves seem more deserving of asylum. Ultimately, she finds that those who show “agency and or complicity in one’s migration,” are often seen as not deserving of aid. This idea is in contrast with the “passive, ‘pure,’ vulnerable victim” figure, which is seen as deserving of asylum (Ticktin, 186). What this reductionist view of deservingness shows is that humanitarianism can often be an exclusionary process that does not transcend forms of racism, sexism, Orientalism, and discrimination that happens in other fields.

⁴⁴ Refer to this link as an example of criticism of Greece’s management of the refugee crisis: Christides and Stefatou, “The Greek,” 1.

Although the examples that I provide in this section are primarily the assessments of deservingness and spectacle made by camp administrators, they do parallel some of the reactions of the migrants. By cutting themselves, migrants may unintentionally be exploring the limits of what they can do without state intervention. By not disturbing the social order of the camp, self-harm is tolerated and not heavily intervened on by camp officials. Acts of self-harm do not evoke a differentiating act that allows the individual to exit the collective. Suicide, on the other hand, is not only an attempt to permanently leave the world, but is also a rejection of circulating within it.

Nationality As ‘Criminality’: Migrant Prejudices Mirroring Exterior Discourses

This chapter observes the creation of a sense of moral action by migrants. While migrants may make moral acts, they may also hold their own prejudices and biases. Although some male Arab migrants come to save the Algerian man who attempted to kill himself, it cannot be assumed that their attitudes and actions towards this man are entirely supportive to him. The moral worlds that the migrants produce for themselves sometimes converge with each other, producing a shared sense of insider and outsider status within the camp. The overlapping perceptions that manifest in Samos draw upon a historical contestations of Arab belonging.

Stereotypes surrounding the ‘criminality’ of Algerian males can be traced back to when Algeria was colonized by France between 1830-1962. Although Algerians were never French citizens, they were French subjects and integrated into the imperial center in a way that was unique to other colonial contexts at the time (Blanchard 2016, 63-64). Beginning in the late nineteenth century and expanding well into the mid-twentieth century, Algerian men made up some of the “earliest and most extensive” colonial labor migrant waves to Western Europe. By the the early 1920s, Algerian males established themselves in French factories and the army

during World War I.⁴⁵ These opportunities in France were crippling to the Algerian economy and inspired great backlash from Algerian economic lobbies. In order to deter Algerians from seeking work outside of their country of ethnic origin, these lobbies “supported hostile press campaigns in mainland France that denounced the supposed criminality and sexual aggressiveness of Algerian men” (House 2: 2006).⁴⁶ Not only that but many French official and media discourses between 1975-1985 presented stereotypes of “young Algerian males centered on criminalization, and alleged their refusal to 'integrate'” (Houses 2: 2006). What is interesting about these historical findings is that similar subjectivities of the Algerian male ‘criminal’ emerged in Algeria and France. Unfortunately, the immeasurable violence and economic precarity that Algerians were subjected to did not end after the war of independence. Algeria became popularly known as “the country of the million martyrs” after its independence, and this slogan resonates today with Algerians fleeing their country in search of work and stability (Ibrahim 1988, 1). To make matters worse, Algerians must justify why they are worthy of asylum or refuge in ways that nationals undergoing war may not have to. The Hotspot refugee camp in Samos is a place where these stereotypes largely remain and are held by other Arab national groups.

Arab national identity is a relevant aspect of the social lives of migrants in Samos and is complicated by the region’s ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity. Although literature on Arab nationalism is highly contested, “there is common agreement among scholars of Arab nationalism that Greater Syria was the main arena in the development and promotion of this Arab nationalist ideology and movement” (Suleiman 2003, 70). The Great Revolt was made

⁴⁵ Neil MacMaster, *Colonial Migrants and Racism. Algerians in France*. Basingstoke, 1997.

⁴⁶ While this is a direct quote from House, he is referencing: MacMaster, *Colonial Migrants*, 224.

by Syrians at the period between the end of Ottoman rule and the beginning of French colonial rule (Mabry 2015: 54). Michel Aflaq, a Greek Orthodox Christian from Damascus, founded the Ba'ath ("revival") Party in the mid-twentieth century. Aflaq's pan-Arab nationalism is noteworthy because it sought to "unite a region of disparate peoples adhering to multiple beliefs, so the doctrine was pragmatically *secular*, and accentuated "Arabness" (*uruba*) rather than Islam" (Mabry 2015, 54). This "secular" definition of Arabness that is centered on linguistic capabilities, rather than religion and ethnicity, enables populations such as Algerians to be Arab too. That said, it is contestable whether or not Algerian Arabic passes the mark for Levantines. Some Levantine migrants may feel a sense of superiority and competitiveness with Algerians due to ethno-linguistic differences. For instance, the Algerian Arabic dialect is not easily accessible to people living in the Arabian Peninsula. In Algeria, people speak classical Arabic, six Berber dialects, French, and/or a fusion of these three languages: Darija.⁴⁷ From a linguistic point of view, Algerians are a hybrid people that are neither fully French, nor Arab. This point of difference may be why it is difficult for some Levantines to fully accept Algerians as Arabs.⁴⁸

Refugee identity is not an identity that unites people in a way that would preclude critique. Ilana Feldman's article "Difficult Distinctions: Refugee Law, Humanitarian Practice, and Political Identification in Gaza" helps us think about the complications surrounding the classification of refugees by humanitarian organizations. A subject of Feldman's analysis is a project managed by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) from late 1948 to 1950, which is the first organized relief in Gaza. Feldman argues that "[t]he categorization of population for relief purposes, for instance, contributed to developments in political vocabulary and identification"

⁴⁷ "A battle over language is hampering Algeria's development," *The Economist*, August 17, 2017, accessed May 1, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21726743-arabic-berber-french-and-hybrid-three-vie-dominance-battle-over>.

⁴⁸ This is the moment to regret that this paper does not engage in depth with the literature on Arab nationalism.

(2007, 132). Here, Feldman finds that the distinctions made by the AFSC between ‘refugees’ and ‘Gazans’ not only affected their aid, but how they imagined their community and articulated their Palestinian political identities. These categories fragmented and set Palestinians against one another in the enduring struggle for a better life.

Feldman’s articulation of refugee identity resounds in the context of Samos today. In Samos, I witnessed a general lack of trust in the intentions of Algerian migrants who are seen as thieves, criminals, and motivated by economic gain. Although I only had a handful of conversations on the topic of theft in the camp, there was a unanimous agreement among Syrian, Palestinian, Iraqi, and Kurdish migrants that the Algerians are the thieves of the camp. Not only that, but some English speaking migrants from Congo, Burundi, Afghanistan, and Iran also shared this same sentiment about the Algerian migrants in the camp. These assumptions point to the hierarchies of suffering that emerge within refugee communities and the perceived difference between ‘true’ and instrumentalized suffering. Although these findings are in no way comprehensive, they may also show that maybe there is a handful of unsavory migrants in this camp who happen to be Algerian. Regardless, these sentiments coupled with the reactions as the suicide attempt unfolded, point to the fact that refugee identity can be exclusionary across national and racial lines.

The moral worlds of some migrants are not fully distinct from the moral discourse of the European Union and refugee camp administrators in which they are inserted. The circulatory process assimilates to or parallels EU notions of who is and is not a ‘deserving’ migrant. Algerians are thought of as corrupted agents who steal and attempt to pass as victims. Stealing is a form of agency and hence if Algerians can steal, then they are not full victims. Theft is rendered an illegitimate form of circulation, one that coincides with the administrative categories and moral

judgments. Didier Fassin, in his article “Compassion and Repression: The Moral Economy of Immigration Policies in France,” bring us to think about the link between compassion and the evaluation of suffering. Fassin draws upon the idea of a “moral economy,” which he defines as “the scope of contemporary biopolitics considered as the politics that deals with the lives of human beings” (2008, 366). In other words, Fassin is referring to the management and subjectification of humans by regulatory institutions. Fassin asserts that “the study of biopolitics is particularly crucial when it governs the lives of undesired and suffering others (Fassin 2001a), undocumented immigrants in this case,... oscillating between sentiments of sympathy on the one hand and concern for order on the other hand, between a politics of pity and policies of control” (Fassin 2008, 366). Here, Fassin highlights that “sentiments of sympathy” are actually political, in that they are inextricably linked to the power vested in the institutions that manage and govern undocumented people. The humanitarian exchanges in Samos do not point to a clear distinction between sentiment, politics, and governance. While people with ‘feelings’ work in humanitarian institutions, there are occasions where they may be apathetic and prejudiced against migrants for a variety of reasons. The imputation of nationhood labels by migrants is also a reflection of the administrative categories used by camp officials. The moral agency is removed from Algerians by some Arab migrants, in addition to the NGOs for assuming certain migrants to be “economically” motivated based on their nationality.

“Ali Baba”: A Second Register of Theft and Intervention

The suicide attempt that took place up in the mountain was only a few yards away from Children’s Activities. Below I describe a time I had during Children’s Activities on a different day. A scene like this is very likely to have occurred during the suicide attempt.

During Children's Activities, I sat with some migrant toddlers on a UN tarp under the olive trees by the main camp gate. The trees offered us some shade on that warm afternoon. The tarp was covered in dirt from multiple uses over the dry soil. Colored pencils, empty coloring book pages, and cardboard squares were scattered around us. There must have been about thirty children who showed up to the activities, along with perhaps fifteen adults. These adults were not necessarily related to the children or responsible for watching over them, as it was common to find many young children roam the camp unattended. The mountain was bustling with energy and at times a bit of aggression.

As I was sitting, a young Syrian girl, perhaps ten years of age, swiped a colorful book from a young Congolese child. As the Syrian girl did this she called the Congolese girl "chocolata (chocolate)" and "tarab (dirt)." The Congolese girl tapped me on the shoulder and shouted, "Ali Baba (thief)!"⁴⁹ Several other children followed her exclamation, as is typical by the children in any instance of theft. I, along with a Vathy Volunteer of Syrian nationality, immediately reproached the Syrian girl in Arabic. The Syrian girl was visibly upset, as she pouted and crossed her arms while looking down, but she did not seem to actually listen to the other volunteer and me. The Syrian girl stormed away from us after we told her how disappointed we were in her and that we would not tolerate any mistreatment here.⁵⁰

The migrant children mobilize figures from outside the migrant community in order to manage theft that occurs during Children's Activities. To the extent that circulation can stay inside refugee moral world, it avoids administration. The Congolese girl interpellates the thief as

⁴⁹ "Ali Baba" refers to the tale of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," which can be found in some versions of *One Thousand and One Nights*. This term has come to mean "thief" in the Hotspot refugee camp and is most commonly used by adolescent migrants of all languages.

⁵⁰ After settling this situation, the Vathy Volunteer explained to me that many of the children in the camp use these racial slurs against the Congolese girl. Her name is Princess and I'm not sure if the Arabic children even know her name. I have never heard them call her by her name or even its translation, Amira.

“Ali Baba,” which is common in the camp. Because a majority of the camp dwellers are Arabic-speakers, it makes sense that an Arabic term would be used by the children in order to communicate with one another. When interpellation is not enough to get the culprit to give return the stolen item for communal use, targeted shouting and pointing is instrumentalized in order to direct intervention from camp administrators. The translinguistic “Ali Baba” is employed by children to communicate with one another and to bring in administration when their efforts are futile.

There are different registers within the refugee camp that address theft. On the one hand, “Ali Baba” is used by children of all languages to identify and expose thieves. At another level, a significant portion of adult migrants from multiple national communities agree that the Algerian men in the camp are responsible for stealing things. Theft links the “Ali Baba” discourse to the Algerian thief stereotypes because it is a form of illegitimate circulation. Not everyone can get away with stealing. Both adult and adolescent thieves require administrative intervention. The administrative apparatus is mobilized when the circulation is no longer reciprocal and leaving the community. When circulation leaves the migrant community, different administrative bodies come in and address it. Vathy Volunteers respond to theft that occurs during Children Activities, while the Greek police, or camp authorities, respond to larger issues amongst adults (i.e. stealing personal belongings).

Conclusion

The stories that I have recounted in this chapter offer a glimpse at the moral worlds that migrants generate through nation state categories and different forms of circulation. Nationality informs how migrants determine who is a ‘real’ and ‘deserving’ refugee. These moral judgments happen to overlap with some of the perspectives held by the apparatuses that regulate migrants.

There are modes of human relationality, like the imperative to circulate, that undergird some of the moral judgments that migrants make as well. Migrants, both young and old, find different forms of circulation to be 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate.' Adolescent migrants form these valuations in terms of theft, while the adult migrants rely upon theft, nationality, and 'authenticity.' Within the Hotspot refugee camp, Syrians and Palestinians are painted by migrants as the 'ultimate' victims because of war, statelessness, and the Israeli occupation. The Algerian migrants in Samos are dominantly considered a 'criminal' class by other migrants, which is unfortunately linked to how their worthiness of sympathy is assessed. Some migrants take issue with Algerians in the camp because they are performing vulnerability, or illegitimately attempting to embody precarities that are not wholly theirs. For these migrants, the Algerians do not have experiences that would justify this particular claiming or appropriation of vulnerability. Athens is an exit that signifies a cut from the refugee camp and the circulations that occur within it. Although Algerians may not be fully welcomed within the camp by migrants who feel as though they are in more 'authentically' precarious circumstances, these migrants are not enthusiastic about Algerians leaving the camp for better prospects than them. These exclusionary perspectives, however, are challenged through hospitality gestures. By offering water, the concerned Arab man reintegrates the Algerian man from the suicide story back into the social life of the camp. In so doing, the Arab man also breaks the boundaries of who is welcomed into the greater migrant community.

***‘Humanitarians’: How Engaging In Humanitarian Action As A Migrant Does Not
Necessarily Make You A Humanitarian***

In the Hotspot refugee camp on the island of Samos, the humanitarian aid organizations operate on a discourse that claims to see all people as human and deserving of the same basic human rights. However, life in the camp shows that this ‘protective’ notion of human unity actually creates distinctions between migrants. A central dilemma of the form of humanitarianism that unfolds in this camp is that the category for human is both generic and ironically stigmatizing. If you are just a human you are below people who are human ‘plus’ some other valuable quality: e.g. the ability to perform types of work that can get you recognized as a volunteer. Therefore, the human is a kind of subhuman as compared to a ‘human-plus,’ who is also the type of human that is fit to make choices for themselves.⁵¹

During my stay in Samos, I had met Megan, Abraham, and Hameedi. Megan is a deeply passionate and down to earth Northern European woman in her mid-twenties. By the time I met her, she had been volunteering at Vathy Volunteers for several months and has continued to do so since I left. She wore many hats at the organization, but her main responsibilities included directing Children’s Activities, managing the Alpha Centre, publicizing Vathy Volunteers, and fundraising for the organization. Abraham is a kind and outgoing Iranian man in his early twenties. He speaks fluent English, which enabled him, to provide Farsi translation services to Vathy Volunteers and other NGOs in the refugee camp. Like Megan, Abraham can also be found at the Alpha Centre helping the English instructors communicate with Farsi-speaking migrants or

⁵¹ Hannah Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, makes a similar case about the tension and lack of sacredness in “the abstract nakedness of being human” (1951: 295). Arendt is arguing here that you need to have a state in order to obtain your rights and full humanity, while the phenomenon I focus on has less to do with states dictating humanity. This chapter focuses on how an NGO, not state, decides who is and is not a volunteer, community volunteer, and helpful migrant.

in the camp at Children’s Activities and Camp Clean-Up. Abraham is considered a Community Volunteer, or a migrant who has distinguished himself enough from other migrants in order to gain this unique title. Hameedi is a young Syrian migrant around ten years of age. He is one of the most enthusiastic and thorough helpers during Camp Clean-Up. Despite working with the other migrants and volunteers almost every week, he has never gained distinction as a Community Volunteer. These are three people who all perform free labor, yet are classified differently by the NGO Vathy Volunteers. What were the key differentia between these individuals that allowed for these categorical distinctions? This is the question I seek to answer with this chapter.

Humanitarianism attempts to provide basic dignity fundamental to all humans, yet so often falls short of its benevolent intentions. In this chapter I propose a schema for understanding how the Hotspot refugee camp interpellates individuals involved in humanitarian exchanges. I will distinguish these populations by referring to them as either a ‘refugee,’ ‘non-refugee,’ or ‘refugee-plus.’ I have created these categories for the purposes of my analysis and they do not necessarily correspond to existing categories used by the people at my field sites.

The table below outlines the terms that I will use throughout this chapter. While the terms of my analysis are similar to the terminology that Vathy Volunteers uses, they are not identical or completely intuitive. I establish critical distance from the ambiguous categories produced by Vathy Volunteers’ system by using my own terms that allow me to analyze and critique the hierarchy at work in theirs.

Table of Corresponding Terms

Vathy Volunteers Terminology	My Terms of Analysis
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‘Vathy Volunteer’	‘Volunteer’ - A non-refugee and non-migrant person who is usually a European or American.
‘Community Volunteer’	‘Human-plus’ or ‘Refugee-plus’ - A refugee or migrant who is recognized by Vathy Volunteers as someone who volunteers too.
‘Migrant,’ ‘Refugee,’ ‘Asylee,’ ‘Person,’ ‘People,’ Respective Individual’s First Name, Etc.	‘Human,’ ‘Refugee,’ or ‘Migrant’ - Are refugees or migrants who may or may not volunteer and/or be hospitable while in Samos. This is not to say that ‘volunteers’ are not humans, but rather to emphasize that their nationality and socio-economic status take a precedence over their shared biological humanness.

The ambiguity of this chart is productive of the social world that the volunteers create. The volunteers affiliated with Vathy Volunteers, or those who go through the application process to register as a volunteer, often use ‘neutral’ terms such as *refugee*, *migrant*, *person*, and *individual* or respective first names in order to refer to migrants, both those who work alongside them as “community volunteers” and those who do not. The unequal categorical system is made more difficult to identify because the language of volunteer and non-volunteer does not make one attune to the power dynamics at work. My terms “human” and “human-plus” forces us to

think about why labor is being acknowledged differently. This slipperiness makes the hierarchy easier to digest and live with. The third category is used to refer to the vast majority of people in the camp, despite the fact that many of them contribute to their community without the same recognition as those that reach volunteer status. Even the organization's category system is modeled after its title, which carries with it the ambiguity of the category system that it creates.

From what I have observed, performing voluntary labor is not enough to make one a "volunteer." Migrants may perform voluntary labor, but Euro-American volunteers do not always refer to them as volunteers. The production of these categories occurs through acts of aesthetic judgement, as they presuppose that volunteering is a quality that only certain types of people can possess on the basis of their legal status.⁵² In this chapter, then, I strive to document the categorical system used by volunteers on migrants. At the chapter's end, I reverse the story, by asking about the categorical system that refugees have used to understand the social world that the foreign volunteers have produced. The final section of this chapter describes how voluntary labor and hospitality are enacted and sometimes distinguished by some Arabic-speaking migrants. The term "ayb," roughly meaning disgracefully rude or inappropriate, is a widely enacted critique of the hospitality acts and discourse of the humanitarians. This hospitality idiom used by Levantines and other Arabs emerges as the predominant alternative to the valuations offered by the humanitarians. By looking at these points, this chapter seeks to explore the relationship that migrants have to their work and acts of hospitality.

The Status of a Vathy Volunteer: Distinguishing Volunteers from Helpful Migrants

On March 26, 2017, the Vathy Volunteers Facebook group shared the following status, which included seven photographs and six people tagged to it.

⁵² There is the possibility that nationality, race, and socio-economic background also are factors that draw this divide as well. Perhaps to some volunteers, one can only be a 'real' volunteer if one is not also seeking asylum in Greece.

We know we missed #shoutoutsunday, so let's dub today #mindblowingmonday!

This weekend a few volunteers and a group of people from the camp got down and dirty during the camp clean-up. This activity is not for the faint of heart: the garbage is everywhere, and it attracts many unwanted guests... you can ask Beth about the rat jumping at her.

As you understand from this beautiful anecdote, the hygiene conditions in the camp are absolutely deplorable. So on Saturday, we collected over 45, 100L garbage bags and we're not even close to halfway yet. It is devastating that people are made to live in conditions where it is necessary to do this, but we're happy that we got this far.

So THANK YOU, to everyone that was involved with the camp clean-up this weekend, you guys are absolute trash-champions!

This status exemplifies how Vathy Volunteers are distinguished from migrants, or in this case, “people from the camp.” While Vathy Volunteers is celebrating the contributions of both “volunteers” and camp inhabitants during camp clean-up, the organization is also demonstrating the exclusivity of the categories that they employ. There are several attempts in this post to construct universal categories, which do and do not refer to both migrants and volunteers. I would like to draw attention to the section where a Vathy Volunteer claims that “it is devastating that people are made to live in conditions where it is necessary to do this....” The ambiguous “people” being referred to here are helpful migrants or non-volunteers. The impersonal quality of the imperative, “it is necessary to do,” is also a way of making a general claim, but one by the volunteers on behalf of the migrants. The thank you to “everyone” at the end of this post is an attempt to construct a universal category that addresses both migrants and non-migrants who cleaned the camp that day. This shared category is not enough, however, to mitigate the stark distinction at the beginning of the post between “a few volunteers and a group of people in the

camp.” After taking a closer look at these universal terms and phrases, one can see how they actually produce and reinforce distinctions in the camp amongst volunteers and migrants.

Perhaps the logic fueling the naming is less a matter of judgments made by the Euro-American volunteers and more a matter of the exclusiveness of the categories themselves.⁵³

The category system that Vathy Volunteers uses is setting them up for discrimination. They are working with a category system that is partially of their making and somewhat not. Classist categories emerge out of structures that produce global inequality, where resources and privileges are not readily available to all in the same capacity. The categories that Vathy Volunteers employs are structuring categories of social life. Vathy Volunteers produces categories and hierarchy through their own organization’s name. At the top, one is a Vathy Volunteer, in the middle a migrant may be a Community Volunteer, and then at the bottom one is an unnamed other, or migrant who may participate in the same act of volunteer service. In the Facebook post we see how the universal and ambiguous terms for migrants allows Vathy Volunteers to paper over the hierarchical system and make it more palatable to volunteers. The casualness in which volunteers are distinguished from most migrants is not worthy of second thought because it does not seem flagrantly discriminatory. However, Vathy Volunteers is constricting the humanity that these migrants were ‘supposed’ to have, in addition to the parameters through which the migrants could express this humanity. Employment and volunteerism is the language through which Vathy Volunteers read or overlooked the migrants’ humanity. The utility behind a migrants’ ‘plus’ qualities offered some of them the ability to be

⁵³ However, maybe some Vathy Volunteers perceive volunteering as an activity that people who have something to ‘lose’ can only participate in. Volunteers in this instance are those who ‘drop’ their lives, leave their jobs, homes, and loved ones in order to support migrants in Samos. In this case, the migrants may be viewed by Vathy Volunteers as people who are not making the same types of sacrifices when they choose to collaborate with the volunteers because they are stuck on the island.

read and treated as more than human in limited ways. Volunteering helps migrants establish a self in a recognizable way to others by unmaking their status as passive non-working subjects, and potentially troubling dominant associations around what they legally are. Migrant volunteers, in addition to non-migrant volunteers, are the ultimate separate category from quintessential migrants, who do not ‘work.’ These working populations are part of the greater hierarchies based on literal and symbolic distance from the camp.

About a month prior to the former Facebook posting, the Vathy Volunteers Facebook Group posted a pictograph that indicates some statistics about their different volunteers during January 2018. Below, I provide the main information depicted by this pictograph.

Vathy Volunteers January 2018 Statistics

“Our volunteers this month enhanced by our community volunteers”

Vathy Volunteers	Community Volunteers
52 Individuals	14 Individuals
15 Languages	6 Languages
18 Nationalities (None Indicated)	4 Nationalities (In Decreasing Order: Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine)

I spotted this infograph while back in New York State, several months after my research. Immediately, my interest was piqued and I inquired further about these statistics by sending a private message to the Vathy Volunteers Facebook group. I asked the Facebook Group Administrator, “Could you help me understand the distinction between ‘volunteers’ and

‘community volunteers?’” The Administrator, who knew me personally, replied, “the statistics in that photo are specifically referring to people from the camp who are helping us with classes, cleaning, and activities.” I was a bit confused by this answer and responded with another question: “Would you mind explaining how you determine who is and is not a community volunteer for the statistics? The reason why I ask is that I remember a lot of committed African migrants for camp clean up during my stay in the summer, but the statistics don't really show that.” The Administrator answered that “Anyone from the camp that has helped us for a while in our activities is a community volunteer, although obviously as you said there are countless numbers of people everyday who help us in some way.” Here the Administrator acknowledges that there are “countless people” who fall out of the “community volunteer” category. The question that remains to be answered, however, is what makes the Administrator distinguish between volunteering for ‘a while’ versus “everyday?”

I was curious and asked a community volunteer whom I know about how he would define the distinction and he claimed that “only community volunteers get invited to Vathy Volunteers after hours.” Vathy Volunteers “after hours” are outings that the volunteers coordinate with each other and may invite community volunteers and other migrants to. It is comprised of many activities that range in formality: ‘hanging around’ after volunteering responsibilities, getting meals, going to the beach, hiking, walking, clubbing, drinking, and going ‘out.’

A typical outing with Vathy Volunteers consists of a night out in a dimly lit restaurant in the heart of Vathy, Samos. I attended a number of such events. On an average night there might be anywhere from fifteen to thirty people who attended the gathering. Live Greek music would play outside, as the room would be packed with volunteers from Vathy Volunteers and

community volunteers whom we worked closely with. Sometimes migrants who were not “community volunteers” would be invited as well, but it was less common. It is a tradition at this organization to celebrate a co-worker leaving with a goodbye dinner. Many evenings, we would go out one last time altogether in order to wish a beloved coworker of ours a safe trip home that night. The co-worker would either be a volunteer or a community volunteer, not just anyone from the camp that offered volunteer service or befriended individuals more closely associated with the NGO. The departing person would typically make the dinner reservations themselves and invite the volunteers on the Facebook group chat, our main form of mass communication. All of the volunteers who went to dinner would pay about five euros for their own portion of the buffet, while the asylum seekers that stopped by would enjoy a free meal. It is typical for attendees to drink spirits, such as wine and beer. There is often much laughter and socializing in the room. One might even find people dancing, if it is appropriate for the particular restaurant setting. Some restaurants have a dance floor and encourage dancing, while others prefer more relaxed guests.

For Vathy Volunteers, engaging in humanitarian action does not necessarily make a migrant a humanitarian. While one might assume that any act for the benefit of the camp counts as humanitarian action, this is not how the camp's dominant categorical system operates. Too many modes of action are unseen or unacknowledged when occurring in front of ‘humanitarians.’ What makes a migrant a humanitarian is the legibility of their volunteer work as a kind of ‘work.’ The migrants who are able to move beyond or complicate their social status as migrants most often offer free translation for different NGOs operating within the camp. I term these individuals as ‘refugee-plus’ because while their political status as refugees are unchanged, their translation services are understood as humanitarian work. However, interpellation of

laborers is not always this simple in Samos. While humanitarian exchanges are professionalized by NGOs, they occur outside of the professional sphere as well. Engaging in Vathy Volunteers “after hours” is a crucial part of being recognized as a community volunteer. It is what makes the difference between attaining credit and earning the title of a kind of volunteer. Participation in “after hours” influences the categories at hand by providing certain migrants the opportunity to forge and build relationships with Vathy Volunteers. In so doing, some migrants gain an advantage for being recognized as a “community volunteer.” The transgression of the professional and non-professional actually creates the professional category of volunteer. Engaging in nightlife is an aesthetic in the sense that it helps migrants socially stratify and build their networks.

Muhannad’s Story: Seeking Permission To Be A Vathy Volunteer

While in Samos, I created an informal children's education program that runs five days a week for two hours a day. This education program is called the Children’s Book Reading Circle and is for children roughly between the ages of 5 - 12. It still runs today and is led by refugees who speak English in addition to either Arabic, Kurdish or Farsi. The class sessions consist of basic English lessons and then a reading period in the respective languages of the children. This project incurs no costs because it makes use of several boxes of children’s books that were otherwise collecting dust in the Vathy Volunteers’ warehouse.⁵⁴ This project seeks to address a neglected educational need of some of the children in the refugee camp, as none of them are attending school. According to a United Nations statistic from 31 January 2018, approximately 18% of the 1,379 camp residents are children (UNHCR 2017, 1). Not only that,

⁵⁴ There were many languages spoken in the camp, such as French and Urdu, during my time there. Unfortunately, I did not find children’s books in the warehouse and fluent English speakers to teach the children in those other languages. This project could expand to incorporate those languages after my brief stay in Samos.

but most of the 248 migrant children on the island are unable to enter the small classes taught by the organization Save the Children.⁵⁵

I had recruited Muhannad, an Iranian man in his early twenties to be the English teacher for the Farsi-speaking children. Muhannad is a dedicated and reliable person. Despite his quiet demeanor, he was committed to making the book circle a success by reaching out to as many Farsi-speaking families as he could in order to advertise it. He worked slowly and patiently with the few children that he recruited. He made sure that they understood the information being presented to them by having them repeat after him correctly. He often celebrated his students' successful attempts by congratulating them with great enthusiasm and a head nod.

Several days after we began the Children's Book Reading Circle, Muhannad asked me a question in private. Muhannad and I were alone in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) container. It was a hot morning and we had just finished our reading circle shift that day. As we were sitting in the narrow trailer, he looked at me and asked, "Can I be a Vathy Volunteer?" I immediately replied, "Of course you are one! Aren't we doing the same work? Just because we have different nationalities does not mean that you are not a volunteer too." Muhannad smiled and seemed to be comforted by what I had said. He nodded his head and shared a few words that I do not quite remember entirely.

By asking me if he can be affiliated with the organization that I formally registered to volunteer for, Muhannad is showing that he wants to be part of this humanitarian circulation. Being a volunteer may encompass both a title and identity. Recognition of these things by Westerners and an institution run by them produces a sense of selfhood and belonging that may

⁵⁵ There were complaints by Vathy Volunteers, Community Volunteers, and migrants that the teachers in Save the Children would not check the children's notebooks for spelling or grammar mistakes, in addition to singing and coloring during most of class time.

feel elevated from the unaffiliated, individual, and ‘other’ migrant self. This sense of selfhood is what I described as ‘refugee-plus’ in the introduction to this chapter, which symbolizes something more than being just a human or a migrant.

Perhaps Muhannad is seeking some form of acknowledgement and affiliation with Vathy Volunteers in a more recognized sense because he is thinking about his future. Like the other volunteers, he will likely search for a job and might have an advantage in getting one by claiming volunteer status. Therefore, in this case, Vathy Volunteers status may not only be a personal achievement, but also something that may offer Muhannad some sort of practical advantages, such as building his resume.

After reflecting on this moment, which was one of my most striking ones during my time in Samos, I think that I misinformed Muhannad by mapping my own beliefs onto those of Vathy Volunteers as an NGO. I wondered why did Muhannad have to ask to be a volunteer and why did he ask me of all of the other volunteers and volunteer coordinators. Unlike the other “refugee-pluses,” Muhannad did not get invited to integrate within the Vathy Volunteers community. While English is a tool you use to participate in nightlife, his fluency was not enough for him to integrate into the free-flowing social interactions of the Vathy Volunteers community.⁵⁶ Muhannad’s position as an unacknowledged community volunteer vis-a-vis Vathy Volunteers is quite curious when compared to Faris, an Iraqi refugee who volunteers for the organization in various capacities. Faris has a subtle speech impediment and can communicate in English a little bit. Despite having less English fluency than Muhannad, Faris is fully considered a community volunteer. I suppose this is because he makes concerted efforts to socialize with

⁵⁶ Frances Tomilson, in his article “Marking Difference and Negotiating Belonging: Refugee Women, Volunteering, and Employment,” draws upon a study on how refugee women in the United Kingdom find work opportunities. Tomilson finds that many of his interviewees echo the idea that “refugees’ lack of fluency and familiarity with UK practices as the main barriers to their employment” (2010: 284).

Vathy Volunteers in any way that he can. He socializes with Vathy Volunteers by volunteering in the Alpha Centre, sorting clothing in the Vathy Volunteers warehouse, offering some English translation, leading Vathy Volunteers activities, and engaging in “after hours.”

The embodied boundary between volunteer and migrant is subject to a great deal of negotiation. While the blurring of this boundary is constantly happening, there is ultimately push back against it and attempts to redraw it by Vathy Volunteers. This kind of negotiation reveals how unstable an authentic humanitarian subjectivity is. Although I propose a schema for understanding how migrants earn ‘plus’ qualities, it is not always clear just what separates the volunteer from the refugee. As I will discuss in the last section of this chapter, engaging in acts of hospitality provides some migrants an alternative social circulation to that of ‘volunteering’ in a sense recognizable to Vathy Volunteers than participating in “after hours.”

Mustapha’s Story: The Migrant Who Came Back as a Para-Vathy Volunteer

Mustapha is an eighteen year old Iraqi-Syrian asylee who can easily pass as twenty-four. He has thick facial hair, a welcoming baby face, and a strong desire to help others. Sometimes when I talk with Mustapha, I forget just how young he is. He arrived to Samos by boat over a year ago and was lucky enough to gain asylum. For many refugees, their asylum takes months and years, but for it took Mustapha nearly eight months. When I met him, he had returned to the island once more after spending some time in Athens. Although Mustapha had planned on taking the IELTS exam, the world’s most popular English test, he had no job and essentially “nothing” to do. His desire to return to Samos intensified over the longer he stayed in Athens, where he had no work and immediate plans for attending college. The Director of Vathy Volunteers helped Mustapha find a paying job in Samos, which gave him the perfect opportunity to return to the island. Mustapha deeply cared about supporting other asylum seekers who were forced to live in the dismal

conditions that he was able to evade. This sense of purpose even brought him to work in other Greek islands, such as Chios.

We were sitting one evening at a cafe beside the ocean. Mustapha kindly agreed to let me interview him for my research.⁵⁷ Mustapha shared that January 2017 was a time when Syrians were still “fast-tracked” in the asylum process. What this meant for him was that he was *not* asked about his experiences in Syria during his asylum interview.⁵⁸ As an Arabic-English translator for Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) and Samaritan's Purse, he knows that this certainly is not the case for asylum interviews today. Mustapha expressed that there needs to be a more detailed and “professional” report for everyone irrespective of their nationality, or lack thereof. He revealed that there is a new Greek law that Syrians are no longer a priority for asylum registration. This law is ostensibly a reaction to administrative practices followed by the 2016 EU-Turkey deal that privileged Syrian migrants over migrants of other nationalities.⁵⁹ That said,

⁵⁷ His presence was calm, appearing to have faith in where my intentions lay with our conversation. He did not hesitate sharing information during our entire conversation. He seemed to offer me trust very easily, and I am not entirely sure why. I suppose that he was put at ease by my thorough explanation of my research objectives -- to understand the migrant situation in Greece and compare my findings to journalistic reportage on this topic -- in addition to the professionalism I showed him throughout the process. After explaining my research, I received informed consent by him to record the conversation and publish any part of it in my senior thesis. He was also informed that a copy of my thesis would sit in one of Bard College's libraries, while also being accessible to the public online. I assured him that his identity would be protecting under the auspices of a pseudonym and that no explicit references to Samos or Vathy Volunteers would be made in the final product. These gestures coupled with our friendship and mutual respect contributed to the effortlessness in which Mustapha shared his stories.

⁵⁸ This may or may not be because of news coverage on the Syrian War, which gained a certain resonance and airtime on many media outlets that were not necessarily offered to other contexts undergoing war at that time. The Lawyers Abroad lawyer, James, exemplifies how reportage is a vital source of information for informing actors within the asylum process of the violence that the asylum applicants seek to evade. This is because he admits to reading the news in order to gain more background on the contexts that the migrants are fleeing. A total lack or poor reportage of certain contexts hinders James', and other lawyer's, abilities to advocate for their clients.

⁵⁹ I regret that I am unable to identify the Greek law according to the information relayed to me. However, Domokos and Kingsley argue that the process in registering migrants to the Greek island of Lesbos favors “Syrians, Yemenis, and Somalis” due to their country's “refugee profile” and the assumption that their asylum case will be “strong.” This article also notes that Syrians have six months in Greece before they are deported after getting their asylum application rejected, whereas Afghanis have one month (2015, 2). Refer to: John Domokos and Patrick Kingsley, “Chaos on Greek islands as refugee registration system favours Syrians,” *The Guardian*, November 21, 2015, accessed May 1, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/21/chaos-greek-islands-three-tier-refugee-registration-system-syria-lesbos>.

Mustapha is under the impression that asylees are chosen “randomly” and that “there is no real procedure” for their selection and rejection. This experience coupled with others has led Mustapha to believe that the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) “does not care about refugees.” Despite this conclusion, he claims that there once was a “lovely French woman” who worked in this office and had to leave because her temporary contract finished. For Mustapha, part of the problem within this office and other regulatory bodies in the Hotspot refugee camp is that the employees in the EASO shift in and out of their positions every six to eight months.⁶⁰ The constant cycling of workers does not allow for individuals to specialize in offering services that meet the specific needs in the camp.

Mustapha is a prime example of a young asylee who makes the ethical decision to ‘go back and do something.’ Besides the need to make money, Mustapha wanted to return to Samos “to be part of Vathy Volunteers and help people.” Although Mustapha is a migrant to Samos, when he returned to the island he was a para-Vathy Volunteer.⁶¹ This distinction from other “community volunteers” is made most apparent by him having to sign in on the list at the police area in the camp. All volunteers and workers in the camp must sign in and out of this list before entering the camp and performing their duties. Although Mustapha is a Vathy Volunteer, he will always be distinct from the other Vathy Volunteers because of his life journey. Mustapha acknowledges that he was able to move forward from Samos largely due to his Syrian nationality, knowing full well that also being Iraqi was not helpful at the time of his application. Mustapha returns to Samos as a relatively privileged asylee, one who is recognized as legal, employed, able-bodied, Greek-passing

⁶⁰ This same phenomenon occurs with the food and clothing distributors who work for the Greek charity Medina, as well as the Greek army/police force that runs the camp. I learned that the Medina employees shift their location every three months, yet am unsure about the army/police.

⁶¹ I call Mustapha a “Para-Vathy Volunteer,” even though he was called a Vathy Volunteer by many. I insist on using the frame of “para” in order to capture the ambiguity around his legal status by his appearance, ethnicity, accent, and life story.

based on appearance alone (fair complexion, yet can tan), and fluent in both Arabic and English. It is exceptional that Mustapha makes a little bit of money to sustain his basic living expenses, as all of the other multilingual asylees and asylum applicants working on the island do not get paid for their work.⁶² In a sense, Mustapha supports communities that he does not fully belong to, at least any longer.

In his book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Pierre Bourdieu pushes us to think against the idea of “objectivist” and “subjectivist theories” set in opposition to one another in order to apprehend social class, taste, and distinction (1984: 483). For Bourdieu, “class is defined as much by its *being-perceived* as by its *being*,” or in other words, its “consumption” as much as “its position in the relations of production” (1984: 484). Therefore, a migrant’s status as a volunteer or not is linked to both their ontological position and how they are perceived by others. This idea is critical when thinking about the ‘human-plus’ volunteer migrant figure as compared to a ‘migrant’ figure that is unemployable and not interpellated as a volunteer. Here, a class of ‘human-plus’ migrants emerges, one that is distinguished by other displaced people based on marketable skills that hold utility. That, however, is not to say that migrants lack ‘plus’ qualities, because they may go unrecognized for possessing them for various reasons.⁶³

Mustapha’s story highlights some of the ways in which class is created and enacted through humanitarian exchanges. The ability to make a relationship out of nothing, to be the

⁶² Nina and Alex are the political asylees who work on the island without pay, as they are affiliated with Vathy Volunteers. Karam, Majid, Tariq, among many others are asylum applicants who also work for free for Vathy Volunteers. Some of them also translate for the Boat Migrant Foundation and Lawyers Abroad, which do not offer compensation as well.

⁶³ An additional consideration is that most humanitarian aid rhetoric emphasizes a shared and equal humanity possessed by all. However, to be described as human as opposed to ‘human plus,’ is ironically downgrading. This is complicated even further when we consider the fact that some refugees insist on being called ‘human’ as opposed to a ‘refugee’ and vice versa. In these ways, identity politics plays an important role in constructing refugee classes.

migrant that ‘returns,’ sometimes necessitates money or certain assets and privileges not tied to wealth. In Mustapha’s case, his return was made possible from having asylum and paying jobs to return to. Nonetheless, Mustapha is so extraordinary because he is the asylum seeker who came back to Samos in order to give other migrants like him a better welcome to Greece and more opportunities. From Mustapha’s story, we also find that the process of departure and return enabled Mustapha to transform into what Para-Vathy Volunteer. This status is unlike any other of the “community volunteers” in the camp. Although Mustapha challenges the categorical system of Vathy Volunteers by being an unusual exception to it, he ultimately reinforces the system because the terms continue to persist.

The framing of categories matters in political organizing. The ambiguity of the Vathy Volunteers category system imposes a diffuse identity on migrants that are more explicitly positioned against the Greek state than the refugee camp administrators. The term migrant refers to one’s residency status vis-a-vis the Greek state, whereas a category like ‘camp resident’ may be set against the camp authorities and administrators. The identity of migrants, then, is built upon their relationship to Greece more explicitly than the humanitarians and authorities that manage them in the refugee camp. This frame can be troubling when humanitarians show solidarity with migrants against the Greek state, as if the humanitarians do not disempower the migrants too. In this way, the ambiguity behind Vathy Volunteers’ category system also allows for volunteers to take their efforts to do ‘good’ for granted.

So far I have explored the categorical system in the camp and now I will show how migrants critique this system. One of the ways in which migrants do this is through a discourse on hospitality. The solidity of category system created by Vathy Volunteers is challenged by a Levantine idiom of shame, propriety, and hospitality.

‘Ayb: A Levantine Idiom of Hospitality Used to Critique Humanitarian Aid in Samos

Hospitality is the very ground of one’s dignity. While hospitality may be trivial, or perhaps secondary, in other contexts, it is a widely possessed value amongst many of my interlocutors. The discourse of hospitality can be used by migrants to critique humanitarian action. “‘ayb (disgracefully rude and inappropriate)” is an Arabic idiom associated with evaluating hospitality and how well one is received by their host when entering their home.⁶⁴ In the Hotspot refugee camp, “‘ayb” is used by migrants to judge their conditions according to practices or standards of welcome from which they are familiar. In other words, the refugee camp’s own form of welcome is assessed by the migrants, or the guests, in the guest-host dynamic. This idiom of hospitality is the language through which many migrants critique how the refugee camp is not meeting their bare minimum needs or what they believe should be available to them. It is important to note that “‘ayb” is not a term that the majority of the humanitarian aid workers understand, so these critiques are often expressed unbeknownst to them.

There are many occasions I recall speaking with the migrant Muhammad, a lively thirty year old from Jenin, Occupied Territories. He has several medical issues that make it difficult for him to walk for extended periods of time, in addition to digesting food.⁶⁵ He often talked about his health and the state of the camp conditions. On several occasions, he discussed topics such as inaccessibility of clean water, edible food, sanitation (especially of the bathrooms), and medical

⁶⁴ According to Oxford Islamic Studies Online, “‘ayb” means the “‘disgrace,’ ‘defect,’ or ‘shame’ resulting from dishonorable behavior, which may range from the shirking of familial responsibilities by a man to resorting to provocative clothing or being seen in the company of unrelated men for a woman. Mischievous or disrespectful children are often reproved by adults with this powerful admonition.” See: “Ayb.” In *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito. *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, accessed April 30, 2018, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e255>.

⁶⁵ While migrants are provided food in the camp, sometimes they have the opportunity to cook or buy food with their monthly stipend from the UN.

care. Every time he described the different issues he faced in the camp, he would always come back to describing the situation as “ayb.” In these circumstances, “ayb” takes on many meanings, as it’s usually ambiguously employed for a wide range of things that are unethical and uncivil. Muhammad not only describes these conditions as a result of a lack of manners, care, or hospitality, but also invokes a sense of shamelessness for these abusive acts.

Other migrants in the camp also found “ayb” to be a particularly apt way of describing how the camp administrative forces were managing them. They, too, share the same sense of embarrassment for the unabashed mistreatment that migrants receive in Samos. I found this sense of embarrassment widely expressed by Palestinian and Syrian migrants. Some Syrians would say this is because, “Istaqbalnahom (We received them / We treated them with hospitality),” possibly referring to when Syria took in Greek refugees after the Greco-Turkish war in 1923, during Turkey’s annexation of the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1939, and after fleeing Nazi occupation during WWII.⁶⁶ This critique situates the evaluation of hospitality with the historical narrative of unrealized reciprocity. This phrase was said with such earnestness as if to try to convince others of this historical fact. Some migrants were thus articulating the argument that because Syria provided refuge for thousands of Greeks during their time of need, that this act should be ‘remembered’ and reciprocated for the Syrians today. Some Syrians exclaimed that “ataynahom akil wa buyoot (we gave them food and houses)” and “bi’eshoo ma’na (they [the Greek refugees to Syria] live among us).” They would even passionately list off what “they,” the Syrians and Syrian state, did for Greek refugees during their time in need, and compare it to their contemporary treatment in Greece. One time, three Syrians who were discussing this topic zealously talked over each other, as their critiques of the injustices bounced off of one another.

⁶⁶ “When the Greeks Found Shelter in Syria,” Perichoresis, accessed May 1, 2018, https://www.perichoresis.ngo/template_ilama_creative/.

They seemed to find this conversation cathartic, as if they were releasing some pain and tension through a game.

Several Syrians would bitterly say that “Younan awsakh balad fe kol Uroba (Greece is the dirtiest country in all of Europe).”⁶⁷ Some people went as far as to claim that their experiences in Greece were worse than in Turkey, although there was no consensus on this. A number of people expressed a preference for the harsh and busy lifestyles they had in order to financially support themselves in Turkey over living in the squalor of the Greek refugee camp, where there are essentially no opportunities for migrants to get a job. Many migrants were also under the impression that countries like Germany and Sweden would treat them much better than Greece. Many migrants’ ideas and hopes for a better future in Europe endured despite their disappointing experiences in Samos.

With all of the critique of the services and aide provided by the camp, there were also some actors whose efforts did not go by unnoticed. The Boat Migrant Foundation (BMF) was unilaterally appreciated by all of the migrants I came in contact with. The two BMF doctors worked in conjunction with what I presume to be two other doctors sent by the Greek organization Medina. Muhammad described the green medical passports distributed by the Boat Migrant Foundation (BMF) as a potent example of “ihtiram (respect and sort of dignity)” in the camp.⁶⁸ For every doctor’s appointment, BMF distributed medical passports that described the ailment, interventions, and medical instruction in the migrants’ respective language and English.

⁶⁷ There were several occasions where some refugees did not seem to regard Greece as a ‘truly’ European country. While they acknowledged that Greece is a European state, it was not viewed on the same level as the former colonial empires or rich Northwestern countries. Linguistically, a nineteen year-old Syrian refugee repeatedly referred to Greece as separate from Europe in a very matter of fact tone, “Younan wa Uroba.” What is significant about this statement is that Europe included the ‘big’ countries like Germany, Sweden, France, Britain, Belgium, Norway, etc.

⁶⁸ The Arabic idiom for ihtiram can also be associated with hospitality. Here, Muhammad is using an Arabic idiom connected to hospitality in order to show what is being done right in the management of migrants in Samos.

These passports also indicated the patient's medical history and all the past and future appointments they would have with the BMF doctors. Muhammad expressed on multiple occasions how the thorough, accurate, and cleanly legible details in the medical passports made him feel cared for. The BMF passports are an expression of respect and dignity because they allow migrants to be differentiated and receive personalized assessments of the ailments. The materiality of the passports matters because they allow for thorough information exchange and documentation of the migrants' medical history and interventions. An aesthetic world is also invoked by the neatly produced passports. BMF seems like a hospital in a way that other NGOs are not because of their attention to detail and presentation. The aesthetically pleasing passports elevates the migrants from being merely human or 'bare.'⁶⁹ The personalization and presentation of the passports makes them feel like gifts, or at least a hospitality gesture that surpasses the quality of their other humanitarian exchanges. It is perhaps most striking that the medical documents that BMF distributes to migrants are passports, which are the things that they most desperately need and may likely be denied to them by the European states.

While the doctors in Medina sometimes have patients walk away with sheets, these papers are not as detailed and accurate. That said, however, this may be in large part due to the translators. There was an instance where a man asked me if I could check the information on a medical report issued by Medina for his wife. She had recently had a miscarriage and was pregnant again. Someone had miscommunicated the time that elapsed between the miscarriage and the second pregnancy, in addition to the timeframe that she had bled. I made the corrections on a sticky note and placed it on the report. While the man was appreciative of my help, he had

⁶⁹ Here, I am invoking Giorgio Agamben's notion of "bare life," which refers to a conception of life where biological life is given precedence over the way that life is lived (Agamben 2016).

to go back to Medina and somehow inform them of the miscommunication. The queue could have been very likely to be long that day.

The details found in the BMF medical passports starkly contrast with the “police papers” that each migrant receives once they arrive to Greece. This is their only form of official identification and they can get arrested if they do not carry it with them at all times. The papers would be distributed in a clear plastic sheet in order to protect them. Their transliterated names would be scribbled on the sheet. Sometimes a completely false name would appear and other times an incorrect age.⁷⁰

Despite the quality of care that the unpaid BMF doctors offered, the organization was no longer permitted to offer medical care in the camp because it admitted a patient to the hospital without having a doctor from Medina see them first. This went against Medina’s legal mandate in the camp and ultimately led to the termination of BMF’s privileges to operate in the camp.⁷¹

A central question that this chapter seeks to address is: how are work and hospitality defined by migrants? We see how migrants can make themselves into moral actors by associating with volunteers. However, some exchanges outside of the volunteer realm get coded into the hospitality realm. In some senses, this slippage or misrecognition of action is a way for volunteers to potentially write off migrants’ work as a kind gesture, rather than act of volunteering that is equal to theirs.

This collection of stories attempts to offer some more details about what migrants think about their acts being called hospitality. Despite the elaborate hierarchy surrounding humanitarianism that I propose in this chapter, its implication may not matter to some migrants.

⁷⁰ It is plausible that asylum seekers gave “false” names, although I was unaware of it.

⁷¹ Regardless of the desperate and growing need for quality medical care, this is just another instance of where the camp mandates override logical and ethical alternatives.

Instead, what may matter to them is hospitality. In fact, the ‘humanitarians’ from time to time are irritants to the migrants and to be one of them is not viewed as a compliment. What matters to some migrants is whether they are being a good host or not.

Hospitality and dignity undergird acts of labor that are and are not ‘gifts.’ I am arguing under the assumption that volunteering in certain senses is a kind of gift-giving that is not one that is not instrumentalized for calculated motives, although it can be. Dignity is at the heart of the politics of how humanitarianism is recognized.

Hospitality: An Alternative Sphere of Humanitarian Circulation in the Refugee Camp

Acts of hospitality provide an alternative to volunteering. Hospitality takes on a subjective range of meanings. I witnessed various acts of hospitality myself while spending time with migrants both inside and outside of the refugee camp. Hospitality can mean watching over a neighbor’s child, giving a haircut, showing concern for someone’s health, and even offering an apple. Below I describe an experience I had with a Syrian mother, Oum Amir.

Oum Amir Feeding Me an Apple

Although the heat wave had slightly subsided by evening, the prospect of staying cool in the container was dismal. With sweat beads rolling down Oum Amir’s face, she began to peel an apple. She handed me a yellow slice the way my aunts did when I was a child.

I politely tried explaining to her that though I was not hungry, I was deeply appreciative of her gift. I knew better than to reject food from an Arab mother because of my Middle Eastern upbringing. I was not surprised when she insisted that I take it, proceeding to hand me several more slices shortly thereafter.

As I was chewing, I looked at her youngest son, Zaid, who was tucked into a bed in front of me. Although his fever was worsening, he was unable to see a doctor again that day. With up to four doctors working at a time and limited access to translators, it was highly unlikely that the two thousand inhabitants of the Hotspot refugee camp would be seen in a timely manner, even when their lives depended on it most.

In an effort to alleviate some of Zaid's discomfort, Oum Amir soaked a cloth in cool water and placed it on his forehead. She tucked a thin sheet around her 10 year-old son, and carried the liter water bottle as he sipped from it. She was taking care of Zaid and me, while her eldest son was still in the island's hospital after a stomach virus prevented him from eating anything for five days.

Oum Amir's attention to detail is familiar to me. She reminds me of the compassionate and generous Arab women that I grew up with, having come to appreciate my own mother the most. That day, Oum Amir showed me how special she loves. She took me into her tent as a privileged volunteer and wanted to take care of me as though I too was one of her beloveds. Her care taking took place in privacy and from what I believe to be without ulterior motives. Her unblemished intentions were apparent to me from the very beginning and confirmed to me because we never spoke of this exchange after it took place. Intentions aside, however, Oum Amir had a desire to be close to me and exchange. Dignity is the capacity to give and not just receive. While some migrants may find dignity in having their volunteer work interpellated as such, others may prefer less public exchanges. Hospitality is a dignified form of gift-giving and receiving, whereas humanitarian exchanges may lack dignity for the receivers. Marcel Mauss argues that "charity wounds him who receives" (2014, 63). Mauss would agree that the problem with volunteering is that it does not allow for the gift to be reciprocated. This uneven circulation

maintains the power relations in the camp, where the receiving migrants can never quite fulfill their debt to the giving humanitarians.

Oum Amir offers us a poignant example of what hospitality can look and feel like. Her hospitality in many ways contradicts the efforts taken on by some of my humanitarian counterparts, in the sense that it claims no title, affiliation, and recognition. It may be safe to conclude that hospitality is more of a way of life and interacting with others. Once these acts claim to be volunteering, they become professionalized and perhaps adulterated. While this professionalization process is a source of dignity and comfort for people like Muhannad, it also distances the acts themselves from ‘pure’ hospitality. Therefore, from my understanding, hospitality like that of Oum Amir is hidden and nameless in the best way. It is for the sake of only doing and inspiring ‘good.’

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that humanitarianism is an aesthetic and that ‘humanitarian’ work is subject to the institutions that name it. I posit that what makes one a refugee-plus is engaging in “after hours” with the interpellated volunteers. This blurry distinction between “volunteer” and “migrant” ruptures the dichotomy of migrant and humanitarian. This false dichotomy begs us to question what it means to be both human and a humanitarian.

The title of “volunteer” may make migrants feel as though they are transcending their conditions, to the extent that they may even unbecome what they legally are. In this sense, free labor helps migrants establish a self in a recognizable way to others by unmaking them passive non-working subjects. That said, migrants need to both offer particular kinds of work and be integrated within the Vathy Volunteers social community in order to be legible as just another volunteer. The subject position of the migrant worker, as opposed to the Euro-American

volunteer is one plagued with deep irony. These seemingly opposite categories are created through class distinctions, which align along national, racial, cultural, religious, and socio-economic lines. While these lines are subject to negotiation, they ought to inspire us to reflect on how we recognize work. By considering the agency of migrants, we can more clearly see the discursive practices and structural forces that perpetuate their outsider status as either Community Volunteers or migrant helpers.

The conditions that I lay out in Samos begs us to question who is in charge of providing welfare and what humanitarian work really means. A welfare regime is created by Euro-American aid workers and migrants in Samos, as they privately take on some of the responsibilities of migrant management. My thoughts on the labor relations in this island highlight the classism inherent to how some humanitarian regimes operate. I hope that you walk away from this chapter with more questions about what volunteering is. How may volunteering be in tension with hospitality, even though it may attempt to serve as a kind of hospitality itself?

Conclusion

The assessment of human action is at the core of this thesis. Through the stories that I share, I argue that aesthetic decision making is intrinsically ethical. By separating these actions from one another, we miss the complexity through which they are made and the context from which they emerge from. This project shows how the ethical and aesthetic realms come together and the ways in which people produce themselves and others upon their convergence.

This thesis pays attention to differentiation efforts and circulations made by migrants. In the first chapter, I focus on how clothing is imbued with meaning and possibilities for migrants that go beyond adornment and aesthetics. In chapter two, I observe the reinvigoration of national distinctions within the camp as a way of assessing a migrant's motives and whether or not they belong in the camp. In chapter three, I look at titles and how volunteers, migrants, and murky mixture of the two categories are interpellated by the NGO Samos Volunteers. Clothing, nationality, and titles influences migrants' subjectivity and allows them to determine ethics for themselves.

Part of my project looks at how migrants self-identity and reimagine themselves in displacement. Sometimes their self-perceptions contradict the categories given to them by humanitarian regimes that regulate them. What I have tried to do, however, is also show that the migrant's perceptions of themselves may not be entirely disentangled from these regimes. In fact, I share how nation-state distinctions and the persisting categories of migrants as non-volunteers also shapes how migrants see themselves. The invention of the nation continues to hold weight in displacement and actually offers the basis for stereotypes that exist within some migrant imaginaries. What these stories show is that migrants are complex figures who make ethical decisions and whose work and perspectives ought to be valued just as anyone else's.

This project reveals some of the dialogues between the Greek state, international humanitarian aid organizations, and migrants. It is of paramount importance to improve these conversations in order to improve future approaches to refugee support in Greece. My findings provide unique insight on some of the social and economic aspirations of the migrants, which can be used to improve future models for their management and integration. I argue that better approaches to refugee support involve integration and open border policies, instead of fortifying refugee camps. The design of the refugee camps as ‘temporary’ spaces is doomed from its inception because many migrants live in them for prolonged periods of time without the means to support themselves on their own. It would be more empowering for migrants if they were integrated into their new communities, so that they could transition into building an independent life for themselves.

As I close this project, I cannot help but to refer back to the sea. My interest in Greece as a potential field site was sparked by images on the news of capsizing boats filled with migrants at the height of the contemporary refugee crisis. Nowadays, these images have almost vanished from many Western news networks because this topic has been oversaturated for quite a while. Although deterrence measures are taken, that is not to say that migrations have ended or refugee camp conditions have improved.

When I arrived in Greece and saw the sea for the first time, I was overwhelmed with contradictory emotions. I felt like I was standing in front of an open graveyard. I was horrified by what the sea could mean to the migrants who encountered it every time they walked to the Vathy seaport. While the sea indexes trauma to migrants, as they often reach the island on overcrowded dinghies in the middle of the night without even a life jacket at times, it also

signifies leisure. The public beaches, as well as parks, serve as a respite from the refugee camp. These spaces offer migrants small pleasures that enable them to ‘get away’ for a while.

I was also deeply perplexed by the tourism that continued on the island despite its migrant situation. On the one hand, I wanted tourists to come to Samos so that they could support the Greeks living there; who to this day are still dealing with the aftermath of the economic crisis. While on the other hand, I was disturbed by the idea of people vacationing in a setting that is so close to the refugee camp. These thoughts have brought me to leave you with one last question: how can we make travel and tourism more equitable and ethical?

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