

Part II

Sights of Mediation

CHAPTER FOUR

Salgado and the Sahel

Documentary Photography and the Imaging of Famine

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In memoriam: Mary J. Geske, 1960–2001

The Famine Icons of Africa

Africa is a continent already imprinted with its own peculiar photographic iconography.¹

The African food crises of the 1980s fundamentally transformed the academic consensus on the nature of famine. In place of timeworn assumptions about the naturalized occurrence of shortages, famines were recognized as human productions, engendered as much by asymmetrical power relations in the economic, political, and social environment as by the continent's ecology.²

What did not change in this period, however, were the images of African famine. In the European imagination, "Africa" (itself a mythical unity) has been produced as a site of cultural, moral, and spatial difference, populated by "barbarians," "heathens," "primitives," "savages," and the generally underdeveloped. With a historical pedigree ranging across various media and stretching from the first encounters to contemporary international relations scholarship, this discursive economy makes available the interpretative resources for subsequent imagery.³ In particular, the nineteenth-century intersection of anthropology, colonialism, and photography gave a powerful technological boost to already-existing conceptions hospitable to the new power relations.⁴ When these resources intersect with a disaster such as famine, the end result is a "global visual

field of often quite standardized representational practices”—either lone individuals or a seething mass, victimized, hungry, staring blankly for a pitying audience far away.⁵

These images portray a particular kind of helplessness that reinforces colonial relations of power. With their focus firmly on women and children, these pictures offer up icons of a feminized and infantilized place, a place that is passive, pathetic, and demanding of help from those with the capacity to intervene.⁶ They are manifest most obviously in the mother-and-child images that have dominated both still photography and video footage of famines.⁷

The imaging of famine remains controversial, as the remarks of Claire Short, the British Secretary of State for International Development, in April 1998 indicate. In pressing for a political response from the international community to war and famine in the Sudan, Short lambasted those British aid agencies that had authorized a public appeal to raise funds for emergency relief. This appeal, with its well-established imagery of starvation, was, in Short's view, counterproductive. Speaking at a seminar on disasters and the media, she protested that “the pictures hurt and upset [the public] but they feel it keeps coming around and it seems to be hopeless and they flinch and turn away.”⁸ The end result, Short claimed, was despair and hopelessness among the donor public, confirming the position of Africa as a place of hunger and misery, in which political solutions to the crisis cannot be found.

Short's attack on the aid agencies' visual strategies, and her call for them to engage only in “positive advertising,” provoked a flurry of media comment. Journalists reflected on the constraints of reporting, and the way difficult choices might have unintended consequences. For example, the BBC's Fergal Keane recounted his experience of filming a starving thirteen-year-old girl in southern Sudan as the centerpiece of a story. Going beyond what he calls “the ritual guilt to our trade,” Keane laments what he did:

It is a sense that perhaps I have taken away her individuality; her right to be seen as something other than another starving African. I had believed that by focusing on this one child I could actually make people identify with the crisis in south Sudan. Give her name, her age, her story. The people will see that skeletal creatures are in fact individual human beings. . . . I now wonder if the opposite did not turn out to be the case. Yes, my report contained all the “necessary” facts. . . . But I fear that in

my report the context was overshadowed by the image of a child in agony. With four minutes to tell the story (and that is a lot of time in a 30-minute news bulletin) that harrowing image was bound to be the defining one.⁹

Although this report might have made some sad and others give, like Short, Keane wonders if “others may have simply looked and turned away, depressed and alienated by yet another image of starving Africa.” As Keane concludes, “we have become used to viewing the continent through a prism of misery. The relentless tide of bad news from Africa has reinforced cultural stereotypes that date from the colonial era: the African as savage; the African as buffoon; the African as helpless, starving shadow.”¹⁰ The only solution, he argues, is to place the image of misery in its context, which is something that can only be determined by the individual reporter.

Despite that plea, Keane’s concern about the power of the imagery of suffering individuals overshadowing any attempt at contextualization is well founded. In large part, the changing political economy of news gathering is exacerbating the problem. With major media corporations employing fewer dedicated foreign reporters and regional experts, the stories and images that are being submitted from the field are increasingly generic, and thus increasingly determined by already-existing representations of events. For the electronic media, the proliferation of news channels, with their insatiable appetite for dramatic live reports with accompanying images, means the shorthanded staffs are tied to their satellite dishes rather than out in the field.¹¹ For the print media, crisis coverage will not run without good pictures, and the priority of stories is being determined by the availability of images.¹² This is helping to change, to some extent, the nature of news photography, which has “begun to take on aesthetic qualities, borrowing freely from the formal innovations of artists in an attempt not only to seize the eye but also to hold it. What used to be called ‘stoppers’—pictures that made page-turners pause—have been replaced by more complex and self-conscious images intended to be ‘keepers.’”¹³ But with print resources as stretched as the electronic counterparts, stock pictures (those already taken and on file with an agency) are sometimes substituted for context- and time-sensitive reporting, and the reporting that does take place is more often than not a product of three global news agencies working to scripts rather than individual photojournalists pursuing issues. All of which

means “the BB” image (Bloated Belly, the journalist’s shorthand for a “starving child” picture) continues to have salience.¹⁴

Interlude: Imaging the Event

The construction of the event (the humanitarian emergency) becomes the event—for the purposes of public opinion and policy flow.¹⁵

The obvious and numerous shortcomings associated with the dominant way in which famine in Africa is imaged should not be taken to suggest that a form of representation that would be “closer to the truth” could or should be found. Relevant to this conclusion is François Debrix’s discussion of mediation in the Introduction to this volume. Debrix argues that mediation should be regarded as a social practice located between subjects and objects that guarantees their existence as subjects and objects, thereby making social meanings possible. Although it might be heuristically correct to observe—as Debrix does—that mediation thereby protects subjects and objects from an *immediate* encounter, no such encounter devoid of mediation is phenomenologically possible. This impossibility derives from the fact that events, particularly political events, and especially humanitarian crises, do not possess a naturally given meaning or significance. For them to reach us in some way, they have to be constituted as an event, and this process of constitution is inseparable from their event-ness.

In the context of the construction of humanitarian crises, such as a famine, the pictorial can play a particularly important role. For happenings to become events worthy of the name “disaster,” a standard calculus is operative whereby the numbers of victims and their proximity (or lack of it) combine to effect a sense of urgency. The visual can reinforce and underscore that calculus, but it can also work to disrupt it by embodying a power that through images generates an affective and effective demand from those otherwise outside the sphere of concern.¹⁶ And yet, this possibility is often constrained by a double bind—although an event can only be an event if it can be reproduced (and then only a particular sort of event when it can be re-presented in a particular way), the reproductibility of the event can prevent us from experiencing and understanding the event.¹⁷ This double bind is even more marked within the specific pictorial domain of photography, which honors yet marks and fixes its subjects, gives a name and a face to an event while stigmatizing and holding it at bay.¹⁸ This doubling of meaning in photography

embodies one form of the “double contradictory imperative” integral to deconstruction’s affirmative and radical possibilities.¹⁹

Although a “better” form of representation, insofar as that means getting closer to the unmediated (or immediate) truth, is not possible, better forms of representation are not impossible. The established modes of imaging African famine do not exhaust the interpretative possibilities for the pictorial representation of the event. Alternatives exist, and insofar as they might be amenable to readings and responses that challenge the pathetic subjectivity of victimhood made possible by the established modes, by embodying a power that transgresses colonial relationships, those alternatives could be considered better. The photojournalism of Sebastião Salgado might constitute one of the better alternatives.

Alternatives: Salgado’s Sahel Photographs

Hunger lies. It simulates being an insoluble mystery or a vengeance of the gods. Hunger is masked, reality is masked. Salgado was an economist before he found out that he was a photographer. He first came to the Sahel as an economist. There, for the first time, he tried to use the camera’s eye to penetrate the skins reality uses to hide itself.²⁰

Now regarded as one of the foremost documentary photographers and photojournalists, Sebastião Ribeiro Salgado, born in Brazil in 1944, began his working life as an economist. Trained at São Paulo University, he emigrated to Paris in 1969 to escape the political repression of the Brazilian military junta. Having half-completed a doctorate in economics at the University of Paris, he was employed for two years by the International Coffee Organization (ICO) in London.²¹

Salgado discovered photography relatively late in his working life, taking his first camera on field trips for the ICO. But what he encountered in the process was that the photographic image involved a practice of mediation at odds with the formal relationships of a social science such as economics: “It was a completely different way to put yourself in relation to that person that was in front of you. . . . The way I presented myself to people as an economist dealing with social problems was completely different than with the camera. I saw that with photography I could probably have a connection with my work that I didn’t have until then.”²² With his background of Latin American Marxist economics and photography, Salgado has been pithily described as being “nothing less than André Gunder Frank with a Leica.”²³

Having abandoned his economics career and become a freelance photographer, Salgado's first assignment in 1973 was to photograph the situation in the Sahel for the World Council of Churches.²⁴ Despite having produced the well-known images of the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan in 1981, Salgado does not do and does not care for news photography. Instead, he undertakes "lengthy, self-initiated and generally self-financed voyages."²⁵ With the income from the universally syndicated Reagan pictures, and aided by his then agency, Magnum, but without a specific assignment, Salgado ventured back to the Sahel in 1984 in order to make the lives of people there visible. Working for fifteen months in the region, he produced a series of photographs that many regard as markedly different from the standardized "starving child" images.²⁶

Published under the title of *L'Homme en détresse*, as a book for Médecins sans Frontières in France and Spain, Salgado's images of the Sahelian famine of 1984–85 embody many of the pictorial themes that would run through his later work.²⁷ That these images are not reproduced here means that this argument confronts the problem of "ekphrasis"—how to achieve the verbal representation of visual imagery.²⁸ Confronting ekphrasis is in many ways to be faced with an impossibility. As W. J. T. Mitchell writes, "no amount of description, as Nelson Goodman might put it, adds up to a depiction. A verbal representation cannot represent—that is, make present—its object in the same way a visual representation can. It may refer to an object, describe it, invoke it, but it can never bring its visual presence before us in the way pictures do. Words can 'cite,' but never 'sight' their objects."²⁹

What, then, can be said directly of Salgado's Sahel images? From the selection of this series available at Salgado's Web site, the photographs' uncompromisingly portray the situation, with abundant images of death and deprivation.³⁰ At the same time, these images disclose more than the standardized icons of famine. People are shown in "more active and clear-cut situations: caring, fleeing, hiding, grieving, and burying their dead."³¹ Ethiopians are not just helpless; although in need of assistance, they are seen working for one another in the provision of aid, and the observed rituals surrounding the deceased demonstrate that life is not regarded as cheap, or that the severity of the circumstances has curtailed culture.

The form of these images marks them off from the work of many news photographers. Salgado declines to use color photography on the grounds

that “it is too much real. It doesn’t allow you to have a single degree of imagination,” and he eschews the use of the flashlight as being too harsh.³² Instead, he photographs only in black and white, with elegant contrasts and texture achieved by the plentiful use of black and shadows. Relying on natural light, and often shooting against the light, he achieves a luminosity that can be surprising. Anna Cataldi, who accompanied Salgado to refugee camps in Croatia as part of a later project, recalled that everything she observed was “gray, dark, formless,” and yet Salgado’s images emitted light.³³ In Eduardo Galeano’s (somewhat unfortunate) analogy, “light is a secret buried under the garbage and Salgado’s photographs tell us that secret.”³⁴ In the Sahel series, the image of Tigrean refugees clustered under trees hiding from Ethiopian surveillance flights, with shafts of sunlight streaming through the leaves, is an obvious example of this.³⁵

Salgado’s use of light, especially when combined with the blurring of life and death in and among the content of his images, has led many to tag him as a photographic practitioner of “magical realism.”³⁶ The concept of magic realism is most often applied to aesthetic forms that emanate from the global periphery and seek to challenge the dominant and totalizing modes of intelligibility propagated by the imperial center. As a feature of much postcolonial fiction—such as the novels of Gabriel García Márquez, Ben Okri, or Salman Rushdie—it involves the hybrid intersection of the real and the fantastic.³⁷ The effect of this intermixing is to highlight the contradictions in the social that the magical seeks to transcend, and to resituate the real as an incomplete and even misplaced account of the totality of life. As Michael J. Shapiro observes, magic realism thus shows “how all forms of the so-called real are simply the result of a more concerted and institutionalized set of fantasies.”³⁸

In this context, the interpretation of Salgado as photography’s magic realist is a powerful and suggestive reading. However, the manner in which it is readily asserted but rarely explored means that it can function less as an account of his work’s significance and more as a means of inscribing it as an “aesthetic form of exotic otherness.”³⁹ Sometimes Salgado’s own pronouncements on the uniqueness of a Southern perspective, or the influence of Brazilian culture with its everyday violence and attendant death on his imaginary, might encourage this.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, if the category of magic realism is taken to include more than the aesthetics of the global margin—something that an appreciation of the literature

of first-world minorities, such as the novels of Toni Morrison and Keri Hulme, warrants—and it is situated as part of an effort to foster what Foucault called “the critical ontology of ourselves,” the affirmative, liberatory qualities of a postcolonial stance can be multiplied.⁴¹ That said, as with many, if not most, other aesthetic forms, a progressive political stance is not guaranteed by magic realism’s disturbance of governing genres. Rather, it offers radical possibilities in its disturbance of the seemingly natural through the disclosure of contradictions, yet permits passivity by only drawing attention to the aesthetic paradox. In this sense, “magic realism has been shown both to engage with history, by manipulating narrative conventions as symbolic acts of resistance or empowerment, and to reject history for a more static vision, but resisting precisely an engagement with the political.”⁴² Insofar as Salgado’s photographs embody pictorially this double possibility, their status as problematizing alternatives, though achievable, is not intrinsically given.

Another feature of Salgado’s photographs that chimes with the appellation of magic realism is the presence of apparently religious themes. Indeed, the aura that is produced by the intersection of form and content in Salgado’s Sahel images leads some to see them as part of “the long Christian tradition of the iconography of suffering.”⁴³ Photographs of men with their arms in crosslike positions; people with shrouds around their heads; children being held and carried by their parents—all combine to leave an unmistakable impression of the sacred.⁴⁴ If taken as a series—and Salgado insists that his work be taken as a series rather than as a collection of individual images—the feminization and infantilization of famine dominant elsewhere are far from prevalent.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, a number of the individual images of mothers with children recall the *pietà* images—those representations of the Virgin Mary holding the body of Christ, with their name derived from “piety”—that often lead observers to speak of the famine as a “biblical” event.⁴⁶ And yet Salgado rejects the notion that either he or his work is religious, noting instead that what interests him “is the spiritual side of man.”⁴⁷ In marking off spirituality from religion, and wanting to see dimensions to humans other than materiality, Salgado’s reasoning has affinities with William Connolly’s notion of a “non-theistic reverence for being.”⁴⁸

The overriding reason for the difference between Salgado’s Sahel images and the iconic famine images is the sentiment that the intersection of form and content can produce. Compassion is not Salgado’s aim: “If

the person looking at my pictures only feels compassion, I will believe that I have failed completely. I want people to understand that we can have a solution.”⁴⁹ As David Levi Strauss observes, “Whereas those other images end at pity or compassion, Salgado’s images begin at compassion and lead from there to further recognitions. One of the first is that starvation does *not* obliterate human dignity. . . . Salgado did not photograph passive victims, and pity does not suffice.”⁵⁰ The focus on dignity, this construction of dignity in place of pity, is perhaps Salgado’s leitmotiv. As he has remarked: “Sometimes we from the Southern hemisphere wonder why you in the North think you have the monopoly of beauty, dignity, of riches. Ethiopia is a country in crisis, where the people are suffering so acutely, yet Ethiopians are probably among the most beautiful, most noble people in the world. There is really no point in going there to deny this reality.”⁵¹

This reality, for Salgado, is not one easily apprehended. He encountered in his first days in an Ethiopian camp something “beyond my imagination.” So many people dying and so many people in distress left him incapable of making photographs. Yet, after the passage of some time, and after reflecting on the fact that he came like the doctors or the engineers with a job to do, he began to work. “So you start to photograph, and after a few more days you start to see the human qualities of the people, not just their pain. You see that they have hope. That is the most human quality for me—hope. And maybe after three weeks in the camp you even begin to smile, like the old people in the camp who smile through their desperation. They have hope to go ahead and fight for their lives. Hope becomes your way of life.”⁵² Given this, even the famine camp is not a reality in which the people are miserable: “Sometimes people say to me, ‘Sebastião, you take pictures of such misery.’ I take pictures of people that have less material goods than others. Misery is human, misery is the spirit. Misery is not lack of material things.”⁵³ In this context, Salgado maintains that he does not find the project—as one interview put it, of photographing “the wretched of the earth”—a depressing exercise:

No, it’s not really depressing in the sense you mean. It is exceptional to see people who are in the process of struggling to maintain their living conditions, not just for their survival, but for the dignity of their lives, and to protect their community. When you see this courage, this will to struggle, you realize that history is not finished, that they have not laid

down their arms and given up the struggle. One must show that. When an English or French or German person sees that he or she sees part of themselves, that we are all part of the human species.⁵⁴

Having deployed elements of the sacred, tapped in to a particular tradition of iconography, and acknowledged agency, beauty, and dignity amid disaster, Shawcross and Hodgson argue that Salgado achieves a repositioning of concern, one that attempts to overcome estrangement: “By placing the Sahel within a tradition we know, Salgado refuses to allow us to claim distance or strangeness as a reason for not understanding.”⁵⁵ As a result, “Salgado’s photographs are more than the cold docketing of disaster. By using images that recall others long familiar to us, he forces us to contemplate seriously what we see. He allows us to bridge the abysmal gap between the unimaginable (but very real) and ourselves by interposing photographs that ask for reaction from the eyes first and only then from the conscience.”⁵⁶

This means that “Salgado’s photos are not a historical record; they are of the present, and they are of the future. Their message is that humanitarianism is not enough.”⁵⁷ Indeed, Salgado’s Sahel photographs embody a humanitarian critique of much conventional humanitarian activity. Hugo Slim observes that humanitarian activity can be understood in terms of prophecy versus the priesthood.⁵⁸ The priesthood includes those elements of institutionalized humanitarianism (such as the International Committee of the Red Cross) that have limited the principle of humanity to standardized practices within formal international parameters. The prophets are those who see themselves as confronting convention with the truth and a demand for transformation. In the realm of humanitarian aid, Médecins sans Frontières, for whom Salgado did the Sahel series, regularly enacts the prophetic function.⁵⁹

Although Salgado’s images may serve the prophetic function of humanitarian critique, much of his thinking and the work it produces are predicated on notions of a common humanity: “humanity is just one humanity. We must save ourselves, the human species. We’ve done such bad things to each other.”⁶⁰ However, this commonality both incorporates a complex sense of difference and involves not a pre-given sense of human being, but a shared sense of what constitutes being human in the contemporary world. In the introduction to his project on migration, Salgado says:

More than ever, I feel that the human race is one. There are differences of color, language, culture, and opportunities, but people's feelings and reactions are alike. People flee wars to escape death, they migrate to improve their fortunes, they build new lives in foreign lands, they adapt to extreme hardship. Everywhere, the individual survival instinct rules. Yet as a race, we seem bent on self-destruction.⁶¹

For Salgado, pictures alone cannot change much. Nonetheless, he does think that they can provoke contemplation, increase sensitivity, inspire a debate, further understanding, and move beyond compassion, all without giving "anybody a bad conscience."⁶² Despite being read and appreciated in aesthetic terms, Salgado insists that his pictures be valued differently: "What I want in my pictures is not that they'll look like art objects. They are journalist pictures. All my pictures. No exceptions. They are published in the press. If a person wants to buy my picture, that's fantastic. The money will help fund my projects. What comes from photography, stays in photography."⁶³

Salgado's intentions notwithstanding, the political economy of photojournalism and publishing has meant that his images are not as widely seen as he would like. Indeed, his images are better known in the world of fine art than in the mass media. This outcome is part and parcel of the decline of news-related photo magazines. Even where illustrated magazines remain—as with the color supplements of most of Britain's weekend broadsheets—their focus is primarily directed toward consumer culture and lifestyle issues rather than documentary reportage. Given that, as Stallabrass contends, serious photojournalism "seems unsuited to a neoliberal climate"; the displacement of documentary photography from the mass media to the art gallery and coffee-table book is less an aesthetic choice than a publishing necessity.⁶⁴

These strictures were particularly apparent with regard to Salgado's Sahel photographs. Although published as a book for *Médecins sans Frontières* in France and Spain (both Salgado and the printer provided their labor free of charge, and twenty thousand copies were sold), the images were not widely published elsewhere. Salgado offered the portfolio to several American aid groups, but they declined to sponsor publication on the grounds that the pictures were too strong for a book to succeed. Likewise, a literary agent who viewed them, and was moved to tears by the images, concluded there was no market for them.⁶⁵

Aside from one spread in a photographic journal, the color magazines also turned them down.⁶⁶ *Life* magazine, which, as Susan Edwards observes, “has been known to publish entire photo-spreads consisting of the pathetic, begging images of famine and disease,” rejected Salgado’s efforts to portray those in the Sahel differently. This led her to conclude that when it comes to famine, “it seems we cannot deal with such images without distancing ourselves somehow.” Whereas the dominant iconography of African famine meets this existential desire for moral distance, “Salgado’s images confront us with a complex humanity, perhaps too painful to be realized on a global scale.”⁶⁷ Eventually, some of the Sahel images were seen in the United States, albeit in a retrospective museum exhibition that toured in 1990–91 under the title *An Uncertain Grace*. Reviewing the exhibition for the *New York Times*, Michael Brenson wrote that Salgado’s photos, like the people in them, “carry a sense of smoldering energy, of passion too big to be held in check by any body, any job, any relationship or any political system.” The photos “are immediate and physical. Their contrasts are sharp, their light hard. They are controlled: form serves content, restraining energy, dignifying death, bringing children up almost into the lens, turning African tribesmen and women into biblical kings and queens.”⁶⁸ This praise notwithstanding, the belated showing of the Sahel images, after the passage of time had distanced people from the events in the Sahel but increased Salgado’s reputation, confirms what Fred Ritchin calls “an unfortunate tendency to elevate the messenger while denying the message.”⁶⁹

Methods: Photography as Ethnography

Charity, vertical, humiliates. Solidarity, horizontal, helps. Salgado photographs from inside, in solidarity.⁷⁰

If Salgado’s famine images differ from the iconography of pathetic victimhood commonly produced, that difference can in large measure be attributed to his photographic method, and its contrast with one of the most famous declarations of method: Henri Cartier-Bresson’s notion of “the decisive moment.” In 1952, Cartier-Bresson stated that “photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give the event its proper expression.”⁷¹ This gave him a particular *modus operandi*: Cartier-Bresson “liked to pop up, as if out of nowhere, take a

picture, and then innocently walk on as if nothing had happened.”⁷² This reasoning meant that in Cartier-Bresson’s view, Magnum photographers—those belonging to the agency he helped found in 1947—were “witnesses of the transitory.”⁷³

Salgado’s photographic method, at first glance, might be thought of as similar to Cartier-Bresson’s. As in the idea of the “decisive moment,” Salgado regards the photograph as a unique conjunction of the spatial and the temporal. In the first instance, the photograph is a product of a complex set of often obscured relationships: “A picture, for me, is like the point of an iceberg. What you see in it is one point of contact, one relation, one preparation.”⁷⁴ The key relationship is that between photographer and subject: “An image is your integration with the person that you photographed at the moment that you work so incredibly together, that your picture is not more, your camera is not more, than the relation that you have with your subject. Your camera is just a movement inside all these movements that happen, that keep going. I trust in this. I’m probably wrong, but that’s my own view.”⁷⁵ And this relationship of photographer and subject, in which both work together, occurs in but a short time: “Photography is the one medium in which you have all your emotions during a short lapse of time integrated with the person that’s in front of you. In a few moments you can get something together that represents all these together. Only photography can get this.”⁷⁶

Despite the initial similarities, at least insofar as the photograph inevitably involves a particular temporality, Salgado’s self-understanding of his photographic method—which he articulates despite protesting that he has no explanation for it, and only works in a “very, very instinctive” way—is differently conceived, and even styled in deliberate contrast, to Cartier-Bresson’s.⁷⁷ Instead of the instantaneous click of a shutter creating a short-lived relationship between an unknown photographer and his subject, Salgado’s decisive moment, the moment in which an image is inscribed on film, only comes *after* the photographer and subject have developed a mutual relationship. If Cartier-Bresson’s photographs can be likened in geometric terms to a tangent balanced on top of a circle, Salgado “feels he must enter the circle, almost, in a sense, ‘becoming’ those he photographs, at the very least working to understand the existence of those he depicts.”⁷⁸ The geometric analogy is Salgado’s, and illustrates what he describes as the “photographic phenomenon”: “When I go to photograph a person or a family, or an event, or workers in

a factory, I create certain conditions which I experience as a phenomenon. You live in a certain time, a short time or a long time, inside of this phenomenon.”⁷⁹

It is because of this understanding that Salgado is regarded as a “photo-ethnologist,” one who works in a critical anthropological manner, embodying the ethos of participant-action research (PAR).⁸⁰ Having become a photographer to overcome the distance produced by social-science analyses, Salgado believes that his ethnographic style helps transcend the tendency of photography itself to remove or detach the photographer (and viewer) from the subject. In contrast to the usual routine of simply snapping the “photographic phenomenon” in front of one,

there’s an entirely different way of working . . . you don’t have preconceptions about the life in front of you. What you know is simply automatic—you have a camera that’s part of your hands, part of your eyes. And then you go inside without judging anything. You don’t come with your American or your Brazilian or whatever culture in order to presume . . . you come because you must come, it’s your way of life. You’re there to see, hear, listen, understand, integrate. Of course, you’re a photographer, and you take pictures. And you’ll probably arrive at the same point as the guy who takes things from the outside. But now you can touch it from the inside. And then the photos have another reason, another meaning. Because in the end it’s not really the photographer who takes the pictures; it’s the persons in front of the camera who give the photos to you.⁸¹

Because “the picture is a gift,” the relationship with the subject is the key. Photography for Salgado is a humanist project rather than a series of technical issues. “The purpose of photography . . . is to have the strongest relation with a person, to go inside the intensity of a person.”⁸² As an instrument of communication, it tells the story that “man is made to live socially,” and the prerequisite for fantastic photographs is to “respect the people you photograph, and . . . see the nobility and dignity of your subjects.”⁸³ This rationale can change the experience of being photographed for the subject. One of the oil workers in Kuwait whom Salgado pictured observed that he “melts away” the normally aggressive act of taking a picture.⁸⁴ It can also mean that many images go unrecorded: Salgado refused to take a photograph of a crazed man tied to a tree like a dog because “I would have been using his humiliated position. I wouldn’t have been ‘given’ the photograph; I would have stolen it.”⁸⁵

Not surprisingly, given the commitment to live amid the photographic phenomenon he wishes to picture, Salgado derides the all too common practice of journalists flying in and out of disaster zones. Without time to appreciate the situation and its people, he says, those journalists take back only what they brought with them.⁸⁶ Eduardo Galeano paints an acerbic picture of the contrast:

Salgado photographs people. Casual photographers photograph phantoms. . . . Consumer-society photographers approach but do not enter. In hurried visits to scenes of despair or violence, they climb out of the plane or helicopter, press the shutter release, explode the flash: they shoot and run. They have looked without seeing and their images say nothing. Their cowardly photographs soiled with horror or blood may extract a few crocodile tears, a few coins, a pious word or two from the privileged of the earth, none of which changes the order of the universe. At the sight of the dark-skinned wretched, forsaken by God and pissed on by dogs, anybody who is nobody confidentially congratulates himself: life hasn't done too badly by me, in comparison. Hell serves to confirm the virtues of paradise.⁸⁷

It is thus the relationship to the other embodied in Salgado's photographs that encapsulates the difference between his imaging of others and other representations of difference. If photography can be regarded—especially through its symbiosis with anthropology—as having a formative role in our understanding of the other, can we regard Salgado's documentation of “a world of differences within the singularity of humanity” as a reworking of the documentary tradition and the established colonial relationships of power it has made both possible and visible?⁸⁸ If Salgado's photographs do represent such a reworking, is it because they restore faith in the universal humanism of the “family of man” that drew the ire of Roland Barthes, or is it because, at their best, they escape “the orbit of United Nations ‘family of man’ internationalism . . . and evince some profound human empathy that nevertheless refuses to reduce the sense of utterly different life experience?”⁸⁹ Do these photographs manifest the I–Thou relationship of Martin Buber, or the ethical first philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas?⁹⁰ Or is it the case that at the heart of Salgado's powerful imagery there is a productive ambiguity that makes definite answers to these questions impossible? Perhaps, as David Levi Strauss argues, “this extraordinary balance of alterity and

likeness, of metaphoric and documentary function, is part of the Salgado signature. It allows his subjects to be at once themselves and more than themselves.⁹¹

Although Salgado is in no doubt that he is engaged in developing a “militant photography, for the best comprehension of man, a valorization of the human effort,” the nature of this project is equally ambiguous.⁹² On the one hand, it can be argued that his use of photographic content, his visual rhetoric, is radical, especially in relation to the established iconography of African famine. On the other hand, given his “strikingly realist sense of the camera,” Salgado is less radical when it comes to the form or medium of photography.⁹³ This more conventional stance is evident in his understanding of how the photographer participates in the photographic phenomenon, the relationship with his subject. On the one hand, Salgado invokes the documentarian’s oath that he does not “interfere with anything in reality or with the people that I photograph.”⁹⁴ On the other, he readily acknowledges that, through his ethnographic style of work, “I create certain conditions which I experience as a phenomenon,” and that this means “I interfere in the reality of the situation to get my pictures.”⁹⁵ The source of this interference, however, is not derived from a conscious act of manipulation. It flows, rather, from the unavoidable impact of the photographer’s ideology, which Salgado understands not as a political worldview—despite the many reviewers who read it solely in terms of his supposed Catholicism, humanism, Marxism, universalism, and the like—but as “the imaginary,” “the apparatus of ideas that we all have, all the formations we have, all the family, all the friends, all the culture inside.”⁹⁶

Problems: The Beauty of Disaster

That Salgado’s Sahel photographs were not widely disseminated in the media, because they were regarded as too disturbing and too harrowing, is something of a surprise given the fact they they are normally singled out for their beauty. For Salgado’s many admirers, the beauty of these images, achieved through a representation of human dignity, is what sets them apart from the iconography of anonymous victimhood found in most reporting on third-world disasters.⁹⁷ As Galeano observes:

Salgado’s photographs, a multiple portrait of human pain, at the same time invite us to celebrate the dignity of humankind. Brutally frank, these images of hunger and suffering are yet respectful and seemly.

Having no relation to the tourism of poverty, they do not violate but penetrate the human spirit in order to reveal it. Salgado sometimes shows skeletons, almost corpses, with dignity—all that is left to them. They have been stripped of everything but they have dignity. That's the source of their ineffable beauty. This is not macabre, obscene exhibitionism of poverty. It is a poetry of horror because there is a sense of honor.⁹⁸

Even though he is dealing with horrors, the evident beauty positions Salgado's work as the antithesis of a concern with the abject.⁹⁹ One photograph of patients at a leprosy clinic is marked by the proud posture of a woman at the center of the image.¹⁰⁰ In large part, the beauty of the images is for Salgado derived from the aesthetic qualities of the subjects rather than being something he imposes on them. However achieved, the emphasis on beauty and dignity is designed to fuel identification. Speaking of the Sahel images, Salgado notes: "I wanted to respect the people as much as I could, to work to get the best composition and the most beautiful light. . . . If you can show a situation in this way—get the beauty and nobility along with the despair—then you can show someone in America or France that these people are not very different. I wanted Americans to look at the pictures of the people and see themselves."¹⁰¹

These intentions and rationales notwithstanding, Salgado's photographs are often derided for being "markedly aestheticizing."¹⁰² In a caustic review of Salgado's increasing and popular prominence (prompted by the dual showing of the *Uncertain Grace* retrospective and the post-war Kuwaiti oil photographs), Ingrid Sischy—a former editor of *Artforum*—lambastes his work as being contrived, gimmicky, meretricious, self-aggrandizing, sentimental, and sloppy with symbolism.¹⁰³ Although she acknowledges that the presence of beauty in the midst of poverty is a means to challenge the usual clichéd representation, Sischy feels that beauty has become equally a cliché in Salgado's images. His strategies "consistently add up to aestheticization, not reportage," the end result being that "this is photography that runs on a kind of emotional blackmail fuelled by a dramatics of art direction."¹⁰⁴

Sischy's critique is driven by her evident commitment to naturalism. Salgado's subjects are said to be too much in the service of his desires to be capable of appearing simply as individuals or representatives of the masses, as though subjects could be represented without mediation. Salgado's images are said to be flawed because his work "is not photog-

raphy in which the facts are allowed to sing for themselves, which is how Lincoln Kirstein once described Walker Evans' work."¹⁰⁵

Although criticisms of the aesthetic as being out of place in the picturing of disaster are largely driven by a surprisingly robust faith in photography's capacity for naive social realism, it is a concern for the political impact of aesthetic images that is most prominent. Sischy sums up this position well: "the beautification of tragedy results in pictures that ultimately reinforce our passivity toward the experience they reveal. To aestheticize tragedy is the fastest way to anesthetize the feelings of those who are witnessing it. Beauty is a call to admiration, not to action."¹⁰⁶

Sischy's critique draws attention to one particular photograph from the Sahel series, an image of a shrouded woman with diseased eyes, her hand touching her face, the clothes wrapping her body almost indistinguishable from the near black background. Although she recognizes that Salgado's strategy is to counter fear and horror through the use of what one reviewer called a "dark, necrogenic beauty,"¹⁰⁷ Sischy concludes that "Salgado's strategy here fits into a long and convenient tradition of coupling human suffering and God's will . . . the photograph suggests that the woman's blindness is holy—in other words, that it needn't be seen as something to cure."¹⁰⁸ Although it is not an intrinsically invalid interpretation, Sischy's reading is nonetheless highly contestable, not least because it is dependent on a particular sense of religiosity being read into a single image extracted from a large series. It is a reading, moreover, that pays little heed to the secular explanation of the caption: "With dead eyes worn out by sand storms and chronic infections, this woman from the region of Gondan has managed to survive."¹⁰⁹

Sischy's concern for the political impact of aesthetics is widely shared, for it is commonly felt that when it comes to disaster, beauty affords distance.¹¹⁰ But if, as George Steiner has famously argued, "the aesthetic makes endurable," then the beauty ascribed to Salgado's famine images should have permitted some emotional or moral distance for the viewer, and therefore made them more palatable for a mass media audience.¹¹¹ However, given that the Sahel photographs were overtly excluded from the mass media because they were considered too disturbing, we can conclude that there is perhaps something unsettling in the particular beauty of his disaster imagery that challenges the idea that the aesthetic necessarily anaesthetizes.

The blanket claim that aesthetics has no place, or a dangerous place, in the representation of disaster has a couple of serious limitations. The first is that there is an implicit assumption—again related to an out-moded faith in the capacity of technologies of representation to achieve a naive social realism, as well as involving a particular ontological claim—that disasters per se are not beautiful, or in any way hospitable to the aesthetic, and that to represent those dimensions thus involves a heavy-handed imposition on the facts. As Stallabrass asks, “should one show such events using an anti-aesthetic form of photography, one which strove to be as ugly as famine itself?”¹¹² Sischy believes that Salgado’s pictures are insulting to those he portrays, and less than they deserve.¹¹³ But are those subjects less insulted by the starving-child images of conventional representations? Assuming it is possible, do these individuals deserve an antiaesthetic portrayal? Of course, the idea that only ugly pictures were possible depends upon viewing the world in distress as without aesthetics. Although the reverse is not necessarily true (i.e., the claim here is *not* that disasters are beautiful per se), the reduction of all forms of life in their complexity to an antiaesthetic dimension seems equally problematic.

A second limitation is that, in critiques such as Sischy’s, “beauty” is taken to be a one-dimensional and universally recognizable phenomenon, that beauty is the same whenever or wherever it is used, regardless of context. There is the suggestion, for example, that the aesthetic qualities of Salgado’s photographs are not qualitatively different from those found in, say, *National Geographic*. But, as Andy Grundberg has pointed out, the beauty embodied in that journal’s images of the third world is of a very particular kind: they are “the apotheosis of the picturesque. That is, they embody many of the same conventions of color and form as *plein air* painting. *They aim to please the eye, not to rattle it.*”¹¹⁴ In contrast, Salgado’s aesthetics are hardly picturesque, even if they do represent a particular beauty. And they certainly do not aim to please the eye. Indeed, Salgado’s aesthetics might be regarded as a key element in his effort to overcome the anaesthetizing effects of the iconography of African famine. Instead of, or in addition to, the simple shock that comes from a photograph of an atrocity, the mixture of the beautiful and the repugnant in Salgado’s images disconcerts and disturbs, thereby inviting us to be more attentive and even awestruck by the situations depicted.¹¹⁵

Although Salgado's images are themselves often without context (an absence that gives them their universal air), it is the social and political context in which his photographs appear, and the traditions against which they are situated, that helps make them significant.¹¹⁶ This is not to deny either the validity or the importance of asking whether we should be unsettled by the appearance of beauty in the midst of disaster, or whether Salgado negotiates the inevitable tension between the moments of magic versus social realism in his images. Given the complexity of the problems and the subtlety of the images, finding an answer is not going to be easy. Perhaps, though, it is not even desirable. Perhaps the greatest achievement of Salgado's photographs is that they unashamedly raise these questions pertinent to the politics of representing disasters. In the space these images and the discourse about them open up—a space made possible by the double contradictory imperative—comes the possibility of thought and action.

Reprise: Alternatives Other Than Salgado

By way of conclusion, a reflection on one famous famine photograph, and another alternative to the iconography of famine, can help situate this discussion of Salgado. In March 1993, the *New York Times* published a single image taken by Kevin Carter in Sudan. Showing an emaciated child, alone and hunched over, with a vulture lurking in the background, it shocked the paper's readership. Without a context, and representing the famine through the classic image of a lone individual as a victim of nature with death imminent, Carter's photo embodied suffering.¹¹⁷ Questions of beauty and dignity were absent. The response to the picture focused less on the child and her circumstances and more on the photographer and his actions. Did he aid the girl? Did he help others? Although the newspaper later responded to this deluge of questions with an editorial statement that the child made it to a feeding center and was unharmed by the vulture, their accusatory tone eventually helped drive Carter to suicide.¹¹⁸ Although the image has become what David Perlmutter calls an "icon of outrage" (winning for the *New York Times* its first Pulitzer Prize for photography), its impact, aside from the consequences Carter bore, was minimal. One of the paradoxes of such images is that the outrage they foster "may stir controversy, accolades, and emotion, but *achieve* absolutely nothing. . . the little girl in Carter's picture

was not plucked away by some special Western relief effort, nor did intervention stem the causes of her suffering. . . . Far from a metonym, the photograph should be taken as an anomaly precisely because the human disaster of the Sudan, then as now, is largely ignored by the Western media.”¹¹⁹

Although not wrong about the specifics of the Carter photograph, Perlmutter’s conclusion is too sweeping when we consider other attempts to document the famine in Sudan. Tom Stoddart’s 1998 series from the Sudan bears comparison—as a series done with the assistance of Médecins sans Frontières, as well as for their uncompromising content and visual style—with Salgado’s Sahel photographs.¹²⁰ They represent a committed form of photojournalism that persists, even with the limited opportunities for publication, with the importance of an engaged visual narrative going beyond the conventional clichéd images. Like Carter, Stoddart found himself criticized by some viewers for his actions; they wanted to know whether he had intervened to prevent the robbery of food one of his photographs portrayed. Unlike Carter, Stoddart used his photographs for a particular purpose, insisting that the phone numbers of Médecins sans Frontières and UNICEF accompany their publication. When some of the images first appeared in the *Guardian*, Médecins sans Frontières alone received some seven hundred phone calls pledging forty thousand pounds. Later published in the *Guardian Weekly*, *Le Figaro*, *Stern*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and magazines in Holland, Spain, and elsewhere, they similarly prompted further financial support for aid agencies. In the process of doing so, they refuted Claire Short’s notion that the public instinctively shied away from such documentary photography. As John Sweeney concludes, the response to Stoddart’s photographs “suggests that the idea of compassion fatigue is a convenient myth for those who hold political power.”¹²¹

Serious questions can and should be asked about whether the act of giving is sufficient, and whether the aid it purchases is beneficial, but the response invoked by the photographs of Salgado, Stoddart, and others demonstrates clearly that viewers do not automatically flinch at and shy away from images that challenge many of the prevailing visual clichés. Photographs are a modality of power, and the bulk of contemporary famine images conform to colonial economies of representation. In contrast to the depoliticization of disasters through such pictures, Salgado’s

comportment vis-à-vis his subjects functions as an ethical and responsabilizing practice in which the aesthetic repoliticizes, making it possible to envisage a humanitarian ethos.

Notes

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1. Michael Watts and Iain Boal, "Working-Class Heroes: E. P. Thompson and Sebastião Salgado," *Transition* 68 (winter 1995): 105.

2. Michael Watts, "Heart of Darkness: Reflections on Famine and Starvation in Africa," in R. E. Downs, Donna O. Kerner, and Stephen P. Reyna, eds., *The Political Economy of African Famine* (London: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1991), pp. 23–24.

3. See Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985); V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); and Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). For a discussion of international relations scholarship in this context, see Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North–South Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

4. James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

5. Liisa Malkki, "Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization," *Cultural Anthropology* 11.3 (1996): 386.

6. Erica Burman, "Innocents Abroad: Western Fantasies of Childhood and the Iconography of Emergencies," *Disasters* 18.3 (1994): 238–53; Margaret Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997).

7. A report by Oxfam on British media coverage of the 1984 famine in the Sahel region of northeastern Africa demonstrated that these photographs featured mother-and-child images more than any other theme. See Nikki van der Gaag and Cathy Nash, "Images of Africa: The UK Report," mimeo, November 1987.

8. "Final Plenary—Conclusions, Claire Short's Speech and Debate," presentation to the Dispatches from the Disaster Zone seminar, London, May 27–28, 1998. Although Short criticized the agencies for eventually making an appeal, the same agencies were criticized by a BBC TV reporter for not making the appeal sooner. See George Alagiah, "Hungry for the Truth," *Guardian (Media Supplement)*, May 25, 1998.

9. Fergal Keane, "Another Picture of Starving Africa. It Could Have Been Taken in 1984, or 1998. How Can We Change the Imagery of Despair?" *Guardian (Media Supplement)*, June 8, 1998.

10. Ibid.

11. See Jim Akhurst, "Live and Dangerous," presentation to the Dispatches from the Disaster Zone seminar, London, May 27–28, 1998; and Nik Gowing, "New Challenges and Problems for Information Management in Complex Emergencies: Ominous Lessons Learnt from the Great Lakes and Eastern Zaire in Late 1996 and Early 1997," background paper for the seminar, London, May 28, 1998. Despite the increase in the number of news channels—or perhaps as part of the "ghettoization" of international news to a larger number of infrequently watched news channels—the overall amount and quality of international coverage on British TV is in serious decline. See Jennie Stone, *Losing Perspective: Global Affairs on British Terrestrial Television 1989–1999* (London: 3WE–Third World and Environment Broadcasting Project, 2000).

12. Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), p. 37.

13. Andy Grundberg, *Crisis of the Real: Writings on Photography, 1974–1989* (New York: Aperture, 1990), p. 240.

14. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue*, 27 and 35; Edgar Roskis, "The Tarnished Image," *Le Monde diplomatique*, February 2000. Accessed at <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/en/2000/02/16roskis,22/2/00>.

15. Don Redding, "Time for Scrutiny," presentation to the Dispatches from the Disaster Zone seminar, London, May 27–28, 1998.

16. Jonathan Benthall, *Disasters, Relief and the Media* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1993), p. 8.

17. Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. xxvii.

18. Andrea Liss, *Trespassing through the Shadows: Memory, Photography, and the Holocaust* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 4.

19. See David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), especially pp. 189–91.

20. Eduardo Galeano, "Salgado, 17 Times," trans. Asa Zatz, in Sebastião Salgado, *An Uncertain Grace* (New York: Aperture, 1990), p. 15.

21. Amanda Hopkinson, "Salgado, Sabastião [sic] Ribeiro," in Martin Marix-Evans, ed., *Contemporary Photographers*, 3d ed. (New York: St. James Press, 1995).

22. John Bloom, "Interview with Sebastião Salgado," *Photo Metro* 9.84 (November 1990): 8.

23. Watts and Boal, "Working-Class Heroes," p. 101.

24. Peter Hamilton, "One Man's Struggle," *British Journal of Photography* 7 (May 1997): 15.

25. Fred Ritchin, "The Lyric Documentarian," in Salgado, *An Uncertain Grace*, p. 145. For a discussion of the Reagan assignment, see Russell Miller, *Magnum: Fifty Years at the Front Line of History* (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 253–56.

26. Mark Harris, "Sebastião Salgado," *Camera and Darkroom Photography* 14.11 (1992): 28.

27. *L'Homme en détresse: Photographies de Sebastião Salgado*, Introduction by Jean Lacouture, text by Xavier Emmanuelli (Paris: Prisma Press, pour Médecins sans Frontières, 1986). For a critique of Médecins sans Frontières and its media actions, see François Debrix, *Re-Envisioning Peacekeeping: The United Nations and the Mobilization of Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), chapter 5.

28. See the discussion of this problem in W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), chapter 5.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

30. See “Famine in the Sahel 1984–85” under the section “The Majority World: Three Photo Essays 1977–92,” at <http://www.terra.com.br/sebastiaosalgado/>.

31. Julian Stallabrass, “Sebastião Salgado and Fine Art Journalism,” *New Left Review* 223 (1997): 141. Of course, Salgado’s photographs are not the only images to achieve this, but this feature is nonetheless rare. In the Oxfam report compiled after the 1984 famine, only one publication was highlighted in these terms: *Fighting the Famine*, text by Nigel Twose, photographs by Mike Goldwater (London: Pluto Press, 1985). See van der Gaag and Nash, “Images of Africa,” pp. 60–61. Insofar as Goldwater’s images are progressive, it is largely because of their subject matter. They portray dimensions of African life (labor, education, agriculture, political assemblies, and the like) not normally photographed within the ambit of representing famine, and do not attempt to represent overtly the consequences of famine.

32. Matthew L. Wald, “The Eye of the Photojournalist,” *New York Times Magazine*, June 9, 1991, p. 72.

33. Anna Cataldi, “Seizing the Light,” *Rolling Stone*, February 23, 1995, p. 67.

34. Galeano, “Salgado, 17 Times,” p. 8.

35. See the photograph captioned “Ethiopia 1985” in “Famine in the Sahel 1984–85,” at <http://www.terra.com.br/sebastiaosalgado/>.

36. Ritchin, “The Lyric Documentarian,” p. 147; Helen Innis, “The Photography of Sebastião Salgado,” Public Lecture at the Australian National Gallery, Canberra, July 14, 1994; Watts and Boal, “Working-Class Heroes,” p. 107.

37. Folke Lindahl, “Rewriting the Caribbean: Identity Crisis as Literature,” in Michael J. Shapiro and Hayward R. Alker, eds., *Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 87–109.

38. Michael J. Shapiro, “Introduction to Part II,” in Shapiro and Alker, *Challenging Boundaries*, p. 84. As such, the link between Salgado and magic realism intersects with the argument that the documentary photography of Gilles Peress “de-realizes” the world and its realist portrayals. See François Debrix, “Post-Mortem Photography: Gilles Peress and the Taxonomy of Death,” *Postmodern Culture* 9.2 (1999). Accessed at http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/vo09/9.2.r_debrix.html, January 31, 2000. However, Debrix’s critique of Peress as offering an aesthetic, comforting, and palatable representation of death—which seems to depend on the idea that representation could better approach the materiality of death by dispensing with the mythical—differs from the argument here.

39. Bruno Bostells, Louis Mirella, and Peter A. Schilling, “The Politics of Totality in Magic Realism,” in Shapiro and Alker, *Challenging Boundaries*, p. 111.

40. One of the reasons he focuses on what others (mistakenly) term misery, Salgado argues, is that he comes “from a place where death is a part of life” (Jonathan Cott, “Sebastião Salgado: The *Rolling Stone* Interview,” *Rolling Stone*, December 12–26, 1991, p. 141). For a powerful ethnographic account of Brazilian life in these terms, see Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

41. Bostells, Mirella, and Schilling, "The Politics of Totality in Magic Realism," pp. 116–20, who align magic realism with Foucault's ethos at p. 111. For my discussion of the importance of Foucault's ethos to the rethinking of international relations, see David Campbell, "Political Prosaics, Transversal Politics, and the Anarchical World," in Shapiro and Alker, *Challenging Boundaries*, especially pp. 19–21, and *National Deconstruction*, chapter 1.

42. Bostells, Mirella, and Schilling, "The Politics of Totality in Magic Realism," p. 112.

43. William Shawcross and Francis Hodgson, "Sebastião Salgado: Man in Distress," *Aperture* 108 (fall 1987): 3.

44. In the book version of the Sahel series, a photograph of a German-run surgery at Abeche Hospital shows a Sudanese man on an operating platform, his arms extended to the side as though he were lying flat on a cross. See *L'Homme en détresse*, p. 40. On Salgado's Web site, the images captioned "Ethiopia 1984," with a shrouded woman and two children, and "Sudan 1985," with a father carrying his son to the Wad Sherifay camp, illustrate this. See "Famine in the Sahel 1984–85" at <http://www.terra.com.br/sebastiaosalgado/>.

45. See Hopkinson, "Salgado," p. 992. Unlike most other photojournalists, Salgado retains considerable control over how his images are presented in publications. When shooting in Kuwait in 1991, showing the aftereffects of the Gulf War on the region's oil industry, and the workers attempting to cap damaged wells, he used ten to twelve rolls of film per day. From those negatives he chose about six from each roll to print on contact sheets, and from those only forty-seven were selected and sent to the *New York Times Magazine* for possible publication. See Wald, "The Eye of the Photojournalist," p. 72. Control is even greater with respect to his book collections, for Salgado has his own agency, Amazonas Images in Paris, run by his partner Lélia Wanick Salgado, who oversees all aspects of printing and production.

46. See the two images captioned "Mali 1985" in "Famine in the Sahel 1984–85" at <http://www.terra.com.br/sebastiaosalgado/>.

47. Bloom, "Interview with Sebastião Salgado," p. 19.

48. William E. Connolly, *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991 [reprint, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002]), pp. 154–57; William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 185ff. This focus on being is readily apparent in Salgado's series on children, in which the individual portraits of young refugees make a statement about what UNICEF has described as "the right of all children to be." See "Changing the World with Children: Photographs by Sebastião Salgado," <http://www.unicef.org/salgado/>. In his discussion with John Berger, Salgado spoke of these portraits as enabling the children to declare "I am here, I exist." See "The Spectre of Hope," *Arena*, BBC2, May 30, 2001. The full series of these portraits has been published as Sebastião Salgado, *The Children: Refugees and Migrants* (New York: Aperture, 2000).

49. "The Spectre of Hope." Some of Salgado's remarks from this documentary (including this quote) are recorded in "A Tragedy the Size of the Planet," *Guardian* (G2), May 28, 2001, p. 10.

50. David Levi Strauss, "Epiphany of the Other," *Artforum* (February 1991): 99.

51. Quoted in Stallabrass, "Sebastião Salgado and Fine Art Journalism," pp. 143–44.
52. Quoted in David Schonauer, "The Sight of Despair," *American Photographer*, January–February 1990, p. 45. There is potentially a parallel here to the idea that even in the concentration camps of the Holocaust there was a moral life. See Tzvetan Todorov, *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps* (London: Phoenix, 1999).
53. Harris, "Sebastião Salgado," p. 28.
54. Hamilton, "One Man's Struggle," p. 15. The comments were made with respect to Salgado's documenting of the Movement of Landless Peasants (MST) in Brazil. Shown in London under the auspices of Christian Aid, these images are published in Sebastião Salgado, *Terra: Struggle of the Landless* (London: Phaidon, 1997).
55. Shawcross and Hodgson, "Sebastião Salgado," p. 3.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
57. *Ibid.*
58. Hugo Slim, "Sharing a Universal Ethic: The Principle of Humanity in War," *International Journal of Human Rights* 2.4 (1988): 28–48.
59. Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed Books, 2001), pp. 76–77.
60. Harris, "Sebastião Salgado," pp. 24 and 26.
61. Sebastião Salgado, *Migrations: Humanity in Transition* (New York: Aperture, 2000), p. 15.
62. Wald, "The Eye of the Photojournalist," p. 72; Susan E. Edwards, "Photography and the Representation of the Other: A Discussion Inspired by the Work of Sebastião Salgado," *Third Text* (Autumn 1991): 172; Cott, "Sebastião Salgado," p. 140.
63. Harris, "Sebastião Salgado," p. 26.
64. Stallabrass, "Sebastião Salgado and Fine Art Journalism," pp. 133–34.
65. Ritchin, "The Lyric Documentarian," p. 149.
66. The spread was in Shawcross and Hodgson, "Sebastião Salgado."
67. Edwards, "Photography and the Representation of the Other," p. 172.
68. Quoted in Wald, "The Eye of the Photojournalist," p. 58.
69. Ritchin, "The Lyric Documentarian," p. 149.
70. Galeano, "Salgado, 17 Times," p. 11.
71. Quoted in Ritchin, "The Lyric Documentarian," p. 147.
72. Miller, *Magnum*, p. 67.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
74. Bloom, "Interview with Sebastião Salgado," p. 12.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
78. Ritchin, "The Lyric Documentarian," p. 147.
79. Bloom, "Interview with Sebastião Salgado," p. 8.
80. Edwards, "Photography and the Representation of the Other," 160; Wald, "The Eye of the Photojournalist," p. 58; Innis, "The Photography of Sebastião Salgado."
81. Cott, "Sebastião Salgado," p. 138.
82. Wald, "The Eye of the Photojournalist," p. 58.
83. *Ibid.*; Cott, "Sebastião Salgado," p. 138.
84. Wald, "The Eye of the Photojournalist," p. 58.

85. Cott, "Sebastião Salgado," p. 138.
86. Ritchin, "The Lyric Documentarian," pp. 146–47. For an account, in the context of the conflict in El Salvador, of the tensions between parachute journalists and regional correspondents, see Mark Pedelty, *War Stories: The Culture of a Foreign Correspondent* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
87. Galeano, "Salgado, 17 Times," p. 11.
88. Edwards, "Photography and the Representation of the Other," p. 157.
89. For the first reading, see *ibid.*, p. 160; for the second, see Watts and Boal, "Working-Class Heroes," p. 112.
90. For the first reading, see Ritchin, "The Lyric Documentarian," p. 147; for the second, see Strauss, "Epiphany of the Other," p. 99. For a discussion of the tensions between Buber and Levinas on the relationship to the other, see Daniel Warner, "Levinas, Buber and the Concept of Otherness in International Relations: A Reply to David Campbell," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 25 (spring 1996): pp. 111–28; and David Campbell, "The Politics of Radical Interdependence: A Rejoinder to Daniel Warner," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 25 (spring 1996): 129–41.
91. Strauss, "Epiphany of the Other," p. 96. For a discussion of the importance of ambiguity in the rhetorical power of what has been called the New Photojournalism—especially with regard to Susan Meiselas's images of Nicaragua—see Grundberg, *Crisis of the Real*, pp. 182 and 184. For the photographs in question, see Susan Meiselas, *Nicaragua June 1978–July 1979*, edited with Claire Rosenberg (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1981).
92. Wald, "The Eye of the Photojournalist," p. 59.
93. Watts and Boal, "Working-Class Heroes," pp. 109–10.
94. Bloom, "Interview with Sebastião Salgado," p. 6.
95. Harris, "Sebastião Salgado," p. 24.
96. Cott, "Sebastião Salgado," p. 140; Wald, "The Eye of the Photojournalist," p. 72. For this political understanding of Salgado's ideology, see Watts and Boal, "Working-Class Heroes," p. 110.
97. Ritchin, "The Lyric Documentarian," p. 147. For a further exploration of the anonymous corporeality of most disaster representations, see Malkki, "Speechless Emissaries."
98. Galeano, "Salgado, 17 Times," p. 8.
99. Stallabrass, "Sebastião Salgado and Fine Art Journalism," p. 143.
100. Image captioned as "Ade, Chad, 1985," in "Famine in the Sahel 1984–85" at <http://www.terra.com.br/sebastiaoalsgado/>
101. Schonauer, "The Sight of Despair," p. 40.
102. Benthall, *Disasters, Relief and the Media*, p. 178.
103. Ingrid Sischy, "Photography: Good Intentions," *New Yorker*, September 9, 1991, pp. 89–95.
104. *Ibid.*, pp. 93 and 95.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
107. Robert McFarlane, "Salgado Goes Deep as TV Flashes By," *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 10, 1995, p. 20A.
108. Sischy, "Photography," p. 92.

109. Image captioned “Mali, 1985” in “Famine in the Sahel 1984–85” at <http://www.terra.com.br/sebastiaoalsalgado/>.

110. Robin K. Andersen, “The Ideological Significance of News Photography: The Case of El Salvador,” *Ideologies and Literature* 3.2 (fall 1988): 251.

111. Quoted in Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine*, p. 3.

112. Stallabrass, “Sebastião Salgado and Fine Art Journalism,” p. 143.

113. Sischy, “Photography,” pp. 93 and 95.

114. Grundberg, *Crisis of the Real*, p. 175; emphasis added. For a thorough critique of *National Geographic*’s imagery, see Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

115. Shawcross and Hodgson, “Sebastião Salgado,” p. 3. Grundberg makes a similar point about Susan Meiselas’s Nicaragua photographs, which he describes as “often intensely beautiful. *Nicaragua* becomes haunting precisely because of the precarious balance between the beauty of its pictures and the horror of what they depict” (*Crisis of the Real*, p. 181).

116. Salgado has been compared with Lewis Hine, but, according to Arthur C. Danto, whereas Hine’s photos are valued more for their historical interest, Salgado’s will not suffer the same fate. That is because Salgado’s images, Danto argues (in response to Salgado’s photographs of the workers at the Brazilian Serra Pelada gold mine), are “so abstracted from anything we know that you can’t locate it in history. . . . You’re astonished that anything like that could happen in the contemporary world. You don’t have a frame to put around it, so you feel that you are looking at humanity in some universal way” (quoted in Wald, “The Eye of the Photojournalist,” p. 59).

117. Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, “The Appeal of Experience; the Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times,” *Daedalus* (January 1996): 3–9.

118. The story of Carter’s photo and its legacy is discussed at length in Greg Marinovich and Joao Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club: Snapshots from a Hidden War* (London: William Heinemann, 2000).

119. David D. Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy: Icons of Outrage in International Crises* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), p. 28.

120. Tom Stoddart, Colin Jacobsen, and John Sweeny, “Moving Pictures,” *Reportage* 4 (winter 1998): n.p.

121. *Ibid.*