UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PALERMO

Dottorato di Ricerca in Scienze della Cultura

Dipartimento di Culture e Società

L-FIL-LET/14

VISUAL SELVES, VIRTUAL REALITIES: DIALECTICS OF REPRESENTATION AND POWER IN PHOTOGRAPHY OF MIGRATION

Dottoranda

Hend Ben Mansour

Coordinatrice

Prof.ssa Giulia de Spuches

Tutor

Prof.ssa Faiza Derbel

Co-Tutor

Prof.ssa Valeria Cammarata

Ciclo XXXVI

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The work of this dissertation could not have reached completion without the unwavering support of my Tutor Professor Valeria Cammarata who has been a constant source of encouragement and guidance throughout my programme and with whom I hope to have started a lasting academic friendship. Equal thanks go to Professor Faiza Derbel who has given me the opportunity to be part of this unique programme and has provided me with invaluable aid both administratively and academically.

Special thanks go to the members of my defence committee Professor Serena Marcenò, Professor Samira Mechri, and Professor Ivan Pintor Iranzo whose constructive feedback is instrumental in refining this work. I am especially grateful to the reviewers of my dissertation Professor Giulia Ingarao and Professor Elisa Bricco who have not only provided methodological insight but also suggested novel paths to exploring the themes of my research.

This dissertation is within the MIGRANTS Project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union under the direction of Professor Serena Marcenò who has provided much needed counsel and inspiration. I would be remiss if I did not extend my gratitude to each board member of this programme who went above and beyond in creating an exceptionally stimulating intellectual environment.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank Valentina, the first friend I made in a foreign land, for her generosity and constant readiness to help. I would also like to thank my Italian family who have eased my homesickness and made Palermo a second home. To Gabriella and Giuseppe, thank you for having considered me a family member. To dear Viviana, thank you for being a good friend and a witty accomplice.

Last but not least, I dedicate this work to my parents Hajer and Hichem who have been steadfast pillars in my life tirelessly providing me with unconditional love and support. To my dearest sisters Manel and Lilia, thank you for sharing my dreams and for lifting me up when I had no power to carry on.

L'acqua ch'io prendo già mai non si corse;
Minerva spira, e conducemi Appollo,
e nove Muse mi dimostran l'Orse.
—Dante Alighieri

ABSTRACT

The political and security-related tensions that have characterised life in the Middle East and other parts of the world during the first two decades of the 21st century have forced millions of people to leave their homes and look for new ones. Soon, this movement started to be articulated in a verbal discourse of crisis that advanced strategies of containment and modes of management and control. In the same vein, the visual discourse on migration, relying heavily on photographs of agony, highlighted its urgent and grave nature. Consequently, the visual field related to migration witnessed a remarkable eruption in the number of pictures depicting overcrowded boats, piled up lifejackets, distressed children, and dead bodies. This visual representation of migration insisted on constructing the migrant as a vulnerable and victimised person and, simultaneously, obscured features of autonomy and agency. In this context, and drawing mainly upon Visual Culture, this dissertation examines the articulations of European representation of migrants reaching the shores of the Old Continent. Additionally, and since this dissertation configures itself as a dialogue, it draws on Decolonial Theory to examine photographs produced by non-mainstream artists. This endeavour aims to not only discuss the limitations of the conventional European gaze but also to explore the possibility of other ways of seeing. Accordingly, this dissertation employs a multidisciplinary and a transdisciplinary approach to study the dynamics behind the representation of migrants that will shed light on the complexity of the phenomenon and open new doors to further discussions on the subject. Additionally, this dissertation proposes concrete examples of alternative methods and modes of reflections that can be undertaken for the establishment of more diversified and dialectic positions regarding the question of migration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT 2

ABSTRACT 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS 4

LIST OF FIGURES 6

INTRODUCTION 8

THE EUROPEAN VISUALISATION OF MIGRATION 15

1. Setting the Crisis and Constructing the Victim 15

1.1. The Victim as a Legal Category 21

1.2. The Victim as a Victimological Concept 24

1.3. The Victim as a Social Construct 31

2. Visual Dialectics of Ideal Victimisation in Alessandro Penso's and Alex Majoli's Photography of Migration 39

2.1. A Brief Historico-artistic Reconstruction of the Visual Field of Innocence and Suffering 39

2.2. Examining the Interplay of Pain and Pleasure Through the Lens of Visual Culture 51

2.3. Contemporary Reconstructions of the Spectacle of Agony: Alessandro Penso's Mother and Child and Alex Majoli's Pietà 60

3. Digital (Non)Distant Suffering and the Erosion of the Right to Ignore 80

3.1. Differance as a form of Distancing and Projection of Meaning in Contemporary Images of Suffering 83

3.2. Digital Visualisation of Pain and the Paradigmatic Shift in the Role of the Spectator 94

3.3. Hyper-Immersive Virtuality and the Negation of the Right to Ignore Reality 103

4. Bearing Witness as Another Way of Looking at the Pain of Others 119

4.1. Photography of Suffering as a Form of Humanitarian Testimony 119

4.2. Bearing Witness in the Time of Hyper Visuality.................................. 127

4.3. Excessive Documentation and Theatricality as Photographic Strategies to Fill the Lacuna of Witnessing 137

DECOLONISING THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF MIGRATION 151

1. Coloniality of Knowledge and the Photographed Other 151

1.1. Non-European Spaces and Peoples Through the Lens of Colonial Domination.. 152

1.2. Colonial Photography and the Visualisation of the Oriental Anthropos 162

1.3. (Re)Imaging Coloniality of Knowledge and Reframing Theory 173

2. *Live, Love, Refugee*'s Self Narration and the Reclaiming of Subjecthood 185

2.1. Subverting the Gazing Game 187

2.2. Self-Irony, Anger, and Loss as Instruments of Resistance 198

2.3. Imagining New Ways of Looking at Migrants 211

3. *Out of Africa* and the Decolonisation of the Space of Migration................... 222

3.1. Intentional Disruption of the Space of Narration as a Form of Resistance to Mainstream Visual Representation of Migration 223

3.2. Lost Objects, Found Objects, and the Archaeology of the Mundane..... 237

CONCLUSION 259

WORKS CITED... 268

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. A) Fired clay figurines of female figures, the one on the right appears holding a baby in her arms. Excavated in Ur, Iraq. Production date: 5900BC-4000BC. (© The Trustees of the British Museum); B) Terracotta figurine of a seated female figure with inf infant of the Dea Gravida type. Excavated in Kition-Bamboula, Cyprus. Production date: 700BC-500BC. (© The Trustees of the British Museum); C) Dea Nutrix. Terracotta figurine of a seated female figure holding an infant in her left arm to whom she is about to give her breast. Probably a representation of Demeter and Demophon. Excavated in Soliman, Tunisia. Production date: late second-first century BC. Bardo National Museum – inv. 32471. 41
Figure 2. Duccio di Buoninsegna, Madonna and Child, (c1300). 42
Figure 3. William-Adolphe Bouguereau, Pietà, 1876. © Public Domain. 48
Figure 4. Alessandro Penso, Mother and Child, Lesbos, 2015. 64
Figure 5. Alessandro Penso, Lesbos, 2015. 69
Figure 6. Alex Majoli, Refugees and migrants arriving on Lesbos island. Lesbos, Greece. 2015. ©Alex Majoli. Magnum Photos. 74
Figure 7. Alessandro Penso, Lesbos, 2015. 92
Figure 8. Giorgos Moutafis, Dying on the Shores of Europe, 2015. 104
Figure 9. W. Eugene Smith, Maude Callen inspected a patient behind a bedsheet screen. © W. Eugene Smith/Life Pictures/Shutterstock. 120
Figure 10. Alessandro Penso, Lesbos, 2015. 120
Figure 11. Alex Majoli, Refugees and migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Somalia arrive on the northern shores of Lesbos island after their journey from the Turkish coast. Lesbos, Greece. 2015. © Alex Majoli | Magnum Photos. 126
Figure 12. Giorgos Moutafis, Dying on the Shores of Europe, 2015. 126
Figure 13. Giorgos Moutafis, Dying on the Shores of Europe, 2015. A) Photograph n°3 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°5 in the photo-story. C) Photograph n°8 in the photo-story. D) Photograph n°9 in the photo-story. E) Photograph n°11 in the photo-story. F) Photograph n°15 in the photo-story. 128
Figure 14. Alessandro Penso, Lesbos, 2015. A) Photograph n°6 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°24 in the photo-story 140
Figure 15. Alessandro Penso, Lesbos, 2015. A) Photograph n°18 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°19 in the photo-story. C) Photograph n°21 in the photo-story. D) Photograph n°22 in the photo-story. 142
Figure 16. Alessandro Penso, Lesbos, 2015. A) Photograph n°16 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°15 in the photo-story. 144
Figure 17. Giorgos Moutafis, Dying on the Shores of Europe, 2015. A) Photograph n°1 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°10 in the photo-story. C) Photograph n°13 in the photo-story. D) Photograph n°15 in the photo-story. 145
Figure 18. Giorgos Moutafis, Dying on the Shores of Europe, 2015. A) Photograph n°6 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°7 in the photo-story. 146
Figure 19. Alex Majoli, Refugee Crisis on Lesbos, 2015. A) Photograph n°3 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°5 in the photo-story. 147
Figure 20. Scenes and types. Moorish woman in her quarters, from The Colonial Harem, by Malek Alloula. 164

FIGURE 21. [OTTOMAN OFFICIAL ON THE TELEPHONE], PHOTOGRAPHER(S) UNKNOWN, CA. 1881–1910. LOS ANGELES, GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE. 168
FIGURE 22. OMAR IMAM, LIVE, LOVE, REFUGEE, UNTITLED, 2015 © OMAR IMAM. 190
FIGURE 23. OMAR IMAM, LIVE, LOVE, REFUGEE, UNTITLED, 2015 © OMAR IMAM. 193
FIGURE 24. OMAR IMAM, LIVE, LOVE, REFUGEE. UNTITLED, 2015 © OMAR IMAM. 195
FIGURE 25. OMAR IMAM, LIVE, LOVE, REFUGEE, UNTITLED, 2015 © OMAR IMAM. 196
FIGURE 26. OMAR IMAM, LIVE, LOVE, REFUGEE, UNTITLED, 2015 © OMAR IMAM. 201
FIGURE 27. OMAR IMAM, LIVE, LOVE, REFUGEE, UNTITLED, 2015 © OMAR IMAM. 203
FIGURE 28. E. J. BELLOCQ, STORYVILLE GIRL POSING OUT OF DOORS, CIRCA 1912. 205
FIGURE 29. OMAR IMAM, LIVE, LOVE, REFUGEE, UNTITLED, 2015 © OMAR IMAM. 208
FIGURE 30. SCREEN CAPTURE OF OMAR IMAM'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE. 214
FIGURE 31. OMAR IMAM, LIVE, LOVE, REFUGEE, UNTITLED, 2015 © OMAR IMAM. 219
FIGURE 32. IOLE CAROLLO, OUT OF AFRICA, 2021 © IOLE CAROLLO. 229
FIGURE 33. IOLE CAROLLO, OUT OF AFRICA, 2021 © IOLE CAROLLO 230
FIGURE 34. IOLE CAROLLO, OUT OF AFRICA, 2021 © IOLE CAROLLO 230
FIGURE 35. IOLE CAROLLO, OUT OF AFRICA, 2021 © IOLE CAROLLO. 234
FIGURE 36. IOLE CAROLLO, OUT OF AFRICA, 2021 © IOLE CAROLLO. (SCANNED). 235
FIGURE 37. IOLE CAROLLO, OUT OF AFRICA, 2021 © IOLE CAROLLO. (SCANNED). 235
FIGURE 38. IOLE CAROLLO, OUT OF AFRICA, 2021 © IOLE CAROLLO. (SCANNED). 238
FIGURE 39. IOLE CAROLLO, OUT OF AFRICA, 2021 © IOLE CAROLLO. 240
FIGURE 40. IOLE CAROLLO, OUT OF AFRICA, 2021 © IOLE CAROLLO. 254
FIGURE 41. IOLE CAROLLO, OUT OF AFRICA, 2021 © IOLE CAROLLO. 255
FIGURE 42. IOLE CAROLLO, OUT OF AFRICA, 2021 © IOLE CAROLLO. (SCANNED). 256

INTRODUCTION

Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio
per aspro mare, a mezza notte il verno,
enfra Scilla et Caribdi; et al governo
siede 'l signore, anzi 'l nimico mio.

A ciascun remo un penser pronto et rio
che la tempesta e 'l fin par ch'abbi a scherno;
la vela rompe un vento humido eterno
di sospir', di speranze, et di desio.

—Francesco Petrarca.

To say that human existence on this planet was only possible thanks to migration would sound like a cliché. To say that considerable research has been done so far to analyse, discuss, address, adjust, evaluate, and propose remedies to the phenomenon of migration would also sound like a readymade formula. Indeed, archaeological research has proved decades, even centuries ago, that the first human originated in Africa and out of which her/his journey began to populate the earth. Furthermore, and ever since human societies were formed, different forms of human movements have helped shape the establishment of current borders and the maintenance of their relative stabilities. However, not all forms of migration have historically been accounted for, for there are certain types that have fell out of the scope of migration studies for a considerable amount of time. Exile, banishment, population transfer, removals, deportation, and even slavery are all instances of migration that despite being performed by a variety of states over time, have not been systematically studied as forms of migration until recently (Gabaccia 39; Walters 70).

Besides the different types of migration that have been studies over time, there is also a large number of disciplines that have been interested in the subject. To name but a few, geography, sociology, history, and statistics have all developed their own approaches and methods regarding the study of this human phenomenon. In more recent years especially, migration became excessively represented in numbers, graphs, scales, and percentages that flourished in the hard science departments. This abstraction reflected its image on the mainstream and generalised discourses that one might regularly hear on the news. People talk about flows, push and pull factors, supply and demand, pressure, and quite a few other words that seem to be oblivious to the fact that those migrants in question are human beings. Because of that and because this world is not only constructed of numbers and equations, this dissertation

proposes to start by conjuring images of migrants. When calling on these images to appear, three compete to impose themselves as *the* image of migration. The first was taken, in black and white, by Dorothea Lange a little less than a century ago. In 1936, and as part of the Resettlement Administration in the United States of America, Lange took the picture of Florence Owens Thompson who became, from that moment on, known as the *Migrant Mother*. The mother sitting, frowning, with her face resting against her hand, and her children in worn out clothes around her became the face of the Great Depression.

The second image that jumps to mind is more recent. It is a photograph shot in 2014 by Massimo Sestini during the Operation Mare Nostrum. It is a picture depicting a small fishing boat filled with tens of African migrants who were waving and smiling at the camera while crossing the Mediterranean, one of the most perilous seas for irregular migrants. According to the International Organisation for Migration, 3,289 people were recorded as dead or missing in the Mediterranean that year.[1] Lastly, perhaps the most iconic contemporary image of migration would be that of Aylan Kurdi, a three-year-old from Syria. Aylan was photographed on a beach in Turkey after he has drowned in September 2015. Since then, his photograph was reproduced, reframed, reimagined, and reimaged to summarise the struggles of migration.

These three photographs belong to different contexts and realities. The first was taken in the United States as part of a governmental project aiming at improving the lives of people residing in agricultural areas. The second was taken in central Mediterranean representing adult male African migrants dangerously, but wilfully, crossing the sea hoping to reach the shores of Europe. The Last one was taken on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean at a time when Syria was going through its darkest war moments. Nevertheless, and despite the differences, all these photographs have a point in common. First, they are presented in a manner that obscures the individual identity of the migrants. For example, people might easily recognise and remember the migrant mother's photograph. But they would find it more challenging to remember or to know her name. They may be able to immediately conjure the boat of Mare Nostrum, but would they remember the faces? Aylan, as a child, sometimes turned into an angel by doodling wings around his body, has become an icon. An icon does not need definition, nor does it enjoy individuality.

---

[1] https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean?region_incident=All&route=All&year%5B%5D=2511&month=All&incident_date%5Bmin%5D=&incident_date%5Bmax%5D=

These extremely present yet elusive, greatly touching yet impersonal images of migration have provoked quite a few questions. One of the first questions that imposed itself pertains to the expected reactions these images aimed to create. In other words, what was the spectator supposed to feel or do when s/he sees these pictures? Were the spectators supposed to feel sorry or angry or a little of both? And in case they felt sorry and angry, what could they do? How would the emotions of a person living in Tunisia, for example, change the reality of Aylan Kurdi, or the life of those who stayed alive after the child was dead? This question was intuitively pertinent to a more insightful and knowledgeable work done by W.J.T. Mitchell and in which he asked a simple yet a provocative and sometimes fearful question: what do pictures want? Indeed, what did the picture of the dead boy want? Can it even want anything at all, in the first place? If it cannot, what do those who shot it, printed it, distributed it, shared it, and reposted it want?

The second question is related to the nature of generalised pain these pictures dealt with. Generalised, in this case, is intended to mean unidentified and impersonal pain. By obscuring the name and the individual identity of suffering migrants, their pain is turned into a generic experience. An experience that was not particularly lived by one individual with a face, a name, a history, a family, hopes and dreams, fears and anger, but gone through by a complete unknown stranger who does not step over the threshold of bare existence. It was not clear if these images were intended to be left hanging in a space of indetermination so to allow for the spectators to construct whatever background stories they needed to be able to sympathise with the photographed selves. Or were they left freely floating in the space of generic anonymity because, besides their pain and suffering, these migrants cannot be defined by anything?

This last remark led to a third question: is it true that migrants cannot be defined by anything other than their suffering and other people's compassion with their pain? If suffering was the only definer, then what good will come from sharing their spectacle of agony? If it is not, why were they not allowed to show other portions of themselves? Why were they confined into a space that flattens their identity and strips them of the power of speaking for themselves? Was it not possible for the migrant to reveal her/himself the way s/he saw fit? Could not the migrant represent her/himself in the manner that was adequate to her/him? Why, despite their loud and colourful presence, were these photographs so silencing?

These were the questions that haunted and guided this dissertation. They were haunting because they kept coming back and imposing themselves in different manners and shapes every time the illusion of an answer was configured. They were guiding because through them it was

possible to explore photography of migration not simply as a field of artistic representation or journalistic investigation but as a territory within which power relations manifested themselves. Every photograph examined in this dissertation was a site of struggle on which different stakeholders came to claim territory. To be able to approach this site of battle over authority, authenticity, and referentiality one had to equip herself with the adequate tools. In this regard, Visual Culture proved to present an exceptional inventory of methodological and conceptual insights that facilitated the navigation through the tricky nature of images. The iconic works of writers such as W.J.T. Mitchell, Laura Mulvey, Susan Sontag, John Berger, Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, to name a few, represented fundamental references when it came to dissecting and analysing photographs. To understand the messages of these photographs, the previous works were coupled with specific readings by Luc Boltanski, Patricia Holland, Susan D. Moeller, and Erica Bouris who brought valuable insight to the intricate ways photography can construct images of vulnerability and victimhood. Eventually, the works of Walter Mignolo, Aníbal Quijano, Ariella Azoulay, and Ramón Grosfoguel, among others, constructed the theoretical background against which decolonising photography of migration was studied.

Consequently, the dissertation had to be constructed in two major moments. This division was enlightened by two fundamental concerns. On the first hand, the researcher wanted to insist that there are, indeed, two ways to represent migrants. There exists a centripetal representation that moves towards the migrants and that concentrates and condenses their meanings in the concrete images one can see occupying the visual territory of migration. The second form of representation is rather a centrifugal rendering of the migratory experience that starts at, but also moves away from, a centre. In both cases, the migrant is the centre of representation. However, in centripetal photographic representation of migrants, the latter is conceived as a recipient of meanings that do not necessarily emanate from them. In the second case, migrants are the generators of meaning. Because of this research reality, the dissertation chose to split its focal point into two thinking moments to allow for the best possible understanding of the two forces of meaning-making.

The second concern acknowledged by this research, is the constantly increasing need for creating welcoming and safe spaces for dialogue between migrants and those who photograph them and between different forms of photography. In this sense, the dual division proposed in the present dissertation should only be considered as an initiative conversation that was intended to take place between two hypothetically opposed poles of migration’s photographic representation. The division has never been intended to be final and this

formatting outcome should at no point be considered fatal. The researcher sought to bring different opinions together, help bridge the gaps that exist between them, engage in a conversation with them, and aspire for proposing common grounds upon which the fair image of the migrant can survive.

In this light, the first part entitled *The European Visualisation of Migration* analysed and discussed three photo-stories produced by three prominent European photographers. The first photo-story is *Lesbos* created by Alessandro Penso in 2015 and devoted its visual space to document the struggles of predominantly Middle Eastern migrants upon their arrival at the Greek island. In this endeavour, Penso created an interesting collection of photographs employing different techniques and visualising different scenes. He photographed landscapes, groups of people, and individuals. One of his most prominent photographs that figures in this visual narrative is a picture showing a mother and her child wrapped in a silver thermal blanket. This photograph, that will be referred to as *Mother and Child*, will receive considerable attention for its capacity to generate meanings related to victimhood. Other photographs from the same photo-story will be studied in relation to the questions of space and the ethical issues related to visualising people in vulnerable situations.

The second photo-story dealt with in the first part is Alex Majoli's *Refugee Crisis on Lesbos*. It was also constructed on the same Greek island as Alessandro Penso's *Lesbos* and was set in 2015 as well. However, Majoli's declared and unapologetic theatrical style made a comparative approach between these two photographers an interesting path to be followed. Unlike Penso's franc documentary style, Majoli's highly artistic photographs enjoy toying with light and darkness to conceal and to reveal the migrant, the photographer's intentions, and the spectator's gaze. Majoli's *Refugee Crisis on Lesbos* does not only allow for a deep analysis of the visual construction of the spectacle of agony but also helps bringing to the fore the tensions that exist between suffering and its representation.

The last work that is examined in the first part is Giorgos Moutafis's *Dying on the Shores of Europe*. The Greek photographer introduced a rather disturbing scenery to the migration visual landscape. Unlike his two predecessors, Moutafis *hits* his spectators with graphic pictures showing extreme struggle and dead bodies. In an almost forensic style, Moutafis does not apologise for the painfully realistic photographs he produced. He confronts his audience with scene after scene of agony, pain, death, and decay forcing them to acknowledge what they see and to bear their personal responsibilities towards the suffering of migrants. His photographs seem to stand as a collection of evidence in preparation for a grand moral trial that does not

require emotions of compassion and unauthentic feeling of guilt but a genuine sense of moral responsibility.

The first section is dedicated to three main ideas that are related to the examination of the visual representation of suffering and how it was, to a great extent, harmoniously embedded in a quite long history of artistic representations of agony. Contemporary pictures of suffering were situated accordingly and were examined as a continuation of that tradition. The second idea discussed in this section is related to the possible pleasures that may be attained from visualising images of pain. Besides the conventional pleasures of compassion that are usually linked to looking at the pain of others, pleasure related to power, accessibility, and the ability to ignore the sight all together has also been examined. The final part of this section is dedicated to the concept of witnessing and how, in situations of extreme suffering, witnessing and bearing witness might serve as a tool to both document the suffering with hopes of future justice being brought and to liberate audiences from the disempowering emotions of pity and guilt.

The second part of this dissertation aims at discussing examples where the practice of photographing migrants and the practice of looking at them could be turned into an experience of decolonisation of the gaze. Through the works of Omar Imam and Iole Carollo, the second part discusses two main points. First, light was brought on the possibility of reclaiming the migrant self. Reclaiming and redeeming is a process articulated in two moments. In *Live, Love, Refugee* that was created in one of the Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon in 2015, Omar Imam allows his photographed migrants to choose the way they want to appear to their audience. The photographic practice turns into a performance in which both the photographer and the photographed participate in constructing the narrative of migration. In a second stage, the protagonist and the photographer invite the spectator in taking part in this performance and game of gazing by consensually allowing and sometimes even challenging the spectator to look on the weakness, suffering, sarcasm, and anger of the migrant. This clear and open invitation disarms the gaze from its intrusive nature and transforms the spectator into a participant.

The same participatory spirit was maintained by Iole Carollo in her book *Out of Africa* in which the space of migration was artistically configured. The book itself constitutes an invitation and a challenge to rethink the conventional ways of representing migration. The organisation of the sections of the photobook, the distribution of its inner space, and the oscillation between text and image make *Out of Africa* a unique experience in which the reader/spectator participates in a migration journey. Moving across the book is reminiscent of moving across borders and physically handling the manuscript brings migration to a new

dimension of proximity and involvement. *Out of Africa* and *Live, Love, Refugee* do not only provide a counter-narrative to the mainstream discourse about migration but propose other possible ways of looking, imagining, and configuring this experience in its full human nature.

PART ONE

THE EUROPEAN VISUALISATION OF MIGRATION

The drowned have nothing to say, nor do they have instructions or memories to be transmitted.

—Giorgio Agamben

1. Setting the Crisis and Constructing the Victim

In his *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams advances that the terms "critic" and "critical", which developed from the Latin "*criticus*" and the Greek "*kritikos*" and "*kritės*", have maintained their meaning of "fault-finding" and "judgment" (47). These meaning are especially evident in the fields of literature and art criticism in general where *to criticise* would signify to evaluate, to appreciate, and most importantly to judge the quality of the work of art. Moreover, Williams asserts that the term "critical" possesses a second meaning that is related to medicine, and which refers to a decisive moment in relation to the evolution of an illness. "Crisis", therefore, developed to mean "any difficulty as well as any turning point" (Williams 47).

Raymond Williams's understanding of *crisis* coincides with Giorgio Agamben's definition of the concept. In an interview with Verso Books, Agamben postulates that the term *crisis* has "two semantic roots: the medical one, referring to the course of an illness, and the theological one of the Last Judgement".[2] In the medical sense, a crisis is a moment in which the illness of a patient takes a decisive turn either towards recovery or death. In the religious sense, crisis is related to the Last Judgment happening in the end of times. Nevertheless, Agamben insists on highlighting that, while the original meaning of crisis brought forward the critical role of time in the resolution of those moments of great difficulty and potential change, the "present understanding of crisis" has lost its "relation to time".[3] Today's crises do not get resolved with

---

[2] https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/blogs/news/1318-the-endless-crisis-as-an-instrument-of-power-in-conversation-with-giorgio-agamben.

[3] Ibid.

time, on the contrary, they have developed an "enduring state" and have become a "part of normality in any segment of social life".[4]

Consequently, contemporary crises, besides being moments of possible change with no guaranteed resolutions, have become prolonged periods of uncertainty where "the old is dying and the new cannot be born" (Gramsci 33). At this point, it would be interesting to note that, according to Gramscian tradition, the term *crisis* itself is difficult to define. With reference to Gramsci's notes on his analysis of the crisis of 1929, Michele Filippini argues that the Gramscian crisis "takes on various meanings in the *Prison Notebooks*" and that its theory is formulated around three basic ideas (90). First, a crisis is not a single event but rather a process whose origins are difficult to pinpoint. Second, the existence of origins is necessary to the development of a crisis, however, the presence of those origins is not sufficient by itself. Third, "crisis is an inherent feature of the capitalist mode of production" (Filippini 91).

These definitions are particularly accurate in the context of the twenty-first century. Most of the people who were conscious during the turn of the new millennium would remember the Y2K scare. As the 1990s approached their end, there was a generalised fear among digital and technological communities that, as the year turns 2000, most computers worldwide would fail to compute the new date. The Millennial Bug, as it was dubbed, threatened to cause computer failures that would, consequently, affect electricity generation, water supply, collapse of world markets—in a nutshell, "The End of The World as We Know It" (Quiggin 46). So, as many people were preparing to celebrate the New Year's Eve, others were preparing for the apocalypse by hoarding bottled water and canned food, cancelling flights, and threatening banks with lawsuits (Edwards 8; Quiggin 46). Despite the reassurances of governments, many people fell prey to the discourse of digital crisis that was spread by prominent newspapers and magazines like *Newsweek* and *The New York Times*. Of course, no apocalypse happened and the world as we know it did not end, at least not in the imagined way and not for everyone.

Nevertheless, the ominous doomsday 2000 prophecies kept their promise in at least two ways. The digital crisis heralded in the late years of the 1990s developed into a chain of successive crises that proved to be more complex and to have more devastating effects. The 'New World Order', foretold by George W. Bush in an address to Congress in 1991, started to take shape as early as 2001 and eventually changed the lives of hundreds of millions of people,

---

[4] Ibid.

forever.[5] The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 was only the first domino to fall in a long chain of disastrous events. It represented the catalyst of a series reactions ranging from generalised unrest to utter wars especially in the Middle East. The unfortunate events started with the invasion of Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq, and continued with wars in Syria, Yemen, and Libya. Along with political unrest, wars and armed conflicts that stormed the region resulted in a catastrophic loss of human lives as well as the displacement of millions of people.

Additionally, the Y2K scare proved itself to be a digital scare despite the alteration of the nature of the expected terror. Instead of collapsing, the digital world gained more power; and in lieu of disconnecting people and systems globally, it brought them even closer to each other and to international events. The "New World Order defined by Terrorism" and articulated in the language of breaking news, investigative journalism and WikiLeaks, turned out to be a world order based on crises, fear, and most importantly, images (Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want?* 12). Before the year 2000, it was virtually impossible for many communities in the world to have access to the news as they developed, let alone have access to secret files shared on the internet to expose international officials. With the ever-growing democratisation of the internet, the new digital age promised world populations that they would never again have to rely on their governments, national media, or official narratives to learn the truth. The digital age delivered. News was served raw, directly from the source, with no obvious alteration or censorship. Most importantly, news was served with visual proof in the form of photographed documents, video sequences from drones shooting live military attacks, and films of atrocities being committed against journalists, captured soldiers, and civilians. Images, like those of "naked, hooded men being beaten, sexually humiliated, and subjected to 'stress positions' [that] were captured by digital cameras, stored on hard drives and compact discs, and disseminated over the Internet" were able to evade all possible form of censorship, to resist multiple attempts to bring them down and to finally reach personal computers worldwide (Mitchell, *Cloning Terror* 112). What the twenty first century offered its inhabitants was an amalgamation of anxieties and images: anxieties over safety, security, health, and images that provide visual evidence that the angst is legitimate.

---

[5] Bush, George W. "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union." *The American Presidency Project* 29 (2002).

The "Abu Ghraib archive", as it is christened by Mitchell, may stand as one of the most iconic examples of the merger of fears and images (*Cloning Terror*, 112-113). However, it definitely is not the only collection of images of suffering that was successful in becoming "imprinted on collective memory" (*Cloning Terror*, 112-113). As a matter of fact, other international crises have also received their fair share of photographic documentation and digital archiving. As wars, civil conflicts, and springs—Arab or otherwise—contaminated different places around the world forcing individuals and communities to constantly redefine what they called home, photography of people-on-the-go rigorously strived to keep up. Moreover, as *crisis* established itself as a defining power of the new millennium, both migration and photography became, almost immediately, articulated in and engaged with the same discourse of emergency and precarity. De Genova and his colleagues remarked that in the last years there was "an astounding proliferation in public discourse of the word 'crisis,' particularly in the European context" and that this proliferation did, indeed, tainted the way discourses related to migration, asylum seeking, and refugees were expressed (7).

Certainly, neither migration nor photography are considered new components of human existence. Besides, the employment of photography to catalogue people and document their experiences is not innovative either. Indeed, in 1929, German photographer August Sander embarked on the journey of photographing and cataloguing "archetypes to represent every possible type, social class, sub-class, job, vocation, privilege" that could come under his lens (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 35). Although his initial project of making 600 portraits showing not only the different faces but also the various professions in Germany was stopped and even destroyed by the Nazis, what remains is a collection of portraits that describe both the people and their class (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 35; Sontag, *On Photography* 61). Sander's project was faithful to the spirit of his age. His "pseudo-scientific neutrality", as Sontag puts it, hid in its details and broad representation of different 'types' of people a nineteenth and early twentieth century's obsession with creating types, producing categories, and classifying the world and its people into clear-cut classes and groups which are hard to pierce into and infiltrate (Sontag, *On Photography* 59).

Classification was, indeed, the backbone of a variety of "typological sciences […] like phrenology, criminology, psychiatry, and eugenics" that, either directly or indirectly, led to injustices, malpractices, colonisation, and even genocides. The wide variety of Sander's human samples could not disguise "class condescension" for while those who belonged to the middle and upper classes were photographed in a more or less neutral setting that did not show any

signs of profession specificities, the poorer had to be shot in a "setting […] which locates them" (Sontag, *On Photography* 60-61). Unlike the rich, the poor could not speak for themselves and their mere apparition before the camera could hardly provide satisfactory information to identify them. The poor person's identity always depends on other people and other things to represent them and to define the essence of their existence. This is exactly why, in Sander's photography, the circus lady's costume has to appear in the picture while the pharmacist's white coat does not (Sontag, *On Photography* 60-61).

In the same vein of using photography to document the life experiences of people, Dorothea Lange's photograph *Migrant Mother* stands as a stark example of how pictures are able to frame people in situations of vulnerability which do not only necessitate compassion but also respect. Susan Sontag argues that the vantage point adopted by Lange to photograph the migrant mother had a clear and a specific purpose: to show middle-class Americans that the poor are really suffering from poverty and that, despite their destitution, they are deserving of dignity (*On Photography* 62). It is true that Sander could be blamed for creating a catalogue of people based on a latent class belief where the poor, unlike the rich, needed further elements outside of themselves to identify them and their jobs. However, unlike Lange, he could hardly be blamed for creating a contrast between being poor and being deserving of dignity. His proclaimed pseudo-scientific detachment allowed him to look upon the poor with the same impassive eye he looked with upon the rich. The result of this lack of compassion put both the rich and the poor on the same level of dignity. Lange's photograph, on the other hand, and as part of an American federal project aiming at "demonstrat[ing] the value of the people photographed" presupposes that the poverty of the imaged individuals made their value as human beings a matter of argument (Sontag, *On Photography* 62). By 'demonstrating' their value and by striving to convince better-off people that they deserve dignity, Lange's photograph created a rift between poverty and worth. This rift, created in the first place by looking at poor people compassionately, could ironically only be narrowed through the intermediation of compassion itself (Sontag, *On Photography* 62).

The conclusion that may emanate from these observations is that photography possesses a historical connection to cataloguing people and recording their experiences. It is true that the intentions of photographers may vary as to why they are inclined to take certain pictures of certain people and why they are, with the same power and passion, deterred from snapping other shots. However, what remains constant is that photographs of people in enthralling and unusual conditions represent a considerable corpus in the common visual memory (Sontag, *On*

Photography 60). Would it then be surprising that when in the last twenty years the public discourse started to address the question of migration in terms of *crisis* that photographers and photojournalists bravely jumped into sinking boats, on rescue ships, over fenced borders, and into refugee camps with the sole concern of documenting the perils of contemporary migration?

What the current migration situation offered to photography is a renewed opportunity to create yet another catalogue of people that is not necessarily based on the belief in the fundamental existence of unsurmountable class conditions but rather on the belief in humanity and that all people, regardless of the differences that might exist between them, "are equal and capable of reason, and are obligated to respect each other's dignity" (Barnett 333). In the chaos of the current mass mobility where migrants often find themselves struggling against fortified borders, rigid migration laws, criminalised migration, and perilous routes leading to Europe, the photographer introduced her/himself as a third party seemingly detached from the struggle. Whatever the outcome of the journey led by the migrant, photographers were there to document. The result is, of course, an immense body of photographs of people fighting for their lives against the treacherous Mare Nostrum, individuals being rescued, children being cast in life-threatening situations, and dead bodies.

Despite the visible variety of the subjects photographed and the techniques employed to photograph them, the vast majority of the pictures of migration agree on two common points. First, they insist on picturing suffering, struggle, chaos, and death. Second, they, either explicitly or implicitly, appeal to the viewer's pathos in order to provoke her/him into action. Consequently, this focus on showing migrants in situation of vulnerability creates a general visual type that conflates migration with suffering and migrants with victimhood. When coupled with a strong appeal to emotions, the image of the migrant as helpless and desperate is amplified to a point where migration, despite all its complexities, is reduced to a situation requiring nothing but compassion and pity. Migrants become, then, cast into the role of *victim* from which certain characteristics and behaviours are expected.

The construction of the victim as a category depends on a complex process that tangles legal definitions of what could be considered a situation of victimisation; as well as personal and group evaluations that are more subjective and more influenced by socio-cultural norms and values. This being said, it would be safe to assume that while the legal definitions may provide relatively neutral and objective benchmarks against which victimisation can be measures and assessed; social and cultural definitions may be subjected to different dynamics like prejudice and stereotypes that are not necessarily detached and unbiased. Consequently, the

construction (and acceptance) of the migrant as a victim would itself depend on the intervention of multiple interlocuters who, each with their own voice and from their own position, would participate in defining the category. Certain photographs of migrants participate in this creational dialogue and, by making propositions about her/his characteristics, conditions, situations, and behaviours, set the norms of what would develop into a new category with inclusive and exclusive powers. The image of the migrant as a victim would then function as a benchmark allowing spectators to predict, "beyond chance level", the former's identity and behaviour and to determine the appropriate approach to be taken in her/his regard (Krueger 14219). However, it should be noted that, while categorisation is a fundamental mental function that enables people to make quite accurate predictions and save cognitive energy, it remains sensitive to change depending on the positions occupied and assumed by multiple interventions.

This part of the dissertation aims at analysing photography of migration in the light of the above-mentioned variables. The interplay of passion and compassion are addressed through the analysis of photographs showing migrants, and especially children, in various conditions of utter vulnerability and helplessness elevating them to martyr-like positions. Children, assumed to have no responsibility in the situations they find themselves in, are often cast as typical victims of perilous migratory decisions. At a second moment, this chapter focuses on studying the extent to which the construction of the migrant as a victim and the appeal to pathos can yield the desired results of help and assistance. Nevertheless, and before delving into the intricacies of the visual construction of the *migrant as a victim*, it seems opportune at this level to analyse the dynamics that construct the *victim* as a more general category. The purpose of this theoretical analysis is to highlight the complex pluri-disciplinarity of a seemingly simple classification and to pave the way to the equally complex, yet more subtle, photographic potential for constructing and categorising.

1.1. The Victim as a Legal Category

To avoid becoming too embroiled in delicate nuances of legal definitions existing between different countries and political entities, this dissertation will adopt the definition of *victim* as endorsed by the International Criminal Court and the United Nations as the starting point of study. This choice is enlightened by two main concerns. First, this researcher is by no means an expert in law or legal proceedings and thus cannot perform any juridical somersaults to disentangle herself from the implications that may result from choosing one national definition over another. Second, both the United Nations and International Criminal Court

definitions have themselves been endorsed by the international community which makes them a suitable platform for virtually unbiased discussions.

In 1985, the United Nations issued its *Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power*.[6] According to this declaration, a *victim* is defined as a person who, either as an individual or a member of a group, has undergone physical, psychological or material harm that resulted in "substantial impairment of their fundamental rights" (*Declaration* par. 1). This harm should be the result of "acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws operative within Member States, including those laws proscribing criminal abuse of power" (*Declaration* par. 1). The term *victim* was then extrapolated to include any person who has been subjected to harm either directly or indirectly. This means that family members and dependents of people directly victimised, or people who suffered as a result of their intervention to prevent victimisation or to help victims, are all considered victims by the Declaration (par. 2). On the other hand, the *Declaration* defines victims of abuse of power as individuals who suffered physical, psychological and material harm that resulted in "substantial impairment of their fundamental rights" through the commission or omission that are not regarded as "violations of national criminal laws but of internationally recognized norms relating to human rights" (*Declaration* par. 18).

The *Declaration* was successful in establishing three main points. First, it was possible to reach an agreement within the international community by which Member States were required to follow "minimum international standards" in their treatment of people victimised within their jurisdiction (Garkawe 278). Second, the United Nations General Assembly was succeeded in reaching a compromise by which both 'crime' and 'abuse of power' were recognised as victimising violations of human fundamental rights that need to be addressed by Member States. Finally, the *Declaration* was able to set the grounds for a comprehensive definition of 'victims' and 'harm' that would allow further legal and social discussions.

One of the most noteworthy points covered by the *Declaration* is the consideration of abuse of power as a form of victimisation. When individuals or groups are targeted by acts of criminal victimisation which is "deliberately not [...] investigated or prosecuted by the authorities" as in crimes committed or condoned by governments themselves, they are

---

[6] UN General Assembly, *Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, A/RES/40/34, 29 November 1985, https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1985/en/57749 [accessed 22 May 2024]

considered by the *Declaration* to be victims of abuse of power (Garkawe 279). Besides "non-enforcement", which denies victims their rights to receive fair proceedings and trials, individuals and groups may become victims of "'immoral' abuse of power", which "involves harmful conduct that should be criminal by any reasonable moral standard, but it is not forbidden by national laws, and may in fact even be authorised by national laws" (Garkawe 279-280). Violations of certain "internationally accepted standards", like certain human rights for instance, are considered by the *Declaration* acts of victimisation and people subjected to them should be eligible to international assistance (Garkawe 279-280). However, and despite this Declaration and definitions, it remains challenging for both individuals and groups to seek international assistance especially when the crimes to which they are victims are committed by the state itself.

Another source that could be employed to define the concept of *victim* is Rule 85 of the International Criminal Court *Rules of Procedure and Evidence* which states that "victims" are "natural persons who have suffered harm as a result of the commission of any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court" (qtd. in Olásolo and Kiss 127). While there exists a consensus regarding the meaning of "natural persons" which interprets them as human beings, several controversies have arisen as to whether deceased people should be allowed, "through representatives", to participate in the proceedings of the court (Olásolo and Kiss 128). The second controversial debate pertains to the unequivocal establishment of a cause-effect relation between the commission of a crime and the harm experienced by the victims. Finally, harm can be understood as "physical", "psychological" and/or "material" (Olásolo and Kiss 128).

The notion of *harm* has also been defined in Principle 8 of the United Nations *Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Humanitarian Law*, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, resolution 60/147, on 16 December 2005, as follows:

> For purposes of the present document, victims are persons who individually or collectively suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that constitute gross violations of international human rights law, or serious violations of international humanitarian law. Where appropriate, and in accordance with domestic law, the term "victim"

> also includes the immediate family or dependants of the direct victim and persons who have suffered harm in intervening to assist victims in distress or to prevent victimization.[7]

A victim is then an individual, or a group of individuals, who suffered physically or psychologically, who endured economic or material losses, and/or who was deprived of her/his fundamental human rights. Victims are people who were either the target of harm directed at their persons or at family members and dependent relatives. A victim can also be an individual who was injured while trying to assist others and prevent acts of victimisation from happening. It should be noted though, that while the International Criminal Court accepts the United Nations *Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Humanitarian Law* as "legitimate source of interpretation" and agrees that psychological, physical and material damages are all valid forms of harm; it remains hesitant as to whether to accept impairment of fundamental human rights as a form of relevant harm (Olásolo and Kiss 134).

There is no doubt that the legal definitions of *victim* and *victimisation* introduced by the United Nations and the International Criminal Court are valuable backgrounds upon which the work of many organisations that deal with protecting the rights of victims was based. However, these definitions as well as many proceedings and recommendations remain largely limited in their impact either because large numbers of victims remain ignorant of their situation and rights or because the long process of proving one's victimisation is time and energy consuming. Unfortunately, victims who come from less privileged backgrounds and who suffer from lack of resources as well as those who have suffered from governmental and institutional abuse of power find themselves discouraged from following this long and tiring legal path. When the criminal is unknown or is too powerful to bring before a court of law, when victims lack the necessary knowledge and resources to prove their victimisation, or when cases are rejected because of legal technicality, the whole process becomes frustrating and adds a psychological dimension to the definition of victimhood.

1.2. The Victim as a Victimological Concept

---

[7] UN General Assembly, *Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, A/RES/60/147, 21 March 2006, https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/2006/en/12095 [accessed 22 May 2024]

The Industrial Revolution brought about structural changes in Western societies. Besides the great scientific and technological development, there was a paramount change in the order, perception and functions of society. One of these substantial changes affected criminal law and, by extension, the way modern societies started to perceive victims. Before the rise of industrial societies, criminal law was based on the notions of retaliation and compensation. The criminal act was perceived as an offence directed mainly against an individual, or a group, engendering a disruption in the order organising the victim's life. Crimes were moments of disequilibrium and inequality the laws sought to redress and eliminate. Consequently, the punishment imposed on the criminal had to be first, proportional to the injustice committed and, second, of the same nature of the offense. The law of retribution, based on the concept of lex talionis, supposed that every criminal act should be punished in the same nature and proportion. Deriving its origins from the Code of Hammurabi, and later on from Mosaic Law, retributive punishment had for ultimate goal the reinstitution of equity between the criminal and the victim. By trying to re-establish equality between the victim and the criminal, the law of retribution is believed to have the former as its ultimate concern and the centrepiece of its justice system (Daigle 17; Fish 57).

Lex talionis, however, had important limitations. Immanuel Kant, for instance, in his *Metaphysical Elements of Justice* admits that this type of laws cannot be applied uniformly to all people. Despite being a proponent of the law of retribution as the only system "compatible with the principle of pure and strict legal justice", he concedes that "the existence of class distinctions" is a major impediment to the universal observation of such laws (Kant 139). It goes without saying that in almost every society there would be a group of individuals, large or small, who would be immune to retribution either because of birth, wealth, or power. The remedy to this issue according to Kant is to be more attentive to the "sensibilities of the higher classes" and to punish them not precisely in the kind of the offense they committed but in the kind of the discomfort and disturbance they created in the body and mind of their victims (139). A second limitation of retributive justice is that it cannot be applied in all situations and in all crimes. If murder can be punished with death, theft cannot be punished with theft. Finally, besides being now seen as "barbaric and cruel", especially when it comes to inflicting physical punishment, lex talionis are greatly impractical and very often useless especially if they fail to prevent future crime (Fish, 62).

These limitations played a fundamental role in leading philosophers to conceive of more practical and useful forms of legal punishment that would not only sanction a present crime but

also prevent future infringements. Jeremy Bentham, for example, supported the idea that the ultimate goal of legal justice is prevention. According to his utilitarian philosophy, it would be useless to impose punishment on an individual only because s/he was found guilty of committing a crime. A punishment is only useful if it could prevent the same delinquent as well as others from committing further crimes. As a consequence, punishment should not only seek to be retributive either by inflicting pain on the guilty or restoring a lost balance to the life of the victim. Punishment should be more oriented towards prevention and discipline. Being adequately administered, legal punishment redresses the offender and deters the general public. In this sense, inflicting punishment on one individual becomes a sacrificial act devoid of any "wrath" or "vengeance" and purely directed to protecting the greater good of society (Bentham 62).

Jeremy Bentham's conception of the legal justice and the punitive system had a momentous impact on our modern understanding of law and order. Today, many modern legal systems tend to take a utilitarian approach to the concept of justice and punishment. Laws and legal institutions took a great preventive and disciplinary turn as their greater purpose became the prevention of future crimes and the rehabilitation of actual offenders. This utilitarian reconceptualization of crime and punishment aiming at improving both individuals and societies crossed roads with the spirit of capitalism in the 19th and 20th centuries (Fish 64). As a matter of fact, the evaluation of an act as harmful and criminal depends greatly on the position of lawmakers who have enough political and economic power to protect their interests. Harmful acts, regardless of the fact that they would produce victims, are criminalised only when they represent a threat to what is deemed valuable to powerful social and political groups. The existence of a victim became only a symptom of the violation of an existing social order. Indeed, the victim her/himself is turned into a symbol that condenses different political and socio-economic articulations and is held as a shield to be readily sacrificed for the protection of the state and society. The priority is then not to compensate a victim but to compensate society by ensuring that offenders receive adequate punishment. In minor offences, for instance, the state would be able to collect fines which constitute a considerable source of national income; in graver infringements, the state would ensure the appropriate discipline of the offender to deter her/him from committing a crime again. In all cases, the victim, the person harmed the most by the crime, is confined to a secondary position (Daigle 17; Fattah, "Prologue" 1; Quinney 315-16).

Modern societies did not only strive to draw some profit from the legal system, but they also weakened the victim's status. One example of the social and political marginalisation of the victim would be her/his dismissal as secondary in the study of crime and criminality in academic domains. Even when the victim started to gain some grounds as a focal point in academic research, the pioneers in the field of victimology used her/him as an explanatory factor of crime. The main interest was not to study the victim per se, but rather to study her/his potential participation and facilitation in the criminal act as an "agent provocateur" (Daigle 19). Since the first victimologists were essentially criminologists, their main concern was to create a typology of victims that could help them to better understand crime and criminality. Von Hentig's *The Criminal and His Victim: Studies in the Sociobiology of Crime*, for example, classified victims using a scale describing the levels of their involvement in the crime. In a paper presented at a congress in Romania in 1947, Benjamin Mendelsohn, the father of victimology, stressed the provocative role played by victims that may lead up to their victimization. The main point in common these pioneers of victimology had was their remarkable interest in the victims' responsibility in their own victimization (Daigle 19-20; Goodey 11; Van Dijk 1).

To be able to determine this responsibility, researchers set behavioural frameworks detailing the types of activities and lifestyles that could be pursued by victims and that could create suitable spaces for victimisation. Two main models resulted from this theoretical endeavour: the first was the lifestyle model developed by Michael Hindelang, Michael Gottfredson, and James Garofalo's (1978); and the second was the routine activity model created by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979). The lifestyle theory of victimisation maintains that an individual's everyday activities, related to both professional and personal lives, could lead her/him to frequent certain individuals and places where the risk of getting harmed would be higher. The model, relying on empirical data, presumes that victimisation does not follow a randomised distribution in time and space but is rather centred on high-risk situations and individuals. People, by exposing themselves to these dangerous situations and associating themselves with motivated offenders, could increase the probability of their victimisation (Garofalo 136; Hindelang et al. 243).

In the same vein, the routine activity theory proposes that some daily activities undertaken by individuals or groups may bring them into direct contact with motivated offenders. This constant contact would increase the risks of victimisation. While the motivation of delinquents does not need to be explained, according to Cohen and Felson, their choice of

particular victims is more intriguing. The researchers maintain that certain people are found to be suitable victims because of their personal characteristics that make them attractive as potential crime targets. When, in a particular situation, a motivated offender and a suitable target coexist along with the absence of a capable guardian, a crime is very likely to take place (Cohen and Felson 589; Daigle 50).

The research conducted by the first pioneers of victimology was highly valuable as it was the first attempt in modern times to shed light on the position of the victim and the process of victimisation. However, this wave of criminologists and social psychologists interested in the studies of victimisation was also successful in raising much criticism especially for providing a fertile ground for victim blaming. Indeed, the first texts of Mendelsohn and Von Hentig, driven by an endeavour to defend the offender, sought to put some blame on the victim either by considering her/him a participant in or a precipitant of the crime. One of the most criticised studies on victimisation was conducted by Amir in 1971. The study concludes that, more often than not, rape is precipitated by the victim's characteristics and behaviour (Amir 493).

Nevertheless, penal victimology along with national and international legal systems tried to provide an objective and empirical definition of victimisation. Both paradigms sought to create a list of definite situations where persons and/or groups could be identified as victim. Choosing to limit victimisation to a state of harm directly resulting from the commission of a criminal act or the omission of acts and interventions that would prevent harm from happening could, in a way, be justified by the technical and material limitations imposed on the work of local and international parties involved in the matter. For practical reasons, criminologists, victimologists, and legal practitioners had to determine the specific instances that should be regarded as cases of victimisation. They were also interested in the manners in which these cases were created and maintained; and, most importantly, how they could be prevented.

According to Ezzat A. Fattah, victimology scholars and victim advocates focused the majority of their attention on what is known as victims of "conventional crimes" like murder, rape, and other forms of violence where both the offender and the victim are "visible" and "identifiable" (Fattah, *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy* 5). This apparently biased distribution of attention leaves an importantly large number of victims unidentified and unattended to. For instance, people suffering from discrimination, pollution, general social injustice, and political and economic abuse of power can find themselves excluded from receiving adequate assistance besides being left out of the scope of academic study. The lack of

attention victims of invisible and silent crimes receive can be due to the fact that such crimes do not get reported as often as their conventional counterparts. Lower rates of reporting such crimes can, in its turn, be explained by the victim's lack of necessary resources to go after the perpetrators (Fattah, *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy* 5).

Identifying and reporting a crime depends on the nature of the offense as much as it depends on the identity of the offender and the victim. In any given society, both victims and offenders are categories defined by legislators and policymakers who usually belong to influential and "powerful social groups" (Strobl, "Becoming a Victim" 16). These dominant groups tend to refer back to their own "cultural standards and value preferences" in order to define offences and perpetrators (Strobl, "Becoming a Victim" 16). Consequently, minority groups, who may have different opinions and definitions and would be more targeted by specific crimes, find themselves incapable of reporting these instances of victimisation due to the inherent bias by which crime and victimisation were defined (Strobl, "Becoming a Victim" 16). Besides, some of the silent crimes, like pollution or abuse of power for instance, do not seem to have a visible and identifiable perpetrator that could be sued by victims. Crimes like these produce victims but do not produce criminals simply because the offenders are either too powerful to identify or completely unidentifiable.

The shortcomings of penal victimology were quickly addressed by the rise of a second branch of the science that was more interested in reducing the suffering of the victims and was less dependent on criminology and criminal law. Being more interested in the lived experiences of victimised individuals, regardless of the legal definition of the particular event causing their victimisation, general victimology was able to branch out and to focalise its research on victims themselves. It was also able to vary its methodological and theoretical backgrounds by soliciting the intervention of clinical psychologists and public health practitioners as well as human rights lawyers and activists. By doing so, victimology could finally address victimisation from the point of view of the victim her/himself who had been for a long period of time silenced and put aside (Van Dijk 4).

Victimology adopted a more generalised definition of victimisation which became regarded as an event, not necessarily criminal, that significantly damages individuals, groups, and institutions. Consequently, victims are people who suffer not only from physical injuries or property losses, but who also suffer from violations of their rights and a "disruption of their well being" (Dussich 118). The disruption of the victim's well-being added a new dimension to the manner in which victimisation is perceived and studied today. Besides being an "objective

reality” that can be observed and measured by criminal and clinical examination, victimisation is also understood as a mental process that is highly subjective and depends on the individual’s assessment of the situation (Fattah, “The Evolution of a Young, Promising Discipline” 50). In this regard, what could be evaluated as an act of victimisation by a person, or a group of people can be inscribed as an insignificant event in the lives of others and vice versa (Fattah, “The Evolution of a Young, Promising Discipline” 50; Bar-Tal et al. 232).

According to Bar-Tal and his colleagues, people can perceive themselves as victims if they succeed in establishing a mental reality of victimisation about themselves or their community (Bar-Tal et al. 232). When they believe that they suffered from an unjustified and unpreventable harm, of which they are not responsible; that they are morally superior to the offender and that they are, as a result, deserving of empathy, individuals would qualify themselves as victims (Bar-Tal et al. 232). This quite complex definition of victimisation and experience of victimhood sheds light on the complicated mental processes individuals and groups would undergo in order for them to accept or reject the label of *victim*. First, victims themselves need to be able to perceive victimising acts and experiences as negative and harmful. While the importance of this point will be further analysed afterwards, it is necessary at this level to highlight that external evaluations of a given event as victimising does not necessarily rhyme with the way a person or a group perceive it. For example, certain rituals or rites of passages of pre-industrialised societies might be seen as extremely harmful by an outsider, yet they do not produce any victimising emotions within the members of the in-group (Fattah, “The Evolution of a Young, Promising Discipline” 51). Second, for an experience to be appraised as victimising, it does not only need to be harmful but should also be qualified as undeserved and unjust. The arbitrary distribution of harm, along with the denial of any responsibility by the victims, serves two main purposes: first, it establishes the moral superiority of the victim, second, it determines her/his complete innocence. In doing so, the victimised individual and/or community could proceed to demand empathy and sometimes assistance and retribution (Bar-Tal et al. 232).

Thus far, it has been demonstrated that the identification of a *victim* heavily depended on what is legally considered as a criminal conduct despite the involvement of psychological appraisals in accepting or rejecting such assessments. Indeed, in the process of law-making, majority groups decide on the collection of values and social norms they want to preserve. They also decide to label as ‘criminal’ any act against these norms and values. Consequently, both ‘criminals’ and ‘victims’ become categories created by societies to demarcate their “moral

territory" (Rock 35). However, this delimitation is not always easily maintained for while some transgressions result in visible and measurable harm like property loss and physical abuse, some other infractions are more abstract and have invisible repercussions like loss of security, anxiety, and fear (Bar-Tal et al. 232). This reality made victimologists consider that relying on the criminal code and legal systems alone to define victimisation would leave a large category of victims outside the scope of study and of help. It is in this light that victimology, as the study of victims, deemed it necessary to investigate not only the legal and the subjective evaluation of victimisation, but also the socio-cultural processes that legitimise such evaluations.

1.3. The Victim as a Social Construct

Besides being objectively observable and subjectively experienced, victimisation is also socially constructed. According to Berger and Luckmann, the real world in which everyday life is conducted is apprehended in a compound way (33). On the one hand, it presents itself as the meaningful world taken for granted by the individuals who subjectively experience it. On the other, this same world is constructed and maintained by individuals shared beliefs and actions (Berger and Luckmann 33). In the human understanding of the world as a given, people presuppose that it is ordered in a manner that does not depend on their intervention to be arranged and rearranged (Berger and Luckmann 35). The world, in its objective existence, predates their own existence and is understood as being fully independent from either their presence in or their awareness of it. However, while the world is believed to be objective, the way people experience it is always subjective. Every individual exists in a constant "here" and "now" that are imposed by corporeal and temporal realities (Berger and Luckmann 36). People are also aware of the existence of others who share the same objective world but not necessarily the same subjective experiences of time and space (Berger and Luckmann 37). Social interaction allows people to share their subjective experiences of the world as well as it permits them to, constantly and mutually, trespass on each other's realities and cause them to change. However, no matter how real and direct these interactions are, they can only be apprehended via "typificatory schemes" (Berger and Luckmann 45). By being able to organise both people and social interactions into types or categories, human encounters become meaningful (Berger and Luckmann 43).

Notwithstanding, not all types are created with the same degree of directness and immediacy. Some of these social types are the fruit of the individual's everyday contact with people s/he knows, is familiar with, and is interested in. Others emerge from superficial

meetings that are unlikely to happen again and involve all the people a person is less likely to be interested in. As they move farther from everyday face-to-face encounters, and as they get less intimate and more uninteresting, types grow more anonymous to ultimately reach the almost absolute anonymity of "abstractions" (Berger and Luckmann 48). It is also important to note that types and typifications do not solely emerge from personal experiences. Some types, and the way they are apprehended, are inherited from the social structures individuals belong to. Some others are created by pure imagination and are transmitted to others through social interactions.

According to Berger and Luckmann's typification and social construction of reality, a *victim*, especially when s/he is distant and treated abstractly, is indeed a social construct. As a matter of fact, Richard Quinney, in his seminal work "Who is the Victim?" published in 1972, insists on the socially constructed nature of the *victim* as a type. Like any other category, the victim is a concept produced by collective imagination. It is in "our own minds", affirms Quinney, that we evaluate the "reality of the situation" (Quinney 314). It is also in our minds and within the "larger social context", that we assign labels to different participants in any given situation (Quinney 314). The victim, as a type or a category, is therefore a label that members of given social groups attach to particular people in particular situations after they go through a mental process of assessing, admitting, and excluding. Victims, like other social categories, are not objective entities existing independently in the world as much as they are the "optional, discretionary, and by no means innately given" commonsensical conceptions that societies construct, concede to, and conserve (Quinney 314).

According to Bar-Tal and his colleagues, social interaction not only "defines the characteristics of 'victim[s]'" but most importantly "assigns" the label and "legitimizes" it (233). Once the label is created, accepted, and justified, it is maintained within society for a relatively long period of time. People who share the same spatiotemporal context and who interact within the same socio-political and cultural frameworks will have relatively the same understanding of what a victim is (Bar-Tal et al. 233). According to Berger and Luckmann's notion of typification, as well as Bar-Tal's ideas of labelling victims, we may conclude that it is through social interactions that communities create the *victim* as a type. It is also these same encounters that enable people to "routinely label persons" as victims if they manifest certain characteristics like being harmed or unfairly treated (Holstein and Miller 105; Jankowitz 8-9). The more routinely the label is attributed and the less directly individuals are exposed to the categories they label, the more general, anonymous and powerful the type grows.

Nils Christie elaborates on the concept of victim as a social construct in his renowned article "The Ideal Victim". He claims that a victim, and most precisely the ideal victim, is an abstract "public status" that some people receive when they are subjected to crime (Christie 18). To be attributed the label of *victim*, people affected by harmful acts need to possess specific characteristics. Three of these attributes are related to the victim her/himself while the other two have to do with the offender. First and foremost, the victim needs to be weak. The example given by Christie is that of an old lady, yet any type of socially perceived weakness could be satisfactory. Generally, society perceives old, sick, or very young people as weak. Weakness can also be attributed to women in certain situations and may also be extrapolated to specific instances of socio-economic inequalities. It is then of paramount importance to be able to see the person who wants to obtain the public status of *victim* as vulnerable.

The second attribute is related to the type of activities the person was engaged in at the moment of their victimisation. An ideal victim is someone who was wronged, injured, and unfairly treated while conducting a "respectable project" (Christie 19). It is particularly difficult to imagine someone harmed while engaging in criminal activities as a victim. Likewise, certain places tend to be shunned as potential places of victimisation because they are dangerous or of ill repute. Therefore, it is fundamental that the weak and respectable person would not be located in a unsafe or questionable place at the moment they get victimised. For example, while Christie's ideal victim cannot be blamed for being mugged on her way home after caring for her sister, the same cannot be said about a thief who happen to get beaten up and robbed in a dark alley where he was trying to buy drugs.

Finally, in order for the assaulted person to receive the label of *ideal victim*, their offender needs to be conspicuously stronger and completely foreign to them (Christie 19). The strength of the offender as well as her/his arbitrary act of evil make the weakness and non-responsibility of the victim stand out. It is this stark contrast between the aggressiveness and depravity of the criminal and the vulnerability and innocence of the victim that social groups use to identify both parties.

In her book *Complex Political Victims*, Erica Bouris takes up the ideal victim model established by Christie and further elaborates it. Discussing two of the most horrific moments in human history, Bouris delineates the characteristics of what is commonly perceived as being an *ideal victim*. The first case she deals with is the depiction of the beating and physical assault the children confined in Auschwitz were subjected to while they were descending into the gas chambers. The second case of terrible treatment was that assumed by men imprisoned in

concentration camps run by Serbs during the Bosnian Civil War. There exist two similarities in these accounts: the striking innocence of the victims and the unfathomable evil they had to face. The children of Auschwitz and the men of Omarska stand out as two extreme examples of *ideal victims* as they condense in their bodies, states, and fates what, in public imagination, is immediately understood as victimisation (Bouris 3).

An ideal victim is someone who is perfectly innocent, of untarnished morality, and of blameless character like the naked children in Auschwitz walking to their death or the emaciated men of Omarska. Ideal victims are people "stripped of their humanity as they are beaten and slaughtered" (Bouris 3). Naked and beaten children along skeletal and exhausted men had nothing but fear and helplessness to face their terrorising fate. Like "pawns" their lives and deaths are decided not by themselves but by a "tremendous act of evil" that they can neither fight nor escape (Bouris 3). In Christie's words, an ideal victim is morally "white" standing in stark opposition to the blackness of the offender's "inhuman evil and terror" (Christie 26; Bouris 3). This whiteness is not only a metaphor for a blameless character but is also a metaphor for the void that results from the denial of power, choice, and autonomy.

Victimisation, like many other social constructs, is organised around a map of binary opposed "notions of good and bad, innocence and guilt, morality and immorality" (Jankowitz 11). An ideal victim is believed to be "wholly innocent" while the offender, usually coming from outside the moral territory of the in-group, is "wholly guilty" and thoroughly responsible (Jankowitz 11). Social types seem to resist relativity and are often imagined as absolute entities. Indeed, a type can be constructed only if it is imagined as pure and immaculate. Thinking of a person as relatively responsible for their victimisation leads to abstaining from perceiving them as real victims and to, consequently, withholding public sympathy and help. Consequently, the victim can be understood as a construct that crystallises socially valuable values that need to be protected. Hence, the victim's most esteemed function is to stand as a line of demarcation separating the moral territory of the in-group from the immoral wasteland of the out-group.

When societies conceive themselves, dominant social groups determine the borders of their territories which are becoming more immaterial and metaphoric in our globalised world. With the remarkable technological advancements that made communication and transport faster and easier in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, people's sense of place does no longer depend on geographical frontiers as much as it depends on spheres of shared experiences and identities (Goodey 19). Because physical borders are not the only separation between the inside and the outside today, communities feel increasingly threatened by invisible dangers waiting

for a suitable moment to attack. These dangers target both the security of the frontier and the stability of the organised society making communities feel more vulnerable and victimised by increasingly ruthless enemies.

Enemies, like victims, represent an essential category in almost every nation's myth of creation. Among other things, these narratives play the fundamental social role of differentiating the national space from the outside world as well as distinguishing national heroes from "less worthy" enemies (Mark 385). The enemy as a social construct is the negative image of the victim for while the latter stands for every virtue adopted and protected by a community, the former epitomises the negation of these morals and standards. By contrasting these two images in compelling narratives of sacrifice and survival, societies become capable of mapping their moral territory.

In the collective imagination of societies, the enemy is usually an outsider upon whom negative and evil impulses are projected. As a type, the enemy is the symbol of everything hated and feared (Mack 386). Not to lose their sense of moral superiority and psychological stability, societies endow their enemies with superhuman characteristics and powers that would justify antagonistic feelings and behaviours. When the physical or moral territory of a given community is invaded, the body politic metaphor by which society is compared to a biological body reaches its apogee. The previously healthy and harmonious social body, left unguarded, finds itself attacked by "pests and parasites" leaving it in a chaotic state of fits and fever (Rock 35-36).

Narratives of virtuous societies falling under callous attacks of outsiders are commonplace. However, what is more customary is the offhanded association between foreignness and danger established by these myths and narrations. Besides the fact that enemies are conceived to be foreigners, they are also imagined possess some animalistic or demonic features that throw them completely outside the human realm and make it almost impossible to understand them, let alone to empathise or to redeem them. In other words, the outlandishness of the enemy stems from both her/his foreignness to the geographical territory of a given society and her/his unfamiliarity with and hostility to that community's "moral schemes" (Rock 36-37).

It is true that modern societies have found new explanations to what was previously unfathomable. Mental and psychological disorders replaced demonic possessions, for example, and instead of burning witches at the stake more humane punishments are adopted to discipline those who break the law. Yet, in humanity's constant struggle to make sense of an inherently

meaningless environment, the belief in the existence of outside and inside worlds persisted. These two worlds are maintained in the everyday life conception as two separate spheres completely independent from each other. The borders separating them are believed to be well-defined, well-guarded, solid, and final. The inside world of the Self and the community is constructed as morally good, while the outside world of the Other and of aliens is constructed as morally bad. All infiltration into the inside moral territory from the outside is believed to cause disruption of order, contamination and pollution and should therefore be contained and neutralised (Rock 38).

In summary, some conclusions could be drawn from the preceding discussion. First and foremost, one can safely assume that the notion of crisis can be considered as one of the defining concepts of the 21st century. Starting with the Y2K scare, present-day societies have experienced, and in some cases are still experiencing, a series of global crises: the financial crisis of 2008, the continuing climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the migration crisis. Coupled with unprecedented digitalisation and democratisation of the internet and social media, these crises acquired a unique visual aspect. It consequently became almost commonplace to summon an image through which each of these crises could be represented. Migration crisis is no exception. Indeed, photographs of migrants struggling through their way to Europe, for example, represent an impressive body of visual production during this first quarter of the century.

This relation between photography and migration is the second conclusion the discussion came to. As a matter of fact, since its invention, photography has been concerned not only with documenting people's lives but also with typifying and categorising these people. A major example of such visual typification is August Sander and his endeavour to create an atlas of German people and professions. Although his project was eventually aborted, he still represents one of photography's deepest desires: capturing the essence of human existence. Naturally, this essence may vary from one photographer to the other depending on how they would define it. Nevertheless, there exists a shared concern with the visualisation of what would appear as universally human. Marriage ceremonies and birthday parties are some of the cherished moments of photography and so are moments of pain, struggle, and even death. What makes these moments photographable is not only their mnemonic value as memory triggers but also their overt simplicity. The universality of emotions such as joy or pain makes such photographs capable of transcending obstacles of language and culture and makes them more

capable of grasping the attention of spectators. Thus, when migrants started to brave the borders of Europe, photography responded by creating a new catalogue of people: migrants.

The catalogue of migrants creates a visual identity of this extremely diverse group of people that predominantly relies on images of vulnerability and distress. Such images, by virtue of their seeming simplicity, serve two main purposes. On the one hand, they establish an almost immediate link between migration and victimisation. On the other, and since the concept of victimhood is particularly intricate and depends on complex interventions from different meaning-creating bodies and processes, migration photography chooses to simplify its images. This simplification results in pictures that visually reiterate the characteristics of the ideal victim who is universally constructed as weak, innocent, without guilt, and morally superior to her/his aggressor. Consequently, and while the image of the ideal victim is celebrated as *the* representation of migrants, less ideal victims are left out of the scope of interest.

Finally, it is opportune to state that the analysis of the construction of the identity of the migrant as a victim, the ways in which this identity is visually established, and the potential political and moral implications of such representation will be conducted through the study of three photo-stories produced by three different European photographers. The first photo-story in question is *Lesbos* produced by Alessandro Penso in 2015 and in which he captures images of migrants both at the moment they arrive at the Greek island and along the way to one of the temporary camps in which they will indefinitely stay. The second photo-story is Alex Majoli's *Refugee Crisis on Lesbos* also produced in Lesbos in 2015 and in which the photographer captures various moments of struggle and distress endured by migrants during their stay on the island. Finally, *Dying on the Shores of Europe* by Giorgos Moutafis captures the extreme cases of suffering migrants are subjected to before and when they reach Europe. His photo-story features on his website as an opening story without explicitly mentioning the date nor the exact place the photographs were shot, giving the work an unsettling sense of generalisation.

Since the field of photography of migration is exceptionally vast and the number of photographers concerned with the issue is large, this part of the research restricted itself to the study of three works by three different artists and photojournalists. This choice is the result of two fundamental concerns. On the one hand, the present dissertation is limited in both time and space. This reality led to the selection of works that would allow a deeper understanding and analysis of the issue without bringing prejudice neither to this research nor to the work of other photographers. The second concern, on the other hand, had to do with the ability of selected works to not only represent the migration crisis but to also establish themselves as

representative of distinct subgenres within photography of migration as a whole. Therefore, a critical examination of the field identified three main approaches to the question of migration. Alessandro Penso's *Lesbos*, for instance, presents itself in an almost pure photojournalistic style that strives to remain as faithful as possible to reality. This style is quite commonly used by newspapers and other media outlets. Alex Majoli's work provides a more artistic approach that is visible through his exclusive use of black and white, for example. Finally, Giorgos Moutafis's *Dying on the Shores of Europe* delves into the extremely documentary aspect of photography that touches, in some instances, on forensic recording. Through these critical choices, the present work aims at providing a general as well as a deep survey of the field of photography of migration while, at the same time, giving justice to the works selected and avoiding unnecessary redundancy.

2. Visual Dialectics of Ideal Victimisation in Alessandro Penso's and Alex Majoli's Photography of Migration

In his seminal work "The Ideal Victim", Nils Christie states that an ideal victim is "a person or category of individuals who—when hit by crime—most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim" (18). The ideal victim is then conceived as an absolute category whose meaning does not lend itself to negotiation since it already emanates from a public consensus. Established as a complete "public status", the ideal victim functions then as a benchmark against which the victimisation of other individuals is measured (Christie 18). In other words, every time a claim is made to include someone in the category of victims, the image of the ideal victim is conjured and is contrasted to that of the pretender. The closer the claimant is to the model, the higher her/his chances are to be recognised as a victim. The opposite is also true. Therefore, and because of the important participation of photography in shaping public discourses about migration, the present section will study the visual dialectics employed by contemporary photographers of migration to construct the image of the ideal victim. This endeavour starts with a brief survey of the western historical and artistic visual representation of innocence and suffering which constitute two main characteristics of the ideal victimisation. The analysis will subsequently discuss the contribution of foundational texts of Visual Culture in constructing referential narratives on the interplay of pain and pleasure. Lastly, Alessandro Penso's photograph of a mother and her child as well as Alex Majoli's pietà will be examined against the preceding backgrounds to establish the contemporary visualisation of the spectacle of agony.

2.1. A Brief Historico-artistic Reconstruction of the Visual Field of Innocence and Suffering

From a socio-cultural point of view, children are commonly perceived as both weak and guiltless. The public imaginary constructs children as "emblems of goodness and purity" whose innocence is seldom contested (Moeller, "Hierarchy of Innocence" 38). As a matter of fact, Susan Moeller confirms that children would seem to always sit at the top of the "hierarchy of innocence"; a hierarchy that orders and organises "who in the world is considered to be the most deserving of protection" (Moeller, "Hierarchy of Innocence" 48). This hierarchal organisation of innocence might find its origins in the archetypal images that compose "the contents of the collective unconscious" (Jung, *Four Archetypes* 2). According to Carl Gustav

Jung, archetypes are "primordial" images that have "originated" at the beginning of human existence and that are "peculiar to whole species" (*Four Archetypes* 11). In other words, all human beings share the same primitive "empty" forms of thought, belief, and behaviour which are nothing but "a possibility of representation" and that, by becoming conscious and performed, may take on different "concrete manifestations" (Jung, *Four Archetypes* 13).

The artistic representation of mother and child as a unit symbolising nurture and protection may be considered as one example of human attempts to materialise the archetypal conceptualisation of childhood vulnerability and innocence. In this context, archaeological findings provide abundant evidence. In the early twentieth century, intriguing clay figurines were excavated in the city or Ur, Iraq (see figure 1A). The figurines that date back to the fifth millennium BC display wide shoulders, elongated torsos, and slender legs. They also show an elongated head with a pair of "coffee-bean-shaped eyes" and unusually protruding nose and mouth (Daems 151). However, and despite its less traditional morphology, the Ubaid figurine clearly show a woman suckling her baby (Daems 151). A relatively more recent representation of motherly care, as well as procreation and fertility, takes the shape of a Dea Gravida and dates back to the period between the seventh and the fifth centuries BC (see figure 1B). Originating in the Phoenician city-states, pregnant goddesses' statuettes were excavated in multiple sites around the Mediterranean testifying to the migration of archetypes and their manifestations. Dea Nutrix figurines are equally abundant around the Mediterranean and they clearly represent a mother/deity nursing her child (see figure 1C). The figurine excavated in Soliman, Tunisia, represents Demeter, the Greek goddess of the harvest and fertility, and Demophon whom she cared for. The statuette goes back to the late second or early first century BC and demonstrates the fusion between Phoenician artistry and ancient Greek religion.

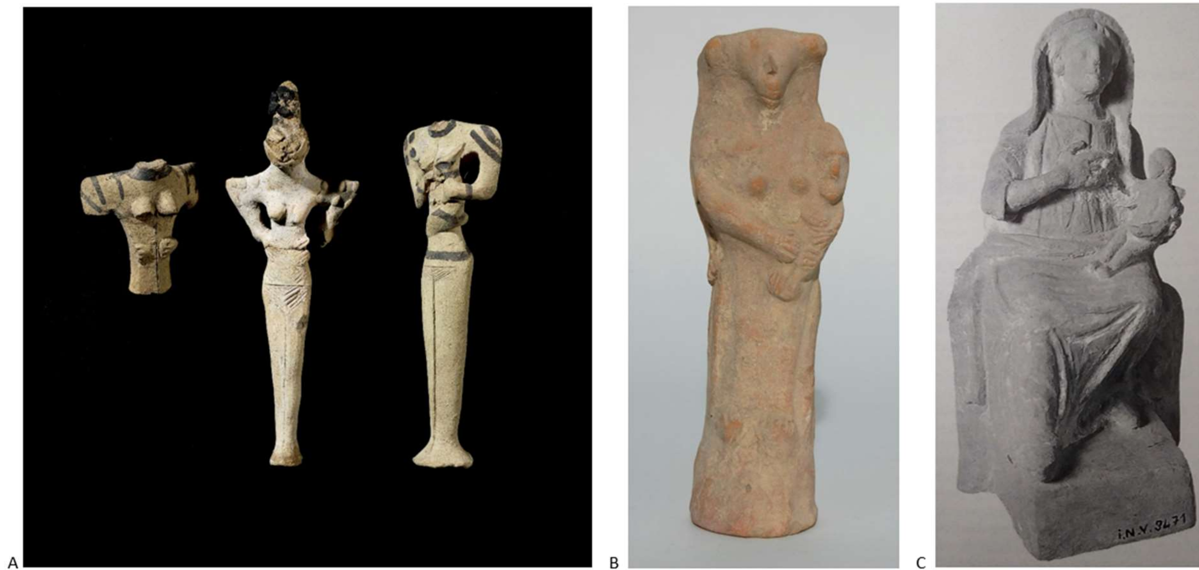


Figure 1. A) Fired clay figurines of female figures, the one on the right appears holding a baby in her arms. Excavated in Ur, Iraq. Production date: 5900BC-4000BC. (© The Trustees of the British Museum); B) Terracotta figurine of a seated female figure with inf infant of the Dea Gravida type. Excavated in Kition-Bamboula, Cyprus. Production date: 700BC-500BC. (© The Trustees of the British Museum); C) Dea Nutrix. Terracotta figurine of a seated female figure holding an infant in her left arm to whom she is about to give her breast. Probably a representation of Demeter and Demophon. Excavated in Soliman, Tunisia. Production date: late second-first century BC. Bardo National Museum – inv. 32471.

Despite the extremely varied manufacturing styles, historical eras, and geographical locations they were found in, all three figurines successfully represent a humanly shared symbol of love and protection. Although it is challenging to definitively establish the functions of the "ophidian" mother and child figurine mainly because of lack of historical and archaeological evidence, Aurelie Daems does not exclude the possibility that it was used by specific social groups "for a certain purpose or during a certain ritual or activity that we can no longer reconstruct" (155). In any case, the Ubaid figurine can be assumed to have played a social—and probably a spiritual—role that gained it a place in its owner's grave. The Dea Gravida and the Dea Nutrix, on the other hand, possesses a more explicit religious status that made them both an object of worship and a funerary artifact. This historical reality proves that different cultures regarded children as dependent and weak, therefore in constant need of motherly nurture and protection. It also proves that the archetypal vulnerability of infants and children is universal and has the capacity to easily migrate through space and time.

As Christianity developed and spread, the image of the caring mother lovingly holding her child against her chest became more canonised. Today, icons and paintings representing the Madonna and Her Child do not only constitute an essential element of the visual field of the Christian religion but have also greatly contributed to the establishment of an even more

universal understanding of innocence and passion. One of the most iconic representations of this eternal purity and devoted affection is Duccio di Buoninsegna's *Madonna and Child* (see figure 2).[8] The painting stands at a crossroad between the traditional Byzantine style in drawing icons and the more humanistic approach introduced by Italian Renaissance a century later. What is of interest to us is, of course, not only the stylistic techniques that were employed by di Buoninsegna to represent the Madonna and Child, but also the striking resemblances that exist between a medieval painting and a twenty-first century photograph.

Figure 2. Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Madonna and Child*, (c1300).

Di Buoninsegna's painting craftily masters a game of chiaroscuro that makes the majestic figures more pronounced and impactful. Clad in a dark blue mantle, the Virgin solemnly dominates the picture by creating a visual centre towards which the eye naturally gravitates. She is seen standing against a gold background minutely decorated with geometric

[8] Di Buoninsegna, Duccio. *Madonna and Child*. c.1290–1300. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art,* https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/438754. © Public Domain

patterns and floral motifs in complete harmony with Byzantine tradition and Gothic elegance. As a matter of fact, while he was excessively generous with the gold leaves decorating the background of the picture, as it was customary in Byzantine icons; Duccio di Buoninsegna adopted a more sober approach when it came to the ornamentation of the Madonna's cloak. The painter attached nothing but a simple golden line to the hem of the Virgin's mantle along with two golden stars, signs of her perpetual virginity and immaculate conception. The modesty of the Madonna's attire is in perfect accord with her renunciation of earthly pleasures and treasures. It is also in harmony with the "post-medieval convention" that reserved gold decoration to the background and other material elements in the picture (Oertel 47).

Contrasted to the brightness of the golden background and the red robes of the Child Christ, the Madonna's mantle further stands out as a symbol of sobriety and solemn melancholy. Probably provoked by the knowledge of the inescapable martyrdom of her Son, the Madonna's whole appearance seems to stand as an epicentre that condenses the melancholy atmosphere of Byzantine and Gothic Churches. While the viewer is reminded of heavenly glory by the bright gold background, and s/he is also reminded of Christ's greatest sacrifice by the redness of His robes; the Virgin's dark blue mantle seems to anchor the painting in humanity. Glorious and divine are, indeed, Christ's deeds and sacrifice; however, His divinity and His godly course do not prevent His Mother's anguish. Coupled with the Madonna's facial expressions, her dark attire provokes deep emotions of meditative mourning. With great silence and "spectacular impassiveness", the *Madonna and Child* is capable of absorbing powerful human emotions of moroseness and even helplessness, and of projecting them both into the solemn and intimate space of devotional contemplation and into time thus inscribing the painting in immortality (Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want?* 27, Oertel 196).

The *Madonna and Child* represents a valuable example of Duccio di Buoninsegna's "timeless and undramatic" art (Oertel 196). Indeed, the timelessness of this picture is not solely understood from the eternity of its subject and its figures, but is also materialised in the picture's stillness, silence, and impassiveness. Looking at the Madonna and her Child, the viewer is not tempted to run her/his eye through the panel to catch on some escaping action. As a matter of fact, with the exception of the slight flow of the figures' clothes and the gentle movement of Christ's hand, one cannot help but notice the impressive lack of motion and action within the painting. Nevertheless, this imposing motionlessness does not throw the figures into a state of vegetative immobility. On the contrary, it casts upon them the charming aura of photographic stillness. Looking at the painting, one gets the impression that the mother and her child were

caught off-guard by the lens of some devoted follower while they were casually interacting with each other. Completely absorbed in contemplating each other's faces, neither the Madonna nor Her Child seems to pay attention to the presence of the viewer. The oblivion of the existence of a third external gaze increases the sense of intimacy between the two depicted figures and bestows their visual representation with an air candid photographic realism. Consequently, thanks to this apparent unintentionality and effortless realism, di Buoninsegna's painting was capable of standing the test of time.

Being undramatic and lacking complex visual action, the *Madonna and Child* is capable nonetheless to cut into the beholder's consciousness and to captivate her/him. While contemplating the painting, one can but feel something "ris[ing] from the scene" and shooting "like an arrow" to bruise the spectator (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 26-27). If Roland Barthes's distinction between the *studium* and the *punctum* of a photograph could be safely applied to a painting, then, the *Madonna and Child*'s studium is Byzantine icons and Madonna paintings. It is also the general atmosphere of solemn maternal love and devoted sacrifice. Its punctum, however, is the raised hand of the Child revealing the Virgin's face, the mother's face. The studium is everything the observer knows about icons and the manner in which they are made. It is all the knowledge s/he can gather about Byzantine and Gothic traditions. It is all the necessary background spectators need to recognise this particular painting as a painting of *the* Madonna and her Child. The punctum, on the other hand, is not about knowledge but about emotions. It is that precise movement of the Child's hand that instantly transforms the *Madonna and Child* into an almost ordinary picture of a mother and her child. The punctum, here, gives the figures back their humanity and, by doing so, makes it more possible to identify with and react to them (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 28).

The spontaneous and affectionate interaction between the child and his mother, which makes the painting stand on a threshold separating the realm of the eternal from that of human mortality, is rendered closer and warmer thanks to the employment of various visual elements. Because of its small size, which is a little inferior to that of an A4 paper, the painting is believed to have functioned as an intimate and a very personal object of devotion. It was not meant to be exposed in art galleries nor was it designed to serve as an optical attraction to congregations of worshippers. Rather, the painting was conceived, from the beginning, to enter in a personal relation, even dialogue, with the devoted believer. As the charred wood of the lower frame side testifies, pious worshippers needed to draw nearer to the "holy subject", to light their candles,

and to engage in private prayers addressed to the appearing figures and to what lies beyond the golden background (Kluckert 387).

Once invoked, the *Madonna and Child* is transformed into a source of liquid light that brings together the world of the painting and that of the beholder. The light produced by the burning candle fuses with the lustre of the gold background and the halos around the holy heads to create a fluid movement oscillating between the realm of the worshipped and the space of the worshipper. This constant to-and-fro alters the relationship between the icon and the devoted beholder from abstract spirituality to concrete, or at least optical, physicality. It is, indeed, light that creates and maintains a discourse between the universe of the sacred and the world of the profane. It is light that makes the humanity of the holy icon stand out and allows for the gentle movement of the Child's hand to be seen as an intimate interaction between child and mother, an interaction that was never intended to be veiled from the gaze of the beholder.

As a matter of fact, the parapet that appears at the bottom of the painting carries on with light's game of interaction between the world of the icon and that of the beholder and further insists on inviting the eye to look upon the revealed figures. Thanks to Giotto's invention, walls became "the foremost plane of the pictorial space" which made paintings of the trecento not only visually more realistic as they acquired depth and became three-dimensional, but also interestingly more accessible (Kluckert 388). The low wall, which in the real world would have been constructed to frame the edges of roofs and balconies, stands in di Buoninsegna's painting as, both, a reminder of the separateness of the sacred world and, as an open invitation to approach it and to "step […] into the picture" (Kluckert 388). Unlike the curtain of Parrhasius's, di Buoninsegna's parapet aims at neither concealing nor deceiving. On the contrary, by incorporating the wall into the painting, the artist offers a visual guide that announces the possibility of vision and that encourages the eye to look past the physical barrier and to venture into the world of truth and light.

So far employed as a painting technique, light suddenly merges with its metaphorical meaning and identifies itself with the image of the sacred Child reverently held and solemnly offered for the salvation of humanity. The house of God, within whose walls the Virgin and her Son dwell, does not jealously keep its light from shedding over the universe of the fallen. On the contrary, it puts its "lamp in the window" and with it the house can see and keep vigil; with it, the house can guide humanity towards itself (Bachelard 34). By finally seeing God's light and recognising the Lamb's sacrifice and His Mother's passion, and by finally seeing the human in the sacred and identifying with it, humanity can be saved.

Its game of light that maintains a constant relation to the secular universe as well as its compact size which makes it within the reach of devotees render di Buoninsegna's *Madonna and Child* a successful attempt to paint the sacred with a tint of human relatability. While it might be challenging for observers to understand the extent of divine perfection, the visible and undramatic humanity of the holy child and his mother makes the former's innocence immediately recognisable. Then, when this purity is located within the sacred context of religious devotion, the image of the Child Christ is readily turned into an absolute archetype. From then on, pictures showcasing babies held in the arms of their mothers develop a considerable potential of conjuring the image of the Madonna and Child and of activating a complex semantic field of blamelessness and irreproachable innocence.

Besides his innocence, Christ's passion and ultimate sacrifice occupy a considerable space in the western and Christian imaginary. In fact, biblical texts recite multiple instances where people, including Pilate himself, have declared Jesus's innocence. Three remarkable moments could be mentioned here to punctuate the unblemished character of Jesus and to highlight the unjust chastisement He received. The first declaration of Christ's innocence came from Judas himself who, upon realising the gravity of his crime, confessed that he has "sinned" and that he "betrayed the innocent blood" (*King James Version*, Matt. 27.4). As the trial progressed, Pilates, finding no fault with Jesus, "took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude" thus announcing his own innocence from "the blood of this just person" (Matt. 27.24). Finally, a malefactor crucified next to Christ testifies that, while he and his other companion have been "justly" condemned to "receive the due reward of [their] deeds", Jesus was a man who "hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23.40-41). Other examples could certainly be found in the Bible establishing the canonical purity of Christ who "as a lamb without blemish and without spot" offered Himself for the redemption of humanity (1 Pet. 1.18-19). The multiple testimonies and declarations insisting upon the innocence of Jesus Christ make His crucifixion next to criminals and wrongdoers exceedingly undeserved and render His suffering almost unbearable.

Consequently, these key moments in the Passion of Jesus turned into foundational events of the Christian faith; and because of their highly emotional value, they also became canonical scenes if different works of art. Paintings, among other forms of art, have reproduced almost all of the instances of the painfully undeserved suffering Jesus was subjected to. In the 14th century for example, Giotto was able to bring to life Judas's kiss that would fatefully lead to Christ's arrest. Two centuries later, this arrest would become the subject of one of

Caravaggio’s most emotional paintings: *The Taking of Christ*. The following Sanhedrin trial, the mocking, the trial in Pilate’s court, the flagellation, and the crown of thorns have all been visually reproduced by painters such as Madrazo, Manet, Hole, Rubens, and El Greco. While each artist employed different techniques either pertaining to the epoch and the movement he belonged to or to personal choices and styles, they all managed to capture the extreme suffering Jesus Christ had to endure.

Certainly, a discussion of Christ’s suffering would not be complete without a discussion of His crucifixion which led to His death and to the sorrow of His mother. It has been widely accepted by Christian believers that the Crucifixion and the Descent from the Cross respectively represent the fifth and the sixth of the Seven Sorrows of Virgin Mary. Therefore, some paintings would depict her in tears or fainting next to the cross, while others would allow her to lament her son by placing his body in her lap. The Lamentation of Christ, which is also a very recurrent subject in Christian art, depicts the body of Christ removed from the cross and placed on the ground while his followers mourn around him. However, a specific type of Lamentation known as the Pietà would only depict Mary sorrowfully cradling her son.

One of these representations was Bouguereau’s Pietà that was produced in 1876 and which images Virgin Mary clad in a dark mantle covering her whole body including her head (see figure 3). Underneath her cloak the Madonna is depicted wearing a red robe that flows to the ground. The ample clothes of the Virgin cover everything except her mournful face, her hands locked around Christ’s body, and her bare foot. The Virgin’s great sorrow is visible on her face. Her eyebrows gently frowned, her eyes reddened with tears, and her pursed lips and wrinkled chin show the degree of patience she is exhibiting besides her excruciating pain. The Virgin’s determination to maintain her composure is represented by the firmness of her arms and hands placed around the body of Christ and most importantly by her foot appearing from underneath her crimson robes. The Madonna’s bare foot functions as a visual reminder of her humility and humanity. Bouguereau seems to have intentionally shown the Virgin’s foot to reemphasise her pain as a mother who has devoted her entire existence to the dead son she is now holding in her arms. While the halo around her head recalls her divinity, her foot comes to re-anchor her in humanity by showing her humble life and connectedness to earth. Nevertheless, her bare foot is also a reminder of her triumphs over Satan, and that once again, when she is put to trial she is able to crush her enemy’s head.

Figure 3. William-Adolphe Bouguereau, *Pietà*, 1876. © Public Domain.

Bouguereau's *Pietà* seems to stand as the mirror image of di Buoninsegna's *Madonna and Child*. This reflection retakes some essential elements and either transplants them or completely modifies them. The first element that is reproduced with alteration is Mary and her Son. While the Holy Mother is still holding her child against her chest in a most loving manner, the latter is no longer an infant nor is he alive. Christ's pale and lifeless body lies inert in his mother's arms and his head, falling backward, turns his face towards the heavens. Mary, on the other hand, turns her gaze away from her dead child and intently looks forward. The intimate interaction she previously had with her son in di Buoninsegna's painting is turned in Bouguereau's *Pietà* into a moment of public suffering. This shift is primarily announced by the

Virgin's engaging gaze that pierces through the medium and immediately implicates the spectator in the scene. Secondly, the presence of the congregation of angels clearly declares that the death of Christ and the sorrow of his mother is not a private matter.

Unlike the *Madonna and Child* which seems to have allowed the spectators to peek into the sacred world of the Virgin and her son through a parapet that separates the two realms without concealing them, the *Pietà* obliterates the visual obstacles and brings the scene of suffering as close as possible to the viewer. This proximity is conveyed through various techniques. First, the painting exhibits multiple details like the folds in the fabric, the decorative designs on the wash basin and jug placed at the feet of Mary as well as those on the halos, the detailed drawing of the fingers and toes, and the visible stigmata on Jesus's hand. All these minute details transmit a sense of closeness and allow the spectator to look upon the smallest detail in the scene. Second, the painting produces a close-up effect by leaving some of its parts out of the frame. Bouguereau carefully drew the faces and hands of almost all the nine angels surrounding the Virgin and her son. At the same time, he intentionally cropped their wings and the rest of their bodies out of the painting. This cropping emphasises the centrality of the Virgin and her son and convincingly proposes that the scene continues to develop outside of the frame. Indeed, the blood-stained white shroud visible on the ground seems to leak out of the painting and to unfold in the space simultaneously separating and connecting the spectator and the images.

The gaze of the Virgin that seems to acknowledge the presence of a spectator, the zoom-in and cropping out techniques that produce an effect of proximity, and the careful visualisation of minute details that mimic microscopic vision have all been skilfully employed to ensure the observer's engagement with the painting and its subjects. However, the more subtle movement of visual elements within the painting and across its borders make the viewer's implication in the scene of suffering more likely and more powerful. Visualised within the context of the Passion of Christ and as an episode of his life, the *Pietà* allows the spectator to notice the migration of the red robe from the body of Christ to cover that of his mother. The scarlet garment may symbolise a variety of things ranging from motherly love to passionate devotion, especially since it is not unusual to represent the Virgin in a red mantle. However, as Jesus Christ appears disrobed wearing nothing but his white shroud, it becomes more tempting to consider the possibility that his crimson robes have been displaced. This spatial transplantation would also implicate a shift in the symbolism of the clothes. Undoubtedly, understanding the Virgin's red dress to suggest love, passion, or divinity is not unfounded. Nevertheless, it seems equally safe

to assume that, after the death of Christ, his mother inherited his suffering and martyrdom in the same way she appears to have inherited his robes.

The fact that certain elements are capable of movement within the painting and of infringing on the limits set by the frame makes the migration of emotions of pain and suffering even more possible. To be able to see that Christ's suffering was transmitted to his mother and that his bloodied shroud unfolds outside of the painting leaves spectators intrigued as to where and when this agony stops. In addition, the presence of the angels around the mournful mother and her son further complicates the position of the spectator. The celestial beings may have descended from heaven to share the grief of the Virgin and to condole her. Some angels are depicted looking upon the dead body of Christ while others are seen joining their hands in a prayer-like fashion. Meanwhile, two seraphs are shown covering their eyes in horror. While the sight of the tortured and dead body of Christ must have been painful to the angels, many of them are visualised intently looking at him. This deliberate gazing onto the dead body of an innocent man believed to have been wronged and to have suffered undeservedly raises questions in relation to the motives and purposes of this act. In other words, why do angels look at such an immeasurable pain and why do spectators share this vision?

These questions reframe the whole practice of looking at the pain of those who are believed to be innocent. To start with, when Christ was an infant in the arms of his mother exchanging with her some innocent and intimate interaction, looking was not problematic. As a matter of fact, the presence of the spectator was not even acknowledged, and the Madonna and her child appeared totally oblivious of the gazes of others. However, when the scene of innocence is transformed into a scene of suffering, the presence of a third party keeping visual record of the painful events was required. Looking at the pain of Jesus Christ and his mother was solicited by the Virgin herself gazing in sorrow and accusation past the medium and by the presence of the nine angels around her. Becoming conscious of her/his vision and being able to assume a role, however limited it may be, might produce within the spectator a certain type of pleasure related to looking at the spectacle of pain. In front of the *Pietà*, the observer also realises that her/his responsibility may transcend passive looking to reach a more active form of bearing witness. In this vein and while the complexities of bearing witness will be dealt with at a later moment in this dissertation, the following section proposes a close examination of the relationship between pain and visual pleasure through the scope of Visual Culture's foundational texts.

2.2. Examining the Interplay of Pain and Pleasure Through the Lens of Visual Culture

Pleasure derived from the act of looking, including looking at scenes of suffering, is neither the product of contemporary times nor that of modern ways of visual representations. As a matter of fact, when Laura Mulvey scrutinised visual dynamics in Hollywood movies, she brought to light the archaic scopophilic pleasures necessary to the establishment and survival of the cinematic art. Mulvey's seminal work "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" takes from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical approach to the question of looking at others a stepping stone to the study of biased distribution of visual power in the art of filmmaking (16). According to Freud, "visual impressions" which are an extension of touching "remain the most frequent pathway along which libidinal excitation is aroused" (156). Scopophilia—the "pleasure in looking"—can be benign when it allows the viewer to experience "sexual curiosity"; and to be driven by that curiosity towards "revealing [the] hidden parts" of the object of desire to finally fulfil the "natural sexual aim" (Freud 156-157). However, it may also turn into a perversion when it is exclusively interested in the genitals, when it "supplants" the natural fulfilment of sexual desires, or when it is accompanied by a feeling of disgust when a person is solely interested in the "excretory functions" of another (157). In its perverted forms, scopophilia develops either into passive voyeurism or into active exhibitionism. In both cases "the eye corresponds to an erotogenic zone" whose stimulation grants sexual pleasure (Freud 169).

After establishing that scopophilia sets off at an early age as an infantile instinct, Freud's argument develops into asserting that there exists an "intimate connection between cruelty and the sexual instinct" (159). This connection may be explained by the inherent aggressiveness of the libido, which, in its turn, may have its origins in archaic "cannibalistic desires" (Freud 159). Cannibalistic desires, rooted in the pre-social human existence, bring forward the paramount importance of the mouth as an apparatus of both love and aggression. It is through the mouth that the infant is able to ensure its survival, the lover can express her/his love, and the cannibal can consume her/his adversary. The mouth, a well-established erotogenic zone, fulfils hence two opposite yet connected functions: it secures nutrition and sexual pleasure, and, at the same time, it guarantees the destruction of the enemy. In both cases, the mouth is a sure gateway to a form of pleasure that depends on "taking someone in, digesting and being physically as well as psychically formed by them" (Vyrgioti 74). Pleasure, understood as the consumption, ingestion, and digestion of the object of desire (or hatred), is then a form of "obtaining mastery" over said object which gets assimilated and incorporated as part of the self (Freud 159). Dominating the

object of love, and while containing "in itself the possibility of a feeling of pleasure", could, therefore, hardly be detached from inflicting pain on what one desires to possess (Freud 159).

Notwithstanding the "preponderating dominance of erotogenic zones" in the child's early sexual life, Freud does not negate the presence of other channels through which the child, and later on the adult, can reach sexual gratification (191-192). The eye, assuming the role of an erotogenic zone, tuns into an instrument of curiosity, discovery, love, and even cruelty. As it takes over the position of the cannibalistic mouth, the eye becomes employed to receive and express love and to consume and destroy as well. When the voyeuristic desire to look at "other people's genitals" is repressed during childhood, scopophilia lingers as a "tormenting compulsion" that would seek varied ways to satisfy sexual needs (Freud 192). It is then by looking that the child satisfies its curiosity about other people's sexes taking them as objects of love; and it is through looking that the child establishes its mastery over these objects. Scopophilia is, consequently, an essential instinct and a complex function of infantile psychology. It gratifies desires of love, it satisfies curiosities about the genitals of others in an attempt to learn more about them and about the self, and it ensures mastery over others by visually discovering and possessing them.

Infantile scopophilic instincts are eventually "modified by other factors" such as the development of the ego and the superego (Mulvey 17). The entry into the genital stage also allows for sexual needs to be satisfied in manners that do not completely depend on looking. Nevertheless, scopophilia does not completely disappear from the psyche of the individual. It retreats into more obscure compartments of one's unconscious to become provoked and satisfied only in specific situations. As stated above, in its pervert state, scopophilia can seek gratification through voyeurism and/or exhibitionism. However, more benign forms of scopophilia could find certain satisfaction in visual arts, including the cinema and photography. Indeed, Laura Mulvey claims that the fundamental obscurity that separates the spectator from the actors creates an environment where vision is not reciprocated and where "voyeuristic fantasy" is indulged (17). By drawing a curtain of darkness between the spectator and the images on the screen, on the one hand, and between the individual spectators, on the other, the cinema wraps its audience in secrecy and concealment that hide their gazes while completely exhibiting the objects of their desires. The "primordial wish for pleasurable looking" is thus not only fulfilled but also encouraged (Mulvey 17). By creating the "illusion of voyeuristic separation" and by emphasising the "sexual imbalance" between the protagonists, the cinema empowers and amplifies the inspecting and curious "male gaze" (Mulvey 17-19).

At the core of the tradition of moviemaking, films are constructed as worlds where the male possesses an active role in the gazing game while the female is confined to passivity. The male looks, the female is looked at; the male inspects and "projects [his] fantasy onto the female figure", while the female is conceived as only an image to be displayed (Mulvey 19). In short, the male possesses and employs the gaze, while the female is subjectified by it. The subjectification of the female as an image may be understood, indeed, against the definition of "subject" advanced by Foucault in his "Afterword" to Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow's *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. According to Foucault, there exists "two meanings of the word *subject*: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (212). The conventional cinematic construction of the female as an object of desire to be displayed and exhibited for the sole satisfaction of the voyeuristic fantasies of both the actor and the spectator highlights her subjectification to the male gaze's control and power. As a matter of fact, while the male character enjoys three-dimensionality with complete control over the development of the story and the sequences of events as well as over his gaze and his body, the female character appears flattened, condensed, and displayed "as [an] icon" for the "enjoyment of men" (Mulvey 20-21). Her two-dimensionality can be further accentuated when her body is imaged fragmented with focus being drawn only to parts of it like her legs or her face. This visual fragmentation of the female body, as well as her subjectification to the male gaze and control, deny her the possibility of developing a complete image of herself and consequently, deny her the formation of an identity conscious of itself.

Interestingly, both the female's subjectification and the male's power and control over her and over his environment transpire through the screen to contaminate the audience's perception of the two characters. This perception allows the spectators to fulfil two needs: achieve narcissistic identification with the 'ideal spectator' who is the male character, and through this identification, possess the female as an idealised object of desire. Functioning as a mirror, the screen enchants spectators with its ability to transport them back to a time when the dramatic tensions between "insufficiency", "anticipation", and the formation of a self-aware identity actively dominated the prelinguistic life of the individual (Foucault 212; Lacan 101). In the same manner the infant assumes its projected image in the mirror to be a more complete and a more ideal ego enjoying more control over its motor skills and its spatial environment, film spectators assume the male character as an ideal spectator who possesses omnipotent gaze and control. This identification, simultaneously acknowledging the insufficiency of the

spectator and the omnipotence of the male character, turns the latter into the "bearer of the look" of the former and, as his representative, performs on his behalf the most desired fetishistic and sadistic actions (Mulvey 20).

Fetishistic impulses depend on turning the female body, or some of its fragments, into a comforting object of love. This process neutralises the menacing nature of the irredeemable female lack of a penis and the threat of castration it heralds. The "overvaluation" of the beauty of the female character transforms her image into an object of desire appreciated and admired in itself (Mulvey 21). On the other hand, when the male spectator is more concerned with the "re-enactment of the original trauma", that is castration, his impulses shift towards voyeurism, as he would find pleasure not only in "investigating" and "demystifying" the woman but also in "ascertaining [her] guilt" and subjugating her to his power of "punishment or forgiveness" (Mulvey 21-22). Looking at the female character in traditionally constructed Hollywood films could thus be understood as a source of two types of visual pleasures. On the one hand, it may satisfy latent scopophilic impulses that are activated by the conventional setting of cinema theatres which immerse spectators in an imagined separation and obscurity from which they can privately and secretly observe their fetishised object of desire. On the other hand, the gaze can acquire more power and turn into an instrument of judgment and salvation or, at least, it could become an apparatus to fulfil the sadistic pleasure of looking at bodies being subjected to investigation and punishment.

In a similar vein, Susan Sontag extrapolates the discussion of visual pleasure and introduces photography as a medium equally capable of catering for scopophilic impulsions. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, she states that "it seems that the appetite for pictures showing bodies in pain is as keen, almost, as the desire for ones that show bodies naked" (Sontag 41). There is a "satisfaction", she continues, in "being able to look at the image without flinching. There is the pleasure of flinching" (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 41). However, while photography converges with the cinema in its ability to provoke feelings of pleasure at the sight of bodies suffering, it diverges from it when it comes to the nature of the image of suffering.

Photography, unlike the cinema, does not create an imaginary world, or at least it is not assumed to. On the contrary, a photograph heralds itself as an objective "record of the real" and the fact that there is a photographer willingly and subjectively choosing to frame something and to leave out of frame something else rarely affects the way spectators consume photographic images (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 26). As a matter of fact, when one thinks of photographs, especially those representing "catastrophic misfortunes" like wars and famines,

one thinks of them “as evidence of a particular truth, as likenesses” and as something “worth recording” (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 21; Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 75). To stand before a photograph and to attempt to disentangle the intended realism from the assumed artistic creation and creative imagination is an exercise that require learning and training rarely available to the general public. The most common understanding of a photograph is that, unlike other forms of visual arts, it is taken and not made. Photographs are slices of reality taken from events as they develop.

The ambivalent nature of the photograph is eloquently captured by John Berger who, while providing a definition of the term, elaborates the intricacies involved in picture-taking. In *Understanding a Photograph*, John Berger advances that “[a] photograph is an automatic record through the mediation of light of a given event” (Berger 19). To be able to correctly grasp the meaning of a picture, one should, therefore, be attentive to two main realities related to the nature of photographs. The first reality is that a photograph is a record, that is an account and a piece of evidence kept from a past event. Second, this visual record is realised automatically through the use of a mechanical contraption, that is the camera. What ensues from this very brief definition is the assumption, usually taken for granted by the general public of photography, that the photographer has little or no part at all in the production of the picture. In other words, the photographer is presumed to be a person who, by luck or by chance, happens to be in the right place and time to snap a picture of an ongoing event (*Sontag, Regarding the Pains of Others* 28). Even when the photographer’s skills and reflexes are acknowledged, they hardly overshadow the belief that pictures of reality can be taken by anyone equipped with a camera.

Nonetheless, Berger continues to point out that “photography is the process of rendering observation self-conscious” (*Understanding a Photograph* 19). Consequently, and by shifting the argument from considering photography an automatic record-keeping to a moment of self-aware observation, Berger introduces a second meaning of picture-taking. Photography metamorphoses from the practice of taking visual slices from the world to the activity of realising this world. This realisation is twofold. On the one hand, it is a moment of self-consciousness during which the activity of taking a photograph becomes aware of itself and of the drives and interests that have led to its existence in the first place. On the other, the product of photography, the picture that becomes visible, turns into the materialisation of the observation. In this light, Susan Sontag’s claim that “photographs are a means of making ‘real’ (or ‘more real’) matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore” becomes

more lucid (*Regarding the Pains of Others* 7). Photographs are indeed means of materialising images people have about the world. Photographs are also instruments of confrontation that make people aware of what they sometimes choose to disregard.

Before expending on the notion of the privileged and safe spectators and their prerogative to choose not to look, there is a need to further analyse the question of photography's ability to realise both the world and the observation of the world. The first, and most straightforward meaning of realisation is, as it has been advanced before, to materialise and to concretise observations about the world. When a moment, an event, or even a person is considered valuable, the photographer resorts to her/his camera and captures the subject of her/his interest thus producing "a slim object that one can keep and look at" (Sontag, *On Photography* 18). Photographs inhabiting family albums testify to the validity of this argument. Graduation pictures, wedding ceremonies, and birthdays parties are all extremely common examples of visual slices cut from life and preserved as material objects of observation made about happiness, pride, success, and time. When revisited, these pictures are capable of narrating one's life in a seemingly trustworthy manner.

Despite its seemingly forthright nature, photographic narration is veritably convoluted. It starts with a simple and yet incessant invitation to look. In a frank and imperative tone, the photograph says "Look, […] this is what it's like" (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 8). Then, as soon as the person looks, s/he finds her/himself ensnared in the photograph's purely "deictic" language (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 5). It is not unusual to use language and linguistics as a method to analyse and understand a photograph. However, Roland Barthes's observation about the deictic nature of photography's language is particularly interesting because it bestows photographs with a power verbal communication is denied. As a matter of fact, pragmatics defines deixis as the utterance's ability to encode the context in which it is produced. To be able to decipher the meaning of such words as *here*, *she*, and *now* for example, the interlocuters need to completely rely on the context of the utterance. Failing to have access to said context, the listener/reader would fail to understand the meaning embedded in the deictic words which, in its turn, would result in confusion and in ineffective communication. Derived from the Greek *deiktikos,* deixis means language's "ability to show" something or someone through the employment of sometimes extralinguistic information (Dylgjeri and Kazazi 87). The context that deictic terms are bound to can be information previously referred to as it can be an object, a gesture, or a place language points at while it exists completely outside of itself (Dylgjeri and

Kazazi 88). Thus understood, language deixis could be assumed to be an impure form of deixis as it does not refer to itself for the generation of its meaning.

A photograph, on the other hand, possesses a pure deictic language since what it refers to—a person, a place, time, or any other object or concept—lies within itself. In the presence of a photograph, the "invitation to look" at something is instantaneously realised by visualising the corresponding referent (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 45). A photograph, insists Barthes, "points a finger at a certain vis-à-vis" that does not exist anywhere else outside the pure deixis of the photo itself (*Camera Lucida* 5). The symbiosis that exists between the picture and its referent is so complex and so complete that, as Roland Barthes warns, any attempt at separating the photograph from that to which it refers ultimately leads to the destruction of both (*Camera Lucida* 6). Photographic tautology is therefore inescapable simply because there seem to be no conceivable ways of separating the photo as an object from its subject (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 5). Photographic tautology is also related to the fact that the invitation to look at something, which every picture proposes and imposes, is immediately materialised by the photo itself. While linguistic deixis point at something outside language and endeavours to show what could not be articulated with words, photographic deixis points to nothing but itself. The *here*, *now*, *she*, etc., that a photograph proposes to show is shown by it and not by anything else.

Furthermore, unlike linguistic deixis that projects its meaning to the world that constantly moves around the interlocuters, photographic deixis collapses time and space within itself and confines both its subjects and its spectators to the immobility of its spaciotemporal dimension (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 6). What is visible in a photograph is forever crystallised in an unmoving *here*; and the photographic *now* is perpetual. The subjects of a picture themselves are never allowed to move or to leave the everlasting eternity of photography: they cannot grow older, transcend their imaged condition, or simply die. To believe that a photograph can realise the world is to believe in the photograph's power to not only give physical form to observations and experience but to also bring in front of one's eyes times, places, and people long gone. This proximity, accessibility, and realism is what makes looking at photographs exceptionally pleasurable. Add to that the fact that photographs can be possessed as objects and can be tactilely manipulated, and one can experience a far greater pleasure and looking at moving pictures on a large screen.

Admittedly, in the past few decades, photographs were destructible objects. One could actively destroy them or let time wash away the vivacity of their subjects. In the past, the possibility of physically annihilating a photograph could have represented a hope for releasing

their prisoners from an imposed immortality. Unfortunately, with the advance of digital technology and the development of digital cameras, this hope seems to have been completely lost. Today, the digital photograph defies the effects of time and mocks the threats of light and humidity. The digital photograph can now live forever and with the virtually limitless access to the internet, the digital image can travel across the world while creating multiple copies of itself. The digital age allowed photographs to transcend their first objective to "mechanically repeat what could never be repeated existentially" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 4). In fact, the digital era granted pictures with the ability to multiply in a faster, easier, and more pervasive manner.

It is fascinating how easy it is, while speaking about the visual pleasures of photographing and looking at photographs, to slip into talking about the photograph's own ability to survive and to reproduce. The visual pleasure seems not to be restricted to the spectators of visual representations, as pictures themselves seem to possess pleasure—the pleasure to live, that is. In *What Do Pictures Want?* W.J.T. Mitchell argues that "images are like living organisms; living organisms are best described as things that have desires" (11). The pictures' desires are understood to mean both what they are asking for, what they demand and strife to have; and what they lack, what they need, and what they are wanting. Two questions follow this argument: first, in what way is it possible to consider images as living organisms, and second, granted that an image is alive, what does it desire? According to Mitchell, the belief in the life of the image is anthropologically old and is conventionally attributed to the "savage mind", that is the mind that has not been disciplined by education, civilisation, and art (*What Do Pictures Want?* 7). The savage mind—whether it is the mind of a child, of a primitive adult, of the collective, or that of the psychotic—is primordially destined to believe in the magical powers of images. Images are thus perceived as having feelings, responding to prayers, and possessing the power to alter events and to interfere with the lives of enemies and friends alike.

However, while animist and vitalist beliefs have nowadays been shunned as magical, delusional, and illogical thinking, the conviction that images are life-forms and have powers did not fade out, but rather transformed itself. As it has been detailed above, the assumption that pictures are capable of provoking pathos and that a photograph can materialise the world are examples of a deeply rooted belief in the images' "agency" and "autonomy" (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 6). Nevertheless, Mitchell takes the argument even farther and brings forward the "clone" as a more potent form of images that does not only "fulfil the ancient dream of creating a 'living image,' a replica or copy that is not merely a mechanical duplicate but an organic, biologically viable simulacrum of a living organism" but also "renders the disavowal

of living images impossible" (*What Do Pictures Want?* 12-13). The clone is at once a living image and a proof that living things are also images of other things, one way or another. It goes without saying that not all images are living clones like the example of Dolly, the cloned sheep, employed by Mitchell. Yet, this extreme example of how images can literally come to life would help in realising a striking reality about images. This reality is that every image, animate or inanimate, is itself an image of something else.

In a nutshell, pleasure originating from the act of looking at others is one of the most archaic sexual impulses humans have. It is an instinct tightly linked to the development of the child as it allows it to preserve itself and explore its environment. While sexual maturity drives individuals towards fulfilling their sexual desires with more than looking, scopophilia retreats into the more obscure territory of the unconscious. When they do not develop into voyeuristic and exhibitionist perversion, scopophilic impulses may find certain satisfaction in the cinema and in photography. Both these visual arts allow for the spectator to enjoy a position of dominance over the object of desire. The cinema, on the one hand, grants its audience the ability to fulfil sadistic and fetishistic fantasies through the adoption of an investigative and chastising male gaze. By identifying with the male protagonist, film spectators are able to vicariously possess the female figure and to submit it to their will. Photography, on the other hand, adds to the pleasures offered by the cinema the character of immediacy. Unlike cinematic pictures that require the suspension of disbelieve in order to be consumed, photographic images come with an implicit assertion of reality. This reality depends predominantly on two factors. First, photography possesses a powerful deictic language that anchors it in the here and now of the beholder. This strong deixis makes the world of the photograph constantly and permanently present and accessible to the spectator. Second and also unlike the cinematic picture, the photographed picture can be physically possessed. One can own the object of her/his desire, and since scopophilic pleasure requires little more than looking, the gratification is immediate and greater. Therefore, when looking at photographic images of pain, agony, and suffering there is always a possibility of experiencing pleasure not only because certain voyeuristic and fetishistic impulses are gratified but also because this gratification comes with greater certainty and a stronger sense of reality. Thus, and taking into consideration images' ability to replicate themselves, the following section will study contemporary examples of the reconstruction of scenes of suffering while examining their potential for generating visual pleasure.

2.3. Contemporary Reconstructions of the Spectacle of Agony: Alessandro Penso's Mother and Child and Alex Majoli's Pietà

The image of the suffering child is *the* image of contemporary crises. During wars, natural catastrophes, widespread diseases, and famine photographs of children become commonly used by media outlets as summative statements of the situation. The image of the pitiful migrant child is no exception. When migration is articulated in terms of crisis, images of suffering children are turned into icons that condense all the struggles migrants go through. This condensation is possible by conjuring already established archetypes of innocence and suffering. Because children, unlike other members of society, are commonly perceived as weak and blameless, their pictures are employed as powerful triggers of pathetic reactions especially when the child's tragic sort is amplified by the presence of a helpless adult (Moeller, "Hierarchy of Innocence" 41). The blameless nature of a child's existence takes shape through the employment of a "constellation of characteristics" that identify her/him as an ideal victim who is most deserving of compassion and assistance (Bouris 32-48). Thus, the child "defined by weakness and incapacity" and portrayed as "suffering from neglect or disadvantage" turns into an "archetypal victim" (Holland 143). The oversimplified moral duality between the "righteousness" of the victimised migrant child and the "malevolence" or even "banal hostility of adults in authority" overshadows the complexities of the migration crisis and makes it "more comprehensible and accessible" (Moeller, "Hierarchy of Innocence" 37-39). Hence, as the "social, economic, and political context to create an imperative statement" is muted, the image of the suffering—even sacrificed—child "bring[s] moral clarity to the complex story" of migration (Moeller, "Hierarchy of Innocence" 36).

Consequently, when the archetype of absolute goodness is harmed, it evolves into an archetype of absolute victimisation that could, by virtue of its simple characteristics, be communicated to and shared with people regardless of their different cultures and backgrounds. Images of suffering children are, therefore, transparent in their meaning because they conjure a humanly inherent image of victimhood that does not require critical analysis to be understood and does not submit itself to the complexities of different events (Moeller, "Hierarchy of Innocence" 37). It would not be strange then that "[i]n today's competitive news environment, children are perceived to be one of the few surefire ways to attract eyeballs—on-line, in print, and on television" (Moeller, "Hierarchy of Innocence" 37). Furthermore, the excessive use of images featuring suffering children is not only justified by their function as "perfect

‘grabber[s]’” of attention but also because such visual stories represent “sentimental” pieces of narrative that the public seems incapable of ignoring (Moeller, “Hierarchy of Innocence” 39). The image of a child in distress is particularly compelling because, while it hampers any “reasoned thought” by oversimplifying complex crises, it strongly provokes the pathos and “goad[s] adults into a response (Moeller, “Hierarchy of Innocence” 38-39).

Since the nineteenth century, argues Holland, the image of the pathetic child constituted a significant part of “popular culture” to a point where pictures of street children, begging youngsters, and sorrowful and crying babes turned into “popular photographic subjects” and “stock-in-trade of postcards” (144). Such images were particularly appreciated because of their aesthetic value and because profound emotional responses were necessary, at that time, to deal with the “drab reality of child mortality” (Holland 144). However, as the general living conditions improved in Europe and overall child mortality and suffering was reduced, emotional reactions to the visualisation of abused childhood found a new locus. It moved overseas, to the underdeveloped world, where “more extreme […] pictures of degradation and disaster” seem to be abundant and seem to grant even more “pleasurable emotions of tenderness and compassion, which satisfactorily confirm adult power” (Holland 143).

Taking this general context into consideration, one would not be surprised by the strikingly large number of photographs showing migrant children in distress. It would not also be surprising to realise that when certain political and social reactions are needed, emotionally moving images of abused innocence surface to occupy the visual landscape of migration. While this abundance in iconographic material is acknowledge, this section of the dissertation will limit itself to the in-depth examination of only two visual representations of victimised childhood. The first focus of study will be on Alessandro Penso’s *Mother and Child* that was produced in October 2015 on the island of Lesbos. Second, particular attention will be brought to Alex Majoli’s *Pietà* which represents underage migrant struggles in Lesbos in 2015. The choice to limit the analysis at the level of two main photographs despite the existence of a large number of other photos dealing with the same theme is enlightened by three main concerns.

The first concern is in fact related to the size of the available photographic corpus itself and to the challenges of dealing with all of them within the scope of the present research. Therefore, the choice to limit the examination to two photographs of this genre came from an interest in doing justice to the works studied. In addition, the existence of a remarkable number of photographs representing migrant children in distress does not necessarily mean the existence of multiple different premises. As a matter of fact, the survey of the photographic field of

migration did not only reveal the abundance of pictures showing struggling children but it also demonstrated that these images shared common features. Therefore, and since the dissertation is organised around the analysis and discussion of thematic issues, there is a concern that the examination of several photographs may lead to an unnecessary redundancy. The strategy was then to choose specific examples that have the virtue of touching on multiple themes and of standing as prototypes of similar work. Finally, and from an ethical vantage point, this dissertation will constantly strive to avoid the employment and the reproduction of pictures showing minors unless this proves fundamentally necessary for the development of the argument.

In the light of these criteria, the works of Alessandro Penso and Alex Majoli have been selected as object of studying aspects of visual reconstruction of the spectacle of suffering. Alessandro Penso is an Italian award-winning photographer whose prolific work has been engaged with the question of migration and social injustice for years. The collection of his photographs is divided on his official website into twenty individual photo-stories each of which focuses on the issue of migration from a specific vantage point. Since 2009, Penso decided to participate in the migration journey and this participation led him to Malta where he photographed a detention centre. He visited Bulgaria and the Spanish enclaves of Melilla where he was able to photograph migrants, many of whom were minors, trying to cross into mainland Europe. In his native Italy, he followed "migrant workers in the agricultural sector in the south of Italy" and photographed their working and living standards that keep prices under control.[9] Penso's dedication to the migrant's plight culminated in 2014 with the production of the *The European Dream: Road to Bruxelles*. The 12 meters truck chosen to be the "mobile base for the project" started from Bari and reached Brussels via major European cities such as Rome, Florence, Geneva, and Strasbourg.[10]

The European Dream, which is still in progress and constantly updated on the photographer's website, brought together photographs shot by Alessandro Penso in at least three different European locations. Constantly focusing on marginalised spaces and situations of marginalisation, Penso's *European Dream* could therefore be considered a summary of his work on the question of migration to Europe and a space where he was able to shed light on some of his strongest photographic moments. One of the main concerns of the project was to bring

[9] https://www.alessandropenso.com/personal-project/european-dream
[10] https://www.alessandropenso.com/personal-project/road-to-bruxelles

forward migrants' struggles when they find themselves facing "attitudes of closure and xenophobia" that "have always existed" but became "justified by EU regulations" in recent years.[11] However, and despite the difference in locations, *The European Dream* featured photographs that share recurrent visual elements. Fences, body injury, inadequate shelters, and general stress are among the main visual images that are scattered throughout Penso's work. The different photo-stories from which Penso selected his exhibited photographs seem to all intersect at the level of showing the unfair treatment migrants find themselves subjected to. One of these photo-stories is *Lesbos* which itself represents an almost exhaustive collection of Alessandro Penso's main concerns. *Lesbos* brings out of the shadows the varied injustices migrants have to face both on their way to Europe and once they reach its shores. Risky sea travels, dangerous landings, long walking distances, hostile environments are only examples of the challenges migrants have to overcome. *Lesbos* also shares its temporal and spatial contexts with Alex Majoli's *Refugee Crisis on Lesbos* which will be dealt with at a later moment in this section. Finally, *Lesbos* is the photo-story that embeds Penso's *Mother and her Child* which will be examined as an iconic representation of the contemporary spectacle of agony.

In October 2015 and on the shores of Kayia, Alessandro Penso was able to photograph a young woman hugging her child while they were both wrapped in a silver thermal blanket (see figure 4).[12] In 2021, this photograph was one of the three finalists for the Premio Luchetta, a journalistic award granted yearly in Italy in honour to the memory of Marco Luchetta killed in a conflict zone in Bosnia in 1994. The picture figures also on Penso's official website both as part of *Lesbos* and *The European Dream*. Penso's *Mother and Child* has a twofold merit for as it immediately summons iconographic images of motherly affection, it also activates the visual filed of migratory crisis. The presence of the thermal blanket functions as a visual trigger and reminder of the "public discourse" that has witnessed "an astounding proliferation" of terms such as "refugee crisis" and "migrant crisis", as argues De Genova and his colleagues (7). This proliferation does not only highlight the rising concern of the public discourse in the issue of migration but also further accentuates its emergency by articulating it in terms of crisis. It is in this context of crisis that Alessandro Penso's photograph of a mother and her child should be analysed; and it is particularly this critical aspect that makes the subject of the image stand out.

---

[11] https://www.alessandropenso.com/personal-project/european-dream

[12] Penso, Alessandro. *A mother and child*. 2015. *MAPS Images*, https://www.mapsimages.com/works/the-european-dream/.

Figure 4. Alessandro Penso, *Mother and Child,* Lesbos, 2015.

Mother and Child is the seventh photograph of Alessandro Penso's photo-story *Lesbos*. It thus configures after six other photographs as well as a textual introduction that set the general context in which this photograph is supposed to be visualised and studied. The verbal introduction informs the reader/viewer that the UNHCR estimated that about 850,000 migrants and refugees reached the shores of Greece in 2015 and that about 500,000 of them arrived at Lesbos in particular. Penso also emphasises that these migrants found themselves in deplorable conditions, as the island had little to offer them aside from the "crowded refugee camps, where not even a place in a tent was guaranteed and where basic amenities such as toilets and showers were lacking"[13]. It is with words expressing struggle and need that the photo-story opens and what follows is a collection of 28 photographs that depict the painful journey the migrants had to undertake, and the trek waiting ahead of them. Therefore, before arriving at the photo of the mother and child, the viewer develops an idea about migration from zones of conflict like Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan to the European shores. S/he also develops an idea about the identity of the migrants including their ethnicity and the age groups they belong to.

---

[13] Alessandro Penso's photo-story *Lesbos* can be consulted via the following link: https://www.alessandropenso.com/work/lesvos.

The photo of the mother and her child is also contextualised by the photographs that come before it. The first six photographs show different images composing the scene at the shores of Lesbos. The first photograph, functioning as a visual introduction to the story, provides a general overview of the event of landing. The calmness of the sea and sky that appear to fuse in chromatic harmony of light blue is abruptly contrasted with the overcrowded dinghy struggling to stay afloat while its occupiers rush to evacuate. The contrast is established both at the level the chaotic evacuation where the viewer is able to see people trying to help each other either by stabilising the boat or by assisting children to get to the shore; and at the level of chromatic distinction where the orange colour of the lifejackets stands out against the immense blue hue dominating the space. What ensues is the establishment of the event of migration as a peculiar event that brings about disorder and incongruency to the otherwise serene scene of sky and sea. Thus, the photographer succeeds in positioning his visual narrative in a more general discourse that recounts and constructs migration as a moment of “crisis, a break, a ‘ruptural fusion’” (Hall and Massey 60).

The concept of crisis is amplified in the following four photographs where spectators are invited to look upon images that further detail the critical aspects of migration. The second photograph in Penso’s visual narration represents a man wearing an orange lifejacket and holding two children in his arms one of which is nothing but an infant.[14] In the third photo, a young man loses consciousness on the rocky shore while a woman, who could be either another migrant or a participant in a rescue team, is viewed attempting to help him recover.[15] The fourth picture shows a little girl sitting by herself on the beach, wet, holding her red lifejacket and staring blankly into the void, while the adults behind her seem completely oblivious of her existence.[16] Migrants’ distress reaches its climax in the fifth photograph where a dead body appears wrapped in a red blanket, lying inert on the beach, and surrounded by weeping and collapsing relatives. A medical assistant affiliated with “La Chaîne de l'Espoire” appears squatting next to the desperate group. As her stethoscope hangs loose from her neck, she holds her head and watches quietly the spectacle of grief.[17] The irony of the situation might be unintended and yet it is inescapable. The logo of the health organisation barely visible on the T-shirt of the medical assistant is overshadowed by the size of the dead body and the

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

catastrophic outcome of the journey it undertook. The orange sun that is supposed to stand for health and hope is eclipsed by death, the ultimate extinguisher of both. Finally, the sixth photo shows a group of young people and children struggling to walk away from the seashore while the strong wind provoked by a helicopter hovering over their heads makes their task even more challenging.[18]

This sequence of photographs illustrates migration as a series of trials and as successive moments of "difficulty" and "potential change" whose "resolution is not given" (Hall and Massey 57; Williams 47). The difficulties faced by the migrants take different forms in the first six photos. First, these migrants have to struggle to land and find safety on the shores of Lesbos. The landing itself is not without risks for, as their dinghy collapses against the rocks, migrants have to evacuate and reach the beach either by swimming or by walking after which they have to continue their journey to the refugee camps. Although it is not visible in the photo-story and is only assumed from reading the textual introduction, the laborious landing is but the culmination of the life-endangering voyage migrants had to undertake by sea to eventually reach Greece, and from which they hoped to be able to travel to other European countries. Migrants, escaping zones of great political and armed tensions like Syria and Afghanistan, seem to have no other choice but to embark on a journey of danger and hope whose outcome is never certain. Indeed, in these same photos one can see a few possible resolutions to the migration crisis: suffering and abandoned children, life-threatening ailments, and death.

Besides the hazardous nature of its stages, the migratory travel is characterised by its enduring aspect. As a contemporary crisis, migration resists resolution, it stubbornly lingers in time, and it regenerates itself. The lingering aspect of the migration crisis is translated in Alessandro Penso's photo-story through the capture of cyclical alternations of day and night. His photographs appear to be ordered chronologically not only according to the development of the migrants' journey from landing on the hostile shores of Lesbos to reaching the camp where they are supposed to dwell after having taken long walks through various routes, but also according to the progress of time during the day. Indeed, *Lesbos* is divided into three major time frames that start with a frank daylight which, despite being attenuated with some clouds, reveals in vivid colours the catastrophic nature of the migratory landing in Greece. The first eight photographs that in a way summarise the whole story take place predominantly in the morning.

[18] Ibid.

As the journey develops, time progresses as well and the spectator is able to see the sun as it rises above the heads of the migrants forcing them to seek refuge in the very narrow shadow of a silo-like construction, or to lie on the ground by the side of a shady road. Eventually, the photo-story ends with five photographs taken during the night and in which the migrants themselves appear to fuse with the darkness of their environment to be only exposed as shadows and silhouettes. However, and despite the passage of time, the migrants' journey does not seem to come to an end. Be it day or night, they continue walking on an endless road and towards an unknown destination.

The seemingly perpetual migration journey is rendered in Alessandro Penso's photo-story through pictures showing not only the passage of days but also the cyclical rotation of seasons. The textual introduction to the visual narrative does not indicate when exactly the photos were taken. However, when published separately, the photograph of the mother and her child states that it was shot during the month of October. Autumn in the Mediterranean is known for being a stormy season; and while the temperature does not fall dramatically during the month of October, heavy rains and violent winds are generally expected.[19] This fact might explain the apparent inconsistency in the clothes worn by the migrants. While some of them are shot wearing light summer clothes others appear in jackets and heavy coats. The variation in the types of clothes worn by the migrants might also indicate that, when their journey started somewhere in the turbulent Middle East, these were the clothes appropriate for the climate and that they did not have the opportunity to update their wardrobes while they were struggling for their lives. It might also be a sign of preparation for the colder weather in Europe. Having anticipated their long travel, some of the migrants might have equipped themselves with coats and jackets to brace them against more cruel times. In any case, the presence of clothes fit for both summer and winter in the same period and in the same place is not only a sign of unpreparedness or, in the opposite case, foresight and planning but is also a sign of the lingering aspect of the migratory journey. Coupled with the photographs that show clear skies turning grey only to pour down in heavy rain forcing people to take cover under flimsy tents and garbage bags, the pictures visualising inconsistent clothing only accentuate the enduring state of the migration crisis.

[19] https://www.severe-weather.eu/theory/autumn-tornado-season-in-the-mediterranean/

The photographs capturing the passage of time during the day and the alternation of seasons might be understood as a sign for the ability of the time of migration to maintain its chronological dimension. The chronology of time is its ability to be measured in years, months, days, and even milliseconds. The term is derived from *Chronos* who, in Greek mythology, stands as the personification of time. Time, understood as Chronos, "allows us to count the span of our lives or place historical events within a certain period of our history" (Platovnjak and Svetelj 798). It is also linear, horizontal, with a beginning and an end starting from the past and directed towards the future. Chronos is "the quantitative time measured by successive objects, events, or moments", it does not halt or slow down and its fleeting passage can only "cease when its purpose is fulfilled at the end of time" (Platovnjak and Svetelj 802). Nevertheless, this apparent chronology is quite frequently interrupted with the reappearance of the paraphernalia of the migration crisis, namely the orange lifejackets and the thermal blankets.

As *Lesbos* develops from one picture to the other and while both the setting and the time change, the lifejacket and the thermal blanket emerge again and again as visual reminders that the moment of crisis is not resolved. The reappearance of these objects, especially in unusual settings, haunts the photo-story and stops its chronological development. For example, the orange and red lifejackets make their first appearance at the beginning of the story when the migrants were struggling to escape a collapsing and overcrowded dinghy. Since the geographical setting of the opening photograph is the sea and the situation is that of a sinking dinghy, the appearance of the lifejackets is not unusual. It is also not strange to see them again in the second and fourth pictures where people are narrowly evading their fateful death. However, while the migrants carry on with their journey by land and on foot where no risk of drowning is in sight, the lifejacket re-emerges around the neck of a migrant woman marching on a dirt road with her small family. Then, thousands of lifejackets form an ominous pile in the middle of an empty land under the clouded sky somewhere in the outskirts of a small town (see figure 5). Appearing on a deserted heath during a cloudy and rainy day, the congregation of lifejackets that simultaneously promise survival and threaten with death is not without a haunting significance.

Figure 5. Alessandro Penso, *Lesbos*, 2015.

In *Spectres of Marx*, Jacques Derrida defines a ghost or a "spectre" as a "*revenant*", something that repetitively comes back and over its return one possesses no control (11). Nevertheless, the uncanniness of the spectre's apparition does not depend on its nature as much as it depends on its untimeliness, that is, its insisting resistance to "the contraction and homogenization of time and space" (Fisher 19). Taking the example of various literary ghosts that appear in works of art like Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* or Dante's *Inferno*, and referring back to Freudian notion of the uncanny, Derrida asserts that while the ghosts and spectres appearing in these literary pieces might be "terrifying" and "lugubrious", there is nothing unheimlich about them (196). The reason why their apparition is not uncanny is because, as the reader or the spectator adjusts her/his judgement to the realities of fiction, spectres and ghosts gain "grounded, normal, legitimate existences" (Derrida, *Spectres of Marx* 196). In this vein, the apparition of the ghost of Banquo in *Macbeth*, for instance, or the encounters with spirits in the *Inferno* do not break the flow of normality in these literary works nor do they break the chronology of time. As a matter of fact, the encounter with the spirits makes an integral part of the story and is essential for the development of the plot. On the other hand, what should be treated as truly unheimlich in *Macbeth*, is rather the apparition of the "weird sisters" (Shakespeare 1.3. 30).

Indeed, the strange nature of the apparition of the witches depends both on their looks and attire as well as on their relation to time and space. Upon seeing them, Banquo could not help but remark that even though they dwell on it, they do not look like “th’inhabitants o’th’earth” (Shakespeare 1.3. 39). They look “so wither’d and so wild” that it is difficult for him to tell if they are dead or alive; and while they look like women, their beards testify to the contrary (Shakespeare 1.3. 38-45). The duality of their nature that recalls at the same time the thing and its opposite combines with their ability to act upon space and time to create a general atmosphere of eeriness. As they finally meet Macbeth on a “blasted heath”, symbol of their barren promises and vain hopes, they prophesise about his future and by doing so they bend the linearity of time and disrupt its chronology (Shakespeare 1.3. 75).

Like the apparition of *Macbeth*’s witches, the apparition of the orange lifejackets in the middle of the land without any possible sight of sea disrupts the consistency of time and space. The disruption of space homogeneity is the result of the introduction of elements that do not normally belong to the setting. This disruption is starkly visible with the presence of the lifejackets on land and quite remote from their natural habitat, the sea. This abnormal presence is key for considering a space as haunted. However, the most compelling meaning of haunted landscapes happens “when a place is stained by time, or when a particular place becomes the site for an encounter with broken time” (Fisher 19). A place is haunted not only when it contains elements that do not specifically belong to it but also when said objects do not follow the chronological flow of time. When time is broken, it fatally repeats itself and while it does so, it keeps on bringing objects of the past to stain the present with them. A haunted place is a place that cannot rid itself from its past and the traumatic events that happened in it (Fisher 18-21).

The lifejackets, which keep on appearing in places they are not supposed to be seen in, as well as the thermal blanket, which transports itself from the image of the mother and her child to cover two babies on the road and a man in the refugee camp, do nothing but consistently break the chronology of time. They repeatedly take the migrants back to the moment of crisis when their lives depended on emergency interventions. The brokenness of Chronos makes it impossible for migrants to experience time as Kairos. In Greek tradition, Kairos is the qualitative dimension of time. It is time experienced not as a series of *nows* chained together with linearity, but as moments of “opportunity, calling for decisive and courageous action” (Platovnjak and Svetelj 799). Kairos is time lived as a unique moment distinguished from all other moments; it, therefore, can only be lived once and can never repeat itself. Conceived as a unique moment of opportunity that requires action to be taken, Kairos is in perfect harmony

with the traditional understanding of *crisis* as a moment of judgment, decision-taking, and potential change. It is also in harmony with *crisis* as rupture and break since, in the same way crisis disrupts the normal flow of events by bringing forward the emergency of a specific situation, Kairos breaks the continuity of Chronos and underlines the uniqueness and unrepeatability of a specific *now* (Platovnjak and Svetelj 799).

However, because the time of migration is broken, the past is doomed to come back and haunt the present, which, in its turn, is not allowed to move forward and to progress chronologically into the future. The compulsive repetition of that “which (in actuality is) no longer” and the impossibility to reach that “which (in actuality) has not yet happened” mean that the migration crisis is, in a way a “failure of the future” (Fisher 16-19). The failure of the migration future means that the migration crisis metamorphoses from a complex process of latent origins to an event breaking out on the shores of Europe, to finally become a status quo and a stabilised component of everyday life. The failure of the future of migration means also that children wrapped in thermal blankets and confined to refugee camps will never be allowed to escape the traumatic repetition of the crisis, will never be allowed to grow, and will never be allowed to move on. The children of the migration crisis will forever be fixed in time and their images will continue to haunt the viewer.

Thus, Alessandro Penso’s photograph of the mother and her child takes on a new dimension. Being programmed by the setting and the haunting return of the migration paraphernalia, the viewer can easily recognise the photograph as one of migration crisis—but not only (Fisher 17). The presence of the child in this picture as well as in all the other photographs in Penso’s *Lesbos* creates a dichotomy between two realities. The first is societies unshaken belief that children stand for the future, the other is the jeopardization of this future, indeed, its destruction. “Children”, asserts Moeller, “are a synecdoche for a country’s future”, they, therefore, sum up in themselves their society’s hopes for continuity and survival (“Hierarchy of Innocence” 39). A child represents its parents’ legacy not only in the metaphorical sense but also in the biological meaning of the word. It is through procreation that humans, like all other living forms, ensure the immortality of their genes which, while connecting them to a very distant past, give them the prospect of living on into the “distant future” (Cave 6). To have children and to believe that there exists a deep connection with them that transcends mere biology to unite parents and their offsprings as “the same being” is humanity’s means to secure immortality and to “fling [itself] into an endless future” despite the doubtless death of “individual bodies” (Cave 230). The child represents, therefore, a link

between the past—the parents—and the endless future—immortality. The child is every family's insurance that their name and legacy will survive and that the ancestors would never be forgotten.

Equally, it is also upon the shoulders of children to secure the continuation of their societies, cultures, civilisations, and the future of humanity as a whole. Indeed, nothing seems more commonplace, when a crisis strikes, than to unroll the archives looking for evidence, visual or otherwise, that proves the existence of some link between the deteriorating situation and children. When society advertises for its bright future and promises success and progress to its members, it is the image of the schoolchild that is brought forward "with upraised arm, so eager to please", and ready to learn and to be disciplined (Holland, 76). When, on the contrary, society is fragilized and threatened with a bleak tomorrow, it is the image of the delinquent, the violent child, the unschooled vagrant, the soldier child, and the dead child that is brought to the foreground. Whence comes the importance of photographing children during crisis. Children, turned into symbols representing the continuity of a specific society or humanity in general, become crucial visual icons signalling both the gravity of the actual situation and the threat of an impossible future. The endangered child stands, therefore, as a synecdoche for the threatened society; and the image of the victimised child is one of the surest ways to advocate for the victimisation of a whole society.

The merit of Alessandro Penso's *Mother and Child* should, therefore, be appreciated within a complex framework of representation. On the one hand, it may be considered as a reproduction of iconic images showing not only motherly love but also exemplar devotion to the protection of an innocent child. However, this reproduction does not offer itself as a faithful copy of what has already been visualised. While they replicate the Madonna and her sacred son, Penso's mother and child have completely stepped out of the realm of the supernatural and have rooted themselves in concrete materiality. The golden background behind the Madonna and Christ referring to their heavenly home is turned into a silver emergency blanket wrapped around the shoulders of Penso's mother and child. Light that has functioned as a mediator of meaning and as a means of connection between the earthly world and heavens is in Penso's photograph nothing more than a reflection on a thermal blanket that highlights the crisis. Finally, the child who has been absorbed in his interaction with his mother completely oblivious of the presence of spectators and worshippers, has his eyes now turned towards the lens holding every gazing eye accountable for his suffering and sacrifice. The concretisation of the

victimhood of the innocent child in Alessandro Penso's photograph is further highlighted by the utter helplessness of the mother upon whose face a look of desperation is visible.

A last merit of Penso's *Mother and Child* is its ability to share its concern about the dangers of migration that threaten not only the safety and the future of individual children but also the future of whole generations and societies with other contemporary photographic representations. Penso's photograph establishes connections of inter-visuality with the pictures of Alex Majoli, another prolific and engaged Italian photographer who has devoted a considerable portion of his work to the question of migration. Majoli, now member of Magnum Photos, debuted his photographic journey at the age of 15. His passion for photography and his diversified interests have led him to cover the war in Kosovo and Albania, to document "decadent lifestyles of the New York fashion scene", and to create "an intimate portrayal of the closing of an asylum for the insane on the island of Leros, Greece".[20] Unlike Alessandro Penso, Alex Majoli's portfolio is diversified to the point where it becomes challenging to find a common ground linking his projects. Nevertheless, his "theatricalized style" stands out as the unifying thread of his work (Bouveresse 1). Alex Majoli does not claim to reproduce faithful snapshots from reality. As a matter of fact, he openly states that he "want[s] to shine [his] flash on society and see how the photographed subjects would react".[21]

Interestingly, when Majoli shed the light of his flash on the stage of migration, a figure of contemporary agony rose from the shadows (see figure 6). The second photograph in his photo-story *Refugee Crisis on Lesbos* published on the Magnum Photos website appears to echo the more traditional representations of canonical scenes of suffering: the Pietà.[22] Majoli's photograph, shot in Black and white, depicts a scene of both great chaos and immense distress. Against the dark background that occupies the upper right corner of the photograph and that appears completely vacant, emerges a crowd of migrants. The group is surrounded by police officers in full anti-riot gear and is squeezed together into a smaller space. In this great scene of turmoil where bodies of immigrant men and women are hurled together, the faces of three children emerge. The first child is lifted upon the shoulders of a man, probably its father, in an attempt to save it from being shoved and stepped on by the agitated mob. With an open mouth

---

[20] https://creative.magnumphotos.com/photographers/alex-majoli/
[21] https://www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/politics/spain-catalonia-crisis-alex-majoli/
[22] The photo-story can be accessed via this link https://www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/alex-majoli-refugee-crisis-on-lesbos/

and worried eyes, the child seems to not only be a victim of this unreasonable violence, but also a witness to a more dangerous fate than his own.

Figure 6. Alex Majoli*, Refugees and migrants arriving on Lesbos island.* Lesbos, Greece. 2015. ©Alex Majoli. Magnum Photos.

In the left bottom of the photograph, the second child appears held also by a man and covering its mouth looking directly into the camera. It is unclear whether the little boy is aware that he is being photographed and it is equally unclear if, had he been aware, he would have cared. The events that were taking place, and that would have endangered both his life and that of the whole crowd were far more threatening for him to care about the presence of Majoli and his lens. However, the spectator could hardly remain indifferent to the child's gaze and gesture. The direct gaze into the camera is strikingly accusive. It seems as if, by holding eye contact with the spectator, the little boy is making sure that his suffering, and that of the others, has been seen and has been acknowledged. His small hand covering his mouth was apparently lifted to protect him from the tear-gas that has been employed by the Greek police to discipline the mass and force them into docile cooperation. Nevertheless, its symbolism is inescapable. It instantly reminds one of the Three Wise Monkeys, the Japanese pictorial proverb of 'see no evil, say no evil, hear no evil'.

The image of the migrant child covering its mouth and looking straightforward could be understood as a mimicry of the silence often surrounding the brutality migrants face at the

borders. It could be also seen as a reflection of the silence of photography itself as a non-linguistic medium of keeping record and storytelling. Yet, the most direct meaning of the mouth-covering gesture could be inferred from the embedded scene of suffering in the more general spectacle of chaos. In the left side of the photograph, and a little off-centred, appears a woman in black clothes and head scarf holding her child in her arms. As the boy seems to be struggling to breathe and regain consciousness, his mother's face betrays emotions of great distress. Her frowned eyebrows and imploring eyes desperately look for some sort of assistance probably from the same police officers who caused her child to faint. The young man standing next to her, looking visibly angry, brings his right hand closer to the boy's head as an invitation to look at the child's condition. Another woman standing behind, covers her mouth and nose with her black headscarf and seems to be equally disturbed. What this image does, besides showcasing and documenting a moment of fear, tension, and anxiety, is to recall another image of more iconic suffering. What would immediately come to mind by the effect of seeing the image of a sorrow-ridden mother in black holding in her arms the inert body of her child is the image of Virgin Mary holding the dead body of Christ after He was deposed from the cross and placed in her lap.

Majoli's photograph places the mother and her child slightly off-centre and by doing so it allows for the overwhelming spectacle of struggle and chaos to develop behind them. The commotion in the scene is reflected in the dispersed gazes that dart in almost every direction yet, interestingly, avoid looking towards the fainting boy and his desperate mother. Even the young man, who is shown exceptionally agitated, points his hand towards the child but directs his furious gaze towards the people facing him. The result is the marginalisation of the contemporary pietà and its assimilation within a larger spectacle of suffering. The pain and struggle faced by migrants today seem to have become so widespread that no particular agony deserves the undivided attention of the beholder. The generalisation of suffering in this photo of migration makes the image of the mother and her son fade out and despite its ability to recall and to replicate traditional visual representations of the Pietà, it does so without necessarily provoking the same religious and human pathos. It is true that images have the capacity of cloning and replicating other images. It is also true that the replica may have the potential of bringing images to life—at least metaphorically—by summoning them from the domain of oblivion and by re-presenting them under newer lights (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 12-13). Nevertheless, revivifying old images does not necessarily give them the same powers and potentials. It might, on the contrary, strip them of their aura.

Original works of art possess, according to Walter Benjamin, an authority over all forms of replications that might be crafted either by the artists themselves or by their disciples (102). This authority stems from the fact that, unlike the replicas, the original work of art is considered as unique not necessarily in subject but in production. Since the specificities of artistic creation related to techniques, time, space, and the precise state of mind of the artist can never be replicated, then whatever reproduction and no matter its qualities can ever hope to stand on equal footing with its original. However, Benjamin points out that this authority, which is usually linked to inaccessibility and distance as well as to uniqueness and permanence, does not hold well in face of mechanical reproductions of artworks (103). When photographs of works of art are taken, one can hardly accuse them of being forgeries since it was never in the intention of the photograph to pass for a painting let alone to fabricate a copy of a painting. A photograph of a painting produces a completely different image which itself possesses its own qualities and merits.

The photograph—thanks to all the adjustments that could be apported to the lens, the choice of the quality of the film, choice of the colour palette, and other techniques of photo-taking like zooming in and out—provides the spectators with different "aspects of the original that are accessible only to the lens […] but not to the human eye" (Benjamin 103). So, while the painting allows for apprehending the subject as a whole and from a distance, the photograph unveils the secret and the hidden details of its object. This unveiling brings the subject closer to the beholder as it allows vision to scrutinise its smallest parts and to investigate its most hidden corners. Photography also brings the subject closer to the spectator by allowing the latter not only to possess the work of art but also to touch it and to carry it on her/himself. Thanks to the lens, vision becomes more empowered and more able to get hold of its subject at a smaller distance. The photographic reproduction of di Buoninsegna's *Madonna and Child* and that of Bouguereau's *Pietà* made it possible to investigate the paintings more closely using all the offerings of technology. One can zoom in to study them in more details, crop them to focus only on certain parts, or even alter their colour palette to produce an infinity of replicas in different shades. One can even create collages and use the paintings as a canvas for a variety of different works. It goes without saying that all these alterations would not necessarily be appreciated by art connoisseurs and would probably be frowned upon by certain copyright laws, yet, they remain possible and doable, at least for private use.

The possibility to possess and consume a work of art in this fashion was not possible before its technological reproduction, and this might be one of the ways in which technological

reproducibility made artefacts more accessible to the masses. The other way is related to the question of transportability. A photograph of an artwork transplants the original into new places and domains that could have never been reached had the latter remained in its auratic isolation (Benjamin 103). While Bouguereau's *Pietà* has resided for a long time confined as a private possession, its photographic reproduction enabled it to make surface on the internet and to become more accessible to more art enthusiasts and to the general public. The same thing is true for di Buoninsegna's *Madonna and Child*. Consequently, had these two paintings not been photographed and had these photographs not been disseminated by technological means, it would have been almost impossible to employ them as an object of study in this very dissertation. What technological reproduction offered is the liberation of the work of art "from the sphere of tradition" and traditional consumption (Benjamin 104). It uproots it from the space of sacred, magical, and ritualistic manipulation and frees it from the confinement of temples and museums. Eventually, technological reproduction transplants the artwork into new spaces and territories where it can enjoy the favours of multiplication. Thanks to photography and to the internet, images can reproduce and replicate themselves almost *ad infinitum* and works of art can finally reach a new form of "mass existence" (Benjamin 104).

What is left of the auratic veil of inaccessibility is only shreds of "uniqueness and permanence" as well as a reminiscing and nostalgic look back to a time when the "sacred isolation" of museums could rarely be broken into (Benjamin 104-105; Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 17). As the technological reproduction of artwork destroys its aura it "emancipates [it] from its parasitic subservience to ritual" and when it ushers it into the domain the secular and the mundane, it changes its social function from an attribute to magic to a component of the political (Benjamin 106). The transition from the magical to the political is best exemplified by photography's intentional transgression over the sacred spaces of visual arts. Gradually, the photographic art started to leak into the public domain the images and figures that have been historically imprisoned in temples and museums. This leakage did not stop at the level of granting massive access to copies of artworks but developed into (re)creating those same images using presumably cheaper and faster materials and techniques. Copies that are not copies emerged and fascinated people with their realism and accuracy. It is in this particular sense that Alessandro Penso's *Mother and Child* and Alex Majoli's *Pieta* can be understood as reproductions of di Buoninsegna's *Madonna and Child*, Bouguereau's *Pietà* and all the other images that represent the same scenes of suffering.

Photography brought with it new concerns and debates about the notion of authenticity. A photograph is originally intended to be infinitely reproduced. Thus, any inquiry about an "authentic print" would seem absurd especially in the contemporary digital world that almost eradicated the use of negative films (Benjamin 106). Besides, images have a tendency to replicate themselves. Their infinite clones are made either intentionally or because images are capable of infiltrating human "optical unconscious" that they seem to force their materialisation (Benjamin 117; Mitchell, *Image Science* 36-37). This limitless reproduction floods the pages of newspapers, timelines, newsfeeds, and screens with incessant and repetitive "copies without an original; indistinguishable copies" that are dipped in "indefinite sameness" (Mitchell, *Image Science* 36). Thus, the digital crisis of the Y2K coupled with the migration crisis exploded in a plethora of "dialectical image[s]" that not only resemble each other but also, like Janus, simultaneously point at the beginning and the end, at the "most archaic fantasies" of the past and the unknown future (Mitchell, *Image Science* 36).

Besides the threat of the impossibility of originality in the contemporary digital age of rather free "circulation" and "mobility" of images—despite attempts to restrict their movement and to impose regulations on their "migration" forcing them to stop momentarily before they find detours to overcome embargos and censorship and pick up their journey of replication and "contamination"—photographs of migration are faced with an ethical challenge (Mitchell, *Image Science* 37). As it has been argued before, looking at images of pain is not without pleasure. However, admitting that there is pleasure in looking at images of suffering children could rarely escape condemnation. Probably one of the most poignant criticisms that was directed to taking, publishing, and sharing pictures of suffering children came after the photograph of Aylan Kurdi surfaced on the internet and on the pages of prominent newspapers worldwide following his tragic death in September 2015. The three-year-old toddler was shot lying face down on the beach and his lifeless minuscule body immediately turned into the sensation of the period. Horrified by both the image and reactions to and recreations of it, British journalist Brendan O'Neill wrote "[t]here was an ugly streak of moral pornography to this poring over an image of a dead child".[23] Moral pornography—borrowed from the concept of "aid pornography" employed in the 1990s and discussed in Patricia Holland's book *Picturing Childhood: The Myth of the Child in Popular Imagery* to describe the emotional appeal to aid

[23] https://brendanoneill.co.uk/post/128908208639/weeping-for-refugees

that focuses on the miserable conditions of children while "deflat[ing] attention from political realities"—means in O'Neill's understanding the gratifying feeling of distress at the sight of Aylan's photo (154). Nevertheless, the objections of Brendan O'Neill, among others, did not stop photographers from continuing to shoot similar photos. Only a month later, in October 2015, the *Daily Mail* published on its website a collection of images showing the bodies of dead children lying on the stony Greek shores. The new photographs were, according to the *Daily Mail* "[r]eminiscent of the now iconic image of the body of the three-year-old Syrian boy Aylan Kurdi, lying on a Turkish beach".[24]

Regardless of the previous objections to the lack of artistic originality and to the affront to morality in representing images of distressed children, photographers continue to produce them. Likewise, deaf to claims that the overexposure to spectacles of suffering may turn audiences numb to the pains of others and lead them to turn the page, switch off their electronic devices, or avert their eyes because they saw enough and do not want to see anymore, such images insist on reproducing themselves to the point of raising fears of plaguing and contaminating the visual landscape with horror and terror (Mitchell, *Image Science* 37). What then is the purpose of these pictures and what do they really want? If artistic originality is long lost with the rise of technological and mechanical reproductions of art and if the pleasure of consuming photographic images of pain is morally frowned upon, why then do photographers continue to take such pictures, and, most importantly, why do spectators continue to look at them? There might be multiple answers to these questions, however, this thesis advances the following: despite the apparent lack of originality and striking resemblances between the actual photographs and traditional scenes of suffering, difference is still perceivable. No photograph of suffering is the exact same replica of a former, older, and more artistic representation of suffering; and this difference is what makes it possible for new meanings to arise. Consequently, with the emergence of new possible meanings, the function of the photographs may shift from producing mere visual pleasure to a more complex form of pleasure—the pleasure of seeing and making a difference.

---

[24] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3296558/Migrants-survive-Mediterranean-crossing-skin-teeth-small-boat-begins-capsize-just-yards-shore.html

3. Digital (Non)Distant Suffering and the Erosion of the Right to Ignore

In one of his most influential essays, Jacques Derrida introduced the *non-concept* of "differance", a neologism that means at the same time to delay and to differ from (129). His coinage was derived from the duality of the meaning of the verb *différer* in French and which translates into English as *to differ* and *to defer*. To differ means "distinction, inequality, or discernibility" and thus highlights the existence of a distance in meaning between one thing and the other (Derrida, "Differance" 129). To defer, on the other hand, is to "delay", and to postpone "until 'later' what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible" (Derrida, "Differance" 129). Both words, despite their divergence, meet at the point where they both incorporate time and space as fundamental component of meaning production. *Differance*, as intended by Derrida, means, at the same time, difference and delay both of which create a necessary gap in space and time from which meaning emerges. In other words, by perceiving the distinction and the "nonidentity" between one thing and the other, one perceives the distance that exists between them and between their meanings (Derrida, "Differance" 129). Equally, by delaying something, one creates an interval or a break in time which would allow for the denied meaning in the present to be realised in the future.

Derrida also asserts that "differance is neither a *word* nor a *concept*", it is rather a generative power that cuts through the fabric of space and time, that underlines sameness and difference, and that projects the present into the future (Derrida, "Differance" 130). It is a movement between the past and the future and a division between identities that insists on dividing meanings in the present and on throwing them forward. Meaning, in this sense, is conceivable only as a "between", a space opening between similar yet different things, and as a potentiality belonging to the future and not the present (Desilet 34). In discussing Derrida's *differance*, Gregory Desilet conjures "doppelgangers" as persistent problems "beset[ting] words" making it almost impossible for both writers and readers to express and to understand "*only* what may be intended" (34). As they are only understood through a comparison between them and others, words seem to come always in doubles, indeed, in multiples. Every word, by being produced either in writing or in speech, immediately convenes a myriad of other words that resemble it but are not identical to it. It is this "sameness which is not identical" between similar words that makes it possible for readers and listeners to discern the difference between words such as *tree*, *bush*, *plant*, *shrub*, *briar*, etc. and thus understand the unique meaning of each one of them separately and with reference to the others (Derrida, "Differance" 129).

Certainly, both Derrida's non-concept of *differance* as well as Desilet's analysis refer to the linguistic potentiality of words to mean one thing and, by doing so, to summon different and even opposite meanings. However, it would be intellectually amusing to notice how the visual finds a way to creep into the linguistic through both the graphic presence of the letter *a* as the only way to render *differ**a**nce* possible, and the invocation of the doppelganger to further explain the multiple identity of meaning and understanding (Derrida "Differance" 132; Desilet 34).

In this vein, it is important to mention that W. J. T. Mitchell defines a doppelganger as a "double, [a] mirror image or twin" (*Image Science* 195). It is the appearance of a duplicate that, despite striking similarities, is not identical to the first object or person. A doppelganger is also strongly connected to the notion of repetition and reappearance as well as to notions of the return of the repressed and supernatural apparitions, in a nutshell, to the "concept of the uncanny" (Mitchell, *Image Science* 195). As an image, a double, or a repetition, the doppelganger simultaneously negates and affirms the self. Its apparition confirms the possibility of duplication. The existence of an other that appears to be identical usurps the self of its originality and uniqueness and makes it only one possibility among others. The persistent repetition "cast[s] the sign of identity into abysmal or groundless nonentity", for the recognition of the other as identical to the self transports subjectivity from the ego to the alter ego and brings forward the schizophrenic split of personality (Webber 6). This might explain why in folkloric traditions, it is often believed that the encounter with a person's doppelganger eventually leads to the former's death. Death, understood literally or metaphorically, is nothing but the ultimate negation of the self. On the other hand, the doppelganger might also function as a power of "*mise-en-abyme*" to the self (Webber 6). The constant repetition of figures serves to "affirm *ad infinitum* the identity for which they stand" (Webber 6).

Interestingly, by insisting on the notion of repetition and affirmation "*ad infinitum*", Webber connects the doppelganger to both space and time. The apparition, being visual and normatively apprehended as a spectre and a "spook" has a strong connection to space (Webber 8). A doppelganger, like a ghost, is always perceived as an intruder who slithers into places without being invited and in which its presence is not welcomed. Its vision is also a reason for surprise if not fear and concern. Its apparition upsets the unity of space by introducing the elements of the metaphysical and the fictive into the realm of the real. Nevertheless, its 'Unheimlichkeit'—its uncanny nature—perceived as a transgression and a displacement in space seems to stain the place it appears in with inherent existence. The doppelganger always

seems to be more familiar with the environment it resides in, and, as "archetypally unheimlich", the spectre rises as the primordial native figure of spaces that host division, split, confrontation, and conflict (Webber 8). "Like all ghosts", asserts Andrew J. Webber, the doppelganger is "an historical figure" that does not only represent the past in the sense that it manifests and concretises it but also in the sense that it brings it forward and re-enacts it (10). It is also "a profoundly anti-historical phenomenon", a figure and a power that disrupts Chronos and resists any "temporal change by stepping out of time and then stepping back in as revenant" (Webber 10).

This dialectic interplay between self and image of the self, past and present, and identification and misrecognition is the only way subjectivity can be achieved. By recognising the other as an image of the self and by incorporating the split of identity and the discontinuity of time, one can transcend the frustrating negations of the doppelganger and fulfil the pleasures of realising selfhood. As a matter of fact, the realisation of the self cannot be achieved without going through the necessary path of "struggle for control over speech and the gaze" in which the subject constantly shifts between "first and third person" being at the same time the *I* and the *she/he*, and between the holder of the gaze and the image (Webber 7-8). The apparition of the doppelganger reactivates, therefore, archaic anxieties pertinent to the age of childhood and to the mirror stage when the child, surprised by its reflection in the mirror, fails at first to recognise it as itself. The mirror image, despite the resemblance, does not seem identical in the child's gaze. It seems more complete, more able, and has more control over its motor skills. It is only later that the child recognises its image as itself and, by incorporating that split between the limited ego and the omnipotent ideal ego, it can confidently move into using the pronoun *I* to refer to both: the self and its reflection.

Accordingly, the encounter with the doppelganger seems not only inevitable but also necessary if any unity of identity is to be hoped. In the same manner the child's subjective *I* rises from perceiving and then incorporating the split of its identity and its lack of control over time and space, the meaning of the word, and the world, can only be fully understood through misrecognition, delay, and repetition. The function of the doppelganger as *differance* is, therefore, to introduce this rupture and crisis in apprehension. *Differance*, as a reflected or a conjured image, disturbs the apparent coherence of the real by transplanting itself into its fabric as an uncanny apparition of a displaced or a repressed element which "on reflection, turns out to be quite familiar" (Mitchell, *Image Science* 195). Reflection—as not only thinking about the differences separating "imagination and reality" but also as the persistent return of the image—

seems to be one possible answer to a persistent question: why are people still interested in images of suffering despite the importunate recurrence of the latter and the pertinacious laments of the former (Mitchell, *Image Science* 196)?

3.1. Differance as a form of Distancing and Projection of Meaning in Contemporary Images of Suffering

It has, thus far, been argued that neither Alessandro Penso's Mother and Child nor Alex Majoli's Pietà represents an original spectacle of suffering. As a matter of fact, Susan Sontag asserts, that the "iconography of suffering has a long pedigree" (Regarding the Pain of Others 40). She then proceeds to provide her readers with quite a few examples of visual representations of agony ranging from "the innumerable versions in painting and sculpture of the Passion of Christ" to "the inexhaustible visual catalogue of the fiendish executions of the Christian martyrs" (Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others 40). W. J. T. Mitchell, in his turn, uses Nicholas Poussin's The Plague *at Ashdod* as a canonical representation of "terror and panic" (*Image Science* 191). Besides the classical scenes of biblical horrors, modern times also offer a generous visual collection of agony. In fact, as he wrote his essay "Photographs of Agony" in July 1972 reflecting on the then ongoing war in Vietnam, John Berger remarked that "[t]here [were] no pictures from Vietnam in the papers today"; however, he also states that this lacuna in providing updated visual evidence of the horrors of the war could be easily filled by conjuring a photograph produced in 1968 by Donald McCullin (*Understanding a Photograph* 30). For Berger, McCullin's photograph showing "an old man squatting with a child in his arms; both of them […] bleeding profusely with the black blood of black-and-white photographs" could be used, although anachronistically, to capture and to "record sudden moments of agony—a terror, a wounding, a death, a cry of grief" (*Understanding a Photograph* 32).

According to John Berger, moments of absolute terror, panic and agony are inherently "discontinuous with normal time" since they "isolate" themselves from the ordinary chronological experience of time and turn the moment of pain into a privileged moment of photography (*Understanding a Photograph* 32). The moment of photography, the moment the photographer decides to press the "trigger" and to shoot is, consequently, a moment of crisis (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 32). It is a juncture that requires precision and a remarkable ability to discern the importance of the "photographed moment" from all the other moments that offer themselves to the lens and slip through unrecorded (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 32). Comparison, discerning, distinction, and decision render every

photographed scene a *differance*. Photographic *differance* is, therefore, the delay in the decision and the "anticipation" that precedes the shot (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 32). It is also the "knowledge that such moments are probable" and it is precisely this knowledge that makes the photographer choose "between photographing at X moment or at Y moment (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 19-32).

The most pressing questions at this point would, therefore, be how do photographers know what to anticipate and what to expect? How would they know that the right moment is certainly coming and that they will have the opportunity to shoot something worthwhile? A possible answer would be that they simply do not know for certain what to expect. Susan Sontag talks about the factors of "chance" and "luck" that play a major role "in the taking of pictures" and about the fact that photography, unlike other arts, exhibits a "bias toward the spontaneous, the rough, the imperfect" (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 28). Photography is one of the few art forms, if not the only one, that does not penalise amateurish and unskilled delivery. Indeed, especially in times of conflict, the audience would prefer its pictures to be raw and would object to "artistry" diluting the authenticity of the photographs of "hellish events" (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 26-27). Consequently, it seems that in situations of great turmoil, when events develop at the greatest speed and when people are in life-risking situations, photography offers itself as the most competent medium capable of capturing fleeting moments of absolute horror. Photography's promises of immediacy and authenticity are partly dependent on luck that puts photographers in the right place at the right time, and partly dependent on photographers' agility and presence of mind that make them press the trigger and take the shot.

Undoubtedly, chance is a fundamental player in the development of interesting photographs. Nevertheless, since luck only manifests itself to those who are prepared, one ought to believe that photographers deliberately situate themselves in a time and a space deemed favourable for capturing impactful pictures.[25] This preparedness comes from the knowledge that, in specific situations, the perfect scene of suffering would certainly reveal itself. It is a preparedness that is enlightened by experience and by the ability to judge and to predict the course of development of certain events. Therefore, when Alessandro Penso and Alex Majoli placed themselves on the island of Lesbos in the middle of a migration crisis, they were certain

---

[25] "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity" is a saying often attributed to Seneca the Younger, although there seems to be no evidence on that.

that scenes of struggle, pain, and suffering are bound to appear, indeed, to re-appear. Eventually, when the mother hugging her child surfaced, and when another mother desperately held her unconscious son in her arms emerged, both photographers knew that these were the photographable moments. The reoccurrence of the spectacle of suffering is what gave these two photographs their visual meaning.

When John Berger remarked that, on that day in July 1972, there were no new photographs illustrating the developments of the war in Vietnam; and that, in front of this photographic silence, a picture from 1968 would have had the same effect, he was in a way talking about the ability of images of agony to repeat themselves in most striking similarities (*Understanding a Photograph* 30). Correspondingly, W.J.T. Mitchell advanced a similar idea when he discussed Mahmud Hams's photograph *Gaza City Morgue* (*Image Science* 189). Hams's photograph is "a close-up of a dead mother with her two dead babies draped across her body" and it was published in 2009 following an Israeli attack on Gaza (Mitchell, *Image Science* 189). However, Mitchell confirms that the picture was in reality taken two years earlier and its use to visualise the renewed attacks was predominantly due to two main factors (*Image Science* 189). First, the photograph functioned as a gap-filler to the visual lacuna that accompanied the verbal reports on the 2009 attack. It seems that the visual silence was so unbearable in front of yet another large-scale human catastrophe that an image had to be produced, even if said image was anachronistic. Second, such images of absolute horror are so commonplace in times of conflict that it almost makes no difference to use one or the other. Mitchell asserts that the most obvious reason for the use of Hams's photograph was because the scene it depicts is "*recurrent*" and "inevitable" in such situations of great violence (*Image Science* 189). He goes on to draw parallels between the photograph in Gaza's morgue and Poussin's painting of the plague in Ashdod to further highlight the anachronistic nature of images of horror that would, to a certain extent, allow them to be used interchangeably (*Image Science* 191). In this light, Berger's suggestion to attach McCullin's 1968 photograph to the verbal reports of the war in Vietnam in 1972 does not seem that out of place as it turns out that this practice is, in fact, doable and most importantly believable (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 30; Mitchell, *Image Science* 189-191).

Now, if images of pain share common elements like depicting suffering mothers and children, visualising divine wrath, or picturing the evils of contemporary wars; and if it is possible and believable to use one picture instead of the other, why then are photographers still producing them? Why do contemporary photographers insist on taking new photographs that

regurgitate old and over-represented themes and subjects? And, most importantly, why do audiences, having had their fair share of looking at the pains of others, keep looking and consuming these *new* photographs of agony?

Needless to repeat at this point that people look at images of suffering because there is pleasure in that. However, it is paramount to specify that visual pleasure is not always related to fetishistic and voyeuristic impulses but can expand to include other forms of satisfactions. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag draws a fine line between looking at "invented horror"—the kind of horror depicted in paintings or staged for the cinema—and looking at "real horror"—horror captured in a photograph (42). Despite being disturbing and even "overwhelming", tableaus of invented horror can distract the attention from the depicted pain of its subject to "the artist's skill of eye and hand" (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 41-42). Thus, the attention of the beholder can be easily swerved from the unbearable sight of agony to the aesthetic value of its representation. What is at play in this case seems not to be the reality of the pain represented but how realistic this representation is. Aesthetical pleasure that might arise from invented scenes of suffering might be due to the interrelation of two main factors. First, the visible skilful rendition of pain may stop the spectator short from contemplating the real subject of a painting, for instance, and focus all her/his attention on the artistic mastery of the painter. The spectator would be more inclined to wonder on the time and talent needed to produce such realistic and powerful representations rather than ponder on the accuracy of the work of art's account. Moreover, horror, being artistically invented, immediately distances itself from the real world and takes root in the realm of the imaginary and the fictive. Thus, by dissociating itself from reality while maintaining its realism, the work of art leaves an open space for spectators to enjoy it without having to question their morality.

Besides, canonical paintings of suffering like those discussed by Sontag and Mitchell, might offer a specific group of spectators a special kind of pleasure. Religious spectators, who believe that the Crucifixion has indeed happened or who believe that divine wrath was executed as plagues erasing whole communities, might find in those paintings of excruciating pain a source for commiseration, contemplation, and inspiration (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 40-41). The passion of Christ and that of Christian martyrs turn into a teaching moment and the suffering subject transcends his/her individual experience to turn into an example and a symbol of sacrifice. In fact, Canonical scenes of extraordinary suffering highlight the unjust nature of the inflicted pain and, by doing so, equally emphasise the innocence of the sufferer. The contrast between the absolute innocence of Christ and the martyrs, on the one hand, and

the pure and arbitrary evil of their executioners, on the other becomes too visible to be missed. The contrast, as well as the connection between innocence and suffering, allows for the elevation of the innocent sufferer above the normal standards of morality. Because of, and thanks to, their great pains these figures become idealised and are uplifted to the top of the hierarchy of innocence. Once turned into an icon— "a symbol that contains the essential reality it denotes"—the image of the ideal sufferer starts to propagate itself (Mitchell, *Iconology* 72).

The idealisation of canonical representations of suffering might account for modern times' urge to reproduce similar scenes when a human catastrophe takes place. Idealisation does not only elevate its subject to apotheotic status and makes it immune to criticism and relativisation, but it also flattens the subject and oversimplifies it. The overlap between the oversimplifications of idealisation and the transparency of the meaning of images of suffering children, for instance, results in the abundant use of children as main subject of photography of suffering. Since it would be impossible in contemporary times to recreate the Crucifixion or the plague at Ashdod, and since it would be equally impossible to resurrect the bodies of martyrs long gone and make them pose for the camera to commemorate their agony in order to add it to the immense catalogue of digital suffering, what spectators are left with is nothing but a simulation. This simulation aims neither at deceiving nor at falsifying reality. As a matter of fact, like all simulations the matter is no longer a question of "the 'true' and the 'false', the 'real' and the 'imaginary'", it is rather a matter of "substituting the signs of the real for the real" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 2-3). This postmodern collapse of the real and the imaginary, according to Baudrillard, made it ever more challenging for people to make distinctions between the world and its representations. As a matter of fact, Baudrillard asserts that in most cases the representation precedes the real, especially when spectators deal with the media and whatever events are reported by it (38). What may transpire, as it will be shown in what follows, is not only a total confusion between the real and the representation of the real, but also the impossibility of dealing with the real as is without transforming it into a representation.

Unlike paintings of pain and horror that are consumed as artistic representations deriving their meaning from their aesthetic or didactic value, photographs of agony come with an attached label of truthfulness and trustworthiness. Any doubts regarding the authenticity of the visual slices of the world retreat to the background since audiences are trained to accept the photographic "presumption of veracity" as reality and to assume that the photograph provides "incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened" (Sontag, *On Photography* 5-6).

Nevertheless, this verisimilitude is always accompanied with an imposing delay for no matter how fast and how connected media networks function today, their report on events always arrives “too late” (Baudrillard 38). Images of the horrors of the world and of the suffering of others invariably reach their audience “with a history of delay, a spiral of delay, that they long ago exhausted their meaning” (Baudrillard 38). One way to account for this delay is to acknowledge the natural and the necessary temporal gap that exists between the event and its mediation. Alessandro Penso’s photograph of the mother and child, as well as all the other photographs depicting the migration crisis in Lesbos, for instance, was not immediately published and diffused. The same is true for the photographs produced by Alex Majoli, and, as a matter of fact, for all photographs that have ever been produced. When the photographs reach their audience, it is already too late. *Too late* in the sense that the event has already passed, and the people photographed have departed from the site of their suffering. *Too late* also in the sense that there remains nothing to be done. This original delay in reporting news makes of the report, whether verbal or visual, nothing but an “artificial effervescence of signs” and an “illusion of an actuality” (Baudrillard 38). The result is a “sinister impression of kitsch”, a collection of images arranged with no apparent logic, in extreme poor taste, and serving nothing except “their spectacular promotions” (Baudrillard 38).

Another possible understanding of the delay inherent to the representations of the world is pertinent to their reoccurrence. When spectators are confronted with spectacles of suffering rarely do they find themselves in the presence of completely original images. The impossibility of producing representations of suffering that are generically original creates a gap between the meaning of the image that is already known and already exhausted and the image itself that always comes too late. The visual field of suffering is, then, seemingly trapped in a spiral of repetition with “profound indifference to their consequences” or to the lack thereof (Baudrillard 38). All possible meaning that may have arisen from representing and looking at suffering have already been consumed to a nauseating level. Compassion, sympathy, and pity have for ever been attached to images of suffering children, and to conjure those emotions again in front of spectacles of drowning babies, abandoned children, suffocating boys would produce nothing but cheap sentimentality and narcistic satisfaction about oneself being disturbed by such sights. To invoke the religious jargon of commiseration, inspiration, and to try to elevate those suffering children to the status of martyrs or angels by re-visualising “the original death scene” by doodling wings on the small dead bodies and picturing them ascending to heaven forces a

meaning of causality and rewarded sacrifice onto an image of arbitrary and "banal hostility" (Chouliaraki and Stolic 10; Moeller, "Hierarchy of Innocence" 39).

It is at this particular level of meaning-making that the difference between imagined and real suffering takes shape. When the realism of the photographed scene of agony overshadows its aesthetic value and when the attempts to draw some moral lessons from the suffering of others turn to be mere exercises in bad taste and futile endeavours to rationalise the banal and the arbitrary, the argument needs to develop towards the ethical and the political. Visual pleasure responsible for growing appetite for graphic pain needs to be problematised in a manner that gives the act of looking new moral and political functions. The moral dilemma that accompanies the visualisation of the agony of others has been articulated by Susan Sontag in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others* as being a licence that should only be allocated to those who are able to intervene on the situation and alter it for the benefit of the sufferer (42). Those who cannot help are only voyeurs, that is people who find satisfaction in being able to access the private spaces and times of suffering others taken "off guard" and shot during "an unexpected event seized mid-action" (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 55). Looking at the pains of others can, therefore, be considered a prerequisite for offering help as it can, sometimes, move the spectator from the position of a voyeur to that of a benefactor.

In this regard, the meaning of the image of suffering is no longer configured as a property of the photograph alone but also as the result of the spectator's ability to make inferences, to engage with the subject of representation, and to bear responsibility of what s/he sees. Therefore, while it is important to visualise sufferers as being innocent victims of unjustified cruelty and pain, it is equally critical that these visualisations reach the *right* audience. The survey of the photo-stories collected and used in this part of the dissertation shows that most of the photographs are not only produced by European photographers but are also published on European and international websites and used predominantly by European and international media. English appears to be the default language of the majority of the websites used either by the photographers or by their photographic agencies and it is the language in which the titles, the introductions, and the captions are written. Alessandro Penso's photo-story *Lesbos* is published in its entirety on his website which loads, by default, in English.[26] Alex Majoli, in his turn, has his *Refugee Crisis on Lesbos* published on the website

[26] https://www.alessandropenso.com/

of Magnum Photos which also uses English as a default language.[27] The use of English as the main language of publication and communication may be due to the belief that it could have a farther reach allowing access to international communities. However, this choice makes the photo-stories equally inaccessible to a large number of people within the photographed communities.

Perugini and Zucconi asserted that there exists a so-called "market of the images of suffering" and that it is this market that regulates the relationship between the production of images of suffering and the reception of assistance (28). Certainly, the publication of photographs of disasters, human catastrophes, and dead bodies are all necessary for creating an adequate reaction of sympathy and an urge to help the unfortunate. As a matter of fact, Perugini and Zucconi confirm that "the crisis, the investment of compassion and the investment of funds that follows, expands in relation to the way the witnesses create the images of the crisis" and that, with the absence of such images, it would be "rare to find and justify humanitarian intervention" (28). Therefore, for those images to 'sell' and for the market to thrive, the representation of suffering must remain as simple as possible avoiding all the intricate complexities of the causes that led to the suffering in the first place (Hoskins 72).

The simplification of the image of suffering should hope to attract the attention of people who would not necessarily care to learn about the in-depth details of wars and conflicts that create the horrible scenes of agony but who would be moved by the simple sight of others in pain. As a matter of fact, people could be so emotionally moved that they translate their emotions into action and start donating and raising funds for different organisations and individuals exactly like what happened in October 1984 when "western conscience" was seized by a BBC video coverage of "starving people arriving at feeding stations" in the north of Ethiopia (Hoskins 72). The visualisation of *simple* pain and *simple* death is believed to produce an effect and push distant audiences to react in order to alter the situation. Hence, what seems most interesting is not only the existence of a market for images of agony that manages the economy of demand and supply and sets the norms according to which such images should be taken, but also that this very market is neither located on the site of suffering nor is it addressed to the sufferer (Perugini and Zucconi 30).

---

[27] https://www.magnumphotos.com/

Images of suffering are rarely consumed by the sufferer her/himself, for how would the photographs of the mourners gathering around the dead body of a loved one, once shown to them, alter the reality of their devastating loss or help alleviate the pain. It is visibly clear, therefore, that the main target of such photographs is not the subject of the photograph but someone else, a distant spectator, someone who can both look at and change the reality of what s/he is seeing. The targeted audience, the people who according to Sontag would be able to look at the pains of others without bearing the guilt of voyeurism, would be European, or western, citizens who are assumed to have enough freedom to object to the policies of their countries, enough representative power to change those policies, enough economic resources to run to the aid of sufferers around the globe, and enough humanitarian sentiments to be compassionate towards the unfortunate others (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 42).

As a matter of fact, Penso's photo-story provides visual proof of this humanitarian inclination towards helping others in distress. The presence of lifejackets and thermal blankets are one indication of European humanitarian concerns. The other indications are the involvement of nongovernmental organisation in the efforts to rescue distressed migrants like La Chaîne de l'Espoire one of whose members is visible in the fifth photo and the International Red Cross whose logo is present on some of the erected tents. Besides these two organisations, it is also possible to recognise the presence of the European Union whose flag is also attached to two tents visible in the eighteenth and twentieth photos. Looking at images of agony by people who are assumed to possess enough power to improve the situation of the sufferer could, therefore, lead those observers to intervene either directly by getting involved with humanitarian organisations or indirectly by donating and supporting the rescue efforts. The market of the images of suffering requires, then, the existence of a distance, a gap, that separates the scene of agony from its audience. This distance can be understood in two manners. On the one hand, the audience could be physically remote from the scene of pain and, thus, excluded from the economy of suffering. On the other hand, distance may be assumed as socio-political in the sense that the audience of pain is believed to belong to different social and political realities that enable it to act on the suffering of others and alleviate it. However, in both these cases, the reaction of the targeted audience could hardly be accurately predicted.

Rarely do audiences of the images of the migration crisis have access to the areas where the tragedy unfolds. For example, Alessandro Penso's *Lesbos* is composed of twenty-eight photographs depicting migrants in different situations of struggle, yet only one of them clearly shows the presence of an audience. At first glance Alessandro Penso's photograph (see figure

7) looks like hundreds of other photographs that are usually attached to media reports on the migration crisis. There appear three men with darker complexion and two of them, having their faces visible, could be easily identified as Middle Easterners. The only migrant woman in the picture is wearing a long dress and a headscarf that would also help identify her not only as a Middle Easterner as well, but also as a Muslim. Besides the migrants' wet clothes and the sea visible in the background two other visual symbols of migration surface. First, there is the orange lifejacket, that despite having lost its purpose now that the migrants are on land, insists on appearing around the neck of the woman as a visual reminder of both the identity of the person it is attached to as well as the unresolved nature of the crisis. The other symbol of migration as a life threating crisis are the two babies who, being too young to walk on their own, are carried by two adult men.

Figure 7. Alessandro Penso, *Lesbos*, 2015.

This small group of migrants is photographed by Penso as it continued its journey towards the refugee camp and after having survived a perilous journey. Indeed, the migrant man in the red t-shirt has already appeared in the second picture of the *Lesbos* and so did the infant he is holding. The woman walking beside him, and the other infant held by the man walking before them were also visible in the second photograph. In that picture, the struggle that this small group went through was visible. As the larger group occupying a dinghy was trying to

evacuate it and to safely reach the shores, the man in the red t-shirt, holding both babies in his arms, desperately looks forward in what seems to be a plea for help. However, in that photograph it was not clear with whom the man was pleading and what was the figure of succour he was entreating. Nevertheless, help seems to have been provided since the company is seen carrying on with its journey through the mountainous roads of Lesbos where they encounter a couple of local inhabitants who are apparently heading to the sea.

As the drenched and distressed migrants pass by, the European man and woman stop by the side of the road and look. The woman, holding her hands on her waist and taking refuge in the shade of a tree, seems to be particularly interested in the small family that is passing through. Next to her stops the man who while still on his motorcycle does not seem to satisfy himself with just looking. He pulls out a camera and snaps a picture of the unfortunate family. Neither the gaze of the migrant in darker clothes looking back at him, nor the migrant woman's clear refusal of having her photo taken by a complete stranger deterred the European bystander. Indeed, aware that the European couple are there to watch and to document what they are seeing, the migrant woman lowers her head and lifts her headscarf and her lifejacket in an attempt to cover her face. Yet, with a grin on his face, the European spectator of pain does not lower his camera and shoots.

The reactions of both European spectators in this photograph demonstrates that something is amiss about with the economy of the market of images of agony. As it has already been stated, it is assumed that the visualisation of pain by people who have the power to alter the conditions of the sufferer is likely to produce sentiments of sympathy that could be translated into acts of actual help. Besides, the simpler the image and the more harrowing the spectacle are, the more the market flourishes. The flourishing of the market means that more pictures will be sold, more will make it to the front pages of newspapers and to news headlines, and more people will be affected by them (Hoskins 72). However, in this particular case, the visualisation of pain does not seem to provoke sympathy or compassion. As a matter of fact, it seems to provoke opposite emotions of indifference and even sadistic voyeurism. The European male spectator, who appears to be "sheltered from the adversity which produces the unfortunate suffering" of the migrants, is not caught discreetly peeping at their pain with which he is "uninvolved" (Boltanski 36). On the contrary, he breaks with the traditional role of the "beholder" and the "bystander", which "emphasises the distant and even theatrical character of the relationship" between the unfortunate and the one who looks upon pain, to become a part of the economy of suffering (Boltanski 36).

3.2.Digital Visualisation of Pain and the Paradigmatic Shift in the Role of the Spectator

As he pulls out his camera, the European spectator steps outside from the position of being at the "end point of a linear, reductive notion, of the flow of communication of news and information" (Hoskins 68). Indeed, with the remarkable advance in digital technology and the democratisation of social media, Hoskins asserts, "anyone is potentially an information producer and sharer" (68). Anyone anywhere can take out her/his camera or mobile phone, snap a picture of whatever interesting scene is developing in front of them, and publish it on their private accounts while adding the necessary modifications and comments. Media content in general is no longer produced solely by media outlets that used to have exclusive access to sites of struggle and suffering and "users", argues Hoskins, are no longer only on "the receiving end of news and images, with limited or no opportunity for feedback or for making their opinions public" (68). In fact, today's digital reality makes audiences active "participants in an ongoing and connected network" not only by allowing them to publicly express their opinions by commenting on news and images published on websites, but also by making them a part of the "production and distribution of media content" (Hoskins 68).

What the European spectator/producer did might be considered an act of photographic violence. A violence that does not stop at covertly looking on oblivious victims, thus, violating their privacy for selfish voyeuristic pleasure, but that also arms itself with a camera to capture, document, and immortalise a moment of vulnerability. This particular "moment of agony" in the life of the migrant group can, thus, be said to be doubly violent (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 33). On the one hand, there exists the inherent violence of the migratory experience which puts them in a position of weakness, and which isolates this moment in their lives as a moment of danger and of important potential change. On the other hand, there appears the European spectator who immediately recognises the critical nature of the moment and decides to further isolate it by taking a photograph that will not only immortalise the moment of suffering but will also share, diffuse, and propagate it taking advantage of digital technologies (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 32; Sontag, *On Photography* 7).

What Alessandro Penso's photograph reveals, then, is a deep shift that affected the way images of pain are both consumed and produced. The European man, who would canonically be assumed to be part of the audience of the images of suffering, is visualised pointing his camera at the distressed group and taking a picture despite the visible disagreement of the photographed subjects. Penso's photograph is a comment on an important body of photography

of migration that does not respect the migrants' right to choose, freely and wilfully, to have their pictures taken. This photograph reveals the "predatory" nature of "the act of taking a picture" (Sontag, *On Photography* 14). This nature that, while sublimating the gun and substituting a camera for it, preserves and maintains the aggression and the violation of the firearm. To photograph someone, especially against their will, is to appropriate them and to turn them "into objects that can be symbolically possessed", claims Susan Sontag (*On Photography* 14).

Photographic appropriation and possession are not only symbolic or metaphoric. Although the idea of metaphysically taking hold of the subject of the photograph is an interesting concept that will be developed at a following stage, it is equally paramount to highlight, at this level, that photographs have a material and an economic value attached to them. This said value depends on the fact that, as it has been explained before, images of suffering construct a market governed by the rules of supply and demand, and by the rules of ownership. Ownership of photographs of suffering migrants, for example, is what makes it possible for photographers to publish, share, reproduce, and sell their pictures. It allows them, as well, to enter competitions for the most influential photograph of the year and win grand prizes. In their article "Enjoy Poverty: Humanitarianism and the Testimonial Function of Images", which is a critical analysis of Renzo Martens's documentary film *Enjoy Poverty* (2008), Perugini and Zucconi report a question asked by the film director to one of the photographers he shadowed while the latter was working on the production of his images of suffering. The question was "about the ownership of the pictures" to which the photographer responded that he was the sole owner of them since he was the one who took them, and he was "the one that turned that situation into a photograph" (Perugini and Zucconi 27). When Martens insisted on asking whether the photographed people also own their own photographs, the answer was categorically negative.

The objectification of the photographed person is quite obvious in the answer provided by the photographer interviewed in Martens's film. Indeed, the photographer did not even seem to have paused to think about the possibility of giving the subjects of his pictures a share in the royalties. This objectification seems yet more apparent in Alessandro Penso's photograph which shows that no concern at all was given by the European bystander/photo-taker to the clear refusal of the migrant woman he is photographing. The loss of subjecthood in front of the lens is not entirely due to the lens's almost magical powers to turn people into objects, as Sontag has already confirmed (*On Photography* 14). Indeed, it is also related to the fact that, finding themselves in situations of vulnerability, most people lose their agency and free will. They

simply lose their right to accept, refuse, and to choose otherwise. This loss of subjecthood was true in the case of the Congolese receivers of humanitarian aids filmed by Renzo Martens, and it was also true in the case of the migrant woman doubly photographed by the European bystander and Alessandro Penso. What ensues from the denial of subjecthood of photographed people and the denial of, at least, their moral ownership of their photographs is, of course, the denial of the economic rights related to the reproduction, publication, and selling of these photographs. As photographers and photographic agencies could benefit from copyright laws around the world to make profit from selling images of suffering and to protect their properties from theft, misuse, and unlawful reproduction, the sufferers themselves remain outside the space of transactions.

The poor and the famished, who are photographed by "western reporters" in Martens's film, as well as the migrants photographed by Penso and many other European photographers remain excluded from benefiting from the market of images of suffering not only because they do not produce their own images—and by consequence they do not own them—but also because they do not produce the canonical knowledge necessary for the production of such images (Perugini and Zucconi 30). It has already been argued that for humanitarian aids to keep flowing, images of suffering need to be able to provoke the emotions of their audience. Therefore, these images need to be "spectacular" and to show unquestionable scenes of agony (Perugini and Zucconi 28). There seems to be, therefore, a checklist of formal guidelines that are implicitly followed by photographers in order to produce images of suffering that sell. Those implied guidelines are what constitute what Perugini and Zucconi call the "humanitarian visual canon" (Perugini and Zucconi 30). For example, Perugini and Zucconi have reported the instructions provided by Martens to his Congolese apprentices while he was giving them classes in photography and marketing. According to Martens, for the images of suffering to sell they have "to tug at the heartstrings of the users of the pictures", and because they are predominantly humanitarian photographs mainly used to raise funds for organisations, they had "to ensure visibility to the organisations working in the area" by clearly including their logos in the picture (Perugini and Zucconi 30). The images of suffering had, therefore, to be simplistic in their meaning and had to be articulated in the language of extreme suffering and dependence.

Consequently, neither the Congolese refugees nor the migrant family in Lesbos could have been allowed to be visualised as people with autonomy and free will as this would definitely defeat the purpose of raising awareness of their state of vulnerability and need for help and assistance. If any help is hoped for the refugees in Congo, all photographs showing

resilience, strength, and agency had to be excluded. This is ironically expressed in Martens's film when he decides to embark on the journey of transforming a "group of young Congolese men" from wedding photographers to photographers of suffering (Perugini and Zucconi 30). His endeavour, although seemingly patronising, is indeed experimentally subversive. The Congolese men were making 75 cents for every wedding photograph. In the same film, the audience learns that the European photographer can sell his photographs of agony at the price of 50 dollars each (Perugini and Zucconi 27-28). The issue is then a matter of simple logic. If the horror, the pain, the famine, the conflict, and all the suffering are Congolese, then their picture should also be Congolese, that is produced, sold, and profited from by Congolese men. However, it turns out that even when the young Congolese photographers followed all the instructions of Martens and shot excruciatingly painful pictures of "extreme poverty of the housing" as well as pictures of "famished children about to die" completely conforming to and "[r]e-enacting the canon of visual humanitarianism", they were unable to sell (Perugini and Zucconi 30).

The Congolese photographers could not sell the images of Congolese suffering because, according to the representative of the MSF, it was shockingly immoral for these young men to aim to "profit from displaying the suffering of his patients" (Perugini and Zucconi 30). Needless to say, the same representative allowed "western reporters" to "take photographs in his hospital" to be used later "to raise funds and to reaffirm the moral credit that constitutes the essential condition of the organisation's existence" (Perugini and Zucconi 30). Where does, then, the immorality of the Congolese photographers lie? The immorality does not apparently stem from the mere act of photographing suffering patients, nor does it take root in trying to sell their photographs for personal profit. As a matter of fact, it would be hard to believe that all the professional photographers who are commissioned to dangerous hot zones would be snapping pictures pro bono. Besides, one of those western photographers featuring in Martens's film had already admitted selling his photographs at 50 dollars each. The immorality of the act of the Congolese photographer is generated by the fact that they belong to the same group of victims they are trying to represent. "Victims", insist Perugini and Zucconi, "are excluded from the testimonial space, even when they try to produce their images in accordance with the humanitarian visual canon" (Perugini and Zucconi 30). They are excluded because they are too close and too involved. They are not detached and distant bystanders and passersby who do not have anything at stake in the suffering of others and who seem to be unaffected by the misfortune of the person in pain.

The economy of the market of the images of suffering is maintained by striking a balance between visualising agony in a manner that allows the sufferer to be nothing but the object of the representation. Victims are, therefore, not allowed to either own their own images or decide on the manner in which these images are taken. They cannot produce images of their own suffering or of the suffering of a group with which they are involved, and in case they do they would probably be prevented from economically benefiting from them. So, the question asked by Martens in his film about the ownership of poverty and the ownership of the images of poverty could, as well be asked about the ownership of the migration experience and the ownership of the migrants' photographs. Certainly, migrants do not own their images any more than the Congolese refugees own theirs. However, as it could be inferred from the photograph of Penso, photographic ownership is not always a material or an economic sort of appropriation and possession. This possession, in one of its most dangerous forms, can be intellectual. It is the possession and production of knowledge about a specific group of people in specific situations.

Photographs of suffering insist on regurgitating the same canon of visual agony. A canon that visualises, simultaneously, the vulnerability of the sufferer and the beneficiary power of the provider of help. Pictures depicting the migration crisis, for instance, are saturated with symbols that visually maintain this imbalance of power. For example, Alessandro Penso's photo-story alone has sixteen photographs that show either the vulnerability of the migrants, the power and control of the providers of help or both. In these photographs the observer may be able to recognise, on the one hand, people struggling for their lives as their dinghy collapses, people losing consciousness, a dead body, children, old people, all of which are visualisations of helplessness and vulnerability. On the other hand, one can also see the logo of the Red Cross and the flag of the European Union on tents, lifejackets, thermal blankets, refugee camps, fences, a military helicopter, all of which could be interpreted as symbols of power, protection, and control.

Migrants need to be photographed in situations of utter weakness and need without the slightest sign of autonomy if any help and assistance is to be delivered to them. Besides, these migrants need to be photographed by uninvolved, disinterested observers who are completely untouched by the formers' misfortune. Obviously, in an age where a large number of people are constantly connected to the internet and social networks, the producer of these photographs could be anyone, even a casual passerby on his way to the beach. What ensues is an immense body of photographs having migrants as their object and depicting them in the most possibly

canonical manner: weak, vulnerable, depending on the "humanitarian benevolence of the West" (Chouliaraki and Stolic 6).

At this level, the reaction of the European passerby, who was shot by Alessandro Penso while taking a photograph of a migrant woman covering her face from his predatory gaze, does no longer seem strange. The spectator of suffering has finally met the image of suffering. He met the image walking in her own flesh and blood, and since in the digital era, compassion and sympathy seem be only transmitted via digital platforms, the observer of pain could do nothing but transform the real scene of pain into yet another image of pain. He had to take a photo of the woman and her little family because, otherwise, he would not be able to express his sorrow at his solidarity. If it was previously believed that images of suffering others had the power to provoke the noblest emotions of sympathy and compassion and move people into actions of help and assistance, it seems that, today, people became so conditioned to digitally reacting to images of suffering that they would be at a loss in front of a real scene of agony. As a matter of fact, the vision of the woman—with her drenched clothes and her minuscule baby clasped against the chest of his father—walking while bearing the signs of the migration crisis was too immediate and too close to make any sense. Meaning needs time and space to be materialised. Meaning needs delay and distance to be formed. Meaning needs to be transported from the location of suffering and broadcast to be realised. Therefore, the real scene of suffering in the real world did not have any meaning to its direct observers and resulted in a spectacle of nonchalant indifference. The spectator had, therefore, to turn himself into a producer of the image of agony to be able to consume it at a later point in time.

A few last remarks about Alessandro Penso's photograph are now due. These remarks concern themselves predominantly with the genre of the picture rather than with its pure content. Penso's photograph can be classified as a metapicture, a "generically self-referential" picture, one that "represents pictures [of migration] as a class" (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 56). W.J.T. Mitchell distinguishes three main orders of metapictures which provide knowledge either about themselves, about other pictures, or even about the humans' relation to pictures. The first order of metapictures introduced by Mitchell gathers the pictures that refer to themselves and to their own making by "creating a referential circle or *mise en abîme*" (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 56). Mitchell calls this type of referentiality "strict or formal self-reference" that perfectly illustrates the idea that "we live in a world of images, a world in which, [...] there is nothing outside the picture" (*Picture Theory* 41). The second order of metapictures consists of the pictures that refer to other pictures as a genre or as a class. Finally, the last type

of metapictures assembles the multi-stable pictures which "illustrate the co-existence of contrary or simply different readings in the single image" (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 45). Penso's photograph is a metapicture of the second order as it could also be considered a metapicture of the third order.

Metapictures in general, and regardless of the type they belong to, are pictures that are used "to explain what pictures are" (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 57). They provide information about themselves, about the process of their making, and about the classes they belong to. They are, in a sense, native informants that provide the observer with valuable knowledge as to how to approach images, how to understand, and how to consume them. So, when Penso's photograph is considered as a metapicture this is because it could be "used to reflect on the nature of pictures" of migration as a class or a subgenre of photography of conflict or crisis (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 57). Alessandro Penso's picture reveals a few things about the practice of photographing migrants. First and foremost, the picture uncovers the visual and photographic violence directed towards migrants. It is a photo that shows that, even with the clear and visible objection to being photographed, the migrant woman was still shot by the amateur passerby. This metapicture helps reflect on the nature of this photographic aggression that, although not directly participating in the suffering of migrants, still represents a form of "complicity with whatever makes the subject interesting, worth photographing" (Sontag, *On Photography* 12). It is the egoistic, voyeuristic, and predatory nature of the photography of migration that is revealed by Penso's photograph; a nature that finds pleasure and takes interest in preserving the "status quo" even if that status quo is "another person's pain or misfortune" (Sontag, *On Photography* 12).

The second reality about photography of migration that Alessandro Penso's metapicture reveals is the fact that this type of photography is, generally speaking, highly canonical. Photographs that depict migrants and the struggles of migration usually abide by the rules of the visual canon of suffering. The canon does not only indicate the necessary visual elements that need to be present in photographs about migration, but it also has a bias toward a specific identity of the photographers themselves. The corpus collected for this part of the dissertation is composed of three photo-stories and a total of sixty photographs forty-one of which clearly show scenes or symbols of distress. The scenes of distress vary from migrants struggling against the agitated waters or trying to evacuate and escape from a broken boat to scenes of migrants collapsing on the shores losing consciousness. Other scenes of distress include unaccompanied children, struggling babies, and dead bodies. The symbols of distress, on the other hand, are

thermal blankets, lifejackets, and tents in refugee camps. The proliferation of these scenes and symbols and their overwhelming recurrence testify to the presence of a visual regime of migration that articulates itself in the language of crisis and emergency. The presence of the lifejacket as a symbol of this assumed migration crisis, along with migrants in drenched clothes and very young children made this scene highly canonical and prompted both the European bystander and Alessandro Penso to take the same picture from opposing angles.

Besides the bias towards images of great suffering and devastating pain, there exists also a bias towards a European production of images of migration. This bias can be accounted for in a number of ways one of which is the easier accessibility to locations of migration crisis by European photographers. It would be only logical to assume that geographical proximity and the ease of travel between European countries would allow more European photographers to reach the areas in which migrants disembark. Linguistic competence might also be another factor that would facilitate the access to information and getting in contact with local authorities and humanitarian organisations to have the necessary authorisations to photograph inside detention centres and refugee camps. However, as it has been argued before, the distance from and non-involvement in the suffering of migrants that the European observer enjoys would grant her/him a relative moral license to look upon their pain. This assumed detachment, neutrality, and objectivity that is often attached to photography is extended to the European photographer who while collecting images of suffering constructs the identity of the sufferer as weak, dependent, and different. The bystander who snaps a picture of the migrant mother and her little family without caring for her consent, and probably without even caring to know her name, where she came from, what she was escaping, what happened to her in the sea, and what life was she dreaming of may simply be the mirror reflection of Alessandro Penso himself and many other European photographers. Those photographers, taken by the tension of the moment, the gravity of the situation, the escalation of events, and pressed by time and their agency, may forget at times that their photographed subjects are subject indeed. They may forget that those migrants are people who deserve to have their consent accorded, their faces shown, and their names known.

It would also be worth noting that Alessandro Penso's photograph is multistable, however not in the manner of the traditionally binary Duck-Rabbit example used by Mitchell to explain this order of metapictures (*Picture Theory* 45). Multistable pictures' main characteristic is their ability to "play an endless game of 'see-saw'", a game of revealing and hiding, of showing and obscuring, during which it is most challenging to be able to see both

images at the same time (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 45). In turns, Penso's photograph is able to reveal both the photographer of suffering as well as its spectator. By capturing the European passerby stopping not only to look at the pains of the migrant family but also to visually document that pain, Alessandro Penso was able to expose what both the producer and the observer of suffering are looking for. It is a picture that describes the visual regime of suffering at both its extremities, that is at the level of its production as well as at the level of its consumption. When the bystander assumes the role of the spectator of suffering, he and his companion are immediately able to recognise the canonical signs of migratory struggle. As a matter of fact, the small group of migrants stands out as foreign to the environment it is in. Their wet clothes, their tan, their facial features, along with the visible signs of distress expressed by the presence of the lifejacket are all visual proof that these people came from a different place and have gone through life-threatening experiences to reach Lesbos. As soon as the observer identifies the canonical scene, he reaches out to his camera to document it and to turn it into an image of suffering to be added to the immense catalogue of human agony. This rapid shift from the role of the spectator to that of the creator of pictures of pain allows for the image of the photographer to emerge.

The photographer is someone who engages in a game with time. He is a person who can anticipate and predict that a photographable moment is bound to happen, and who is capable, either by luck or experience, of making a choice "between photographing at X moment or at Y moment" (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 19). What Penso's photograph did was then to reveal the "true content of a photograph", a content that usually remains "invisible" and that "bears witness to a human choice being exercised" (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 19). This choice, according to John Berger, is not a choice between different objects to be photographed; rather, it is a choice of photographing a particular object at a particular moment (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 19). When Penso captured the bystander shift into a producer of images of suffering, he revealed that moment of choice and revealed what, according to both photographers and spectators of suffering, "is worth recording" (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 18).

Therefore, the multistability of Penso's photographs, the constant shift between the identity of the spectator and that of the photographer, highlights the most salient component of the picture itself. This important component, that is time translated into a photographable moment, is formed by the visual regime of migration which "determines what we see and how we see it" (Bischoff 22). In other words, this metapicture "show[s] us what vision is", that is, it

shows the observer what to look for, what to anticipate, and what to immediately recognise as canonical (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 57). By showing the European man taking a photo of the migrant woman, and probably also including in the frame her small baby, Penso shows his spectators what is important to European audiences, what is important to *them*. He is, therefore, making them aware of their vision and of the visual regime of migration that has constructed, through "[m]edial representations in word and image", what Bischoff calls "an iconology of the other" (Bischoff 23). This iconology is always constructed and, while it often reveals the migrant as the Other, it "at the same time conceals the photographer, the author and the addressee of these media products" (Bischoff 25). The value of Alessandro Penso's photograph is its ability to give spectators some useful tools not only to understand similar photographs but also to become more aware of the regime of vision they may be adopting. This metapicture does not only render "observation self-conscious" as Berger states, but it also provides observers with a "grammar and […] an ethics of seeing" (*Understanding a Photograph* 19; Sontag, *On Photography* 3).

The grammar of "images of migration" reveals that "there is no 'objective reality' to be found" and of which photographs are simple representations (Bischoff 24). The grammar of images of migration exposes that observers and photographers move from one representation to another making the "boundary between first- and second-order representation ambiguous" (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 48). This, indeed, might explain why the European passerby was unable to deal with the apparition of the migrant group without turning it into an image, that is without formally taking a picture of them. They were simply images that came to life, that stepped outside from their natural space, and that seem to have acquired life on their own (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 248). This blunt and direct reality about images of migration makes them too threatening and too dangerous to deal with without performing a counter-exorcism to send them back into the digital space they belong to. When this is not possible, when the living image cannot be turned back into a *dead* image, spectators of images of migration opt for ignoring them. They pretend that they do not exist, that they did not reveal themselves, and that they are not physically haunting spaces and staining them with broken time.

3.3. Hyper-Immersive Virtuality and the Negation of the Right to Ignore Reality

The pretence that the image of the migrant in pain does not exist is more visible in Giorgos Moutafis's photograph (see figure 8). This photograph appears on the Greek

photographer's personal website as part of his opening photo-story: *Dying on the Shores of Europe*.[28] The Athens-born multiple award winning photojournalist and cinematographer documented some of the "most severe humanitarian crises and conflicts in more than 20 countries all over the world covering Middle East, Balkans and Africa".[29] His photographic work was commissioned and published by some of the most influential media outlets in Europe and in the world. His photographs were featured in newspapers such as *Der Spiegel* and *The Guardian* and appeared on some news channels like the CNN, the BBC, and Al Jazeera. His concern for human crisis and conflicts made him devote the "last nine years to a long-term project on migration, focusing on the perilous European paths that migrants follow".[30]

Figure 8. Giorgos Moutafis*, Dying on the Shores of Europe*, 2015.

Shot in bright daylight, the picture shows a collection of striking contrasts. The figure of the migrant mother holding her little daughter in her arms and standing almost centred in the photograph creates a visual separation between the right and the left sides of the picture, as well as between the background and the foreground. In the background, the observer could see a

[28] https://giorgos-moutafis.com/
[29] https://giorgos-moutafis.com/about-me.htm
[30] Ibid.

calm blue sea stretching across the picture, deep into the horizon, and separating the bright and clear sky from the beach. On the same beach, under a straw umbrella sit a man and a woman in swimming clothes clearly enjoying their summer day. The background and the left side of the picture could have easily passed for a photograph used by some travel agency to advertise for their organised trips to some little paradisiac coastal town in the Mediterranean, had it not been interrupted and disturbed by the appearance of the migrant woman and her child.

The sight of the woman crossing the beach coming from the sea fully clothed and holding her child who is missing her shoes and a sock, does not seem to alarm the European couple. In fact, as the woman walks through with a lifejacket around her neck, her child in her arm, and a seemingly sad and disappointed look on her face, the European sunbathers overtly avoid looking at her; and, while the little child seems interested in the sunbathing couple, they both avert their eyes either by looking down or by lifting their hand to the level of their eyes to block her gaze. As opposed to the previous photograph by Alessandro Penso where the vision of the migrant woman and her husband and child represented a spectacle to be looked at and recorded, this photograph shows an intentional refusal to look. In addition, while the scene of suffering is almost identical, for the same elements of distress and symbols of migration as a crisis are present in both pictures, the reactions of the European couples vary greatly between the two photographs.

Now, if images of suffering are supposed to generate sympathy and compassion, and lead the spectators of pain to run to the help of the misfortunate, what would then explain this reaction of indifference captured in Giorgos Moutafis's photograph? The first and most straight forward explanation is what Susan D. Moeller calls "compassion fatigue" (*Compassion Fatigue* 7). It seems that the contemporary generation of media consumers is dragging behind a large catalogue of visualised suffering, an important portion of which was televised and broadcast almost in real-time. Many of today's adults are old enough to remember the Ethiopian famine of the mid-1980s. Those who are a little younger may remember images of "famine and civil war in Africa [that] killed hundreds of thousands and left 27 million at risk" (Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue* 7). Suffering, then, whether caused by natural disasters, wars, or diseases seems to be a recurrent image during the eighties and the nineties and also seems to be particularly recurrent in certain regions in the world. However, as time passed and as the same images of emaciated African children and war-torn towns and villages kept repeating themselves, people's agony moved from a "cause célèbre" advocated by superstars during iconic charity festivals to a trigger for cynical attitudes (Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue* 8).

The repetition of almost identical scenes of suffering that do not seem to alter, improve, or disappear produce emotions of frustration, distrust, and indifference (Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue* 9). According to Moeller, it is the media and its "sensationalized" and "formulaic coverage of similar types of crises" that produce a feeling of "déjà vu" forcing their audience into a loop of simultaneous overstimulation and boredom (Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue* 9-16). Compassion fatigue— "the inability to feel"—is, therefore, due to "familiarity with images of suffering [that] inevitably desensitises and leaches meaning out of what is before us" (Hoskins 68). However, it is not only mainstream and traditional media that is responsible for this overload of images of pain. Today's digital era has imposed its own methods and instruments for capturing, sharing, and commenting on images of suffering. For example, during the so-called Arab Spring—a wave of political uprisings, socio-economic changes, and armed conflicts that affected several countries in North Africa and the Middle East—social media like Facebook and Twitter proved to have had enough influence to put to test "mainstream media and other elite actors [and] their capacity to shape what war looks like" (Hoskins 68). What this new media coverage offers to its audience is a new sense of accessibility and proximity to zones of tension and conflict. New media users became themselves the producers of "content" upon which they were able to comment in their own languages and dialects, in real time, and without the censorship that would have otherwise been imposed by governments (Hoskins 68). The result was, and still is, a "plethora of content on digital and social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and others) [that] produces an overwhelming presence of unfolding war" (Hoskins 67).

Nevertheless, to blame the apparent indifference of audiences on compassion fatigue means that one needs to believe that there existed a "golden (twentieth century) age of image effects" during which, people would have been moved into emotional distress and actions of solidarity only by visualising the suffering of others (Hoskins 66). Hoskins asserts that such belief stems from what he calls "a false memory of the relationship between media images, knowledge and action, driven primarily through photojournalism"; and, although he does not clearly explain from whence came that 'false memory', he carries on confirming that "the persisting belief in the power of images doesn't fit with today's digital world" (66). Surely, Hoskins is not entirely wrong. There still exists an enduring belief that images have power. However, this belief is not the result of a false memory but is rather the outcome of a long tradition established by various scientific fields which took, to a certain extent, this power for granted.

In his book *What do Pictures Want?,* W.J.T. Mitchell develops quite a generous list of the disciplines that have been involved with discussing “the relations of pictures to theories, texts, and spectators; the role of pictures in literary practices like description and narration; the function of texts in visual media like painting, sculpture, and photography; the peculiar power of images over persons, things, and public spheres” (6). What transpires is that disciplines as varied as semiotics, aesthetics, anthropology, psychoanalysis, and ethical criticism—to name but a few—could not abstain from discussing, studying, and sometimes even attacking this presumed power of images. The scientific fascination with pictures, and images in general, is not arbitrary and is itself derived from a long human history of using them in aspects of their everyday life ranging from ornamentation to worship. Indeed, the assumed power of images translates itself in two major ways. First, it has been historically challenging to define what an image is, and even more so was to try to identify what images do. Second, because their true nature remained obscure, it was easy to misjudge their powers which in many cases led to conflicts and even wars between iconoclasts and iconophiles (Mitchell, *Iconology* 7).

In today’s digital reality, the debate over the nature and powers of images is less settled than before. Although Mitchell asserts that “[i]t is a commonplace of the modern cultural criticism that images have power in our world undreamed of by ancient idolaters”, it is ever more difficult to identify which type of power they have (*Iconology* 7-8). A contemporary scholar of images would feel nostalgic to a time when images presented themselves in somewhat simpler forms. For example, and despite important differences both in nature and in function, fetishes, totems, and idols, which belonged to older and sometimes non-European cultures, were quite easier to deal with. Totems, for instance, could be dismissed “as a kind of childish naïveté, based in an innocent oneness with nature” (Mitchell, *Image Science* 74). Additionally, while fetishes would be “regarded as less important and powerful than idols” and scorned “as crude, inert, smelly, obscene, and basely material objects that could only acquire magical power in an incredibly backward, primitive, and savage mind”, idols were celebrated, or attacked, as “iconic or imagistic symbol[s] of a deity who lives elsewhere” (Mitchell, *Image Science* 73-74). Whichever the case, historical forms of images enjoyed an important position in the lives, imagination, politics, and sciences of humanity to which they dedicated considerable time and effort either to celebrate or to attack and destroy.

Likewise, more modern visual works of art were able to maintain their magical aura as long as they could isolate themselves in the sphere of ritualistic tradition. Confined in the secluded universe of originality and inaccessibility, images were shrouded from the masses and

their powers were only unveiled to an elite minority that could afford, both economically and spiritually, to look upon their sublime presence. It was not until it became mechanically reproduced that the image started to be free from its ritualistic servitude and began to acquire for itself a "mass existence" (Benjamin 104; Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 17). However, this emancipation from the realm of the ritualistic did not mean that images lost their magical powers. On the contrary, by stepping into the digital age, images seem to have stepped back into the age of "vitalism and animism" in an even more realistic manner (Mitchell, *Image Science* 141). Indeed, "the convergence of technoscience with magic", which is the main characteristic of the digital age according to Mitchell, means that today's images have acquired both a new nature and new powers (Mitchell, *Image Science* 141).

It is in the nature of today's images to be free, to be mobile, and to be able to migrate from one platform to the next and from one virtual space to the other. This freedom that started a few decades ago with the technological reproduction of works of art, namely through photography, did not stop at the level of transplanting images from one environment to the other making them more accessible to the masses. As a matter of fact, the "global circulation of images in media and the dematerializing of the image" seems to have replaced the physical and material circulation and mobility of people and commodities (Mitchell, *Image Science* 76). So, while *real* life-forms seem to have become more confined and their mobility more restricted, images became increasingly more able to "pass through walls and leap great distances, instantaneously from one side of the planet to the other" (Mitchell, *Image Science* 76). Nonetheless, rapid and uncontrollable mobility is certainly not the only power that images have acquired thanks to the digital age. Indeed, images today have become closer than ever to develop a life-form that, although artificial, would resemble to the farthest possible extent biological life-forms. Mitchell has predicted that "machines […] are really stalking horses for something more like artificial life-forms", and that they would occupy the space between *reality* and *artificiality* until more sophisticated "artificial life-forms" take over (Mitchell, *Image Science* 141). It seems that it is only a matter of time before "robots, cyborgs, and complex autopoetic [sic] systems as large as the internet" break out of human control and take over the world (Mitchell, *Image Science* 141). Until then, humanity has to live with its complex feelings and attitudes towards images. It can choose to celebrate "their uncanny personhood and vitality", accept, even if temporarily and hypothetically, that "pictures had feeling, will, consciousness, agency, and desire", or—and precisely because of all of that—choose to deny their powers, and fight them, or even ignore them (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 31).

Consequently, it would be safe to assume that the belief that images had the power to influence people and drive them into action is not entirely a "false memory" as Andrew Hoskins suggested (66). It is, indeed, an anthropological as well as a historical reality that is not limited to the primitive, naïve, and savage mind but is also shared by modern, secular, and enlightened people. For example, Susan D. Moeller mentions in her *Compassion Fatigue* that the mediatisation of the African famine in the 1980s and the involvement of the "entertainment industry" in the effort to raise both awareness and funds had resulted in collecting "almost $300 million in relief aid" (8-9). Patricia Holland states as well that "aid agencies have expanded from their origins as small, voluntary groups to become major international, highly professional organisations, whose influence in the field of overseas aid and children's rights has rivalled that of states"; and that this influence was the fruit of not only having access to "disaster-prone areas" but also of being able to bring into media attention the harrowing images of human suffering (153). Without sharing with the media the "first pictures of the Ethiopian famine" in 1973 and without "tour[ing] journalists in parts of Africa" in 1991, neither Oxfam nor other humanitarian organisations would have been able to engage public attention and aid (Holland 153).

Nevertheless, and despite the fact that there existed a time when images of suffering had a genuine influence over people, it seems that the digital age does no longer offer that possibility. While it might be true that today's audiences are growing increasingly indifferent to images of suffering because they have been, for a long time, overexposed to them, it might also be interesting to consider that this apparent indifference is nothing but an expression of anxiety over images turning way too real. Alessandro Penso's photograph of the two European passersby stopping by the side of the road to look on and take pictures of the group of migrants shows one of the possible manners in which spectators of suffering could deal with real scenes of agony. However, with the lack of the possibility of mediating the real, the spectator of suffering could choose to look away. Looking away, which might appear like indifference as in Giorgos Moutafis's photograph, might as well be interpreted as a form of defending oneself against the collapse of distance between suffering and visualising it.

If Alessandro Penso's photograph is a picture about how the pictures of suffering are made, Giorgos Moutafis's is about how those pictures come to life. According to Hoskins, the digital age allowed for images of "human suffering" to reach an unprecedented level of constant presence and proximity to their audience (67). This proximity should not simply be understood as easier availability and accessibility of news and information that has been facilitated by the

use of social media and other technological advances; nor should it be limited to remarking that "the very audiences" that used to be reached by the media have shifted into becoming a "part of the same communications fabric" (Hoskins 69). Indeed, the proximity to images of human suffering has become a matter of concrete collapse in physical distance between the sufferer and the spectator of suffering (Hoskins 69). What Moutafis's photograph shows is that the digital age does not offer the possibility of conceiving of the world in the traditional dichotomous division between Orient and Occident (Hoskins 69). The rapid progress of communication technology, and of social media in particular, means that today's audiences can no longer consume "humanitarian crises" as "a distant concept to the so-called Occident" (Hoskins 69). Indeed, because of the "continuous view of human suffering" as well as the "unprecedented opportunities for individuals to like, share and comment on a tsunami of disturbing images", the agony of others gained a new dimension of closeness and immediacy. The first distance that collapses in the digital universe is the distance of presumed non-involvement with the suffering of others necessary for the spectacle of agony to develop. In fact, Luc Boltanski insists that for a long time the sufferings of misfortunate individuals have been "conveyed to a distant and sheltered spectator" in a spectacular way that renders the borders between reality and fiction a little too blurred (23).

Boltanski sets out a moral dilemma regarding the visualisation of the suffering of distant people. He asserts that even when "suffering is presumed to be real", the farthest it is from the spectator and the less it is possible for the latter to intervene and help, the more likely the spectacle is "apprehended in a fictional mode" (Boltanski 23). The more the spectator feels that her/his options for action are limited by the great distance separating her/him from the unfortunate sufferer, the more the distinction between reality and fiction loses its relevance" (Boltanski 23). This would implicate a greater inclination towards dismissing and ignoring scenes of real suffering simply because the spectator realises that s/he is far too removed space- and timewise to be able to do anything. Therefore, the logical outcome of this observation made by Boltanski would be that with the reduction of the distance between the spectator and the sufferer, audiences of agony would become more engaged with the misfortune of others and more inclined into helping them.

However, from what is visible in the photograph of Moutafis, this hypothesis is not always true. The contemporary digital reality did not only allow international audiences to have almost unlimited access to scenes of suffering from around the world, but it also allowed them to take up active roles in publishing, sharing, modifying, and commenting on these scenes.

Since the year 2000, crises have, indeed, become international and the moment one has an internet connection and a social media account, one is flooded with information about the slightest development in the most geographically remote areas. The migration crisis is no exception. Besides the news flashes, the television documentaries, and the mediated campaigns, audiences are exposed to an overwhelming number of images that flare up on social media every time a human catastrophe befalls the borders of Europe. The image of Aylan Kurdi was one of those overly documented and overly shared moments of human catastrophe, but it was not the only one. Images of dead corpses washing up on the shores of the Mediterranean have become both an algorithmic reality that haunts digital spaces and a part of the visual ecology of the region.

Giorgos Moutafis's photo-story *Dying on the Shores of Europe* is composed of sixteen photographs seven of which show dead bodies and five more show situations of extreme struggle either at sea or as a result of being in the sea. Besides, five of the sixteen photographs show children and two of them display women. This overwhelming number of photographs depicting death and the casual manner by which these deaths are shot is startling, if not offensive. For instance, the third image in the photo-story shows a piece of white plastic cloth spread on the dark ground and fixed by two stones, one on each side. Over it, lies some unidentified object itself covered with another white cloth. Although nothing shows from under the tissue, one can only sense the heavy presence of death especially that this photograph comes after two other pictures that have already set the ground for such conclusions. Moving forward, the photographs of death get even less decorous, and a dead body is visualised washed up on a rocky shore with an exposed torso and an open mouth hardly distinguishable from all the sea debris surrounding it. Another corpse is shot face-down in a ditch with its lower back exposed. A third picture shows the hands of a dead person heavily affected by remaining for a very long time in salty water. The hands appear discoloured, and the fingers are extremely wrinkled.

If the digital age has made images of pain more available and more accessible, thus collapsing the "figurative" distance between the sufferer and the spectator; migration has, in its turn, collapsed the physical and "geographic" distance between the spaces of agony and the spaces of visualising suffering (Hoskins 69). As it is visible in the Photograph of Giorgos Moutafis, suffering does not happen abroad, it is not something distant and remote anymore and its proximity can be visualised in extremely graphic details. Suffering is no longer confined within the borders of Africa and Asia from which the most staggering images of famine, war, and disease have been historically invading the visual spaces of represention. Suffering in

Moutafis's photograph, as well as in Penso's, is clearly in Europe; and while Penso's migrant woman hid her face to avoid the investigative gaze of the white European spectator, the child in its mother's arm shown in Moutafis's photograph leans forward and looks intently at the European couple openly asking for, at least, a visual engagement.

Moreover, and besides the collapse of space, the present photograph shows a clear collapse in time. Unlike the picture of Aylan Kurdi that reached European audiences only after the child was dead which made help impossible and only allowed for feelings of sorrow and "shame" to be expressed along with resetting the "original death scene […] in a range of imaginary contexts", Moutafis's photograph depicts a living child who still offers the possibility of being helped (Chouliaraki and Stolic 10). Nonetheless, and despite the extreme proximity in space and time between the scene of suffering and its audience, the European couple does not seem to be moved by what they have seen, or as a matter of fact, by what they openly refuse to see.

This refusal to acknowledge the scene of suffering through vision could also be interpreted as an active action of reappropriating what Luciano Floridi calls the "right to ignore" (*The Fourth Revolution* 42). According to Floridi, the world is rapidly moving towards a new form of existence where it will be almost impossible to make the difference between the "here" and the "there" (Floridi, "A Look into the Future" 61). The *here* is conceptualised as "analog, carbon-based, offline", it is the world as it has been experienced so far, the material and *hard* world people have access to when they are not connected to their gadgets (Floridi, "A Look into the Future" 61). However, this analog existence is becoming, following Floridi, quickly eroded by the "ever-increasing growth of our digital space", the "there", the "silicon-based, online", and wireless reality (Floridi, "A Look into the Future" 60-61). Digital reality is described by Floridi as not only growing but also as "spilling over into the analog and merging with it" making it even harder to distinguish the boundaries that used to traditionally separate the two ("A Look into the Future" 61).

The consequences of this merge transformation could be, therefore, classified into two categories: an ecological and a deontological one. Ecologically speaking, the growth of the digital space would eventually transform the world into a complete "infosphere"—which is, according to Luciano Floridi, the "whole informational environment constituted by all informational entities, their properties, interactions, processes, and mutual relations" (*The Fourth Revolution* 41). In its maximal potential the infosphere will become "synonymous with reality", it will be everything humans know about everything (*The Fourth Revolution* 41). The

infosphere, following Floridi's conception, is not a "virtual environment supported by a genuinely 'material' world behind" ("A Look into the Future" 61). In fact, what Floridi proposes is a potential formation of a new reality where the digital would completely spill over the analog and absorb it to form with it a new environment of human existence where it would be impossible to separate the two spaces. At the end of this digital shift, the infosphere would no longer be a "space of information" but rather the synonym of "Being" ("A Look into the Future" 61). Existence, life, and reality would all become the equivalent of the infosphere where people are constantly connected to everything and to everywhere. The implications of this impending reality are paramount, for besides the crossing into an info-space the disconnection from which would either be impossible or would bring about serious existential risks, the infosphere seems to be constructed as a space where the right to know is transformed into an obligation.

Luciano Floridi asserts, in rather worrisome ways, that "the world offline is bound to become a fully interactive and responsive environment of wireless, pervasive, distributed, a2a (anything to anything) information processes, that works a4a (anywhere for anytime), in real time" ("A Look into the Future" 61). This "increasingly synchronized", "delocalized" and "correlated" new world will eventually result in denying all its citizens the right to not know ("A Look into the Future" 61). In fact, the new ecology that intertwines knowledge and existence is already experienced in the current time as users of social media platforms, for example, are more likely to share the same "common knowledge" since they are more or less exposed to the same information, news, images and so on (Floridi, *The Fourth Revolution* 42). Being connected to the same platform, which means existing in the same digital space with other people, makes it easier for any piece of knowledge to travel and reach individuals regardless of where they are. This, certainly, depends on the likes and preferences of each user; however, algorithmic calculations could always suggest pieces of information that have been mathematically proven to be relevant in specific areas and times. It is also worth noting that common knowledge is not only the extremely accessible information shared among the people occupying the same space, but also the knowledge regarding what other people know. As Floridi puts it, common knowledge usually refers to situations where "everybody not only knows that *p* but also knows that everybody knows that everybody knows, . . ., that *p*" (Floridi, *The Fourth Revolution* 42). What ensues from this is a growing impossibility of claiming ignorance, and this is precisely the deontological consequence of the merge transformation of the infosphere.

In a world in which information and knowledge are increasingly available and accessible, and in which it is increasingly difficult to hide one's knowledge about an issue or

an event, humanity is becoming held more “responsible, morally speaking, for the way the world is, will be, and should be” (Floridi, *The Fourth Revolution* 43). As the new digital world might make it harder to prove the “responsibility [of] specific individual agents” thanks to—or because of—increasing protections of personal information and anonymity, collective responsibility seems to be increased in the infosphere (Floridi, *The Fourth Revolution* 43). Unlike individual responsibility, collective responsibility does not have a legal binding. However, in certain occasions, it might have heavy moral implications. Collective responsibility, Hannah Arendt asserts, is by definition “vicarious” since it is “taking upon ourselves the consequences for things we are entirely innocent of” (157). In Arendt’s philosophy, collective responsibility is a political responsibility par excellence, and it is the “price we pay” for being members of societies and for not living in complete isolation and seclusion from others (158). However, despite being political and having no legal implications, collective responsibility is not without a moral tax. Arendt makes sure in her essay “Collective Responsibility” to distinguish between the notion of *guilt* and that of responsibility and insists that while guilt is individual and is usually the outcome of being causally and morally responsible for a harmful doing, responsibility can be collective and can also be inherited from older generations (150). Being held vicariously responsible for the “sins of our fathers” is but one condition of the establishment of collective responsibility, the other is that this very responsibility is generated by the mere fact of belonging to a certain group one can neither choose to join nor to leave (Arendt 149-150). Groups such as nationalities, ethnic groups, religions are suitable candidates for afflicting on their members this sense of collective responsibility where every member would feel personally responsible and sometimes guilty for the deeds of others.

Also, and still according to Hannah Arendt, democratic societies are more likely than totalitarian regimes to produce judgment and sentiments of collective responsibility. This is due to the fact that democratic societies grant their citizens with certain freedoms and rights that could be inconceivable in tyrannies and absolutist states. Two main democratic freedoms and rights seem to be paramount in establishing collective responsibility. The first is related to the right to elect governments that would eventually act in the name of the individual. The consequence is that although the individual would not be personally responsible for the actions, or crimes, committed by members of her/his government, s/he would still bear the burden of collective responsibility as a member of said community. The second freedom/right enjoyed in democratic societies is that of “nonparticipation” which could sometimes take the form of a

resistance against the government and turn into a political stand (Arendt 154-155). These two essential freedoms and rights, which constitute—among others—the political foundation of participatory democracy, make the moral burden of collective responsibility a little too heavy for many people to bear. As a matter of fact, collective responsibility does not only mean that one has to be accountable for the mistakes and even the crimes s/he did not do, but it also means that one has to bear the burden of some historically unforgivable sins.

Hannah Arendt advances a few examples in her essay "Collective Responsibility" to explain what she means by collective responsibility and to distinguish it from the notion of guilt (147). As it has been explained above collective responsibility has two fundamental requirements: it has to be vicarious, and it has to answer for some crime committed by a group to which the person belongs. Guilt, however, cannot be vicarious as it requires the personal involvement in the crime, and it cannot be collective. Guilt is always established on a personal level for something the person has committed, and this is exactly why it has the legal binding responsibility does not have (Arendt 147-150). Thus, while guilt is always personal and individual, responsibility can be stretched to include almost anyone. As a matter of fact, collective responsibility for crimes and atrocities could even include the victims themselves as well as the witnesses, either because they could be believed to have provoked the crime, or because they believe that they did not do anything to stop it. Moreover, collective responsibility can also be expanded in time to cover past and future wrongdoings and crimes (Bouris 67). Arendt asserts that, unless one is a complete "outcast" totally excluded from any "internationally recognisable community", one cannot hope for escaping political responsibility (150). Only the "refugees and the stateless people" can enjoy what Arendt calls political "absolute innocence" the price of which they pay by being excluded and completely ousted from "mankind as a whole" (150). The rest of humanity, those who live together as, and within, human communities have to take "upon [themselves] the consequences for things [they] are entirely innocent of" (Arendt 157).

Arendt's conception of collective responsibility that stretches over time to include the crimes of the past and those of the future, and that spills over the figurative space of community to contaminate all the inhabitants of its moral space makes the deontological stakes even higher in the infosphere. As the contemporary world is becoming more connected and the future only promises more synchronisation, delocalisation, and correlations, the collective responsibilities of the citizens of the infosphere can but increase (Floridi, "A Look into the Future" 61). On the one hand, it would become harder for people to claim ignorance of events taking place both

within and outside the traditional borders of their communal space. The synchronisation and the delocalisation of information would mean that every single piece of information would be uploaded, shared, and consumed almost at the same instant it is created, and this would happen across the infosphere. Correlations, understood by Floridi as interactions, would, on the other hand, increase the level of the involvement of the citizens of hyper-historical societies—that is societies in which ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) are "essential conditions for the maintenance and any further development of societal welfare, personal well-being, and overall flourishing"—with digital data ("A Look into the Future" 61; *The Fourth Revolution* 4). The moral implications of these two conditions of existence in the infosphere are paramount, as people can become increasingly held accountable for universal moral ills and crimes not only because they knew about them in real-time but also because they shared information about them, commented, liked, and professed some sort of cyber engagement.

The migration crisis is a solid case in point that the world of information is steadily moving towards this form of complete and total synchronisation and delocalisation. Real-time collection of information has for a long time been utilised by authorities around the Mediterranean, for example, to intercept the movements of migrants. Satellites footages and surveillance cameras are among the instruments employed to detect migrants and to counter their crossings. These same tools, along other "visual recording technologies chiefly those of the photographic and video camera", have also been used by individuals, bodies, and organisations to detect the involvement of governments and nongovernmental organisations in the shady activities of intercepting and *saving* migrants especially at sea (Kurasawa 94). For instance, Watch the Med Alarm Phone is one of such initiatives that started its activities in October 2014 and that has for main goal to "offer boat people in distress an additional option to make their SOS noticeable".[31]

As it is detailed on their website, Alarm Phone does not directly intervene to save people stranded at sea. However, it "documents the situation, informs the coastguards, and, when necessary, mobilises additional rescue support in real-time".[32] With the absence of the logistic possibility to intervene and to concretely act upon the situation of distress and suffering, Alarm Phone takes advantage of visual recordings and the internet and employs them to bear witness and to make their witness available to different components of the transnational community

---

[31] https://alarmphone.org/en/about/

[32] Ibid.

(Kurasawa 94). Alarm Phone, along many other organisations and individual activists, participates in the creation of what Fuyuki Kurasawa calls "global public spaces" where transnational audiences would have the opportunity not only to witness but also to respond to "distant suffering" and thus, to virtually hold the responsible parties accountable for any form of violation of "human rights against refugees and migrants at sea" (94).[33]

Undoubtedly, these efforts can help make the struggles and suffering of migrants at sea, more visible thus gaining them more help and adequate assistance. It is also paramount to highlight that this visibility, particularly when stretched to shed light on the activities of coastal guards and rescue teams, may play a key role in holding different parties accountable for their actions and nonactions. Nevertheless, one should not lose sight of the fact that this same visibility, which aims at protecting the rights of the migrants—as potential victims—and at establishing the liabilities of individuals, groups, and governments—as potential perpetrators, also widens the circle of potential witnesses. Those witnesses could oftentimes find themselves overwhelmed with the amount of information they receive; and, some other times, could simply get shocked and distressed by the images of suffering which appear, unconjured, on their newsfeeds. As a result, they may choose to practice their *right to ignore* and to actively decide not to look upon the suffering of others, especially when they cannot think of any way in which they can assist.

The photograph of Giorgos Moutafis, which shows a couple of European people having their day at the beach interrupted by a scene of a migrant mother and her daughter crossing the beach after having only recently disembarked from a perilous maritime voyage, could be nothing more than a representation of an ordinary human protest against forced and somehow unfair collective responsibility. Turning away from the scene of suffering and actively refusing to regard the pain of others should not necessarily be interpreted as a sign of indifference, nor should it be easily dismissed as a symptom of the normalised compassion fatigue. Deciding not to look upon a scene of suffering, especially when it gets too real, might be one of the manifestations of humanity's rapid leap into the digital world that made any material, concrete, and analog interaction seem obsolete and completely without meaning. It might as well be a political protest against feeling, and being, forced to look on images of distress without being able to offer assistance. Finally, it might be a way to claim back the right to ignore that seems

[33] *Ibid.*

to be increasingly eroded especially in hyper-historical societies (Floridi, *The Fourth Revolution* 42). Not looking is simply refusing to bear witness and to assume the collective responsibility of knowing about something.

4. Bearing Witness as Another Way of Looking at the Pain of Others

It has been argued thus far that the representation of migrants in situation of vulnerability and in pathos provoking manners stems from the long history of the iconography of pain, where looking at the agony of others would arouse pleasurable emotions of sadistic voyeurism or altruistic compassion. It has also been argued that these particular emotions were the cause of significant debate and criticism especially regarding the moral aspect of the act of looking. Susan Sontag, for instance, was adamant in her conviction that looking at the pain of others without possessing the necessary power to alter the situation of those who suffer can only be, regardless of the intentions of the observer, an act of voyeurism (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 42). Compassion was also under considerable attack, for despite its humanitarian and altruistic surface, it has been accused of hiding a core of sympathy and benevolence pertinent to sentiments of charity not necessarily founded on any belief in the need for establishing social justice (Barnett, "Human rights, Humanitarianism" 334; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity* 49). The "regime of sympathy", which laid down its roots in the eighteenth century with the philosophy of the Enlightenment, was indeed a significant force not only to help alleviate the misery of the poor but also to drive "the best men of all revolutions" (Arendt, "The Social Question" 71; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity* 49). The "sympathetic man" obsessed with his "passion for compassion" was the man of the eighteenth century onward and his humanitarian interventions were not miniscule (Arendt, "The Social Question" 71; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity* 49).

4.1. Photography of Suffering as a Form of Humanitarian Testimony

Undeniably, history testifies to the numerous interventions of the sympathetic and humanitarian human being to help and assist the miserable of the earth. History also provides photographic evidence of such compassionate interventions. One prominent example of visualised benevolent actions is mentioned by Luc Boltanski in his seminal book *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics.* The example in question is a photograph that was published in *Life* magazine in 1951 and that was afterwards reprinted in Vicky Goldberg's book *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives*. The aforementioned photograph shows "a woman in a nurse's blouse, a stethoscope around her neck, leaning over the body of a black woman who is giving birth" (see figure 9) (Boltanski 78). At first glance, the photograph does not display any elements of either crisis or emergency—with the exception perhaps of the fact that a woman is about to give birth. It is in no way similar to the almost

graphic photograph of Alessandro Penso showing a medical aid squatting next to a dead corpse on the shores of Lesbos (see figure 10). One would even take the risk and say that W. Eugene Smith's photograph mentioned above stands as the diametric opposite of Alessandro Penso's both formally and thematically.

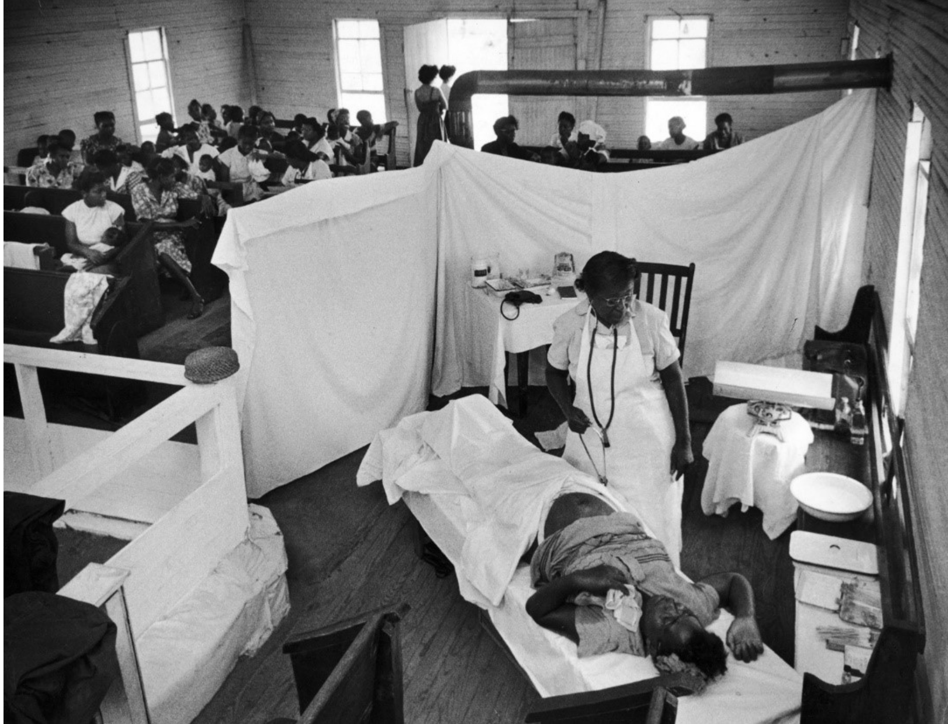


Figure 9. W. Eugene Smith*, Maude Callen inspected a patient behind a bedsheet screen. © W. Eugene Smith/Life Pictures/Shutterstock.*

Figure 10. Alessandro Penso, *Lesbos*, 2015.

The first striking difference is, as a matter of fact, Smith's choice of a black and white film to shoot his photo as opposed to the vivid colours employed by Penso making the latter's photograph appear more realistic while the former seems more artistic and dramatic. The dramatic effect of Smith's photograph is further accentuated by the choice of angle from which he took his shot. While the choice of black and white might have been dictated by the constraints of the period—for although colour films were available in the 1950s, they were also more expensive to buy and process—opting for a high-angle shot was certainly the decision of Smith. W. Eugene Smith's vantage point revealed to him and to his spectators almost the entirety of the church that was turned into a hospital. It also revealed the people waiting to receive medical care inside the church who happen to be black women and children. Choosing to take the photograph from a high angle allows Smith to visualise and convey a feeling of vulnerability and powerlessness. Because of their racial background, Smith's subjects may have been suffering from the socio-economic vulnerability that affected most of the black community in the south of the United States in the 1950s. This vulnerability could have also been further accentuated by the gender and age groups to which Smith's photographed subjects belong. Women and children are particularly considered as two of the weakest categories in societies.

Choosing to situate himself in the gallery of the church, Smith was able to have a visual access to the site of birth giving. While the future mother and the nurse were hidden from the rest of the waiting patients by the white curtain, Smith's elevated vantage point revealed the whole scene before him. His position as a white male photographer gave him enough power to cross the barrier of gender segregation and medical privacy. He alone seemed to have enough privilege to look upon a woman about to give birth, photograph her and make her image triumph over the test of time. This privileged spatial position he occupies to have a better view, emphasises the vulnerable position of black poor women in the 1950s United States who, besides being completely exposed in the photograph, also appear smaller and distant. Yet, and despite all of the above-mentioned objections to the choice and employment of angle, W. Eugene Smith's photograph was interpreted as a picture of hope, improvement, progress, and life. As Vicky Goldberg mentions in her book, this photograph changed lives for the better: people donated money and equipment, Maude Callen—the nurse-midwife in the photograph—was able to open her own clinic, and black Americans gained visibility (182-184).

Alessandro Penso's photograph, on the other hand, appears closer to the visual standards of the twenty-first century. Shot in colours and in high-definition, Penso's photograph does not only show its essential subjects, but it also captures the "surrounding" and what would

otherwise be deemed “unimportant or irrelevant details” (Ellis 19). The cloudy sky, the slightly agitated sea, and the rocky beach are all “rendered with the same degree of faithfulness” as the dead body lying wrapped in a red blanket, the mourning congregation around it, and the medical aid next to them (Ellis 19). The photograph is so vivid that one might wonder at the possibility of smelling the salty wind of the sea or feeling the rough texture of the rocky shore. One would not expect less than this definition and precision from a photograph taken in 2015 and would not settle for less than a proximity that would throw the beholder in an episode of phantosmia and tactile hallucinations. To further highlight this proximity, Penso employs a linear perspective that endows the picture with a realistic three-dimensionality. The horizon line that splits the picture in two smoothly blends the sky and the sea and sinisterly functions as the vanishing point. However, despite its colours and movements, Penso’s photograph is a picture of despair. The unmistakable presence of death rendered more visible with the red blanket covering a corpse, turns this picture into the polar opposite of Smith’s photograph.

Aside from the formal and thematic oppositions that may be inferred from W. Eugene Smith’s and Alessandro Penso’s photographs, the two pictures seem to carry opposite messages about compassion and humanitarianism. Smith’s photograph is part of a whole photo-essay in which the photographer wanted to celebrate humanity and “undermine prejudice” (qtd. in Goldberg 184). For Smith, the photograph and the whole photo-essay was an attempt to render justice to the efforts of the nurse-midwife Maude Callen, to shoot African-Americans in more sympathetic lights, and to show them as “educated and accomplished” (qtd. in Goldberg 184). It seems clear from the photograph itself and the comments of the photographer, that they both belonged to different times: times when the depiction of the heroic and altruistic actions of benevolent individuals alleviating the pains of the poor, the sick, and the utterly miserable could move people into action. The same, however, could not be said about Penso’s photograph that does not only put a dead corpse in the middle of the visual field as the ultimate symbol of despair, but also surrounds it with clear signs of sorrow and anguish. One is, therefore, inclined to agree with Hannah Arendt that “history tells us that it is by no means a matter of course for the spectacle of misery to move men to pity” let alone to benevolent action (“The Social Question” 70). One is, nevertheless, inclined to point out that while history may *tell* us, photography provides us with visual proof.

Admittedly, the spectacle of suffering is a complex scene to be studied. It is a site that offers multiple interpretations and constantly renewed challenges one of which is the possibility of diverting feelings of compassion from the suffering victim to the humanitarian benevolent.

The divergence of compassion from the unfortunate to the benevolent is in fact a very probable outcome of the photography of agony. Going back to Smith's photograph, one can easily notice that the attention of the photographer was brought on the nurse who, despite the humble location and equipment, manages to provide help and care for those in need. This focus is further intensified with the embedding of the photograph within a whole photo-essay that celebrates the unparalleled achievement of nurse Callen. What slips out of focus, however, is the destitution of the people Maude Callen is helping. What gets blurred in the background is the number of women and children not able to receive adequate healthcare and medical attention and finding themselves in need for the benevolent intervention of Maude Callen. What is more obfuscate, indeed, and is completely left out of this photograph of compassion is the actual cause of the crushing poverty in which whole American neighbourhoods sunk during the 1950s while the nation was living one of its most remarkable economic booms. Leaving out the cause of poverty, the cause of misery and suffering, would, as Luc Boltanski asserts, divert the "spectator's sympathy" from the unfortunate recipient of care "towards the benefactrices, towards the charitable action she performs" (78).

As a matter of fact, this visual trope of including the benefactor within the scene of suffering is quite common in photography of migration as well. Alessandro Penso's photograph discussed above is but an example. However, what seems interesting is that this benevolence has acquired a more symbolic and implied presence and seems to try to avoid being personified. What is redundant in the photographs representing the migration crisis and depicting the migrant as an unfortunate sufferer is the overuse of visual synecdoche to imply the presence of help. For example, in Penso's *Lesbos*, the spectator can easily identify the following items: lifejackets, a helicopter, thermal blankets, a stethoscope, refugee tents, and the logo of the Red Cross and the European Union's flag. Alex Majoli uses the same technique although with sometimes varied elements. He, too, visualises the thermal blanket to allude to help and care and the refugee tent also makes an apparition in his photo-story. However, what stands out in Majoli's *Refugee Crisis on Lesbos* is the introduction of the gloved hand as a symbol of help, but not any kind of help. This is an expert help. The kind of help that knows what to do, that gets prepped, and that deals with situations of crises with the utmost professional detachment and compassionate distance. The gloved hand of compassion reappears in Giorgos Moutafis first picture in his photo-story *Dying on the Shores of Europe*. The spectator can see at least three hands in blue rubber gloves handling a distressed child, probably in an attempt to save its

life. Moutafis, who is more explicit in his content, does also allow for lifejackets to appear in his photographs despite being irrelevant and useless most of the time.

It is true that the charitable benefactor does not always appear in person in the photographs of migration, although some pictures that circulated the internet especially during what is called peak moments of the crisis did visualise them. However, her/his presence is always strongly implied. To see the thermal blanket, the lifejacket, and the medical rubber glove, for instance, means that needs have been attended to. It also implies that during the most challenging moments of a migrant's life, some heroic figure was present to assist and help. This figure was, indeed, so selfless and so altruistic that besides providing aid to the unfortunate, stepped out of the photograph and left only marks of its intervention behind. Thus, the paraphernalia of migration doubly haunts the picture. Once as an incessant reminder of the crisis that does not resolve itself in time nor in space, and second, as a blinding proof of the apparent absence of the benefactor. This insidious infiltration of the spectre of the benefactor into the space of the sufferer ultimately usurps the latter of her/his spotlight and turns him into a secondary character in her/his own story.

Besides being fickle, compassion has also little demands. Michael Barnett articulates an interesting link between charity, humanitarianism, and compassion. These three terms belong to what Barnett calls the "regime of sympathy" which, while insisting on the importance of helping the miserable, does not require from the benefactor anything besides charitable feelings and coherent actions (Barnett, *Empire of Humanity* 49). Compassion, like charity, "makes limited demands on us and has very limited aims"; and unlike the moral responsibility usually attached to witnessing, looking with compassion does not necessarily involve any duties or obligations (Barnett, "Human Rights, Humanitarianism" 334). In fact, all that compassion cares about are "the fundamental needs of the poor, the marginalized, the vulnerable and the victims of the world" (Barnett, "Human Rights, Humanitarianism" 334). These needs are quite simple and straightforward and could be summarised in a checklist composed of "food, shelter, clothing, medicine, clean water, and sanitation" (Barnett, "Human Rights, Humanitarianism" 326). Hence, as soon as these needs are met, compassionate attention shifts either to celebrate the benevolent actors who set up a tent for the refugees or to attend to the needs of other more unfortunate sufferers.

In its endeavour to assist the miserable, humanitarian compassion does not care to ask questions about the identity of the people or the bodies responsible for the suffering nor does it care to accuse and denounce (Barnett, "Human Rights, Humanitarianism" 334; Boltanski 78).

This is precisely why photographs such as those produced by Penso, Majoli, and Moutafis are commonplace when migration is tackled as a crisis. As a matter of fact, they might also be commonplace at any time any humanitarian crisis is invoked. They are, par excellence, photographs of crisis that visualise human life as a “bare life” brought to the brink of collapse and total annihilation by one emergency or another (Agamben *Homo Sacer* 10; Barnett, “Human Rights, Humanitarianism 326). They are photographs that mostly provoke compassion and sympathy and that would lead, in the majority of cases, to what Barnett calls “moral minimalism” (Barnett, “Human Rights, Humanitarianism 335).

Moral minimalism depends on striking a balance between representing migrants as vulnerable “bodies-in-need, deprived of food, clothes or shelter” and the recreation of “the canon of visual humanitarianism” (Chouliaraki and Stolic 3; Perugini and Zucconi 30). Reducing the migrants’ experience to mere corporeality dehumanises them in the sense that it creates a perceived separation between their autonomy and their biological existence. The “visual regime of biological life” relies on two sets of images (Chouliaraki and Stolic 6). The first set of images depicts bodies piled as a mass in “fragile dinghies or in refugee camps” (Chouliaraki and Stolic 6-7) (see figure 11). The second set comprised comprises images of dead migrant bodies (see figure 12). The visualisation of migrants as an unidentifiable mass erases any residues of humanisation and creates a visual reality where individualisation is not possible. The impossibility of distinguishing human faces and exchanging contacts with human eyes, makes it visually challenging to move beyond the raw materiality of human flesh. Photographs of dead migrant bodies reiterate this corporeal reality: since it is impossible to capture unsubstantial life, what is left to document and visualise is nothing more than inert remains. This sort of moral engagement, being minimal, satisfies itself with seeing a thermal blanket being wrapped around the shivering shoulders of a poor migrant, medical care being provided to a crying baby, or a tent set over the head of a homeless refugee. And it is also the same moral minimalism that allows for such scenes to survive, for their pictures to multiply, and for their spectators to be affected by compassion fatigue.

Figure 11. Alex Majoli, *Refugees and migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Somalia arrive on the northern shores of Lesbos island after their journey from the Turkish coast*. Lesbos, Greece. 2015. © Alex Majoli | Magnum Photos.

Figure 12. Giorgos Moutafis, *Dying on the Shores of Europe*, 2015.

Fortunately, not all spectators of pain are contaminated with compassion fatigue, nor do they all look away trying to fend themselves against the intrusive obligation of knowledge. Some spectators look upon pain to bear witness. As it has already been established, looking at the pain of others entails a number of moral and ethical issues. However, shifting the act of

seeing from its passive and receptive nature to a more active form of seeing might solve such issues.

4.2. Bearing Witness in the Time of Hyper Visuality

In his book *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*, John Ellis postulates that television, along with photography and the cinema, have "introduced a new modality of perception into the world" (Ellis 1). This new modality, according to Ellis, is that of witnessing provoked by these media's ability to flood the visual sense with incessant images and knowledge about the world in front of which audiences may feel powerless (Ellis 1). The generations of spectators who have been born in the age of the television could hardly claim that they did not know about this or that particular event, especially when news channels, broadcasting 24 hours a day and with a "pervasive sense of liveness and intimacy", make them almost impossible to ignore (Ellis 1). Younger generations, those who have been born in the age of the internet or who rely more on social media to get informed about the world, are not faring any better. They are equally flooded with information reaching them from the four corners of the globe in an even more accelerated manner and with more accurate visual evidence (Ellis 9).

Witnessing, as a modality of perception, can then be understood as a response to witnessing as a modality of representing the world. The more accurate, proximate, and present the media claims to have become, the higher is the demand on images of suffering that bore the "weight of witnessing without the taint of artistry" (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 26; Tait 1221). The more photography detaches itself from its artistic heritage and the deeper it lays down its roots into documenting and recording the world, the more the audiences become infected with what Fuyuki Kurasawa calls the "witnessing fever" (94). Interestingly, this fever blighted both sides of the transaction of images of suffering. The producing part became increasingly preoccupied with "factual depictions of reality" (Kurasawa 94). The consuming part, on the other hand, developed a fascination with the images' power to haunt, to create carbon copies of experiences capable of transporting "physical traces" of even crimes (Ellis 10). Hence, looking at the suffering of unfortunate others became legitimised by attaching to it the label of *witnessing*. This looking was also encouraged by a type of photojournalism that represented the world as a massive crime scene from which evidence was collected and presented to wide audiences who, in their turn, were required to not only witness but to also pass on judgements.

One example of this type of photography is Giorgos Moutafis's photo-story *Dying on the Shores of Europe* (see figure 13). The pictures shown below were taken by Moutafis on the shores of Lesbos in 2015. The graphic nature of this series of photographs establishes a resemblance between them and the kind of pictures taken by the forensic police, or at least the kind of pictures audiences of detective TV shows and action films believe forensic photography to look like. By "flying low, artistically speaking" these photographs promise is two things (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 27). On the one hand, they provide the viewer with an iconology of migration that claims to be the closest to the crude reality of the tragic enterprise. The photographs are not embellished, not filtered, and seem not to be staged. It has already been argued that the graphic nature of Moutafis's photographs accentuate to the utmost the biological nature of human existence.

Figure 13. Giorgos Moutafis, *Dying on the Shores of Europe,* 2015. A) Photograph n°3 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°5 in the photo-story. C) Photograph n°8 in the photo-story. D) Photograph n°9 in the photo-story. E) Photograph n°11 in the photo-story. F) Photograph n°15 in the photo-story.

Indeed, what can be seen in this small selection of photographs is the ultimate negation of human power, will, autonomy and the capability of decision-making. Everything that might be interpreted as action or a potential of an action has been stripped from these photographed individuals by death. What remains from what used to be is nothing more than a literal "staggering corpse", a "bundle of physical [non]functions", as Jean Améry once said (qtd. in Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 41). What remains, in fact, is bare life as understood by Agamben to mean the leftover of being when both the political and the natural lives are negated. It is the result of denying a human her/his political existence and of politically managing her/his biological existence (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 9-11).

The representation of the shores of Europe as a crime scene and the representation of the migrants as helpless, dead victims of some invisible hostile powers invite the spectator to partake in a game of investigation, which fulfils the second promise of unartistic photography. This curious change in the frame of representation is what changes the modality of perception and prompts audiences to address the scene not as a spectacle of suffering that requires compassion, but as a site of crime that requires cool-headed observation and collection of evidence. The role of the spectator can thus be expected to change from passive beholding to active witnessing. Unpolished, proximate, and authentic photographs can be believed to facilitate her/his job (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 27). By turning the photograph into a piece of visual testimony, and the beholder into a witness, the visualisation of the pain of others could be transformed into a moral act. By claiming to be witnessing, journalists and photojournalists could access the most delicate situations, look upon the most excruciating pain, capture individuals in the most vulnerable situations, and transmit all their testimonies to the world, in a blink of an eye without the slightest taint in their conscience. Likewise, audiences from around the world, those who do not flinch at least, could look upon misery, investigate it, consume it, share it, and comment on it without necessarily feeling the moral burden of voyeurism (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 41).

Nevertheless, representing the world as an open-air evidence room and inviting audiences to witness does not necessarily mean that the moral task attached to the activity of looking at the suffering of others has been fulfilled. As John Ellis argues, one of the possible results of witnessing may be overwhelming audiences with information that leaves them, at the same time, incapable of claiming ignorance of large-scale catastrophic events, and unable to provide any sort of help to the unfortunate depicted in the news reports (10). Witnessing can make spectators know; however, their knowledge would be powerless. For instance, what can

any spectator do after witnessing Giorgos Moutafis's photographs, and after having collected all the necessary proof that establishes, for a fact, that migrants died and washed up as inert bodies on the shores of Lesbos? This form of powerless knowledge provided by the photographs immediately turns witnesses into "accomplices in the crimes […] because [they] have seen the evidence and sometimes even the events themselves" and did nothing to change the situation (Ellis 10). As powerlessness becomes coupled with feelings of "safety" and "separation", audiences may be inflicted once more with emotions of pity, "guilt or disinterest" (Ellis 11).

It might, therefore, be easier on the conscience of different audiences to avoid witnessing the atrocities that condemn others to immeasurable suffering, and they would have a collection of plausible reasons for that. People may claim that they have seen enough and that they do not want to see any more dying babies and decaying corpses. They might also object on the basis that some news and some pictures of agony are too graphic and too invasive and that they did not ask to know about such realities in the first place. This argument is particularly pertinent in the digital age when images just manifest themselves on timelines completely unsolicited. Others might even object to looking at images of agony because they are well aware that pictures can be doctored, manipulated, cropped, and if they were not completely falsified, they would still be constructed as "a point of view" (Ellis 12; Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 26). Moreover, people might object to visualising images of atrocities based on the fact that sometimes those images are viewed too late and after all hopes for help have withered; or that the scene of suffering is too remote and has such a complex reality that makes concrete help ineffective. Refusing to witness might in this case be a refusal to be implicated in what John Ellis has called "powerless knowledge", a form of knowledge that intertwines excessive sight and deficient action (Ellis 1-15; Tait 1221). Refusing to witness might, thus, turn into an act of resistance against finding oneself compelled to become complicit with the events and the sights of suffering since one can neither ignore nor change them (Ellis 15).

Nevertheless, witnessing possesses a significant potential especially when it breaks free from its passivity and gets employed in its active form: the form of bearing witness (Ellis 11; Tait 1221). An indispensable way to differentiate between the passive and the active form of witnessing, proposes Sue Tait, is to make a semantic distinction between *to witness* and *to bear witness*, for although these two terms have been employed interchangeably in the literature, causing great confusion, they do not mean the same thing (1222). To witness is akin to *to look*, *to observe*, and *to see*, and it would not necessarily imply anything besides the fact that a certain individual has been present either physically or metaphorically when an act of atrocity or a

scene of suffering unfolded (Cohen 15). An immediate witness to suffering is defined by Stanley Cohen as a member of an audience who has either lived through atrocities or has heard about them “from first-hand sources” (Cohen 15). Metaphorical witnesses are, on the other hand, all the people who learn about atrocities through “secondary sources, primarily the mass media or humanitarian organizations” (Cohen 15). Media in general, and photography in particular, is then believed to be responsible for the production of the second type of witnesses or bystanders theorised by Cohen. The implications of this form of passive witnessing have already been explored in detail and could be effectively summarised in the rather pessimist words of Fuyuki Kurasawa when he says that “one of the most daunting facets of transnational witnessing is the persistence of collective indifference and inaction on the part of Western states and populations” (101).

Contrarily to simple witnessing, Sue Tait argues that “to bear witness conjures an explicitly moral practice, which is normatively linked with suffering or atrocity” (1221). It appears from Tait’s explanation that bearing witness is not a mere sensory activity. Unlike witnessing it does not stop at the level of looking upon atrocity, although it may be conventionally linked and provoked by it. To bear witness is an explicit “moral practice” and it might be understood as the power and the ability to render the sense of seeing a preparation for assuming one’s ethical responsibility towards what has been seen (Tait 1221). To bear witness, asserts Tait, means “to *perform responsibility*”, to recognise that some events “require some form of public response” and to take upon oneself to provide the required responses (1221, emphasis in original). Bearing witness is an “affected, partial, active and committed” practice, it is looking that precedes the “moral engagement with suffering” that can shake audiences from their “spectatorish inertia” and thrust them towards assuming their collective and moral responsibility (Baudrillard, *Transparency of Evil* 76; Tait 1222). However, this moral endeavour is not without perils.

As a matter of fact, it is not an easy task to make the distinction between photography’s ability to witness and to bear witness for how can a spectator know the difference between a picture that has only been produced to arouse audiences’ cheap emotionality and one that aims at inciting beholders to take a moral stand? For example, how can one classify Alex Majoli’s *Pietà* discussed earlier in this part, and how does it stand in comparison with say Nilüfer Demir’s infamous photograph of the three-year old drowned Syrian boy? Both photographs represent the unparalleled threat migration poses to some people. Demir’s photograph represents a toddler who was found dead on the shores of Turkey as his parents attempted

crossing the Aegean Sea heading for Greece. Majoli's photograph represents a boy who seems to have lost consciousness after the group of migrants he is part of has been targeted with teargas. Both images are striking examples of the life-risking nature of the migration journey. Nevertheless, the photograph of Demir be accused of looking for cheap sentimentalism while Majoli's cannot be dismissed on the same basis?

It appears that a key factor for this distinction lies in the difference between witnessing and bearing witness. Nilüfer Demir's photograph witnesses to the death of a toddler because his parents decided to migrate to Greece, and besides the miniscule dead body lying face down on the beach waiting to be picked up, there is nothing to be seen. The spectator has only one reaction to make, and that is to feel sorry for the life lost too soon. Then, the spectator would turn the page, look away, and move on with her/his life. It is a picture that does not allow for any other emotions to emerge; and even if one would feel angry at the loss, one would soon regain her/his sobriety. To be angry at whom? At the parents who risked the lives of their child? At the photographer who took such a heart-breaking shot? At the newspapers, magazines, TV channels, and social media for incessantly diffusing the picture? At both the Turkish and the Greek governments for turning a blind eye to such tragedies? To feel angry at oneself, and for what? What "effective intervention" could one conceived after the deed was done (Cohen 16)?

Stanley Cohen has argued that "the passive bystander effect" may be provoked when the one witnessing harm and suffering being inflicted on someone else realises that "responsibility is diffused" (16). The responsibility in question, in Cohen's argument, is that of intervening in order to alleviate the pain. Once the bystander or the witness realises that s/he is not the only one at the scene and many others could get involved to help, the tendency is that no one would take the initiative. However, in the case of the photograph of Aylan Kurdi, responsibility is diffused in the opposite direction. It is not that the spectators knew that the responsibility to help is diffused among so many spectators, but that they realised that the individuals and groups responsible for that situation are numerous. This diffusion of responsibility made the reactions to the image of suffering vary from sand sculptures re-visualising Aylan signed with the word "shame" to activists and artists lying face flat on the beach in what they presumed to be an act of paying tribute to the dead boy. However, no one knows this shaming message was addressed to whom, nor does anyone know what followed the tribute.

These diffused and aimless reactions to such a photograph of great pain is partially due to the nature of "moral indignation about a remote place" that is described by Cohen as "safe,

cheap, and uncomplicated" (19). The moral indignation with the plight of Aylan, and through him with that of tens of thousands of migrants losing their lives every year on the perilous routes to Europe, remains an indignation provoked by images of distant suffering. It is because the suffering is visualised as something happening to others in distant places that sympathy and indignation seem safe. Moral frustration, manifesting itself in messages of shame without addressees, proves also to be cheap in situations where nothing else is required from the spectator. Moreover, the uncomplicated nature of feeling morally stimulated by scenes of distant suffering can also be the result of the manner in which such images are rendered.

The photograph of Nilüfer Demir that made the largest media circulation does not show anyone besides the dead boy. Other photos taken at different moments and from different angles show the little boy being picked up by a Turkish gendarmerie soldier, two soldiers inspecting the site one of whom is armed with a camera, and a third one showing a soldier retelling how he found the body. The three photographs that show the presence of the gendarmerie soldiers emphasise two realities about the representation. On the one hand, the spectator finds her/himself once again in front of a sight of suffering constructed as a site of crime that invites investigation and gathering of evidence. The presence of the camera in the hand of one soldier and the gloves on the hands of the other do but further accentuate this reality. The other aspect that is brought forward is the visualisation of the scene of suffering as a scene of testimony. Both the soldiers and the spectators share the task of witnessing the consequences of a crime that has already been committed by some invisible third party. The spectator is once more at a loss for s/he can see the suffering, can understand the loss, can feel the pain, however, there is no one against whom s/he can direct her/his political anger. The photograph of Nilüfer Demir is one of "safe, cheap, and uncomplicated" indignation because it is a photograph that fails to include in the spectacle of suffering those who are responsible for it (Cohen 19). It is a photograph that witnesses but that does not bear witness.

Contrariwise, Alex Majoli's photograph is highly accusative in its tone. It is a photograph that depicts a scene of suffering, but not only. The picture includes two main visual elements besides, of course, the off-centred image of pain. The first element that would attract the attention of the spectator is the angry face of the young man standing next to the suffering child and his mother. This figure is particularly interesting because, on the one hand, it exhibits facial signs of rage that would be universally interpreted as such without the need for a language mediator to translate their meaning. On the other hand, the facial expressions join the movement of the hand which is directed to the struggling boy in a visible effort to attract the attention of

the beholder to the scene of great suffering. The eye of the spectator does not wander. It is immediately caught by the angry face of the young man who instantly diverts it to the unconscious boy after having contaminated it, even if partially, with the same fury. Once the eye reaches the boy and takes knowledge of his condition, it gets directly caught by the apparent empty and dark space suddenly appearing behind the distressed congregation. Before the observer has time to wonder why the little boy is unconscious and why the visual space is so unbalanced, the answer emerges inscribed on the white helmets and the uniforms of the Greek anti-riots police. The responsible for this terrible scene appears fully equipped, taking advantage of space and darkness, pressing the desperate group into a chaotic upheaval. Unlike Demir, Majoli does not shy away from showing in his photograph the parties that are responsible for the suffering and who are, therefore, eligible to blame, anger, accusation, and denunciation (Boltanski 78). His photograph does not only witness suffering, but it also bears the responsibility of showing it and showing those responsible for it. Thus, Majoli's *Pietà* engages the spectator and urges her/him to assume her/his moral charge.

Nevertheless, while passing the ordeal of bearing witness to the suffering of others and not falling prey to mere witnessing, Majoli and other European photographers may fall victim to another peril. One of the most common concerns about witnessing is the tendency to speak on behalf of the other, especially when this other is assumed to be silent. To witness, according to John Ellis, is always a mediated act (11). Even when witnesses have immediately attended the scene of suffering, they would necessarily use some sort of media to relate their witnessing. This mediation is even more obvious when witnessing takes place at a second level or by "external or metaphorical bystanders" who have no access to the actual scene of suffering and only consume images of it that have been collected and disseminated by other parties (Cohen 17; Ellis 11). Ellis elaborates on the mediated nature of witnessing using the example of films such as those of the French director Georges Méliès and which deliberately fuse the art of the cinema with that of illusion. Ellis declares that even the audiences of such films were fully aware that "a degree of willing suspension of disbelief" was required to be able to enjoy those productions (11-12). However, audiences do not approach a film made for the cinema with the intention of entertaining with the same attitude they approach a photograph taken on a crime scene with the purpose of collecting evidence. Photography, unlike the cinema, has an in-built claim of authenticity that seems to have so far survived frequent trials. This strong claim of authenticity is what blinds even the most advised audiences from the "constructed nature of images", bewitches them into believing that the mechanical reproduction of reality brings them

"into contact with individuals, crowds, actions and events", and deludes them into trusting that this contact was "unmediated by other humans" (Ellis 12).

Therefore, when a photograph is produced as a form of witness to testify that a specific horror has indeed happened, it is usually immediately accepted not only as authentic but also as a direct and unmediated piece of evidence. This power that photography enjoys, unlike verbal witnessing for example, is derived both from its already explained claim of veracity and from a historical tradition that established photography as the default medium of witnessing horrors. As a matter of fact, it would seem that humanity is as much inclined towards photographing suffering as it is towards committing atrocities, and the immense collection of war photography testifies to that. Although the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s "was the first war to be witnessed ("covered") in the modern sense" by a professional body of photographers who were able to gain access to the front lines and to have their photographs "immediately seen in newspapers and magazines in Spain and abroad", as asserts Sontag, both the world's and photography's histories present multiple other examples where pictures were used as a medium of documenting war (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 21). The American Civil War that took place between 1861 and 1865 was, for instance, "the first full-scale attempt to document a war" and photography was, indeed, its medium (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 51). This is, of course, but one example of the human fascination with the "irresistible" and "picturesque" nature of war, of atrocity (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 49).

This macabre fascination with pain would reach its acme during the Second World War, at the doors of the Nazi concentration camps where liberators, facing indescribable horrors resorted to taking "snapshot after snapshot of what they saw" not only in a feverish endeavour to record the atrocities but also in a desperate attempt to make sense of the horrid sights (Zelizer 700). That would have been the time when the function of photographing agony slightly adjusted its course from documenting wars in a seemingly detached manner to becoming both the "standard response to later traumatic public events" and a trustworthy and concrete witness (Zelizer 700). The photograph became so powerful, indeed, that it started to compete with "personal memory" (Zelizer 705). In her article "Finding Aids to the Past: Bearing Personal Witness to Traumatic Public Events", Barbie Zelizer recounts an instance when one of the soldiers who participated in the liberation of Dachau resorted to photographs as proof that the Holocaust happened (705). What Zelizer finds ironic is that, even in the personal appraisal of one's own memory and testimony, photographs seem to be privileged to "the personalized, internal memories of individuals" (705). What is of particular interest here is this immune

position to criticism, doubt, and double-check photography seems to occupy in the public opinion. It is this position that makes spectators oblivious to the fact that a photograph is also a point of view and that, very often, this point of view is constructed about and constructing of others.

A point of view is both an opinion and a location from which that opinion may be created and articulated. In "The Problem of Speaking for Others", Linda Alcoff asserts that the location, social or otherwise, from which one makes her/his utterances cannot be transcended and it, therefore, "has an epistemically significant impact" not only on what one utters but also on authorising or deauthorising those utterances (6-7). Interestingly, in photography, location takes on a physical meaning besides its epistemic understanding, and a vantage point translates not only as an opinion but also as the actual and material position occupied by the photographer in the time of shooting. The photographer's location is, consequently, one of the most salient, and invisible, components of a photograph. The importance of the location of the producer of the photographic utterance lies in its enabling powers, since certain "privileged locations" can be "discursively dangerous" (Alcoff 7). For example, the location that Eugene Smith occupied to shoot nurse Callen, while she was attending to one of the pregnant black women in a church/infirmary in the American South, allowed him to have access to a scene otherwise inaccessible. Taking his position in the gallery of the church, Smith was able to see and to photograph one of Callen's important interventions. However, while his physical location exposed his subjects to him, it also exposed his social location to the spectators. It is because Smith belonged to a privileged sociopolitical class that he probably was able to have access to that scene.

Likewise, the instances of humanitarian journalism that were documented in Renzo Martens's *Enjoy Poverty* and that were reported in Perugini's and Zucconi's "Enjoy Poverty: Humanitarianism and the Testimonial Function of Images" testify that the social, political, and even cultural positions of the photographer have a significant importance not only in allowing her/him to take a picture, in the first place, but also in legitimising the pictures and what they show, that is in "authoriz[ing] or disauthoriz[ing]" one's photograph (Alcoff 7) . It is paramount to remember that while European photographers were welcome to shoot inside one of the MSF's hospitals in order to raise humanitarian awareness and funds, Congolese photographers were prevented from doing the exact same thing on the basis of immorality (Perugini and Zucconi 30). Thus, it seems clear that the privileged position of the European photographer gives her/him a surplus or an "excess of seeing" that allows her/him not only to see from a privileged

location what others cannot see but also to, sometimes, monopolise seeing (Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability* 22-23).

In the former examples the privileged position of the photographer might be due to the fact that unlike the people he is photographing, he already enjoys a position of political and socio-economic power. In the case of Eugene Smith, it might be that the fact that he was a white man documenting poverty in the poor and black neighbourhoods of the American South put him already on a pedestal that he only further elevated by climbing to the gallery of the church. The photographer's white privilege might not be something that he himself endorsed. However, it was this precise privilege that allowed him to donate blood to a dying black baby despite the objections of the "white nurses in the hospital", and to transcend the white bedsheets working as a curtain blocking view to the black patient (Goldberg 182). Nevertheless, the privilege does not always need to be attached to one's belonging to a certain social class or having a specific skin colour. The privilege might be also derived from the function of the photographer as a witness, and this function is itself uncovered by the physical location of the photographer while snapping her/his shots.

4.3. Excessive Documentation and Theatricality as Photographic Strategies to Fill the Lacuna of Witnessing

Going back to the three photo-stories analysed in this part of the dissertation, one can notice that all the photographs are taken from either a frontal position where the photographer is directly facing his subjects, or from a location slightly removed to the side from which the subjects seem to figure in profile. However, and regardless of the position and regardless of the proximity or distance between the subjects and the photographer, it is always visibly clear that the latter is not taking his shots from the same vantage point of the former. The photographer in these three photo-stories is never himself the migrant. He is always a third party, someone else, an outsider who does not belong within the group of migrants. This physical location puts the photographer instantly in a particular political position of witnessing. According to Giorgio Agamben, the word *witness* has two equivalents in Latin (*Remnants of Auschwitz* 17). The first equivalent is "*testis*" which means a person standing as a third party in a trial between two adversaries; the second equivalent is "superstes" and it refers to the "person who has lived through something" and can, therefore, "bear witness to it" (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 17). Obviously, neither Alessandro Penso, Alex Majoli, nor Giorgos Moutafis are survivors bearing witness to something they lived through. They are clearly witnesses in the first Latin

meaning, that is a third party occupying a "neutral" position of testifying (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 17).

It is, indeed, this assumed neutrality and impartiality in the function of a witness that may enable her/him to have access to places and situations that would be barred before others. However, Agamben draws our attention to the fact that neither the testimony of the survivor, nor that of the third party is ever complete (*Remnants of Auschwitz* 33). The third-party witness, the photographer in this case, is a complete outsider to the suffering of the migrants; and although her/his function and privilege might bring her/him closer to them, s/he will never be part of the group that went through ordeals. Admittedly, this external location to the pains of migrants would allow the photographer to claim neutrality and objectivity and would also allow her/his pictures to be accepted as trustworthy and authentic. Moreover, being an outsider to the scene of suffering might thrust upon photographers, and through them upon the spectator, the moral and political responsibilities of bearing witness and of "speak[ing] out against oppression" which are "incurred by the very fact of [one's] privilege" (Alcoff 8). Nevertheless, being an outsider also means that the testimony is lacking. The photographer would never be able to know the exact extent of the migrants' experience and emotions, no matter how proximate and sympathetic s/he is. The testimony is, then, only a construction and a representation of what seems true and authentic from the photographer's location.

The survivor's testimony, on the other hand, and because of her/his direct implication in the suffering to which s/he bears witness, does not enjoy the same level of credibility, and cannot be used, states Agamben, as a source for "the acquisition of facts for a trial" (*Remnants of Auschwitz* 17). Besides, despite the fact that survivors are closer that photographers to the harrowing experiences that may sometimes accompany the migratory journey, their witnessing remains lacking. The survivors' testimony "contains a lacuna" simply because they survived and "enjoyed [the] privilege" of coming out of suffering alive (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 33). Being able to survive means that the involved witness, the *superstes* did not reach the end of their suffering and could not, therefore, have attained the ultimate position of witnessing. A *superstes* is someone who lived when someone else died, and while they would know more than a third-party witness who happens to see only the aftermath of the brutality, they would never know what it means to reach the end of suffering. In this sense the only "true witness" and the only "complete witness" is the martyred who, because of her/his martyrdom, cannot testify (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 26-33). "The drowned have nothing to say, nor do they have instructions or memories to be transmitted", declares Agamben, and when the

"survivors speak in their stead", their testimony attempts at filling the lacuna left by the silence of the dead and the failure of memory (*Remnants of Auschwitz* 33).

In sum, the act of bearing witness is constitutively flawed. Regardless of how proximate and involved the witness is, it is virtually impossible to reach a complete rendition of the experience of suffering. Since the only "complete witness" is the person who died and who could not "bear witness" to what s/he has been through, all the witnessing that remains is lacking and incomplete (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 33). Consequently, witnessing and bearing witness, which assumes more moral and political responsibility, is permanently constructed as a narrative delivered about someone else. Witnessing is, therefore, a matter of speaking for others, in their stead, and on behalf of them. Even when survivors speak about themselves, those selves are constantly projected outside as victims and subjects of suffering and not fully as incorporated parts of the survivor's psyche. Kirmayer argues that survivors of torture, violence, genocide, and other grave violations of human rights testify to experiencing a feeling of alienation from both their societies and themselves (745). This estrangement from self and others is one of the consequences of living through a traumatic experience that succeeds eventually in severing social ties and threatening the integrity of the self by forcing victims to witness and to survive great losses (Kirmayer 745).

In the case where the traumatic experience of migration has been captured by European photographers, the flaws of the act of bearing witness is multiple. On the one hand, as it has already been established, the photographer is a third party to the experience of suffering, and while her/his testimony might be valued for its neutrality and objectivity, it is still lacking in proximity and completeness. Besides being an outsider to the traumatic experience of migration, the European photographer is an outsider to the community of migrants he is photographing. In the three photo-stories that constituted the subject of discussion in this part, the photographers are two Italians and a Greek, the migrants on the other hand are predominantly Middle Easterners, Africans, and Asians. This double distance from the community of suffering renders the lacuna of the photographic witnessing more significant and makes the task of completing the "missing testimony" more challenging and more "dangerous" (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 33; Alcoff 7).

To fill the gap of his testimony, Alessandro Penso employs a documentary overcompensation. The collection of the photographs that make up his photo-story *Lesbos* show a clear avoidance of what Susan Sontag calls "artistry" (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 26). For example, while all the photographs are shot in colours, Penso seems to have intentionally

refrained from adjusting or modifying their chromatic values. He also seems to have avoided to intervene and to adjust the light exposure in certain photographs which sometimes makes the sky look flat and some other times allows the glare of the sun and electricity poles to disturb vision (see figure 14, A). Equally, when some photographs are shot at night, Penso does not compensate for the darkness, which makes migrants appear as dark silhouettes and shadows (see figure 14, B). Alessandro Penso also intentionally takes photographs of migrants in different situations including while they are walking, sitting down to rest, sleeping, cooking, or taking cover from the rain. This produces a feeling of spontaneity and imperfection that further emphasises the documentary aspect of his photo-story (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 28). As the photos appear to be unstaged and taken almost on the go, the spectator experiences a sense of proximity to the represented events and situations which makes the act of witnessing seem more trustworthy.

A B
Figure 14. Alessandro Penso, *Lesbos*, 2015. A) Photograph n°6 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°24 in the photo-story

Moreover, the chronological order followed by Penso to create a seemingly coherent journey starting at the disembarkation and ending in the refugee camp is occasionally disturbed by single shots depicting chaotic moments of an irregular adventure. For example, the first and the second photographs in Penso's story clearly show the disorganisation of debarkation from the already over-crowded and collapsing dinghy. The chaos of landing, which seems to be only an extension and a reiteration of the whole disordered nature of the journey, further aggravates the situation and puts the lives of migrants at greater risks. In the commotion of reaching what is believed to be the shore of safety, infants face death under a glaring sun and as a result of a long and hectic sea voyage. Young children appear to be completely abandoned on the beach, blankly gazing into the void, and desperately trying to get warm under their inflatable swim jackets. The less fortunate lie wrapped in blankets on the shore while their relatives wail in

despair next to their inert bodies. The more fortunate continue their road toward the refugee camps faced only with minor challenges like the gust provoked by a helicopter hovering over their heads, the curious gaze of local inhabitants finding their suffering interesting enough to be photographed, or the blazing sun forcing them to take cover in the slim shadow of a silo.

In the refugee camps, Penso continues his endeavour to represent the migrant's life as it is and with the least artistic intervention possible. The product of this attempt at depicting life in what W.J.T. Mitchell calls "extreme social environments" is a series of photographs that could hardly be judged as aesthetic (*Image Science* 184). In his definition of extreme social environments, Mitchell highlights a few characteristics of such spaces that are visually reproduced by Alessandro Penso. For example, Mitchell argues that such environments are "sites of extreme inequality and uncertainty, often outside any government control" (*Image Science* 184). He then continues to assert that they are also "sites of extreme violence and rampant crime, homelessness, and shattered families" (Mitchell, *Image Science* 184). Penso's visual reply to Mitchell's verbal assertions serves only as a confirmation. His photos show migrants taking refuge in temporary tents scattered around vast empty spaces at the periphery of towns and villages (see figure 15). The tents, with their fragile structures, could only function as provisional refuge for passersby. However, and despite their transitory nature, they are turned into a sort of a permanent lodging for the homeless who would otherwise have to remain without shelter. It is then "homelessness", as well as "uncertainty", "inequality", and extreme poverty, that the tent stands for (Mitchell, *Image Science* 184). The collection of tents forming the refugee camps standing outside the locally inhabited spaces are clear visual representation of the political lack of "government control" advanced by Mitchell as a significant characteristic of "extreme social environments" (*Image Science* 184). It is also a clear visual example of how the "finite process" of transitioning, which is usually linked to the image of the tent and the camp, and which is supposed to have "a time-span with clearly drawn starting and finishing lines", is "petrified into a state of permanence" (Bauman, *Liquid Surveillance* 59).

Figure 15. Alessandro Penso, *Lesbos*, 2015. A) Photograph n°18 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°19 in the photo-story. C) Photograph n°21 in the photo-story. D) Photograph n°22 in the photo-story.

The petrification of the site of transition into a site of permanent residence is expressed in Alessandro Penso's photographs by a variety of visual signs of immobility. The third picture in figure 15 shows an elderly couple sitting in front of what appears to be their tent. Besides their older age, which would indirectly imply limited mobility and difficulties of movement, the woman is visualised sitting in a wheelchair as her legs, one of which is broken and plastered, rest heavily on a small footrest made of the debris already available on site. Aside from this rather symbolic representation of the migrant's confinement to immobility, Penso's following photograph shows the temporary tents with their collapsing and malleable plastic walls slowly metamorphosing into white metallic square boxes some of which are even equipped with air conditioners. It is, indeed, not conclusive whether these more sophisticated tents belong to refugees or if they are used by some humanitarian organisations as offices or other aid facilities. However, it is not unusual for "extreme social environments" to develop their own hierarchical systems which, "feudal" and "patriarchal" as they are, benefit greatly of the passage of time (Mitchell, *Image Science* 184). What one can see in this specific photograph is not only the transition of the camp into an established, though marginalised, neighbourhood but also the

appearance of signs of social hierarchy among migrants themselves. Having lived there long enough "with little prospect of parole or of the sentence being completed", migrants came to create their own order of the wasteland they occupy (Bauman, *Liquid Surveillance* 59).

The hierarchy of the refugee camp does not imply that some migrants would benefit from a more favourable treatment or would have better chances at leaving. As a matter of fact, Zygmunt Bauman passes a rather fatalist judgment by declaring that hopes at leaving the camp are at best meagre and that the very "meaning of being assigned to a place called a 'refugee camp' is that all other conceivable places are cast as off-limits" (*Liquid Surveillance* 59). To be an "inmate of a refugee camp" means that one has already been banished from the "rest of humanity" (Bauman, *Liquid Surveillance* 59). It is the material declaration of the world that a certain someone cannot be incorporated into any of its social space. The inmates of a refugee camp are all those who do not fit anywhere and who cannot be claimed by anyone. They are not simply those who left somewhere but those who have nowhere to go. It is, then, at the end of social redundancy that the camp is located as a final destination for the "rejects or refuse of society" (Bauman, *Liquid Surveillance* 60). It is in the camp that the human "waste" is collected and separated from the useful "decent product" of society; and, while it remains there "soiling and cluttering up the space that could otherwise be usefully employed", this refuse disintegrates and biodegrades (Bauman, *Liquid Surveillance* 60). Therefore, it would not be surprising to see the chaotic plastic tents shift into metal cubes carefully packed next to each other making as much profit as possible from the available space. What would not also be surprising is to understand the hierarchy of the refugee camp as a visual sign of how removed one is from total crumble and biodegradation.

Witnessing such a brutal reality, Alessandro Penso seems to actively refuse to "aestheticize [his] testimony" and continues to deliver the meaning of waste, redundancy, refuse, and reject in the most unequivocal manner (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 33). When the migrants' homes mingle with piles of garbage and debris, Penso shows us the image in disturbing frankness (see figure 15). Equally, when the refugee her/himself dissolves into her/his environment to reach a point of difficult distinction, Penso delivers with powerful trustworthiness (see figure 16, A). Finally, when the migrant decides to wrap her/himself in a garbage bag and to make from it a cover against rain, Alessandro Penso does not shy away from presenting this reality unstaged and unbeautified (see figure 16, B). By refusing to artistically intervene to render his photos more beautiful, and by actively insisting on making them look frank, straightforward and "un-beautiful", Penso approaches the "seriousness" of the issue of

migration in "anti-aesthetic terms", compensating the lacuna of his testimony with overt documentation and un-aestheticization (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 309-310).

Figure 16. Alessandro Penso, *Lesbos*, 2015. A) Photograph n°16 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°15 in the photo-story.

Taking documentation a step further, Giorgos Moutafis faces the lacunae of witnessing in his *Dying on the Shores of Europe* by turning photography into an investigative practice and the lens of the camera into an instrument of collecting evidence. Moutafis's adopted a forensic style that would put his audience in front of two disturbingly frank realisations. On the one hand, the photographer exposes his migrants as "bodies-in-need, deprived of food, clothes or shelter" which highlights their vulnerability and lack of agency (Chouliaraki and Stolic 3). On the other, he seems to endeavour to prove that the destruction of this vulnerable life results in no reaction despite the availability of proof. Several of his photographs do not seek to constitute the migrant as a subject. Indeed, Moutafis's lens seems to be present only in situations where the migrant is not even capable of possessing her/his body, let alone "mak[ing] another body for [themselves]" to pose in and present to the world (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 10). This loss of the body, and consequently loss of conscious and "active" transformation of the body into an image to be taken by the photograph, is due to two fundamental factors (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 10-11).

The first reason for the loss of complete agency over one's body might be related to the age of the photographed person. Some of the people Moutafis photographed were infants who were so young that they had no control over their motor skills (see figure 17). Their state of complete dependency coupled with the absence of a caring adult hand put them at a great risk. Indeed, the threat to their fragile lives is represented by the gloved medical hand stretched to help a young child and, in a more sinister manner, by a floating small body being snatched from the sea (see figure 17 A, C, and D). This biological reality is certainly not invented by Moutafis.

However, he visualises and mediates it to his audience without the slightest touch of artistic euphemism.

Figure 17. Giorgos Moutafis, *Dying on the Shores of Europe*, 2015. A) Photograph n°1 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°10 in the photo-story. C) Photograph n°13 in the photo-story. D) Photograph n°15 in the photo-story.

The second situation where migrants are photographed lacking control over their bodies is when they are captured at the edge of life, narrowly escaping their dim demise. Picturing a woman hanging on the ropes struggling with all her might to stay above the surface of water, photographing a group of men collapsing on a beach, or capturing a mass of people flinging themselves into the waters in a desperate attempt to escape the collapse of their bark, are all images produced by Giorgos Moutafis to highlight the biological fragility of migrants' lives (see figure 18). Interestingly, adult migrants, like the migrant babies, are presented as being incapable of possessing their bodies, composing themselves, and presenting their own image to the lens on their own accord and in their own terms. As a matter of fact, this total lack of agency is rendered undeniably more visible when Moutafis decides to photograph corpses and fragments of dead bodies (see figure 13). The photographs of dead people lying face down in a ditch or almost completely camouflaged by the surrounding debris and waste, and the pictures

of body parts or corpses wrapped in cloth waiting to be disposed of speak the loudest to the lack of agency resulting from migration experienced as a brutal generator of death.

A B

Figure 18. Giorgos Moutafis, *Dying on the Shores of Europe*, 2015. A) Photograph n°6 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°7 in the photo-story.

Giorgos Moutafis's forensic approach to the question of migration would have been greatly attacked on the same basis similar photographs, namely that of Nilüfer Demir, have been attacked. His photographs could easily be classified as distasteful, graphic, brutal, and violent. Some would put the blame on the photographer and his images rather than on the political realities that produced those scenes in the first place. However, finding themselves on the site of a human catastrophe what could Moutafis or Demir do? Could it not be that, as they faced scenes of horrific human destruction and with the "availability of cameras", both photographers resorted to "taking pictures [as] an obvious way to respond personally to trauma" (Zelizer 700)? No doubt, their photographs are shocking, even more, they are haunting. Nevertheless, what else could have been done besides taking pictures and besides collecting evidence in the clearest possible way and in the most seemingly detached and almost scientific manner in the hope of a fairer future. The lacuna of witnessing that Giorgos Moutafis attempted to account for is not simply the lack of proximity and involvement he naturally suffers from as an outsider to the migrants' experience and to their social group. The main lacuna he seems to have intended to fill was that of recognising the shores of Europe as a potential crime scene on which a specific group of people, regardless of their gender and age, die surrounded by a deafening silence and a shameful indifference of an international community who actively chooses not to look.

Continuing in the same vein of compensation for the lacuna of witnessing, Alex Majoli provides his audience with a collection of photographs that stand in formal opposition to Alessandro Penso's documentation and Giorgos Moutafis's forensic photography. Majoli's

overt aestheticization of the migrant's journey is firstly established by the adoption of black-and-white photography and a choice to re-picture scenes of canonical suffering. Then, the photographer is fully aware of the fact that he is an outsider to the scene of suffering and that no effort of documenting or collecting evidence would alter that reality. The lacuna of testimony, from Majoli's perspective, seems too stubborn to be filled with excessive proximity. That could be the reason why, unlike the former photographers, Majoli chooses to insist on his foreignness to and distance from the scenes he shoots. Clara Bouveresse argues that "Majoli does not seek to create a dialogue with the people he photographs, and he seems to be at ease with his powerful position as one who gazes and creates beautiful images, using suffering as subject matter" (1). Indeed, as the spectator moves through the photographs s/he could come to realise that the migrant figures seem to emerge from darkness every time Majoli presses the shutter button and exposes them to the light of his camera's flash. Once the picture is taken, darkness settles anew and swallows the migrants who immediately disappear. This effect is created by the stark contrast between the completely dark background against which the migrants are shot and the bright light that frontally faces them making them visible, hence photographable (see figure 19). It would seem, then, that it is only the light of Majoli's flash that gives these otherwise obscured figures their ocular existence. In fact, it is precisely because of his power to shed light on them and to snatch them—even if momentarily—from the darkness, that Majoli does not seek to enter in a dialogue with the figures he photographs.

Figure 19. Alex Majoli, *Refugee Crisis on Lesbos*, 2015. A) Photograph n°3 in the photo-story. B) Photograph n°5 in the photo-story.

Undoubtedly Alex Majoli has actively chosen not to enter in dialogue with his subjects and this might be due to his awareness that, as a third-party observer of their suffering, he has nothing to say nor to show to them. He might also have refused to converse with them because he is particularly sensitive to "his own position as a privileged photographer" and that this position endows him with the power and the responsibility of bearing witness (Bouveresse 1). To bear witness to the suffering of others, as it has been demonstrated before, is not an act of equality. As a matter of fact, every witnessing is a manifestation of the privilege of either being an uninvolved observer or of being a fortunate survivor (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 33). Therefore, as an outside observer, Alex Majoli could have chosen to refrain from engaging in a dialogue with his photographed figures simply to bring forward his privilege "thus revealing the invisible frontier that separates [the viewers] from 'illegal' newcomers" (Bouveresse 2). Insisting on silencing his subjects and confining them to the darkness of their existence only to reveal them periodically with the light of his "strobe flashes", Majoli assumes the role of a theatre director who not only orchestrates every move on the stage but also, by doing so, reveals his vantage point to his audience. Majoli's testimony lacks proximity and first-hand involvement in the suffering of migrants. It also lacks pretence. He represents migrants in a highly artistic manner to voluntarily re-establish a distance between himself and his subjects, and between them and the spectator. This distance "forces viewers to reflect on the role of the photographer's mediations in shaping testimony" and to equally reflect on their role as spectators of suffering (Bouveresse 5).

Alex Majoli does not hide behind his camera, nor does he pretend to present his viewers with a realistic or a scientific reportage of migration. On the contrary, with the glare of his flashes, Majoli announces himself in the most urgent way to the migrants he photographs. He makes himself, his camera, and his art extremely visible to them, and insists on being seen while capturing their pain. He also makes his vision and his representations visible to his viewers. As he breaks the wall of make-belief, Majoli frankly exposes his photographs as artworks completely aware of their artistry. He does not invite his audiences to suspend their disbelief, rather he insists on making his aesthetics so visible that they become difficult to miss. By doing so, Majoli does not seek to close the gap between the event of migration and his testimony. Indeed, he endeavours to make the lacuna as wide and as deep as possible to force viewers to reflect on the experience of migration, on the role of the photographer as a witness, and on their role as spectators (Bouveresse 9). His aesthetic choice denounces the border guards brutalising migrants, criticises the witness and condemns the spectator.

Until now, all the photographs that have been analysed are European photographs. This means that they were photographs taken by European photographers and that they were also shot in Europe. It has also been argued that they were predominantly destined to reach a predominantly European and generally a western audience. They constitute, therefore, an important contribution to the discourse Europe is having with itself about migration. They represent a concretisation of a specific European gaze that sees migrants as victims in constant need of being helped and saved and of also being represented and visualised. They equally constitute visual evidence that can be used to legitimise reactions of sympathy and compassion. The immense body of European photographs of migrants testifies to both, the urgency and importance of the issue of migration—often referred to as *crisis*—, and the monologic nature of this European discourse. Indeed, the starting point of this research was a simple observation about the nature of images one receives upon searching the concept of *human migration* online. Common search engines would generate three types of visuals: maps, graphs, and photographs of people. The maps show, in a rather simplistic way, the routes of early human migration flows that resulted eventually in the population of the earth. The graphs mostly talk about migration in numbers. The photographs, however, show quite interesting images. The people engaging in the migratory activity are predominantly non-white and most of them appeared to be marching across roads, deserts, and rivers, while only a very small minority is shown in an airport or a train station. Besides, images showing tents and camps immediately appear. The photographs would become even more disturbing and more apocalyptic when the term *crisis* is added to the equation.

The inference that could be drawn from this observation is that there exists a specific image of migrants generated by search engines. This image is itself of the result of constructions and confirmations produced by a large body of knowledge that is able to affect the algorithms of said engines. The second logical step would be to identify the body of knowledge and those who contribute to its creation. Limiting the focus to photography, it was easy to notice that pictures depicting suffering children and struggling ethnically non-white migrants appeared mainly on the websites of international organisations like the UN, American and European newspapers like *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, NGOs such as Human Rights Watch, and independent photographers' websites. Certainly, many of these organisations and newspapers have representatives, reporters, activists located in different regions and countries in the world, including in what is conventionally known as the Global South. Nevertheless, these entities are created and established in Europe or in the United States and they operate

within the political, legal, and cultural framework of these regions. Their members and leaders are mostly westerners and so is the target audience. What is more interesting, and more problematic indeed, is that when the language of the online search changes and when Arabic is used to look for images of migration, the nature of the photographs does not. The word 'هجرة' in Arabic, which means *migration*, generates the same images that are either borrowed and reproduced from European websites, or are created in a similar way. One would, then, be able to see capsized boats, overcrowded dinghies, and a striking number of non-whites trying to cross the sea.

This almost identical representation that seems to cross the barrier of languages to present the viewers with a monolithic visual narrative of migration could be accounted for in two manners. One might believe that this portrayal of migrants is, in fact, realistic and trustworthy and that the striking similarities testify to the veracity of this claim. Conversely, one might be more sceptical and note that the majority of the websites that appear in the Arabic language search are either translated versions of the western websites or Arabic websites that publish European and western photographs. The challenge, at this point, becomes to find photographs that are produced by Arab photographers that might contradict the European visual narrative of migration, and that could provide viewers with a visual narrative of migration that departs from the mainstream European representation. Therefore, the endeavour of the following part will be to put into question the dominant European visual narrative of migration first by challenging its epistemological origins and second by confronting it with other narratives, produced by Arabs and non-Arabs, that counter the discourse and establish a possibility of re-imaging.

PART TWO

DECOLONISING THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF MIGRATION

Though floating on the water, I was not part of it. I thought that if I died at that moment, I would have died as I was born — without any volition of mine. All my life I had not chosen, had not decided. Now I am making a decision. I choose life.

—Tayeb Saleh.

1. Coloniality of Knowledge and the Photographed Other

The ultimate goal of this dissertation is not to discredit the efforts put in place by European photographers seeking to shed light on the struggles faced by non-European migrants. Indeed, Alessandro Penso, Alex Majoli, and Giorgos Moutafis have been successful in keeping the plight of migrants constantly relevant by undertaking photographic projects that lasted for years and that have testified to their engagement with the migrants' cause. However, it is necessary to point out that the body of photographs produced by these photographers remains a fragment of a discourse constructed and conducted about and on behalf of others who remain silent about their own experience and remain marginalised in their testimony. A fundamental proof of this silence—indeed, silencing—is the challenging task of finding photographs of migration produced by migrants themselves about their own experience and without necessarily producing the same visual tropes of pain and suffering systematically shown in European photographs. The internet and the search engines that have developed in this digital age as a main source of information and knowledge do not generate photographs made *by* migrants with the same frequency they generate photographs made *about* migrants. The result is that the majority of the visual knowledge one could construct about migration would come from pictures of them taken by someone else who is not usually a migrant or a third-worlder.

The reason for the lack of visibility of photographs produced by migrants in comparison with the over-abundant photographs produced by Europeans and Westerners in general might be due to the fact that migrants do not make such photographs. What is meant is that they do not produce photographs that can make their way to the first pages of influential media outlets or that can circulate for days through social media platforms. What gets generally captured by migrants, especially when they are facing life-threatening situations like struggling for their lives in the waters or getting disembarked on rocky shores, could at best be some shaky photos taken with their mobile phones in desperate hopes of documenting the situation and leaving

behind a proof of their existence. Eventually, when they survive and get hold of a professional camera with which they would be able to document their everyday lives as refugees or asylum seekers, it would be too late because the emergency had passed. In this vein, photo-stories that are created by migrants to document and to represent their lived experiences take a considerably longer time to surface online and require intentional search to be found. The unconventionality of the pictures sometimes produced by migrants makes their impact a little weaker. Going against the grain of the "standardized way of practicing photography" may contribute to this relative invisibility (Bleyen xi).

Before delving into studying the non-standardised migration photography, it seems imperative to spend some time unpacking the meaning of standardisation, especially when it comes to the origins of mainstream representations of migrants. As a matter of fact, and as it has already been shown in the first part of this dissertation, one essential element in the representation of the migrant is the focus brought on her/his pain and suffering. When this suffering is coupled with visible signs of weakness and vulnerability attached, for example, to the migrant's physical traumas, age, or gender, s/he could be easily identified as a victim deserving of compassion and help. This compassion, however, does not come without a price which is usually the destitution of the migrant from her/his autonomy, agency, and maturity. Consequently, the pathetic migrant turns into a symbol of weakness and pity that needs the intervention of the benevolent hand of the paternal west to survive (Chouliaraki and Stolic 6-7). The standard representation of migrants is, in part, their depiction as vulnerable recipients of the West's sympathy and benevolence. Such representation lays its roots in a long history of a Eurocentric generation of knowledge that took the non-Europeans as its subject (Quijano and Ennis 534).

1.1. Non-European Spaces and Peoples Through the Lens of Colonial Domination

In "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America", Quijano and Ennis vocalise an interesting understanding of the relation that was established for over five centuries between Europe and Latin America and Europe and the rest of the world. According to Quijano and Ennis, this relationship started as an economic endeavour that soon developed into full colonisation of the space and the peoples outside of Europe. The colonial asymmetric relation between coloniser and colonised entangled in its development a deep belief in the superiority of the European race and culture. When the first European colonisers set foot in America, racial differences were among the first things that the conquerors noticed about the new world and

that would later on develop into a synonym for global power and modernity (Quijano and Ennis 533). In his “confusion” and believing that he succeeded in reaching India from the west, Christopher Columbus called the native inhabitants he met on the shores of America Indians and soon, this appellation grew to condense all the extremely diverse native populations of the New World (Mignolo and Walsh 182). The term *Indian*, sometimes also specified as *red Indian* to distinguish its referent from Asian Indians, betrays at least three aspects of European thinking at that time.

To begin with, *Indian* stands as an extremely generic term that overlooks the “extreme diversity of the people inhabiting the New World” (Mignolo and Walsh 182). This amalgamation of the “heterogenous history” of the different native American civilisations in one word based on erroneous judgment of bodily appearances witnesses not only to the ignorance of the European colonisers of the nature of the peoples they colonised, but also to their indifference to these differences (Mignolo and Walsh 182). Indeed, the presence of different others did not provoke curiosity—cultural or otherwise—as much as it provoked an inclination towards dominating and oppressing these others based on their assumed “inferiority” (Quijano and Ennis 533). In the same way Europeans named America after the “Italian explorer Americo Vespucci”, they also named the Aztecs, the Mayas, the Incas, and all the other American peoples, indiscriminately *Indian* (Mignolo and Walsh 184). Naming, which was the second aspect of European thinking since the “invention” of America, was the epistemic manifestation of the economic and military expropriation of the land of native Americans (Mignolo and Walsh 184).

Discussing the question of naming and its scientific as well as political implications, Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh declare in their *On Decoloniality* that “America was an epistemic invention of the European Renaissance: [as] no continent named America existed to be discovered” (184). What happened from 1492 onwards was a long and a complex process of establishing domination over a land whose multiple and original names were ignored and which became baptised America. This linguistic baptism established a kind of paternal authority that the Europeans enjoyed at the expense of the natives. Naming, considered an act of initiation in Mignolo’s and Walsh’s opinion, represented a necessary symbolic step towards introducing America, and its peoples, into the religious and political authority of the father, that is Europe (22). Mignolo and Walsh assert that “[t]he European baptizing of the continent drastically modified the heretofore history, plurality, and social, cultural, economic, spiritual, territorial, and existential foundation of these lands” (22). Indeed, calling the land of native American

populations *America* did not only erase the history of these lands in an attempt to "annihilate all that existed before" but also denied the native peoples their plurality, diversity, uniqueness, and independent identities (Mignolo and Walsh 22). By condensing them together as a homogeneous mass of people called *Indians*, the European colonisers succeeded in subjugating native Americans to the European epistemic power of creating categories and naming them, and in estranging them from their original native identity by replacing it with a new colonial one.

The "colonial power" of naming, along with other practices of colonisation, resulted in dispossessing native peoples "of their own and singular historical identities" and simultaneously endowing them with a "new racial identity" that is also "colonial and negative" (Quijano and Ennis 552). While the racial and colonial aspects of the new identity of colonised people may be accounted for by their apparent physical differences and their political subjugation to European powers, the negativity of their identity seems more challenging to explore. What could be meant by a negative identity is that it stood as the opposite of the European identity, as a negative picture of it. At the same time Europe consolidated its "colonial domination" and developed into the centre of capitalist economic powers, it was able to empower its "hegemonic Eurocentric paradigms" of knowledge (Grosfoguel 213, Quijano 171-172). This "Eurocentric perspective of knowledge" provided European colonisers with answers that legitimised "the relations of domination imposed by the conquest" (Quijano and Ennis 534). Finding its root in Cartesian philosophy, western knowledge was able to establish itself on two main pillars. First, it assumed the existence of dualities such as those of mind and matter and mind and nature. Second, by assuming those dualities, Cartesian and modern European thinking was able to claim the possibility of a "non-situated, universal, Gog-eyed view knowledge", a type of knowledge that could be attained by rational thinking alone without resorting to the senses of the body (Grosfoguel 214). By claiming the possibility of a universal knowledge, the modern European knowledge was able to present itself as delocalised, alone having access to universal truths through the application of rational and conscious thinking (Grosfoguel 214). What this assumption implies is that non-European knowledge was not capable of reaching universality and was thus epistemically inferior.

The establishment of "a hierarchy of superior and inferior knowledge" led, consequently, to the classification of people into superior/inferior categories (Grosfoguel 214). Europeans were the superior people who had the superior knowledge and the non-European nations, which happen to be racially different and politically colonised were the inferior people with inferior knowledge. This Eurocentric knowledge formation allowed for a chain reaction

that started with colonial powers plundering the lands of native populations and did not stop at "the plundering of their place in the history of the cultural production of humanity" (Quijano and Ennis 552). Inferior races that were "capable only of producing inferior cultures" stood at odds with what seemed to be the natural flow of history and the natural progress of time (Quijano and Ennis 552). While Europe was stepping into its modernity as an age of rationality, Cartesian logic, and universal truths, the non-European world(s) remained attached to their barbarism raising constant suspicions regarding their human essence (Maldonado-Torres 245). The "Imperial Man['s]" attitude towards the colonised non-European native inhabitant of America, Africa, or Asia was a "form of questioning the very humanity of colonized peoples" in a manner that did not only legitimise and facilitate colonisation but also dismissed these populations from the articulations of modernity (Maldonado-Torres 245).

European modernity, assumed to imply rational universal knowledge as well as "capitalist and urban social relations and nation-states" that were imposed on the rest of the world through colonisation, also implied a temporal factor that imagined humanity progressing "from a state of nature and culminated in Europe" (Maldonado-Torres 175; Quijano and Ennis 542). This world, conceived as a trajectory moving from a primitive past to a modern present and a more modern future, ordered human civilisation and cultures not only linearly moving from the most ancient to the most recent, but also hierarchically moving from the most primitive to the most developed. Certainly, in the Eurocentric vision of the world, Europe was both the "center of the modern world-system" and the "culmination" of its culture (Quijano and Ennis 541-542). Europe was the successful present and the hopeful future. The rest of the world, as a space where the "colonized populations, along with their respective histories and cultures" lived, was "relocated" in the past (Quijano and Ennis 541).

Thus, the Eurocentric knowledge constructed Europe as the mobile locus of modernity constantly moving forward leaving behind and pushing outside all forms of sub-knowledges and subalterns. However, the Eurocentric conception of the world did not stop at the geographic borders of Europe. It, indeed, overflew to contaminate the knowledges of native populations who got into contact with European colonisation. A first instance of this contamination happened during the colonisation of Latin America and the result of which was, as it has been already stated, the creation of a whole epistemological class of people called *Indians* who did not ontologically exist—at least not in this sense—before being invented by Europeans. European colonial activities in Latin America affected the native populations of those lands not only by categorising them into an epistemological class over which they had no control but also

by using these same invented categories to subjugate them and to project them outside modernity as primitive Others. As inferior beings, for example, the native populations of Latin America represented a source of a cheap, if not a free, labour force that was exhaustively exploited for the pure economic benefit of the European centre. This ruthless exploitation, among other factors like warfare and disease, led eventually to "[t]he vast genocide of Indians in the first decades of colonization" (Quijano and Ennis 538).

As Europe expanded and colonised more nations taking hold of vast territories, the knowledge of Europe spread. This knowledge spread precisely by the encroachment of European, and later on American, "institutions and philosophy" over non-European and non-Western institutions and philosophies that had little to do with the western "praxis of living, knowing, and doing" (Mignolo and Walsh 138). As a result of colonisation, European languages started to replace native ones and started to be taught and to be used to teach modern sciences. Soon, the six modern European languages—English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and German—became assimilated to knowledge, rationality, and education; and soon, the native selves became required not only to speak at least one of them, but also to think in their terms. What is curious is that by simply learning and using these colonial languages the native selves find themselves at the threshold of contradictory worlds. On the one hand, they would have admitted that the language they were born to speak is neither privileged nor "apt for rational thinking" (Mignolo 275). On the other, while the learned and privileged European language would show the native selves the golden gates of modernity, it would simultaneously banish them outside of its centre and condemn them to wander in the wasteland of subalternity and otherness. It is in the privileged European languages used as languages of objective, detached, universal and rational science that the native learns that s/he is an "anthropos": an inferior human being discursively invented to stand as the negative reflection of the European/Western self (Mignolo 275).

However, the creation of the anthropos as Europe's *Other* was not only a discursive endeavour. Indeed, the Other had a physical appearance and a material existence that could be—and was—captured and documented by different means. The vast non-European lands stretched as a great laboratory in which theories could be applied. They were also conceived as extended fields from which valuable scientific material could be extracted to be "photographed, numbered, measured, bagged, boxed, and transported to centrally located repositories" (Shepherd 320). This intensive harvesting of excavated knowledge included even the bones of "the ancestral dead" that were exhumed from "burial sites and sacred places" (Shepherd 320).

The bones of the native's ancestors as well as her/his ritual mask and cultural artifacts were approached as valuable sources of data that required the special attention and study of various "schools of theory" which, despite sometimes deep differences between them, dealt with this "cultural resource" with the same kind of "entitlement" and "objectification" (Shepherd 320-321).

The sense of entitlement with which European/Western archaeologists dealt with the sacred burial sites of South Africa, for example, and which was discussed in Nick Shepherd's "The Grammar of Decoloniality" stands as a flagrant example of both the belief in the superiority of European sciences and the belief in colonial supremacy. It is the "scientific value" of the bones of the ancestors of the native population of South Africa and the political supremacy of the "white landowner" over the "black or Indigenous community attached to the site" that made the trespassing over sacred spaces possible (Shepherd 320-321). As a matter of fact, it is this same scientific and colonial entitlement that allowed for museums—as a "European invention"—to "collect artifacts representative of 'other' memories" and to displace and alienate them from their "cultural environment, their owners, and authors" (Mignolo and Walsh 199). As the preservation of humanity's material past stands to be a fundamental objective of museums, the bones as well as the cultural artifacts and objects of mundane and sacred practices turned into valuable physical proof of the development of humans from a state of nature, naïve barbarity, and uncivilised culture to a state of civilisation and sophisticated knowledge. They stood as a reminder of an "innocent oneness with nature" humanity used to have in the early stages of its existence, during its "childhood" (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 162).

By exposing the treasures extracted from the extra-European space in European museums it became visibly clear and scientifically proven that there existed a difference between the central European Self and the peripheral Other. The first point of difference was simply geographical. The Other did not inhabit the European space and was, indeed, separated from the centres of the largest colonial empires—Britain and France—not only by oceans and jungles but also by fables recounting the dangers that had to be braved in order to reach the heart of darkness in some remote African land. What existed beyond the borders of Europe was fascinating and dangerous; it was also the work of science and fiction. It would not be surprising then that while African artifacts made their way to populate the rooms of the British museum, works of fiction like *Heart of Darkness* also made their way to the British public. Turning into a source of education, novels and novellas about Africa filled the minds with descriptions of

the remote continent. Sometimes, it was depicted as one of the “blank spaces on the earth”, spaces that invite curiosity and dreams of “glories of exploration” (Conrad 11). Some other times, and as British exploration and colonisation progressed, those “blank” spaces started to acquire an identity and got filled in “with rivers and lakes and names” (Conrad 11-12). However, their new colonial identity shook off deluded dreams of glory and brought into the light the dark nature of the colonies. They were wide and wild spaces where “impenetrable darkness” reigned over “savages” who despite being employed to the extremity of their power and health would not deserve any compassion (Conrad 68).

Therefore, it was imperative that this immense darkness stretching outside the borders of Europe be brought to light. It was hence explored, excavated, catalogued, classified, and finally quarantined in museums that not only stood as spaces of knowledge but also as spaces of demarcation. As a heterotopia, the museum is simultaneously within and outside space. It is part of the modern “Western culture” and city as well; and yet, since it has no particular function except to “accumulate [time] ad infinitum”, it could but be conceived as *other* space (Foucault, “Of Other Spaces” 334-335). The museum has also a particular relation to time. It is a place where time infinitely accumulates and yet it is hardly affected by “the wear and tear of the years” (Foucault, “Of Other Spaces” 334-335). It is a place that stands still while everything around it moves, grows, dies, and decays. The museum is a place that triumphs over time and by doing so it endows the objects contained within its walls with a sort of a magical eternal life. However, this eternal fixity in space and time simply means that the displaced objects and artifacts of different non-European cultures get usurped of their right to develop. Standing uniquely at odds with their environment and completely outside the natural progress of time, objects from Africa and other colonies preserve their attachment to the dark history of humanity without being able to assimilate neither in European space nor time.

By the nineteenth century and as historical and cultural proof of the deep differences between the European hegemonic centre and the periphery of civilisation was successfully plundered from colonised lands to stand exposed in museums, photographs of native populations also made their way to Europe. Photography approached local native populations with almost the same avidity sciences like archaeology and anthropology did. It also shared with these disciplines a concern for classifying and preserving non-European spaces and peoples. However, and unlike scientific descriptions and museum tags and explanations, photography offered “more life-like detail[s]” that did not only provide an unquestionable visual proof of the difference of colonised “people as ethnic or occupational ‘types’” but was

also useful in fixing and preserving these types (Woodward 364). It was not surprising, then, that the European fascination with the Middle East and North Africa, for example, and that expressed itself through the appropriation of "[o]riental motifs" in different forms of art and "clothing fashions", would find photography a more satisfying tool to make the *East* more accessible (Woodward 364). The fascination with what lay beyond the known borders of Europe that translated itself into works of literary creation, music, and paintings dating as far back as the sixteenth century coupled with photography's promises of trustworthy documentation of reality resulted in the germination of a long and a complex relationship between photography and the *Orient*.

The Orient, as a category, "was almost a European invention", asserts Edward Said in his *Orientalism* (1). Being *almost* an invention of Europe entails that the Orient both existed and did not exist before the intervention of European powers in its creation. This may also mean that there is a component of artificiality and plasticity related to the identity of the Orient. The Orient, as a geographical space extending to the East and the Southeast of Europe did, indeed, exist before it was *invented* by Europe. However, Said's Orient is not only concerned with the geographical extent of lands stretching through North Africa and the Middle East reaching as far as China, in some cases. The Orient is, in fact, a mental construct. It is a place that does not only stand outside the physical borders of Europe but also stands outside of its cultures and civilisations as their negative. The Orient's identity, like that of America, was invented by Europe on the same colonial basis of race, dominance, and othering. Said asserts that, for Europe, the Orient was a "contrasting image" and stood as an actualised reflection of a less developed and a less sophisticated past (Said 1). What the Orient could have offered to the European imagination of the development of world civilisations was the missing link that tied together the *savages* of Africa and America to the modern European man. The Orient was the cradle of European "civilizations and languages" and the space that preserved the ancient sciences and philosophies (Said 1).

During the decline of intellectual life in Europe in the Middle Ages, the Abbasid Caliphate, which stretched over the majority of the lands of the Middle East and North Africa, witnessed its golden age. The Islamic rule over an important portion of the Orient was essential not only in preserving ancient Greek philosophy and mathematics through translation into Arabic, but also played a key role in introducing Persian and Hindu knowledge into the world (Mignolo and Walsh199). Muslim scholars like Al-Khwarizmi, who lived around the nineth century A.D. and who was a prominent mathematician and astronomer, was responsible for

bringing about ground-breaking mathematic findings winning him the title of the father of algebra. Other famous Muslim scholars include Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Al-Haytham (Alhazen) who were respectively influential in medicine and optics. Generally speaking, the Abbasid Caliphate followed by the Ottoman Empire guaranteed that, in the eyes of Europe, a significant portion of the Orient was considered to have had "sufficient dignity to be the other to the 'Occident'" (Quijano and Ennis 540). Unlike other cultures in America and Africa, the culture that flourished in the Orient, especially in the Middle East during the Islamic rule seemed to have been developed enough, politically and intellectually speaking, to be accepted to stand as the "contrasting image" and the "cultural contestant" of the old continent (Said 1). Quijano and Ennis insist that only the Orient was invented as a "geocultural identity" without "some equivalent to 'Indians' or 'blacks'" and this "dignity" was the result of the recognised development of the Orient (Quijano and Ennis 540).

For Quijano and Ennis, the level of political, cultural, and intellectual advance played an important role in defining the new identity that was attributed to the Orient by Europe. Race was equally essential in defining not only the identity but also the relationship that would tie Europe with its Other (540). Despite visible differences, the Orient represented a cultural reservoir for Europe. The long history of migration that linked the nations around the Mediterranean Sea allowed for an extraordinary exchange of languages, heritage, and religions. In more modern times, the Orient is believed to have been the cradle of Christianity, the main religion of Europe and an essential component of Eurocentrism. Unlike the nations of America and Africa, the Orient—always in the Saidian understanding—was home to Islam, another monotheistic religion that, despite being dismissed and disavowed as a system of belief capable of creating objective and universal knowledge, was sometimes recognised for specific scientific advances (Mignolo and Walsh 197). Politically speaking, the Orient was also capable of producing organised and centralised governments that were recognised as political threats, at times, and as considerable political and economic allies, at others. All these qualities, along with considerable ethnic diversity, brought the Orient closer to the European understanding of modernity. The geographic proximity, the political rivalry, and the cultural and intellectual development of the Orient may have won it the place of Europe's Other; however, in a deeply Eurocentric imagination of the world, the Orient could but be inferior.

The signs of the Orient's inferiority are numerous. Being almost invented by Europe, as Edward Said affirms, the Orient seems to be naturally and innately removed to a secondary position vis-à-vis its creator (1). Unlike Europe, the Orient does not seem to possess the power

of self-generation. It cannot create or invent itself and hence, it remains forever dependent on Europe to blow in its veins the blood of life. It is, therefore, ontologically inferior as it only comes second to its creator and donor of life. Not only the Orient's existence is dependent on Europe but so is its knowledge about itself. As a matter of fact, and as it has already been explained, the Orient as an extent of land predominantly stretching over North Africa and the Middle East physically existed independently from Europe. However, it was only the European conceptualisation of the land as "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes" that turned the physical space into a mental construct (Said 1). This mental construct, gaining more power during European colonial endeavours, especially during the nineteenth century, depended gravely on dichotomies that exaggerated differences and diluted similarities. It was then that all the elements of development, which had brought the Orient closer to European modernity and made it worthy of being considered Europe's Other, had to be dismissed and rejected as inferior and lacking in value. It was also then that the Orient started to be shaped as a difference, a contrasting canvas for European "culture" and "identity" (Said 3).

The construction of the Orient as a "new geocultural identity" depended on the creation of a whole discourse about it that projects it, at the same time, outside of the European geography and outside the centre of its modernity (Quijano and Ennis 537). The result of such discourse would be to justify and legitimise control and dominance over it. Indeed, Edward Said asserts that the Orient is in large part the result of a discursive creation and a power relation that Europe maintained with the Middle East, as well as the Far East (3). The Orient is the product of a European—mainly British and French—way of "dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it" (Said 3). It is thus in a constant state of subjugation to the European dominance of political power and knowledge. Colonisation ensured that political dominance over the Orient was guaranteed. It also proved that the latter was incapable of governing itself and maintaining its sovereignty. Likewise, starting from the eighteenth century, the scientific and pseudoscientific discourse about the Orient created "a growing systematic knowledge" about it in Europe that mixed in a unique fashion the findings of human and social sciences with the imagination of literature (Said 40). What eventually resulted from this discourse was the complete undermining of the Orient as "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, [and] 'different'" that stood as the absolute negative to "rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" Europe (Said 40).

1.2. Colonial Photography and the Visualisation of the Oriental Anthropos

When photography visited the Orient, it confirmed the verbal discourses that have been recounting detailing its exotic features and backward cultures. Indeed, as soon as the cameras became more advanced and less technically demanding they were deployed to the Middle East and North Africa to catalogue and keep record of the region, its inhabitants, "and their everyday practices" (Behdad 4). The aim of such prolific production of images of the Orient is, according to Ali Behdad, twofold. In a first instance, the early expeditions to the Middle East employed photography as an adjacent technique to support their scientific research. Historians and archaeologists were mostly interested in photographing "the ruins and remains of the Middle East's past" (Behdad 4). For example, in her article "Between Orientalist Clichés and Images of Modernization", Michelle L. Woodward cites the exclamation of French "scientist and politician François Arago" who predicted the great scientific addition of photography to the study of hieroglyphics (364). According to Arago, the work of "legions of draftsmen" copying "the millions and millions of hieroglyphics covering just the outside of the great monuments of Thebes, Memphis, Karnak" would be easily done by one man equipped with a camera (qtd. in Woodward 364). The practice of photographing the Orient's historic temples and decaying monuments would serve to satisfy the curiosity of a growing scientific society interested in collecting the remains of exotic cultures and decoding their obscure secrets, and to indulge the desires of a "burgeoning tourist industry" and its ever-growing interest in remote lands and alien peoples (Behdad 4).

One main category of early "Orientalist photography" responded to these two European demands (Behdad 21). The scientific interest in the Orient and its historical and cultural heritage, which was fuelled by "Napoleon's 1798 expedition to Egypt", found its visual translation in the works of such photographers as Maxime du Camp. Du Camp, who was already an established writer when he visited Egypt in the mid-nineteenth century, produced some of the first travel narratives that contained photographs (Behdad 21). Maxime du Camp's photographic representation of Egypt and other parts of the Orient like Palestine and Syria was not only the fruit of a personal interest in the region but also the product of "a network of individual and institutional relationships" that "determined the content of his photographs" and "provided the technical knowledge and logistical support to execute them" (Behdad 21). Being supported by the French government itself in his orientalist travel, du Camp employed his photography to satisfy both public and governmental curiosities about the exotic lands (Behdad

21). Another example of these early orientalist photographers mentioned by Ali Behdad in his *Camera Orientalis* was Francis Frith who, like du Camp, was interested in shooting ruins and monuments decorating the landscapes of Arab countries like Egypt, Palestine, and Lebanon. Also like du Camp, Frith attached to his photographs "verbatim extracts from eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Orientalist travel narratives in order to make these images meaningful and legible" (Behdad 21). These verbal extracts, contends Behdad, gave the Orient's visual images contextual frameworks that would help not only understanding but also classifying them (21).

Besides being used to serve the political interests of colonial governments, like that of nineteenth-century France, and to satisfy European curiosity about "alien and unusual" lands and peoples, Orientalist photography was also employed to quench the desires of a "bourgeois clientele" to look at and to possess exotic scenes (Behdad 4; Said 40). By the end of the nineteenth century, a quite different type of Orientalist photography developed both in the Middle East and North Africa. European and native photographers like Adrien Bonfils, as well as Syrian Pascal Sébah, founded their own studios in the Middle East (Woodward 364). Sébah, established in Istanbul, successfully executed a project to "photograph folk costumes of the [Ottoman] empire's provinces" (Woodward 364). Bonfils, on the other hand, upon moving from Paris to Beirut, established his studio and embarked on the mission of creating "the largest bodies of photographic work in the Near East" (Woodward 365). His work included the landscapes of the Orient and its people who were "classified according to type" (Woodward 365). Likewise, Lehnert & Landrock was "one of the most prolific studios in North Africa" (Behdad 38). Active predominantly in Tunisia and Egypt at the dawn of the twentieth century, Lehnert and Landrock managed to produce an impressive body of visual types ranging from "highly idealized views of the North African landscape to eroticized harem scenes and homoerotic portraits of young boys" (Behdad 38). A point in common that these different experiences had was an overly simplistic representation that sometimes bordered on falsification and the use of the same model to stand as genuine example of different social classes (Woodward 365).

With its almost obsessive concern for "cataloguing people according to ethnic group or occupation as well as commonalties in the use of studio backdrops, props and poses", Orientalist photography succeeded in creating and in anchoring an image of the Orient and the Oriental that was unidimensional and flat. Such images relied heavily on visual shortcuts like folk clothing, for example, that showed locals, particularly women, in their "full regalia" (Alloula

17). This aspect of depicting Oriental women clothed in intricately designed garments and wearing excessive amounts of jewellery did not only exhibit the hidden wealth of the Orient but also the idle aspect of its life (Behdad 83). Photographed in their private quarters, fully dressed in luxurious fabrics and ornated with jewels, Oriental women were presented as having neither occupation nor worries and as conducting an undemanding life that required from them almost nothing beyond dressing up and reclining in comfortable beds. This insistence on the idleness of the females of the Middle East and North Africa becomes even more accentuated when the photographer chooses to surround his models with leisure paraphernalia. In his book *The Colonial Harem*, Malek Alloula includes a respectable number of photographs taken in North Africa, namely in Algeria, and that show women who were either identified by their names or simply referred to as Moorish or Arab. In many of these photographs Arab and Moorish women were exposed reclining in their rooms and quarters surrounded with tea and coffee sets laid on the ground or on arabesque styled tables next to a waterpipe used to smoke tobacco (see figure 20).

Figure 20. Scenes and types. Moorish woman in her quarters, from *The Colonial Harem,* by Malek Alloula.

These photographs, transformed into postcards to better circulate and to better attend to the desires of a larger clientele increasingly interested in life in exotic places, required minimal

cognitive effort to be both recognised and classified as images of and from the Orient. This immediate recognition and categorisation resulted from a double process of negation and confirmation. On the one hand, the presence of a large body of photographs produced during the nineteenth century in the Middle East and North Africa cataloguing people according to their *social types* makes it extremely challenging to imagine them otherwise. For example, the category of women appearing labelled as Moorish or Arab women are almost all featured in similar situations. Almost all of them are photographed inside what appears to be their home, sitting down or reclining, and partaking in leisure activities such as drinking coffee and/or smoking a waterpipe. A foreign eye that had never seen an Arab or a Moorish woman would have never known that they did possess more complex identities that might transcend their seemingly easy and idle life. However, this complex identity was denied to them. It was not the standard custom of Orientalist photography to depict Oriental women, and Orientals in general, as complex individuals. As a matter of fact, the writing appearing in French at the bottom of the photograph used as a postcard by French colonialists and tourists reads "scènes et types" and testifies to this idea of negation of diversity and complexity. Classifying people into types and scenes and categorising them by their ethnic background or profession condenses their human identity in one single category denying them the possibility of change, progress, and individuality.

This negation is, on the other hand, usually accompanied by a simultaneous confirmation. The labelling itself, which denies Orientals complex individual identities, engages with the visual information exposed in the photograph to confirm the flat identity of its subject. As a matter of fact, some of the earliest Orientalist photographs like those produced by Francis Frith contained explicit textual information added and attached to them. Ali Behdad, for instance, has invoked Francis Frith as one of the Orientalist photographers who insisted upon incorporating in their "photographic collections […] descriptive texts that cite the works of earlier Orientalist travelers" (10). Behdad includes, in his *Camera Orientalis*, one of Frith's Orientalist photographs which depicts the temple and range of Baalbek in Lebanon (Behdad 23). On the photograph, one can read the following text: "This city may possibly have been built by King Solomon. 'And Solomon built Baaloth (Baalbec) and Tadmor in the wilderness (Palmyra).' 1 Kings ix. 18." The connection established between the biblical text and the photograph may have for function to further anchor the picture in reality. This anchorage of the visual by the linguistic might have been intended by Frith—especially when he does not only transcribe a verbal text on the photograph of the ruins of Baalbek but also when he specifically

sites the bible—to further validate both the accuracy of his assumption and the trustworthiness of the picture. However, one should not be oblivious of the nature of pictures themselves which makes them resist easy surrender to linguistic “invasion” (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 283). This resistance may simply express itself as a “co-presence” that allows a certain balance of powers between the two signs, visual and verbal; and that acknowledges the rights of both of them to exist within the same space without one necessarily prevailing over the other (Cammarata 20).

Co-presence as resistance eventually creates a gap that separates the photograph from the text and creates a generative space for other possible understandings. This separating gap may be understood as a space of disarmament in which both the text and the image can come to admit their limitations and accept the other as a possible aid to fill the space of meaning making (Cammarata 20). Nevertheless, and despite its creative potential, this generative gap that physically appears as a “white space” separating the visual from the verbal can turn into a manifestation of failure and a materialisation of the lacunae of representation, imagination, and memory (Cammarata 20; Foucault, “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” 12). In the case of the ruins of Baalbek, for example, Frith could have inscribed the biblical text as a verbal testimony to the historical, geographical, and even religious realities within which the temple is anchored. Nevertheless, the assertive tone of the text is immediately contradicted, indeed, negated by the image itself. Contrary to the verbal *building* to which the text testifies, the temple appears in ruin. Contrary to the assumed eminence of Solomon, the biblical king, the temple appears destroyed and struggling to survive. The white space is then turned into a battle ground between the image and its accompanying text in which the two signs do not only contest each other but also aim at dissolving each other. The result is what Foucault calls “an absence of space, an erasure of ‘common ground’ between the signs of writing and the lines of the image” (Foucault, “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” 12). The absence of space and common ground is symptomatic of two other absences: the one is ontological, and the other is political.

Ontologically speaking, the Orient was seemingly disappearing and slipping out of existence. It is worth remembering at this level that the Orient, as a category, was conceptualised in two main manners. On the one hand, Edward Said in his *Orientalism* declared that the Orient was almost fully created by Europe as its childish, immature, and irrational Other (40). On the other, Quijano and Ennis assert that the Orient’s past development was the most important redeeming quality that has eventually gained it, and its people, a geocultural identity that is not completely debased and disgraceful (540). In this sense one can understand the Orient as being a category upon which Europe looked with both nostalgia and pity. There was nostalgia because

the "primitive" oriental stood as a reminder of an earlier "stage of human history" (Behdad 89). A reminder of an imagined easier life, a life that was more connected to nature before the urbanising demands of modernity. Pity, however, could have been provoked either by the Orient's loss of prosperity and collapse into poverty and depravity, or because, like a child, its fallen state can but provoke compassion. The Orient was then a space where the memory of humanity was located, and it was where this memory had to be saved and preserved so that it can be enjoyed by future generations. To preserve this memory, European photographers deployed their skills to fight against the signs of mnemonic erosion that was threatening Oriental spaces.

One of the imminent threats to Europe's Oriental memory was the apparent attempts at modernisation conducted by certain Middle Eastern and North African states. For example, in 1841, the Tunisian Ahmad Pasha Bey issued a series of orders that culminated in the abolition of slavery in 1846. Closing the slave markets and the liberation of those born in slavery or entering the country as slaves, among other things, were revolutionary measures within the Arab and the Muslim world.[34] They were also revolutionary on the international level. The United States of America, for instance, only abolished slavery in 1865 after a civil war that lasted four years claiming the lives of many and turning into a spectacle of horror triggering history's "first full-scale attempt to document a war" (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 51). France, which colonised Tunisia in 1881, abolished slavery in its colonies in 1848, two years after the full abolition of the practice in Tunisia.[35] In the Eastern basin of the Mediterranean, the Ottoman centre, and despite its starting disintegration, showed other signs of modernisation. In "Alternative Histories of Photography in the Ottoman Middle East", Nancy Micklewright discusses a portrait of an Ottoman man that was produced between 1881 and 1910 (84). The photograph shows the "modern bureaucrat" at his desk surrounded with various objects including "ink jars, blotter, basket for papers requiring attention" (Micklewright 84). However, what stands out the most in this photograph is the candlestick telephone that seems to compete with his owner over the observer's attention (see figure 21).

---

[34] https://www.unesco.org/en/memory-world/abolition-slavery-tunisia-1841-1846
[35] Ibid.

Figure 21. [Ottoman Official on the Telephone], Photographer(s) unknown, ca. 1881–1910. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute.

Micklewright sheds significant light on both the format and the content of the photograph. Formally speaking, she asserts that the size of the portrait (31.5 x 39 cm) "is at least four times larger than most portraits of this period" (84). Besides, the "sharpness of focus, and crisp tonal range" testify to a "remarkable technical competence" (Micklewright 84). The sharpness of the photograph is well married with the sharpness of the look of its subject. The man appears dressed in a "suit jacket with vest, wing collar, and tie" and his attire is complemented with his eyeglasses and "trimmed beard and mustache [sic]" (Micklewright 84). Without his fez, the subject of the photograph would be easily confused with any European bureaucrat of the period. What is also striking about this photograph is that it stands as a contestation to the myriad of Orientalist photographs popularly produced and consumed in that era. There are no bazars and snake enchanters, no dervishes and erotic odalisques, no tents erect in the desert surrounded with oasis. In short, there is not a single visual indication of the Orient, except for the fez proudly kept by the Ottoman subject. What one can see in this photograph is what Nancy Micklewright calls "calm responsibility" and "Ottoman modernity" (84-85). It is a calm modernity bordering on boredom. It is modernity spreading through space contaminating the precious locus of Orientalist fantasies and daydreams of flying carpets, gennies, and

enchanting bayadères. Who in London or Paris would be interested in the photograph of man signing papers and speaking on the telephone? The Orient was, indeed, vanishing and it had to be brought back to where it belonged.

Taking the Orient back to where it belonged, that is to the past of humanity, means that it was necessary to deny it its modernity. The denial of the Orient's modernity did not only depend on the practice of dismissing its past progress as incapable of producing any universal knowledge. It also meant that even its present, which was attempting to catch the train of European modernity, had to be denied. This created an ontological absence that had to be filled with another (id)entity. In this context, one may understand Frith's photograph of the temple of Baalbek as a confirmation of the existence of the space and its past. Nevertheless, the confirmation of the past is immediately entangled with the negation of a possible survival into the future. The Oriental space can only be visualised as a disintegrating space collapsing into dust. If not, it has to be visualised as excessively anchored in a nostalgic past of slave markets and grand bazars. An image of modernity, even if superficial and staged, could not have been sustained. Besides denying the potential modernisation of the Oriental space, there were also multiple projects of denying this same modernity to the Oriental subject. Indeed, the image of the Ottoman official pales out in front of the army of images of generic and stereotypical nature. Unlike the unnamed Ottoman clerk, images discussed by Malek Alloula, Ali Behdad, and Michelle L. Woodward as being Orientalist photographs based on a systematic classification of people into types and professions leave no space for interpretation. The Orientalist generic photograph collapses the identity of its subject into a flat one-dimensionality that puts their existence outside of the photograph at risk. The ontological danger of the Orientalist photograph is not only limited to putting into question the very nature of the Oriental self but transcends that to question the possibility of existence of a modern Oriental.

To make up for an ontological vacuum, both the Orient and its people were given a new geocultural identity that is totally incapable of progress and development. The geography was locked in a decaying past and collapsing ruins and the people were plain unidimensional casts. This new colonial identity depended on an excessive production of racialised photographs and an "excessive anchorage" of the images they produced (Behdad 31). The excessive production may be accounted for, as it has already been demonstrated, by the growing scientific and touristic interest in the Middle East and North Africa. It could also be accounted for by a rise in a new form of consumerism in Western Europe especially. Unlike earlier forms of consumerism, the second most significant wave of European consumerist culture was not merely focused on

emancipating itself from the "regime of needs" (Trentmann 374). As a matter of fact, once liberated from hunger, disease, high mortality rates, and general forms of lack thanks to both the Agrarian and the Industrial Revolutions, European societies moved into satisfying their desires. With significant variations between different European nations, nineteenth century consumerism meant that a growing number of people became able to consume goods not because these goods were necessary for their survival but because they satisfied certain whims and caprices. It is also interesting to note that this type of consumption did not always depend on the material acquisition of commodities and accumulation of possessions, which interestingly started to develop a meaning of irrationality and "a loss of individuality" (Trentmann 388). Indeed, late nineteenth century Western European consumerism became more interested in vicarious ways of obtaining pleasure. Erika Diane Rappaport claims that entertainment such as the musical comedies housed in department stores provided, at the same time a pleasurable consumerist experience and a commentary on the rising consumerist society (180).

In this vein, the "gaze of the flâneuse" played a decisive role in changing the nature of European consumerism (Trentmann 388). Unlike the literary flaneur, traditionally assumed to be a male "observer and stroller whose home was the streets and arcades of the European metropolis", the female flaneuse seemed to have a different objective (Rappaport 115). The flaneuse was "a sightseeing tourist, browsing shopper, and magazine reader" who turned "commercial pleasures" into an activity of gazing and not necessarily buying (Rappaport 115). Her gaze was constantly moving from one shop window to the other, from one magazine page to the next, and from one musical comedy to the following. Her gaze was always "mobilized" because, after all, she is also a flâneuse, whose identity depended on the constant movement of her eyes. However, this gaze seemed to be less judging than that of her male counterpart who, in his urban solitude, derived pleasure from dispassionately observing the masses he anonymously marries himself to (Baudelaire 33-34). The flâneuse's gaze was insatiable and lusted after continuous tableaux of goods, subjects, and landscapes (Rappaport 180).

Also, unlike the male gaze of the flâneur which favoured the physical proximity to the masses it observed, the gaze of the flâneuse did not restrict itself to devouring real scenes of life. Contrary to Baudelaire's "perfect spectator", who passing through the masses reflected their movements like a mirror or captured and reproduced the "multiplicity of life" like "a kaleidoscope endowed with awareness", the female flâneuse would have satisfied herself with the virtual realities offered by photography (Baudelaire 34; Friedberg 30). Indeed, nineteenth

century consumerism offered multiple opportunity of transgression to women including moving, though partially, from being the object of the male flâneur's gaze to developing her own gaze. This transgression was the fruit of the relative hospitality of the urban spaces and arcades to the female stroller; but most importantly it was the fruit of the increasingly democratic use and spread of photography that allowed women to become more mobile, even if virtually (Friedberg 35-37).

It was while London, and other European cities, started to be consumed by "mobilized" and "virtual" gazes that photographs of the Orient reached their metropolitan clientele (Friedberg 22). Like its predecessors the panorama and illustrated print journalism, the Orientalist photograph offered the flâneuse the opportunity of virtual mobility. This kind of photography allowed the observer not only to project herself into foreign places thus satisfying bourgeois touristic desires, but also to summon within the most intimate spaces different forms of subjectivities (Friedberg 22). Also like its predecessors, the offerings of this visual medium were ephemeral. The ephemerality of the Orientalist photograph was, on the one hand, the result of the nature of the photograph itself and the nature of its subject, on the other. Never meant to stand alone in its auratic seclusion, the photograph reproduced itself in legions. This reproduction was both a reprint of the same plate multiple times and a reproduction of scenes and types infinitely. One photograph was then immediately followed by another and as the demand for exotic images of the faraway lands of the Orient grew to constitute a lucrative business for many European photographers such as Francis Frith, attention shifted into satisfying the market and pushed all interest in authenticity and authority to the background.

An example of this is, once again, the case of Frith himself who not only commissioned photographers to circulate the Middle East and produce images of the Orient but also bought "the negative stocks of established photographers such as Roger Fenton and Francis Bedford" to reprint them as his own.[36] Claiming possession of other photographers' prints or publishing them under the name of F. Frith and Co. without specific mention of the artist was not necessarily an act of plagiarism as much as it was a materialisation of the unoriginality and lack of uniqueness that characterised photography as a nascent art and profession in the nineteenth century. What mattered the most, then, was to satisfy the demand for the alien and the unusual rather than to ponder over the origins of the "authentic print" (Benjamin 106). What mattered

[36] https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O214425/baalbec-temple-photograph-francis-frith/

was to embrace photography's celebration of the immediate, the accessible, and the irredeemably replaceable and not to waste valuable time on questions of authority and authorship (Mitchell, *Image Science* 36).

Besides the ephemerality of the photograph as a concept, the subject matter of the Orientalist photograph was also ephemeral. As it has already been elaborated, the attempts at modernisation represented a threat to the existence of the Orient as Europe's Other. To face such gradual evaporation, the Orientalist photograph stood as an ocular proof of the existence of the Oriental space and self. However, in numerous cases, this visual proof came accompanied by a text functioning as an explanatory anchor. This excessive anchorage that materialises itself as labelling captions and works on a first level to link the photograph to reality, eventually leads to "discouraging the viewer from assuming different standpoints with respect to what is in the picture" (Behdad 31). Excessive anchorage forces on the Orientalist image a type of categorising knowledge that does not necessary emanate from within. By classifying, typifying, labelling, and naming, the text imposes its linguistic control on the "projective power of pictures" (Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image" 40). That is when the white space between the image and the text is blackened, and imagination is supressed. It is this excessive linguistic anchorage that accompanies Orientalist photographs that collapses the generative gap between the two signs into a barren "univocal and flat" expression (Behdad 31).

The triumph of the "repressive" powers of the text, akin to the long-assumed triumph of the logos over the icon and of reason over childish naïveté, finally erodes all possibilities of white spaces of different arrangements and understandings (Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image" 40; Cammarata 20; Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 332). This verbal triumph is also akin to the triumph of Europe's epistemological powers that imposed their ideological dominance over the Other and her/his space. It is at the level of the text, asserts Roland Barthes, that society's "morality and ideology" are invested, and it is at the level of the text that the Oriental space and self are dominated and possessed ("Rhetoric of the Image" 40). What results from this encounter between the verbal and the visual is, therefore, a total negation of the latter's liberties by the former's normative control. In front of a photograph of the Orient and its peoples, the European consumer finds her/himself bound to accept the logo-centric and taming explanations and elucidations without which the image would be too free, too wild, and too plurally total to be understood (Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image" 40; Behdad 31).

1.3. (Re)Imaging Coloniality of Knowledge and Reframing Theory

The dominance of the verbal over the visual is also symptomatic of European epistemological dominance over the lands of the Orient and the rest of savage nations that failed to enter the modern time of the word and remained attached to their archaic icons. It would not be a stretch to claim that for a significant part of the twentieth century, language—oral and written— became the focal point of scientific and philosophical research. Indeed, there was even "an excessive *textualization* in research practices and in their objects that ended up marginalizing what cannot be shaped on the model of language" (Cometa, "Introduction" 15). The verbal was established and hailed not only as a subject matter of different schools of thought, but it was also the very instrument with which reality was explored. The history of prioritising language over other forms of human expression and communication is significantly long. However, it was in 1967 that Richard Rorty clearly announced the dawning of the linguistic turn. Discussing Rorty's philosophy, W.J.T. Mitchell asserts that the culminating development of the former's history of thought was the heralding of the linguistic turn that rendered the "textuality" and the verbal in general "the lingua franca for critical reflections on the arts, the media, and cultural forms" (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 11). Indeed, in the light of the linguistic turn, almost every conceivable aspect of human society, including its interaction with nature, was constructed as a language and a discourse. Even the unconscious, with its obscure forms and archaic archetypes, was "structured like a language", claims Mitchell; and nature itself was subdued to the categorising powers of discourse (*Picture Theory* 11).

This favouring of language over image in constructing, conveying, and decoding meaning could, in fact, be traced to certain insecurities humans have—or have acquired—in their relationship to the latter. W.J.T. Mitchell valuably elucidates this apparent unrest towards images. In *What Do Pictures Want?*, Mitchell points out that people's relationship to images has been "ambivalent", governed by love and hate, depending on the value they attached to said images (93). One of the first traces modern humanity has to the value of images derives from religious texts. Mitchell states that the biblical story of Adam's creation embeds two meanings: first, Man is created in the image of God; second, Man has almost an equal power of creation and can, in his turn, make "new images" (*What Do Pictures Want?* 92). Seemingly taken by surprise by his creation's capabilities, God issues a series of laws prohibiting the making of new images. However, also endowed with free will, humankind does not seem to take any heed of the prohibition and proceeds with the creation its own images. This act of blatant disobedience

gains the original "imago dei" a negative value that became engraved in the genetic makeup of all its imaged creations (Mitchell, *Image Science* 84). Like its creator, "The man-made image that comes alive is equally capable of being seen as an evil, corrupting, pathological life-form, one that threatens the life of its creator or host" (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 93). Besides threatening the life of their creator, images could also pose serious threats to her/his sovereignty, autonomy, and dominance. When taken by love for these images, humankind may fall prey to different "forms of overestimation such as worship, adoration, and veneration" (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 93). Hatred, on the other hand, mostly derived from fear, functions on the level of "devaluation or underestimation-horror" (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 93).

Interestingly, hatred and violence against images seem to be far more complex than love for them. Iconoclasm, which is the deliberate destruction of images for either political or religious motives, originates from a passionate hatred that, at the same time, recognises their life and powers and rejects them as cause for revulsion (Mitchell, *Image Science* 31; *What Do Pictures Want?* 93). Iconophobia and iconoclasm function on two parallel levels, the first of which incorporates the value of the image, and the second rejects it as negative. The value of images does not, however, stem from their coming to life alone. It is indeed provoked by a collection of thoughts and imaginations that humankind has developed about images. These life-like forms are believed to be capable of a variety of actions: they have a "social life", they reproduce themselves, and they also move (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want*? 93). Once imagined in this manner, images tend to turn into a source of anxiety that people fight for, fight against, and/or "blame" for their own misbehaviour (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want*? 141). Images are also believed to have some powers over the human. Idols, fetishes, and totems, with varying potencies, are believed to affect the life of the people who believe in them and sometimes even that of those who shun and disdain them (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 7; *What do Pictures Want*? 158-159). The images' potential and ability to develop a seemingly ordered life and to propagate themselves through reproduction and migration makes them appear concerningly more intrusive and elusive. It would not be inexplicable then to see anxiety over said power spread and affect especially the adherents to the three monotheistic religions (Mitchell, *Image Science* 20).

Religious zealots have taken it upon themselves, for centuries, to purge the world, and the word, from any trace of image contamination. The stories of religious groups attacking and destroying other people's images are abundant. W.J.T. Mitchell mentions one of them in his book *Image Sciences: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics* where he discusses

Nicholas Poussin's *The Plague at Ashdod*. The main subject of the painting is divine wrath befalling the Philistines as a form of collective punishment for both their war against the Israelites and their idolatry. Mitchell draws the reader's attention to the fact that as the eye pulls out of the striking scene of generalised death in the foreground, another embedded scene reveals itself (*Image Science*, 191-192). In the background, the Philistines' idol, Dagon is seen face down, decapitated, and with his hand cut off. The plague that befell the misbelieving population and is brought to the foreground is nothing but an "allegorical shadow"—an image—of the "real story", which is the miraculous "shuttering of the enemy's idol by the more powerful god of the Israelites", emphasises Mitchell (*Image Science* 193). In the same vein it is worth noting that Muslims recount a similar story, although they leave out the dramatic effects of plagues wiping out nations. They, indeed, believe that when Mohammad returned to Mekka after defeating the idolaters who have caused him and his followers to emigrate to Yathrib, he ordered his disciples to enter the city and to destroy all the idols that were erected in and around the Kaaba. This act of destroying the enemy's idols is recorded in Islam as one of the final orders of Mohammad and an important milestone in finalising the establishment of the last monotheistic religion. Curiously, however, both the Israelites and the Muslim seem to have replaced the pagan idols with a symbolic figure that functions as a placeholder or a reminder of the divine prescription against making images.

In Poussin's painting, one can see next to the demolished Dagon the Ark of the Covenant that the Philistines have captures and that is now returned to its righteous owners (Mitchell, *Image Science* 192). The Ark is believed to be a wooden chest embellished with pure gold and containing the two tablets upon which the Ten Commandments have been engraved. It may also have contained the rod of Aaron and a golden pot of Manna. Symbolically speaking, the Ark of God contains his word and that is why Israelites had to venerate and protect it. Materialistically speaking, the Ark is a chest, an artifact believed to have contained other objects of supernatural powers. Similarly, Muslims, during the early years of the establishment of their religion, fought several wars against idolaters. Upon final victory, they purified the Kaaba, the house of Allah, from all signs of paganism starting with demolishing idols. Today, the Kaaba stands as one of the most sacred places in Islam. It is the direction of all their prayers and observers would endeavour to visit it on pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime. The Kaaba is a cubical structure built of stone inside of which only copies of the Qur'an, the word of God, exists. Symbolically speaking, the Kaaba is the sign of God's will and power. It is His figurative house towards which believers gravitate and whose protection and veneration are mandatory. Materialistically

speaking, the Kaaba is a visible, tangible, and physical object that contains Mohammad's linguistic miracle.

If any lesson is to be learned at all from these stories of fervent hatred and violent attacks on images it would be that the latter have a strong and a tenacious potency of reincarnating themselves allowing them come back with even greater power and in a more insidious manner (Mitchell, *Image Science* 32). Images have vanquished religious iconoclasts and succeeded in remanifesting themselves in ways that transcended men of the cloth's power to attack them. Images have transformed themselves from a condemned golden calf to a venerated wooden chest, from a massive humanoid stone to an even larger architectural form. Nevertheless, the failing religious crusade against engraved images did little to deter other groups like scientists and even politicians from conducting their own campaigns. Linguistics, philosophy, and ethnography are among the human sciences that have deplored images either as entities capable of captivating humans or as signs and symbols of primitivity and immaturity threatening to lead humanity backwards in its evolutionary journey (Mitchell, *Image Science* 222). Images, the making of them, the love and devotion to their existence, and the belief in their life and power have all been bewailed "as an invitation to moral degeneracy, perversity, and regression into savage superstition, infantilism, psychosis, or brutish forms of behavior" (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 93). To evade such accusations, human beings had to project this seemingly foolish and vicious belief in the life of images onto others. The self, imagined as rational, civilised, educated, and even religious had to purify its domains from any flirtation with idolatry (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 93).

To take up the images of the Ark of the Covenant and the Kaaba again, one is tempted into making yet another logical parallelism. The point in common both these structures have is their inner void. This structural void is believed to be filled, in both cases, with the word of God and symbols of His absolute power. The hollowness of the new figures seems to have an essential symbolic function, which is calling out "the emptiness, vanity, and impropriety of the idol" (Mitchell, *Iconology* 113). Put differently, destroying the Philistines' Dagon or Quraish's idols was not enough by itself to dissuade people from relapsing into idolatry. Both the Bible and the Qur'an share a few examples of the possibility of a backward move into paganism one of which is the Israelites' worshiping of the golden calf. Consequently, there was a need for the immediate replacement of the old image by a new one that is more abstract and absolute. The new form had also to be constructively hollow to highlight that it was unalive and that nothing lived inside it. A step further into the destruction of the image was undertaken by filling it with

words; sacred words that adamantly prohibit its turning into a living image, and idol. Worshippers and followers of new religions could then ease their anxieties about being held captive and enslaved again by a new image. They would also have a constant physical reminder of the hollowness of every image and that those who "overvalued" them were either "pagans and primitives" who have not been ushered into civilisation; "children or foolish women" who are wanting in rationality; and in general, every Other group (Mitchell, *Iconology* 113). At this point it seems inescapable to reach the same conclusion W.J.T. Mitchell reached in his *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*: "[t]he rhetoric of iconoclasm is thus a rhetoric of exclusion and domination, a caricature of the other as one who is involved in irrational, obscene behavior from which (fortunately) we are exempt" (113).

Thereupon, it would also seem inevitable to conclude that the destruction of the images of the Other goes hand in hand with the destruction of the Other her/himself. This destruction can, in fact, be literal like it has been showed through the example of the obliteration of the Philistines by the miraculous plague of Ashdod; or it can be political by forcing the Other into complete surrender to the word as the conquest of Mekka testifies. Either way the result is almost identical since the "destruction of the Baalim, of gods of the place, local deities, the genius loci" ensures the final purification of the land from idolatry and sometimes even from its native populations (Mitchell, *Image Science* 70). This "territorial mandate" is usually executed within a discursive framework of supremacy and dominance of one's own god—and by expansion—one's "reason, science, criticism, the Logos, the spirit of human language and civilized conversation" over the native's "'dumb', 'mute', 'empty', or 'illusory'" idol (Mitchell, *Iconology* 113; *Image Science* 70). Moreover, since images are not only physical objects but can also be images of the mind like metaphors or mental representations, the eradication of the Other's images may, indeed, take multiple forms. In modern times, destroying someone's image is often understood metaphorically as it is usually taken to mean tarnishing one's reputation or blackening her/his (self)representation. Also, in today's context, territorial and ideological conflicts take place on the virtual space as well as on the battle ground and a key weapon used against enemies is to misrepresent, to vilify, and to dehumanise them.

In effect, virtual destruction of images has been part of war propaganda for decades. The Cold War, for example, was a historical moment during which both (non)warring parties employed their capacities to dehumanise each other. In more recent times, the Abu Ghraib scandal which consisted of the leakage of photographs showing Iraqi prisoners being tortured, dragged by a leash, and piled up naked on top of each other while grinning American soldiers

held thumbs-up next to them is nothing but another attempt at disrobing the enemy of any human dignity. Finally, the livestream images of thousands of killed babies and unarmed civilians in Gaza that have been feeding some Arab News channels while partially or completely censored from European and American channels is also a proof of the importance of destroying both the enemies and their images. This almost systematic war on images during times of conflict is best materialised by the military targeting of journalists reporting from theatres of operations. Alessandro Penso's *Mother and Child* discussed in the first part was a finalist in the Premio Luchetta. This prize was created to celebrate and commemorate Marco Luchetta, Dario D'Angelo, and Alessandro Ota who were killed in 1994 while filming a documentary about children orphaned by the Bosnian war. In the still going on war on Gaza, "at least 108 journalists and media workers" were among the people killed as of June 14, 2024.[37]

Generally speaking, photographs of atrocity, famine, and war have a massive destructive potential even when they call for compassion and pity or for fear and anger. They are images that show the Other being destroyed either by a supernatural power or by a superior human power. Such images can be easily interpreted as signs of the Other's weakness and ill-fitting capability to survive adversary forces and can consequently convey messages of the authority and the superiority of the vanquishing power. On the other hand, and especially in a situation of a political or armed conflict, when the enemy is shown in debasing situations like being held captive in an inhumane way or being tortured and abused, her/his human image gets shuttered. Dehumanisation, in this sense, functions on two distinct but connected levels. First, it denies the enemy any human behaviour and emotion, and focuses on showing only the biological side of her/his nature. Second, and as a result of the first negation, the enemy is also denied her/his human dignity and the right to equal treatment on the basis of her/his humanity. It is in this light that Orientalist photographs can also be approached as pictures that act upon the image of the native Oriental to distort it and to eventually destroy it in order to replace it by something else. Orientalist photographs are pictures that deny the native populations of the Orient their own "singular historical identities", impose on them a racialised, "colonial and negative" identity in preparation not only for the pillage of their lands but also for "the plundering of their place in the history of the cultural production of humanity" (Quijano and Ennis 552).

[37] https://cpj.org/2024/06/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/

Orientalist photographs are, therefore, colonial photographs because, regardless of the intentions of their producers, they served imperialist and expansionist objectives. To call Orientalist photography colonial serves multiple purposes, in reality. First, it calls out their violent nature that could otherwise be hidden behind a seemingly neutral or neutralised terminology. Edward Said's *Orientalism* was, in fact, revolutionary when it was first published in 1978. It was one of the first major theoretical works that revealed the nature of the systematic knowledge produced by the Occident about the lands of the Orient. Said insists that the Orient was the territories of expansionist interests to mainly Britain and France during the nineteenth century until the end of their colonial dominance by the end of the Second World War. However, the waning of the largest colonial empires in modern history allowed for the rise of the United States of America as a sole dominator of the Orient (Said 4). He also does not fail to note that this "particular closeness" between the Occident—Britain and France first, then America—and the Orient resulted in the enormous production of knowledge that "always demonstrates the comparatively greater strength of the Occident" (Said 4). Said's groundbreaking theory strived to demonstrate that the seemingly detached, objective, and universal knowledge produced by the West about the Orient was, in fact, biased and essentialist. His theory also provided what Michelle L. Woodward calls "trenchant critical analysis" especially when it was applied to the visual arts by enthusiastic researchers who sometimes used it "too broadly" turning it, eventually, into a cliché (Woodward 363).

In effect, as soon as Said's book saw the light, an extraordinary number of paintings, drawing, texts, and even photographs were readily dubbed Orientalist not only to highlight their subject matter but also to provide a form of subtle warning in relation to their content. However, also soon enough, Orientalism turned into a term almost devoid of any meaning. It became quite easily dismissed either because it was used as a shortcut that "obscur[es] nuances and inconsistencies", or because it was accused of suffering from moments of "essentializing discourses" similar to those it set itself against (Clifford 262; Woodward 363). Although Orientalism was mainly intended to debunk the essentialist narratives the west produced about the Orient, it itself was turned into a seemingly normative discourse about the West. The overuse of Orientalism as a label and a theoretical framework turned it into a cliché especially suitable for detached academic debates. One of such debates was exemplified in Linda Nochlin's article "The Imaginary Orient". Nochlin mentions that when confronted with the question of Orientalism being employed as an instrument of control that justifies Europe's dominance over the imagined culturally inferior Orient during the nineteenth century, Donald A. Rosenthal, the

organiser of the “Orientalism, the Near East in French painting, 1800-1880” exhibition held in 1982, dropped the “issues of political domination and ideology […] like hot potatoes” (34). Indeed, Rosenthal’s argument for dismissing the “re-evaluation of [the] political issues” of “French Orientalist painting” was in a way due to them having “aesthetic quality and historical interest” that seem to be of greater importance (9).

One important concern regarding the use of the label of Orientalist photography is the possibility of disregarding the political bearing of such photographs in favour of focusing simply on their aesthetic value. While the question of whether works of art should be appraised for their aesthetics, their political engagement, or both will be addressed adequately in what follows, suffice it to say at this point that this particular debate is pushed to the background when the naming is shift to *colonial photographs*. This label functions as a reverse prism that concentrates the different discussions and focalises them into addressing the imperialistic and ideological nature of colonial picture-making. In the light of Decolonial theory and thinking, there should be no room left for dropping hot issues as one would find her/himself almost forced to confront the shuttered and shuttering image of the Oriental Self. Properly naming the photographs is a first necessary step towards exorcising their hurtful image. It is also an exercise that challenges Quijano and Ennis’s claims that the Orient preserved some dignity in the eyes of the West that kept it from being attributed a completely debasing colonial identity (540). As a matter of fact, there was nothing dignifying about photographs that expose the Oriental as a *type*, as an element of a charnel landscape, or as a carnal humanoid. There is no dignity in being colonised.

To insist on the fact that such photographs were colonial and not simply Orientalist, one is also invited to examine the dynamics of power that led to their creation. One important power instrument was, in fact colonialism which gave the European historian, ethnographer, and even tourist the political power to roam freely within the Oriental space and shoot, to the content of her/his heart, as many Oriental selves as s/he pleased. However, it is equally important to note that military and political colonisation were not the only instruments and sources of power European photographers of the Orient enjoyed. Indeed, they were also equipped with the power of knowledge. On the one hand, they knew how to make photographs. Being an art and a profession born in Europe, photography was more democratised in the West than in the Orient. On the other hand, European photographers would have been more familiar with the Orientalist gaze that mastered overlooking “history [and] temporal change” to fix the Oriental subject in an ephemeral past (Nochlin 36). This knowledge guided the early European Orientalist

photographers and showed them where to look and what to look at/for. It also leaked into their disciples who picked up after their masters and begun, themselves, to produce their own Orientalist photographs. One important example in this sense was Pascal Sébah whose prolific photographic production did not break free from the chains of Orientalist standards despite the fact that he, himself was an Oriental subject. Besides his collection of photographs of "folk costumes of the Empire's provinces" that won him praise, Sébah also produced a considerable number of pictures of Ottoman types like dervishes, eunuchs, Bedouins, and of course reclining females (Woodward 364). This particular example demonstrates that Orientalism is not simply an artistic genre or movement but rather a hegemonic form of knowledge that imposes itself on weaker others. It is, indeed, a form of coloniality that makes Oriental selves migrate outside of their own subjectivity to forever wander in the peripheries of objecthood.

When the Orientalist gaze and knowledge are configured as invasive, intrusive, and hegemonic, Orientalism as a theory, as well as postcolonialism, prove to be of little service. Besides the fact that it became sometimes dismissed as a cliché whenever the relationship between the Orient and the Occident was brought up; and other than the fact that it is often criticised for adopting the same essentialising thinking it claims to fight, Orientalism seems to have *docilized* the conflict between the Orient and the Occident. In other words, the Orientalist thinking moved the struggle into the academic arena almost cutting it off from what happens on the grounds of reality. It might not have been Edward Said's intention, yet his theory left the door ajar for considerable rebuttal and dismissal on the basis of overgeneralisation and expiry of the statute of limitations. As a matter of fact, like postcolonial thinking, Orientalism partakes in what Ramón Grosfoguel calls "the myth of a 'postcolonial' world" (219). This myth consists in a deceitful belief that colonialism and coloniality ended with the formal and political independence of the colonised nations. The *post* in postcolonial conveys a meaning of going through, reaching an end, surpassing, and even surviving a period or an event. Grosfoguel insists that "[w]e continue to live under the same 'colonial power matrix'" and that if anything has changed in the twentieth century it was a subtle, and perhaps more aggressive, movement from "'global colonialism' to the current period of 'global coloniality'" (219). This global coloniality means that "non-European people are still living under crude European/Euro-American exploitation and domination" and that the same "old colonial hierarchies of European versus non-Europeans remain in place and are entangled with the 'international division of labor' and accumulation of capital at a world-scale" (Grosfoguel 219). In this understanding, postcolonialism seems like a mirage that invites ex-colonised peoples to come to terms with

their colonial traumas and to accept the shuttered colonial image of themselves as part of their past identity.

This rupture with the past cannot, however, take place without a major necessary step of breaking completely free from the European/Euro-American domination. Epistemologically speaking, the break with European and American dominance could only happen when thinking changes its locus. This is yet another field where postcolonial and Orientalist theories are of little service to the current endeavour. Orientalism, in particular, was no doubt a necessary first step towards recognising certain patterns in European thinking and rendition of the Orient. It was similar to a wakeup call opening the Oriental subjects' eyes on how they were (and still are) seen and represented by the Western eye. However, the issue at hand would not be solved only by tracing lines of similarities between the past and the present. The issue is to demonstrate that there is a "continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations" and that this continuity is "produced by colonial cultures and structures in the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system" (Grosfoguel 219). This continuity is what allows for the production of photographs showing migrants in situations of vulnerability. The continuity of forms of domination is what allows for the objectification and dehumanisation of said migrants either by magnifying their biological existence or by minimising their human experience. The colonial forms of domination that allowed for the colonial European self to project the colonised Other out of historical temporality, is the same form of domination that expels migrants from their singular identities and collapses them into a type, a scene, a case, and a number. Colonial forms allow for the amalgamation of Non-European selves collective groups like Africans or Middle Eastern coming from generic places like the Sub-Sahara or Arab countries.

Moreover, and besides recognising and demonstrating the continuity of colonial forms of dominance that linger like an afterimage even after the stimulus—read colonialism—is removed, it seems imperative to take the struggle to the second level. This second level was in fact hint at by Edward Said himself in his preface to the 2003 reprint of his *Orientalism*. For Said, the aim of Orientalism was "to use humanistic critique to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis" (xvii). Fulfilling this objective would have answered to assumedly European and American invitations to "Arabs and Muslims" to stop "dwelling on the depredations of empire" and to assume the failures and the losses of the past—and the present— without the lamentations of discourses of victimhood (Said xvi). Said, and many postcolonial thinkers, have tried to fulfil this aim by trying to hold "modern

Orientalist[s]" responsible for the ills of past empires (xvi). This endeavour has failed, for while some scholars as well as politicians recognise the severity of the impact of the empire on the lives of "'subject races' generation after generation", little has been done on the ground to change the current situation. Photographs of migrant people that have been examined in the first part of this dissertation seem to be enough of a proof that the "hierarchical order of superior and inferior people" has remained in place; and that by adopting "juridical-political" discourses of security and management, this order gained more power and legitimacy (Grosfoguel 217-219).

The endeavour of opening up struggles and debates about the evils of the past with almost naïve aspirations for a potential change in the world order has failed also because talking from inside the system against it is nothing but a form of wailing. Maybe those who have claimed that "victims of empire wail on while their country goes to the dogs" and with whom Said seems to be at odds were not completely wrong (xvi). It is a form of passive wailing to keep playing a game over whose rules one has no control (Mignolo 277). It is certainly a form of wailing to insist on using the same models of colonial and hierarchical knowledge and hope to prove, through them, one's equality "to those who placed him or her second-class" (Mignolo 275). It is a futile and a hopeless wailing because, as Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni has stated in "Decoloniality as the Future of Africa", the "postcolonial 'cultural turn' […] is located and revolves within a Euro-North American-centric modernist discursive, historical, and structural terrain" (491). This location or position within the hegemonic centre makes postcolonial theory of little effect in the struggles of ex-colonised people for salvaging their image. The failure of the enterprise is also in part related to its endgame. What is hoped for from demonstrating to the centres of the modern empire the extent to which their representations of the colonised Other were hurtful? What could be gained from returning the "immense postcard to its sender" (Alloula 5)?

The current conjuncture of world crises in general and migration crisis in particular dictates that a work of relocation is in order. This relocation depends on repositioning knowledge and its production outside the Euro-American centre by acknowledging and applying models of thinking that were not only produced outside the geography of the conventional modern West but that were also produced as a challenge to the mainstream narrative of a systematic and universal knowledge. The second fundamental work of relocation depends on repositioning the ex-colonised Self outside of the grinding centre of the hegemonic West. This repositioning should be configured as a form of tenacious rebellion and as an

instrument of resistance to the normative dichotomous hierarchisation of time and space that was produced by European modernity. To achieve this aim, the following two chapters will utilise Decolonial Thinking as the main theoretical framework against which self-representing migrants' photographs as well as non-conventional European pictures will be examined. Decoloniality is most suitable for this exercise because, as asserts Ndlovu-Gatsheni, it "provides ex-colonized peoples a space to judge Euro-American deceit and hypocrisy and to stand up into subjecthood through judging Europe and exposing technologies of subjectivation" (492). Decolonial Thinking is also suitable for this endeavour because it does not stop at the level of judging and denouncing Europe using Eurocentric forms of knowledge but proposes its own epistemological framework. A framework that does not aim at imposing itself as "an essentialist, fundamentalist, anti-European critique" but at recognising the pluralities of truths that need to enter in dialogues with each other (Grosfoguel 212).

2. *Live, Love, Refugee*'s Self Narration and the Reclaiming of Subjecthood

One of the strongest arguments against iconoclasm is that it is in the nature of images to resist complete destruction. They may be tarnished, blackened, they may even be banished; however, they can never be annihilated. Regardless of the amount of power images—any images—are faced with, they will always find a way to reincarnate and to relocate themselves. W.J.T. Mitchell insisted through his writings that images are relentlessly capable of duplicating and reproducing themselves, as well as migrating from one domain of visual production/consumption to the other (*Image Science* 68).[38] This constant return is akin to that of the "repressed" that insists on making its presence felt and noticed notwithstanding attempts of omission (Mitchell, *Image Science* 31). It is also akin to the haunting powers of spectres and ghosts which persistently stain space with their apparition (Derrida, *Spectres of Marx* 11; Fisher 18-21). Thus, it seems that both images and migrants meet on the grounds of repression and recurrence. They both suffer from oppressive tentatives of containment, immobilising, halting, and differing; and they both are stubbornly resistant to such powers of suppression. They both seem capable of not only reinventing themselves but equally reinventing modalities of transgression and trespassing. Their ability to self-regenerate and to relocate, especially clandestinely, makes them highly disruptive to the common stability of the "law-and-order society [that] has today developed into an expansive penal and national security state with enhanced powers to deport, detain, surveil and abandon" (Danewid 8). They stand, therefore, as agents of chaos and rebellion that taint with their untimely presence the visual landscape.

What then is to be done with images and migrants? If they cannot be contained and restrained and if the harder they are fought, the harder they come back, how should they be dealt with? One possible answer might be to befriend them. To come to terms with them. To negotiate a common ground of understanding with them. One would think of it as an experience of taming and policing. However, one should also be attentive to the fact that such terminology is hierarchically ordered and pertains to the territory of coloniality. Taming is the practice of domesticating what is assumed to be wild, living outside culture and civilisation. It involves violence and aims at bringing an inferior other into the domain of the self. Policing is equally negative, colonial, and othering. Policing starts from a presumption of the existence of a centre of order to be maintained and protected against peripheral elements of disorder. In relation to

---

[38] See also W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* and *What Do Pictures Want?*.

images, the centre is presumably the supremacy of the word/language that is assumed to be rational and mature. The periphery is occupied by the childish, emotional, and immature image. In relation to migration, the centre is “the (white) nation-state” and the periphery is where the threatening migrants are located or come from (Danewid 3). Besides, policing naturalises the dichotomous construction of the relationship between image and text and between migrant and nation-state, highlights the existence of a tension that needs to be managed and maintained, and finally obscures “the centrality of racial–colonial violence to the making of sovereign ‘exceptional’ power” (Danewid 3).

Decolonially dealing with images and migrants means resisting, as a first step, to frame the relationship with them as one of tension and struggle. Then, one should aim at entering in a dialogue with them with the intention of reaching new forms of knowing and doing. This dialogue may start with striking a contract with both of them. A contract that would eventually lead to the production of an image of migrant that is not necessarily hurtful and that is not a permanent exile. This type of contract is visible in the work of two photographers who, despite belonging to two different backgrounds, have been able to make of their work a space of confidence instead of preying, a site (sight?) of composure instead of exposure. One of these artists is Omar Imam, a Damascus-born Amsterdam-based visual artist who, according to his website, “uses irony and a conceptual approach to provoke positive impact, and contribute to society reshaping, with playful seriousness”.[39] His photographic project that will be discussed in this chapter is entitled *Live, Love, Refugee* and has been shown in 16 countries. Omar Imam establishes his contract through immediately creating a visual encounter between his spectators and the people he photographed. After a brief introduction of the project, one finds her/himself looked at by migrants who stand gazing at the lens inviting and even challenging the spectator to continue looking. This experience creates a generalised atmosphere of consent between the three poles of the visual game at hand: the photographed subject, the photographer, and the observer. All of them become fully aware of the presence of each other and all of them play along.

[39] http://www.omarimam.com/about

2.1. Subverting the Gazing Game

In her book *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Ariella Azoulay advances that the day photography was officially invented its citizens "signed" a civil contract (109). The civil contract of photography is constructed as a space open to any individual who takes part in the photographic action either by being a photographer who addresses others through photographs or the person who assumes the role of addressee (Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 81). Photography's civil contract, like any other contract, "regulates" the encounters between the different members of its citizenry "reducing and most of the time eliminating the possibility of direct violence", proposes Azoulay (*The Civil Contract* 82). It also equips its citizenry with the power to resist and to oppose the sovereign governmental powers that divide populations into citizens and non-citizens the latter of whom are pushed out of the nation-state's space and into the infringing space of predatory photography, among other locations. A non-citizen, a refugee, an illegalised migrant, or a stateless person is not only someone who was reduced to bare life, that is a non-political life where s/he loses any "right to have rights" but s/he is also a person "who can be arrested at any time" and who can even be forced "to undress and expose himself to the whims of those who have detained him" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 4; Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* 296; Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 81). A non-citizen is someone who can be easily "raped into being only a photograph […] into being someone who can continually be humiliated by the gaze" (Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 314).

Photography was initially deployed to capture the images of the less advantaged people in modern society "such as ethnic minorities, criminals, and the insane", hence its infringing and violent nature helped perpetuate "the social relations of power", indeed, normalise them (Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 109-110). What resulted from this almost mundane practice of photographing the weak, the sick, and the mentally and socially alienated was to construct these categories "into utterly exposed objects of photography", objects whose consent was taken for granted (Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 110). As a matter of fact, even though the "specific historical condition" under which photography was invented and primarily used have changed, photographers rarely ask for the consent of marginalised categories to be turned into images (Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 109). Certainly, some of the living conditions of the mentally challenged, the incarcerated, and minorities have greatly improved between the nineteenth century and now which made them less accessible to the intrusive lens. However, "weak populations remain more exposed to photography, especially in the journalistic kind, which

coerces and confines them to a passive, unprotected position" (Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 110). It was, therefore, necessary to configure a possible space where photography's violence could be neutralised.

Because of photography's almost natural connection with the powerful and the intrusive, it becomes quasi redundant to state that its civil contract has been subject to recurrent breaches. The encounters between the different members of the photographic citizenry have predominantly privileged positions of power. From cataloguing people into types to documenting the details of humiliation and torture, photography seems to be familiar with locations of suffering. From the long shot and bird's view revealing the largest number of people and gulping down limitless space to the close-ups focusing on the minutest details, photography has proven to have strong affinities with control and dominance. Besides, Photographers who shoot people and take their pictures have been "given legal rights" to ownership over what they produce (Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 100). This right to ownership over the photographed image seems to be only shared with the public, the spectator, and the audience who "has been recognized as the virtual owner of all photographs" (Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 100). The public, appearing like a gigantic collective eye, has an insatiable appetite to look, to see, and to digest massive numbers of images regardless of their natures and purposes. The "public's right to see" and, more importantly, the public's right to "enact photography free of governmental power and even against it", gives this omnipotent collective eye the potency to execute some of its civilian prerogatives independently from, and sometimes antagonistically to, the direct intervention of governmental power (Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 100). Photography, per Azoulay, is an instrument that can be used by individuals to observe and counter governmental actions. Nevertheless, this empowerment is not distributed equally between all the participants in the photographic act. The civil contract is often violated especially when the photographed subject is dispossessed of her/his subjecthood and becomes nothing but an object to the gazing eyes of the photographer and the spectator.

Constant and recurrent breaches to the civil contract of photography happen, as Azoulay demonstrated, with vulnerable populations, especially when they are photographed without their knowledge or consent. Examples of these situations of scopic violence are abundant in conditions of generalised violence like wars and displacement. Nevertheless, even moments where there appears to be mutual consent to photograph and be photographed contain "a measure of violence" since there remains someone appropriating someone else's rights (Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 100). It is therefore paramount, if photography ever hopes to break

free from its predatory nature, that these infringements on the subjecthood of the photographed person be minimalised if not eliminated. One way of doing so is by allowing the photographed self to become an accomplice of the scopic regime and not merely a victim of it. Every scopic regime is defined as an interplay between "at least three factors" (Cometa, "Introduction" 14). These three factors are, according to Michele Cometa, images, media, and the gaze whose ordering and collective interaction constitute a particular way of seeing ("Introduction" 14). Taking this definition into account, one would claim that the subverting of the hegemonic western scopic regime of photography of migration does not only depend on changing the nature of the images or the manner with which the spectator consumes them but would also necessitate the alteration of the nature of the interplay itself.

In his *Live, Love, Refugee*, Omar Imam attempts to dismantle the scopic regime of migration by chaining together different visual, as well as verbal, elements that disrupt the dominant visual order. At first glance, his visual project presents itself as a collection of eleven black and white photographs taken in Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon in 2015.[40] The presentation of the work in black and white could be interpreted as a mere aesthetic preference on the part of the photographer. It might also be conceived as a tool to further ingrain his photo-story in an atmosphere of dreams and make belief or to highlight their artistry. However, considering the hegemonic "scopic regime of '*malveillance*'" that has hunted down migrants, especially those confined in camps, with excessive visibility, the choice of black and white may also be interpreted as a visual obstacle raised in front of clarity of vision (Jay 416). This interpretation is consolidated by the photograph with which Imam opens his visual narrative (see figure 22). In front of a large white refugee tent, sits on a plastic chair, a woman in a black embroidered dress and a white headscarf. In front of her, stands a man wearing a black cape and a top hat, holding in his hand a long white cane. At first glance, again, one would think it to be a photograph of a magic show. Looking closely, the spectator discovers that the white cane is the one used by visually impaired people, the man is no magician, and the woman is blind.

---

[40] Omar Imam's photographic project can be visualised on his official website through this link: http://www.omarimam.com/live-love-refugee

Figure 22. Omar Imam, *Live, Love, Refugee*, Untitled, 2015 © Omar Imam.

The tent extends in the background like a white canvas that blends almost uniformly with the cloudy sky, the white buildings behind it, and the grey ground. Rather than concealing refugees inside it, the tent expels them so they can perform their narrative. In this case, the story is told by a man standing in disguise holding in his hand his blind and partially deaf wife's white cane which he uses to master his magic show which is to "tell her the stories of her favorite TV series, and sometimes change the script", admits the husband.[41] The visual complexity of the scene lies on two levels. On the one hand, the husband is performing to his wife who cannot see him and who can only partially hear him. Using her white cane to help her follow and understand the events of her favourite TV series is utterly absurd, for not only it displaces the instrument from its conventional function but also gets no reward from that displacement. The husband also admits that he alters the content of these series "to create a better atmosphere for her", which further distances the wife from the real show she intends to follow.[42] What is at play here is a series of visual matryoshkas where the TV shows get embedded in the husband's performance to a wife who cannot see making the stories more and more remote from whatever reality they are supposed to represent. An intricate web of

[41] http://www.omarimam.com/live-love-refugee
[42] Ibid.

representations encased in each other resulting in complete visual confusion not only to the wife but also to the spectators of the photograph.

The blindness of the wife is immediately disclosed to the spectator by the caption of the photograph. There is neither concealment nor deception at play; and while s/he might be somewhat surprised to witness a magic show being performed to a blind person, the observer soon realises that the spectacle was, in fact, intended for her/him. It is at this level that the second visual complexity of the photograph is revealed. This unconventional photograph of migration and displacement does not offer its spectator the usual distant omnipotent and secret gaze into the lives of unsuspecting others. Instead, this photograph invites the viewer into the world of this couple. It is a photograph that clearly shows the existent complicity between the photographer and the photographed selves and extends an overt invitation to the spectator to join in an act of dissidence. What is there to look at then? It is neither the blind wife nor the husband with his half-burnt face. It is not the refugee tent erect in the middle of the expanded Bekaa valley. The real spectacle is the white cane that was charitably granted to the wife after she was "visited [and studied] by every possible NGO".[43] What is worth watching, indeed, is not the deplorable situation in which millions of Syrian refugees found themselves in after their country was dismembered by war, but the shameful and shameless help they received from national and international nongovernmental organisations.

The blind woman and her husband standing in front of their refugee tent decided with the complicity of the photographer to get their image captured in a way that mocks their assumed vulnerability. People who are socially constructed as victims either because of their presumed weakness or because they are believed to have been wronged by a certain superior power or system tend to receive looks of compassion and pity. However, this kind of "sympathy for the underdog" has no goal beyond itself (Williams 257). In an interesting entry made by Raymond Williams in his *Keywords,* it appears that multiple words that have been constructed with the prefix "under" like "underprivileged", "underdeveloped", and "underdog" have derived from a cultural consensus that there exists a normal condition the falling under which necessitates feeling of merciful sorrow (256-257). Underprivileged which is sometimes used as "a euphemism for *poor* or *oppressed*" assumes that the "*privilege* is a normal condition" (Williams 257). The same is also true for underdeveloped where societies assume that there is

[43] Ibid.

a normal development under whose threshold people would be categorised as underdogs. What is most thought-provoking about Raymond Williams cultural commentary on these terms is that in most cases these "*under*-formations" are but indicators of "humanitarian or even socialist sentiments […] of sympathy for the victims of a social order with the conviction or unnoticed assumption that such an order will or must continue to exist" (Williams 257). The blind woman and her husband are certainly underprivileged, underdeveloped, and an epitome of an underdog. Therefore, they received the treatment of sympathy which they mock and toy with.

Omar Imam continues his photographic flânerie between the tents of the refugee camp where he meets the second couple who poses for him. Faten and Ahmad are two refugees who came to Lebanon escaping the then escalating war in Homs, Syria. They have five children, one of whom was killed by a rocket bomb while she was waiting for her father to come back home.[44] The photograph is a long shot uncovering a vast snowy landscape and a light grey sky that blends almost perfectly with the white horizon. In the middle of the picture appears Ahmad, in a wheelchair, wearing heavy winter clothes and sandals. Next to him stands Faten wearing what appears to be a doctor's white coat. Around them float seven balloons in different shades of grey and lifting screwdrivers and wrenches (see figure 23). The photograph is constructed on a series of dualities. First, the picture is shot in a low contrast black and white which makes it over-bright and makes its details over-exposed. This visual composition seems to foreshadow the frankness and honesty with which the subjects of the photograph are going to relate their story. The second duality appears between the standing wife and the sitting husband. This dyad transcends the visibly detectable paraplegia of Ahmad to touch on a deeper metaphorical form of paralysis.

---

[44] Ibid.

Figure 23. Omar Imam, *Live, Love, Refugee,* Untitled, 2015 © Omar Imam.

The photograph stands as a subversion of the traditional and conventional division of gender roles within the Arabo-Muslim communities. This division highlights the sedentary nature of the female's role as opposed to the standing and mobile nature of the male's. In fact, the Qur'an describes men as "قوَّامون" (qawwamoona) over women which is understood to mean being responsible for taking care of and for providing for their wives and families.[45] The active participle (قوَّامون) is formed according to an exaggeration pattern used in Arabic language when there is an intention to insist on the qualities of a noun. Eventually, according to Islamic religion and Arabo-Muslim tradition to which Faten and her husband belong, men are not only supposed to take care of their families and provide for them, but they are also expected to do so with diligence. Men are expected to strive as hard as they can to protect the weaker parts of their families and to provide them with not only the necessities of life but also luxury when possible. It is also interesting to know that the exaggerated formation of the active participle (قوَّامون) is derived from the verb (قام) which means in Arabic, besides being responsible for and taking care of, to stand up and to stand erect and from which derives a variety of words such as (قامة) which means the building of a person like her/his height and general form; (تقويم) which means correcting, adjusting, and measuring; and (قيامة) which means standing up and resurrection as well.

[45] Qur'an 4:34.

Keeping all this in mind, Ahmad's pictures sitting in a wheelchair next to his standing wife gains new meanings of vulnerability and weakness as one would be able to imagine the feelings of helplessness and even uselessness that he would be experiencing. Ahmad's physical paralysis meant that he became culturally classified among the *sitters,* those upon whom one cannot count or rely. In this context, Ahmad tells Omar Imam that when he was in Syria before the war, he used to have his "own construction workshop" which he lost along with his four-year-old daughter Khadija, and the mother and brothers of his wife.[46] Upon arriving to Lebanon as a refugee, Ahmad worked as a lumper and that is when he was pushed by a co-worker from "the fourth floor" to eventually become paralysed.[47] This series of losses that culminated in his physical and metaphorical paralysis, led his wife Faten to assume the *standing up* for herself and her family. In her turn, she confesses to Imam that she does not want to return to Syria as it "will make [her] remember a lot" and therefore she "want[s] a new land" that is not necessarily Lebanon.[48] As a refugee, Faten had to experience the objectifying nature of her new political situation. She does so while narrating how the surgeon who was supposed to operate on her husband's back failed to do so "because [he] can't find the screwdrivers".[49] The doctor's remark made Faten realise that being a refugee seemed to threaten her humanity. Effortlessly touching on Hannah Arendt's philosophy, Faten contests that "[they] are refugees but still humans" (Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* 296).[50] Her standing up is, therefore, also metaphorical. It is a form of rebellion against and resistance to the unbearable memories from Syria, and from the abject present in Lebanon. With it she will not only be able to help her husband and others like him, but she will also be able to regain and reassert her humanity.

Loss is certainly a major theme in Omar Imam's photographic project, hence the exploration of its physical and metaphorical nature. The case of Ahmad and Faten and that of the blind woman and her husband explicitly show the corporal loss that seems to be enmeshed within the migratory experience of Syrian refugees. Nevertheless, this experience carries with it heavy metaphorical losses like the loss of the sense of security even if it was illusory. This dimension is materialised in the photograph of Rawd and her daughters (see figure 24). The mother of five girls stands with two of her daughters next to a scarecrow dressed like an Arab

[46] http://www.omarimam.com/live-love-refugee
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

man. Soon, the spectator understands that the figure stands for Rawd's ex-husband and gets the tongue in cheek representation. The scarecrow is surely known for its repelling abilities. As the mother and her daughters stand in the middle of a laboured field, one would expect the scarecrow to have been erect there to scare the crows away from the plants and potential harvest. This first understanding of the function of the effigy is reinforced by Rawd saying that before she divorced her husband he was "useful to keep the harassers away from my daughters and me".[51] Keeping harassers away from his family is in reality a function that is in complete harmony with a man's expected gender role within an Arab community and would not win him the title of a scarecrow, unless that was all he did. In fact, the scarecrow is used in the Arab culture as a metaphor for a useless person. Therefore, to represent the husband/father, a usually dignified figure within the family, as a scarecrow means to deny him any form of respect and reverence. Rawd does not shy away from declaring that during the "revolution" gender roles changed gravely leading women, including herself, "to do most duties".[52] Staying at home avoiding going out and face the checkpoints cost Rawd's husband his family and reduced him to a straw mannequin only missed for his powers as a repellent.

Figure 24. Omar Imam, Live, Love, Refugee. Untitled, 2015 © Omar Imam.

[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

Carrying on with the theme of loss, Omar Imam captures Amina in an unusual setting. In the photograph Amina is seen sitting at what looks like a chic restaurant round table with a clean white tablecloth. Next to her stands a young man in a black suit jacket holding, in a waiter-like fashion, what appears to be food. Suddenly, everything collapses as the photograph starts gaining a strange and an eery aspect (see figure 25). The reflection of the sky on the surface of stretch of still water behind the protagonists should have predicted the subversive nature of the picture that invests in a game of contradictions between identities and appearances. Therefore, as soon as the spectator identifies her/himself as the photograph's addressee and Amina's guest, s/he realises that the table is set the middle of a flooded field, the silverware is disordered, the plate is broken, and that "there [is] only grass" to eat.[53] Amina's inviting, even daring, gaze adds to the eeriness of the scene and the spectator finds her/himself compelled to join and to at least listen to what she has to say.

Figure 25. Omar Imam, *Live, Love, Refugee,* Untitled, 2015 © Omar Imam.

Amina is a Syrian-Palestinian who was, along with her family, an inhabitant of the Yarmouk refugee Camp in Syria. During what is now known as the Syrian Civil War, the Yarmouk was the scene of several rounds of fighting involving different fractions until it was overrun and taken by Daesh in 2015. The series of battles in and around the camp as well as the

[53] Ibid.

siege of 2013 caused the Palestinian refugees and Syrians living within to undergo death, severe hunger, diseases, and (another) displacement.[54] Amina went through three of these trials. She suffered from chronical hunger for seven months as a result of which she lost 70 kg and developed anorexia. The disease prevented her from eating even after she managed to escape the camp with her children and reach Lebanon. Amina's anorexia was a psychosomatic reaction to the lack of food causing starvation among the camp's population and forcing her to chew on grass in front of her children to convince them that it was edible.[55] It is also a psychological reaction to the "air strikes […] and deaths" that have punctuated her time during the siege of the refugee camp. Anorexia, a disease characterised by a distorted body image and a fixation on controlling calories intakes, seems to have developed in Amina's case as a result of excessive stress over food and all the traumatic losses of life and security that accompanied it. To eat, means that someone else must remain hungry, someone else must die. To remain hungry means that no one has to risk their lives for a bag of rice.

Loss for Amina is not simply the loss of more than half of her weight or the loss of her appetite. It is not only the loss of her husband who had to remain back in Damascus because Lebanon reached its cap on refugee admittance. Loss for Amina is also a double negation of belonging to a space she can call home. According to the UNRWA, the Yarmouk "had a very good reputation and was considered as the capital of the Palestinian diaspora", before the eruption of the war on Syria in 2011.[56] The Agency also states that it "was home to approximately 160,000 Palestine refugees, making it the largest Palestine refugee community in Syria" and that it "resembled an urban quarter".[57] Today, and despite some return activities, almost all of the Palestinian refugees who used to live in the camp have left either to other areas in Syria or, like Amina, left for good. Amina is, thus, a double refugee. She lost her ancestor's home in Palestine to be born in a camp and now, as half Syrian, she lost her second home in Syria. The question for Amina, then, is not about how a person can, by simply becoming a refugee, lose her/his right to have rights, as declares Arendt (Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* 296). The real issue for Amina is how is it possible to be a double refugee, to lose even the state in which one was stateless? When she gazes at the spectator, she is not returning the inspecting gaze. She is the one who initiates looking in defiance across the

---

[54] https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/syria/yarmouk-unofficial-camp
[55] http://www.omarimam.com/live-love-refugee
[56] https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/syria/yarmouk-unofficial-camp
[57] Ibid.

medium of photography into the eye of her inspector. She looks into the lens to ask: what is there to look at? What is there to be seen besides a woman who lost her home, her husband, and had to chew on grass to save the life of her children?

Omar Imam's photographs are ripe with questions of the sort. Questions that put forward the seemingly unresolvable situations refugees from Syria find themselves in. Most importantly these questions emerge from the photographed selves and cross over the medium of photography to reach the spectator who finds her/himself responsible for making sense of what s/he sees. The persons Imam photographed do not identify as victims and refuse to frame themselves or to let others frame them as such. Therefore, the learned practice of looking at them with compassion and pity does not only seem of little use in this situation but also appears to be a form of violence against their self-representation. Their gaze, their poses, and their humour force one to unlearn the imperialistic gaze that makes "others and others' worlds available to some" and gives this privileged some the right to see, to judge, and to pity the underprivileged (Azoulay, *Potential History* 5). As protagonists and active actors in the visual stories that are made by and about them, Imam's refugees "suspend the operation of the shutter and resist its operation in time, space, and the body politic" (Azoulay, *Potential History* 8).

2.2. Self-Irony, Anger, and Loss as Instruments of Resistance

In her seminal book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag openly declares that "there is an aggression in every use of the camera" (7). Sontag's insightful analysis of photography as a practice, art, and "social rite" leads her readers to conclude that, at best, photography is an ambivalent exercise (*On Photography* 8). The photographic ritual may be used to take control over the arbitrary and chaotic world presenting itself in unlimited numbers of stimulus constantly threatening of erasure; as it may be used as "a tool of power" not to fend off anxiety but to "capture" and to "appropriate the thing photographed" (Sontag, *On Photography* 4-7). In this same vein of capturing, appropriating, and taking control over the photographic thing, John Szarkowski affirms that the "new picture-making process" that was introduced by photography was one based on "selection" instead of "synthesis" (7). Unlike painting, for example, that resulted from a process of ingesting and digesting the visual world before reproducing it, photography functions as a tool of freezing, framing, capturing, and immortalizing something that already exists as such in the world (Szarkowski 8). Also, unlike painting, which chooses to visualise what is important, photography made things important by choosing to photograph

them. Indeed, photography, because it "was easy, cheap and ubiquitous", was employed to record anything and everything even "unimportant people" (Szarkowski 8).

However, photography's democratic endeavour to render everything visible and worth being recorded and immortalized was not without method. Framing, which is the visible expression of selection as a mental activity, simply means that there exists a hierarchy between the seen things. This hierarchy is what dictates selection and omission, "choosing and eliminating", and it is what makes the practice of picture-taking also a practice of picture-making (Szarkowski 10). Framing is, therefore, the practical decision of bringing something/someone forward while pushing to the background or to the edges of the picture something/someone else. Framing is also responsible for making something/someone visible at a certain time, in a certain space, and in a certain manner or position. When the shutter button is pressed and a person is shot, the latter is immortalized in a given spatio-temporality that is created and maintained by "imperial formations of power" into which photography itself is deeply rooted (Azoulay, *Potential History* 3). The imperial formations of power Azoulay is referring to are, "the use of violence, the exercise of imperial rights, and the creation and destruction of shared worlds" (*Potential History* 3). This framework conceives of the world as "made to be exhibited […] for a select audience" and that this exhibition does not take into account the will of the people "from whom the objects have been expropriated" (Azoulay, *Potential History* 4). Needless to say, the expropriated objects may be a variety of things ranging from homelands to images of the self and every possible thing that lies in between. This has been the scopic regime that reigned over the production of images of the Orient and that managed to transplant itself to become the scopic regime of photography of migration. It is also the scopic regime that the photographs of Omar Imam mock and rebel against.

As a matter of fact, the first picture with which Imam opens his photo-narration may function as a summative statement of the atmosphere of self-irony that will establish itself with the progress of the story. The magic show delivered to the blind woman, the disguise of the husband as a magician, and the fact that he uses his wife's white cane as an instrument of magic-making are all elements of self-mocking. The couple takes up what may provoke the sympathy of the spectator and turn it into an element of fun making. The blindness, the half-burned face, poverty and destitution, the refugee tent, and the meagre offering of NGOs could all lead spectators into feeling sorry about the unfortunate distant migrants. However, by turning all that into a show mocking themselves and their situation, this migrant couple disarms observers from their benevolent emotions and incite them to think about these refugees' resilience and (dark)

humour. Self-irony is also visible in the photograph of Rawd and her daughters with the scarecrow who stands for the man of the house. This picture seems to be targeted at Rawd's husband but, as a symbol, the scarecrow might be expanded to include patriarchal societies and even the patriarchal, sexist, imperialistic, and colonial modernity (Grosfoguel 213; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 486). By mocking her husband metamorphosed into a scarecrow, Rawd mocks the "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system" that allowed for the dismantling of her country, its occupation by different world powers including the United States of America, the looting of its oil and other wealth, and the displacement of its people (Grosfoguel 213). The horrors of the so-called Syrian Civil War happened while the modern and democratic world stood watching, like scarecrows; and it is this same world that would look at the photograph of Rawd searching for signs of vulnerability and weakness to feel sorry for her and feel good about its humanity. Rawd mocks this world and turns her picture into a mirror that reflects its image.

Self-mocking continues and becomes more explicit when Hael, who was a doctor and had to quit his job after the death of his young child, says: "Our testicles are in danger".[58] Hael and his wife stand in the middle of a black and white photograph taken between the refugee tents in the camp (see figure 26). One of the tents visibly displays the logo of the UNHCR which is responsible, among other organisations, for the distribution of food in the refugee camp. In effect, Hael's wife, who appears wearing a black jilbab and a scarf that she brings across her face covering it except her eyes, stands holding on her shoulders two white boxes. Hael's wife's posture reminds the spectator of Atlas' burden and punishment. It is up to her now to take on the responsibility of bringing food to the family and it is on her shoulders that their well-being rests. Hael confesses that when he goes to "UNHCR or another NGO, they refuse to give [him] the food box".[59] What Hael experiences in the refugee camp is nothing less than a multi-faced castration. At the beginning and before he migrated to Lebanon, he lost his brothers to a militia he does not name. He also lost his child and almost lost his own life had it not been for his wife's "instant reaction" who lied to the soldiers and saved his life.[60] Hael does not explain what his wife did exactly to save him neither does he linger on the circumstances of his child's death. However, he insists on the fact that it was her who brings food "home" and he continues "men lost their superiority, our wives don't obey us any more because they bring

---

[58] http://www.omarimam.com/live-love-refugee
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

the food aid”.[61] As a conclusion, Hael declares that “the battle between the masculinity and the woman’s new power” is putting their testicles in danger.[62]

Figure 26. Omar Imam, *Live, Love, Refugee,* Untitled, 2015 © Omar Imam.

Castration, emasculation, and infantilisation are recurrent themes in photography of migration that insist on showing migrant men in situations of visible vulnerability and weakness. They are men incapable of protecting their own families. They are failed parents who often put the lives of their children at risk. They are absentee husbands who leave the hardest chores of life to their wives. In general, they are things of the world photographed *en masse* to put forward their biological entity without any necessary regard to their humanity. Hael seems aware and sensitive to this image, indeed, reality. Hael is conscious to the fact that there is an active process of emasculation going inside and on the borders of migration and that this process results in creating men in the shape of scarecrows, or men holding ball-shaped dumbbells in allegory for their removeable testicles. However, Hael, whose name means enormous and massive in Arabic, does not fail to point out that the castration of migrant men happens, in part, because certain NGOs refuse to let them take food home and insist on only delivering it to the women. He does not explain why this happens nor does he clarify the policies behind selecting

[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

only women to be the recipient of humanitarian aid. Nevertheless, the social impact of the practice is deeply felt as men become redundant, useless, and somehow a burden that women have to also lift on their shoulders. Yet, Hael does not shy away from his vulnerability and weakness. He brings it to the spectators and confronts them with it. He bitterly jokes about it and even invites the spectators to laugh at it.

Hael, Rawd, and the magic show couple are all engaged in a painful process of redeeming and reclaiming themselves and the images of themselves. They are all conscious of the predatory, intrusive, and violent nature of photography. Therefore, they all wear their weakness as an armour with which they face the imperialistic violence of the camera and the gaze. The imperialistic violence of the gaze was only an extension of the imperialistic violence of plundering other people's lands and homes and making them accessible and available to an assumedly superior and more advanced/modern some (Azoulay, *Potential History* 5). Making the Other's world available to the colonial and imperial powers of the privileged some means also making images of this world available to the gaze of some. Those images can be examined and evaluated, they can be turned into subject of study or objects of collection, or can become stimuli for humanitarian emotions of compassion and pity, all while keeping the Other, who is "harmed" the most by the plundering, the studying, and the pitying, "bracketed and […] outside of these debates in which the fate of photography is discussed" (Azoulay, *Potential History* 5). Fortunately, neither Omar Imam nor his protagonists are willing to sit still while their image is taken/made by someone else. They take up their disabilities, their lack, and their loss and laugh at it, completely disarming the gaze and forcing it to submit to their will of self-representation.

Because Omar Imam does not dictate on his protagonists how they should pose for his lens, not all of them choose self-irony as a way to redeem themselves. Some of them, like Faten, choose a dream-like setting where balloons of different shades of grey float around carrying wrenches and screwdrivers. Hope might be the message behind Faten and Ahmad's photograph. Faten confessed her dream to Imam. "Now", she says, "I dream of being a physiotherapist, to help my husband and other injured, and to have all the screwdrivers around me".[63] Faten who stands next to her husband dreams of being able to help and to become more useful than the surgeon who lost his tools. She holds a dream of construction and reconstruction of her husband and all the injured like him. She wants to heal, and she believes that not returning to Syria and

[63] Ibid.

becoming a physiotherapist would help her heal and would help her assist others in their healing process. Kawthar, on the other hand, does not dream of healing but of burning everything to the ground. Kawthar's story is one of the most recurrent stories in the refugee camps, and in life. One of five daughters who were deserted by their father, Kawthar believed that her marriage would rid the family of a burden. At sixteen she marries a man double her age. She gets beaten by him, by his sisters, and by her uncle. She gets a divorce and goes back home. Imam could not photograph her on the day of her wedding, he says. However, he could do so when she comes back transformed wishing "to become a dragon and burn the scarves and everything in that tent" (see figure 27).[64]

Figure 27. Omar Imam, *Live, Love, Refugee*, Untitled, 2015 © Omar Imam.

Kawthar's husband beat her because she "didn't let him touch [her]".[65] Things escalated and everyone participated in the abuse of a young girl who was accused of bringing "shame to the family".[66] Eventually, and after proving her innocence from the cardinal sin by allowing her husband to perform his conjugal rights she gets divorced and returns with a considerable amount of anger wishing to burn the tent to ashes. Kawthar poses in an aesthetically pleasing photograph. The girl is photographed off-centred occupying the right side of the picture leaving

[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

the rest of the space to accommodate her black dragon wing extended across the tent. She is then visible through a spot of light that partially falls on her illuminating only one part of her face leaving the other dim except for a small lustre shining from her left eye. The spectator can see her dressed in what appears to be a white wedding gown adorned with crystal flowers. Her pose with her arm folded and resting on her stomach, her face agitated and frowning, and her mouth open and lips rounded gives one the impression that she is about to sing. However, the dragon wing carefully attached to her back and the anger apparent in her eyes remind the spectator that she, indeed, is about to blow fire.

Unlike all the other pictures composing his photo-story, Kawthar's is Imam's darkest photograph. She is the only protagonist who appears half obscured and surrounded with darkness. It is also the only photograph whose protagonist reveals visible facial expressions. What transpires from these visual choices is that Omar Imam wanted to create for Kawthar a setting where her burning fire could be visible. To photograph her outside or in plane light would have dimmed her anger and agony and would have diluted the brightness of her fire by contaminating it with the light of the sun. Kawthar had to be allowed within the tents she wants to burn down. She had to be allowed to have her anger directed to the symbols of her oppression. The spectator had also to witness her act of counter-aggression. The spectator had to perhaps be trapped in the same space with her to face her destructive fire when she burns her wedding gown, her scarves, and her tent.

What is also interesting about Kawthar's picture is that it functions as a visual echo of some of Ernest Joseph Bellocq's photographs (see figure 28). Bellocq was famous for his collection of photographs he made for the inmates of the brothels of the red-light district of New Orleans in the beginning of the twentieth century. What Bellocq's photographs have in common with Kawthar's is this kind of undemanding and unpretentious sympathy with women. In *Where the Stress Falls*, Sontag discusses the photographs he took for the prostitutes of Storyville and says: "Bellocq's photographs belong to this same world of anti-formulaic, anti-salacious sympathy for 'fallen' women" (224). She then continues to admit that despite the harshness, the "meanness and abjection of a prostitute's life", Bellocq succeeded in capturing the beauty of the women he photographed, and he eventually created pictures that are "touching and good natured" (226). The good-natured character of photographs taken of women who find themselves in degrading situations stems, perhaps, from a unique ability to look and to see beyond these situations. Bellocq, as he admitted his spectator into the inner quarters of the prostitutes of Storyville, did not want to expose the women who resided there. He wanted to

take their pictures and to allow them, for once, to show their bodies the way they wanted to. He probably wanted to give them an opportunity to construct and compose a self they dream of having or reclaim a self they once had. Bellocq's photographs are touching because they were able to transmit something universally human about a category of women some people are fond of, and some are fond of pretending it did not exist.

Figure 28. E. J. Bellocq, *Storyville Girl Posing Out of Doors*, circa 1912.

Likewise, Omar Imam gave Kawthar a visual space in which she could construct and re-create herself in whichever manner she saw fit. She chose to be a dragon. She did not choose to settle down or accept her fate. She did not choose to lament about her past. She did not see herself as a victim and did not want others to see her as such. She made wings for herself, dressed up in a white wedding dress, and prepared herself to blow. Imam shares with Bellocq not only the formal mastery of black and white but also an unpretentious, anti-formulaic, and inoffensive sympathy for women regarded as fallen, deprived, unworthy, and shameful. Their unpatronizing sympathy freed Kawthar and the girls of Storyville, even if for moments, from the burdens of social institutions that legitimise their exploitation and turn a blind eye to their pain, indeed, to their humanity. This sympathy also manifested itself through a visual game of inside-outside and dressing-undressing. While Storyville—New Orleans' notorious red-lights

district—confined its inhabitants within the walls of its brothels to keep them out of sight and to restrict prostitution to one place always under the control of the government, Bellocq brought some of his photographed selves outside. The girl appearing in the photograph above (see figure 28) is shot standing against a plain dark background that was set in what seems to be the yard of a house. Bellocq could have cropped his photo or could have at least got closer to his model to photograph her framing out the decaying door, the cracking window, and the unattended wall. The fact there was a black background already set behind the model proves that she is, indeed, the most important figure in the picture and that Bellocq wanted to photograph her exclusively. However, this seemingly last-minute decision to photograph her standing outside an open door and an unshaded window uncovers the intentionally subversive nature of this picture.

Bellocq was clearly defying the scopic and governmental regime for while prostitutes were conventionally managed to remain out of sight in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, he took their pictures; and while the logic of establishing a red-light district was to create a geographical and visual enclave that obscures the existence of prostitutes, he brought them outside. Moreover, while it was conventional to expose the bodies of prostitutes to the exploring, inspecting, lusting, and predatory gaze of male customers, Bellocq photographed these abused bodies fully clothed and refused to forget the jewellery and fur to complete their elegant looks. By bringing them outside when they were expected to remain inside and by clothing them when they were expected to be naked, Bellocq created a civil contract with the girls of Storyville that allowed both the photographer and photographed to use photography as an instrument "to suspend the gesture of the sovereign power seeking to totally dominate the relations" established between different components of society (Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* 21). Pushing prostitutes outside the field of visibility but into the field of surveillance and pushing them outside the general urban space and into a specific district predefined by the profession of its inhabitants was a political decision to usurp them of their citizenship. Bellocq's photography stood up to these governmental measures and turned his pictures into spaces of equal citizenships where everyone seems to have equal rights to be visible according to her/his own terms.

Similarly, Omar Imam engages into the game of inside-outside and dressing-undressing with Kawthar. At the age of sixteen, Kawthar was forced to get married to a man she did not like. Her refusal to submit to his will on their wedding night cost her the loss of her body. Kawthar does not only recount the beating that she received from her husband, his sisters, and her uncle. She also recounts that besides the beating, her husband's sisters tied her with her

scarves, ripped her dress, and one of them "touch[ed]" her.[67] Trying to escape the hardships of the refugee camp and hoping that by getting married she would be able to help her mother, cost Kawthar the integrity of her body and turned it into a field to be explored, inspected, and abused. The admittance into the institutional system of married life meant for Kawthar being dispossessed of her body. Marriage turned her into the property of her husband and his family. Dreaming of becoming a dragon to burn the scarves that tied her and everything that was inside the tent is Kawthar's way of stepping outside of the social institutions that dispossessed her. Her choice to be photographed in a wedding gown might be interpreted as an attempt to go back in time to the day she lost herself. However, this time she is prepared. As a dragon, she will never allow for her body to be plundered.

Omar Imam's photograph of Kawthar and other migrants turn into spaces of reconstruction and recuperation of fragments of the self that were lost as a result of migration and confinement in refugee camps. This retrieval was partially done by admitting the loss and by turning it into subject for mockery and laughter. In other cases, loss was confronted by dreams and ambition to complete the lacks in others so to vicariously attain personal completeness. Anger could also be conceived as a way to deal with loss. It is with anger that some of the photographed refugees chose to confront their present situation and to account for their unjustified demise. Other migrants, however, accept loss for what it was. They neither object to it nor try to complete it by projecting themselves into the future. They assume it as a growing "blank" stretching over their memories threatening them with void.[68] This, in effect, is the case of Hani, a Syrian singer and activist, who found himself gradually incapable of bringing back the memories of his homeland. Unlike other refugees, Hani confesses that he is afraid, and his fear is triggered by the growing loss of memory that jeopardises his ability to write poems and lyrics. Interestingly, Hani's fear and loss is translated in Imam's *defected* photograph (see figure 29).

[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

Figure 29. Omar Imam, *Live, Love, Refugee*, Untitled, 2015 © Omar Imam.

On the formal level, Hani's picture appears as if it has been subject to a light leak that crept unexpectedly on the film swallowing up two-thirds of the photograph. Hani can barely be seen sitting next to what looks like a small keyboard instrument while the majority of his body, with the exception of the top of his head, is eaten up by light. The gaps that are becoming wider in Hani's memory drifting him farther from Syria turn into a large flow of light that obscure him from the gaze of the spectator, on the one hand, and truncate his body, on the other. *Frustration* would have been an adequate title for this picture in which the failure of memory and the defect of photography leave the spectator incapable of seeing or remembering. Frustration is even stronger when the spectator suspects that the light leak erasing more than half of the picture could have been intentional. Light leaks are usual accidents in analog photography when the risks of overexposure are higher. They are also more common in older cameras where shutters and foams are used up or when the back of the camera does not get fully shut after placing the film. However, with digital photography and with the care of professional photographers, chances of having a photograph ruined with a light leak is almost zeroed. Keeping this in mind, one would presume that the defect was indeed intentionally added to the photograph to make vision nearly impossible and to strike a balance between the spectator and Hani who is having less and less access to his own memories. If Hani is denied his past self and the mental images of his homeland, why would anyone have access to Hani's image? And if that is the case, what would be the function of this image then? If neither seeing nor

remembering is possible, what would then be attained from looking at the visual representation of defect? And if vision and memory are both failing, how is any meaning to be constructed at all?

In her "Narrating Palestinian Lives Through Phototexts: The Case of Edward W. Said", Valeria Cammarata writes the following: "The phototext can be considered the offspring of the crisis of representation that ensued from it, as a staging of the unspeakable and unimaginable, or of their obliteration" (22). Sensitive to the phototext's innate resistance to definition, Cammarata proposes an understanding of this particular genre that thrives on dualities. A phototext is always compound, composite, and complex. It is, at the same time, a photo, a text, both, and neither of them. For its meaning to be complete, the reader/observer should oscillate between the two media of representation—the verbal and the visual—recognising their complementarity and their incompleteness. Whatever meaning is to be obtained from a phototext derives from "the crisis of representation" that leaves unfilled gaps of memor(ies) that photography alone cannot fully trace and that words alone cannot fully show (Cammarata 20-22). Meaning is, therefore, the outcome of a crisis that, once aware of its present failure, starts projecting itself backward and forward in time weaving the threads of memory and imagination to finally be able to construct itself. It is in this very specific sense that Omar Imam's photograph of Hani begins to make sense. Since the photograph does not show much, the spectator is more inclined to read what is attached to it. The caption that Imam includes in bold just underneath the photograph and the text that follows with more specific details, explain to the spectator what is taking place before her/his eyes. It is only by reading the text that the meaning of the picture is clear.

To be sure, the photograph of Hani is not Omar Imam's unique photograph with a caption. As a matter of fact, all the photos included in his photo-story *Live, Love, Refugee* are accompanied by captions and texts that identify the people photographed, name them and set their background, relate portions of their stories, and include fragments of their testimonies. However, it is only in this photograph that the failing and defecting power of photography is brought forward and insisted upon. Hani's picture is, in a manner, a direct critique to some migrants' pictures that pretend to be able to illustrate in the most trustworthy way the reality of their lives. The use of colours, the high definition of the image, the documentary and even forensic style, the detached photojournalistic approach are all devices used by some photographers to highlight the naturalness, the realism, and the objective perspective of their images. These seemingly omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent pictures devoured the space

of migrants' representation and dominated migration's visual landscape. What ensued was an almost blind belief in their veracity and their unique capabilities of representing the reality of complex selves and situations. Then, as if by magic, appears Hani's photograph to admit to its lack, to display its incompleteness, and to call on the text to fill in the gaps of memory that eroded its face. Once conscious of the defects and lacunae of the photograph, the spectator is tempted to spend more time reading and contemplating the text. S/he is then even more tempted to go back and to read again all the texts that were annexed to the photographs and to check if the meanings are going to change, if understanding is going to alter.

Erosion, that threatens the memory of Hani and the self-contained meaning of his (any) photograph seems, in effect, to be the result of a "loss of referentiality" that contaminated not only the phototexts of the twentieth century but also the majority of its citizenry that managed to migrate into the twenty-first century (23). Cammarata declares that "when history itself becomes incommunicable, unpronounceable, unacceptable, incomprehensible, the representation (whether verbal or visual) can no longer adhere to any referent and becomes elusive without giving up its narrative and memorial function" (23). Indeed, the twentieth century represented considerable challenges to the formation and representation of truth as a category. The two catastrophic world wars, the cold war, the *little* wars that took place within peacetime, and especially all the documents whether verbal or visual that resulted in concretising human atrocities made it quite clear that neither history nor its narration are detached and impartial. History, believed to be a uniform inclusive scroll of human development and progress from savagery to modernity and postmodernity, proved to be nothing but pieces of stories told in fragments from a multitude of vantage points, serving an even larger multitude of purposes. The fragmentation of history as a collective human memory and the realisation that it has always been flawed and subject to corruption, led to a growing disbelief in its authority and referentiality. What prevailed was a bias toward the personal, the intimate, and the unofficial narratives. It was, indeed, during the twentieth century that people started hearing about what is now commonly known as *history from below* and *people's history* as a form of narrating history from the perspective of common people. It is this form of history and history-telling that favoured the oppressed, the poor, the deprived, and the marginalised.

Loss of referentiality should, therefore, be celebrated for opening doors of nonconformity and political and generic rebellion against the dominant narratives and genres. Phototexts were suitable vehicles for subversive thoughts and modes of being and doing. They were not only born out of a crisis of representation, as it has already been explained, but they

also perpetuated this crisis making of it an important engine for creativity. Constantly resisting definition and categorisation, phototexts constitute a valuable instrument of self-narration, and the decentralisation of the authoritative power of "official accounts" (Cammarata 23). In this perspective, the copresence of the eroded photograph of Hani along with his testimony as to the growing gap between him and his memories from his homeland, Syria, plays a double role. On the one hand, the presence of the text that verbally explains what one cannot visually grasp provides the necessary proof to the incompleteness of pictures. This weakness, on the other hand, seems to have forced the photograph to share its dominion with the text, and together they rose as a more powerful genre capable of more adequately representing a particular aspect in the life of a Syrian refugee. Unlike Orientalist and Colonial photographs that endow the gaze with an almost limitless power, the native gaze admits its defect and weakness and does not shy from gaining meaning from the accompanying text. Equally, the text renounces to its referentiality as an instrument of categorisation and echoes the visual loss and confusion.

2.3. Imagining New Ways of Looking at Migrants

All of Omar Imam's photographs have been constructed as a dialogue in which more than one side obtains a chance to see, speak, think, and take a position. It is also from this perspective that one can assume that the scopic regime that Imam wanted to establish relies on a constant interplay, indeed play, between its different components: image, media, and the gaze (Cometa, "Introduction" 13-14). This scopic interplay, or game of seeing, takes place at a first level between him and his photographed selves and it has been evidenced by the establishment of a civil contract that allows these selves to manifest themselves the way they see fit. This civil contract appears to have been based on the fundamental pillar of consent that was articulated through the active participation of the photographed person in the act of photography. Posing for the lens, looking back into it, and engaging the spectator with the use of prompts that they have carefully prepared have all been visual signs of the shared, enlightened, and free consent of the participating selves. The migrants Imam photographed do not simply "constitute" themselves before the lens or make other bodies for themselves in front of it (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 10). In reality, the migrants Imam worked with have come to the photographic session with premeditated selves and have already composed and constructed bodies. They did not transform in the presence of the lens. They transformed themselves for the lens and because they wanted to be observed by it in a particular way. Unlike Barthes who admits to his almost helplessness in the presence of an omnipotent camera that has the ability to either create or

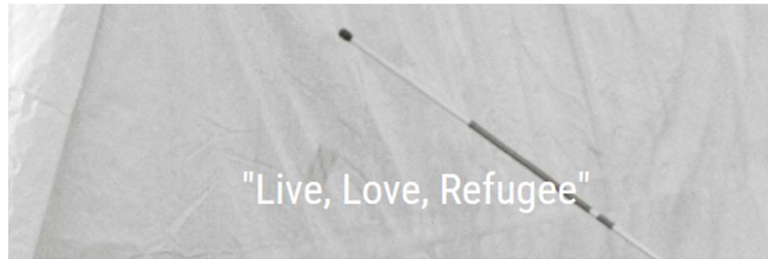
mortify his body, the magic show couple, Amina, Hani, Rawd, Hael, Faten, Ahmad, and Kawthar came to pose in front of the camera completely transformed (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 10-11). The game-like interplay between Imam and his protagonists resulted in the production of photographs that submit to the will of their subjects and not the opposite.

Another indication of the existence of a consensual civil contract between Omar Imam and the people he photographed was the quasi absence of children from his photo-story. In the eleven photographs that were taken in the refugee camp, Imam showed children only once and with the presence of their mother (see figure 21). The presence of the mother in the photograph means that Imam refuses to bypass her authority as the guardian of her children and refuses to use his lens as a preying weapon. Omar Imam refuses to lurk in the shadows of the refugee camp waiting on the appearance of a barefoot child to capture his picture and show it to the world begging for cheap sentimentalism. Imam recognises the right of migrant children to having their identity protected and to having the integrity of their existence maintained. This right would be gravely jeopardised if, besides the catastrophes of migration that leave them homeless, destitute, and dead, comes photography to plunder their image. The presence of the mother does not only provide a visual proof of consent to having her daughters photographed but also changes the approach one is to take towards these photographed children. Indeed, the two girls, who are seen participating in the act of making fun of the role of their father within the family and comparing his absence to the presence of a scarecrow, appear neither neglected nor dead. They look cleanly dressed, they have their hair brushed, and they do not show any signs of being at the verge of destruction. The older girl, not to lose touch with her childhood, wears a pair of corks on which a cartoon face is drawn. She also wears two necklaces and a hairbow. It is this last detail that pierces through the photograph to testify to the preparedness of the migrants photographed by Imam. This punctum also testifies to the fact that not all migrant children are abandoned and left to their obscure sort. Rawd, the mother, seems to struggle to the best of her capacity to secure to her children a respectable and presentable appearance. Despite the poverty they suffer from, and despite being deserted by their father, Rawd's daughters insist on showing themselves in the most dignifying way. While being playful with his camera and his protagonists, Omar Imam succeeds in establishing a relationship of trust with them. This trust opens spaces of exchange and dialogue that transform his lens into a looking glass through which the reflection of and on humanity can be materialised.

The second level of Imam's game of seeing does not involve him and the subjects of his photographs but rather involves his pictures and the texts they appear with. In his "Forme e

Retoriche del Fototesto Letterario", Michele Cometa identifies three modalities through which the phototext can be constructed: the emblem-form, the atlas-form, and the illustrated-form (93). The emblem, which is the closest form to Omar Imam's photo-story's layout, organises its "fissured representational space" in three parts: the *motto/inscriptio*, the *pictura*, and the *subscriptio* (Horstkotte 62). The first textual element traditionally appears as a header on the upper third of the page. Also traditionally, the *inscriptio*, which functions as the title of the whole visual representation and which is usually drawn from "classical or biblical" sources, is taken up by the *subscriptio* to be "further explicated" (Horstkotte 63). The fissure that stretches between the inscription and the subscription is then filled by an image that has for a sole role to illustrate the meaning of the motto. The fissured space of the emblematic phototext, therefore, follows a tripartite distribution of vision that relies on the migration of the gaze between its different components (Cometa, "Forme e Retoriche" 93). However, and although the traditional emblematic phototexts seem to have favoured text over picture, the invention and the democratisation of photography resulted in the enrichment and even the remodulation of their appearance as well as their functions allowing photographs to play a role bigger than simple illustration (Cometa, "Forme e Retoriche" 93).

It is worth noting that, according to Michele Cometa, phototexts, in their varied types, have almost never presented themselves in a "pure" form ("Forme e Retoriche" 93). They have, indeed, always been prone to "contaminations and hybridisation" which would become easier and more profuse with the use of photography and with the advance of the digital age (Cometa, "Forme e Retoriche" 93). One would venture to say that the transgressive and liquid nature of phototexts might, in fact, be related to the presence of pictures that refuse to be dominated by the text and that engage in constant negotiations of space and powers. For instance, Omar Imam's photo-story *Live, Love, Refugee* presents itself on his official website in an interesting format. The cover page, if it may so be called, contains the three elements of the conventional emblematic phototext (see figure 30). The *inscriptio Live, Love, Refugee* appears at the top of the page written in a larger font, placed between inverted commas, and centralised to indicate its function as a title. However, immediately the layout starts its visual game. The *inscriptio* is placed within a photograph that will itself figure as part of the photo-story and, instead of being followed by an image that illustrates its meaning, it is followed by the *subscriptio* that develops into a manifesto of the work. Following the two textual elements, the eleven photographs that compose the visual story are visible in a grid format that allows the gaze to circulate freely between them and to have a global idea of the subject of the story.



In "Live, Love, Refugee" Omar Imam dissolves the recurrent representation of Syrian refugees by replacing numbers, reports, and statistics with hallucinations, fears, and dreams. In refugee camps across Lebanon, Omar collaborates with individuals through a process of catharsis, one he believes to be deeply healing. He asks them to recreate their dreams: dreams of escape, dreams of emasculation, and dreams of love and terror. Sparse and surrealistic, the resulting images evoke the deepest and darkest inner worlds of those persisting everyday with their roots stretching further from a home left behind. In turn, these self-composed photographs challenge projections of victimization, offering entry into the expressive interior from which our humanity stems.

Figure 30. Screen capture of Omar Imam's official website.

The reorganisation of the visual space of representation in this specific manner satisfies two objectives. On the one hand, the gaze of the spectator is guided through the logic and the rationale of the photo-story that seems to be structured in a form of an argumentative visual essay that starts with a title followed by an explanation of the arguments and ending with visual examples that support the case at hand. On the other hand, and while being guided, the gaze is allowed to wander and to go back and forth between the texts and the images discovering and rediscovering each part in the light of what has been highlighted and articulated by the other. Cometa clearly states that the emblematic form gives enough space for the author to organise the reading/vision of her/his work in a programmed and one-directional manner. Nevertheless, this reading/looking is also allowed to be divided and to enjoy a swinging ride between the three elements of the emblem ("Forme e Retoriche" 93). Interestingly, however, Omar Imam seems to take Cometa's observation to the next level for while he maintains the division between the textual and pictorial components of his photo-story allowing the eye to continue its equivocal trip between them, he further disperses the reading/looking gaze by splitting the pictorial space into a grid. This reorganisation is, therefore, a testimony not only to the malleability of the phototext as a genre but also to the playful nature of Imam's own photo-story that heralds, from the beginning, its willingness to transgress both the form and the functions of visual representations.

The title of the photo-story is clearly an unacknowledged manipulation of the well-known motto “Live, Love, Laugh”, a motto that found its way from platforms of social media to the walls of living-rooms and became one of the most famous motivational and decorative elements during the 2000s and the 2010s. This slogan is taken by Imam and reshaped to fit his narrative of refugee life. Omar Imam’s photo-story is certainly about life. It is a life, though, that presents quite a few challenges within the context of forced migration. All his protagonists display formidable resilience, indeed tenacity, with which they are able to surmount their personal impediments and situational obstacles. Their refusal to recoil into the darkness of their refugee tents and their unapologetic display of anger, loss, and defects is nothing less than a loud mockery of the political correctness that has for long confined them to the disabling and immobilising victim category. Their ferocious attachment to life is what made them chew on and swallow grass, ridicule social order, poke fun at their own physical disability, question their manhood and gender roles, and get even ready to burn everything. It is this relentless cling to life that made Imam’s refugee able and willing to let go of what they hold dear to their hearts. Faten, for example, who refuses to go back to Syria, the land in which her daughter, mother, and brothers are buried, does so because she does not want to remember. Not remembering for Faten is simply a way of surviving, a way of being able to move forward and take care of herself and those she loves.

And how else could these refugees, who have lost almost everything, continue to live if it were not for love? This refugee love is what gave Kawthar enough power to resist the beatings of her husband and his sisters. It is also the same love that made her wish to transform herself into a dragon to burn the scarves that tied her down and made her vulnerable. This is also the kind of love that made the magician perform to his blind wife and urged him to tweak the stories of her favourite TV series in order to spare her further discomfort. The refugee love is also a love that is self-aware. It is neither delusional nor hopelessly romantic. The magic show couple, Faten and Ahmad as well as Rawd and her daughters display functional and realistic types of love where the well-being of the other ranks before ego-centric and immediate gratifications. All their stories testify to their willingness to undergo even more hardships in the refugee camp only to ensure a more comfortable life to the people around them. Love and life, love for life, and life of love are all possible meanings that the reader/spectator might understand from Omar Imam’s photo-story. *Laugh*, however, the third component of the millennial slogan, is harder to reach: first because it is literally omitted from the title and replaced by *Refugee*, and second

because the story itself resists facile and straightforward laughter although it contains elements of self-mockery and irony.

By omitting *Laugh*, Imam highlights its presence. A slogan or a motto is, in fact, created to be remembered as a whole and as soon as one of its components is brought up. To manipulate its wording creates, therefore, a break or a glitch in the remembering process and forces the mind to think even harder about the missing element. Thus, Imam wittily and intentionally creates a lethologica, a phenomenon commonly known as the "tip of the tongue" in which "one cannot quite recall a familiar word but can recall words of similar form and meaning" (Brown and McNeill 325). Quoting William James, Brown and McNeill insist on the fact that this failed remembering of the correct word creates a "gap" in the "state of our consciousness" that is "intensely active", different from other gaps left by other forgotten words or names, and that "acts immediately so as to negate" any wrong proposed words (James, qtd. in Brown and McNeill 325). Generally speaking, people may experience, through their lifetime, several moments when a specific word is completely inaccessible while its spectre flickers in the background feeding the brain with stress patterns, number of syllables, first letters, and other partial information. The phenomenon creates a certain frustration as the targeted word presents itself as both attainable and inaccessible tempting the person to concentrate more, further explore the lexical field, consult a dictionary, or hopelessly abandon the quest. However, while lethologica happens spontaneously in real life, Imam seems to provoke it with his photo-story by feeding his reader/spectators partial information and by playfully, and even mischievously, tempting them into seemingly familiar grounds so that they discover, after a while, that what they are presented with is not completely what they have expected.

Where is the "Laugh" part of the slogan then? It is partially hidden within the "Refugee" who actively "collaborates" with Omar Imam to represent and to recreate her/his own migration story in a cathartic manner capable of provoking sober laughter at the darkly humorous scenes.[69] Laughter might also be at the expense of the spectators themselves who find their knowledge displaced and are forced into a game of retrieval and loss. Neither Imam's text nor his images provide the reader/observer with complete information about the content of what s/he is looking at. As a matter of fact, the oscillation between *inscriptio*, *subscriptio*, and *pictura* does nothing but widen the gap between the images and the text hurling the observer/reader into the realms

[69] http://www.omarimam.com/live-love-refugee

of “hallucinations, fears, and dreams” completely uprooting her/him from the certainties of “numbers, reports, and statistics” that have haunted the life experience of Syrian refugees.[70] It is at this level that the third stage of Imam’s visual game unfolds. Only when the reader/observer acknowledges her/his inability to fully grasp the meaning of the photo-story at hand and realises that the co-presence of the photographs and the text creates and widens an abyss of representation that neither is alone capable of filling, can s/he understand the essence of this gazing game. It is only at this moment that the spectator fully comprehends that s/he has been invited to participate in meaning-making and that her/his role has never been intended to be limited to that of a voyeuristic observer or sadistic judge. The spectator enters a collaborative relationship with all the other citizens of Omar Imam’s photography and, now being part of the game, s/he has to answer to the question asked decades ago by Jean Mohr and John Berger: “What did I see?” (Berger and Mohr 41).

In 1982, John Berger and Jean Mohr worked together to produce a possible theory of photography that they christened *Another Way of Telling*. In their book both the writer and the photographer explored the domains of word and image. Berger was uniquely interested in uncovering the “unforeseeable consequences” of photography the “strange invention” (Berger and Mohr 85). He then emphasizes that what makes photography such a unique medium of communication is its ability to arrest the “flow of time”, connecting the present to the past, and, while doing so, shocks its spectators with the abyss of discontinuity that exists between the photographed moment and the moment of visualisation (Berger and Mohr 86-87). The discontinuity that characterises the existence of all photographs makes them all “ambiguous”, insists Berger. As they break the fluidity of time, photographs seem to interrupt the continuity of history, life stories, and even landscapes and fix the photographed moment in a state of perpetual need for additional meaning (Berger and Mohr 91). That is when the word steps in to supply the photograph with the longed-for interpretation and together they become “very powerful” for each equips the other with what it lacks: the photograph with meaning and the word with “specific authenticity” (Berger and Mohr 92).

Nevertheless, this complementarity is not always fulfilled. Some photographs continue to resist meaning given by words, some words insist on deforming and distorting the photograph, and, when the relationship is not one of tension and rebellion, it can easily be one

[70] Ibid.

of trickery and playful coyness. This has been eloquently demonstrated in Jean Mohr's "Beyond My Camera". In the opening chapter of *Another Way of Telling*, Mohr picks up his reader/spectator for a journey of photo taking/looking "without paying and without asking permission" (11). After showing his reader/spectator several photographs that he took in Europe and in India, Mohr starts a new section entitled "What Did I see?" in which he tries to discover "how the images he makes are seen, read, interpreted, perhaps rejected by others" (Berger and Mohr 42). His looking game was simple: he showed people photographs he took and asked them to explain what they saw. The answers never coincided with the real photographed moment. Mohr has already predicted the results when he said "in face of any photo the spectator projects something of her or himself. The image is like a springboard" (42). The meaning of a photograph is, therefore, seldom contained in the picture itself. It is also rarely completely created by the photographer independently from the photographed subject, the spectator, and the camera. A photograph is only a proposition of meaning. It is a potential construction of a common understanding between the different citizens of photography. A photograph is a space of dialogue into which all participants project segments of themselves to reach a collective entente. By asking his spectators what they saw and by delegating the role of explaining to them, Mohr abandoned "the position of the knowing subject" and accepted being a simple participant who lends his gaze to others to see and to share his "visual field" (Azoulay, "Getting Rid of the Distinction" 240; *The Civil Contract* 107).

Omar Imam seems to follow on the footsteps of Jean Mohr. He retreats to the background and leaves it up to the beholders to make up their own meaning and their own story. As Imam's photo-story comes to an end, he insists on making a final wink to his spectator/reader. His final photograph, the eleventh, is a team picture where he and his protagonists pose in the fashion of football players wearing the jersey of an internationally famous Italian team (see figure 31). Imam makes the last photo about himself and, as a member of the refugee team, he squeezes his own story among those of the people he photographed and confesses that his photographic project allowed him to "rediscover" his own story through those of the people he photographed. As the spectator recognises the faces of the people s/he became familiar with their stories, some other remain obscured by anonymity. It is into that gap of emancipating namelessness that Imam finds his place and identifies not only with the individuals he photographed but also with the collective group of Syrian refugees today scattered around the world. His ability to identify with his own people and yet remain unidentified as a single individual experience is what eventually allows him to transcend his

own gaze, to borrow the eyes of his protagonists, and to see himself through them. Omar Imam is, indeed, a unique case of a photographic flâneur. As he equips himself with his camera and browses the alleys of the refugee camp, he aims at neither documenting nor judging. He also does not allow his camera to be turned into a weapon that shoots at a people doubly jeopardised by their excessive visibility. Imam's photographic flânerie is not only cathartic and remedial as he himself intended it to be, but also, as a matter of fact, exorcistic.

Figure 31. Omar Imam, *Live, Love, Refugee*, Untitled, 2015 © Omar Imam.

The exorcistic power of Omar Imam's photo-story lies in his pictures' ability to reclaim the domain of the self. He was able to do so by allowing his refugees to reappropriate their pain, loss, fears, and hopes. His photographs, turned into spaces of self-expression, endowed Syrian refugees with the power to visually narrate their stories with their own bodies and in their own voice. No lurking, no sneaking up, and no ambushing was employed to shoot these photographs. On the contrary, migrants were invited to freely expose what they wanted to tell others and so they did. One is to believe that many other stories have remained hidden, and that other hopes and fears are still beyond the observer's gaze. However, one is also to believe that what the spectator is able to see is visible with neither coercion nor deception. The migrant's self is then composed in the manner the migrant wants it to appear and its vulnerability and incompleteness is exhibited to the human gaze not to be judged but to be recognised. The humanity of Imam's photo-story is nothing but a suspension of disbelief and suspension of judgment. The same way

Syrian refugees photographed by Imam want the spectator to believe that a blind person can enjoy a magic show, that grass is humanly edible, and that a scarecrow is as good as a husband and a father, they want the same spectator to look on their vulnerability and recognise their humanity. Identifying with their humanity is the only way the spectator can understand their position and share a laughter with them without guilt and without pity.

Imam did not seek to move his spectator into tears and he did not seem to be after moving them into humanitarian action either. He was not attempting to return the stereotypical migrant image back to its creator nor was he trying to "shred or incinerate" it (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 310). His photo-story was not calling for a "historical amnesia" and was not pretending that the ills of the past are over (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 310). Yet, it was not lamenting over the amputated migrant self which is forced to forever live in lack and denial. Imam and his collaborators collect the bits and pieces and put them together trying to salvage what remains and grieve over and burry what was left behind. It is in this sense that his photo-story is understood to be exorcistic. It confesses and purges images of the past to be able to "repossess and redeem" images of the present (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 310). Discussing Malek Alloula's attempt to send back the gigantic colonial postcard to its colonising sender, W.J.T. Mitchell says that "the rescue of women is an overcoming of impotence; the text asserts its manhood by freeing the images from the evil eye" (*Picture Theory* 310). In other words, the text of Alloula functioned as a spell to counter the effects of the evil colonial eye that turned Algerian female bodies into objects for European male pleasure, thus dispossessing Algerian males of their omnipotence and potency. In this same vein, one dares say that the images of Omar Imam possess, indeed, apotropaic powers that can rescue both women and men from the evil eye of humanitarian compassion.

The loss of the self as well as the loss of the image of the self have both been addressed in Omar Imam's photography through insisting on the migrants' ability and determination to recollect the fragments of their existence and to reconstruct their lives and their hopes for the future. His collaboration with the migrants he photographed allowed Imam to break the confinements of victimising representation and opt for an angle that accentuates his protagonists' agency as his "*single constitutive choice*" (Berger and Mohr 89). If photography is "weak in intentionality", as Berger and Mohr have declared, then Omar Imam has strategically pointed his camera to only shoot the strongest possible facets of his migrants, thus condensing all his intentionality in creating and projecting images of empowerment instead of vulnerability and of rebellious resilience instead of surrendered objecthood (89). Besides, by

attaching his photographs to confessional texts through which his photographed migrants were able to add—in their own voice—meaning to their images, Imam created safe spaces of self-representation within his photo-story. These amoeba-like spaces of representation have neither fixed borders nor constant inhabitants. In fact, their borders can expand from the claustrophobic and oppressing walls of refugee tents to reach the spectator and to involve her/him as a participant in the photographic civil contract. Turning into an essential player in the game of gazing, the spectator also becomes a member of Imam's photographic citizenry and a contributor in meaning-making. *Live, Love, Refugee* has, therefore, two levels of meaning-making. The first level is that of the photographs in which migrants are allowed to express themselves the way they saw fit. This visual level of meaning-making served three main objectives: it showed Omar Imam's photographic intentionality, exhibited migrants' agency, and involved the spectator in the gazing game. The second level of meaning-making, on the other hand, developed within the space of confession and self-narration that Imam allocated to his protagonists; and it is precisely at this level that the Syrian photographer meets with Iole Carollo, an archaeologist and a photographer who, in the words of Benedetta Donato, the editor of her photobook, "is willing to go the extra mile, and identify alternative paths and use of images, not to alter history, but rather to grasp traditionally less highlighted aspects, to make them evident".[71]

[71] Donato, Benedetta. "The Sensitive Imaginary." *Out of Africa*, edited by Benedetta Donato, Fotograph s.r.l.-Palermo, 2021.

3. *Out of Africa* and the Decolonisation of the Space of Migration

In 2021, Carollo published her photobook *Out of Africa* in which she presented to her reader/spectator as a unique sensorial experience. *Out of Africa* is an unusual photobook that heralds its commitment to the migration cause from the beginning. The photobook comes wrapped in shiny golden paper that one discovers to be a piece of a thermal blanket commonly used to cover migrants upon rescue. The shiny golden paper immediately anchors the photobook in its subject matter and confronts the reader/observer with a physical reality of migration. In 2023, for example, about 286,292 people arrived in Europe of whom 257,237 got there by sea.[72] In the same year, over 2000 people were reported dead or missing in the Central Mediterranean alone, a maritime region considered to be the deadliest route for illegalised migration according to the International Organization for Migration.[73] Nevertheless, and however large these figures are, they remain little more than numbers that are often represented by graphs, percentages, scales, and points on a map. In other words, people who are not directly involved with irregular migration remain locked in their position of distant observers remotely contemplating lists of numbers and statistics that hardly break free from their symbolic and figurative nature. It is at this point that Carollo's book intervenes and concretises the experience of migration. Holding the thin piece of the aluminised emergency thermal blanket, the reader/observer is invited to become tactilely conscious of one of migration's realities. S/he might find her/himself asking whether this blanket is capable of keeping migrants warm, or whether it is even conceivable to attach the existence of a human being to this piece of foil. Carollo seems to be provoking the bodily senses of her readers/observers in a manner that transcends passive gazing at photographs and that prepares them for another level of engagement.

---

[72] Data is accessible on the official website of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) through the following link: https://dtm.iom.int/content/europe-migration-arrivals-dashboard, accessed on 16/01/2024.

[73] Data is accessible on the official website of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) through the following link: https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean?region_incident=All&route=3861&year%5B%5D=11681&month=All&incident_date%5Bmin%5D=&incident_date%5Bmax%5D=, accessed on 16/01/2024.

3.1. Intentional Disruption of the Space of Narration as a Form of Resistance to Mainstream Visual Representation of Migration

One cannot simply flip through *Out of Africa*. This sort of casual browsing of the pages of a book lying within the reach of disinterested readers is not possible. To be able to have access to the volume, one has to tear the garment of crisis only to be surprised again. The book does not display neither the title nor the name of the author in the usual frontal fashion. On the contrary, the reader is faced with an almost blank white cover with coloured dots abstractly shaping the map of the world (see figure 29).[74] Every one of these points stands for a moment of human migration dating as far back as 150,000 years when the Homo Sapiens migrated out of Africa to populate the world. Carollo intentionally omits the political borders that separate countries and continents from her world map. She also erases the names of the countries that have been politically constructed over the centuries. What remains after the photographer's intervention is nothing but centres of human existence the connection of which traces routes of a once free and necessary circulation of life. Migration, which has been defined by Everett S. Lee in 1966 as "a permanent or semipermanent change of residence" regardless of the distance between the place of origin and destination and regardless of how long this act of mobility is, was (and still is) a necessary human phenomenon upon which life on earth is possible (49). Iole Carollo's map highlights this fact for, as human life is barely sustainable in both polar regions, migration points do not appear there leaving the glacial extremities of earth completely blank.

The cover of *Out of Africa* is very straightforward in its messages: migration is human, and it is necessary for maintaining human life. These two declarations seem to join de Haas in his claim that the "migration is too complex" argument is only a "fallacy" and a pretext to abandon the quest for a "comprehensive or universal migration theory" (3). Migration is, indeed, not complex to be understood. Certainly, to study it as a formal subject requiring the collection of data, the analysis of trends, and the breakdown of policies would necessitate considerable time and effort. However, to humanly understand migration, its motives, hopes, challenges, failures, and successes only requires getting in touch with the human part of it. This human side of migration that is universal without being dismissive, comprehensive without being patronising is what Carollo's photobook will endeavour to explain and to show. The

[74] Unless otherwise indicated, all the pictures from Iole Carollo's *Out of Africa* have been taken from her official website: https://iolandacarollo.com/out-of-africa-libro/

"extra mile" and "alternative paths" that Iole Carollo seems willing to undertake with her photobook do not necessarily have to be solitary journey as she invites her reader/spectator to join in a quest through space and time.[75]

Carollo's invitation is articulated in two different manners. First, as it has already been stated above, to be able to have a look at *Out of Africa*, the reader/spectator needs to unwrap the book. This unwrapping allows the reader to touch, maybe for the first time in her/his life, an emergency thermal blanket. It is a sensory experience that brings the issue of migration closer to the spectator and allows it to gain a concrete aspect. Furthermore, the unwrapping stands for an active commitment to the act of reading the book and looking at the pictures it contains. What seems to be established at this level is a contract between Carollo who offers her work and her reader/spectator who actively accepts to take it. Once consent is given, the photobook reveals its intentions to take the reader/observer, now becoming participant, into a universal journey of migration that would highlight the striking commonality of the phenomenon. Lastly, the participant will be handed a leaflet that explains the manner in which the photobook is to be used. This last detail fulfils three distinct functions: it insists on the invitation and the importance of consent, highlights the interactive nature of the book, and leaves the door ajar for those who want to retreat from the civil contract of this photographic experience. The leaflet presents the book as a form of medicine that seems to have desirable side effects including countering prejudice and stereotypes. What follows is simple, participants are free to either consume *Out of Africa* or continue unmedicated in the matters of migration. Like Imam, Carollo possesses a subtle sense of humour that transpires through her work. Also like him, she aims at engaging her reader/spectator and fully entangle her/him in this game of gazing. However, unlike him, her photobook has a physical nature that makes migration and the journey out of Africa more tangible and concrete.

[75] Donato, Benedetta. "The Sensitive Imaginary." *Out of Africa*, edited by Benedetta Donato, Fotograph s.r.l.-Palermo, 2021.

Once the contract is established and readers/observers are committed to the journey, they find themselves alternating their gaze between text and photograph. In effect, *Out of Africa* proves to be an interesting exercise in space division and management. The space of the book is unequally split between the text and the photos, which constitute the most substantial portion of the work. To start with, the textual component of *Out of Africa* is constructed in two major moments. The first is the narrative and descriptive texts written by Iole Carollo and Benedetta Donato, the editor of the photobook. As for the editorial note, — "The Sensitive Imaginary"— it curiously appears at the end of the photobook both in its original Italian version and its English translation. Iole Carollo's text that figures without a title but is preceded by verses taken from Homer's *Odyssey* takes its place at the beginning of the book and its English translation is pushed to the end. It is also important to note that, before Carollo's textual introduction, appear two photographs stretching over two pages each and one photograph preceding Homer's verses and facing it. Her introduction is also preceded by the title as well as a dedication she addresses to her father and—again curiously—two testimonies from a migrant that happen to be the real first text in the in the book. Migrants' confessions constitute, in fact, the second part of the textual component of Carollo's photobook and, unlike the other texts, they appear scattered along the book and hidden within the folds of some pages.

Evidently, *Out of Africa*'s relation to space is unique and the distribution of text around photographs is not without purpose. When it comes to Carollo's own text, it seems to be strategically placed to constitute an introduction that neither commences the dialogue between the different interactors nor frames it. Iole Carollo's text is itself confessional and only functions as a personal participation in the conversation about migration that is about to take place between her and her companions, on the one hand, and between them, the migrants, and the reader/spectator, on the other. Carollo's testimony is provoked by a visit she had to Sferracavallo "a little village nearby Palermo, stretching its roads between the sea and the land".[76] Her seaside promenade with her two companions brings Carollo memories from her childhood and how her parents used to take her there. Soon, personal memories transform themselves into memories of humanity, and the story of Carollo merges with the stories of the unknown people who inhabited the caves of Capo Gallo during the Palaeolithic age. These people, who were not yet able to transcribe their history in word, left concrete traces of their existence like pieces of

---

[76] Carollo, Iole. *Out of Africa*, edited by Benedetta Donato, Fotograph s.r.l.-Palermo, 2021.

pottery and food remains. Most importantly, they left "handprints on the cave walls" to unequivocally mark their presence.[77] Starting from the first words of Iole Carollo, one can sense the advent of a stream of thoughts, memories, objects, and images. The memory of her childhood was effortlessly connected to human history that immediately conjured the presence of ancestral humans who marked the territory with their objects. Unintentionally—or perhaps deliberately— Carollo shows her readers/spectators the ease with which migration can be understood.

The stream of consciousness continues as Carollo and her conversers move from one topic to the other. After the Palaeolithic man, the company talks about the Greeks and how challenging it was to cross the Mediterranean, a sea that simultaneously connected and separated Sicilians, Hellenics, Phoenicians, and Carthaginians. This treacherous sea that subdued heroes and empires seems today to be overpowered by the technological progress of humans who were able to turn it into one of the most attractive touristic destinations in the world. At that point, Carollo remembers her diving cruise a few years back and how the presence in the middle of the liquid extent filled her with a "sense of infinity" and serenity.[78] She declares that during that voyage "[t]he Mediterranean felt as the safest place on Earth".[79] Suddenly, the mood of the testimony changes into a gloomier tone. The tranquillity and serenity of the summer days seem to have turned into a threatening darkness that falls heavily on the fluid stretch squeezing and pressing those present within its dominion into the finite dimension of their human "smallness".[80] As the oppressing atmosphere dominates the narrative, the companions draw a comparison between Odysseus' journey and that undertaken by migrants today. The Mediterranean does no longer seem safe. It turns into a space of obstacles, challenges, and trials in which one can put her/his life at risk in order to fulfil her/his quest. The abrupt shift of the topic from the peacefulness of summer holidays to Homeric temptation and sacrifice led Carollo finally to ponder on the question of choice. Remembering that her mother does not know how to swim, Iole Carollo concludes that at least she has the freedom and the "chance to choose".[81]

[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

This final remark puts this introductory note, as well as the whole photobook, into perspective. Iole Carollo does not pretend to stand as a universal example nor to possess by herself the meaning of migration as a human experience. This is, perhaps, why her introductory talk was punctuated with bits of her conversation with her companions. The presence of two other voices speaking to the reader/observer functions as a direct invitation to participate in this dialogue. Besides easing the atmosphere and allowing for friendliness and trust to settle in, the conversation challenges the formal borders of subjectivity and otherness that are traditionally erected between readers and authors. Carollo welcomes her readers to join in and take part in her exchanges. She allows her/him to peep into her memories and to borrow her eyes to see what she sees. Also, by placing her own testimony after the two testimonial lines of Stefania—a migrant who will be quoted again through the book—, Carollo does not assume a generative role nor does she dominate the narrative. On the contrary, by not giving herself neither the first nor the last word, the photographer, like Jean Mohr and Omar Imam admits that the meaning of her photographs cannot be unilaterally defined by her. It becomes now somewhat clearer why *Out of Africa* has this particular opening composition that transgresses the ordinary layouts of books.

In a final remark about the opening of *Out of Africa*, one cannot but notice that the dialogue that hopes to be established does not solely involve the author, her readers/spectators, and her companions, on the one hand, and her photographed subjects, on the other. The dialogue is also conceived to be created between the photographs and the texts of her book. Naturally, any photobook would be composed with the intention of engaging its iconic and verbal components in an incessant conversation. However, Carollo's book, once more, confronts its own parts with challenging realities. Pictures and words are supposed to converse on the meaning of migration, but they are also provoked into challenging each other's territory. The space of migration and the space of migratory narration are not to be taken for granted while going through the pages of *Out of Africa* as the reader/spectator may be surprised by images in the *wrong* places and texts trespassing on images. This spatial reality forces the participants in Carollo's conversation to go back and forth between the photographs and the texts and also between the beginning and the end of the book to make sense of what is present before her/his eyes. For example, someone who cannot read Italian finds her/himself bound to start the book from the end to be able to have access to the English translation. One can, of course, ignore this step and insist on going through the photobook in the conventional order. One can do so if s/he

can resist the colourful temptation of the blue pages at the end (beginning?) of the book that visually stand out even when the book is closed.

Aside from Iole Carollo's own introduction to her work, *Out of Africa* possesses a considerable textual body composed of confessions made to the photographer during conversations upheld between her and her migrant "friends and acquaintances".[82] These confessions are themselves distributed in two different spatial categories. The first locations where the testimonies of migrants appear are the two extremities of the photobook. After the first photograph filling the first two pages of the book, appear two confessions from Stefania occupying the upper left corner of one page and the diagonally opposite bottom right corner of the following page. The rest of the pages is left completely blank making the confessions both stand out and fade away. As the first confession "And I miss the sea" appears, it seems to have been born from the preceding photograph showing someone turning their back to the spectator and facing the sea.[83] When the second confession appears at the bottom right corner of the second page declaring a sense of freedom, one is not sure what "here" refers to.[84] Is it supposed to refer to the sea that is missed or is it supposed to refer to the new place that is reached? This deictic confusion created by the text becomes even more challenging as the latter gets surrounded by photographs of the sea.

The last confession is made by Valeria and it appears almost at the very end of the book. Valeria, in effect, expresses her hopes to be able to start anew. Again, no other details are included in the text and the reader/spectator is left to her/his own device to make sense of these words. However, Carollo gives the users of her photobook some visual clues as to what may be meant by the words of the migrants. Following Valeria's words and as the book is believed to have ended, Carollo inserts one last photograph (see figure 32). A monkey, sitting in the shade of a tree while chewing at the plants around it, takes the viewer/reader by surprise. At this point it becomes more evident that this photobook is not simply about the migration of individuals deciding to go from one place to the other. It is rather a book about the migration of human beings across space and across time. It is about the human migration that allowed for the human race to develop and progress and to rise from its primitive state to its contemporary condition. The words of Valeria about starting everything from the beginning, coupled with the photograph

[82] Donato, Benedetta. "The Sensitive Imaginary." *Out of Africa*, edited by Benedetta Donato, Fotograph s.r.l.-Palermo, 2021.
[83] Carollo, Iole. *Out of Africa*, edited by Benedetta Donato, Fotograph s.r.l.-Palermo, 2021.
[84] Ibid.

of the monkey at the end and the photograph of a person at the beginning does not only emphasise the necessity of migration for human evolution but also brings forward the circularity of the photobook itself. With this final/first wink at the reader/spectator, Iole Carollo establishes the spatial transgressions that her photobook is going to be engaged with.

Figure 32. Iole Carollo, *Out of Africa*, 2021 © Iole Carollo.

The first spatial transgression might be identified from the location of the second group of migrants' confessions. Unlike the first category that is placed at the extremities of the book, the second and largest group of confessions is embedded not only within the photobook itself but also within the photographs. This embedding, however, follows an interesting pattern. As it is clear in figures 33, the text appears on a white tipped-in page that is smaller in size and that splits the larger photograph in two. The visual space is, then, distributed as follows: a single photograph stretching over two pages between which is attached a third page with a small text inscribes on its recto and a part of the larger picture on its verso. To be able to see the full photograph, the reader needs to flip the smaller page to the left. To read the text, the page has to be flipped to the right. This activity of constantly turning the page right and left to be able to see and to read makes text and image simultaneously present and absent in the same space. It also makes it visibly and tactilely evident that any dissociation between the image and the text makes meaning fragmented and lacking. When the page is turned to hide the text and reveal the whole picture as in figure 34, it becomes challenging to make sense of the content of the

photograph. It is only when the reader/viewer turns the page to read the text "Disaster" that the sea water and the thermal blanket gain concrete presence.[85]

Figure 33. Iole Carollo, *Out of Africa,* 2021 © Iole Carollo

Figure 34. Iole Carollo, *Out of Africa*, 2021 © Iole Carollo

---

[85] Ibid.

Berger has already confirmed, decades ago, the ambiguity of photographs (Berger and Mohr 91). He has also asserted that the weakness of photographic intentionality can be made up for by words, while the latter can be supplied with evidentiary proof by the photograph they are attached to (Berger and Mohr 92). However, the co-presence of Carollo's photographs and migrants' confession does not only result in making meaning clearer or more accessible to the reader/viewer. As a matter of fact, this idiosyncratic distribution of space between text and image creates what Stefan Soldovieri calls a "moment of delay or complexity that requires the reader to maintain a mobile reading posture" (152). The meaning of both the text and the photographs is, therefore, not simply attained by the immobile co-presence of both mediums on the same page but is rather created by the constant back and forth movement between them and between the recto and the verso of the pages. In this respect, Iole Carollo's *Out of Africa* crosses roads with Bertolt Brecht's *War Primer* as they both seem to advocate for "the abandonment of normal protocols of linear reading" (Long 208). These two volumes have other points in common, as well, for they not only share the general format of a photobook, but they also create a complex relation between image and text and they both create a significant "Effect of Interpellation" (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 75).

Besides the need to maintain a mobile reading position that postpones meaning and turns it into a woven fabric only achievable through a back-and-forth movement, Jonathan Long attributes the complexity of Brecht's *War Primer* to its paratextual profusion that, when ignored by critics, leaves lacunae in the understanding of the work. The other complexity that characterises the image-text relation in Brecht derives from the "semantic density" that the verbal attributes to the visual (Long 214). These two complexities are explored differently in *Out of Africa*. The paratext in Carollo's work does not intervene with the understanding of the photobook, for while it is rather *misplaced* and appears at the end instead of the beginning it can be easily read and done with. Neither the editorial note nor the acknowledgment section interferes with the almost regular flow of the photobook. Even Carollo's own introductory testimony can also be somewhat overlooked after being read. What creates a complex image-text relationship in *Out of Africa* is, indeed, the location of the testimonies of Valeria, Yousif, Elsa, and Iwona that appear in the middle of the book and punctuate the photographs. By embedding the words of the migrants between the two pages forming one photograph, Carollo adds to the complexity of space distribution in her book and, most importantly, breaks the completeness and fluidity of the image to let the text emerge. This seemingly misplaced insertion of the text that insists on

seeding it simultaneously within and without the photograph recreates an interruption that reminds one of the characteristic hiccups of today's migration.

The smaller pages upon which the words are inscribed are erected like walls disturbing and blocking the fluidity of the photographs. However, they also create a dent that can be felt through the cover and the pages of the book and function as bookmarks drawing more attention to their specific locations. Needless to say, these same half pages contain text on one side only while their lefthand side presents a portion of the photograph they block. Their blocking effect is, therefore, only partial and they manifest themselves not because of an "abiding mistrust of photographic images" or because of a persisting belief in the pictures' "power to deceive the untrained viewer", but because there is a need for collaboration between the verbal and the visual to make meaning more complete (Long 209). The photographic polysemy in Iole Carollo's *Out of Africa* does not need to be controlled or restricted. On the contrary, it is encouraged and celebrated. The proof is that, unlike Brecht's *War Primer*, her book is not bombarded with verbal reference, and that while, at first, the tipped-in pages may seem disruptive and irritating they reveal themselves to be visual markers. The effects of this particular spatial distribution of confessional texts are to draw more attention to the photograph, to contribute to meaning-making, and to allocate witnessing a separate but connected space of articulation. The apparent territorial challenge between text and image turns out to be a sort of sisterly quarrel over the attention of the reader/viewer not to impose one's narrative but to collaborate into producing the most complete meaning possible.

This quarrel over space is what increases the "Effect of Interpellation" of Carollo's photobook (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 75). Mitchell defines this effect as "the sense that the image greets or hails or addresses us, that it takes the beholder into the game, enfolds the observer as object for the 'gaze' of the picture. This is true even when no figure in the image looks out at the beholder" (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 75). It is necessary to include this rather lengthy quote in full to highlight the components that constitute the effect of interpellation. First, the effect is based on a sense, that is a feeling and a cognitive appraisal of a sensorial experience. This sense identifies an image's greeting and address which immediately implicate the viewer into the game of "switching and alternating the places" between all the participants of the visual contract (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 75). Then, the beholder becomes the object of the gaze upon whom the image looks. Mitchell gives *Las Meninas* as one of the most complex examples for his effect of interpellation. However, Mitchell also declares that it is sometimes possible for an image to *interpel* its beholders, to greet them, and to absorb them into the game

of gazing even without it possessing a pair of peeping eyes or even when the eyes are not directed to the beholders. Some picture, even the most abstract of them, can enjoy the power to stop the casual browsing eye of the viewer not only to address her/him but also to lecture her/him about the act of looking itself (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 75).

Out of Africa, indeed, possesses a unique potential for interpellation as a photobook, that is a compilation of photographs and texts brought together around a common theme, and as a container of individual photographs that are able to stand alone as independent generators of meaning. Certain aspects of the photobook's effect of interpellation have already been discussed. The golden and silver thermal blanket that shrouds the volume, the white cover that showcases hotspots of historical and prehistorical migration movements, and even the seemingly disrupted and disruptive distribution of its content make *Out of Africa* capable of capturing the attention of the potential reader/viewer. It can, therefore, be said that the format of the photobook and the way it presents itself to the people it intends to interact with is remarkably interpelling. Still on a formal level, the photobook employs other techniques to catch the attention of its readers/viewers and to engage them in its game. The fact that the internal text that recounts the testimonies of the migrants themselves is located on a half-page functioning as a bookmark that allows the image to continue on its other side attracts the reader/viewer's attention to the non-infringing reality of the relationship between image-text. Indeed, unlike other photo-texts, the words present in Carollo's *Out of Africa* do not usurp the space of the image. They are not written on it, and they do not force themselves on its territory. The text appears in its own space, separating the two pages forming the whole picture. This distribution of space draws attention simultaneously to the photograph that seems highlighted by the text, and to the text that enjoys its individual space.

Interpellation also occurs through the constant movement of images. Throughout the photobook, Carollo's photographs incessantly change position, size, and colours. For instance, the book opens with a double-page black and white photograph that is followed by another photograph of the same chromatic value and size. Then appears a one-page photograph in the middle of which a smaller colour photograph is glued (see figure 35). After that, the reader/viewer is exposed to two other double-page black and white photographs followed by three colour pictures appearing each on the righthand page of the book. As s/he turns the page, a grid of three smaller pictures occupies almost the two thirds of the righthand page followed by a colour photograph on the verso. In all these cases the rest of the space in the pages remains completely blank. With the progress of the book, Iole Carollo's photographs continue their

game of hide and seek jumping from left to right, stretching over two pages, shrinking and enlarging their size, sharing the same space, or even facing each other as if holding a friendly conversation. They also keep toying with their chroma appearing sometimes in black and white and some others in colours. Meanwhile, the clueless reader/viewer, already interpelled and intrigued, continues to follow their footsteps, and remains continually anticipating and constantly surprised. As one jumps with them from page to page, one could almost hear a mischievous childish laughter shrieking "gotcha!" at every corner. Interpellation.

Figure 35. Iole Carollo, Out of Africa, 2021 © Iole Carollo.

This game of stopping, possessing, and dispossessing the reader/spectator does not end at the level of formal playfulness. As a matter of fact, as Carollo's photographs shapeshift, their content also changes and their subject matter alternates between serenity and agitation, blissfulness and depression, mobility and immobility. For example, in figure 35 the reader/viewer can see a small image where the sea appears a little agitated embedded within a larger black and white photograph standing as a background and showing a rather calm sea. In another instance, the reader/viewer might be looking through the window of a plane or enjoying a car ride by night only to be faced by a large metal fence scratching the skies with its barbed wire (see figure 36 and 37). These visual sequences do, indeed, take the reader/spectator by surprise. First, because they break the thematic continuity of the visual narrative for when calmness is installed, agitation emerges, and where mobility is expected a sudden stop appears. Second, these abrupt shifts force the reader/viewer to change perspective and to sometimes go

backwards to a previous image of natural stillness or to quickly turn the page to avoid looking at the stressing images of distress. In any case, the reading/viewing pace as well as its direction and rhythm are acted upon by the images and also by the texts of *Out of Africa*. When the reader/viewer is surprised by the image of tragedy showing a thermal blanket floating on the surface of the sea and as s/he reads the word "Un disastro/Disaster" pronounced by Yousif (see figure 33 above), s/he was coming from a picture showing a beautiful winter sunset. Suddenly, the scene of peacefulness and intimacy is turned into one of calamity and only by tuning the page can the reader/viewer escape its oppressing anxiety.

Figure 36. Iole Carollo, *Out of Africa*, 2021 © Iole Carollo. (Scanned).

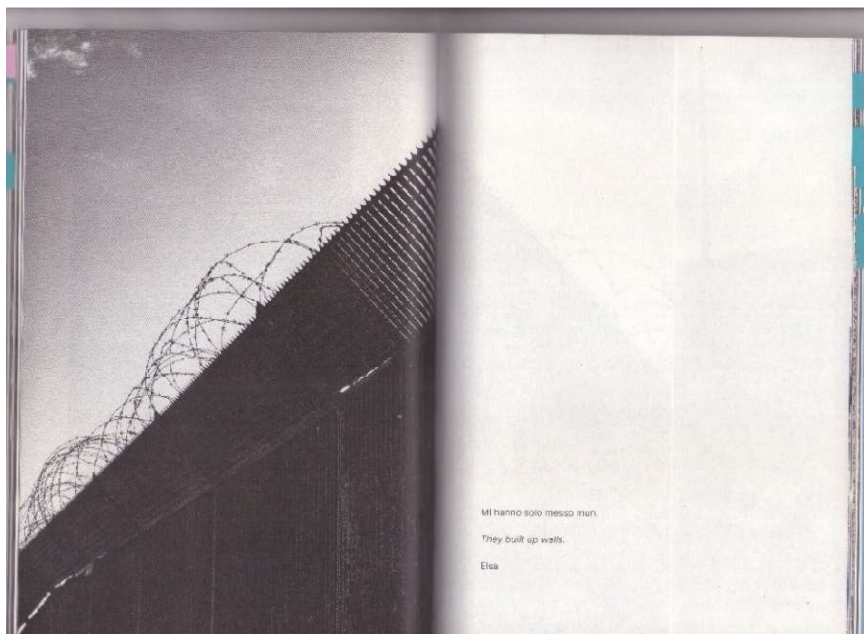


Figure 37. Iole Carollo, *Out of Africa*, 2021 © Iole Carollo. (Scanned).

Acting on the reader/viewer reading or observing faculties by changing their rhythms or directions is a way to act on their "ideological presuppositions" (Long 210). Long explains that the manner in which a text or an image addresses the reader, or the viewer, participates drastically in shaping the way the latter receives, understands, and reacts to it (209-210). In other words, by interpelling and addressing the viewer/reader a photo-text does not only exhibit its own subject matter, but it also chooses the position from which this meaning is to be received and how it is to be understood. For example, when s/he is allowed to look from the plane window and then is allowed to take a road ride only to be faced by a tall wall, the viewer is in a way forced into assuming the position of a migrant and is guided into looking at the environment through the eyes of a migrant. It is clear from these three photographs that are presented as a sequence that the reader/observer is not addressed as a distant spectator of the migratory journey. On the contrary, the viewer/reader is invited, and even tricked by the images, to assume the position of a migrant and to play her/his role so that when Elsa exhales "Mi hanno solo messo muri", the viewer feels that these walls have been, indeed, built in her/his face. The frustration and the desperation of the migrant is now shared by the viewer who can no longer assume a detached and disinterested gaze, nor can s/he feel sorry or pitiful over the misfortune of distant others.

To recap, *Out of Africa*'s idiosyncratic layout and energetic interplay between its text and images endows the book with an extraordinary power of interpellation. This power immediately grasps the attention of the reader/viewer and intrigues her/him. Before knowing it, the owner of the gaze finds her/himself crossing seas, walking on beaches, jumping off planes and into cars, running on roads and halting in front of immense walls. Sometimes slowing their gaze and pace to enjoy a scenery, sometimes averting pages and turning eyes to avoid looking at signs of distress, the readers/spectators become conscious of the book's ability to act on their senses, emotions, and even presuppositions. Suddenly, finding themselves in the shoes of a migrant looking at the hostile and refusing world with her/his eyes, the readers/viewers feel their subjectivity turn into objecthood as they stand addressed by the images and as the text's confessions resonate in their minds. Destabilised in their position of a subject in total control of their gaze and ideology the entanglement metamorphoses into engagement and the narrative of migration becomes familiar (Long 219). This engagement and this familiarity do not simply emanate from a newly established identification with the migrant other, nor do they merely stem from a rekindled sensitivity to migration's historical characteristic; they, as a matter of fact, are also provoked by the physical presence of the book itself.

3.2. Lost Objects, Found Objects, and the Archaeology of the Mundane

Out of Africa is an active book. It acts on its readers/viewers. It is also an interactive book as it allows its audience to handle it, to use it, to participate in unfolding its narrative. This participation in the unfolding process takes on a literal sense right in the middle of the photobook. Almost halfway through the book, the reader/viewer is confronted with a grid of objects photographed and displayed on the lefthand page accompanied with Elsa's confession "Perdi pezzi dell atua vita, pezzi dell atua cultura/ You lose pieces of your life, pieces of your culture".[86] The cultural objects vary from contemporary passports to a historical terracotta. There also figures, a Bible and a Qur'an, an Ankh symbol, and a Tau cross (see figure 38). If one is to categorise these objects one would say that they all symbolise life and passage. The passports are obviously instruments of crossing, going beyond, and transcending borders. If one would possess two passports and enjoy the benefits of having two nationalities one would have a large collection of borders to hop over. If, like in this case, one passport belongs to a country member of the European Union and the other is the United Kingdom, then almost all borders would evaporate in front of their holders. The Bible, the Qur'an, the Anth, and the Tau cross can, on the other hand, be understood as symbols of spiritual passage. They can all represent life, eternity, unity, and crossing over; and are, in this sense, the spiritual equivalent of the passports that facilitate human's transition from one place to the other. The terracotta in its turn is unique. Without further archaeological notes, one cannot confidently declare its meaning. However, there is an air of familiarity that surrounds the statuette. It shows a seated woman wearing a head cover and holding in her lap what appears to be a lion. It bears visible resemblance to Punic and other Mediterranean figurines that have been found in almost every coastal city of the Mare Nostrum.

[86] Ibid.

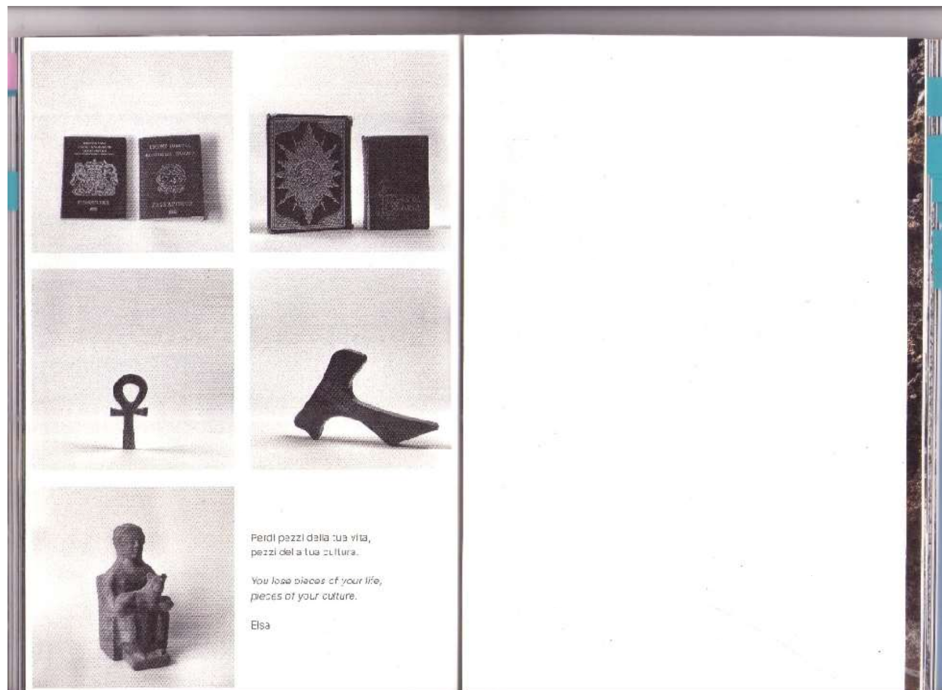


Figure 38. Iole Carollo, *Out of Africa*, 2021 © Iole Carollo. (Scanned).

As symbols of transition and crossing over, they function as great ambassadors who invite the reader/viewer to unfold the next page promising perhaps more curious objects. Unfolding the hidden page has, in reality, two main functions. First, it is a reminder that the journey undertaken by the reader/viewer of the book was consensual and that the discovery of both the photographs and the texts constituting *Out of Africa* largely depends on her/his willingness to see and to read. The second function is to grant the reader/spectator a participatory role in the development of the story. Without the active decision to spread out the folded page, the story will remain concealed and lacking. It was necessary then that the reader/viewer steps out of her/his passive flipping of the pages and interacts physically with the book. This tactile experience highlights the commitment of the observer/reader towards uncovering, discovering, and most importantly understanding the story and the history of migration. It is an experience that materially testifies to the presence of a degree of engagement towards the narrative of the photobook. This seemingly simple movement grants the reader/viewer an immense pleasure as it is through the action of her/his own hands that an obscure part is revealed. It should be noted that, after the monkey unexpectedly surprising them at the end (beginning?) of her photobook, this might constitute the second wink Iole Carollo gives her readers/spectators.

It has already been established that the book possesses a great potential for *interpelling* its readers/viewers. It has also an extremely dynamic and playful rhythm that governs the

movement from page to page, from beginning to end and backwards. These two abilities are fused in the middle of the book to represent Carollo's engaging and good-humoured address to her audience. When the reader/spectator reaches the section requiring her/his unfolding intervention, s/he finds herself welcomed by a collection of objects that exhibit themselves in a natural and yet provocative way. They all belong to cultures that have existed or still exist around the Mediterranean. The Bible and the Qur'an connect the Middle East to the western basin of the Sea, its south to its north. The Tau cross is interestingly Greek, Hebrew and Christian. The Ankh, also known as the key of the Nile, is both an ancient Egyptian and a Christian symbol; and the terracotta statuette representing a mother or a goddess has certainly circulated the Mediterranean if not materially than in image. All those objects, including the passports that represent a different historical reality, seem to be comfortably located in a temporal and spatial continuity. This continuity is abruptly interrupted by the folded page that only show its blank face to the increasingly curious reader/viewer. Carollo, who is an archaeologist besides being a photographer, shares with her readers/spectators the intrigue, curiosity, and pleasure that looking at and for objects involve. She shares with them the delights of digging out hidden things, hidden images, and the satisfaction of spreading out the scrolls of time. It seems that Iole Carollo has intended for her readers/spectators to come to physically realise that the (hi)story of migration can be fully told only through the collective participation of human beings. The abstinence from taking an active role in this narration and narrative would leave it blank and lacking and would prevent migrants from having enough space for self-expression.

Space and space management is certainly a crucial dimension in the phenomenon of migration. The most straightforward definitions of migration agree that it is a phenomenon that requires movement from one place to another and this regardless of the motives and the periods of time one intends to spend in the new destination. *Out of Africa* has so far proven to be quite sensitive to this question of space organisation and to the issue of movement across spaces. Needless to repeat the previous analyses related to the spatial organisation of the book and to its ability to act on its readers/viewers' mobility across its pages. However, a final remark about *Out of Africa*'s relation to space is now opportune. When the folded page is spread open it immediately stretches beyond the physical borders of the book. Instantly, the reader/viewer finds her/himself facing three pages instead of two and participating, voluntarily, in a spatial trespassing (see figure 39). Like its subject matter, *Out of Africa* maintains a dialogical relation to space. As a book, it recognises the limits of its formal structure. It seems to be aware that it

is an object that has a defined appearance and finite dimensions contained within its environment. Nevertheless, *Out of Africa* seems to be also capable of challenging these limits by expanding and deepening its entrails. The folded page remains concealed until the reader/viewer reaches it and actively stretches it to reveal its secrets. The secrets appear, then, and besides giving the viewers/readers the satisfaction of uncovering them, they also fill them with wonder as to why they were hidden in this fashion. Why did these objects feel the need to usurp some extra space upon which they install themselves? Most importantly, why did they find it necessary to smuggle themselves into the book and to hide their presence until their revelation was required? It is only by the examination of the nature of these found objects that one can understand the reason behind their apparent clandestine movement.

Figure 39. Iole Carollo, *Out of Africa*, 2021 © Iole Carollo.

As both an archaeologist and a photographer, Iole Carollo exhibits a clear affinity for rendering the invisible visible. In an extremely layperson's fashion, one would say that archaeology is the science that aims at understanding the life of long-gone people through the study of the places they occupied and the objects they used. In this sense, archaeology gives great importance to *things* left behind by people who may have used them in the most mundane way. Similarly, photography gives importance to things and people who may have not otherwise been important. What photography did to persons in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries is quite similar to what social media did to everyday meals, outfits, nights out, working spaces, and so on. It gave them visibility despite their extraordinarily commonplace nature. Before photography was invented and then democratised, only great dignitaries and people of immense wealth could afford having their profiles painted. With photography, things started to slowly change. At first, photographs captured important people, then they captured the dead because they were also “precious and beautiful”, and finally they found space for everybody dead or alive regardless of their socio-economic or political position (Linkman 14). Today, people are flooded, to nauseating levels, with pictures of every possible person and object in the world and this includes migrants and their objects. There seems then to exist a kinship between photography and archaeology that manifests itself in an interest in the mundane and the unimportant.

Examining the photograph above, one can immediately recognise a few commonplace objects. There figures a rubber duck, a necessary element of almost every child’s bath. One can also locate a Starbucks cup, a teapot, something that looks like an Asian rice box, and a round sphere that makes one think of an ostrich egg. If one disregards their historical, spiritual, or cultural value, all the objects are ordinary and unimportant. All of them are *things* that either have already been used and discarded by people or are being used by them at this very moment. Why do they, then, appear on the pages of a book dealing with migration? And why does the reader/viewer have to undertake the extra effort of unfolding a page to reveal them? This is what W.J.T. Mitchell has to say about “Trivial objects”: “slippers, pencils, gloves, teapots-no longer seem like innocent, passive entities, but have ‘lives of their own,’ with stories to tell, and voices to tell them; the venerable subdiscipline of ‘material culture’ has news to report” (*What Do Pictures Want?* 111). These trivial things are, therefore, important because they seem to have come to life and to possess enough independence and agency that enables them to transgress the borders of their innocent inertia. After this, a large semantic field of animist beliefs, iconophobia, iconophilia, idolatry, fetishism, and even psychoanalytical jargon is activated. Material culture, avant-garde art, Marxist commodities find also a way to haunt the mind (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 112-113).

All the above-mentioned terms and concepts related to *found objects* and how to approach them are legitimate. However, only certain aspects of their nature are of importance at this point and only some of their functions are going to be explored. Mitchell reminds his readers that *found objects* have two criteria that define them. First, a found object “must be ordinary, unimportant, neglected, and (until its finding) overlooked” (*What Do Pictures Want?*

114). It cannot possess any aesthetic properties that make it "remarkable in any obvious way" (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 114). Second, a found object needs to be really found. This means that it needs to be localised by mere chance and that no planning is employed in its bringing forward (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 114). Consequently, if one re-examines the objects found by Carollo, one would be able to conclude that all of them are mundane and unimportant at least in the sense that they are not unique and that they exist in a large number of copies. Even the terracotta statuette and the other double-faced figurine, and despite their apparent historical value, have in fact very recurrent shapes. None of them is of any specific beauty and when spread on a table none of them would particularly catch the eye. Moreover, their discovery by Iole Carollo is very likely to have happened by accident. One would find it hard to believe that the photographer went deliberately looking for a rubber duck, or that she carefully designed the excavation of a Starbucks paper cup. Also, even the passports or the Tau cross would have probably revealed themselves to her without being specifically sought out. Therefore, one might conclude that this collection of trivial things is, indeed, a collection of found objects that have exposed themselves to Carollo who eventually photographed them and showed them to her readers/viewers.

In the same context of revelation and exposition of found objects a last remark is necessary. Still according to W.J.T. Mitchell, a *found object* should be carefully distinguished from other misplaced or displaced objects. Mitchell insists that despite the fact that a found object is neglected, unlooked for, and dismissed, it should not be confounded with the "bad object", the "feared or hated object", or even "the lost or vanishing object" (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 116). Certainly, these objects can be overlooked, misplaced, and neglected; however, they are thus treated because they are fully present in the conscious or unconscious of the person. For example, the "bad object" that serves as a landfill for negative emotions and images is actively avoided and overlooked precisely because its presence in the person's psyche is so powerful that it threatens its integrity. Psychological bad objects may find their equivalents in the material world and can express themselves in the forms of "totems, fetishes, and idols" (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 146). Upon their revelation, the "bad objects' of empire", as Mitchell designates them, provoke in the imperial self the need to neutralise, tolerate, or destroy them (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 146). This need emerges predominantly because these objects are believed to "come alive" and to have enough animation and even power and will to demand things and to act on things (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 146).

Consequently, these bad objects are dispossessed of their power by turning them, in some cases, into "art object[s]" that can be safely quarantined in museums.

European museums are full of found objects marking colonial encounters across the world. Indigenous objects are often turned into objects of art that need to be simultaneously preserved and exposed, regardless of what indigenous people have to say about this practice. For instance, African war masks, bowls, boxes, fabric, and many other objects that were looted during the colonial period, still represent a considerable component of famous European museums. Some of these objects may, indeed, have a certain political or religious value to the people who lost them. However, in many cases, the looted then aesthetically neutralised objects are of an extremely mundane and unimportant nature. According to the Belgian Royal Museum for Central Africa, the famous Luba Mask that was stolen from its righteous owners in Congo in 1896 and then sold to the museum in 1919, represents one piece in a collection of over 700 other objects including "musical instruments", "chairs", and even "combs".[87] This aesthetic neutralisation renders the found object harmless. As an object of art that is now located in a museum to be admired and marvelled at by a curious audience wanting to peep into a culture remotely located in time and space, the Luba Mask, for example, lost almost all its unsettling powers. It will certainly not come to life while confined into an air-tight glass box surrounded by exploring eyes. When elevated into the status of an object of art the found object is subjected to a "transfiguration" and an artistic "redemption" that turns it into a foundational object of a new trend (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 114).

In the context of migration's found objects, artistic apotheosis is quite common especially during the years that were conventionally evaluated as critical. Artistic apotheosis is what transforms commonplace objects left or lost by migrants into foundational elements in museums or art installation. It is a process through which the found object is "revealed", "discovered", "reframed", and elevated above its "poor" nature to be ushered out of "a zone of indistinction, beneath notice or contempt" and to be celebrated as what it is not (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 116). Artistic apotheosis is here understood to function on two level: first it transfigures the nature of the found object, next it transforms its function. A classic example of artistic apotheosis is Marcel Duchamp's urinal turned into a fountain only by labelling it as such. Other examples of this transfiguration have been examined by Federica Mazzara in her

---

[87] https://www.africamuseum.be/en/learn/provenance/luba-mask

book *Reframing Migration: Lampedusa, Border Spectacle and Aesthetics of Subversion.* One of the interesting cases addressed by Mazzara was Ai Weiwei's 2016 Berlin installation which consisted of "the recycling of 14,000 life jackets abandoned on the shores of the Greek island of Lesbos" (134). Ai used the life jackets that haunted the Greek landscape "to wrap the six columns of the Berlin's nineteenth-century Konzerthaus patio, during the 66th Berlinale International Film Festival" (Mazzara 134). Ai Weiwei's installation was designed to attract attention to "the cause" of refugees and "unauthorised" migrants (Mazzara 133-134). Ai was committed to "raise awareness" and to render the struggles of hundreds of thousands of people more visible to European audiences (Mazzara 133). To do so, Federica Mazzara reports that he installed an art studio in Lesbos, produced a "documentary called *Human flow* (2017)", and of course mounted several art installations including the one in question here (133-134).

Undoubtedly, Ai Weiwei's intentions are not the subject of questioning. However, the impact of some of his artistic projects was object for criticism. For example, the instance where he chose to cover the columns of the Berlin Konzerthaus with red and orange life jackets resulted in some outrage. Mazzara discusses Maya Ramsay's observation that the number of life jackets is arbitrary as it does not stand for neither the "number of deceased migrants, nor the number of rescued migrants" (Ramsay qtd. in Mazzara 134). Mazzara continues to add that Ai's installation runs the risk of aligning itself with the "governmental discourse" and the "spectacle of statistics" (134). The spectator would be overwhelmed at first in front of what seems to be a "huge human loss" (Mazzara 134). There would be bewilderment, shock, sadness, and even anger in front of an "impressive" spectacle of human loss (Mazzara 134). Nevertheless, these emotions and reaction might also get immediately subdued by the *rationale* of statistics. The arbitrariness of the number 14,000 that fails to link itself to any tangible reality about migration besides the "idea that the number of arrivals is beyond capacity, massive and unprecedented", makes the aesthetic bewilderment fade out in favour of rational or, for that matter, rationalised discourses about migration. The attention then shifts into recycling the same "narrative of crisis and emergency" (Mazzara 134). Federica Mazzara interestingly points out that the failure to provide any subversive narrative to the governmental discourses about migration risks to confine "debris" into a "merely ornamental" function (134).

Another instance of transfiguration discussed by Federica Mazzara in her book regards *Porto M,* the headquarter of Askavusa, a collective active in Lampedusa and engaged with resisting "any attempt to 'spectacularise' the island as a militarised stronghold" (Mazzara 98). *Porto M,* declares Mazzara, is "a place of experimentation with practices of memory and

struggle" (98). It is also "where migrant objects – relics used by the migrants to reach Lampedusa, rescued from the abandoned boats and then abandoned on the island landfill – are displayed as testimony to the violence at the Mediterranean border" (Mazzara 14). In *Porto M* and after being saved from the landfill that reduces them to trash and destines them to oblivion, migrants' objects receive the attention of a museum-like care. Once excavated and sorted, they are displayed to the public eye. Their display is, however, random and "free from any attempt to define their story, belonging or function" (Mazzara 99). These found objects are allowed to sit there free from the conventional museological practice of attaching labels and categorising objects by usage or provenance. The artists and activists who are responsible for *Porto M* consider themselves the "guardians" of these rescued objects and they allow them to "talk back to different viewers" and to release an energy capable of "activating" both themselves and the "gaze of the observer" (Mazzara 107-109). This resisting and subversive potential of *Porto M* turns the place into a moment of mutual engagement between the found object and the spectator. An engagement that transports the object from a frozen expository state to an active participatory action of reshaping indeed, reframing migration, in terms of resistance and subversion.

Hence, *Porto M* is constructed, according to Federica Mazzara, as a space of "fluid configuration of memorialisation that implies, first of all, a less institutionalised layout of the museum space and a redefinition of the practices of representation by performing an aesthetics that prioritises the performative dimension of the memorial event" (Mazzara 108). For this reason, the site possesses an undisputable aesthetic and political value. In a sense, it is a place where neglected and lost objects are recognised as worthy of display not particularly because they have an aesthetic value but mostly because they can release a sort of energy capable of activating those who meet them. To be activated by these objects might mean to become more sensitive to the cause of migration. It might also mean to recognise the right of these migrants' objects to be displayed or to simply exist. To be activated may eventually mean to rethink conventional spaces that institutionalise and preorder the gaze and the object of the gaze. The project's intentions and potentials to subvert not only the official and institutional narrative about migration but also the conventional space organisation is admirable. Nevertheless, one should not lose of sight of the fact that *Porto M* is still a museum. Indeed, it is an unconventional museum that constantly defies the normative construction and understanding of the space. Yet, it still fulfils the functions of the museum as an institution that manufactures "knowledge and

sensing" and that "regulate[s] epistemology and aesthetics" (Mignolo, *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations* 80).

A museum is a place where "artifacts representative of 'other' memories" are collected, asserts Mignolo and Walsh (199). The sum of the word's Greek origins defines it as a place of both study and memory. However, since the "memories contained in those artefacts" could not themselves be collected, museums devoted themselves to the compilation of objects "removed and displaced from their cultural environment, their owners, and authors" (Mignolo and Walsh 199). It was within the walls of these "European invention" that found objects belonging to non-European cultures got elevated to the status of cultural and/or artistic artefact (Mignolo and Walsh 199). It is within the walls of museums that the cultural other learns about the value of the objects that once belonged to her/him and are now displaced into *better* places. How then would the Congolese know about the treasure-like nature of the Luba mask if it was not looted and transported to Belgium where it resides today, revered as it should be, under the roof of the Royal Museum for Central Africa? Where else would a disfigured aluminium pot, a torn Bible, and the worn-out pair of shoes find themselves displayed on a shelf? It is the museum, as an institution of dominance, that excavates, collects, and even buys objects with the purpose of studying, categorising, and exhibiting them, even if these objects have never been intended to be publicly shown.

Putting aside the subversive potential that some artistic installations and some museums dealing with the issue of migration may have, one needs to be alert to two fundamental limitations these forms of aesthetic apotheosis may have. The first challenge is structurally related to the concept of coloniality of knowledge. Certainly, artistic representation is not exclusively colonial, European, or western. However, certain forms of artistic representations of migration locate themselves both physically and epistemologically in Europe, or the west in general, hence distancing themselves from localities of suffering. Consequently, they might easily fall into the pits of distasteful and even "offensive" representations (Mazzara 135). Some other times, even with the best intentions, artistic representations ignore the particular cultural or religious sensitivities of certain found objects that get exposed when they should be concealed and get preserved when they should be completely destroyed. Muslims, for instance, have a specific code of conduct that should always be observed when handling their holy book. This code includes that when the Qur'an is partially destroyed or that it is destroyed beyond repair it should be disposed of within specific measures. It also should not be neglected, discarded, placed directly on the ground, or under other objects. Taking these sensitivities into

consideration one would conclude that some artistic exhibitions that showcase torn pages from the Qur'an might be offensive to a large number of Muslims. In sum, by failing to recalibrate one's position in the cultural universe and by assuming that a universal knowledge and aesthetics exist, one runs the risk of reproducing normative, dismissive, and patronising forms of knowledge and art.

The second challenge is related to artistic installations, exhibitions, and museums of migration as spaces. What happens when the migrant found object is recycled and becomes a foundational object within a larger object of art? What happens when the found object is taken into a migration museum to be displayed before visitors? What happens to these poor objects is that they get swallowed and digested by the spaces they are taken into. The artistic exhibition and the museum are instruments and institutions that organise space. They structure it and give it meaning. They construct space into finite units that have a beginning and an end, that one can get into and out of, that have opening and closing hours, and that have expiration dates. The museum, the art gallery, the art installation also organise vision. They guide it through space and objects and teach it about what should be looked at. Rarely do spectators stand in front of their own kitchen shelves admiring their old pans blackened with use. Yet, they do so when these pans are put in a museum and are labelled *migrant pans* or *pans that survived a shipwreck.* These poor found objects turn into an object of a curious, focused, learned gaze that is capable of recognising an object of spectacle instead of a pile of trash. Even when the committed museum or art exhibition/installation refuses to label and to categorise these objects in an act of resistance and subversion, they are still labelling them by merely incorporating them. Giving a title and a context to the space of display and subjecting the poor object to the examination of a sympathetic yet curious gaze is at once elevating and subduing. By being extraordinarily worthy of exhibition, the "poor thing" is immediately discarded in favour of other debates concerning the skills of the artist, the political message, or anything deemed more important.

W.J.T. Mitchell asserts that the "true found object never quite forgets where it came from, never quite believes in its elevation to spectacle and display. It remains humble to the end, a poor thing caught up in the push and pull of desire and demand" (*What Do Pictures Want?* 115). Whose desire and demand is the found object entangled in? They are certainly not the object's own desire and demand, for it remains faithful to its nature as a humble *poor thing*. It is also hard to believe that those are the desires of the real owners of the things turned into objects of "spectacle and display" for why would the dead desire anything, or why would those who have been incarcerated in detention camps demand that their objects get displayed? Why

would the migrants who *made it* ask for their torn pair of shoes to be elevated on a shelf? Migrants' found objects get recycled and re-used because they cannot be suffered to roam freely around the space. They cannot be allowed to forever haunt the hills of Lesbos or fill the entrails of Lampedusa. Therefore, they need to be excavated, elevated, displaced. They need to be institutionalised in order to be eventually digested by the space they tarnished. Thus, art itself is transformed into an instrument of waste and space management, an instrument of organisation, order, and oppression. And that is precisely when the found object becomes foundational and consequently loses its power to unsettle, to intrigue, to surprise, and to scare. It turns into a dull thing in a glass box or on a wooden shelf meant to be looked at until it gets obliterated by the "cycle of obsolescence" (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 124).

Taking it all into consideration, it becomes less challenging to consider that the found objects photographed by Iole Carollo and presented in her book differ in three main aspects. First and foremost, Carollo's found objects come truly unsorted thus defying the logic of systematic organisation. On the lefthand page, one can easily sea objects that belong to different cultures, times, and places. The Bible and the Qur'an that appear together next to two European passports indicate two realities that are not necessarily contradictory but that belong to two different conceptions of this world. The holy books represent, as it has already been argued, a form of spiritual journey and passage from a material world to the realm of the metaphysical. People who believe in these books believe that they are transcendental, that is coming from a divine world; and that they are able to make people transcend. They are, indeed, the passports of believers who can, through them see beyond the confines of materiality. They are books of liberation but in a less physical way than the liberation of a European passport. At the other extremity of the unfolded page one can see a stack of books all of which are versions of *The Little Prince*. De Saint-Exupéry's novella is not only a story about a little prince who was able to travel between planets but is also the most translated book after the Bible. This fact makes the novella itself a migrant and an ambassador, par excellence, capable of transcending physical borders as well as those of language and culture.

The only common thread that might link these books of great religious and cultural importance to things that appear to be more mundane and unimportant like the rubber duck or the teapot is the simple fact of migration. Regardless of where they came from, where they are located now, and where they may go in the future all these found objects are migrant objects. It is equally interesting to note that even *migration* was not framed in these photographs of found objects. Clearly, it was not framed neither by time nor by places of provenance and destination.

Moreover, it was not framed by *crisis* either. For instance, the covers of both the Bible and the Qur'an testify to the hardships the books might have faced. One can easily see that the corners of the books have faced quite a few challenges and can also suspect that they may have been on a boat journey. However, the lens of Carollo allows both of them to compose themselves. They were not ambushed nor were they forced to expose the vulnerability of their pages. They seem to have been allowed enough time to show themselves in the way they would have wanted people to remember them. This dignifying approach towards the photographed object reminds one of the bust picture of Marcel figuring in *Another Way of Telling* and the story behind it. it was on a Sunday morning that Marcel himself knocked on the door of Jean Mohr telling him that "the moment has come" and that he was now ready to have his picture taken (Berger and Mohr 36). He prepared himself, chose the setting, and drew the line below which Mohr was not allowed to photograph. Marcel who was wearing his "working trousers" wanted his great grandchildren to remember him as well-shaved and well-dressed regardless of the hard life he was living as a farmer (Berger and Mohr 36). It was only when he saw his picture as he imagined it that he was to exhale in relief "And now my great grandchildren will know what sort of man I was" (Berger and Mohr 37).

Mohr was sensitive to Marcel's concern about his image; and although he had already taken a few pictures of him completely immersed in his work, this picture was different. This photograph was the one Marcel wanted his great grandchildren to look at to know the man he was. It is the picture through which Marcel wanted to communicate with his great grandchildren after he is gone from this world. This picture was his passport to the future and into the memory of the people he would, perhaps, never have the chance to know. Mohr knew that, or at least he sensed that, and he respected it. Iole Carollo also sensed the necessity of allowing her found objects to be seen and remembered with respect. Not as objects excavated from piles of garbage, nor as objects rescued from collapsed boats and barely surviving. Carollo gave these objects the opportunity to present themselves as components of other people's lives, dreams, hopes, cultures, and memories and because of that they deserved to be presented with dignity.

The dignity that *Out of Africa*'s found objects are treated with manifests itself in the fact that although they appear without a label, they are not denied their origin. It is true that some of these objects clearly state where they historically came from like the Tau cross that is originally Greek and the Ankh that is Egyptian. However, other objects like the teapot, the rubber duck, the Starbucks paper cup, and the stack of books do not clearly announce their place of origin. Nevertheless, the reader/viewer does not feel that s/he is in front of some orphaned

objects collected and exposed against their will and the will of their righteous owners. Indeed, the text that manifests itself between the photographs reminds the viewer/reader that these objects belong to people. Stephania and Elsa, who probably own some of the objects now collectively forming the photobook, frankly express that they are “pieces of [their] culture” that might be lost as a result of migration.[88] The loss does not necessarily have to be physical. The loss could simply mean that these objects are not accessible anymore, that they fell out of use, or that they lost the spaces they used to occupy. For instance, one could imagine the feelings of nostalgia a North African would feel when seeing the traditional teapot that constitutes a fundamental component of the region’s culinary space. As an individual object, the teapot may have no considerable material value. Yet, when it is connected to the family space, to the tradition of collectively sitting down for an afternoon tea break, to the smells of fresh mint, to the stories and gossip that are shared around it, the teapot becomes more than an object. The teapot gets transformed into a symbol representing family, comfort, and casual chatting.

When Stefania says that these are “objects belonging to my family”, the reader/viewer becomes aware of the objects power.[89] They are things connected to family trees. They might even be considered family members. Some of them might have been inherited from grandparents, some might have been carefully handled and used by someone’s mother. Some of these objects may have witnessed a family’s happiest moments and hardest days. They may have even participated in the family’s celebrations and healings. Migration dislocated the person from a familiar space to a new non-familiar and unpredictable space. This dislocation does not only estrange the migrant from the people who inhabited the familiar space but also from the objects which did so as well (Volkan 5). These *things* may be transformed into “linking object[s]” that is, objects chosen by people to link them to the beloved lost objects (Volkan 21). When the process of grieving, which usually follows any act of separation between the self and the loved object—be it a person, a place, or even a thing—is not healthily accomplished, the person might pick up an object that once belonged to the lost persons/things to continually keep a link with them. Vamik D. Volkan maintains, that in cases of migration and displacement, people who did not necessarily lose family members and loved ones in the process may “focus more on the loss of the ‘average expectable environment,’ which includes not only people but also non-human objects and sometimes pets” (25).

---

[88] Carollo, Iole. *Out of Africa*, edited by Benedetta Donato, Fotograph s.r.l.-Palermo, 2021.
[89] Ibid.

Linking objects help migrants adapt to the new situation and location. They help them "work on [their] denial of what is lost" to eventually "accept changes, and to realize what may be gained" (Volkan 28). After reaching the phase of accepting the new reality, migrants give these objects up and "move on" (Volkan 28). However, some migrants remain locked up in their relationship to the linking objects. They may become excessively "preoccupied" with them "to the degree that they do not have much energy left to spend on finding new ways of living" (Volkan 28). In any case, the objects that belong to the migrant's family or culture possess immense powers that connect her/him to the lost objects of love. This power can help the migrant survive, heal, and accept the new life ahead. Therefore, and because of this power and potential such apparently trivial objects may have, linking objects need to be treated with the respect they deserve. This respect does not only consist of retrieving and displaying them, but it also relies on allowing them to be reincorporated within the memory of their rightful owners. Iole Carollo does so by presenting the found objects in the same space with their owners.

Carollo's artistic intervention made it possible for the object and its owner to exist in the same place again. This co-existence is materialised through the co-presence of the objects' photographs and the written words of their owners. This co-presence, to remember Valeria Cammarata's words, "fill[s] quite the same gaps, those of memory or rather memories: lost memories, often never possessed memories, which cannot be found, only re-constructed through a narration that hand and eye make from their own exclusive point of view" (Cammarata 20). There is, indeed, something nostalgic in Cammarata's words as there is something mournful in the testimony of Elsa and Stefania. It is the constant longing for something lost that neither a photo nor a text alone can find. It is the gap of representation that can be fully filled only with the co-presence of photo and text. It is also the gap of loss and mourning that can only be filled with the co-presence of the object and its owner. Carollo's artistic transformation is what allows for this co-presence, indeed reunification, to take place. It is her intervention that made it possible for the object and its owner to trespass the borders of loss and oblivion and to recover, reconstruct, and even create memories.

What results from this reunion and co-presence in the emancipation of both object and owner. The migrant, by finding the lost object can now move on. S/he can accept the loss and give up the object which is, in its turn, emancipated from its dislocation and anachronism. A misplaced object is a haunting object. It is something that reappears in unusual spaces to stain them with its presence. However, when returned to their owners, these objects are freed from the shackles of elevation and transfiguration. Iole Carollo's artistic intervention allows these

found objects to remember "where they came from", what they really are, and to whom they once belonged (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 115). Some of the objects Carollo photographed have been confined, one suspects, within some glass boxes in a museum. They have been for long elevated to the status of "spectacle and display" (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 115). Curiously, however, by photographing them unframed and unlabelled, Carollo helped them step down from a pedestal they might have never aspired to climb. Also, by playfully mixing them with other apparently trivial objects, Carollo helps these found objects regain their humble nature (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 115).

It might be argued, at this point, that the things Iole Carollo photographed are found objects. One would claim that perhaps these objects are unimportant and lack great aesthetic value. One would also claim that they might have been found by the photographer by accident or that they *magically* manifested themselves to her. However, since they were not artistically transformed into something else, they could not be considered as *true* found objects. The argument against these advances is twofold. On the one hand, Carollo's artistic transformation consisted in turning the objects into photographs. The transfiguration took place at the level of the nature of the object from a three-dimensional thing occupying a three-dimensional space to a two-dimensional picture figuring on a flat surface. This artistic transformation allowed Carollo to move these objects out of the spaces that confined them. This possibility of breaking free from defined and structured spaces—regardless of the nature of these spaces—and to travel freely on the pages of *Out of Africa*, is, in effect, the second artistic transformation. Were it not for Carollo's intervention, these lost objects would have never been found. In other words, it was their metamorphosis from objects to images by Carollo's lens that allowed these objects to co-exist with their owners in the same place. It was also this transformation from one form of object to another that made it possible for these photographs to enter in a dialogue with the reader/viewer who was invited to take an active role in making them visible. It is, then, photographic transformation that made these lost/found objects reconnect with both their actual and historical owners and that made it possible for them to transcend the limitations of conventional spaces.

It would be opportune at this point and as this chapter is coming to a closure to note that both the photographed found objects and the space they figure in within *Out of Africa* represent the book's answer to traditionally configured spaces of migration. In a first instance the book orders its photographs around two dualities: fluidity/rigidity and mobility/immobility. The first part of the book, that is the collection of photographs that figure on the pages preceding the

demarcation created in the middle by the found objects, represents the traditional conceptualisation of fluidity and mobility. Going through the pages the reader/viewer encounters different photographs that represent the sea and the human connection with it. On the one hand, one can see large stretches of water, seashores, and a sea urchin's shell. On the other, a harbour and a lighthouse are visible, a turned-over wooden boat, and some unidentified orange objects that one would assume to belong into the bark. Even the stones that could be associated with rigidity bear the marks of attrition. They are rounded, softened, cracked, and eroded. The presence of the harbour, the lighthouse, and the turned over wooden boat testify to a long historical relation that was established between Human beings and the Mediterranean. Despite its storms and capricious nature, the Mediterranean has always been navigated in almost every direction by humans. This fact is further highlighted by the discussion between Iole Carollo and her companions that is reported in the beginning of the book. What this sea represented for its neighbours was, for centuries, the possibility of mobility.

However, this fluidity and mobility is disrupted by two things. First and immediately after the textual introduction of the photobook, an ominous picture appears (see figure 40). The black and white photograph stretches over two pages as is the habit of many other pictures in the book. Its space is horizontally divided between a lightly clouded sky that progressively comes in contact with the sea. The sea, occupying the bottom half of the photographed space appears in a darker grey and seems to be a little agitated. Nothing looks particularly suspicious about this picture except for the harsh appearance of a dotted and dashed white line at the level of the horizon strongly separating sea and sky. The line is nothing but Morse Code for S.O.S. The international distress signal, ironically, puts the photograph into perspective. The horizon line, also known as the eye line, is located at the eyelevel of the beholder and indicates the place from which the picture is being seen, the extent, and the direction of the gaze. The horizon line is used by artists to endow their work with depth and three-dimensionality. It is used to represent a guideline as to where to place the vanishing point, a point that creates the illusion of depth. On that horizon line, Carollo places the dots and dashes of the Morse Code. Bleakly, the horizon is immediately turned into a collection of vanishing points from which migrants sent their distress calls and shouts of fear from the depths. The white line seems afterward to have turned into a hard wall against which the gaze of the beholder crashes.

Figure 40. Iole Carollo, *Out of Africa*, 2021 © Iole Carollo.

Further ahead in the book, and as the spectator/reader reaches the land, fluidity and mobility are interrupted by objects pertaining to the field of navigation and communication. Five photographs appear directly before the found objects break and announce the introduction of the theme of visibility. The first picture exposes what appears to be a telecommunication site (see figure 41). The large number of satellites visible instantly summon into the viewer/reader's mind images related not only to visibility and detection but also to surveillance and hypervisibility. Satellites have become a stable component of the 21st century as they ensure connection and communication between individuals, states, organisations, and even between earth and outer space. Satellites are also instruments of power and surveillance since through them nations can control their space and spy over others' spaces. In this sense, satellites have become key instruments in collecting information and insuring the visibility of others. Besides, the structure of the buildings in the site with their many windows, blue tower, surrounding fence produce a mixed feeling of being both visible and watched. This feeling is reinforced by the two following photographs featuring a compass laid on a map and a pair of binoculars. Consequently, the concept of fluidity and mobility is intercepted by ideas related to visibility, localisation, and surveillance.

Figure 41. Iole Carollo, *Out of Africa*, 2021 © Iole Carollo.

Nevertheless, and despite their pressing nature, Iole Carollo does not seem to linger on these themes. She is fully aware that migration has become commonly linked to the concepts of surveillance and hypervisibility by which *other* people are examined on the basis of their "perceived difference" (Settles et al. 63). The compass that is able to locate, the map that draws borders, the satellite that can supervise, and the binocular that has traditionally been associated with enhanced vision are all instruments employed to not only recognise the "otherness" of others but also to scrutinise them, magnify their failures, and dispossess them of any control "over how they are perceived" (Settles et al. 63). Once these different others are identified and located, their mobility comes to an end. Carollo conveys this idea by leading her spectator/reader to jump over the mid-book barrier and to examine the signs of immobility she plants around the second part of her book.

Promptly the environment shifts from the smooth fluidity of the sea to the harshness of the land. The reader/spectator is faced with a photograph of a rocky seashore. Immediately after, the space of movement is abruptly confined. Now the perspective changes from the infinite open sea, to what appears to be a plane window. The following photograph adds poor visibility to restricted space. It is a photograph shot by night on a motorway road where the two white lines demarking it from the open field of darkness vanish in complete obscurity. To make the photograph even more visually challenging, the camera seems to have moved either

accidentally or intentionally while the picture was taken. The result was a vast black space of darkness through which the eye is barely guided by two faint white lines leading nowhere. Finally, a tall metal fence announces its presence with its unwelcoming crown of barbed wire blocking any exit. The claustrophobic impact of these photographs increases when Elsa announces: “They built up walls”.[90] The theme of immobility and rigidity is visualised by photographs showing plants, roots, a fallen feather, footprints on an extremely dry land, and a chair. The whole culminates in two highly moving pictures. The first shows a dirt road barely lit by car lights. The majority of the space of the photograph is devoured by darkness and in the middle, where the light hits, one can see unattended wild plants growing on the borders of the road. On the lefthand page appears the silhouette of a person walking away from the spectator, heading towards darkness. Accompanying the picture appear the words of Iwona who confesses that she could not return home “defeated”.[91] The second photograph also shows a road situated in a countryside landscape. Unlike the previous one, this picture is well lit and almost all of its components are visible, all except for Yousif who has “stopped running” and evaporated into a cloud (see figure 42).[92]

Figure 42. Iole Carollo, *Out of Africa*, 2021 © Iole Carollo. (Scanned).

[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

The dualities established between fluidity and rigidity, on the one hand, and mobility and immobility, on the other, testify to Iole Carollo's awareness and sensitivity to the question of migration space and how it has been conventionally depicted. The first indication proof to this sensitivity is the fact that she actively avoided facile representations of spaces that have been overwhelmingly connected to migration. Some of these spaces include hard borders demarcated by security checkpoints, fences, cameras, guards and so on. As a matter of fact, borders might have been some of the most photographed spaces during the so-called migration crisis. They have been excessively photographed because they satisfy the need for presenting and re-presenting migration as a crisis. They provide the perfect setting for "spectacles of migrant 'illegality'", generalised victimisation, and even death (De Genova 1184). It is generally in the border that the most harrowing scenes of violence, objectification, and exclusion of the migrant bodies take place. For this reason, photographers who feel the need to collect evidence of that violence and to provide visual proof of transgressions of power target borders as a preferred site. Carollo, contrary to mainstream photographic practice in relation to migration steered away from borders. At least she steered away from re-enforcing their violent nature by providing further visual proof to what they are capable of. Carollo insisted on showing the double of their hard nature. Borders are also liquid, porous, and surmountable. She does so not because she is oblivious of their harshness but because she wants to liquify it.

Iole Carollo's artistic sensitivity to spaces of migration can also be inferred from her metaphorical and metonymic representation of another problematic site. The camp is present in *Out of Africa* through the presentation of its attributes and parts. The metal fence and barbed wire visually allude to the notorious space of confinement. The testimony of Elsa about the built walls is another indication for the metaphorical presence of the camp. The satellites, the binoculars, the maps, and the compass as instruments of visibility, surveillance, and location are also metonymic references to the camp. The offensive space that has also been the subject of numerous photographic representations is not allowed in *Out of Africa* not because Carollo naively disbelieves in its existence but because she refuses to surrender to its powers. The photographer as well as her reader/spectator are conscious of the existence of the camp as a space where those who are denied transit and movement are "ordered to stay" (Bauman 59). The ironically-named "transition camp" becomes the last destination of a group of people who have been evicted from all other places. (Bauman 59). There, under the surveillance of "ban-optical devices" allowing non-stop enhanced vision, they remain, they waste away "until biodegradation completes its course" (Bauman 59-60). Carollo is aware of the existence of the

camp as a concept and a place since she might have been exposed herself to the same type of photographs discussed in the first part of this dissertation and where migrants are shown, like human waste, piled up on top of each other in a camp waiting for their expiration date. Her awareness and sensitivity to this construction may have guided her inclination away from reproducing images of camps in an active act of rebellion against mainstream migration representation.

Finally, her ultimate act of resistance and subversion comes, once again, through the manner and the space she chose to locate her found objects. In the middle of the book, on three pages unfolding outside the borders of the book, Carollo introduces her reader/spectator to a collective narrative of migration. The found objects, the migrants, herself, and the reader/spectator all participate in the great dialogue about a human phenomenon that shaped the life of humanity across time and space. No one is left out from this narrative. Every person is included and has an active voice. Iole Carollo visualises what is usually overlooked and by doing so she invites the migrants she conversed with and the reader/spectator she is constantly interacting with to reclaim their spaces and their objects. She presents *Out of Africa* not only as a photobook that deals with migration but also as an ongoing project of reappropriation and reclaiming. A project that spills over borders and touches on the lives, cultures, religions, and memories of human beings.

CONCLUSION

He who allows oppression shares the crime.

—Desiderius Erasmus

According to the International Organisation for Migration and as of 16 June 2024, 65,916 migrants have already entered Europe of who some 63,276 have entered by sea. Also, according to the same source, 1,181 migrants have been reported dead or missing till the same date.[93] These numbers, however, do not mean much to many people besides the fact that they are occasionally turned into colourful graphs to decorate some fleeting news segment. In some more heated moments, the numbers could be employed by politicians to remind their voters of the fundamental dichotomies that exist between the *us* and the *them* and that the *them* as a group represents a threat or a challenge, in best cases, to the values and unity of the *us*. This discourse of division has participated in changing and shaping policies and governments not only around Europe but around the whole world. It is also a discourse that participated and facilitated the creation and the circulation of an image of a migrant that can hardly be reconciliated with the image of the resident. The migrant, even when s/he is a dead child left on a desolate shore and even when s/he evokes the noblest emotions of human compassion and empathy, "is not us, is not one of us, is the sacrificial victim of a war that does not belong to us and of [hi]story that is not ours" (Cometa, "Fototesti della Migrazione: un Genere Necessario?" 145; my translation).[94]

The alienated image of alienated pain has origins, attributes, and functions. The origins of the image of pain may date as far back as the first conceptions of human groups and societies. The formation of social groups is deemed to be one of the most fundamental capacities of humankind that ensures its preservation and survival. In this light, it was rudimentary of human beings to be able to differentiate between themselves and others and between those who are part of their ingroup and those who are outsiders. This categorisation helped the progress of humanity in a variety of ways. First, it meant that more and more humans were selected on the basis of their genetic pool. The genetic selection was one of the factors that allowed Homo

[93] https://dtm.iom.int/europe/arrivals

[94] In "Fototesti della Migrazione: un Genere Necessario?", Michele Cometa wrote the following "È stato così con il bambino del ghetto di Varsavia (1943) ed è così con il bambino morto abbandonato su una spiaggia turca (2015). Sono immagini di vittime, certo, e in tal senso, ancora una volta il sentimento che esse scatenano è di umana empatia ma anche di distanza. Quel bambino non siamo noi, non è dei nostri, è la vittima sacrifcale di una guerra che non ci appartiene, di una storia che non è la nostra."

Sapiens to be the only survivors among the genus Homo. Categorisation is also necessary for acquiring and protecting resources especially when they are scarce. One needs not go back hundreds of thousands of years to find a proof of that. Indeed, a simple observation of a group of small children playing will provide evidence to the rise of competitive feelings and behaviour among them when there is a prize to be won and that the said prize cannot be divided. Soon, groups will be formed, alliances will be struck, and even fights will take place. Group formation is an innate inclination that is often stimulated by situations and even by discourses.

Wars, economic hardships, natural disasters are all moments when the solidarity between the members of the ingroups is highly required and encouraged. These are also moments when the differences between the ingroup and the outgroup are also emphasised. In extreme situations like wars, the outgroup is not simply a group of people who are assumed to be different. The outgroup is associated with danger and threat and its mere presence might lead to the total annihilation of the ingroup. The others, who are often outsiders to the physical as well as the moral territory of the ingroup, are usually depicted in extremely negative light. They are "less worthy" as human beings, evil, and malevolent (Mack 385). They are devoid of any redeeming virtue and can sometimes be equated with demons, witches, and animals of human form. A common cultural proof on that can be found in fairytales that are usually told to children not only to encourage them to obey their parents but also to create within them some rather traumatic fear from strangers. A familiar evil image in those fairytales is the wicked witch who usually lives in the woods, completely outside the realm of the village, and who dedicates her time to snatching wandering children. In Tunisian folklore, for example, there are two recurrent images of an evil-doing person. There is, of course, the female witch but there is also her male equivalent. Bou Sh'kara **(بو شكارة)**, which translates into the "man with a bag", is a terrifying individual who would wander around the narrow alleys of Tunisian towns and cities kidnapping young children to eat them or to sell them.

Tunisian children usually get introduced to this terrorising personality when they insist on going outside the house either in the evening or, during summer, at midday when the streets are deserted. The usual threat is that Bou Sh'kara will find the child, put him in his large bag, take him home, and eat him. Certainly, no one will come to the rescue of the little one and that child will grow developing great suspicions to the outside world and to strangers. What is particularly interesting about Bou Sh'kara, besides balancing the gender distribution of evil, is the fact that it is an image of an imaginary person who does not belong to the society he attacks. He lives on the margins in a completely unknown place and he attacks the most vulnerable and

precious components of society, the children. Like any other absolute enemy, the evil witch and Bou Sh'kara represent all that is rejected, feared, and hated. They become the total negative symbol of the Self, social space, and values. They are old and ugly when youth and beauty are the favoured values. They live in the woods and on the borders of the towns when the home and the community are the valuable spaces. They are absolutely and arbitrarily evil when kindness and good-doing is the norm. Fairytales are certainly not only stories that people use to have fun scaring children, but they are also great repositories of certain social and individual anxieties. The world presents itself as a great chaos and people have to make sense of it. They have to order their space, organise their time, and to do so they have to categorise and prioritise. They draw lines to separate the inside from the outside, the important from the trivial, and these lines become borders. Borders turn into fortified walls that people die to protect, and others die to cross.

The border that separates one country from the other has traditionally had an impressive potential of generating both the image of the enemy and that of the hero. However, in more contemporary times, the border proved to be also capable of generating victims who, while not being completely demonised and rejected like enemies, remain located at the periphery of the self and of space centrality. A victim is a person who is identified as weak and whose vulnerability is abused by someone who is stronger and with vile intentions. The abuser is thus dismissed as morally inferior, and the victim is elevated to moral superiority. Therefore, when a person or a group of people are characterised as victims and are socially accepted as such, they get immediately projected outside the space of ordinary people. An aura of sacredness seems to surround them and to protect them from any criticism. Nevertheless, to attain the unequivocal status of *victim*, a person needs to go through unimaginable pain. This suffering needs, in most cases, to be proven and documented, and there seems to be nothing more potent that an image or a picture to testify and to transmit the pains of victims.

Images of pain are abundant and the most iconic of which are the paintings depicting the suffering of Christ and the torment of saints. In front of such images, the spectator would experience a variety of emotions. S/he can be moved to horror at the sheer amount of pain a person can endure. S/he can be inclined into appreciating the level of skill the artist had and that made the transmission of passion so fluid and powerful. Or s/he might stand completely taken by the artistic apotheosis that combined pain and beauty in a subliminal work of art. However, and regardless of the level of artistry with which such paintings are produced and also regardless of the devotion of believers, these images remain invented and imagined. They

may be based on real events, but the painter was not there. The painter did not witness with his own eyes what his hand has created. Because of that the appreciation of the spectator of such work is different from her/his appreciation of a photograph. A painting of suffering allows a distance to be established between reality and imagination, between reality and art. Photography, on the other hand, closes that gap, or at least pretends to. In front of the "presumed veracity" of a photograph, the pain of victims acquires a new dimension (Sontag, *On Photography* 5).

Photographed pain seems to be more real, more authentic, and more immediate. It is a kind of pain that does not require a great exercise of imagination to be visualised. It does not require a transportation into different times to be understood. Although it finds its origins in canonical representations of pain and relies on a dichotomous division of the world between inside and outside, the photograph of suffering roots itself in a pretence of authenticity and proximity. Indeed, the photograph of pain shares with the painting of agony an aspect of idealisation of the sufferer. However, because these contemporary times do not allow for the presence of and the belief in saints, the photograph introduces a more realistic sufferer: children. Constructed as weak, innocent, incapable of evil, and irresponsible for their actions, children represent, today, the ideal image of victimhood. Besides, love and care for children seem to be universal inclinations which would make the image of a suffering child a shortcut to transcend cultural, political, and social differences. For these reasons, photography of agony has had a penchant for capturing the spectres of children during wars and great catastrophes. Michele Cometa has mentioned two iconic examples of such photographs. The first is the boy who was photographed in 1943 during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising lifting his hands over his head while he, and others, where forced out of a bunker under the threat of Nazi guns. The photograph became an icon representing the horrors that were inflicted on the Jewish people by Nazism. The second photograph is that of Aylan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian refugee who was found dead on a Turkish beach in 2015. This photograph was also transformed into an icon standing for migration (Cometa, "Fototesti della Migrazione: un Genere Necessario?" 145).

These two photographs have much in common. They are both photographs of suffering and agony. Their subject is clear and well defined: a child. The innocence of the victim is beyond question. They are also photographs that are capable of provoking the most tender emotions for who would not be moved into horror and even tears at the sight of two very young lives being wasted so casually and so arbitrarily. However, these two photographs are also capable of numbing the feelings and producing a sense of relief. A relief because that pain is

distant either in time or in space. It is a foreign pain, and alien pain. It is, indeed, the pain of others. It is a pain from which the self is exempted. Moreover, and as these photographs repeat and replicate themselves, spectators may find themselves rapidly transiting from compassion to indifference.

Photographs of agony can provoke powerful visceral reactions. As a matter of fact, some migration photographs like those of Aylan Kurdi or other more graphic photographs produced by Giorgos Moutafis depict in the clearest possible forms the level of suffering migrants can reach. Destitution, poverty, vulnerability, disability, and finally death can all be titles that summarise the contemporary history of migration. There are also enough photographs to prove that. Alessandro Penso showed in *Lesbos* evidence to the utter poverty in which migrants find themselves. Those who have fled wars find themselves with nothing more than a tent in the outskirts of towns and cities for a shelter. Alex Majoli, with a refined artistic theatricality, condensed the agony of migrants in his *Pietà* revivifying not only images of sacred sacrifice but also images of motherhood and unconditional devotion. His images also insist on the aspect of exclusion and invisibility that migrants suffer from. Giorgos Moutafis took on a more confrontational approach to migration. His photographs showed, in graphic realism, not only the vulnerability of the migrant body but also its biologically degradable nature. Put together, all these European photographs are capable of constituting a unique inventory of migratory horror. A type of horror that jumps from one photograph to the other and from the lens of the photographer to the eyes of the beholder.

Nevertheless, they are also photographs that lead the spectator into a state of anaesthesia or denial. One picture after the other, the senses are dumbed, emotions are numbed, and sympathy turns into frustration and indifference. At first, taken by strong emotions, one might turn into her/his social media account to express pain at the sight of drowned children. Then one would turn away. And as spectators become more and more used to images of suffering, agony becomes more graphic. The increased graphic nature of photographs of suffering migrants does not aim at making people more compassionate with them as much as it aims at furnishing proof that the photograph is authentic and that the suffering is real.

Photographers are witnesses. They are people who have been on the site of suffering. They are people who saw that suffering take place and who were able to record it. In this sense, photographing the agonies of migrants when they are struggling for their lives, when they give up the struggle and surrender to a degrading and degradable life in the camp, and when they finally expire could be considered as a form of testifying. It, therefore, cannot be embellished,

modified, made up. The graphic nature of Giorgos Moutafis is only a reflection of the graphic death these migrants are subjected to. The spectator's senses may be offended by the sight of a young man thrown face down in a muddy ditch, yet it is not the picture that is truly offending. What is, or at least what should be offending, is the reality that led a young man to gamble with his life for the hope of a better future. Surely, Aylan Kurdi's photograph offended many spectators who found it distasteful, graphic, violent, and even fit to be exchanged among the browsers of the dark web. However, what is truly offending is the real indifference of humanity toward thousands of children who found themselves in the shoes of Aylan.

As witnesses to a painful reality, Penso, Moutafis, and Majoli could only attempt to fill in the gaps of testimony. These photographers, and despite being in extreme proximity to the site of migration suffering, are three times removed from it. First, they are removed from suffering because they are not migrants. They may have travelled around the globe; however, to be considered a migrant one needs to feel that "mobility to Europe [is] a scarce resource", and that unless one can meet the formal and the "*informal* requirements that guide consular staffs' decisions" this privilege will certainly be denied (Scheel 41-42). Formal requirements exceed a photocopy of one's passport and demand all sorts of official documents testifying to one's financial stability, general health, employment, and prospect retirement pension. One can easily find her/himself visiting a European embassy with a file containing around twenty documents exposing every single aspect of her/his social, economic, educational existence. After that one needs to succeed in bypassing the personal whims of some visa agents as one has been reported by Stephan Scheel saying "'Anybody who does not earn at least double the average monthly income will not get a visa from me'" (43). These are some of the obstacles that need to be surmounted by migrants to Europe and that make many of them decide to put their own life on the line only to risk to live. These are the obstacles that citizens of the global north in general do not experience which makes them once removed from the experience of migrants they find dead on their shores.

The second distance is established by the fact that neither Penso, Majoli, nor Moutafis are members of the socio-cultural groups the migrants they are photographing belong to. This distance is even more challenging to reduce. It is a remoteness established by a long history of distrust provoked by colonisation and war. The migrant comes from out there, from the land of poverty and underdevelopment. The migrant comes from the Other of Europe, it's inferior reflection and past. The migrant comes from Asia, Africa, or a mixture of both: the Orient. The migrant is also visibly different and the colour of her/his skin, eyes, and hair testify to that. The

language s/he speaks, the god s/he prays to, the clothes s/he wears, the food s/he eats are all proof to that difference and distance. The photographer, however, is equipped with double vison. He can look, and insists to look, because he is a photographer and it is his profession to look and because as a European, he culturally internalised the intrusive gaze of the coloniser. Nothing is beyond the European gaze. As a matter of fact, even when the migrant covers her face in shame, in fear, or in clear refusal of that examining gaze, neither Penso nor the European bystander heed her refusing to be looked at. The distance that separated Europe as a colonising space from Africa and Asia as colonised spaces is the same distance that separates the European photographer from the photographed migrant. It is a distance of power, dominance, and a patronising authority.

The third and final distance is created by the fact that these European photographers are only observers of suffering and not part of it. The particular suffering of fighting against agitated water, struggling to save one's child, or dying is only the pain of those who have to bear it. The physical proximity to someone in agony does not necessarily mean that the agony is shared. Being in the presence of the dead while alive makes one an outsider to the experience and makes their testimony only partial, fragmented, and lacking. This lacuna that is created by the threefold distance between the suffering migrant and the photographer is what Alessandro Penso attempted to fill with his documenting photography trying to remain as close as possible to the reality of the scenes he visited. Giorgos Moutafis endeavoured to make up for this lacuna by adopting a forensic style that leaves almost no room to questioning and doubt. Alex Majoli, on the other hand, employed his artistic intentionality to, indeed, account for his own distance. Majoli seems to force his spectators into accepting the fact they are nothing but mere observers of scenes of suffering being unfolded before their eyes.

These distances and gaps in the testimonies of the three European photographers, whose works constitute the subject matter of the first part of the present dissertation, are in part responsible for veiling migration and migrants' suffering with an aspect of spectatorship that however compassionate and empathetic it is, does not allow for much reflection and understanding that would hopefully lead to adequate action (Cometa, "Fototesti della Migrazione: un Genere Necessario?" 146). As a matter of fact, and despite the great humanitarian load of the photographs produced by Penso, Majoli, and Moutafis, they were lacking in the potential of establishing fulfilling human dialogues with the migrants. They remained locked in their position of distant observers who wanted to remain faithful, objective, and perhaps even detached from the plight of the people they represented. These perspective

choices led to the creation and the reinforcement of the European gaze that saw, and is still seeing, migrants as helpless and hopeless victims in dire need for help and assistance.

However, to reach a reflection and an understanding of the situation of migration and the human condition of migrants a communication needs to be established. Migrants should be allowed to speak for themselves, and when they do they need to be heard. Their own experience related in their own voice should be respected. Their self-narration and self-narrative, even when it goes against the mainstream discourse about migration, should be allowed enough and equal space. The independent humanity of the migrant, her/his autonomy in thinking, and her/his agency in doing should be honoured. In this respect, the works of Omar Imam and Iole Carollo proved to be uniquely valuable.

The worth of Imam's photographic project *Live, Love, Refugee* is that it did not try to emphasise the need for humanitarian compassion and sympathy. It was also not an attempt to send back the offensive image of the helpless migrant to its producer. His photo-story was a struggle to recollect and reconstruct the migrant self in its full human dignity. This dignity recognises the losses of the past and admits to its lacks and needs. It is a dignity that comes to terms with its amputation and limited abilities and strives to surmount them to be able, eventually, to live on with what is left of the self. The humanity that Omar Imam recognises is a humanity that admits to frustration and anger as well as to the ability of migrants to grown beyond the handicapping conditions they find themselves in. Imam did not depict his migrants as helpless victims. He allowed them, through photography, to express their deepest desires, fears, and dreams. His work became, therefore, a space of honest interaction between the photographed self, the photographer, and the spectator who is touched by and implicated in Imam's game of seeing. Imam's work helped migrants redeem the parts of their selves lost in the process of migration and helped the spectator recognise the loss and participate in the construction.

Iole Carollo's *Out of Africa* is also another eloquent participation in the great dialogue on and about migration. Unlike Omar Imam, she is not a refugee, however, she is capable through a unique artistic sensitivity to understand what it means to be a migrant. Through her book Carollo did not photograph faces. This interesting choice allowed her to open up more spaces for her migrants to express themselves beyond the traditional frames of photographic intrusion. She photographed the sea and the land and what lies between them. The photobook was itself a journey transporting the reader/viewer through space sometimes urging her/him to run, some other times to stop and to think. Her spaces of migration are wide and open closing

abruptly behind a window to reopen again on different landscapes. She also photographed migrants' objects. Things that would seem trivial and unimportant. Nevertheless, the co-existence of the object and its migrant owner allowed for both of them to reconstruct their memories together. The presentation of objects and spaces of migration made it possible for Carollo's reader/viewer to project her/himself into those spaces and to share the human experience of loss and redemption.

Unfortunately, however, and despite the extreme value of these works, they only represent an exception in the great body of photographic representation of migration. It has been proven to be difficult to find abundant work on migration that does not reiterate the same utterances of vulnerability and need. This reality represented, indeed, one of the major challenges for this present research for while it was with extreme ease that photographs of dying migrants, degenerating bodies, and encamped individuals were found, it took a considerable amount of time to eventually find photographic work that honoured the human experience of migration. The rarity of data that perceived and represented migrants from a human rather than humanitarian perspective created a sort of limitation to the possible horizons of study and analysis that this dissertation could have reached. Nevertheless, this very limitation is hoped to inspire not only future research on the subject of photographic representation of migrants but also to inspire photographers to adopt a more understanding and thought-provoking perspective when they shoot those migrants.

WORKS CITED

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press, 1998.

—. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. Zone Books, 1999.

—. "The Endless Crisis as an Instrument of Power: In Conversation with Giorgio Agamben". Interviewed by Verso Books. June 2013, https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/blogs/news/1318-the-endless-crisis-as-an-instrument-of-power-in-conversation-with-giorgio-agamben.

Alcoff, Linda. "The Problem of Speaking for Others." *Cultural critique,* vol. 20, 1991, pp. 5-32.

Alloula M. *The Colonial Harem.* University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Amir, Menachem. "Victim Precipitated Forcible Rape." *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1967, pp. 493-502.

Arendt, Hannah. *Responsibility and Judgment*. Schocken Books, 2003.

—. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harcourt Brace & Company, 1973.

—. "The Social Question." *On Revolution*. Penguin Books, 1963.

Azoulay, Ariella Aïsha. *Potential history: Unlearning Imperialism*. Verso Books, 2019.

Azoulay, Ariella. "Getting Rid of the Distinction Between the Aesthetic and the Political." *Theory, Culture & Society,* vol. 27, no. 7-8, 2010, pp. 239-262.

—. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. Zone Books, 2008.

Bachelard, Gerard. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press, 1994.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*. University of Texas Press, 1990.

—. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

—. "The Problem of Speech Genres." *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee, edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press, 1986, pp. 60-102.

Barnett, Michael. *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*. Cornell University Press, 2011.

—. "Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and the Practices of Humanity." *International Theory*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2018, pp. 314-349.

Bar-Tal, Daniel, et. al. “A Sense of Self-Perceived Collective Victimhood in Intractable Conflicts.” *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 91, no. 874, 2009, pp. 229-258.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard, Hill and Wang, 1981.

—. “Rhetoric of the Image.” *Image-Music-Text*, translated and edited by Stephen Heath, Fontana Press, 1977, pp. 32-51.

Baudelaire, Charles. “The Painter of Modern Life.” *My Heart Laid Bare and Other Prose Writings*, edited by Peter Quennell, Soho Book Company, 1986, pp. 21-73.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan press, 1994.

—. *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*. Verso, 1993.

Bauman, Zygmunt, and David Lyon. *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2013.

Behdad, A. *Camera Orientalis: Reflections on Photography of the Middle East*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility.” *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 3, 1935-1938*, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, Harvard University Press, 2002, pp. 101-133.

Bentham, Jeremy. *The Rationale of Punishment*, edited by James T. McHugh, Prometheus Books, 2009.

Berger, John, and Jean Mohr. *Another Way of Telling*. Pantheon. 1982.

Berger, John. *Understanding a Photograph*. Penguin UK, 2013.

Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Anchor, 1966.

Bischoff, Christine. “Migration and the Regime of the Gaze: A Critical Perspective on Concepts and Practices of Visibility and Visualization.” *Concepts for the Study of Culture*, edited by Doris Bachmann-Medick, Horst Carl, Wolfgang Hallet and Ansgar Nünning, De Gruyter, 2018, pp. 21-43.

Bleyen, Mieke. “Introduction.” *Minor Photography: Connecting Deleuze and Guattari to Photography Theory*, edited by Mieke Bleyen, Leuven University Press, 2012, pp. ix-xix.

Boltanski, Luc. *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Bosma, A. K, et. al. "The Ideal Victim Through Other(s') Eyes." *Revisiting the 'Ideal Victim': Developments in Critical Victimology,* edited by Marian Duggan, Bristol University Press, 2018, pp. 27-41.

Bouris, Erica. *Complex Political Victims*. Kumarian Press, 2007.

Bouveresse, Clara. "Alex Majoli's Theatre of Migrations." *Miranda. Revue Pluridisciplinaire du Monde Anglophone/Multidisciplinary Peer-reviewed Journal on the English-Speaking World,* vol. 26, 2022, pp. 1-11.

Brown, Roger, and David McNeill. "The "Tip of the Tongue" Phenomenon." *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior,* vol. 5, no. 4, 1966, pp. 325-337.

Cammarata, Valeria. "Narrating Palestinian Lives through Phototexts: The Case of Edward W. Said." *Migrations: Socio-Cultural Contexts and Constitution*, edited by Valeria Cammarata, Federica Mazzara and Samira Mechri, Mimesis International, 2023, pp. 19-53.

Cave, Stephen. *Immortality: The Quest to Live Forever and How It Drives Civilization*. Crown, 2012.

Chouliaraki, Lilie, and Tijana Stolic. "Rethinking Media Responsibility in the Refugee 'Crisis': A Visual Typology of European News.", *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 39, no. 8, 2017, pp. 1162-1177.

Christie, Nils. "The Ideal Victim." *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy: Reorienting the Justice System*, edited by Ezzat A. Fattah, Palgrave Macmillan, 1986, pp. 17-30.

Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Harvard University Press, 1988.

Cohen, Lawrence E., and Marcus Felson. "Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach." *American Sociological Review*, vol. 44, no. 4, Aug. 1979, pp. 588-608.

Cohen, Stanley. *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*. Polity Press, 2001.

Cometa, Michele. "Foto Fototesti Della Migrazione: un Genere Necessario?" *Laboratorio Mediterraneo 2. Perché è il Mare del Futuro. Fotografie Migrazioni miti Nuove Economie*, edited by Patrizia Varone and Nicola Saldutti, Guida Editori, 2023, pp. 139-147.

—. "Introduction: Scopic Regimes and Literature." *Archaeologies of Visual Culture: Gazes, Optical Devices and Images from 17th to 20th Century Literature*, edited by Vita Fortunati and Elena Agazzi, V&R Unipress, 2016, pp. 11-16.

Condry, Rachel. "Secondary Victims and Secondary Victimization." *International Handbook of Victimology,* edited by Shlomo Giora Shoham, Paul Knepper, Martin Kett, Routledge, 2010, pp. 219-249.

Daems, Aurelie. "A Snake in the Grass: Reassessing the Ever-intriguing Ophidian Figurines." *Beyond the Ubaid: Transformation and Integration in the Late Prehistoric Societies of the Middle East*, vol. 63. Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2010. 149-161.

Daigle, Leah. E. *Victimology: the Essentials*. Sage Publications, 2020.

Danewid, Ida. "Policing the (Migrant) Crisis: Stuart Hall and the Defence of Whiteness." *Security Dialogue*, vol. 53, no.1, 2021, pp. 1-17.

De Genova, Nicholas, et. al. "Europe/crisis: New Keywords of “the Crisis” in and of “Europe”." *Near Futures Online*, vol. 1, 2016, pp. 1-16.

De Genova, Nicholas. “Spectacles of Migrant ‘Illegality’: the Scene of Exclusion, the Obscene of Inclusion.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 36, no. 7, 2013, pp. 1180-1198.

Derrida, Jacques. “Differance.” *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, translated by David B. Allison, Northwestern University Press, 1973, pp. 129-160.

—. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Routledge, 1994.

Desilet, Gregory. *The Enigma of Meaning: Wittgenstein and Derrida, Language and Life*. McFarland, 2023.

Dussich, John P. J. "Victimology–Past, Present and Future." *Resource Material Series*, vol. 1, no. 70, 2006, pp. 140-145.

Dylgjeri, Ardita, and Ledia Kazazi. "Deixis in Modern Linguistics and Outside." *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2013, pp. 87-96.

Edwards, Paul N. "Y2K: Millennial Reflections on Computers as Infrastructure." *History and Technology, an International Journal*, vol. 15, no. 1-2, 1998, pp. 7-29.

Ellis, John. *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*. I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2000.

Fattah, Ezzat A. "Prologue: On Some Visible and Hidden Dangers of Victim Movements." *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy: Reorienting the Justice System*, edited by Ezzat A. Fattah, Palgrave Macmillan, 1986, pp. 1-14.

—. "The Evolution of a Young, Promising Discipline: Sixty Years of Victimology, a Retrospective and Prospective Look." *International Handbook of Victimology*, edited by Shlomo Giora Shoham, Paul Knepper and Martin Kett, Routledge, 2010, pp. 69-120.

Filippini, Michele. *Using Gramsci: A New Approach*. Pluto Press, 2016.

Fish, Morris J. "An Eye for an Eye: Proportionality as a Moral Principle of Punishment." *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2008, pp. 57-71.

Fisher, Mark. "What Is Hauntology?." *Film Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 1, 2012, pp. 16-24.

Floridi, Luciano. "A Look Into the Future Impact of ICT on our Lives." *The Information Society*, vol. 23, no.1, 2007, pp. 59-64.

—. *The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Fohring, Stephanie. "Revisiting the Non-Ideal Victim." *Revisiting the 'Ideal Victim': Developments in Critical Victimology,* edited by Marian Duggan, Bristol University Press, 2018, pp. 195-210.

Foucault, Michel. "Afterword." *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, University of Chicago Press, 2014, pp. 208-226.

Foucault, Michel, and Richard Howard. "Ceci n'est pas une pipe." *October,* vol. 1, spring 1976, pp. 6-21.

Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, edited by Neil Leach, Routledge, 1997, pp. 330-336.

Freud, Sigmund. *A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality, and Other Works*. Translated Under the General Editorship of James Strachey in Collaboration with Anna Freud, Assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson. Hogarth Press, 1953.

Friedberg, Anne. *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. University of California Press, 1993.

Gabaccia, Donna R. "Time and Temporality in Migration Studies." *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*, edited by Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield, Routledge, 2014, pp. 37-66.

Garkawe, Sam. "Revisiting the Scope of Victimology—How Broad a Discipline Should it Be?." *International Review of Victimology*, vol. 11, no. 2-3, 2004, pp. 275-294.

Garofalo, James. "Lifestyles and Victimization: an Update." *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy: Reorienting the Justice System*, edited by Ezzat A. Fattah, Palgrave Macmillan, 1986, pp. 135-155.

Goldberg, Vicki. *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives*. Abbeville Press, 1991.

Goodey, Jo. *Victims and Victimology: Research, Policy and Practice*. Pearson Education, 2005.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Prison Notebooks*. Vol. 2, Columbia University Press, 2011.

Grosfoguel, Ramón. "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms." *Cultural Studies,* vol. 21, no. 2-3, 2007, pp. 211-223.

Hall, Stuart, and Doreen Massey. “Interpreting the Crisis.” *Soundings*, vol. 44, no. 44, 2010, pp. 57-71.

Hall, Stuart. “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse.” *CCCS Selected Working Papers*. Routledge, 2007, pp. 386-398.

Hentig, Hans von. *The Criminal and His Victim: Studies in the Sociobiology of Crime*. Yale University Press, 1948.

Hindelang, Michael J., et. al. *Victims of Personal Crime: An Empirical Foundation for a Theory of Personal Victimization*. Ballinger Publishing Company, 1978.

Holland, Patricia. *Picturing Childhood: The Myth of the Child in Popular Imagery*. IB Tauris, 2004.

Holstein, James A., and Gale Miller. "Rethinking Victimization: An Interactional Approach to Victimology." *Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1990, pp. 103-122.

Horstkotte, Silke. "Photo-text topographies: Photography and the Representation of Space in WG Sebald and Monika Maron." *Poetics Today,* vol. 29, no. 1, 2008, pp. 49-78.

Hoskins, Andrew. “Digital War.” *Routledge Handbook of Humanitarian Communication*, edited by Lilie Chouliaraki and Anne Vestergaard, Routledge, 2022, pp. 66-86.

Huyse, Luc. "Victims." *Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: A Handbook*. International Idea, (2003).

Jankowitz, Sarah. "Intergroup Struggles over Victimhood in Violent Conflict: The Victim-Perpetrator Paradigm." *International Review of Victimology*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2018, pp. 259-271.

Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. University of California Press, 1993.

Jung, Carl Gustav. *Four Archetypes*. Routledge, 2014.

—. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Routledge, 2014.

Kant, Immanuel. *Metaphysical Elements of Justice: Part I of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Hackett Publishing, 1999.

Kirmayer, Laurence J. "Le Dilemme du Réfugié." *L'Evolution Psychiatrique*, vol. 67, no. 4, 2002, pp. 743-763.

Kluckert, Ehrenfried. "Gothic Painting." *The Art of Gothic: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting*, edited by Rolf Toman and Achim Bednorz, Könemann, 2004, pp. 386-467.

Krueger, Joachim. "Psychology of Social Categorisation." *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, edited by P. B. Baltes and N. J. Smelser, Pergamon, 2001, pp. 14219-14223.

Kurasawa, Fuyuki. "A Message in a Bottle: Bearing Witness as a Mode of Transnational Practice." *Theory, Culture & Society,* vol. 26, no. 1, 2009, pp. 92-111.

Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I'." *Reading French Psychoanalysis*, edited by Dana Birksted-Breen, Sara Flanders and Alain Gibeault, Routledge, 2010, pp. 97-104.

Lee, Everett S. "A Theory of Migration." *Demography,* vol. 3, no. 1, 1966, pp. 47-57.

Linkman, Audrey. *Photography and Death*. Reaktion Books, 2011.

Long, Jonathan J. "Paratextual Profusion: Photography and Text in Bertolt Brecht's War Primer." *Poetics Today,* vol. 29, no. 1, 2008, pp. 197-224.

Mack, John E. "The Enemy System." *The Lancet*, vol. 332, no. 8607, 1988, pp. 385-387.

Maine, Fiona, and Rupert Wegerif. "Dialogism." *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of the Possible*, edited by Vlad Petre Glăveanu, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, pp. 395-400.

Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept." *Cultural Studies,* vol. 21, no. 2-3, 2007, pp. 240-270.

Mazzara, Federica. *Reframing Migration: Lampedusa, Border Spectacle and the Aesthetics of Subversion*. Peter Lang, 2019.

Micklewright, Nancy. "Alternative Histories of Photography in the Ottoman Middle East." *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, edited by Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, Getty Research Institute, 2013, pp. 75-93.

Mignolo, Walter D., and Catherine E. Walsh. *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Duke University Press, 2018.

Mignolo, Walter D. "Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (De)coloniality, Border Thinking and Epistemic Disobedience." *Postcolonial Studies,* vol. 14, no. 3, 2011, pp. 273-283.

—. *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations*. Duke University Press. 2021.

Mitchell, W. J. Thomas. *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present*. The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

—. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. University of Chicago Press, 2013.

—. *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, And Media Aesthetics*. University of Chicago Press, 2015.

—. *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

—. *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*. The University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Moeller, Susan D. "A Hierarchy of Innocence: The Media's Use of Children in the Telling of International News." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2002, pp. 36-56.

—. *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death*. Routledge, 2002.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1989, pp. 14-26.

Nancy Micklewright, "Alternative Histories of Photography in the Ottoman Middle East." *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, edited by Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, Getty Research Institute, 2013, pp. 88–89.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J. "Decoloniality as the future of Africa." *History Compass,* vol. 13, no. 10, 2015, pp. 485-496.

Nochlin, Linda. "The Imaginary Orient." *The Politics of Vision: Essays on the Nineteenth-Century Art and Society*, Routledge, 1989, pp. 33-59.

Noor, Masi, et al. "The Social Psychology of Collective Victimhood." *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2017, pp. 121-134.

Oertel, Robert. *Early Italian Painting to 1400*. Praeger Publishers, 1968.

Olásolo, Héctor and Alejandro Kiss. "The Role of Victims in Criminal Proceedings Before the International Criminal Court." *Revue Internationale de Droit Penal*, vol. 81, no. 1, 2010, pp. 125-163.

Perugini, Nicola, and Francesco Zucconi. “Enjoy Poverty: Humanitarianism and the Testimonial Function of Images.” *Visual Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2017, pp. 24-32.

Platovnjak, Ivan, and Tone Svetelj. “Chronos and Kairos of Hope.” *Bogoslovni vestnik/Theological Quarterly*, vol. 81, no. 4, 2021, pp. 797-806.

Quiggin, John. “The Y2K Scare: Causes, Costs and Cures.” *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 64, no. 3, 2005, pp. 46-55.

Quijano, Aníbal, and Michael Ennis. "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America." *Nepantla: Views from South*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2000, pp. 533-580.

—. "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." *Cultural Studies,* vol. 21, no. 2-3, 2007, pp. 168-178.

Quinney, Richard. “Who Is the Victim?” *Criminology*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1972, pp. 314-323.

Rappaport, Erika D. *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London’s West End*. Princeton University Press, 2000.

Rock, Paul. “Society’s Attitude to the Victim.” *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy: Reorienting the Justice System*, edited by Ezzat A. Fattah, Palgrave Macmillan, 1986, pp. 31-49.

Rosenthal, Donald A. *Orientalism, the Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880*. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, 1982.

Ross, Sven. "The Encoding/Decoding Model Revisited." *Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association*, vol. 26-30, no. 5, 2011, Boston, MA. 2011, pp. 1-14.

Said E.W. *Orientalism*. Penguin Books, 2003.

Scheel, Stephan. “‘The Secret Is to Look Good on Paper’: Appropriating Mobility Within and Against a Machine of Illegalization.”, *The Borders of “Europe”: Autonomy of Migration, Tactics of Bordering*, edited by Nicholas De Genova, Duke University Press, 2017, pp. 37-63.

Settles, Isis H., NiCole T. Buchanan, and Kristie Dotson. "Scrutinized but not Recognized: (In)Visibility and Hypervisibility Experiences of Faculty of Color." *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* vol. 113, 2019, pp. 62-74.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. Vol. 2. Classic Books Company, 2001.

Shaw, Adrienne. "Encoding and Decoding Affordances: Stuart Hall and Interactive Media Technologies." *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2017, pp. 592-602.

Shepherd, Nick. “The Grammar of Decoloniality.” *Colonial and Decolonial Linguistics: Knowledges and Epistemes,* edited by Ana Deumert, Anne Storch, and Nick Shepherd*,* Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 303-324.

Sironi, A., et. al., editors. *Glossary on Migration*. International Migration Law, No. 34. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2019.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography.* Delta Books, 1977.

—. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Picador, 2004.

Strobl, Rainer. “Becoming a Victim.” *International Handbook of Victimology*, edited by Shlomo Giora Shoham, Paul Knepper and Martin Kett, Routledge, 2010, pp. 3-25.

—. “Constructing the Victim: Theoretical Reflections and Empirical Examples.” *International Review of Victimology*, vol. 11, no. 2-3, 2004, pp. 295-311.

Szarkowski, John. *The Photographer’s Eye*. The Museum of Modern Art, 1966.

Tait, Sue. "Bearing Witness, Journalism and Moral Responsibility." *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 33, no. 8, 2011, pp. 1220-1235.

The Bible. Authorized King James Version, Paradise Press, Inc., 2006.

Trentmann, Frank. "Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption." *Journal of Contemporary History,* vol. 39, no. 3, 2004, pp. 373-401.

Van Dijk, Jan J. M. “Introducing Victimology.” *Caring for Crime Victims, Selected Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium on Victimology*. Criminal Justice Press, 1999.

Verdun-Jones, Simon N., and Katherine R. Rossiter. "The Psychological Impact of Victimization: Mental Health Outcomes and Psychological, Legal, and Restorative Interventions." *International Handbook of Victimology*. Routledge, 2010, pp. 637-664.

Volkan, Vamik D. *Immigrants and Refugees: Trauma, Perennial Mourning, Prejudice, and Border Psychology*. Karnac, 2017.

Von Thun, Friedemann Schulz. *Miteinander reden 1: Störungen und Klärungen: Allgemeine Psychologie der Kommunikation*. Vol. 1. Rowohlt Verlag GmbH, 2013.

Vyrgioti, Marita. “Freud and the Cannibal: Vignettes from Psychoanalysis’ Colonial History.” *Wild Analysis*, edited by Shaul Bar-Haim, Elizabeth Sarah Coles and Helen Tyson, Routledge, 2021, pp. 67-81.

Walters, William. "Deportation, Expulsion, and the International Police of Aliens." *Citizenship Studies,* vol. 6, no.3, 2002, pp. 265-292.

Webber, Andrew J. *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature*. Clarendon Press, 1996.

Wemmers, Jo-Anne. "The Meaning of Justice for Victims." *International Handbook of Victimology*, edited by Shlomo Giora Shoham, Paul Knepper and Martin Kett, CRC Press, 2010, pp. 27-43.

Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Woodward, Michelle L. "Between Orientalist Clichés and Images of Modernization: Photographic Practice in the Late Ottoman Era." *History of Photography*, vol. 27, no. 4, 2003, pp. 363-374.

Zelizer, Barbie. "Finding Aids to the Past: Bearing Personal Witness to Traumatic Public Events." *Media, Culture & Society,* vol. 24, no. 5, 2002, pp. 697-714.