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# *Counteracting Dominant Discourses about Migrations with Images: a Typology Attempt*

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## **Abstract**

This article examines a series of art and media images which have contributed to counteracting dominant discourses about migrations. Through recourse to recent research in political science and psychology, it suggests that both the genre of the images and the very nature of their message contribute to shaping opinions and public policies. Specifically, it emphasises how the recurrence of certain motifs helps to diffuse a feeling of anxiety about the migration “crisis”. By doing so, this article updates the “Funnel of Causality”, a theoretical tool elaborated by political scientists to analyse voting behaviour that is now used to understand attitudes toward migrations. In this scheme, the media effect, in which images play an increasing part, is considered to be of minor importance, whereas moral values appear to be crucial. However, the present article shows how these very values are fostered and conveyed by certain images, particularly those of fictional nature.

**Keywords:** Migration, Images, Funnel of Causality, Motifs.

## *Introduction*

During the First World War, at the time when the American population was influenced by the isolationist Monroe Doctrine, President Wilson’s administration hired the advertiser Edward Bernays to promote U.S. commitment to the war (Aumercier, 2007, p. 452). The publicist proposed to disseminate cartoons picturing Germans looking like Hun monsters killing babies. The aim of this campaign was to convince the American population to enter into the war. Bernays’ caricatural choice of representing Germany as a threat to freedom helped in raising awareness of the European conflict and in triggering American involvement in the war.

This set of images can be viewed in relation to other photographs publicised by the Polish Government-in-exile during the Second World War that aimed to bring attention and support to another situation. Graphic

photographs representing an accumulation of totally emaciated bodies and a dead toddler of a frightening thinness were published by Shmuel Zigelboim, a member of the National Council of the Polish Government-in-Exile. They were illustrating a pamphlet titled "Stop them now, German Mass Murder of Jews in Poland". These photographs fall into a broader action undertaken by the Polish underground National Council, and in particular by the Catholic resistance-fighter Jan Karski, to inform the Allies on the fate of Jews in Poland (Becker, 2018, p. 19). These terrible photographs were sent to the Foreign Office in London, but even though they seem to bestow a prophetic significance to the images published during the First World War, they failed in ending the genocide. Similarly, the Allies did not pay attention to the concentration camps, although they were clearly visible, in the aerial photographs through which they sought to identify industrial installations to be bombed (Rancière, 2012, p. 33).

What is intriguing here is that, in the first case, fictitious images managed to alert an opinion which was until then indifferent to the need to enter the war; whereas, in the second case, images of a realistic genre did not manage to change the course of history. Viewed in the light of the current migration "crisis", this historical aesthetic divergence raises the question of the ability of images to counter the dominant discourses that receive an ever-increasing audience in the present day. This article aims to identify and to analyse the images which have influenced today's opinions on migration.

Assuming that images have the ability to influence opinions, the article starts by investigating the relationship between contemporary art productions and media images currently picturing the migration issue. Examining on equal terms these two kinds of images, the objective is to extract common trends with regard to their main topic, their genre, and their framing, which could explain their potential influence on attitudes to migration, in particular within the European Union. In doing so, this article questions a conceptual device elaborated by political scientists from the Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration (OPAM) to understand the causal variable at play in the policy process, which has had some success to date. Based in Brussels and implemented by the European Commission in 2017, the goal of the OPAM is to enhance knowledge "of attitudes to migration" with the ambition of producing a "step-change in our collective

understanding of perhaps the definitive public policy issue of the twenty-first century in Europe" (OPAM website). For this purpose, the OPAM uses an analysis tool that is an inherent part of the Michigan model elaborated in the 1950s. Known as the "Funnel of Causality", this conceptual tool contributes to explaining voting behaviours by a series of social and psychological factors. The team of researchers at the OPAM have transferred the conclusions of this reading grid to the field of migration studies. In particular, following the lessons of the "Funnel of Causality" in the field of voting behaviour, the media would have little influence on electoral choices. When transferred to the field of migration, the conclusions drawn from the "Funnel" in relation to the media would be similarly expected to have little influence on attitudes toward migratory flows. In this essay, the impact of the media on attitudes to migration will be questioned, first, in the light of a typology of art and media images about the migration crisis, and then with regard to a psychological theory connecting emotions to moral values. The presence of common repeated motifs, in both art and media images, seems to bind these two kinds of representations together in what could be considered as the *media entry* in the "Funnel of Causality" conceptual scheme. From this vantage point, if both these kinds of images may have largely failed in deflecting the conduct of repressive policies, a few of them seem to have succeeded. More specifically, the successful cases include a fictional feature-length film, an iconic press photograph and a magazine cover, all dealing with the subject of migration.

The analysis of this set of still and moving images leads to the discovery of a few common factors all conveying emotion: the identification process, the presence of a child, and the fictitious dimension of the image. Following Christine Tappolet (2000), a philosopher specialising in ethics, emotions appear to be levers for opening and shaping moral values. To the extent that these psychological factors and values are the most critical elements in the Michigan model, some images would therefore have the ability, through the use of emotions, to influence opinions on migration. Therefore, the "Funnel of Causality" would need to be updated to include Tappolet's conclusion on the relationship between rationality and emotions.

This study will begin by assuming that a narrow range of specific motifs bind together the media and images of current migrations by conveying a

general feeling of anxiety (I). It will then consider how a few determining factors in images appear to play a key role in triggering emotions and moral values influencing attitudes to migration (II).

*1. A narrow range of motifs binding the media and art images of migrations*

In an article intended to highlight the permanence of interest in the “Funnel of Causality”, Matt Wilder (2016) stresses the ability of this conceptual model “to link the structural concerns emphasised in political economy to the micro level behaviour of agents”. The early attachment to parties, in particular through sociological and parental characteristics, is recognised as the most decisive factor in explaining political behaviours. The media is also mentioned in the reading grid which composes the “Funnel” but, as the impact is perceived as being less powerful, it exists at one of the furthest places of influence. In the “Funnel” evaluation grid, the further the factor is from the attitude, the more the attitude is rooted in the behaviour.

The following evaluations aims to determine if the place assigned to media in the “Funnel of Causality” should be reconsidered. In this perspective, images that usually accompany the migration crisis subject in the mainstream media, namely those that the audience would have in mind about this topical issue, should be analysed.

To designate what composes the opinions formed in the collective consciousness is a perilous and slippery enterprise, not only regarding the definition of the “general public” in itself, but also in respect of the “collective imaginary” that accompanies it. Yet, both notions are as elusive as they are crucial in the conduct of policies. More precisely, a series of relationships are at stake: the one between political decisions and the population’s wish, and the one between these two components of public affairs and the set of shared perceptions of a phenomenon. These shared perceptions are what I would call a “collective imaginary”. The latter would be composed of the images, whatever their medium, that are the most frequently confronted by a group of people. The images most frequently used to describe a situation would be decisive in the collective perception of the situation. Regarding migrations, the anthropologist Liisa

Malkki noticed that "photographs depicting refugees are so abundant that most of us, having seen them before, have a clear and fixed image of what a 'refugee' is" (1995, p. 10). Delineating which images are associated with migration would be a first step in addressing the relationship between policies implemented to deal with a phenomenon and the perception of it.

A survey conducted from 2013 to 2016 by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism of the University of Oxford shows that, in the United Kingdom, people get their news mostly online and from television. During the period considered in the survey, respondents answering they have used printed newspapers as a source of news the past week witness a decline from around 60% to less than 40%. Regarding the same question, online news sources (including social media) remain stable around 70%. In 2016, online sources of information exceeded for the first time television as the most followed source of media. This change of source in direction of online information can be explained by the preferences of a younger generation. Considering "the gradual erosion of television as the single most widely used source of news, to the point that by 2016 it has been overtaken by online sources in terms of reach" (Nielsen, 2017) and the widespread access of the population to the internet (for example, 92% of the UK population in this study), the focus will be placed on images available online in the present study.

Regarding migrations occurring by the Central Mediterranean route, using the keywords "migration" and "Mediterranean" in Google's search engine generates a limited range of colours, materials and objects. Their combination around several themes leads to five main motifs: boats, endless lines of people, lifejackets, survival blankets and press infographics including maps. Motifs are defined as identified forms and objects contrasting with the background of the images. The word motif derives from the Latin "motivus" which means "what moves", as the nature of motifs is to move and to be repeated from one image to another. Free from spatial and temporal borders, this circulation affects all kinds of images, whether they be documentary or fictitious, media or artistic. Then, doing the same research toward artworks related to migration yields a similarly limited scope of images displaying boats, lifejackets, and survival blankets. As it is currently used by the OPAM team, the "Funnel of Causality" indicates that the media is classified by political scientists as a "contextual"

factor with little influence on opinions (Dennison & Dražanová, 2018, p. 7). Contemporary artworks making use of the same motifs than the media should thus also be largely ineffective with regard to changing opinions.

An example case can be found in the art productions of Chinese activist Ai Weiwei, such as his 2016 installation at Berlin's concert hall which included 14.000 discarded lifejackets; *Reframe* (2016) composed of 22 rubber boats attached to the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence; *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads* (2016) consisting of the wrapping of twelve sculptures located in front of Prague's National Gallery Trade Fair Palace with survival blankets; his 2016 re-enactment of Nilüfer Demir's famous photograph of the young Aylan Kurdi; the *Law of the Journey* (2017) made from an 80-metre long rubber boat; and *Soleil Levant* (2017) composed of 3.500 salvaged life jackets. As they predominantly repeat, generally in gigantic dimensions, the media motifs picturing the crisis, these art productions deliberately refer to the media images covering the crisis. More precisely, on a chronological timeline, the media images precede the artworks. They also evoke artistic practices such as the metaphor (for instance, the lifejackets as dead bodies), the accumulation (of lifejackets on seashores) or the wrapping (of refugees into survival blankets). On the other hand, the contemporary art images also seem to anticipate the media images.

These media motifs are also embedded in the works of other contemporary artists such as Alex Seton (*Life Vest M (Emergency)*, 2014; *Durable Solutions 1*, 2014), Banksy (*Dismaland refugee boat*, 2015), Gandolfo Gabriele David (*We Are Here*, 2017, flags made from life jackets) and Arabella Dorman (*Flight*, 2016, with a rubber boat; *Falling*, 2016, with life jackets and rubber boats).

While stating that media and artistic images seem to be connected by common motifs, the iconological approach, initiated since the creation of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1924–1929) by Aby Warburg and subsequently theorised by Georges Didi-Huberman (2002) under the term *The Surviving Image*, deserves to be embraced. This method of interpretation implies that images bear various temporalities. As Didi-Huberman claims to see the Jackson Pollock dripping gestures within a Fra Angelico fresco, various temporalities in the image generate collusions that may be anachronistic. The temporal movability of today's images of migration would thus be fostered by the circulation and recurrence of several motifs over time. In



relation to the present typology of images, their dissemination highlights a dialogical relationship between the two registers of images: those relating to the media and those relating to the contemporary artsphere. Drawing on this observation, representations originating from both the media and the artistic sphere will be perceived under the generic notion of *image* in the present article. Depicting the so-called migrant crisis in a massive number of works, characterised by a limited range of motifs, these media and contemporary art images would contribute to define the current Western collective imaginary of the migration in the Mediterranean.

Yet, with the notable exception of the Swedish and German governments which decided to accept significant numbers of refugees in 2015, mainstream images of the crisis (whether created by journalists or contemporary artists), neither succeeded in impacting national policies, nor, as shown by the success of populist parties, did they prevent the rise of hate speech. At a European level, a Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2014–2018, namely during the peak of the migration crisis, showed that the majority of respondents have a negative feeling toward immigrants from other EU member states and from non-EU member states (Dennison & Dražanová, 2018, p. 14).

Semiotic analysis of these recurring motifs can help to explain their impact on public opinion. Research in art history, in particular works conducted by Michel Pastoureau (2005, p. 114) regarding perceptions of colours, shed light on the images of migration in 2010. Associated with lifejackets, the colour orange, very present in the images containing lifejackets and rubberboats, conveys the feeling of a subtle threat. It connects the viewer to the imminence of an emergency, as a signal meant to warn of some insecurity. The choice of framing is also crucial in the photographic compositions. Playing on this aspect, the UK Independence Party successfully used Jeffrey Mitchell's photograph of an endless queue of refugees walking along the Croatian-Slovenian border. This photograph, displayed on a truck by pro-Brexit politician Nigel Farage, emblematises a specific use of images in the service of a border shutdown agenda. As the art historian Antigoni Memou (2019, p. 8) observes, the line of refugees walking to the Croatian-Slovenian border is in stark contrast with the stillness of Farage when posing in front of the image. Besides, the anonymity of the homogenous crowd of exiles is opposed to the unique

silhouette of the politician. Whereas the viewer can individualise and identify him, the refugees remain an indistinct mass, in which the gaze cannot fix its attention on any of those who compose the scene. Furthermore, in Mitchell's photograph, the beginning and the end of the queues are kept out of frame, conveying the feeling of an endless line. Opponents to Farage's UKIP movement denounced Mitchell's photograph for its similarity to images in the Nazi footage had been shown on BBC TV in 2005 (Stewart & Mason, 2016). Within hours of the unveiling of the poster, Twitter users pointed out the inadvertent similarity of Mitchell's photograph with the Nazi propaganda footage of migrants. If Godwin's law has been opposed in reaction to this comparison, as it tends to end the debate, the historical reference nevertheless remains telling regarding the significance and afterlives of motifs associating migration with invasion.

Visual historical imprints also seem to be at stake within press cartographies depicting refugee "crisis". Large arrows pointing to Europe in these infographics bring the impression of an invasion. In the blink of an eye, other cartographies and other geopolitical images conveying the notion of strategy are summoned. The latter are close to other cartographies related to military displacements, from Soviet to German operations during the Second World War, which convey the idea of a massive invasion.

The relationship between images, texts and speeches seems to contribute to a social construction leading to consider vision not as a purely optical process. In the images illustrating today's migrations, the exiles are tight against each other on doomed-to-wreck vessels, in seated positions, their gazes blank. Media images sold by press agencies display the vision of incomplete and unable humans. Coming from countries that are subjected to the West, the refugees are, in their turn, subjected in the pictures which represent them and subjected to a reality which denies their basic rights. More or less overtly referring to historical slave practices, the media images representing the migrants' crisis contribute to the feeling of a necessary "objectification" of migrants. Maintaining exiles outside of the scope of human rights, these images contribute to a sentimental humanism perception of Westerners toward their own selves.

As demonstrated by the American scholar Yogita Goyal (2017, p. 543), media coverage has repeatedly invoked slavery as a "grim historical parallel", which evokes moral outrage associated with Atlantic slavery

and shows migrants as the “living embodiment” of a Western transcended past. The idea seems to have impregnated the collective mind so well that, in 2015, the Word Press Photo award was granted to Massimo Sestini for an aerial photograph of the former *Mare Nostrum* operations picturing refugees pressed up against each other in a boat. This photograph evokes the 1788 campaign launched by a British abolitionist group which disseminated a diagram of the cramped conditions of the *Brookes* slave ship.

In 2016, the same photographic award was granted to Sergey Ponomarev for a photograph of refugees arriving on the shores of the Greek island of Lesbos. Ponomarev’s photograph is reminiscent of Géricault’s masterpiece, *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818–1819), whose particular aim was to denounce the persistence of slave practices. For Goyal (2014, p. 52), this historical reference “accrues hegemonic power” and prevents thinking about the specificity of the political situations which have led to these humanitarian situations. Metamorphic motifs evoking the slave narrative contribute to the delineation of a collective imaginary of migration and, in the same movement, act as a shield hiding the role played by the West in generating these very circumstances. For example, 70% of the arms exports made in the European Union are intended for regions outside the Union, among which the Middle East is the first beneficiary (Sabbati & Cîrlig, 2015). Looking at small arms exports, 83% are shipped to countries located outside the European Union, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. These countries act as transit countries for fuelling the Syrian civil war (Angelvoski, Patrucic & Marzouk, 2016; Fisk, 2018).

Above all, there petition of this narrow range of motifs conveys rather negative feelings toward migrants that appear to be linked to negative opinions to migration. As established by the OPAM research team (2017), statistics provided by the Eurobarometer at the height of the crisis show that negative opinions toward migration remain stable at a European level.

Following the Michigan model’s analysis about attitudes to migration, which concludes the media has little influence on opinions, the narrow range of motifs present in both media and art works lead to the encapsulation of refugees in a visual vocabulary strictly falling under the humanitarian field. Far from conveying identification, and from attracting sympathy from opponents, they lock exiles into the narrow representation already assigned by the media. In view of the reciprocal influence of media

and art images, these art productions, far from proposing innovative forms of representation, lag behind the media, to which they are content to be echo chambers.

To synthesise the previous cited collection of art and media images, the collective imaginative vision regarding today's refugees in the Mediterranean would take the shape of an overcrowded rubberboat of black people who need to be rescued with recourse to lifejackets and/or survival blankets. The combination of these few motifs seems to delineate today's collective imaginary of migration. This imaginary appears to be that of coloniality. Born in the aftermath of movements of decolonialisation during the nineteenth century in South America, and in the 1960s in the African continent, coloniality designates the legacies of colonialism that perpetuate a relationship of domination and dependence from countries of the global North in the direction of countries of the global South. "You do not see coloniality, but there is no way you cannot sense it" claims Walter Dignolo (2018, p. 365). The traces left in the mind, by the mere repetition of a few motifs that are picturing today's migrations in the Mediterranean, are evidence of the pervasiveness of coloniality. These traces also transpire in Jeffrey Mitchell's photograph of refugees walking through the Balkans into Hungary, in which an indistinct and apparently infinite mass of bodies heads toward the viewer.

Making refugees fully subjects within these images contributes to decolonialisation of the Western gaze, Western representations and the collective imaginary attached to them. In this respect, a decolonial view on images "brings to the foreground the coexistence [...] of stories, arguments, and doxa ignored by Eurocentred languages" (Dignolo, 2018, p. 365). This specific "partition of the sensitive" (Rancière, 2000, p. 12), at the core of universalist values, seems to be achievable through a few images which have influenced migratory policies. They deserve further examination.

## 2. *Reaching moral foundations*

In 2009, the film *Welcome* appears to have influenced French public debate on migration. Dealing with the story of a master swimmer in Calais helping a young Kurdish guy to cross the Channel, the movie became a

box-office success. It inspired the proposition of a law put forward by French deputy Daniel Goldberg, with the film being explicitly referenced in the proposal, whose aim was to withdraw the mention of “crime of solidarity” in the French legal corpus. How is it possible to explain this success and its following outcomes in French public life?

In an interview conducted in 2010, on the occasion of the DVD release of the film, the French director Philippe Lioret raises the notion of identification. He does not estimate that the success of the film lies in its social and political dimension. Based on one hundred public screenings, and on his own writing from the characters, the director argues that the audience sees it as a story about people:

The film touches the heart first and then moves to the brain. A political pamphlet would engage the mind without involving any feeling, any emotion, and have less impact. When you involve the emotions first, and then engage the mind, it has more impact. That’s why the film was such a word of mouth success (Lioret, 2010).

Being aware that the emotions conveyed by images are built on perceptions of values would be key to exploring art as a form of resistance against dominant discourses. According to the philosopher Christine Tappolet (2000), emotions are vehicles which allow us to access and to build moral values. In relation to theoretical explanations of attitudes and political behaviour, the research team of the OPAM, the “first Observatory of its kind dedicated to producing comprehensive, pan-EU data and accounts of public attitudes to migration in Europe” by the European Commission (European Commission 2017), distinguishes ten determining human values. Among them, only four matter regarding attitudes to immigration. Among these four values, only one of them makes someone pro-immigration, and that is universalism: namely, the belief that everyone around the world should be treated the same and that we should break down barriers. The other three moral foundations concern motivations that can make someone anti-immigration and are related to self-preservation. They are tradition, conformity and security.

By triggering emotions through identification, the artistic experience would open up these moral foundations in the viewer. This process would be especially relevant when art evokes dramatically different lives and pathways.

In the absence of lived experiences, the attendance of certain works of art –one can think of literary works, but also of pictorial art and the seventh art –can have an impact on the way values are perceived. By identifying with the characters in a novel, the reader relives their emotions. As a result, the reader will have the opportunity to experience emotions that were previously unknown to him. In addition, he will learn in which context such emotions are supposed to be appropriate (Tappolet, 2000, p. 254. (personal translation from "En l'absence d'expériences vécues, la fréquentation de certaines œuvres d'art – on peut penser aux œuvres littéraires, mais aussi à l'art pictural et au septième art –peut avoir un impact sur la façon de percevoir les valeurs. [...] En s'identifiant avec les personnages d'un roman, le lecteur revit les émotions de ces derniers. [...] Le lecteur aura de ce fait l'occasion d'éprouver des émotions qui lui étaient jusqu'alors inconnues. De plus il apprendra dans quel contexte de telles émotions sont supposées être appropriées").

If it is true that, as argued by Tappolet, the emotions provoked by images allow awareness to values: which of their specific characteristics would be the determinant factors at stake?

Among the various images produced to illustrate migrations more broadly, two of them seem to have led to changes of direction in matter of opinion. Their common point is the presence of children. Paragons of innocence in regards to adults' actions, images including child victims appear as impactful factors to influence policies.

The first image led President Trump to step back on his decision to separate migrant families. The BBC (2018) reported that "he had been swayed by images of children who have been taken from parents while they are jailed and prosecuted for illegal border-crossing". Trump's policy had led to the separation of 2.342 children from 2.206 parents between 5 May and 9 June 2018. When signing the executive orders in which he backed down from his previous decision, the American President declared: "I didn't like the sight, or the feeling of families being separated"(Nakamura, Miroff & Dawsey, 2018). Among the images of children that may have swayed him, one had experienced particular success on social media. It pictures a little Honduran girl in tears wearing a pink jacket. Although it later appears that the toddler was not separate from her mother, as they were actually caught together by the American authorities (Mosbergen, 2018), it is worth being examined because it went viral and was chosen by *Time Magazine* as a poignant cover image for the issue disseminated 2 July 2018. The weekly cropped the toddler's silhouette and pasted it in front of a photograph of

President Trump, under the title “Welcome to America”. In the meantime,, the NGO RAICES, which provides education and legal aid for immigrants in Texas, raised more money than any other single donation campaign in its Facebook history (Jacobs, 2018). Perhaps, as a result of its wide dissemination, the photograph of the little girl, in particular when associated with President Trump’s silhouette on the magazine’s cover, contributed to the shift in his policy.

The second image that influenced policies is the one that led Chancellor Merkel to ease German migratory regulations. The image of Aylan Kurdi was published on 2 September 2015 at 8:42 am by the Turkish news agency DHA (Dogan Haber Ajansi). On 14 September, the photograph had been shared 2.843.274 times between various social media, blogs, news, and forums (Thelwall, 2015, p. 32) and had been viewed by more than 20 million people across the world in the space of 12 hours (D’Orazio, 2015, p. 16). Above all, it became viral in the circumstances because the young boy materialised both the consequences of the Syrian civil war, and the incapacity of the Western powers to deal with the issue of hosting refugees. During the night between 4 September and 5 September, Chancellor Merkel decided to open the German borders to migrants. Besides, in the aftermath of the image, people helped NGOs massively by giving donations (Slovic, Västfjäll, Erlandsson & Gregory, 2017, p. 642).

Why, while the Syrian civil war had been costing the lives of so many victims for four years, did the photograph of one of them, of the young Aylan, suddenly move the whole world? What did people recognise in this photograph?

Considering the repetition of motifs as a lever of circulation and the inclusion of images in the common imaginary, the photograph of the young Aylan Kurdi would implicitly refer to the Pietà, a Christian theme representing the Virgin Mary, as she cries with her child held in her arms. For Jim Aulich, “the imagery carries a huge potential charge as it connects to a heritage in western life and culture” (Aulich, 2015, p. 50). “As we as viewers are ‘primed,’ trained to perceive aestheticized corpses through the Christian tradition, Aylan’s body is reworked into that of a sleeping angel”, adds cultural theorist Olga Goriunova (2015, pp.7–8). As a correlation is drawn between the dissemination of the image and the ensuing global commitment worldwide into helping Syrian refugees

(Slovic, Västfjäll, Erlandsson & Gregory, 2017), or as stated by media scholar Anne Burns, between “viewing and doing” (2015, p. 39), the evocative power of this iconic motif, in particular its religious connotation, suggestive of the spirit of charity (Aulich, 2015, p. 51), caused people to act in a moral way toward migrants.

Besides, the photographs of Aylan Kurdi were widely disseminated, and through this movement, were encountered by many diverse spectators. Following Dr Simon Faulkner (2015, p. 54), this very movement contributed significantly to the affective force of these images. The affective force triggered by the Pietà motif belongs to a visual Christian tradition of death aestheticisation aiming to trigger a moral duty of charity. This value relates to the universalism that is shown as a lever to positive attitudes to migration in the “Funnel of Causality”. As compassion fades when seeing images staging more than two persons, behavioural scientists consider that the lone toddler with his hidden face contributed to a process of identification among viewers (Slovic, Västfjäll, Erlandsson & Gregory, 2017, p. 642) and thus contributed to its dissemination worldwide. Accordingly, the Oxford Dictionary defines empathy as “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another” and universalism as the “loyalty to and concern for others without regard to national or other allegiances”, and therefore the capacity to identify oneself in a picture would be essential in bringing about positive attitudes to migration.

This raises the question of how the specific register of images can serve as an explanation for the way in which they may counter dominant discourses. In the case of the cover of *Time Magazine*, the form is that of an obvious collage which *recreates* a political situation: that of the consequences of Trump’s policies on children. Because of the overtly false juxtaposition that it sets, the cover brings into the same light two totally opposed individuals. Jacques Rancière (2012) notices that with the entrance into the realm of photography, the “age of History” begins. “History is the time when those who do not have the right to occupy the same place can occupy the same image” (personal translation from “*L’histoire est le temps où ceux qui n’ont pas le droit d’occuper la même place peuvent occuper la même image*”, Rancière, 2012, p. 19). For the philosopher, the “age of History” does not deal with equal conditions with regard to the camera shutter, but to a certain way of “sharing the light” that goes along with the notion of justice.



Following this point, the little Honduran girl would hold the American President accountable for her tears. In the age of History, an image can yield universalism. Yet this value, seen as a lever to creating positive attitudes to migration according to the “Funnel of Causality”, must be one that allows a coexistence between the main subjects of the images, e.g. in the matter of migration, that of the exiles and the viewer. The cover of *Time Magazine* openly constructs this face-to-face encounter. Regarding the film *Welcome*, the coexistence is fostered by the process of identification with the master swimmer. Western viewers could see themselves in the character all the more, so that the screenplay arranges two parallel love stories: one between the master swimmer and his former wife and one between the Kurdish boy and his girlfriend.

To resist dominant representations of migration, coexistence can be achieved by the catharsis of emotions, and/or by a certain setting in the image. In both cases, identification is what provides the sense of agency: to the exiles as human beings, and to viewers, enabled, thanks to the image setting, to access the values that are open to a common sensitive condition. In this light, images that seek to foster pity, for example, by individualising one specific exile who cries, do not bring identification. Their emotional power appears to be ineffective on people who cherish the values of tradition, security and conformity, which are shown in the “Funnel of Causality” as determining negative opinions to migration. When a shouting father is seen holding his crying baby and crossing a European barbed wired fence, the viewer who embraces these values does not associate his own life with that of the refugees. Conversely, this viewer, as s/he seeks tradition, security and conformity, would find himself in total contrast with the despair of the refugee pictured. As a result, miserable images of refugees might, in the best case, strengthen these anti-immigration values.

To avoid this response, disseminating images which convey, on the contrary, a “positive image” of the refugees is similarly inefficient with people that hold these values. As shown by Henrietta Lidchi (2015, p. 291), when discussing the charity campaigns of developing NGOs, “positive images are not, in any sense, closer to the “truth”. They were, and are, deliberate, highly motivated answers to the truth claims and immediacy of negative images”. The scholar bases her demonstration on the analysis of a

photographic image from the 1990 campaign of the British NGO Christian Aid. The latter represents a cycling Bengali Woman who has, hanging on her bike, a bag picturing the RedCross. The accompanying text mentions that the woman, whose name is given as Elizabeth, cycles every morning to villages to provide a health service and sanitation advice. Here, individuality and activity are sought in opposition to the homogenous masses and passivity portrayed in negative images. Staging an empowered woman, whose name is indicated, this image is created as a response to representations that reify those to whom aid is addressed. Development NGOs using “positive” representations of refugees seek something better and truer than images that reify migrants. Yet, following John Berger, empowering visions of refugees still fail to influence security discourses and migratory policies:

The well-fed are incapable of understanding the choices of the under-fed. The world has to be dismantled and re-assembled in order to be able to grasp, however clumsily, the experience of another. To talk of entering the other’s subjectivity is misleading. The subjectivity of another does not simply constitute a different interior attitude to the same exterior facts. The constellation of facts, of which he is the centre, is different (Berger, 1975, pp. 74–75)

From this stance, what is crucial would be the emancipation of the viewers themselves.

The subliminal force of the motifs, which act to prevent the viewer from experiencing both the exiles’ shared humanity and the role played by the West in generating these migrations, serves as a determining factor to accessing “the experience of the other”. For now, the repetition of the narrow range of motifs (rubber boats, lifejackets, lines of people, survival blankets), leads to a situation where both sets of looks are captive: on the one hand those of the exiles, the “collateral victims” of globalisation’s forces (Cava, Parito & Pira, 2018, p. 57), are subjected to practices of enslavement, and on the other hand, in a more surreptitious way, so are the Westerners. The Western gaze and attention appears to be subjected to more imperceptible and painless predation processes. To this end, “Tobii Pro Glasses” have, for example, been designed to determine motifs which are generating buying decisions. Western companies using these high-technology glasses analyse the successive points of focus of the look on

consumer products to understand what particular colour, inscription or motif could have attracted their customers' attention, and thus generate the act of purchase (Hermann, 2012). With the help of neuroscience, these companies therefore assume that analysing the gaze is analysing the brain. The repeated confrontation with a brand (with its logo, the imagery associated with it), contributes to the installation of a "reward circuit" in the brain. From then onwards, the sight of the brand instantly solicits a neurotransmitter, dopamine, which enhances actions considered beneficial, by providing pleasure by activating a sort of "reward system" in the brain (Schaefer & Rotte, 2007). On the other side of the border the exiles, subject to smugglers and human trafficking (IOM, 2016), also seek to attract these looks. Yet the mechanism of attraction of the Western gaze occurs in a closed circuit: when the consumer's eyes encounter the brand motif, this image immediately causes a molecule of pleasure, reinforcing the positive opinion that he seeks to feed. Thus, the meeting of the gaze does not take place in the Western context. Instead, far from encouraging coexistence, the repetitive motifs of mainstream images keep the exiles themselves out of the Western gaze; meanwhile, the Western consumer is struggling with other merchant circuits affecting their own bodies.

The collective imaginary of today's migration is composed of a narrow range of repeated motifs. Simultaneously, in both their spatial spread, over various supports, and temporal distribution, the motifs' circulation binds together art and media images. Used as a conceptual tool for deciphering the factors at stake in the matter of opinion toward migration, the "Funnel of Causality" appears to be updated by Christine Tappolet, whose research demonstrates that emotions allow access to values. As, on the one hand, emotions can be triggered by identification and setting into images, and, on the other hand, values are determining factors of political opinions, dissemination of media and art images could thus be key in attitudes toward migrations. Yet, refugees are subjected in the mainstream art and media images dealing with the topic. The limited range of motifs to which they are associated convey a mixed feeling of anxiety and passivity, which are inherited from a broader implicit analogy between contemporary refugees and slavery, as pointed out by Goyal (2017, p. 543):

When some seven hundred people traveling from Libya to Lampedusa drowned in

April 2015, and in the same month at least five boats sank in the Mediterranean and twelve hundred people lost their lives on the way to Europe, the visual imagery of black bodies lost at sea was a stark reminder of the atrocity named by *Zong* [Goyal refers to the 1781 disappearance at sea of 133 slaves, thrown overboard by their owner so that he could claim them as insurance losses. At the time, the tragedy contributed to draw attention to the anti-slavery discourse]. In the words of the photographer Aris Messinis, what he witnessed on the Mediterranean made him think that the analogy to slave ships sailing the Atlantic “was exactly right—except that it’s not hundreds of years ago.”

The cases of the three varied images discussed here, of the film *Welcome*, the press photo by Nilüfer Demir, and the *Time Magazine* cover, show that fostering the coexistence of the viewer and the exiles represented is key to counteracting these discourses. Allowing coexistence in the image, whether by means of an identification process or through the use of composition, is key to initiate a process of decolonisation of the gaze.

At the time I am writing these lines, the NGO SOS Méditerranée had to give up its action due to the withdrawal of both its flags by Gibraltar and Panama and an indictment opened by the Prosecutor General’s Office of Sicily – which had already prosecuted other humanitarian vessels in the past – into alleged anomalies in the treatment of waste on board. To carry on its mission, SOS Méditerranée disseminated a video depicting the following scene. A man and a woman meet on a beach. They do not have the same view of the Mediterranean: for her it represents a swimming pleasure, for the man it signifies a threat. “When I look at it, I don’t see the sea, no. It’s a huge wall ready to crush me”, he tells her. Both of them share the same desire to live; the desire that pushes entire families to risk their lives at sea every day. The narrative puts forward the common human conditions that they share, namely the coexistence of the stories called for by Mignolo for decolonialising the collective sensing of marginalised populations.

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