From Greece to Germany: A Photo Documentary by Marie Dorigny on European Hospitality

De la Grèce à l’Allemagne : un documentaire photo de Marie Dorigny au sujet de l’hospitalité en Europe

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In 2015, the sudden increase of migrants arriving by sea from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, and the strong press coverage, led EU countries to contribute to the resettling of population. Germany received the highest number of asylum applications. German officials said more than a million had been counted in Germany’s “EASY” system for counting and distributing people before they make asylum claims. (“Migrant Crisis”, 2016)

There were many families with children, for whom the route to exile was reportedly more difficult (IOM report, 2020). Women and children paid a heavy price and the European Parliament’s Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality decided to expose the facts in a research paper on female asylum seekers in Europe¹ (Europarl, 2016) and by commissioning French photographer Marie Dorigny.

Dorigny, a photo-reporter for over 25 years, is well known in the world of documentary photography. She has been awarded several international prizes on projects exposing humanitarian and environmental issues, such as child labour, violence against women or land grabbing. For this photo reportage—Displaced—on Middle-Eastern refugees on their way to Europe with a focus on women’s condition, she decided to follow migrant families all the way to Germany, starting in Lesbos and going on through Macedonia and Serbia. Her work was exhibited by the Parliamentarium in Brussels and at the international festival of photojournalism “Visa pour l’Image” (MYOP, 2016). Dorigny chose to depict the various stages of the migrants’ harrowing journeys and to present the logic, as well as the limitations or aberrations, of the hospitality process. Her decision to stay very close to the people and constantly include children inside the frames, provides an emotional narrative likely to generate empathy. She offers an
account of hospitality where young children, although protected by international conventions, are nevertheless mistreated at borders. This paper will be focusing on the children’s presence in the pictures as a strategy to denounce the contemporary erosion of hospitality as a fundamental and sacred duty.

Such a focus on the emblematic value of the child and on its pleading role in migrations narratives requires thorough exploration. The children in the pictures will be analysed as a means to present the transformation of contemporary hospitality practices and their ambiguous status towards vulnerable populations. But the idea is also to question photography itself, as a close and far intermediary. This study will show how the pictures fabricate migration and hospitality stories that bring the inhabitants of host countries close to the migrant-ghosts that make the European past. This should help view photography as a meditation on the unfair suffering of the very young, as a discourse towards repair or as an agent for distanced, virtuous, charitable and unpersonal answers.

**From border to border and from guest to host**

Dorigny’s photo reportage came at a time when Europe decided to do a little something in response to the public outcry that followed the photograph of a lifeless boy on a Turkish beach. Indeed, in the public’s imagination, the inflation of online iconography (photographs and other visual representations) of the child’s body created a shift from immigration to humanitarian crisis. As Aylan’s image went “viral” on 2 September 2015, the Google searches for “refugee” were multiplied several times over. However, those sensitivities were short-lived and non-intervention as well as “push-back” policies are now even more vigorously enforced than ever.

But Dorigny’s series of thirty-five pictures does not follow the versatile public mood. Shot between December 2015 and January 2016, many views focus on a crowd that is mostly made up of families with young children. All of them are under their parents’ or mothers’ care. They are carried around and kept protectively close, but nevertheless vulnerable. Anxiety is paramount.
The baby and the girl (fig. 1) cannot see beyond the adult next to them, who cannot see very far either. There is no escape: the girl and her mother cannot do anything but stand within a faceless and powerless crowd. They are caught in a process that deprives the migrants of their individuality and does not allow them any initiative. After landing on the Greek coast in Lesbos, the refugees are indeed taken by bus to the Moria reception centre for registration. There, the wait is endless.

After dark, many of them are forced to spend the night in what is basically a transit center. Danger lurks here, overcrowding is the norm, which creates a lot of anxiety for women who have to sleep in the midst of a large majority of men. (MYOP, 2016)

After registration, a limited number of people are allowed to continue. They take the ferry from Lesbos to Athens and are transported by bus to Gevgelija on the border with Macedonia. Then, only the nationals from countries at war (Syrian, Iraqis, Afghans) can continue towards northern Europe by train, in overcrowded coaches with locked doors.

Refugees are no longer in control of their movements. Day and night, families are tossed from one camp to another, pushed from bus to train; they go through and through again, from one border to the next, without having time to settle down, sleep in beds, make real meals, wash themselves... Most do not even have the time to learn the name of the country they go through. (Michalak, 2016)

From early December 2015 to mid-January 2016, Dorigny followed the same route to the North, along the Balkans, through Macedonia and Serbia. She witnessed the migrants’ arrival at the Paul-Hallen registration centre, a former car mechanical workshop in Passau, a small town in Germany, at the border with Austria. There, migrants eventually filled a request for asylum before being randomly sent to German towns in order to wait—for several months—for the authorisation to stay—or not—in Europe. In March 2016 an agreement signed between the European Union and Turkey transformed the transit camp in Lesbos into the infamous detention centre of Mória. Criminal gangs of smugglers took over. Dorigny’s documentary has become a testimony of what Europe had to offer in terms of humanitarian help.
A diverted hospitality

10 That winter was the last where thousands of migrants were allowed to cross the European borders. The conditions witnessed by the photographer were dire, but a small window was still open. A set of rules did provide legal passage, although very different from the ancient reception ritual of hospitality named Xenia (ξενία), translated as “ritualised friendship” in ancient Greece and rooted in generosity, gift exchange, and reciprocity (Powell, 1995). This ritual was a fundamental and sacred duty applied to the least protected social class—exiles and fugitives. At the time, Iketeia (Ἵκετεϊα) or “supplication for hospitality” or “asylum” was answered with respect [αἰδώς] (Kazanskaya, 2013: 2). Greek hospitality or Latin hostis was a pact, a relation set on compensation and involving reciprocity (Benveniste, 1960: 94).

There is something to compensate in order to reach the right amount, a degree of equality or equivalence, which will immediately correct an initial imbalance. The reference to the potlatch indicates the non-hierarchical character of such balance: it does not include the superiority of one over the other, only the difference between the space of identity and an exterior space, a space of alterity. (Payot, 2018: 2)

11 Hospitality in its ancient form works as a non-hierarchical relation based on trust and where treason is always a possibility. It is an ethical posture in the face of the unknown, partly linked to the original human nomadic state.

The first human societies were nomadic; man is a displaced and precarious being from the start. [...] The unconditional hospitality rule may constitute the very concrete, very imperative and immediate reminder of the fact that everyone may be thrown overnight on the road and in need. (Villeminot, 2008: 525)

12 This ancestral law comes from an immemorial and fundamental space that predates history: a pre-word culture, where relationships were built on actions towards the other. On the contrary, Dorigny’s pictures reveal very different rules and interactions. She presents migrants that are all gathered in dedicated spaces, forced to follow a path set in advance, tossed around like freight in convoys arranged by state authorities. Like the child photographed at the Gevgelija train station (fig. 2), sitting behind a smudged train window, they are crammed into overcrowded carriages, all separated from the “normal” world by thick screens, due to their threatening value of alterity. They become immaterial and inaudible with black and white spectral materiality.
The photographer’s focus on the face reinstalls a direct and personal face-to-face contact and brings back the memory of the sacred antic ritual based, according to Emmanuel Levinas, on the “uprightness of the face to face” symbolising, the “uprightness of an exposure to death, without defense”:

It is the death of the other for which I am responsible, to the point of including myself in this death. This is perhaps shown in the more acceptable proposition: I am responsible for the other insofar as he is mortal. The death of the other is the first death. (Derrida, 1999: 3)

And this “death of the other for which I am responsible” (when not helping) is all the more difficult to watch when linked to the face of a child, whose vulnerability makes the survivor’s guilt ever more acute.

In locking the child’s eye into the viewer’s eyes Dorigny’s picture recalls the ancient ritual of the ἴκετεία—or imperious call for an answer that Levinas presents as “a responsible, unlimited and unconditional ‘yes’ that will free the host from potential murder, which is another word for refugees’ annihilation” (Derrida, 1999: 3). The face of the child works like an epiphany, aimed at reinstalling, according to Derrida, the “original fidelity to an indissoluble alliance” (1999: 3). But the smudged train-window restricts any direct physical contact and therefore unavoidable interaction. It points towards the dangerous place of the ethical reciprocity, where saying “yes” means losing control, but keeps the viewer out of danger, on the doorstep of “all the problems to follow, just as much as the welcoming, anarchy, anachrony, and infinite dissymmetry commanded by the transcendence of the Other” (Derrida, 1999: 136). Especially since the separation between the viewer and the child is made stronger by the photographer’s choice of black and white photography and of a thick black frame in the tradition of mourning envelopes edged in black. Each print is formally and symbolically separated and therefore tends to remind the necessary intermediary third party—or “exteriority”—required within any functioning hospitality process: a “thirdness”, which according to Derrida, “turns or makes turn toward it, like a witness
(terstis) made to bear witness to it, the dual [duel] of the face to face, the singular welcome of the unicity of the other” (Derrida, 1999: 29):

The third is other than the neighbor, but also another neighbor, and also a neighbor of the other, and not simply his fellow. What then are the other and the third for one another? What have they done to one another? Which passes before the other? . . . The other and the third, my neighbors, contemporaries of one another, put distance between me and the other and the third. (1999: 30)

Derrida insists on the role of thirdness as a diversion to the violence “potentially unleashed in the experience of the neighbor and of absolute unicity” (1999: 33) that springs from the face-to-face between two “unique” people. He explains indeed that the third party prevents the stranger, either friend or enemy, from dispossessing its host, reminding the:

implacable law of hospitality: the hôte who receives (the host), the one who welcomes the invited or received hôte (the guest), the welcoming hôte who considers himself the owner of the place, is in truth a hôte received in his own home. (1999: 42)

This means, according to Derrida, that the stranger has all the rights, including that of taking the place of the host, “from the moment the door is opened to him, and many fears regarding the current issue of illegal immigration may be linked to this fantasy” (1999: 42). But the migrants in that train—adults and children—are all locked up. They will not invade anyone’s private home, for “security” prevails over “hospitality”. This applies to everyone, even to children who are the most vulnerable while appearing the most dangerous, for it is not possible not to open the door to children.

Professional hospitality

However, some photographs show very caring gestures, and real closeness between the hosts and the refugees (fig. 3). But such interpersonal contact seems restricted to the beach in Lesbos, at the very beginning of the hospitality process, before the paperwork. The picture below shows indeed a Greek volunteer from the sea rescue corps, working on the frontline, who does not hesitate to help thirty-four-year old, Sunduz, an Iraqi Kurd who had fled Mosul and Daesh three months before with her husband and two young children: “This woman is pregnant, she fainted on the beach, on arrival, at the end of the difficult and dangerous crossing of the Aegean Sea in a rubber dinghy.” (France Info Culture, 2016) She was in a state of shock when she landed on the beach.
The physical reassurance by the female coastguard is freely given and accepted with a third-party present on the scene, almost at the centre of the picture, with the word “lifeguard” on his T-Shirt. This makes everyone’s status very clear. It allows the helpers and the refugees to face each other in order to care and to be taken care of. It protects the lifeguards when engaging with the newcomers and respond to the trauma of crossing on makeshift boats when not knowing how to swim and, for most of them, never having seen the sea before. Dorigny, who has worked on migration before, also feels very close to these families. She knows what to expect, and notices that most migrants are “dazed [...] in a state of astonishment” (France Info Culture, 2016). She recognises their distress and admits that “seeing these people who look like us, who could be us, affects us right in the guts and the heart” (France Info Culture, 2016).

My mother set out in exodus when the Germans came in 1940, I thought about that during the whole report. My mother was traumatized by it all her life. [...] I wonder what these women and children are going to be like. [...] I’m ashamed. It’s terrible to see history repeating itself and to tell ourselves that we are not up to the task. (France Info Culture, 2016)

She notes that “after the crossing of Turkey, hundreds of refugees arrive on the Greek island every day. [...] [and] something new has emerged in recent months: women and children now account for over half the passengers. Often four generations of the same family are fleeing war, violence or terror together” (France Info Culture, 2016). On their arrival, they are given blankets, hot drinks and sweets. But the compassionate interaction stops there.

Quickly they go through a set of formalities, efficiently regulated by order control, with no face-to-face interaction, but hour-long queues for registration with impersonal police searches. There is no call for a “yes”: the tall masked and armed female police agent does her job and the teenager in front of her, with her arms open and her eyes closed, shows complete submission (fig. 4). The picture focuses on the profusion of
walls and partitions. And constrained into such a restricted space, the eyes-shut migrant makes herself absent.

Fig. 4. – 12 January 2016, Paul Hallen registration centre Passau, Germany © Marie Dorigny/MYOP

![Image](image1)

Fig. 5. – 12 January 2016, Paul Hallen registration centre Passau, Germany © Marie Dorigny/MYOP

![Image](image2)

Everyone’s belonging is searched, identification documents checked, fingerprints taken and children are no exception (Fig. 5). The process is run smoothly and efficiently following the four phases of “good care” described by Joan Tronto to the letter:
caring about, i.e., recognizing a need for care; caring for, i.e., taking responsibility to meet that need; care giving, i.e., engaged in the actual physical work of providing care; and, finally, care receiving, i.e., evaluating how well the care provided had met the caring need. (2010: 160)

Each family gets medical care, food, warm clothes, a roof and even toys for the children. Translators, medical staff and social workers are at hand, but power relations transform the care that could be integral and holistic into a strict administrative and police task. It may contribute to the transformation of the migrants into figures of the frontier itself, as described by French anthropologist Michel Agier: “extinguishing the energy, drying up voices and possibilities” (Agier, 2014). It turns them into tired, fainting images, “consumed, falling into a very small place and contracted duration” (Deleuze, 1992: 97). The girl with the white jumper contrasting with the black police woman’s uniform is left out of the common spatial and social framework. She slips away and embodies the absent life of transit zones. With her face deprived of any active power, she becomes nothing more than an image. All that remains is her determination to be there. Tahar Ben Jelloun calls it beauty, which “is no one’s concern. [...] cast into the waves of an inhospitable sea. [...] given to the sea, which engulfs it or, at best, given to Europe, which does not want it” (2007: 28). This beauty of the abandoned caught within borders reveals a suffering and silent humanity made of de-socialised, surviving individuals whose destiny is to be kept in an assigned marginal space—a space of representation, a space of discrimination—according to Jacques Rancière (1995: 167sq), which belongs to the post-democratic scene where myths and symbols such as sacred hospitality disappear, to be replaced by police order.

The impossibility of an outside, mythical world, explains the unease and social tensions and links the only possible causes of problems to undisputable physical conditions such as sex, skin colour, ethnicity, etc. [...] The post-democracy therefore affirms, paradoxically, a crude basic racism, where difference is pointed out as the source of the problems. (Lanthier, 1997: 160)

The photographs show how the border police replaces every hospitable interaction with disembodied regulatory procedures. They depict a callous and rigid process, that may be understood as one of the warning signs that institutions are not caring well, according to Tronto: for example, the choice to marginalise the ones who need care; the assumption that they are dependent and therefore not able to care for themselves; that their needs are fixed and have to be determined by others; or that the receivers will do with scarcity and accept that only a small part of their needs be met (2010: 163). Dorigny is not alone in taking a stance against the rules of humanitarian justice in countries of arrival, rules which work as a list of limitations. Commenting on Niki Giannari’s documentary film and poem Specters Haunt Europe, Georges Didi-Huberman also insists on this unjustified oppression in an essay entitled Passer quoi qu’il en coûte (2016). Like Hannah Arendt in 1943, he is indignant at this “parked humanity”. Discussing the concepts of pariah, statelessness and migrant, he writes:

The only thing they ask for is to cross [the border]. [...] They sacrifice everything for the possibility to turn their backs on death. [...] The only welcome we are able to offer is to “park” them in camps. [...] gives them food, provides tents or waterproof clothing. But they are removed from civic life, and condemned to a long bureaucratic wait before being granted the refugee “status”, left to stand in line, waiting to be recognised as human. Yet they are there, in front of us, with their gestures, their faces, their words. (Didi-Huberman, 2017: 37-39)
Dorigny comments on the inherently controlling nature of the bureaucratic apparatus put in place to grind asylum claims with a shift from immediate ethical and emotional response to legal and political responsibility:

After a few months of chaos, since August 2015, the police and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) have introduced a sense of order: they have made asylum seekers use a “processing corridor” divided into “stations” for registration, taking photographs, medical examinations, fingerprints that are checked in various databases. This protocol, justified by the concern to identify possible infiltrated jihadists, gives the police full powers to carry out the first selection and to reject the candidates whom they consider undesirable or unfounded to assert their rights. ([France Info Culture], 2016)

These powers, according to Tronto, bring into the care system “paternalism, in which the givers assume that they know better than care receivers […] [and] parochialism, in which care givers develop preferences for care receivers who are closer to them” (2010, 161).

Michel Terestchenko defines these restricting rules as a consequence of the economy of exchange and reciprocity in Western societies: “Instead of being welcomed, refugees [without the required resources] are forced to comply with liberticidal rules. Violence is done to them.” (2001: 527) According to him, this is linked to a system of thought that does not recognise common vulnerability.

The rejection of compassion can arguably be best understood as the refusal to see oneself as fragile, vulnerable and mortal. Acceptance of this condition is the strength and originality of care policy, but also its fragility since being reminded of one’s vulnerability is generally resisted. ([Ibos et al.], 2019)

Such resistance explains why non-hierarchical and dangerous hospitality has been currently replaced by “care policies”, the aim of which is “to include people and groups who lack the resources to be heard and who therefore risk being left by the wayside” ([Ibos et al.], 2019). According to Tronto, “care does not work equally. The distribution of care-work and care-recipients helps to maintain and strengthen existing models of subordination” (Tronto, 2010: 161). These models, based on uncompassionate solicitude, match the transformation from ethical hospitality into police and political responses.

Charitable hospitality

It has become very difficult indeed to speak of hospitality in Europe, even when member States do not annul or criminalise it. “Hospitality” comes from “hospes” with the double root “hosti-pet”—“hostes”: “the one who welcome the other” and pet(pot): “personal identity” (Benveniste, 1969: 88–101)—that provides protection and compensation, has given way to the concept of “care”, from caritas, meaning love and compassion and implying the act of giving out of goodness. The “care” or “charitable help” is linked to a kind and lenient attitude towards people and works only from the “have” to the “have not”. It is a Christian duty that supports the current hierarchical and vertical, professionalised and institutionalised reception of exiles and refugees in Europe. “Care” is a fundamentally unilateral posture where hospitality is granted as a service out of pity: “a feeling of sorrow caused by the suffering and misfortunes of other”. (Oxford Dictionary)
It seems (too often) to miss the reciprocity of the relationship of equality. [...] More than hospitality, we should speak of charity here [...]. But that would require accepting to [...] make “our welcome” no longer a private and privileged action but see it more as a question. (Louis, 2020)

Charity, as a theological Christian virtue, is integrated into the very deep fabric of European social practices and institutions. The thirteenth-century monks who opened their doors to the first “hospitalities” had heard these words: “I was a stranger and you did not take me in; I was naked and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison, and you did not visit me” (The Bible, Matthew 25:43). They exercised compassion as described in the parable of the Good Samaritan (The Bible, Luke 10:25–37) where three passers-by see a man left half-dead by robbers. Only the third one does not look away and shows some mercy. Luc Boltanski, drawing from Hannah Arendt’s essay On Revolution, links charity to a personal sensibility to the suffering of the other, which is followed with direct feasible action—in contrasts with pity, which generalises and therefore “makes it possible to bring together, beyond individual cases, sets of groups”. With pity comes distance and hospitality becomes political:

Distance indeed constitutes a fundamental dimension of politics, one of the specific tasks of which overcomes dispersion by setting up the “sustainable institution” necessary to make equivalence between local situations in space and time. (Boltanski, 1993: 21)

Such generalisation may comfort the hosts in their choices as they see playful children in reception areas. It gives them the idea that merely fulfilling basic needs brings gratitude and happiness, but for Didi-Huberman, this is not enough. His comments on Niki Giannari’s pictures describe children full of strength, hope, determination and desire to live: they are “stubborn children who throw themselves into life with all their emotions” (Didi-Huberman, 2017: 17). And Dorigny also shows small children in good health and provided with toys in well stocked storage spaces (fig. 6). The children in her pictures play in gymnasiums or “container villages” as if they were at home. They are able to behave (almost) normally when reassured by their parents’ presence, like this little one, with his/her ill fitted clothes who is enjoying his/her new-found toy; and yet, they are not at home. Showing them pity while providing some goods is a political dismissal of hospitality.
It figures the nature of charity as a moral posture that enjoins the rich to give to the poor, but not to change the hierarchical order: the master remains in control. Charity here, replaces personal humane involvement and transforms the risky practice of helping unknown others into a generalised and institutionalised system of thought, allowing the host to feel good and safe, and therefore happy. Charity keeps the migrants in the camp and at the border, in temporary accommodation, while hospitality, according to Levinas, provides them with a house, private and familiar. For Levinas the house is indeed the “place of gathered interiority of recollection, certainly, but a recollection in which the hospitable welcome is accomplished” (Derrida, 1999: 36).

In Dorigny’s pictures, there are no houses. The migrants sleep in dormitories or outdoor spaces, at the margin of inhabited areas. They all get basic and impersonal shelter but nothing remotely close to the intimate protection of a house. The provision of clothing, health-checks and administrative support has become a way for the inhabitants of the host country to assert their legal and political powers. Indeed, for Daniel Payot, this “determined, limitable and de-limitable hospitality is the prerogative of hosts who are self-assured in their identity, even in their domination” (2018: 11). We are miles away from the xenía on which depends Ulysses in the Odyssey—“a reception based on free and unreserved generosity, without condition, without institution, beyond all reciprocity” (Payot, 2018: 10). Charitable hospitality reveals the hostile within the hospitality.

According to philosopher and psychoanalyst Cynthia Fleury, the city, based on the delegate model of representative democracy, “has become a place where each one tells the other what to do” (2010: 51). Each singular host keeps his/her distance and the care for refugees is left to the police and social services or, to say it differently, to professionals. Such anonymous and distant care is almost invisible to the general public. It is, according to Axel Honneth, the sign of a society of contempt, which organises social disapproval and blocks recognition as well as emancipation (2006: 17). It creates a distance which makes migrants even more vulnerable. For Fleury, this
posture stands in line with the mercantile aspects of globalisation, away from openness and benevolence and closed to the diversity of others (2010: 47). She calls it the end of courage (political, moral, ethical) and sees it as the cause of “the most trivial and deafening barbarities” (2010: 54).

This may lead us to wonder how long our democracies will keep newcomers away by dint of charity. The artist’s choice—Dorigny’s as well as Giannari’s—to put the children in the frame tells us that it will not be forever, although the situation has become worse since 2015, with European doors more and more tightly shut.

These children will be the first witnesses. These will bear witness to the inhumanity they have witnessed. Today they are orphans, exhausted, hungry, thirsty. (Giannari & Didi-Huberman, 2017: 13)

Tomorrow they will become the people of Europe. (Giannari & Didi-Huberman, 2017: 85)

The children update the survival and heritage of mankind. The ash remembers (Giannari & Didi-Huberman, 2017: 13). Didi-Huberman is reminding Europeans of their own spectres, ghosts or “revenants”, from the numerous wars, genocides and discriminations of the past. According to him, the children, like the descendants of the victims of the holocaust (“ash”) or of former migration waves, will be the ones who will remember and “tell our own story. [...] After all, the refugees are just coming back. [...] We are all the children of migrants.” (Giannari & Didi-Huberman, 2017: 31) His question here is to know “why Europe is trying to forget something which is nevertheless fundamentally hers. [...] Why repress the past?”: or, to say it differently, why keep the migrants at large and maintain them, even the children, behind screens and veils? (Giannari & Didi-Huberman, 2017: 71)

Such choices reveal a line of thought which, according to Didi-Huberman, points out the power of photography. The photographer who dares to have direct contact with these distressed people indeed speaks against the current political trend to keep the suffering of the other at bay. Thephotographical images work like imagos—in the etymological sense: they are like the imprints of plaster or wax that the ancients made to keep the image of the dead. They help the migrants’ faces to force their way towards the inhabitants of the host country. They stand as reminders of the previous generations who have been building Europe for millenaries. Michel Agier (2018) admits that institutional settings are needed to organise the relations between residents and guests. And he also marvels at the engagement of associations and platforms which work at building links between “us” and others, while pointing out their limits. Based on the action of a small number, these collectives of citizens leave both hosts and guests unsatisfied, tired, saturated and inadequate.

Photography, according to Didi-Huberman, may help revive the direct individual responsibility within hospitality. To him, photography is “a constituent, an operator of dignity [...] used as an object of genealogical transmission, that is to say of restitution and passage” (2017: 82). In Giannari’s documentary, there is “no voyeurism, no pathos despite the terrible situation in Idomeni, but images that bear witness” (Didi-Huberman, 2017: 82). Turned towards the past—Barthes calls them having-been-there (1980: 150)—the photographs have the power to relate to those—Poles, Spanish, Italians, Belgians etc.—who fled their birth-place two or three generations ago. They are, as Susan Sontag writes in her essay Regarding the pain of other, “a trace of something brought before the lens, [...] [and] superior to any painting as a memento of the vanished past and the dear departed” (Sontag, 2003: 21). According to Didi-Huberman,
they have a role to play in carrying a message about hospitality from many ghosts. They have the ability to bring back our European past and therefore to become “a huge monument of indictment brought against our own governments” (Didi-Huberman, 2017: 81).

Dorigny’s pictures indeed project the viewer in Lesbos, Gevgelija or Passau: they are a means, of “making ’real’ (or ’more real’) matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore” (Sontag, 2003: 9). The photographer knows that “all photographs wait to be explained or falsified by their captions” (Sontag, 2003: 11). And she is very aware of the endless contemporary flow of visual information, but understands that “when it comes to remembering, the photograph has the deeper bite” (Sontag, 2003: 20). Especially with children in the frame as the children present the suffering as unjust and to be repaired. Her work is offering an artist-as-citizen meditation on discourses on the suffering happening elsewhere. It offers a non-verbal and open account that may stimulate some empathy and reach a communal space conducive to dialogue.

**Conclusion**

On the status of children in Dorigny’s pictures there appears what hospitality might have been and what it has actually become. It reveals a change from ancient, personal, compassionate, unreserved and risky reception, to contemporary institutional and selective care, focused on material welfare. And yet, the children also remind us of a forgotten past, when parts of the European population were refugees themselves. The pictures bring back previous faces and implore their descendants to react responsibly instead of (at best) giving to charities in order to clear their conscience without taking any risks.

In the photographs, the child stands as an intermediary—close and far; now and then—encouraging the inhabitants of host countries to come closer. It reveals the emblematic value and pleading role of the migrant child. It also transforms the pictures into narratives aimed at bringing the little “extra” that comes with good care, according to Fisher and Tronto (1990). It may provide the “home” that Levinas associates with hospitality, instead of the camp.

According to photographer David Campbell, the photographic discourse moves beyond the specifics of the case and is essential. It reminds us of the role of photography to “investigate the power, purpose and impact of images and produce new ways of seeing the world that can promote change” (david-campbell.org). The photographs of migrant children offer therefore an exploration of the recent political and visual contexts related to the vast number of Middle Eastern families fleeing their country. They question the way current migration flux are represented and offer an understanding of their significance. They also relate to the issue of the intellectual responsibility of the viewer, of his expectation and ethical feelings while contributing to the redistribution of power to which both participatory systems and social movements aspire. These images have the power to work as efficient instruments to help subvert hierarchies. They present photography in its relationship with ethics and responsibility, memory and testimony, shame and guilt, collective awareness, construction and revision of the past and ultimately, in its relationship with death.


SONTAG Susan (2003), Regarding the Pain of Others, New York: Picador.


NOTES

1. All translations from the French in this chapter are mine, except stated otherwise.

2. The “ash” is a direct reference to the holocaust, which made so many children disappear. But these children’s silent traces are still telling the unthinkable through the memory despite temporal distance.

ABSTRACTS

This chapter describes the presence of young children at the heart of photographic accounts of migration as a strategy to denounce the contemporary disappearance of the traditional social organisation that sees hospitality as a fundamental and sacred duty. And to do so it will first, question the photographic figure of the child as an emblem of distraught migrants. It will then analyse the role of the photographic process that has been used by the professional photographers to fabricate and present their migration and hospitality stories.

The aim is to show that by mediating such an act, the photographer contributes to the contemporary deterioration of ancestral and theoretically unconditional hospitality, from individual to individual, to shielded, conditional and collective practice, delegated to institutions,
local authorities and humanitarian organisations. The idea is to highlight the adequacy of the photographic medium to represent hospitality in its ambivalence while questioning its contemporary shift or qualitative transformation.

Ce chapitre questionne la présence de jeunes enfants au cœur des récits photographiques de la migration comme stratégie pour dénoncer la disparition contemporaine de l’organisation sociale traditionnelle qui considère l’hospitalité comme un devoir fondamental et sacré. Pour ce faire, il s’agira d’abord de questionner la figure de l’enfant en photographie comme emblème du désarroi des migrants. Nous analyserons ensuite le rôle du processus photographique utilisé par les photographes pour fabriquer et présenter leurs récits de migration et d’hospitalité. L’objectif est de montrer qu’en médiatisant un tel acte, le photographe contribue à la détérioration de l’hospitalité ancestrale et théoriquement inconditionnelle, passant d’une pratique entre individus à une pratique institutionalisée déléguée aux autorités locales et aux organisations humanitaires. L’idée est de mettre en question l’adéquation du médium photographique pour représenter l’hospitalité dans son ambivalence tout en mettant en évidence son glissement contemporain.

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