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**Re-thinking Photographic Portraiture of 21st Century Italian
Migrants in the Arc Lémanique area
Arese Visconti, F.**

A PhD thesis awarded by the University of Westminster.

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Rethinking Photographic Portraiture of 21st Century
Italian Migrants on the *Arc Lémanique* area

Francesco Arese Visconti

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Contemporary history has identified three big Italian migration movements to Switzerland: the big diaspora of the end of the 19th century, the period between the First and the Second World Wars and the diaspora movement from the end of the Second World War until the 1970s. After the Schwarzenbach initiatives and the oil crisis of the 1970s, Italian migration to Switzerland has decreased. However, with the beginning of the 2007 – 2008 global economic crisis, Italy has witnessed a large new diaspora movement to the traditional countries of migration. Academic studies have found that the most diffused narrative on the *brain drain* phenomenon is oversimplistic and needs to be re-examined and updated; notably that this diaspora in the age of globalization has new and complex layers.

The aim of this research is to re-think photographic portrayals of the cultural identity of Italian migrants of the 21st century in the area between Lausanne and Geneva in Switzerland (*arc lémanique*). The work reflects on issues related to the formation of cultural identity formation of the migrant as a continuing experience and to the sense of belonging to a space which becomes a known place after years of residency. How can an image capture a complex, ineffable, and unrepresentable notion of modern Italian cultural identity? Furthermore, how can an image represent the cultural identity of a group of people whose lives have been changed by the experience of physically migrating to a *terra incognita*?

Research conducted in the archives of Swiss-French illustrated magazines (*L'Illustré* and *L'Hebdo*) and other online publications has highlighted distinctive photographic representations of Italian migrants in Switzerland from the 1960s-1970s to the period between 2006 and 2019. The analysis of pictures of Italian migrants made it possible to understand on a larger scale how the public imagination is shaped, how it impacts on the politics of the 'other' and how society reacts to the phenomena of migration. This process has supported and influenced the development of the photographic practice of this research in its attempt to render visible the complex notion of this new migratory identity.

Keywords: migration, Italians, photographic portrait.

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List of Acronyms

AIRE: Anagrafe degli Italiani Residenti all'Estero

EFTA: European Free Trade Association

EU: European Union

FIBA: Fédération Internationale de Basketball

FDFA: Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

IOC: International Olympic Committee

IOM: International Organization for Migrations

ISTAT: Istituto Nazionale di Statistica

SEM: Secrétariat d'État aux migrations

UEFA: Union of European Football Associations

UN: United Nations

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Author's declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Introduction

In January 2007, my first son Andrea was born, and my wife and I were living and working in Italy. We had an intensive life which didn't really give us the possibility to spend the necessary amount of time with our son. Did we have to outsource what we, as parents, had the desire and obligation to do? Did we have to ask our parents, relatives or institutions to grow and educate our son? We decided that it was the time to migrate and find a place where we could work and earn enough money to improve the quality of our life. By 'quality' I mean having more time to spend with Andrea and build a family based on human relationships. As many other Italians had done in the past and were still doing in 2007, we basically had to migrate. I had to leave the city where I was born and lived my entire life. By August 2007, we had moved to the French-speaking part of Switzerland, and we started our migrants' journey which soon will also give us the Swiss citizenship. It all seems a smooth transition, considering that we did not have to struggle to migrate as our ancestors had in the 1960s and 1970s. As explained further in some parts of this thesis, in the period after the Second World War until the 1970s, migrants who had decided to migrate to Switzerland had to go through a process which was very demanding from a bureaucratic, physical and emotional point of view. Compared to those years, our migration has been easy. However, when people change the landscape of their lives there is a sense of displacement that arises. There are psychological consequences that grow and influence their life (Bolzman, Fibbi, and Vial 2003b; Juhasz and Mey 2003; Mey, Rorato and Voll 2005; Ortner 1973: 1339). Like me, many other Italians have moved since 2007 and are still doing so while I am writing. Is this kind of migration still considered to be worth narrating in 2022? In times of globalization and space/time compression, when you can easily eat a good pizza and drink an Italian 'aperitivo' in the centre of Geneva and Lausanne, when arguably Switzerland and Europe have gone through a process of *mediterranéisation* (Maiolino 2013: 154), when we all dress in the same way and look similar, can we still talk about Italian migration as a impactful phenomenon on Swiss society? Since I have always been interested in doing research that relates to issues of migration, I decided that this recent process of which I was an active part deserved to be investigated. In this regard, this research is about me as an Italian migrant.

According to the *Office Federal de la Statistique*,¹ in 2020 Italians were still the largest group of migrants in Switzerland. While the new Italian diaspora is a very complex and multi-faceted process and it is not really properly visually represented through the media, the aim of this research is to find ways to re-think photographic portraiture of contemporary Italian migrants who are resident in the area along the *arc lémanique* between Lausanne and Geneva. I had initially thought to develop my study on Switzerland as a whole. I then realized that planning my research on the entire Swiss confederation would have been too broad and difficult also considering all the different characteristics of each canton. On the contrary, I had to concentrate my scope on an area which is very unique for the profile of its residents in the Swiss context. The region between Geneva and Lausanne along the Geneva lake is part of the French-speaking area of Switzerland and is comprised of the Geneva and Vaud cantons. It is populated by international organizations like the UN, the UEFA, the IOC, the FIBA and global corporations like Nestlé, Richemont, and Phillip Morris International. As a consequence of this, during the last fifty years, these international employees have been integrated with the local Swiss population. The *arc lémanique* region is, therefore, very international and different from other Swiss regions. Like many other nationalities, Italians have massively migrated to this area. Through the case study of recent Italian migrants living in the *arc lémanique* area, this research wants to contribute to documenting an important phase of contemporary humanity when migration is still a crucial and controversial issue. It is an essential point of this practice-based research to rethink and render visible the complex notion of the cultural identity of recent Italian migrants of the French speaking part of Switzerland. These migrants hold an identity in flux, which is different from the contemporary public's understanding of migration and identity.

In the next chapters it will be demonstrated how, due to the time-space compression caused by globalization and to the *mediterranéisation* of Switzerland, the recent Italian migration in the Swiss confederation is not a highly visible phenomenon. As shown in chapters three and four, Italians and Swiss people have become more similar today when compared to their ancestors of the 1960s and 1970s. I am referring here not only to their habits but also to their clothing; their physical aspect. It is, thus, very complicated to visually represent the cultural identity of a population of migrants like Italians who are today not much visually different from the Swiss. As explained in the following chapters, this research wants to suggest a method to document this

¹ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/migration-integration/foreign.html>

transformation recalling visual connections to the native cultural identity of Italian migrants. In the 1960s and 1970s, a small group of photographers were interested in documenting the process of Italian migration and the workers' conditions in Switzerland.² The majority of these photographers took images on the topic but never worked in a systematic way on a body of work with the aim of producing a book or an exhibition.³ Migration from Italy to Switzerland in the early years of the Twenty-first century has not yet been documented through photography with a systematic approach.

I believe that the strength of this research project is that it presents a topic that is a collision of contemporary discourses happening while I am writing. It is a documentation of a phenomenon sociologically analysed but barely visually represented. The images produced as a result of this research are the first ones (to my knowledge) depicting the cultural identity of this new Italian diaspora and its *Italianity*. While being aware of the regional differences (and regions themselves can be vastly diverse), and the diverse minority groups that Italians are as well, I had to concentrate on a shared cultural background which could be felt as common and try to visually represent it. How could *Italianity* be visually represented? What is the meaning of *Italianity*?

As stated by Richard Sennett (2011: 58) and confirmed by Arjun Appadurai (1996: 41, 147, 161, 163), cultural identity cannot only coincide with ethnical, geographical and political borders of one nation but also 'The food people eat, how they move when they dance, the dialects they speak, the precise forms of their prayers, these are the constituent elements of national life' (Sennett 2011: 58). All these aspects happen in one territory and, therefore, this place becomes the synonym of cultural identity. However, this concept has to be broader and linked to rituals, practices and customs connected to an imagined community (Anderson 1991). 'We need to think ourselves beyond the nation' (Appadurai 1996: 158). The creation of a cultural unity can still exist once people move abroad like in the case of Italian migrants in

² See for example the catalogs of the exhibitions 'Il lungo addio' (Bachmann 2013), *Ricordi e stima – Fotografia e storia orale della migrazione italiana in Svizzera dal secondo dopoguerra fino agli anni 80* (Alghisi et al. 2016) or *Nous, saisonniers, saisonnières... Genève 1931-2019* (Brux 2019) with photographs by Giambattista Colombo, Tano D'Amico, Christian Kænzig, Anita Niesz, Pia Zanetti.

³ To my knowledge, the only case is represented by the work of Jean Mohr for the book *A Seventh Man* (Berger & Mohr 2010).

Switzerland who preserve their *Italianity*. However, there are multiple aspects of *Italianity*.⁴ Silvana Patriarca (2010: 6) defines this characteristic as ‘complex of predispositions that become part of the public and political attitudes of a population.’ In the past the concept of *Italianity* was linked to the idea of nation (Scaffai & Valsangiacomo 2018: 13) and influenced by politics (Patriarca 2010: 6). According to Ruggiero Romano (1997: 12), it is difficult to link the concept of *Italianity* to a nation. The concept of *Italianity* has to be found in the values of the different local practices (food, cultural, religious and social practices) more than in the consequences of important political and historical events. The title of his work, *Paese Italia*, highlights the fact that in his opinion it is better to refer to Italy as a country (*paese*) more than a nation. It is in this sense that I refer to Italians. It is then clear how complex is the concept of *Italianity*.

Valsangiacomo (Scaffai & Valsangiacomo 2018: 11 – 22) confirms that there are different meanings of *Italianity*. It is a concept which has changed during the years. Starting from the 1980s, Italian society has improved the welfare level. Along with it, Italian culture and Italian products have reached a high level of global diffusion. Italian communities have changed: the first old generation of migrants (like the 1960s and 1970s in Switzerland) have integrated, the second and third generations have developed a controversial relationship with Italy but not necessarily negative with their perception of *Italianity*. Therefore, *Italianity* has a multi-layered meaning which comes from different experiences, that of one who sees Italy from outside and the other one of those who are in Italy and therefore see it from the inside. All these experiences contribute to generate a narrativity of *Italianity* which goes beyond the traditional means of literature and verbal communication and involves visual arts. For my research, I was particularly interested in the context of visual arts. As a starting point for my research, I wanted to understand what characteristics of the arts could represent *Italianity* abroad. What was, in the view of Italian migrants resident in the *arc lémanique*, the historical period which could immediately be identified by them as the shared cultural common background of the Italian culture in visual arts? As explained in chapter two, for this reason I circulated a survey among Italian migrants living in the *arc lémanique*. Roman period, Renaissance, Baroque, and Risorgimento were listed in the survey. The first choice of survey responded was for the

⁴ For other works related to the definition of *Italianity* see (Corti 2011b), (Balicco 2015) and (Bassetti 2015). While not using the term *Italianity*, Barthes (1980b: 281) gives a definition of *Italianicity* (where the adjective *Italian* becomes a noun with the suffix *-icity*): ‘*Italianicity* is not Italy, it is the condensed essence of everything that could be Italian, from spaghetti to painting.’

Renaissance period and in particular on Renaissance portrait paintings. As largely discussed in chapter two, I therefore focused my attention on the main characteristics of Renaissance portrait paintings and started considering how to include these aspects in my photographs.

However, it was fundamental to tackle theory first as part of a process that could allow me to understand and develop the project and work on it. This thesis follows the process of research. Before studying for this Ph.D., I completed in 1998 an MA in Archeology. My current research process owes much to that academic background. When I develop a photographic research, I apply the same research method that I was using in my years of study in Archeology at the University of Florence. My work always starts with the understanding of the theoretical framework with an interdisciplinary approach. I have to investigate different fields that apparently, but only apparently, are disconnected one from the other in their content. In the case of this research, before working on my practice, I had to study interpretations and definitions of cultural identity, portraiture, visual communication in the fields of cultural studies, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and photographic theory. All these concepts, as said above, sometimes seemed distant one from the other. However, the more I was developing an understanding of the theoretical framework, the more I began to see a common thread that connected all the dots. This new knowledge, quite articulated in its complexity, constituted the foundations of the practice work.

The aim of the practice and its theoretical framework was to answer to four main questions. Firstly, I needed to understand how photographic portraiture becomes a means of communication between the photographer, the sitter and the viewer. Secondly, I wanted to interrogate what means have been used by photographic practice to represent the cultural identity of Italian migrants in the past, in particular in the period between 1960 and 1970. My third main question was about the recent Italian diaspora of 2007–2019, how it was visually narrated in French-speaking illustrated magazines and online platforms. I was interested in understanding the different profiles of recent Italian migrants in Switzerland when compared to those of the 1960s-1970s diaspora. I, then, argued how photographic portraiture can depict the *Italianity* of the recent Italian Diaspora in the *arc lémanique* area of Switzerland.

To answer to these questions, I have applied a wide range of multiple primary methods.

I have used a semiotic approach to understand the image (Barthes 1977; Joly 2015) and based my study of texts in the titles and in the articles of the magazines on rhetorical analysis (Berger 2014: 81-101). I have used interviews (Berger 2014: 157-176) and surveys (Berger 2014: 247-271) with my subjects and in the analysis of my own work as a photographer, I have applied the 'reflective practitioner' method (Walker 2004). As explained by Shön (1996: 4), 'it is rare that the designer has the design all in her head in advance, and then merely translates it. Most of the time she is in a progressive relationship-as she goes along, she is making judgments. Sometimes the designer's judgments have the intimacy of a conversational relationship, where she is getting some response back from the medium.' The practice part of the research has been an ongoing process. Following Walker's definition (2004: 9-10), I developed my photographic work as an 'artmaking process with openness to seeking new solutions rather than relying upon more obvious and normative possibilities for expressing the big idea.'

As a result of this process, I have written four chapters. The first chapter functions as a theoretical framework and it is divided into three parts. The first part of this section introduces the reader to the concept of the photographic portrait as a place of dialogue between the photographer, the sitter and the viewer. This point will also be more extensively developed in chapter four. The second part argues how photographic practice can depict aspects of native cultural identity of migrants drawing on concepts like Bourdieu's *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977). In the last part of the chapter, drawing on the meaning of national identity as imagined community, the reflection focuses on how the integration process of Italian migrants in Swiss society from the 1960s to the 2000s has been interpreted by historians, writers and photographers. The second and the third parts of this chapter function as an introduction to the following chapters which address the issue of photographic representation of Italian migrants in French-language Swiss magazines in the years between the 1960s and 1970s and between 2006 and 2019. Particular attention could have been given in this chapter to the political and ethical status of photography in relation to migration studies and the representation of migration. I am aware that this is a crucial topic that deserves consideration. However, the space constrains of my research did not allow to open a discussion on this point which definitely requires large and thoughtful analysis.

The purpose of the second chapter is to question the methodological challenges that the practice-based research on recent Italian migrants in Switzerland has posed. The theoretical background

led me to reflect on practical solutions to produce photographic portraits in the attempt to depict the cultural identity of this specific population. Thus, a series of key points of this visual and intimate journey are discussed and developed. In the first instance, I argue and further expand the reflections already introduced in chapter one on the psychological challenges resulting from the encounter of the photographer, the sitter, and the spectator. Secondly, the challenges of the representation of a group of people with individual photographic portraits are discussed. The chapter underlines how previous works were precursory of later research and why the inclusion of the landscape has links with paintings from the Italian Renaissance. Finally, I give a brief introduction to various ideas about the final exhibition.

In the process of re-thinking new ways of photographic portraiture of 21st century Italian migrants in the *arc lémanique* area, the third chapter questions how the Italian diaspora of the 1960s/1970s has been represented in French-speaking illustrated Swiss magazines of those years. These were the years which lead to the Schwarzenbach referendum. As explained further in the chapter, the purpose of this initiative was to decrease and regulate the number of migrants in Switzerland. Illustrated magazine played an important role in the political environment in influencing and documenting the public opinion. The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to offer an overview and a reflection on the results of the research on *L'Illustré*, the most popular and the only illustrated magazine in the *Suisse Romande* in those years.⁵ The decade between 1960 and 1970 was selected and it has been observed how seasonal workers, often identified by public opinion as migrants, were represented in this magazine. The research investigated different key aspects: firstly it identified significant influences on the composition and content level from other media; secondly it explored what visual symbolism was developed and its relationship with the previous models of photographic representation (like for the trans-Atlantic diaspora of the beginning of the 20th century); ultimately it questioned the sociological influence on photographers' composition and the visual representation of integration in the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

In the last chapter, the focus is on the photographic representation of the Italian diaspora between 2006 and 2019. As largely explained in the chapter, after the Schwarzenbach initiatives and the oil crisis of the 1970s, Italian migration to Switzerland has decreased. However, with the

⁵ La *Suisse Romande* is the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

beginning of the economic crisis in 2007, numbers show that Italians have started again to move to the Swiss Confederation. From 2006 to 2019 Italians resident abroad and registered on AIRE (Anagrafe Italiana Residenti all'Estero) increased by 70.2% (Bonifazi 2017: 32). To better understand the characteristics of the new Italian diaspora to Switzerland and how it has been visually represented, this chapter summarizes the findings of research conducted in the archives of the magazines *L'Illustré* (2006 – 2019) and *L'Hebdo* (2006 – 2017) and online publications. This part of the thesis also reflects on how these images influence my photographic practice.

While the photographic practice of this research re-thinks solutions of photographic portraiture of recent Italian migrants in the *arc lémanique*, the purpose of the next chapter is to position the study in a theoretical framework and to solidify the reasoning behind the practice.

Chapter 1 – Positioning

Introduction

Drawing on philosophical, sociological and psychological sources, this chapter will discuss three main arguments. The first one reflects on the value of the photographic portrait as a medium of visual communication. Building on theories which involve the visual perception of the other,⁶ the discussion will cover issues about how a photographic portrait becomes a form to develop a conversation between the photographer, the sitter and the viewer. A more extensive discussion on the value of the face and the gaze in photographic portraits will also be developed in chapter two. However, for an accurate understanding of the theoretical framework of this work and the reasoning behind the photographic practice, it was essential to introduce this point in this part of the research. This section will also reflect on to what extent photographers have contributed to the debate with their work⁷ and how they created portraits as places for recognition, self-recognition or self mis-recognition.⁸ The second part will analyze how photographic practice can depict aspects of native cultural identity of migrants drawing on concepts like Bourdieu's *habitus*.⁹ Through the case study of Michele Petruzzello's work *Good bye my Love* (2015), conventions and motifs related to the representation of Italian migrants will be identified. Finally, starting from considerations on the meaning of national identity as imagined community,¹⁰ the last part of the chapter will analyze how the integration process of Italian migrants in Swiss society has been interpreted by historians, writers and photographers.¹¹ The second and the third parts will function as an introduction to the following chapters which address the issue of photographic representation of Italian migrants in French-language Swiss magazines in the years between the 1960s and 1970s and between 2006 and 2019.

1. Photographic portraiture as means of communication between the sitter and the viewer

In his book *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes stresses the importance of the role played by the photographer in representing the *air* of the sitter and communicating it to the viewer. The *air*, he states, is 'ultimately something moral, mysteriously contributing to the face reflection of a life

⁶ (Agamben 2000); (AA 2017); (Lacan 2005); (Sartre 1993).

⁷ (Avedon, 1985); (2002); (Dijkstra 2003); (Hanzlova 2012); (Penn 1980); (Sander and Keller 1980).

⁸ (Fagioli 2009); (Nadar 2007); (Sartre 1993); (Simmel 1985b).

⁹ (Bourdieu 1977).

¹⁰ (Anderson 1991); (Brennan 1990); (Hall 1989); (1990); (1996); (1997); (1999); (2003); (Hall and Back 2009).

¹¹ (Berger and Mohr 2010); (Cattacin, Fibbi and Wanner 2016); (Franchi 2017); (Maiolino 2013); (Stohr 2013).

value' (Barthes 1980a: 110). In Barthes' view, a photographer, only if talented or lucky, should be able to successfully communicate to the viewer the *air* of the sitter, who, then, will become only 'a body without a shadow' (Barthes 1980a: 110). The photographer is, thus, the pivotal point of a dialogue between the sitter and the viewer and his portraits are 'a matter of being' and 'no longer of a thing' (1981: 107). Drawing on sources which deal with the meaning of portraiture (Scharf 1969; Simmel 1985a; Clarke 1992; West 2004; Berger 2008; 2014; 2015; Kozloff 2007), the aim of this section is to see how a photographic portrait develops communication between sitter and viewer with the collaboration of the photographer (Burgin 1982, Sekula 1982; Fagioli 2009; Azoulay 2012).¹²

The use of photography as a tool to create identity comes from the second half of the Nineteenth century and it is connected with the rise of the middle classes (Scharf 1969; Hamilton and Hargreaves 2001). While in the Nineteenth century photography was basically seen as the representation of nature itself (Sekula 1982: 5; Tagg 1988),¹³ it can also be seen that in the same years photographic portraiture was considered more than just a mere reproduction of truth (Scharf 1969). The period of time between 1850 and 1890 is considered the moment when portrait photography blossomed in Paris with Gaspard Félix Tournachon de Nadar and his son Paul, André Eugène Disdéri and Gustav Le Grey (Scharf 1969). Portraits not only represented the action of fixing an image and became a 'double,' a way to see ourselves as the others see us. Nadar was the first to notice this psychological aspect and to analyse it in his writings (Félix Nadar, Cadava, and Theodoratou 2015). He described the different reactions of the portrayed persons when they saw their photographic portraits at first: 'in actual fact, to see our own image in a double that is different from our illusory image of ourselves and instead resembles the way other people see us, is like listening to our own voice coming out of somebody else's mouth as an unrecognisable, deceitful echo that gives rise to the sudden, irritating discovery of an affected lilt and strangely exaggerated tones' (Nadar 2007: 74). It might be of interest to understand how this process works and which elements are involved.

¹² On this point and the importance of the role played by the beholder in front of a photograph, see (Di Bello 2008). As mentioned by Di Bello (2008: 152), I use the term 'beholder' because it involves the sense of 'holding.'

¹³ Niépce called his invention 'heliography,' highlighting the importance of the action of the sun for the image formation. In this moment in time, photography was considered as just 'the unmediated agency of nature' (Sekula 1982: 5).

The decoding of an image is automatic and unconscious (Burgin 1982: 114). The viewer is a passive receptor and all these elements that she/he receives from the image form her/his identity. Like for the 'mirror stage' theory of Jacques Lacan (2005), the reception of the interpretation of the image constitutes the formation of the self. A portrait can act as a mirror of the viewer (Gierstberg 2015: 12). Each viewer lives a process of recognition or mis-recognition with the sitter and possibly can project himself in a portrait (Bate 2016: 103). A photograph is a space within which the viewer uses her/his codes to understand the image. With a cultural definition, this process can be called the 'photographic discourse' (Sekula 1982: 3). If a discourse is a system of relationships between parties which are communicating on the basis of a specific cultural background, a photograph is an utterance which carries a message (Sekula 1982: 3). This utterance depends on some external codes to allow its readability. In daily life, the relationship with the other is a multi-sensorial experience but in art the formal elements must help to reach a similar level of bodily and psychic connection (Simmel 1985b: 51-62). As stated by Georg Simmel (1985b: 56), the organization and the determination of the formal elements contribute to this point. David Bate (2016: 89) lists five elements which define a photographic portrait: face/facial expression, pose, clothing, background and props. The first three points are directly related to the communication of the sitter with the viewer, and the photographer in the process of identity formation.

While more extensively discussed in chapter four with a dedicated analysis, it is important here to quickly introduce the concept of the face in the context of the reasoning on identity and communication between the sitter and the viewer. In the key text for the history of the theory of portraiture *De Pictura* (1435 in Latin, 1436 in Italian), Leon Battista Alberti suggests that the face is considered as *pars pro toto* of a person's appearance (Alberti 2004: 103). Alberti acknowledges that the face is the most important means of communication and it is the person's most expressive and impressive feature. 'Recognition' in a painting, Alberti states, is based only on the visual relationship between two faces: the face of the known person and the face reproduced by the painter (Alberti 2004: 103). The notion of the face is complex. It is assumed that human beings have a face but the definition of it is not obvious. The face is a place where experiential and communicative functions concentrate (AA 2017): it is a flat surface on which organs like eyes, mouth, or muscles work and manifest passions and emotions. While convinced that 'it is unclear and difficult to define the notion of face' (AA 2017), Mark Cousins states that

expression, recognition, frontality and look (AA 2017) are all involved and concern communication. The face is, Cousins states, 'the first of several planes which confront you with the others.' Seconding his reflections, we can assert that the face is not unique. Having multiple planes which do not show all at the same time, human beings seem to have a whole cluster of faces (Proust 1982: 978) which reflect physicality and emotional characteristics at the same time. The face, not to be confused with the visage,¹⁴ is the suture point of the inside of the individual and the outside world (Agamben 2000). 'My face is my *outside*: a point of indifference with respect to all my properties, with respect to what is properly one's own and what is common, to what is internal and what is external. In the face, I exist with all of my properties (my being brown, tall, pale, proud, emotional...); but this happens without any of these properties essentially identifying me or belonging to me' (Agamben 2000: 98,9).¹⁵

Eyes are part of a face and contribute to the dialogue (AA 2017). The eye contact in a portrait is an abstract substitute of a meeting in the flesh (Gierstberg 2015: 12). The gaze of the sitter straight into the lens is an open invitation to the viewer to participate in a discourse about the identity trans-formation process (VanGelder 2012). Looking at a portrait is like looking at another person but there is awareness that it is an image, a construction (Gierstberg 2015: 11). A visual relationship based on the gaze is established (Bryson 1983, 1999).

The relationship between the sitter and the viewer which is a fundamental component of this research project is based on the theory of Jean-Paul Sartre (1993) about one's position in relation with the other and to the mirror stage theory of Jacques Lacan (2005).¹⁶ The sitter and the beholder/photographer exist in a bi-directional confirmation and immobility. Their approaches are anthropocentric and imply that the subject is in one and only place, not dependent on the objects which surround them and that it is of a permanent and independent form. This concept is connected to the self-perception of the subject and her/his presence in the world. This position is menaced by the other's gaze. Sartre (1993: 341) uses a metaphor in two stages to explain his

¹⁴ According to Giorgio Agamben the *visage* is the mere physical appearance of the face of the individual, not to be confused with the face which objects also could have. Agamben (2000: 91) states that 'there is a face wherever something reaches the level of exposition and tries to grasp its own being exposed, wherever a being that appears sinks in that appearance and has to find a way out of it.'

¹⁵ For photographers who worked on faces see (Ruff 2017); (Schöller and Abramović 2012); (Schöller and Funderburg 2013); (National Geographic 2013). See also (Ewing 2006).

¹⁶ The value of the gaze in photographic portraits and the relationship between the photographer, the sitter and the viewer are also discussed by Ariella Azoulay (2012). Further argument on these points will follow up in chapter four.

interpretation of the gaze. In the first one, one enters a park and he is the only individual. Everything there is for him and he has a centralized perspective of the surroundings. In a second moment, the other enters and watches the watcher. The new element attracts the focus and the perspective changes. The centralized position of the first individual is menaced by the intruder. The self becomes an object in relation to the other. The watcher is objectified by the other's gaze. The entire scenario is restricted to these two poles. A good visual example of this theory is given by the *Sposalizio* (1504) by Raphael (fig. 1). The attention of the viewer goes to the subjects in the foreground, the architectural perspective in the background is painted for the viewer.



Fig. 1 – Raphael, *The Wedding of the Virgin*, 1504.

There is, nevertheless, a vanishing point in the center of the image which is a second point of interest. All the lines converge there, where the viewer is not. The viewer and the vanishing point are dependent on one another and inseparable.

This pictorial example is very close to Lacan's point of view on the gaze (Lacan 2015). Not only do other people look back to the subject but also inanimate objects return their gaze to the perceiver. They communicate to us because of the network of meanings constructed by society.

The social construction influences our vision. And this process starts with the mirror stage. Humans are very premature at birth compared to other animals, including primates. Human beings cannot walk, see, talk in the first hours after birth. *Proprioception* (the perception of the body in relationship with the environment) is absent. The mirror stage represents the first moment when the child thinks of itself as 'I' connected to an image which it understands as itself. Between the age of six and eighteen months, the child sees his image in the mirror which can be the mother as well. It realizes that it is itself but understands that that is a lure. Since that moment, the baby comprehends that yet it is itself in the way it is seen by the others. Through the act of understanding the unreality of itself, the baby experiences its wholeness. Its identity is given by the merging of what it is and what others and itself sees of it. Lacan states that the foundations of human identity are based on a schismatic act of narcissism where for narcissism we don't mean the common sense of vanity but the 'beloved view of oneself.' The two key points of identity formation in the mirror stage are the seeing of oneself in an image with all the consequences explained above and the love of the image of oneself which Lacan called the 'Ideal I' (Lacan 2005: 503). That is the moment when we modulate our identity influenced by the others and the life experience. According to Lacan, the mirror stage is actually anticipated by the relationship of the infant with the mother. The gaze of the mother is our first mirror. The child understands that the mother sees something when she looks at them. Thus, the conception of the subject is present already before the mirror stage and depends upon the mother's gaze. Humans are socially constructed and everything starts with the mother's gaze and continues with the other's gaze. This process also develops empathy.¹⁷

If the face is the mediator (Preimesberger 2011), the body posture communicates the sitter's attitude towards the viewer (AA 2017): the frontal position of the sitter in front of the camera is sign of 'solemnity, frankness, the disclosure of the subject's essence' (Sontag 1990: 38). This position shows the sense of cooperation of the sitter with the photographer and the viewer. There are examples of photographers in contemporary art like Rineke Dijkstra or Jitka Hanzlova, who have portrayed one person per picture, in the center of the image, looking at the camera with no expression and any apparent intervention of the photographer. Apparently, there is no compositional intervention of the photographer in the attempt of being the most objective

¹⁷ Neuroscientists are studying if and possibly how mirror neurons have an impact on the empathy development. See (Rizzolatti and Craighero 2004); (Barry 2009); (Iacoboni 2009a); (Iacoboni 2009b); (Borg 2017).

possible. While acknowledging the different meaning and context of ethnographic photography, in this sense, there are similarities in the works of Dijkstra (2003) or Hanzlova (2012) with James H. Lamprey and Thomas Huxley's images (Ryan 1997). In these ethnographic photographs of colonized populations of the end of the Nineteenth century individuals were photographed with grids and measuring sticks (fig. 2) with the purpose of developing what was conceived as the most objective documentation possible.

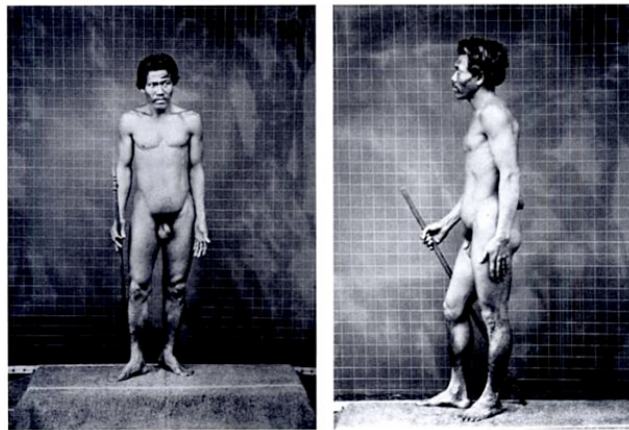


Fig. 2 - John Lamprey, *Front and Side Views of a Malayan Male*, 1868 – 1869 ca.

These images are there to say that these subjects are not different from the viewer (Stallabrass 2007) and they are far from the quasi-anthropological approach of Nan Goldin (2014) with a personal position. While in the images of Nan Goldin the photographer represents the lives of people with whom they are intimately connected,¹⁸ the photographs of Jitka Hanzlova or Rineke Dijkstra tend to be closer to the concept of the anonymous types.

Jitka Hanzlova (2012) uses tools from Renaissance portraiture to create contemporary portraits (Gierstberg 2015: 90). There is a strong connection between her work and the Renaissance portrait paintings. For examples, like in the Italian Renaissance artistic production, she develops a conventional style with three-quarter pose and torso views framed in natural light with nondescript colored backgrounds and includes details like in Piero Della Francesca or Leonardo da Vinci's paintings (Gierstberg 2015: 90). Her subjects are people with a deadpan look (fig. 3). There are no props or symbols included. Hanzlova wants us to concentrate on the sitters' faces.

¹⁸ See (Goldin 2012).

She reproduces the Renaissance's sense of reality with the intention to depict the unique appearance of each individual. Each portrait is meant to represent individual identity.



Fig. 3 – Jitka Hanzlova, *Untitled (Boy)*, 2007.

Rineke Dijkstra produced the beach series (Dijkstra 2003) in Poland and United States between 1992 and 2002 (fig. 4). She represents adolescents in their status of not being adults yet, standing in an ambiguous area which is not sea but is not earth anymore. They live in a sort of limbo, physically and psychologically. They do not socially interact. They are allowed, nevertheless, to represent themselves in front of the camera. Her style is influenced by the artistic tradition which comes from August Sander (Sander and Keller 1980), Bernd and Hilla Becher (Lange 2014) and Thomas Ruff (Ruff 2017) in particular for the serial approach. Diane Arbus (2011), Irving Penn (1980; Heckert and Lacoste 2009) and Richard Avedon (1985; 2002) seem to have inspired her fashion/magazine side. There is also a connection to the documentary work of Walker Evans (Evans and Agee 1960) for what Rancière calls 'the poetry of the banal' (Rancière 2009: 3). What interests Dijkstra is the self-representation of the subjects and how they are conscious of this self-representation.



Fig. 4 – Rineke Dijkstra, *Kolobrzeg, Poland, July 26, 1992*.

Dijkstra acknowledges that for her it is essential to understand that humans are all solitary characters: no one can deeply understand the other. She claims that she wants ‘to awaken definite sympathies for the person I have photographed’ (Grunberg 1997: 87). She wishes to represent their loneliness in being adolescent humans in her act of social de-contextualization (Gierstberg 2015: 77). The use of the fashion technique (in the lighting for instance) forces the viewer to feel a sense of celebration of ordinary people (Stallabrass 2007; Rancière 2009). However, since the subjects are represented with blank expression and with no make-up, there is a simultaneous elevation and lowering of the subject (Stallabrass 2007). People are represented alone, straightforward with no apparent composition suggested by the photographer. Dijkstra’s images represent human beings in a society where identity is not clear, where they are politically weak yet exploited by society itself (Gierstberg 2015: 76). In these photographs, these subjects show an *aura*, what Walter Benjamin called an auratic power (Benjamin 2015). This is a concept was introduced by Walter Benjamin in 1931. Through the face and the body of Dijkstra’s subjects, we are facing a presence. Benjamin claims that a photograph represents the precise instant when the depicted fact happened (Benjamin 2015: 29). The first images of the Nineteenth century had a strong aura due to long exposure times (Stallabrass 2007). In his ‘Little History of Photography,’ Walter Benjamin states that this aura generates from the pure innocence of the bourgeois sitters while posing in front of this unknown tool, the photographic camera, and the

high contrast tones and long exposures which brought people to have timeless expressions (Benjamin 2015: 29). In these modern portraits, Dijkstra uses still a large format camera but the subjects have lost their innocence before the camera because they are used to photography since their birth (Stallabrass 2007). Rancière calls them ‘indifferent individuals’ with no particular aura (Rancière 2009: 8). However, the high resolution of the image wants to attract the attention of the viewer on every single detail so that one could be lost in the image (Bate 2016: 106), feeling a sense of ‘sublime’ similar to that one of the urban viewer in front of mountain scenes and stormy seas paintings of the Nineteenth century.

The examples of Hanzlova and Dijkstra’s portraits demonstrate how strong a dialogue between the sitter and the viewer can be established. This dialogue is stimulated by the photographer and attempts to unveil the identity of the portrayed person, otherwise called *air* by Barthes (1980a: 110). As argued in the next paragraph, the concept of identity is really complex and even more pressing today as a consequence of globalization and time-space compression (Hall 1996). What we consider ‘I’ constantly changes: globalization and communication (new ways of communicating, interacting, creating communities) change the awareness of the cultural identity. Globalization has also the counter-effect of stimulating the desire to have deep roots, a strong tradition and a dedicated attachment to native cultural identity (Appadurai 1996: 161).

2. Photographic representation of the native cultural identity of Italian migrants: one example.

As anticipated above, defining cultural identity is a very complex issue. While being aware that there are several theoretical arguments and positions on the topic,¹⁹ this part mainly draws on Stuart Hall’s theories on cultural identity. In my argument here I refer to the cultural aspect of identity. As stated by Hall, it could be assumed that cultural identity is a never-changing status or, at least, that this identity changes very slowly ‘at the rate of a glacier’ (Hall 1989: 10).

However cultural identity is never shaped in a fixed form and it is a long process of identification (Hall 1989: 15) through difference and positioning (Hall 1997: 17).²⁰ Starting with the mirror stage as an identification moment (Lacan 2005: 503), identity becomes a fluid form and it is influenced by social inputs (Lacan 2005: 507). Individuals experience more than one identity

¹⁹ See for example (Derrida 1981); (Laclau 1990); (Butler 1993); (Althusser 2014); (Foucault 2014).

²⁰ On this point see also (Hall 1989); (1990); (1996); (1997); (2003); (Hall and Back 2009).

during their lives and this depends on how others see us (Hall 1989: 16). It is the relation to what is missing and different that builds identity (Derrida 1981; Laclau 1990; Butler 1993). There is a sedimentation of identities in the cultural context in the individual history from the past which are brought in the contingency of the discourse. This sedimentation of layers of cultural identity applied to the experience of migrants recalls the *habitus* theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1977). The concept of *habitus* is linked to the Aristotelian idea of *hèxis*²¹ (Aristotle: 1998), then translated in the Latin word *habitus* by Thomas Aquinas as a relatively stable condition of the individual, i.e. health or personality (Sparrow et al. 2013: 85).²² Pierre Bourdieu uses the concept of *habitus* in a sociological environment to find a median between the objectivism of social structures and the subjectivism of the individual. *Habitus* is a durable and transferable system of schemes of perception, value and action, produced by and within the social context. It is the accumulation of ways of thinking, moving, acting which are culturally and socially acquired by an individual or a group, gradually built by everyday actions. It reflects a class background, a social history, and it is internalized. It represents a routine, a regular practice which becomes natural and accepted by the group. Even if durable, *habitus* is not unchangeable. It can be modified by time, place and power distribution. It depends on the social schemes but, at the same time, it organizes practices and their perception. *Habitus* is, therefore, influenced by the social environment but it contributes to continuously changing and constructing it. ‘*Habitus* contributes to transforming that which transforms it’ (Bourdieu 1997: 177). There is a primary *habitus*, which is formed in the early stages of our life within the family context, and a secondary *habitus*, which is generated by the first educational institutions such as schools, painters’ ateliers, religious sects, etc. (Wacquant 2016: 68). *Habitus* originates interiorized, regular and similar behavior within the same social group. It guarantees ‘cultural reproduction,’ which is the transmission of values of one generation to the following one. What happens when there are radical breaks in the regular flow of practice? What happens when migrants move? There is a shift in the routine which breaks the *habitus*. According to Michael Baynham: ‘the migrant habitus can be perhaps understood as a series of radical ruptures and dislocations followed by or perhaps interspersed with the slow accumulation of acts and events and their sedimentation’ (Baynham 2015: 75). *Habitus* plays a fundamental role in the transformation of the migrant’s cultural identity and can be influenced by the hosting culture. There is a mutual contamination

²¹ A sort of acquired but rooted, moral aspect which influences our feelings and our ways of being.

²² The concept of *habitus* has also been used in different contexts by Emile Durkheim (1990), Marcel Mauss (1973), Max Weber (1963), Thorstein Veblen (2009) and Edmund Husserl (1975).

between the migrants' cultural identity and the hosting cultures. The process of minorities assimilating to the dominant culture has been analyzed by Homi Bhabha (1984). According to Bhabha, dominated subjects attempt to mimic the colonizers who will encourage mimicry among dominated individuals. We have to recognize here the different context of power relations: while Bhabha discusses the relationship between the colonizer and colonized in India, we refer here to the mimicry effect as a consequence of the interaction of the Swiss hosting population and the minority of Italian migrants in the Swiss Confederation. While acknowledging this difference of context, what is interesting here is how a *mimicry* effect can be found also in the relationship between the migrant and the host in their mutual cultural influence. In this broader sense and in this situation of power dynamics, we can see the effect of doubling when one culture dominates another even in the migrant/host environment. Minorities try to assimilate to the culture of the dominants. Hybridity is the result: they will not be who they were before but will not be fully who they are trying to imitate. (Bhabha 1984: 127). As said, he applied this theory originally to the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized but it can be referred also to the migrants' condition in relation to the hosting culture. Therefore mimicry has an impact in the process of cultural identity formation: while having a natural feeling of belonging to their native culture for distinctive ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious and national aspects (Bhabha 1990: 19; Hall 1996: 596), migrants are also part of a process which exposes them to the hosting culture.

How is it possible to represent these complex aspects through photographic means? The photographic work of Michele Petruzzello (2017) provides a case study of how the native cultural identity of Italian migrants of the Twenty-first century have been visually depicted. Petruzzello's work is highly inspired by the different visual rhetoric of Augustus Sherman (1892 – 1925) (Mesenhöller 2005; Moreno 2004) and Lewis W. Hine (1874 – 1940) (Hine 1909; Seixas 1987; Trachtenberg 1977: 118-137). To better understand Petruzzello's work, it is thus important to review the main characteristics of Sherman and Hine's photographic practices. They both depict in different ways the native cultural identity of migrants on Ellis Island at the beginning of the Twentieth century. Ellis Island became the first US immigration station on January the 1st 1892 (Szlezák 2009). In the early years, immigration was heavy and mainly from eastern and southern Europe. The immigration station was closed in 1954 and in 1990 it became a museum for Ellis Island's history (Szlezák 2009: 72). The migrants who passed through the

immigration center on Ellis Island were non-Germanic mother tongue, non-Protestant and had a non-Anglo-Saxon appearance and were thus considered by the locals less compatible with their life style (Roberts 1912: 324). The mass migration phenomenon was a huge issue that the US government had to deal with. Timothy Prchal (2001) explains that there were four distinctive strategies to approach the mass migration issue: the first one opted for immigration restriction, the second one supported a quick and smooth assimilation process following WASP²³ standards, the third one favored the melting pot concept and the fourth one seconded a cultural pluralism approach. The first two options were more conservative whereas the other two more liberal. American society believed that images were totally reliable. Therefore photographs gained a strong reputation for representing reality (Goldberg 1991). Photography was used to produce documents about the mass migration phenomenon for the news, propaganda and official documents. The photographic representation of migrants depended on the photographer's stance. Different approaches moved from ethnographic curiosity to sensationalism, from social documentary to photojournalism.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Sherman (1865-1925) was Chief Clerk at Ellis Island and took 239 images over more than 25 years. All the images are supported by captions, the texts are generic but are always consistent in indicating the sitter's region of origin. These captions reinforce the idea of the type. Sherman used the same locations to portray his subjects. These two elements create a standardized system similar to archival photography. The majority of these images are portraits of migrants who are photographed as representatives of their countries of origin.

²³ WASP: White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant.



Fig. 5 – National Geographic – XVIII, May 5th, 1907. Illustrations of the article ‘Some of our immigrants – with a Series of 20 Illustrations of Typical Immigrants.’ Photographs by Augustus Sherman.

Sherman’s photographs were used to illustrate a *National Geographic* article published May 1907 (fig. 5) as photographs of types (Grosvenor 1907). They portray migrants as representatives of the groups with which they were affiliated (Kraut 1986). His images can be grouped into four sections: family groups, non-family groups, children, individual portraits and miscellaneous. He was interested in migrants’ faces and traditional costumes. All the photographs are created in an archival style for their consistent background, frontal position of the subject and captions (fig. 6).



Fig. 6 – Augustus Sherman, *Ruthenian Girl*, 1923.

The text that accompanies the images is fundamental in understanding the approach that Sherman had with his sitters. Alan M. Kraut (1986: 5) claims that, at Ellis Island at the beginning of the Twentieth century, the native cultural identity of migrants was recognizable through their clothing more than other things. Clothing was seen as an instrument for and of communication and it defined the groups to which they were affiliated. The new migrants who arrived on Manhattan were strongly advised by their assimilated relatives to change their old clothes with other local garments. It was felt that it was inappropriate to look like a foreigner and changing clothes was the first step towards integration. Sherman wanted to photograph them with their original garments to highlight this sense of otherness. He knew that their clothing would change as soon as they entered the new society on Manhattan (Szlezák 2012: 17). Klara Stephaine Szlezák (2012: 9-29) acknowledges that Sherman decided to portray his subjects in their folkloristic clothes because it helped him to have a semi-scientific ethnographic intent and to represent the Old-world exoticism which included a certain sense of superiority of the New World. Clothing, thus, well represents the sense of otherness effectively. In the photograph *Children's Playground, Ellis Island Roof Garden* (fig. 7) taken by Sherman at the beginning of the Twentieth century, the migrants' children are portrayed in an American context underlined by the presence of American flags and by the 'Uncle Sam' car. Children are represented with American clothes to show the Americanization process. Showing children within this context, Sherman passes the message of the success of the integration process of migrants which started with children.



Fig. 7 – Augustus Sherman, *Children's Playground, Ellis Island Roof Garden*, 1900 ca.

Lewis W. Hine had a different vision of migrants (Sundell 1986: 170). Born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, Lewis W. Hine studied sociology and later worked in New York at the Ethical Culture School. This experience deeply formed him and influenced his photographic approach. In 1908 Lewis W. Hine stopped teaching and started to document the situation on Ellis Island as a 'social photographer.' He used photography for social criticism and seemed not to have focused his attention on producing documentation on the native cultural identity of migrants. While the common goal of the two photographers was to raise awareness of the critical condition of migrants, Hine's pictures 'have emerged as icons of American social history and are inextricably linked with the progressive-era social agenda' (Kaplan 1992). Hine's intent was not to establish any sort of social control or representation of the original cultural identity and diversity with the hosting culture, rather to create the conditions which could help migrants to become self-sufficient (Szlezák 2009). This form of progressive activism is visible in his images: while creating a repertoire of documents, Hine also pointed his lens at individuals and produced thus social documentation and art (Jeffrey 1981). The context in which Hine had to work was particularly complicated. The light conditions were always critical and he had to photograph in an overcrowded context. He used a Graflex 5x7 camera which allowed him to have two shots available. In most cases he only had one chance to capture his portraits (Rosenblum 1977: 12). Hine created more than two hundred plates and produced an archive assigning numbers to all the photographs, dividing them into series with titles, captions and dates (Rosenblum 1977: 17). 'Though Ellis Island was not a new subject for journalism and pictorial representation with drawings and etchings, Hine's approach and motivation may have been new. Hine mentions "new values" and "humanitarian interest" as factors contributing to his interest and in the subject' (Stange 1989: 52). The general main interest for journalistic reportages was to represent the oddities of migrants' clothes and attitudes. Using the storytelling quality of photography, Hine started to take photographs of individuals, groups and of the actual administrative proceedings of immigration on Ellis Island. In his images, he has always a frontal approach with eye-contact. Some scholars believe that the eye contact and frontality lead to a physical distance which corresponds to a psychological one (Trachtenberg 1977: 124). However it is also believed that the use of these means in his photographs establishes a direct and close connection of the migrant with the viewer (fig. 8) (Szlezák 2009).



Fig. 8 – Lewis W. Hine, *Climbing into the Promised Land, Ellis Island, 1908*.

This style could seem to second the understanding and sympathizing of the Americans for migrants. Whether Lewis W. Hine wants to describe types or represent individuals with their specific stories is a controversial point of discussion (Ureña 2009) which is not yet resolved. Augustus Sherman and Lewis W. Hine had different styles in portraying migrants. They had different concepts of photography as a medium of expression and as an art form. They also had a different political stand: while Sherman was more conservative, Hine was part of the Progressive movement (Szlezák 2012: 12, 25).

As illustrated later below, in his work *Good bye my Love* (2015) Michele Petruzzello was influenced on different levels by Sherman and Hine's images. Petruzzello (Petruzzello n.d.) portrays recent Italian migrants in New York. He started his project in 2011 and completed the work in 2015. The images were exhibited at the Italian Institute of Culture of New York in 2015 ("Good Bye My Love-Opening" n.d.). The title of the project reiterates the fact that migrants have to often leave their beloved home countries forced by hard living or working conditions. The work includes nineteen photographs. All the images have captions indicating the name of the subject portrayed, the current employment and the place where the image was taken. All the sitters are represented in a frontal position except for *Maria Barberi, translator – Union Square, NY* (fig. 9).



Fig. 9 – Michele Petruzzello, *Maria Barberi, translator* – *Union Square, NY*, 2015.

The camera is usually placed at the eye level. They all have eye contact with the viewer and none of them is smiling. All the images are horizontal except for one (*Philip Guardione, chef* – *SoHo, NY* – fig. 10).



Fig. 10 – Michele Petruzzello, *Philip Guardione, chef – SoHo, NY*, 2015.

The structure of the images is not always the same. The images are all portraits of Italians who are dressed in old clothing performing as they were coming from a different time in a modern context. All the photographs were taken in New York. Out of nineteen images, ten have the subjects in a central position, eight have the sitter/s on one of the sides of the frame and one is a close-up portrait. Petruzzello's idea is to represent Italian migrants who recently migrated to New York and to compare them with migrants of the beginning of the Twentieth century.²⁴ All these images are characterized by a strong contrast between the sitters dressed like migrants of the beginning of the Twentieth century and the context in which they are standing, the modern and vibrant New York of the new millennium.

As explained below, *Sara Galassini, actress – Broadway, NY* is a good example of Hine's influence on Petruzzello's work (fig. 11).

²⁴ Petruzzello, Michele. Interview by the author. Email. February 14th, 2017



Fig. 11 – Michele Petruzzello, *Sara Galassini, actress – Broadway, NY, 2015.*

A woman is standing in the centre of the horizontal frame. As suggested by the caption, she is an actress and, for this reason, is photographed on Broadway and stretches her arm towards the viewer holding a skull with a clear reference to Shakespeare's Hamlet. The centrality of the image is emphasized by the fact that the subject is portrayed on the street centreline and at the crossing point of the perspective lines. She looks straight into the camera. The eye contact and the stretched arm shorten the distance with the viewer. The camera is in a lower position than eye level almost to suggest a sense of submission and respect for the skull. All these elements enhance the persuasive force of the photograph. The apron moved by a passing car and the action of the arm holding the skull confer a strong dynamism to the image. Petruzzello shares the same style of Lewis W. Hine in this image: the centrality of the subject, the dialogue imposed to the viewer and the strong dynamism. The power of Hine's photographs resides in his masterly use of 'the work place' and capacity to handle perspective (Trachtenberg 1977). The subject 'stands forth...in a social place in which individuality is defined, related, and expressed through the encompassing detail' (Rosenblum 1977: 127). A different case is *Francesco Mari, manager; Debora Friscira, teacher; Mirea Mari, student - Wall Street, NY* (fig. 12).



Fig. 12 – Michele Petruzzello, *Francesco Mari, manager; Debora Friscira, teacher; Mirea Mari, student - Wall Street, NY, 2015.*

In this photograph a father, a mother and their daughter are placed on one side of the frame. There are links with Augustus Sherman's approach in this photograph: despite the presence of three men who are walking into the image from the right side of the frame, the composition is very static. Like in Sherman's images, Petruzzello carefully composes this image. As usual, Petruzzello creates a work place photographing his subjects in locations connected to the job of the sitters: Francesco Mari is a manager and, therefore, he is portrayed with his family in Wall Street. In the background, there are three American flags. Like in some images taken by Sherman in the first decade of the 1900s (see *Children's Playground, Ellis Island Roof Garden (c. 1900)* – fig. 7), the American flags have here a metonymic meaning and stand for a country. The presence of these three flags, like in Sherman images, underlines the gap between migrants and the hosting country. The presence of the American flag as a national symbol highlights the separation from the group of others and the local community; 'us' in contrast to 'them' (Madriaga 2007). The theme of Americanization of the other is recurrent in Augustus Sherman's photographs and can be identified in this image taken by Petruzzello. All the images of *Good bye my love* can be associated either to Lewis W. Hine's or to Augustus Sherman's style. An image completely different from the others is *Maria Barberi, translator - Union Square, NY* (fig. 9). In this case Petruzzello moves away from the style of either Lewis W. Hine or Augustus Sherman.

A woman dressed like a 1900s migrant is sitting in a bar in front of a typewriter. She looks at us through the window. Like in all the other images, Petruzzello portrays non-smiling subjects. They all look preoccupied with their condition as migrants. This concern is here enhanced by the position of the subject's hand next to her chin which transmits a sense of anxiety and consciousness of uncertainty. It is possible to identify the same worried attitude transmitted through the body language in other historical images like *The Migrant Mother* (1936) by Dorothea Lange.²⁵ As stated in *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* by Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites (Hariman and Lucaites 2007: 53), in relation to Dorothea Lange's image, 'the disposition of her body—and above all, the involuntary gesture of her right arm reaching up to touch her chin—communicates related tensions. We see both physical strength and palpable worry.' The camera is placed in a diagonal position and not in front of the subject like all the other images. Unlike the other photographs, the sitter is not in a predominant position. She is hardly recognizable between all the other people sitting in the bar. The man in the right side of the frame attracts the attention of the viewer for his white beard and the movement of his left hand. We have the impression that the dialogue between the subjects portrayed and the viewer that Petruzzello manages to create in his other images is lost in this photograph. It is true that the eye contact shortens the distance with the woman but her suitcase in the foreground and the window creates a separation between the viewer and the subject. There is a further element that differentiates this image from the other eighteen of *Good bye my love*. Michele Petruzzello photographs his subjects always in places which are connected with their work. The actress is photographed in Broadway, the manager in Wall Street, the architect in front of skyscrapers, the hairdresser in a barber shop. As stated in the caption, Maria Barberi is a translator. Nothing in the images helps us to understand this link. Petruzzello seems to have focused his attention mainly on the contrast between the old typewriter and the laptop on the right end corner of the frame. Petruzzello's images have a balance between the idea of the type and the individual case, between Sherman and Hine's styles. It is quite clear that Petruzzello navigates between Sherman and Hine photographic approaches, not taking a definitive decision between the two styles. On the contrary, he decides to merge the two different positions in the development of his work. In Petruzzello's photographs, the 'props,' the suitcase, the heavy clothing, and the specific poses are motifs which recall the

²⁵ See Lange, Dorothea. *The Migrant Mother*. 1936. National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Center, Washington, DC.

historical pictures of the Italian migration to the US at the beginning of the 20th century. The meaning of Petruzzello's modern images is generated by the historical references. As demonstrated in chapter three, these conventions were still used in photographic representation of migrants in the 1960s and 1970s in Switzerland in illustrated magazines. They show the complexity of the process of integration of the Italian migrants' community in the Swiss context, hence how complex it is re-thinking photographic representation of recent Italian migrants in the area around lake Geneva.

3. National identity as imagined community: the process of integration of Italian migrants in Switzerland

What do we mean when we are referring to Italian migrants in Switzerland? Are they identifiable as a national group?²⁶ As seen above in the chapter, having the same cultural identity could be interpreted as belonging to distinctive ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious and national culture and place (Hall 1996: 596). The concept of cultural identity could be associated with the feeling of being part to the same nation. It is important to understand the concept of nation under the cultural point of view in the post-modernism era of globalization. There has been a general tendency to describe the nation in restrictive ways: if, on the one hand, nation could be identified as a repressive ideological apparatus (Foucault 2014), on the other hand, it could also be defined as the 'incipient or emergent expression of the 'national-popular' sentiment preserved in a radical memory' (Bhabha 1990: 3). Nation has been described not as a community given only by race or religion, dynasty, geography or language but also as a spiritual principle characterized by the same memories, the desire of living together. 'The modern nation is therefore a historical result brought about by a series of convergent facts' (Renan 1990: 12). It is probably reasonable to say that national identities are the result of the combination of the modern concept of nation-state and the ancient idea of *nation* in its literal meaning of 'place of origin,' 'birth' (Brennan 1990: 45). Being part of the same nation could, then, mean being member of a political state and being identified with a specific national culture (Hall 1996: 616). The national culture is built on stories and memories which are imagination constructions of the present based on the past. The distinction between national identities, then, could be identified

²⁶ See also in this regard literature on Italian diaspora in Britain (Sponza 1988); (Colpi 1991); (Sprio 2013). On the meaning of diaspora more in general and its relationship with media and society, ethnic identity, race, class and gender, globalization and immigration see (Retis & Tsagarousianou 2019).

on how these imagination constructions differ one from the other. Benedict Anderson defined national identity as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991). With the phenomenon of globalization (in particular in recent years with the extensive use of social media), there is a compression of time and space. ‘The world feels smaller and distances shorter’ (Hall 1996: 619). From the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth century, Switzerland was a country where migrants regularly moved (Arlettaz and Arlettaz 2004). After the constitution of the Federal State in 1848 and the beginning of the construction of the railway infrastructures of Gotthard, Simplon and Lötschberg, Italians started to arrive in Switzerland (Fibbi 2011: 211). From that moment, the Italian diaspora to Switzerland never stopped and in the Twentieth century Italian migrants were one of the main components of the foreigners’ presence in the Swiss Confederation (Ricciardi 2018).²⁷ When Italians started to migrate to Switzerland after the end of World War II, they were the largest community of migrants in the Swiss Confederation (Cerutti 1994). They largely contributed to the prosperity of Switzerland but always as external help and hence never really integrated into Swiss society (Castelnuovo-Frigessi 1977; Castelnuovo-Frigessi 1978; Agelli 1985; Stohr 2013: 47). Italian workers were seen mostly as production elements more than people (Stohr 2013: 48). By the end of the 1970's, the protests of Italian migrants about their working conditions and rights brought Switzerland to change this unequal relationship.²⁸ With the 1974 oil crisis and fewer job opportunities in Switzerland, most of the Italians that were permanent resident decided to move back to Italy (Haug 1980; Maiolino 2013: 152). However at the beginning of the 21st century Italians started again to migrate to the Swiss Confederation. According to official data of the Swiss Confederation from December 2018 (Statistique des étrangers à fin décembre 2018), the Italian migrants represented the biggest community of foreigners permanently resident in Switzerland, nearly 4% of the Swiss population (313,725 in front of the Germans (301,548) and the Portuguese (268,067)) (Secrétariat d’Etat aux migrations de la Confédération Suisse 2018). These data were confirmed in 2020 (FSO 2021). According to some scholars (Bolzman, Fibbi, and Vial 2003a; Maiolino 2013: 152-158), after the massive return of Italians in their country of origin in the 1970s (Seiler 2002) and politics of integration (Niederberger 2004) applied by the Swiss institutions, there have been a growing acceptance of the Italians who have decided to stay in Switzerland. The general image of Italians has improved because of the economic growth of the country and because Italians have managed

²⁷ See also (Halter et al. 2004).

²⁸ See the documentary works of Alvaro Bizzarri (1970); (1972); (1974); (1977); (1990); (2009), Alexander J. Seiler (1965) and Katharine Dominicé and Luc Peter (2010).

to give a different content to their presence in Switzerland. The feeling of arrogance and superiority played by the Swiss has been replaced by a sense of *mediterranéisation*. This is a term introduced by Angelo Maiolino (2013: 154) to explain the gradual acceptance by Swiss society of Italian cultural aspects (pizza, espresso, fashion, lifestyle, spirit of enterprise). The *mediterranéisation* shows a gradual emancipation of the Italian community in Switzerland. Children of the first generation of migrants of the 1960s-1970s, *secondos* (Wessendorf 2007a) have contributed to the improvement of the reputation of Italians in Switzerland and are also part of the managerial class (Ruspini 2010). It is probably the first generation of Italians who are not yet completely integrated. Still attached to the traditions of their country of origin, they are less well connected with the Swiss environment. They live in the memory of a country of origin which has in the meanwhile changed.²⁹ They live in a cultural *utopos*, a non-place (Maiolino 2013: 156). They are people in transition from one place to the other without becoming definitely permanent. The situation of the *secondos* is different. They represent a hybrid cultural model between Italy and Switzerland. They have been defined as people in *translation* (Maiolino 2013: 156). A concept introduced by Kevin Robins (1997), Hall (1996: 629) states that being in *translation* ‘describes those identity formations which cut across and intersect natural frontiers, and which are composed of people who have been *dispersed* forever from their homelands.’ The second generation of Italian migrants are considered able to translate two different cultures (Durous 2010; Cattacin, Fibbi, and Wanner 2016). Starting from 2007, data shows a constant increase of Italians who decide to migrate (ISTAT 2016b). While it is difficult to have exact measurable data because of the free circulation of people in the European Union (EU) and the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) of which Switzerland is member, in 2016 there has been an increase of migrants with a university degree compared to the year before (ISTAT 2016a). Despite the fact that mobility could cause a difficult collection of realistic data of migration in Europe, academic literature has pointed out that this recent migration has been characterized by the *brain drain*, *brain gain* and *brain circulation* phenomenon (Beltrame 2007; Docquier and Rapoport 2007; Dahinden 2008; Friedrich and Schultz 2008; Cassar 2010; Dequiedt 2011; Boeri, Brücker, and Doquier 2012; Tirabassi and del Prà 2014; Minneci 2015; Tintori and Romei 2017; Cattacin, Pellegrini and Ricciardi 2022). There might be an over-estimation of this process (Franchi 2017) but the market change, the demand for specific

²⁹ See (Berger and Mohr 2010).

competences and the need of them in hosting countries have shown that migrants of the new millennium have an higher level of education than migrants of the 1960s-1970s.³⁰

As demonstrated in the next chapter, the representation of the Italian migrant in Switzerland in the 1960s and 1970s was limited to the photojournalistic approach³¹ for the documentation of the social and working condition of workers. Photographers like Giambattista Colombo (1921 – 2005), Anita Niesz (1925 – 2013), Pia Zanetti (1943), Tano D'Amico (1942), Fernand Rausser (1926 – 2016) and Christian Känzig (1952) have been involved in the process of documenting the migrants' situation for newspapers and magazines but never worked in a systematic way on a body of work. A selection of their images with work from other photographers has been collected in an exhibition curated by Dieter Bachmann, *Il lungo addio – Die lange Abschied*, (Bachmann 2003) presented for several years in Italy and Switzerland. More recently another collection of images called *Ricordi e Stima – Fotografia e storia orale della migrazione Italiana in Svizzera dal secondo dopoguerra fino agli anni 80* (Widmer 2016) on Italian migration in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was presented as a retrospective. A book was created after the exhibition (Alghisi et al. 2016). The only photographer who worked systematically as a photo-reporter on the migration process from Italy to Switzerland and back was Roger Wehrli. His work *Un viaggio per immagini: Italia – Germania – Svizzera e ritorno* (Wehrli 2006) has been exhibited in Italy in 2004 and 2006. All these works are concentrated on the Swiss - German region.

As it will be demonstrated in chapter three, the visual representation of Italian migrants by photojournalists has followed stereotypes to underline their physical difference with the local Swiss population. The issue of the visual aspect of Italian migrants in Switzerland, the difference with the Swiss and the perception of them by the public opinion was remarkable in the 1960s. Referring to the visual dissimilarities between Italian migrants and Swiss people and to reinforce this point, it is interesting here to report the statement of a Swiss policeman from the Bern Canton in 1968: 'We, Swiss, do not easily accept that racial characteristics prevent assimilation. Physiognomy of Germans, Austrians or French does not differ much from ours, therefore we unconsciously accept them if only for their physical aspect. A Calabrian, with his short height, black and curly hair, will hardly be seen as a future Swiss. [...] There are so many different kinds of Italians and Spanish, even in their second generation, that it is impossible to confuse them

³⁰ See also the documentary on the Twenty-first century Italian diaspora to London by Luca Vullo (2016).

³¹ I use here the definition of photojournalistic approach given by (Newton 2001).

with a Swiss' (Fibbi 2011: 217). In the movie *Pane e cioccolata* (Brusati 1973), the main character Nino Garofalo, a migrant from the South of Italy, wants to become a member of the Swiss society regardless of all the difficulties and decides to dye his moustache and hair to look Swiss.³² I refer here to the concepts of Bourdieu's *habitus* and Bhabha's *mimicry* introduced in the second paragraph of this chapter. In times of globalization, cultural contamination, and *mediterranéisation*, Italians seem visually less recognizable than they could be. How is it then possible to portray Italian migrants of the new millennium in photographic practice? The second chapter will reflect on the methodological challenges that this process can pose.

³² See also the movie *Die Schweizermacher* ('The Swissmakers') (Lyssy 1978). In this acclaimed 1978 Swiss comedy film, the recently arrived Italian migrants throw their spaghetti away and pretend to be eating fondue when the immigration inspectors visit their home.

Chapter 2 – Cultural Identity and Photographic Portraiture: methodological challenges.

Introduction

This following chapter explores the methodological challenges that this research has posed. I will use the first-person with the purpose of offering a better understanding and clarity of the creative process and its methodology which has served as the basis for my practice. While describing the steps that I took to eventually finalize the production of my practice, I will include the theoretical background that led me to reflect on the practical solutions to complete the photographic portraits. The entire production has followed theoretical reasoning and practical experience and has moved from one part to the other back and forth in a continuous exchange which is at the base of attempts and successful results. In this chapter I will, then, introduce and develop seven key points which have to be considered while looking at my photographic work. In the first instance, inspired by the reflections of Ariella Azoulay on the civil contract of photography and the value of the gaze, I will question the psychological challenges which are the result of the encounter between the photographer, the sitter and the spectator (already partially introduced in the literature review chapter). I will, secondly, discuss the challenges of the representation of a group of people through individual photographic portraits: while arguing that seriality can be one of the solutions, I will support this choice giving examples of photographers who have produced bodies of work in archival forms. This part will be followed by the story of my work which led the photographic practice of this research to represent the cultural identity of the recent Italian diaspora in Switzerland. I will, then, explore the reasons behind the decision to include the landscape in the photographs instead of having a seamless background and the connection of my work to Italian Renaissance portrait paintings. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the critical analysis of the exhibition and the reasons behind the choices taken for the final display. The purpose of this ending will be to explain how to plan and show the photographic portraits of contemporary Italian migrants in the Swiss Confederation in a way that can lead the visitor through an intimate visual journey.

1. The Gaze, the Face and the Mask

In his essay '*La questione del ritratto*,' Georg Simmel in 1901 stated that in visual arts the first impact that the viewer has with a portrait is optical, just mechanical (Simmel 1985a: 51 - 53).³³

³³ Italian translation from (Simmel 1901).

Nonetheless, he explained that in everyday life we realize that human contact is not limited only to an optical connection but it is actually multi-sensorial. However, considering the non-human nature of a painting, it is inevitable in Simmel's opinion that the first impact with a painted portrait is merely optical. The first role of a portrait is to portray the simple visible side of a human being. The spectator is not in front of a physical body (a human being) depicted as a whole. Is there going to be a relationship with the spectator? If we are referring to photographic portraits, how is the encounter of the photographer and the sitter going to generate a communication with the viewer? This was one of the first points that I wanted to understand undergoing the production of the photographic portraits of recent Italian migrants in Switzerland. My attention went to the value of the gaze in photographic messages given by Ariella Azoulay (2012) in *The Civil Contract of Photography*. Azoulay states that the denotation of a photographic portrait goes beyond its material appearance. When looking at a photograph, we see a frame which contains a message implying reflection. As users of images, we are part of a civil contract and universal spectators (Azoulay 2012: 339). What does Azoulay mean when she describes a photographic image as the result of a civil contract? Each photographic image is the witness of the meeting of the photographer and the subject portrayed. None of them has control on what will happen as the result of this encounter and its consequences. Each photographic act includes a photographer with a camera, a subject frozen in the image and the viewer. The moment when the photographer presses the shutter, he/she is performing an act, a civil act. This act will trigger a series of reactions which involve the subject portrayed and the universal spectator. The photographic camera is between the actors of this encounter and it 'embodies a gaze' (Azoulay 2012: 333), 'the gaze by which we are surprised' (Azoulay 2012: 333). Who is the final user of the image? To whom is this image addressed? The message produced by the civil act of photography involves the presence of a viewer. An image is universally addressed to spectators. 'What is imprinted in the paper of the photograph,' Azoulay (2012: 337) clarifies, 'is never completely circumscribed by what the photographer meant, and always includes something requiring clarification.' The spectator will interpret individually the image with the details that even the photographer didn't realize that they were going to be included. This is the reason why I try to produce images which portray subjects with neutral expression and are in a frontal position. These are all aspects which intend to offer the universal spectator space for reasoning. The photograph is silent but invites the spectator to take a position. Therefore, as stated by Azoulay (340), 'the spectator is an effect of the act of photography' and photographic portraiture

is a place of dialogue between the photographer, the sitter and the universal spectator. Photographic portraits can, thus, assume the role of a mirror for recognition, self-recognition, and self-misrecognition and become a multidirectional dialogue between the photographer, the sitter, and the spectator. The question is, then, about which means can be used in photographic narratives to deliver a specific message which in my case is related to the visual representation of a specific cultural identity.

The human face is one of these elements of communication and it is quite complex to define. In German 'face' is translated as 'Gesicht' which means *being seen*. This concept evokes the idea of being seen by the viewer. It is, thus, a passive action that the sitter is receiving. In ancient Greek, the theatre mask and the face had the same name: πρόσωπον (prosopon). This term has its etymology from the verb ὀράω (oraō) which means 'to see.' Πρόσωπον (prosopon) includes the sense of seeing and being seen and involves the idea of the others' gaze. If the face and the mask in Greek have the same term, do we have to assume that the face and the mask also had the same value? Romans had two different terms to identify the face. While *facies* means *form, configuration, external aspect* (Collatinus-web 2019a), *vultus* signifies *an expression of countenance, the countenance* (Collatinus-web. 2019b). As far as the mask is concerned, in classical theatre Romans had fixed types. The Roman mask was called 'persona,' and these masks had one fixed expression. The difference between 'vultus' and 'facies' seems to be a concept not far from Giorgio Agamben's definition of the face, as discussed in chapter one. An interpretation of the face is also given by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) discuss faciality, significance and subjectivity. According to the philosopher and the psychoanalyst, a system of expression is called a regime of signs. A regime of signs is a semiotic system. The substance of expression for Deleuze and Guattari is *faciality* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 115). Language is always linked to facial expressions and the face receives and produces signs which signify. The face is like a body unto itself. The authors state that 'it is a whole body unto itself.' It is the *icon* of the signifying regime. It is what gives substance to the signifier. 'It is what fuels interpretation, and it is what changes, changes traits when interpretation reimports signifier to its substance' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 115). In being so, there is no idea of the mask. The mask does not cover the face. In Deleuze and Guattari's opinion, the mask **is** the face (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 115). The face is the meeting point of *significance* and subjectivity. *Significance* (which they call *semiotique de*

signifiante) is represented by the social messages projected onto different social surfaces (like signs projected on white screens) and carried by ordinary language. Subjectivity (which they call *semiotique passionelle*) is the personal consciousness and personal passions experienced in an inward dimension (like black holes of which it is not possible to determine the end). It is how the subject individually reacts to the world. These two components are always combined. Human subjectivity is never completely autonomous but is always integrated with patterns of *significance*. Then the face is a critical element for human communication.

Art historian Hans Belting (2017: 1) claims that a face becomes really a face after the interaction with the others' gaze. With the gaze, we invite the other to communicate with us or not. Therefore, it is with the play of facial expressions that the face comes to life. The action of seeing and being seen implies our interaction with society.³⁴ As described by Italian writer Luigi Pirandello in his novel *One, None and a Hundred-Thousand* (Pirandello 2017), we have private and public faces.³⁵ If seen as masks, we are influenced by society. Do we do the same when we look at photographic portraits? Do we assign roles? Is the photographer transmitting a message about these roles? Do we read the image with our interpretation as we do when we meet people in person? What drives my practice is the face in the context of photographic portraits to be interpreted as a mask. French anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1938) discussed the notion of person (also mentioning the Latin *persona*) in connection with a social meaning of *mask*. He develops considerations on the individual, the sense of 'me,' the person and the mask in societies through history. Belting (2017: 7) stated that 'when we let our whole face become expressionless, we allow our face to become indecipherable and stiffen into a mask'. Do my portraits have to be interpreted as mask? Are we then our own masks? Do I reproduce masks through my photographs? As already mentioned in the previous chapter, Barthes (1980a: 35) states that photography can only achieve significance when it shows a mask. In order to better understand this point, we can look at the work of August Sander (Sander and Keller 1980; 2008) as a photographer who portrayed people as masks of his time and society. While French photographer Nadar (2004; 2007) represented the French bourgeoisie of the Nineteenth century

³⁴ On social interaction and the relationship with the other, roles assigned in life and life seen as a performance see also (Goffman 1955), (Goffman 1959) and (Goffman 1963).

³⁵ Published in 1926, *One, None and a Hundred-Thousand* is the story of the introspective analysis of an ordinary human being. Just merely looking at his image reflected in a mirror, Vitangelo Moscarda starts a journey into himself which he calls 'my sickness' (Pirandello 2017: 17). He understands that he is not what he thinks he is and that others see him differently. Others, as society, assign him different roles (masks) which he accepts changing role each time.

(fig. 13), Sander portrayed the people of the Republic of Weimar (Sander and Keller: 1980). They all reproduced masks of their time and society. The camera produced masks of someone who is now not there anymore.³⁶



Fig. 13 – Félix Nadar, *George Sand*, 1864 ca.

In 1934, in *Antlitz der Zeit*, Sander (2008) represented a series of portraits of Germans.³⁷ Immortalizing his subjects from close up to full length, Sander aimed to represent social types and classes in their collective roles (fig. 14). The Nazi Ministry of Culture banned *Antlitz der Zeit*. This series of images was later expanded in the famous *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Sander and Keller 1980). In his work, Sander has individual portraits, then couples and then groups - they are not snapshots. The subjects are portrayed in full length or $\frac{3}{4}$ with a severe attitude in their environment. Sander's idea was to have a series of images structured in the form of an archive. The archival system applied by Sander recalls a sense of typology: there are always four individual portraits of male farmers, four corresponding female farm wives, one other photograph of a woman, two portraits of couples and one family portrait. The four men

³⁶ Belting calls it the *thanatos effect* (Belting 2017: 160)

³⁷ For readings on August Sander, note (Baker 1996) and (Jones 2000).

represent the earthbound man, the philosopher, the revolutionary and the wise man. The same system is applied to the female portraits.³⁸



Fig. 14 – August Sander, *Bricklayer*, 1928.

In his analysis of Sander's work, American documentary photographer Walker Evans claimed that *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* was a 'cultural necessity' and 'photographic editing of society' (Evans 1931: 128). Walter Benjamin (1980: 211) highlighted the fact that Sander's work is organized as a series and exactly because of this reason becomes 'a training manual.' This serialization gives Sander's work the value of masks evoked by Barthes. Living in the same years of August Sander, Erna Lendvai-Dircksen (1932) had a similar view and mentioned that the face is an essential element for the identity representation of a country. Although she was a Nazi and Sander was progressive with different points of view on society, they both shared this idea of using photography to represent the face of a nation. As I am doing with my portraits representing the cultural identity of recent Italian migrants in Switzerland, Lendvai-Dircksen produced portraits of people that could communicate the context they had lived in. She represented the face of rural Germany. She stated that the face is like a landscape on which the real landscape is imprinted (Lendvai-Dircksen 1933: 84). These photographs are an attempt to read the characteristics of a country through the physiognomic aspect of the faces of the people

³⁸ Referring to Atget photographs, Rosalind Krauss (1982: 316) called this type of archival structure a 'repetitive rhythm of accumulation' which is typical of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

who lived in it. In his introduction to Sander's *Antlitz der Zeit*, Alfred Döblin (2012) is convinced that, in creating identifiable social types, Sander develops a sort of sociology through images rather than through words. Döblin (2012: 12) explains how faces and images can be levelled by universal forces such as death and human society. For levelling, Döblin intends the cancellation of diversity. As far as the first case is concerned, the levelling caused by death, Döblin refers to the death masks. Once dead, all the faces, in his opinion, have the characteristic of having lost expressivity. He defines, then, the death masks as the final product of life consumption on body and mind. To underline how life has an essential impact on these faces, Döblin compares these post-mortem faces to pebbles eroded by the endless action of the sea. Death mask captures a face for eternity. If, with Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 115), Agamben (2000: 98,9) and Cousin (AA 2017) we assume that the face is the carrier of expressions, we can think that a mask is when an individual is liberated from every psychological origin. The death mask has no expression, or better the expression is no longer linked to life; therefore, the death mask becomes the image of the 'authentic' face (Belting, 2017: 21).

With the portraits of Italian migrants in 21st century Switzerland, my practice intends to produce images which compress and include all the expressions of one person's life in a mask-like effect. Durs Grünbein (Davidis and Dessoff-Hahn 1999: 12) in the catalog the collection of the Schiller National Museum in Marbach, Germany, said 'whatever can be read from the face of a dead person is now left up to the meditations of the viewer.' We can identify this viewer with Azoulay's spectator (Azoulay 2012: 340). Moreover, here this blank expression of portraits can generate communication between the sitter and the beholder. The photographic portraits that I took with blank expressions communicate through a mask. They invite the other to dialogue and suggest an interpretation of whom the spectators have in front of them. These images evoke a mask. In European culture, the portrait assumed the role of the mask and became the memory of the face (Belting, 2017: 92). The photographic portrait gains a mimetic meaning: it is the presence of an absence. It is the imitation of the face. My expressionless portraits become an alternative to the death mask. However, differently from the death mask, in my portraits, we have the gaze, the gaze of the sitter which engages the spectator. This interaction frees the sitter from the plane and allows the represented subject to claim a presence. The gaze creates a direction and places the subject in the world and gives to the portrait the value of a real face establishing a connection with the viewer. The photographer proposes the dialogue but the

spectator chooses the role: ‘the sight of the true spectator is supposed to be free of any personal interest save the common interest in the civil contract of photography’ (Azoulay 2012: 340). The timeless and authentic face presents living subjects in a frozen form and, by doing so, tries to communicate a mimetic meaning of the face like in a catalog with a series of death masks (fig. 15).



Fig. 15 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *YD*, 2021.

2. Seriality

These timeless and authentic faces assume particular relevance once presented as a series. In this part of the chapter, I will discuss why I identified seriality as the main approach to represent with photographic portraits a specific group of people. I see seriality as a sort of inventory, a catalogue of individuals which form, all together, a group, almost like an identification system. There was a moment in time when photography was used with a pseudo-scientific approach to record individual characteristics and develop identification systems. I had to study and understand this aspect of the history of photography to have a clearer idea on how to develop my practice. In their book ‘The Beautiful and the Damned,’ Peter Hamilton and Roger Hargreaves (Hamilton and Hargreaves 2001) trace an exhaustive history of how the Nineteenth century society used

portrait photography to record information on individuals.³⁹ Images have always attracted the attention of science but until the advent of photography everything related to diagrams, maps, paintings was based on human drawing skills (Hamilton and Hargreaves 2001: 57). From the Sixteenth century, observation was central to scientific research. With the invention of photography, there was a paradigm shift: it was believed that pure objectivity was introduced in the way of thinking (Hamilton and Hargreaves 2001: 58). It was the time for social inventory with the intersection with other systems of identification. Photography was applied to physical anthropology in relation to Darwin's (2018) evolutionism and to control the population. It was used by the British empire to document the colonial exploration (as in the case of David Livingstone in Zambesi between 1858 and 1864) (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 86 - 87). In his essay, *The Body and the Archive*, American critic and photographer Allan Sekula (1986) describes the birth of archival photography as a branch of portrait photography and how it was used to develop police archives from the 1840s until more recent years. The diffusion of photography was linked to the Nineteenth century rise of the middle classes and portrait photography became a new mass phenomenon. Sekula identifies two aspects of portrait photography: while in its honorific role photography was used to represent the self of the middle classes (bourgeoisie), it was also clear that its repressive side played an important role in criminals' identification. Photographic documentation of prisoners was not completely embraced until the 1860s but the potentiality of its use in possible archival systems was already recognized in the 1840s.⁴⁰ Allan Sekula (1986: 6) calls it 'legalistic truth.' In the United States, police began to use photography as a means of identifying criminals and to develop a social and moral hierarchy, identifying the betters (in the case of the bourgeois self) and the inferiors (criminals). Sekula explains that in these terms we can talk about a 'social archive' which highlighted the distinction between the bourgeoisie and the criminal body.

By 1880 and 1890, police work moved to a more professional and technological level in identifying criminals and archiving their profiles with the inclusion of photographs (Sekula 1986: 17). The photographic archive became a fundamental tool of detection and control of criminality. The photographic representation of the criminal body mainly followed two different systems. Firstly, according to a realist approach, the aim was to identify reality of

³⁹ On this topic see also (Sekula 1986), (Tagg 1988) and (Phillips 1998).

⁴⁰ William Henry Fox Talbot presented his calotype 'Articles of China' from the book 'The Pencil of Nature' as a good example of visual document (Schaaf 2003: 192 – 193).

species and types through a theoretical and scientific methodology. The final result was to define the general criminal type. Secondly, the nominalist approach wanted to generate large categories and mental constructs with a practical and technical system to study individual criminals. These two systems were deployed in the 1880s (Sekula 1986: 22). Photography started to be used in strong connection with statistics. Physiognomic anthropologist Alphonse Bertillon (2014) developed the 'bertillonage,' the first scientific, nominalist, structured system for police identification (Sekula 1986: 18). The system was coupled later with photographs of the crime's scene and images of cadavers' faces. In the 1880s in Paris, Alphonse Bertillon was the Director of the Identification Bureau of the Paris Prefecture of Police where he attempted to rationalize the volume of images which were produced every day and created a system of criminal identification. There were, nevertheless, several issues he had to face: the problem of classification and the organization of individual cards. This standardized system was based on three actions: after having identified eleven bodily measurements, he realized that it was almost impossible that two individuals might share the same series of these measurements and then calculated that they were constant in every adult body. Bertillon was possibly the first one to understand the value and complexity of the photographic documentation and its archiving. In Bertillon's view the photographic document was merely a morphological registration which was considered globally useful also for the telegraphic transmission of suspects. His system was widely exploited, paralleled and surpassed by the fingerprint system which needed less technical skills to be applied. Sekula (1986: 37) states that photographic documentation was well accepted by the majority of the practitioners even if in the late Nineteenth century there was a large discussion about other factors that could determine criminal action (Sekula 1986: 40). Francis Galton contributed to this search with a realist method of composite portraiture to define the criminal type (Galton 1998; Stimson 2006). He tried to work on a different level than on just singular cases. Compared to Bertillon, Galton was not a systemizer and used composite images to identify types of criminals. Known in particular for the development of the first statistical method applied to heredity, Galton's peculiarity is the so - called *composite images* realized overlapping multiple exposures on one single plate. The result allowed him to create types with no subjective characteristics. In his 1869 work 'Hereditary Genius', Galton attempted to highlight the quality of human intelligence building a hierarchy and applying it to racial groups through quantification, numerical ranking and physiognomic description. He found

it impossible to follow Bertillon's method of individual classification and believed the representation of general types to be more productive. Even though the two systems applied by Bertillon and Galton might seem totally different in their final goal, they both represented positivist attempts to regulate criminal body identification and were based on Adolphe Quetelet's (1991) theory of the 'average man:' through a deep study of recurring births, deaths and crimes, Quetelet's final aim was to create an exact science based on social phenomena. While, as seen before, August Sander is an example of a photographer who accepted and continued the tradition of the archival approach, Walker Evans can be considered a representative of anti - positivism and anti – rationalism documentary photography. In his 1938 work *American Photographs*, Evans (2012) revamped the archival model adding a poetic structure. With the dry documentation of his photographs taken in the subway (Greenough and Evans 1991), he was very close to police photography. Nevertheless, in a 1971 interview (Katz 1971: 87) Evans described the difference between his 'documentary style' and the 'literal document' as we consider a police photograph of the murder's scene. He highlighted the importance of the poetic experience beyond the normal and physical level in each image.⁴¹ This poetic experience added to the archival approach was at the basis of previous photographic works that I have produced and are the prelude to the current research.

3. From Africa to Europe: a Prelude

'New World - Stories of African Immigration and Integration in Switzerland' (Arese Visconti 2012) and 'We, Prato' (Arese Visconti 2015) are two migration-related photographic projects that I completed in 2012 and 2015 (fig. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22). In different ways, they both had a significant impact on my photographic research on recent Italian migrants in Switzerland. Being a migrant myself, I decided in 2010 to start researching the integration process of migrants with photographic portraiture. I was not interested in the migration process *per se* but rather in the moment of settlement when a person establishes in a country and starts the process of integration. In 2012, I worked on a project on the African immigration and integration in Switzerland and later, in 2014, on the Italian-Chinese community of Prato (Italy).

⁴¹ See the following portrait photographers who are known for their archival style: (Greenfield-Sanders, Clemente, and Papanoni 2001); (Dijkstra 2003); (Greenfield-Sanders and Vidal 2005); (Schöller and Abramović 2012); (Schöller and Funderburg 2013); (Taylor-Lind 2014); (Hussain 2014; 2017) (Serrano n.d.).



Fig. 16 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *Adu Adjei*, 2012.



Fig. 17 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *Daphrose Ntarataze*, 2012.



Fig. 18 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *Sene Dame*, 2012.



Fig. 19 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *Edoardo Carli*, 2014.



Fig. 20 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *Jun Guang Zhang*, 2014.



Fig. 21 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *Liliana Lippi*, 2014.



Fig. 22 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *Giulia Zuo*, 2014.

‘New World – Stories of African Immigration and Integration in Switzerland’ is a photographic documentary project that I developed in 2012 intending to raise awareness about the global issue of migrants’ identities. I contacted twenty-eight subjects from eleven different African countries who had legally migrated and were permanently resident in Switzerland. The work, also presented on an online platform,⁴² eventually became a book and an exhibition which was shown at the *Salon des artistes indépendants* at the Geneva Palexpo in November 2012 and at the *Université Ouvrière de Genève*⁴³ in February 2013. Short texts were displayed next to the

⁴² newworldproject.wordpress.com

⁴³ www.uog.ch

photographs. After a brief description of the migratory experience, the text included a one-sentence advice offered by the subject portrayed, for people who might want to migrate to Switzerland. The subjects are photographed in their living spaces. The resulting environmental portrait includes personal details which narrate a richer story of the sitters. The images were taken with color film to have additional information. These images refer to the tradition of documentary photography devoted to migration.⁴⁴ As mentioned above, these images are presented as a series, and this was also the method used in the exhibition.

While still engaged in 2013 in documenting similar issues, I was fascinated by the migration and integration process of the Chinese population in Prato (Italy). About thirty kilometers away from Florence, Prato hosts the largest Chinese community in terms of population density in Europe.⁴⁵ In this context, broad literature on the controversial phenomenon of integration of Chinese migrants with the local population has been produced.⁴⁶ I met the Chinese migrants' second generation, boys and girls who were born in Italy to Chinese parents but who had never been to China. I was particularly interested by the level of integration of the second under-twenty-eight years-old generation Chinese migrants and their relationship with their Italian peers. Did they feel different from the others or rather had the perception of being part of the same community? Were they Chinese or Italians or, in certain cases, both of them? I went to local schools, associations, and cultural centers where these young people met, and I started establishing stronger connections with them. The final result of this activity are sixteen portraits of boys and girls aged between sixteen and twenty-eight years-old. All the photographs were taken on b&w film with a 4x5 inches large format camera to recall the long tradition of documentary photography. The environmental portraits are always horizontal with the subject standing in the center of the composition in a location chosen by them (fig. 19, 20, 21, 22). While the focus is on the faces, the bottom of the image is blurred with the idea of melting the lower part of the bodies with the ground: the subjects become visually part of the context despite of their facial look which suggests different origins, Italian or Chinese. This technical solution helped me to

⁴⁴ See for example the works on Ellis Island by Lewis Hine (Sundell 1986; Szlezák 2009; Szlezák 2012) and in the Eastside slums of New York by Jacob Riis (1971).

⁴⁵ The National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT 2013 – Comune di Prato, ISTAT DATA, 31/12/2013) in Italy published a study in December 2013 which reported that the 8.35% of the resident population was Chinese. This data shows that in the year when my research work was conducted, the Chinese community in Prato was the largest in Europe in terms of population density.

⁴⁶ See (Bernardini 2014); (Pieraccini 2010); (Nesi 2010); (Johanson Russell Smyth and French 2009).

visually show what I collected from the interviews that I ran with all the sitters: they all told me that they felt part of the same community. These subjects were all rooted in the same place. Seriality in the sense of an archival approach recurs even stronger in this work as it did in 'New World – Stories of African Immigration and Integration in Switzerland.' This photographic research became a book and an exhibition shown at the Theatre Grütli in Geneva in January 2015.⁴⁷

Developing further my interest in the integration process of migrants' communities, in 2015 I decided to start working on the contemporary Italian diaspora in Switzerland, focusing my attention in particular on the area between Geneva and Lausanne. As anticipated in the introduction of this thesis, the *arc lémanique*, is populated by a large community of people with different nationalities (Italians included) employed in international organizations, non-governmental organizations and corporations which operate on a global scale. Moreover, the Geneva and Lausanne cultural identity have been deeply influenced by the Italian migration of the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁸ For these reasons, this geographic zone is quite peculiar in the Swiss panorama and interesting in the context of my research. While at the beginning the intention was to work on the differences between the first generation of Italian migrants who moved to Switzerland after the Second World War and the 21st century Italian migrants, I realized that I had to scale down and devote my research only on recent migrants. For this project I created a page on Facebook and started to contacting Italians in the area with the aim of developing new connections. As a result of the exposure due to the Facebook page, I was contacted in May 2015 by the City of Geneva, and I was asked to be included in the Swiss Pavillion at the 2015 EXPO in Milan. The Swiss Pavillion devoted specific days to three main cities of Switzerland (Zürich, Bern and Geneva) and the Administration of the City of Geneva had decided to dedicate part of the events to the Italian migration phenomenon which had deeply contributed to the development of the city in the 1960s and 1970s. Since the EXPO in Milan was centered on nutrition, my images had to portray recent Italian migrants and second-generation Italians who were working in the food industry. Through my personal connections, I contacted a list of people who I thought could be available to be photographed. The images were all taken in black & white with 8x10 inches film. The monochromatic tones offered a uniform and abstract

⁴⁷ <https://aresevisconti.com/2015/01/24/we-prato-opening/>

⁴⁸ The interest towards the Italian diaspora of those years is still strong today as witnessed by the two exhibitions on the topic held in Geneva in 2019 (Brux 2019) and in Lausanne in 2021 (Costa and Gulay 2021).

approach to the project. The large format camera allowed me the opportunity to establish a certain distance with the subject in the moment of the shot, which helped to create a sense of aura. The subject had to stand in a frontal position before a white background. The light had to be soft so that the shadows didn't alter the facial expression. Sitters were represented in three/quarters and had to hold a prop which could give the viewer a hint on their personality. The ten resulting images were printed on 80x60 cm. fiber-based paper, mounted in large black wooden frames and exhibited in the Swiss Pavillion at the EXPO in Milan (figg. 23 and 24). I wanted to replicate Richard Avedon's style of portraits which he realized for his 1980s project *In the American West*. The aim of my project was to create an archive of Italian migrants of the new millennium. I had studied how Richard Avedon had produced his portraits (Wilson 2003; Pénichon Sylvie 2012) and, fascinated by his approach, decided to reproduce the methods that he had used in *In the American West* (Avedon 1985) (fig. 25).



Fig. 23 – The Swiss Pavillion at the Milan EXPO in 2015.

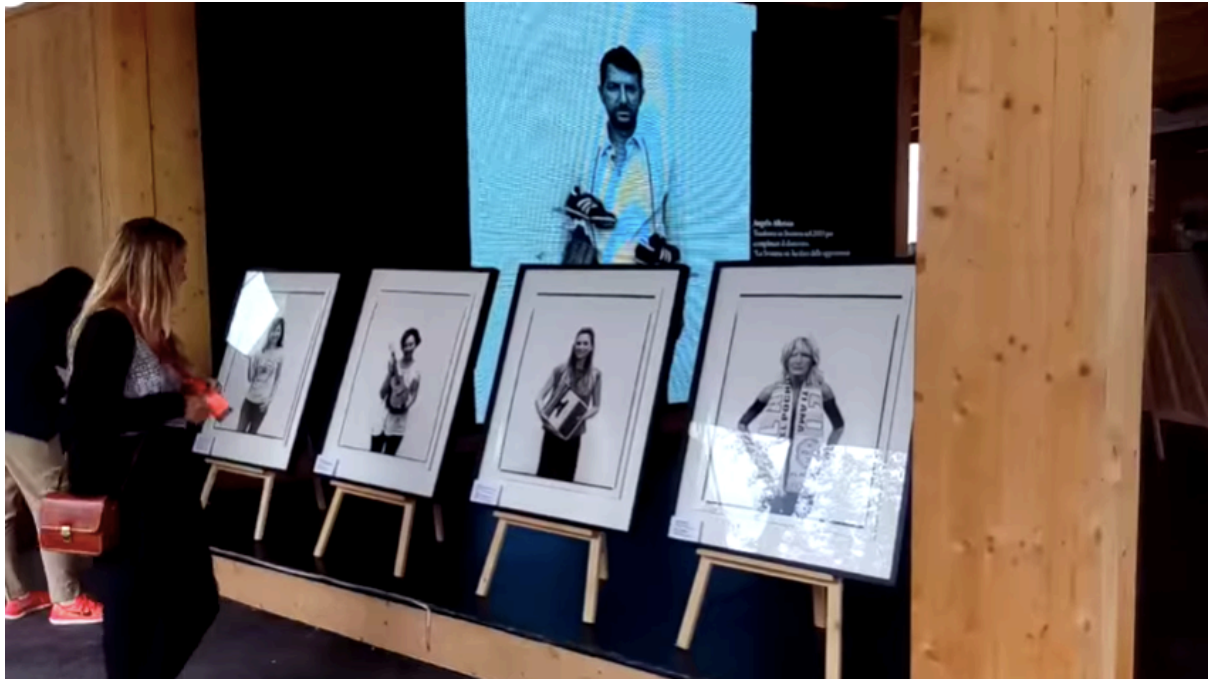


Fig. 24 – The Swiss Pavillion at the Milan EXPO in 2015.



Fig. 25 – Francesco Aresè Visconti, *Giustina Cristiano Mulliri*, 2015.

Avedon said that his work was about the working class (Whitney 2002), not about the American West but taken **in** the American West. He was looking at people and trying to find the truth about them but these pictures were fragments of himself. In his photographic sessions, there was no space for the collaboration between the photographer and the sitter. For Avedon it is the

photographer who always has total control of the sitting session. Speaking with one of the individuals portrayed, Sandra Bennett, who was complaining with him about being put on the front cover of the book *In the American West*, Avedon said: 'you can't say you weren't there, which you have to accept, then you are there under control of the photographer. I have the control in the end but I can't do it alone. You have a lot to say by the way you look' (theradpho 2013: 1:05:08). His sitters are objects like clay in the hands of the sculptor. Avedon photographs his subjects against a neutral white sheet of paper and away from the sunshine to avoid shadows and highlights which could lead the viewers' eyes to something which is not of any interest for the photographer. The light has to be even to 'neutralize its role in the appearance of things' (Avedon 1985: 19). He uses an 8x10 inches camera, standing next to it always at a determined distance from the lens and from the subject. Avedon claims that 'a portrait is not likeness. The moment when an emotion or fact is transformed into a photograph it is no longer a fact but an opinion. [...] None of them is the truth' (Avedon 1985: 21).

On the back flap of her book *Avedon at work in the American West*, Laura Wilson (2003) declared that 'as much as all these photographs may appear to be moments that just occurred, they are finally, in varying degrees, studied works of the imagination.' This idea is significant for my research on recent Italian migrants in Switzerland because my images are not snapshots but images studied in every aspect. All the details collaborate to communicate something about people's cultural identity. There is, therefore, a similarity between my work and Avedon's images in the conceptualization of photographs. They are not examples of occurred moments but rather studied works of the imagination of the photographer. This composition is created in the case of Avedon's *In the American West* and the same process is repeated in my work. As in Avedon's work, I started to portray my subjects in front of a white seamless sheet of paper which served to isolate them from the environment. In the production of black and white images with an 8x10 inches Kodak MasterView camera, I always used natural soft light (fig. 26). The elimination of the environment and the use of the soft light help the viewer to concentrate on the subject and nothing else. I believed that the images had to present the subjects in an archival form like in a catalogue and that the only elements portrayed had to be the subjects themselves, the clothing and the props which could add indications of the cultural identity of the individual.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Also see Anastasia Taylor-Lind (2014) on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kiev.



Fig. 26 – Settings for the shooting of the first series of portraits, Nyon (CH), 2015.

The interesting results achieved with these earlier projects encouraged me to submit a proposal for a Ph.D. project. My research interests moved to a further understanding not only of Italian migrants in general but also in relation to the more general meaning of cultural identity. I researched the value of photographic portraiture as a means of communications between the photographer, the sitter and the viewer, and specifically the representation of Italian cultural identity in still images. I started thinking and reading about identity and all its layers, specifically about the cultural aspects which identify the individual. Inspired by the work of Rineke Dijkstra (2003) and Jitka Hanzlova (2012) seen in the previous chapter, I thought about the elements that can culturally unify a population (and in the specific case of my research the Italians) and at the same time help others to identify that same population. From March 2017 I started working on a new set of images. While studying identity formation⁵⁰ and how photography could reflect it,⁵¹ I realized that it was necessary to change the concept of my images and decided that I had to include the full body in the landscape (fig. 27).

⁵⁰ See in the literature review chapter (Althusser 2014); (Baynham 2015); (Bhabha 1984; 1990); (Bourdieu 1977; 1986; 1997); (Butler 1993); (Hall 1989; 1990; 1996; 1997; 1999; 2003); (Hall and Back 2009); (Lacan 2005); (Lang 1985); (Merleau-Ponty 1963).

⁵¹ See for A. Sherman (Mesenhöller 2005) and (Szlezák 2012); for L. W. Hine (1909), (Rosenblum 1977), (Seixas 1987), (Sundell 1986), (Szlezák 2009; 2012) and (Ureña 2009); for R. Dijkstra (2003) and (Grunberg 1997); for J. Hanzlova (2012); for M. Petruzzello (2018).



Fig. 27 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *BS*, 2021.

4. The Body and the Landscape

The representation of the full body in the landscape suggests a relationship between migrants and the new space where they are living. For me the full body is the physical representation of an experience of migrating to a new place and its embodiment. I use the term embodiment in its value of incorporation. I refer to psychologist Richard Lang's definition of incorporation (Lang 1985: 202): 'Incorporation is the initiative of the active body, embracing and assimilating a certain sphere of foreign reality to its own body. In this sense, incorporation is essentially the movement from the strange to the familiar.' In portrait photography, the sense of how bodies assimilated a foreign reality can be visualized in 'Passengers,' the award winning documentary work by César Dezfuli (2022) (fig. 28). On August 1st, 2016, 118 migrants from Africa were rescued in the Mediterranean Sea. Spanish photographer Dezfuli portrayed them and re-photographed them after few years once the migrants had found a place to stay in Europe. The difference of the portraits is impressive. While in the second images they look relaxed, in the images taken in 2016 these migrants had incorporated their fears, abuses and humiliations. Their faces and bodies reflected their migration experience, their journey. French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1963: 168) explains how our body lives space by means and adapts its status according to the inputs it receives from the context and the other. He uses the example of the

soccer player in the playground with the adversaries and his team-mates. The field and the other players are the context in which he moves. Merleau-Ponty calls the field ‘the immanent term of his practical intentions.’ The structure of the context (the other players) constantly changes. The soccer player embodies the context adapting to it with his moves. We all inhabit place as the soccer player does. Inhabiting, Lang states, is ‘an act of transformation where space becomes place. Inhabiting is an act of incorporation; it is a situation of active, essential acquisition’ (Cromby 2015). In doing this we embrace the external impulse into our body. The space where we move does not belong to us but becomes more familiar. John Cromby states that we are, before other things, feeling bodies (Cromby 2015). Feelings are not just emotions. They are somatic experiences, and as in the case of the migrants photographed by Dezfuli, they will change and transform our bodies during our lives. Cromby states that these experiences are not easy to control. They have us before we have them and, of course, they have a direct influence in the visual transformation of our body. ‘Feelings are intrinsically part of the experience,’ Cromby states (2015: 16). The body is an entity which is shaped by feelings. ‘Feeling,’ continues Cromby, ‘emerges as a quality or aspect of the body under certain condition’ (2015: 17). ‘Feeling is a phase or aspect of the body’ (2015: 21). ‘Feelings are emergent phases of the body’ (2015: 28).



Fig. 28 – Cesar Dezfuli, *Passengers*, 2020.

These points are essential in my research for the way I compose my images. I want to portray my subjects as full bodies because I am portraying the result of the emotions connected with the process of migration and integration that the subject must have experienced. The representation of the full body in my images is the physical representation of the experience of these feelings. All the feelings connected with the experience of moving from a comfort zone (the motherland) to a new space have inevitably shaped the migrant body, maybe in almost invisible details. I want, nevertheless, to make sure that these details, no matter what they are, are recorded and documented in an image.

The representation of the body in the landscape is also one of the characteristics of Renaissance portrait painting. It is an important link to the visual references that I have used to connect to a specific shared native cultural background of Italian migrants living in the *arc lémanique*.

5. Italian Renaissance Portrait Paintings as a Common Native Cultural Aspect

I decided to develop a photographic narrative which could suggest a correlation to a common native cultural aspect. As explained in the introduction of this thesis, my point was not to construct a myth of national identity that could possibly mislead the viewer of the exhibition and, most importantly, not be felt by all Italians as a common cultural background deliberately assigned by me. However, it was a way to tackle the discussion on the topic while trying to find a response to my research questions. I wanted to find a method to photographically represent a group of people who share a common native cultural background that can culturally unify a population and at the same time help the others to identify that same population. As a key point for my practice, I had to choose which artistic period could represent *Italianity* in its cultural aspect in visual arts. As anticipated in the introduction, *Italianity* is a complex multi-layered concept. However, I wanted to understand what characteristics in visual arts could represent *Italianity* abroad. Therefore, I wondered what was in the opinion of Italian migrants resident in the *arc lémanique* the historical period which could be identified by them as a shared cultural common background. In particular, I was interested by these answers for their connection with painting portraiture: once understood that I could replicate some of the visual characteristics of those paintings in my photographic portraits and create a visual reference to an Italian common cultural background. This point is complicated and controversial considering the multi-faceted and peculiar origin and structure of the Italian population. Being aware of this aspect, I circulated a survey among the Italian community living in the *arc lémanique* about what they

thought was the most common native cultural background shared by them.⁵² Acknowledging here the scientific imperfection of the tool used, the answers suggested that the period to which I should refer was the Italian Renaissance (out of thirty answers, the Italian Renaissance was the most popular response, followed by the period of the Roman Empire, Baroque and Risorgimento). I therefore focused my attention on the main characteristics of Renaissance portrait paintings and started considering how to reproduce these aspects in my images. The visual link to Italian Renaissance paintings in my practice is given by the replication of some specific characteristics of Italian Renaissance portraiture. These aspects are likeness, the inclusion of the landscape as a means to describe the roots of the subject depicted, the use of perspective to involve the viewer putting the human being with its perfect proportions (like in case of the *homo vitruvianus* by Leonardo da Vinci) at the centre of the universe/painting/image. I will now expand on these points.

Likeness was not a novelty of the Renaissance portraiture of the fifteenth century (Rubin 2011). Giorgio Vasari in his *Lives of the Artists* from 1550 (Vasari 1998) stated that Giotto had been the first painter to introduce ‘good drawing from live natural models, something which had not been done for more than two hundred years. And even if someone had tried it, [...] none of them had succeeded as happily or as completely as Giotto’ (Vasari 1998: 16). Also, physician and philosopher Pietro d’Abano in his *Expositio in Problematibus Aristotelis* from 1310 (Thomann 1991) had pointed Giotto as a ‘painter capable of producing a likeness in all respects’ in such a way that the people who were represented were easily recognizable. One example of likeness in Italian Renaissance is the painting of the old man and his grandson by Domenico Ghirlandaio (fig. 29). In this scene, the old man is represented with each detail of his face including his irregular nose (Weppelmann 2011).

⁵² In the selection of subjects, I have excluded children and elderly people: I have focused my attention on people like me, part of the middle class that has migrated abroad on the *arc lémanique*.



Fig. 29 – Domenico Ghirlandaio, *An old man and his grandson*, 1490.

The fresco 'The Distribution of Alms and the Death of Ananias' by Masaccio in the Fifteenth century Brancacci Chapel in Florence is another example of realism of architecture and landscape (fig. 30). The buildings represented are typical of an Italian city of the Fifteenth century. The mountains in the background are the snow-capped Apennines (Casazza 2001: 52).



Fig. 30 – Masaccio, *The Distribution of Alms and the Death of Ananias*, 1425 – 1428 ca.

The inclusion of the landscape in Italian Renaissance paintings has the intent of describing the story of the subject depicted and their sense of belonging to a specific place because of what she or he did in his life. The context here has an important role. It is not just a mere background and there is a strong link between identity and belonging. The place in which the act of portraying takes place is particularly important. Francesco Sassetti was a de' Medici's banker who worked in Geneva and Lyon. In his portrait with his son Teodoro (fig. 35), Domenico Ghirlandaio included a city that is probably Geneva in the background because of a chapel that Sassetti had built in that city. Ghirlandaio reproduces the same detail in a fresco in the Sassetti chapel in the church of Santa Trinita in Florence (fig. 36). The landscape tells us something of Sassetti's life. Another example is the portrait of the Duke and the Duchess of Urbino by Piero Della Francesca (fig. 37). The landscape in the background describes the properties of the Lords of Urbino, from the Marche region to the Trasimeno lake. All these paintings have an interesting light effect: the subjects in the foreground and the landscape are differently lit. There is a clear separation between the two planes. Subjects seem to be separated from the background. In my photographs I want to replicate this effect with the use of the flash (fig. 31, 32, 33, 34).



Fig. 31 – Backstage images from a shooting session, Commugny (CH), 2021.



Fig. 32 – Backstage images from a shooting, Commugny (CH), 2021.



Fig. 33 – Francesco Arese Visconti, AS, 2021.



Fig. 34 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *VP*, 2021.



Fig. 35 – Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Francesco Sassetti and his son Teodoro*, 1488 ca.



Fig. 36 – Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Stories of St. Francis - Renunciation of Worldly Goods*, 1483 and 1486.

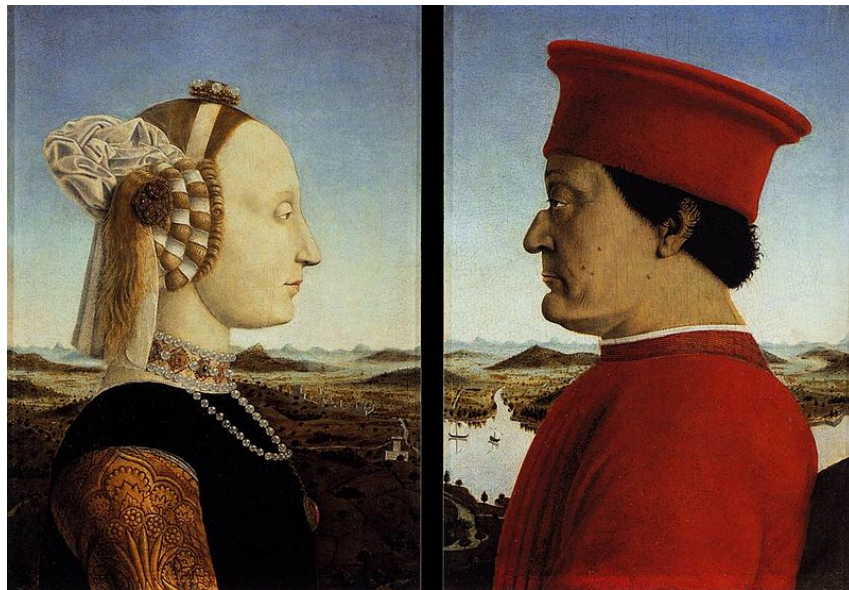


Fig. 37 – Piero Della Francesca, *The Duke and the Duchess of Urbino*, 1465 – 1472 ca.

The relationship with the other in Italian Renaissance paintings passes through the use of perspective. The human being is at the centre of the image and, consequently, at the centre of the universe. Everything can be measured around and for him. Perspective is, then, fundamental in this process because it is the human being who defines and measures the physical space. It is an open dialogue with the viewer. In the Middle Age, God was the center of attention. There

was no need to measure the physical space. It was important to find a way to represent the infinite and the abstract space, thus painters used gold to do it. An example is ‘The Annunciation’ by Thirteenth – Fourteenth century artist Simone Martini (fig. 39). In the Brancacci Chapel in Florence there are frescoes by Masolino, Masaccio and Filippino Lippi. They are examples of the use of perspective to include the viewer in the scene. In ‘St. Peter Healing the Sick with his Shadow’ (fig. 38), for instance, Masaccio deliberately alters the perception of space for the viewer. He creates the illusion of space extending out of the fresco into the real space of the spectator. Saint Peter is walking towards us as he is exiting out of the fresco and entering the viewer’s space.



Fig. 38 – Masaccio, *St. Peter Healing the Sick with his Shadow*, 1425 – 1428 ca.



Fig. 39 – Simone Martini, *Annunciation*, 1333.

6. The Square

Referring to the ratio of my photographs, I create square images inspired by the *homo vitruvianus*' drawing by Leonardo da Vinci (fig. 40). Based on the definition of the perfect human proportions by Vitruvius, Leonardo da Vinci drew around 1490 the 'Vitruvian Man,' a pen and ink drawing kept at the *Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe* at the *Gallerie dell'Accademia* in Venice. As stated by historian Richard Kay (2012), the square represents earth and its mundane aspect and the circle represents totality and wholeness (God). Leonardo da Vinci inscribed the human body dynamically shaped inside the circle and in a very static and stable way in the square. In the *homo vitruvianus* by Leonardo, the navel of the human body is at the centre of the circle to testify the divine origin of human beings (Kay 2012: 253). At the same time, Leonardo puts the means through which humans reproduce, the genitals, at the centre of the square. As in Leonardo's drawing, I put my subjects at the centre of the square to suggest their connection with the landscape and their belonging to a place on earth. The square, as said above, is a reference to earth. The position of the sitters in the centre of the square with their feet on the ground want to suggest their sense of belonging to a place. This is not the same place where they were born, it is, instead, a new country with which they now have to interact (fig. 41).

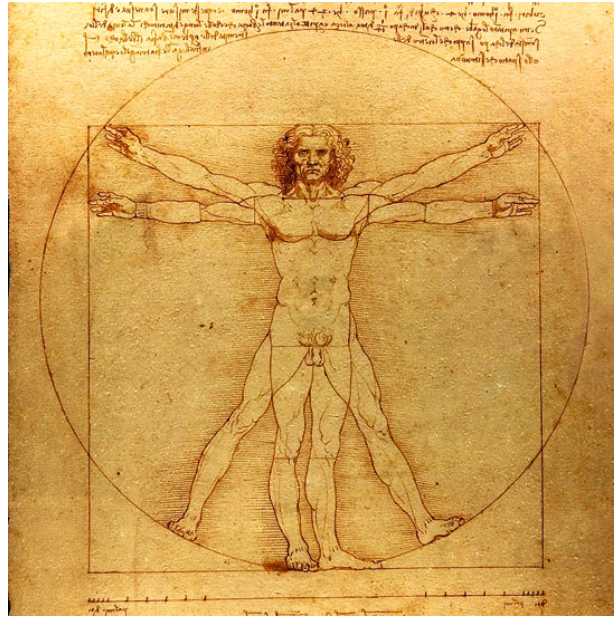


Fig. 40 – Leonardo da Vinci, *Homo Vitruvianus*, 1490 ca.



Fig. 41 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *MC*, 2018.

7. Envisioning the exhibition

The exhibition of the present research is intended to be displayed in two rooms (or only one divided by light displaceable walls). In the first space, hanging on the walls, there is an introductory text to the exhibition with a short biography of the author. In this part of the show, a strong emphasis is given to the archival photographic material coming from publications like *L'Illustré* and online platforms analyzed in previous chapters. The purpose of this part of the

exhibition is to introduce visitors to the different visual representations of Italian migrants in the period between 1960 and 1970 and more recently between 2007 and 2019. This initial display is necessary to understand why and how certain visual decisions have been taken in order to re-think photographic portraiture of 21st century Italian migrants from the *arc lémanique* area. It introduces the visitor to the topic offering fundamental background knowledge to be prepared for the second space which hosts the main part of the exhibition. While entering the second part of the show, there are some reflections to be done. In the first stance, we have to reflect on the visual representation of migrants as a group of people which is simultaneously composed of individuals. Since the beginning of my practice, I was led by the intention to deliver the visitor of the final exhibition the perception of being in front of a diaspora, a group phenomenon, which inevitably was maintaining the characteristic of being created by the action of the single individual.

While, as explained in previous chapters, the 1960s and 1970s the Italian migratory process to Switzerland was composed by large groups of population coming from the same towns and villages, the recent diaspora doesn't have the same characteristics and is more individualistic. Nevertheless, we are talking about the recent Italian diaspora as a mass phenomenon. How is it possible to represent this difference through visual means? As highlighted in previous chapters, seriality was the main solution but instead of having singular photographs on the walls, the images will be anchored on the ceiling. They are randomly displaced in the centre of the room allowing walking space. At the bottom of the images there are QR codes that give the viewer access to one sentence about the migrant experience extrapolated from the interviews that I have conducted with all of them (fig. 42).⁵³ All the images face the entrance (fig. 46). This visual impact entering the room gives the visitor the experience of being in front of a mass, a group of people staring at him/her and waiting to share their migratory experience. The photography exhibition is, then, moving away from the walls and occupies the central part of the space. It becomes an interactive installation and can be framed in relation to Soutter's concept of expanded photography (Soutter 2016). Referring to the idea of the 'expanded cinema' introduced by Gene Youngblood in the 1970s, Soutter looks at photography as an art medium which is part of cultural production. In this sense photography overlaps with other art forms and

⁵³ I conducted semi-structured interviews with all the subjects I photographed. I asked questions about their reasons for migrating, if and how often they travel back to Italy, the purpose of their visits, the meaning that Switzerland and Italy have for them after years of residency abroad, the strongest memories related to their migration process and the effects that living in Switzerland have had on them.

moves beyond the traditional domains of the wall, the page and the screen. It overlaps with sculpture, installation or architecture developing tension ‘between image and object, between craft and concept, between representation and presentation’ (Soutter 2016: 42).

The display of the exhibition also gives the visitor the visual experience of less visibility of contemporary Italian migrants in Switzerland if compared to the migration of the 1960s and 1970s. In those decades, Italians had arrived with suitcases with different clothing and habits from the native Swiss population⁵⁴ and were, thus, visually different and recognizable (Fibbi, 2011). According to the *Office federal de la Statistique*,⁵⁵ in 2018 Italians were still the largest group of migrants in Switzerland. This phenomenon has, of course, an impact on different levels on Swiss society. How can an image represent the cultural identity of a group of people whose lives have been irrevocably altered by the experience of physically moving away from their homeland and resetting in a *terra incognita*? The display of the photographs in the second space of the exhibition are an attempt to render visible the complex notion of this new migratory identity, of identity in flux which is different from the common understanding of migration. The photographs are printed on thin fabric which will offer a high degree of transparency. This idea of printing photographs on textile comes from another exhibition I had in June 2018 at the Cedar Café in Bellevue (Switzerland). In order to still give the sense of transparency and less visibility of the contemporary Italian migrants in Switzerland, in this exhibition the photographs were printed on semi-translucent attachable silicon support. The images were stuck directly on the windows allowing the viewer to see the images, their semitransparency and the background through the photographs (figg. 43, 44, 45). After some tests, I realized that printing on thin textile improves the transparency effect which was only partially achieved with the silicon support.⁵⁶ The transparency and light essence of the textile is crucial here: through this means I want to invite the viewer to reflect on the unseen and how photography can actually become a

⁵⁴ A strong emphasis on the physical differences perceived in the 1970s is offered by Franco Brusati in his movie ‘Pane a Cioccolata’ (Brusati 1973). The main character of the movie, Nino Garofoli, is an Italian migrant in Switzerland. Having migrated in the 1970s to the German part of the Swiss Confederation to find a job, Nino struggles to integrate into Swiss society and despite all his attempts, he is not successful.

⁵⁵ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/population/migration-integration.assetdetail.9447645.html>

⁵⁶ For installations with prints on textile see Heather Agyepong ‘ego death’ project or Harley Weir’s work ‘Homes.’ With an expanded photography approach (Soutter 2016), Agyepong (2022) investigates her hidden personality discovering her Jungian shadows. She reveals her results through photographs, textiles, sound and text developing a strong visual language. Harley Weir (Fabrica Gallery 2018) presented her project on migrant camps in Calais (France) at the 2018 Biennale in Brighton (UK). In Weir’s case, the semi-transparent fabric material refers to what is printed on the photographs (migrants’ tents).

tool of social justice documenting the invisible (or, better, the partially visible). Referring to Samuel Aranda's work in African migrants trying to enter Melilla (Aranda: 2014), therefore Spain/Europe, Tanya Sheehan (2018: 93) underlines how photography's role is to document the unseen, to become the means through which migrants can be seen in their migration process. This is a phenomenon that assigns photography the value of political intervention. 'By framing the unseen, [...],' Sheehan claims (2018: 93), 'documentary photographs provide a narrative frame' and become a 'useful tools in negotiating politics because they come with an aura of believability' (Levi Strauss 2003: 71). My photographs are not purely documentary in their nature; however, they aim to facilitate a discussion on a quite invisible phenomenon and stimulate a reaction.



Fig. 42 – Backstage image from an interview session on April 23rd, 2021, Geneva (CH).



Fig. 43 – Backstage images of the mounting of the exhibition at the Cedar Café, Bellevue (CH), 2018.



Fig. 44 – Backstage images of the mounting of the exhibition at the Cedar Café, Bellevue (CH), 2018.



Fig. 45 – The semi-transparency effect of the images printed on silicon support and attached on the windows. Bellevue (CH), 2018.

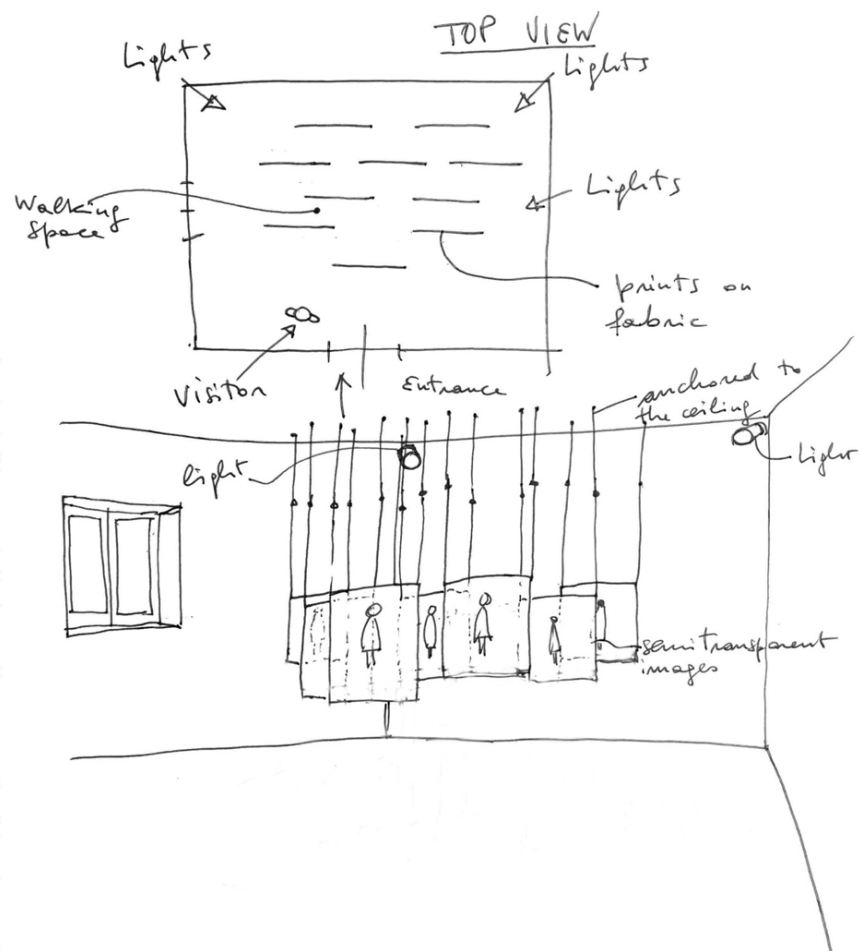


Fig. 46 – A sketch of the possible display of the second space for the final exhibition.

8. Conclusions

As demonstrated in this chapter, the experience gained through previous photographic projects and new experiments has led me to take decisions that deeply influence the final result of this exciting, demanding but, eventually, rewarding research. Since the beginning of the project in 2016, my interest expanded from the specific understanding of the Italian diaspora in Switzerland to the larger meaning of cultural identity and the value of photographic portraiture as a means of communications between the photographer, the sitter and the viewer. Inspired by the work of portrait photographers,⁵⁷ I reflected on which elements the genre of photographic portraiture can find its contribution to culturally unify a population (and in the specific case of my research, Italians) and, at the same time, help others to identify with that population. I based my reasoning on Stuart Hall's (1989, 1990, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2009) concept of cultural identity as never shaped in a fixed form and being part of a long process of identification, on how it can be influenced by society (Bourdieu 1977; 1986; 1997) and the meaning of being part of a common imagined group which shares the same values (Anderson 1991). The theoretical framework supported ideas about how to represent Italian cultural identity through my practice. I chose to identify a period in history which still clearly influences the cultural background of Italians today. I circulated a short survey through my network (associations, friends and relatives) and the main answers indicated the Renaissance period. I, therefore, decided to focus my attention on Italian Renaissance portraiture and see how I could create a link between that period and my images. I had to consider the main characteristics of Renaissance portraiture and how I might apply them in my photographs. The realistic representation of the sitter is one of the main characteristics of Renaissance portraiture: subjects were portrayed as they were. In my photographs, I wanted to reproduce all of these details so that they could be discernible and recognizable. In Italian Renaissance arts, the human being was at the center of the visual representation. I, then, started placing my subjects at the center of the composition. The landscape assumed an important role in the Italian Renaissance portraits, and it is often well recognizable (like in the portrait of Federico da Montefeltro by Piero Della Francesca, fig. 37). The sitter is often immersed in a geographically recognizable landscape. Subjects were always lit with a different light which separated them from the background as if they were portrayed in a

⁵⁷ To mention some of the photographers discussed in the previous chapters: August Sherman, Lewis W. Hine, Sam Ivin, Michele Petruzzello, August Sander, Erna Lendvai-Dirksen, Walker Evans, Richard Avedon, Irving Penn, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, Rineke Dijkstra, Jitka Hanzlova, Martin Schöller, Anastasia Taylor-Lind, Andres Serrano, Diane Arbus.

room with a window behind them. In my photographic portraits, I, thus, included the landscape and used a mix of artificial and natural light to replicate the light effect visible in the Renaissance paintings. The strong use of perspective was also an important aspect of Italian Renaissance. It was used as a way to define and measure the physical space in which human beings live. In placing my subjects at the center of the image, I want to emphasize the effect of perspective and suggest an open dialogue with the viewer. I started portraying my subjects within a square frame which is connected to the Vitruvian man (Leonardo da Vinci, *Homo Vitruvianus*. Gallerie delle Accademie, Venice. 1490 c.). In Leonardo's drawing, the human being is represented inside a square ('homo ad quadratum') and inside a circle ('homo ad circulum'): the human being becomes a bridge between God and Earth and unifies the two elements. The circle is the divine and the center of the circle is the umbilicus of the man. The square is the symbol of earth. The square framing of my photographs suggests this link to earth. Through this means, I want to emphasize the sense of belonging of the migrant to the land and the contrast in living in a different country which is not the motherland. In the migrants' experience, while Switzerland cannot be the motherland, it becomes nevertheless a known place of comfort zone after years of residency. I also had to think about how to develop a dialogue between the sitter and the viewer and developed my practice around David Bate's (2016: 89) considerations on the key elements of a photographic portrait (face, pose, background, clothing and props). The facial expression often suggests a mood. In my images, faces have a blank expression. The blankness is an open invitation for the viewer for an active inclusion (Van Gelder 2012). As far as the pose is concerned, the frontal position of the body suggests an openness.⁵⁸ Being in a frontal position, the subject is open to the dialogue with the viewer as usually happens in society. We see and we are seen by the other. This connection develops a dialogue and an interpretation with and by society. I developed the idea of representing the full body so that we can see it all and interpret it. We see the entire body well rooted on earth (see the Vitruvian man, the landscape and place/motherland). Due to experience, the body has incorporated feelings and emotions (linked to migration) and, thus, it is the explicit representation of feelings as identity formation's result (Cromby 2015). The background represents the landscape in which the subject/migrant is immersed. Clothing was chosen by the subjects and no props were included in the images. I found subjects who could be involved in the research through my personal connections and local

⁵⁸ See Susan Sontag on Diane Arbus (Sontag 1990: 38, 60).

associations.⁵⁹ During our first meeting, I conducted interviews with a precise set of questions about their migrant experience (fig. 42). I asked them to choose where they wanted to be photographed, places which they considered important in their life in Switzerland. I guided the shooting sessions asking the subjects not to smile and look straight into the camera being in a static frontal position. In this way, faces became masks. As Barthes argued (1986: 35), photography can only achieve significance when it shows a mask. Photographed and exhibited in a way which aims to recall a type of archive (Sekula 1986), these portraits have a deadpan expression. However, they are real faces of living people, and their gaze engages the spectator (Azoulay 2012: 340). The photographer proposes the dialogue with the sitter but the spectator chooses the role based on their personal background.

To summarize, I give in this chapter an overview of both the theoretical and practical methods that I have used to develop my photographic research. A pivotal role for understanding how I had to proceed in my practice was to understand how Italian migrants had been photographically represented on illustrated French-speaking Swiss printed media and online magazines during the diaspora of the 1960s and 1970s and in more recent years between 2007 and 2019. After research conducted in the archives of French-language Swiss magazines and online, the next two chapters will analyse the photographic narratives of the Italian diaspora in the decades between 1960 and 1970 and from 2006 to 2019.

⁵⁹ Cultura Italia (<https://www.culturaitalia.ch/>) and COM.IT.ES. (<http://comites-ginevra.ch/>)

Chapter 3 – 1960 – 1970 Photographic Representation of Italian Migrants in the *Arc Lémanique*

Introduction

The aim of the following two chapters is to develop an analysis of how Italian migration was photographically represented in popular French-language Swiss magazines in the decade between 1960 and 1970 and from 2006 until 2019, how this visual representation has been influenced by the political, sociological and economical Swiss and Italian contexts, and if these images have significant dissimilarities between these two periods. The research described in the next two chapters will highlight a symbolism system and demonstrate through its findings that the production and selection of these images was based on an ideological discourse (Hall 1972). In combination with the arguments based on the theoretical framework described in the previous chapter, the analysis of motifs and conventions of images related to the migration phenomenon in Switzerland from the 1960s to the 1970s has the purpose of showing the reasons behind the decisions taken in the production of the photographic practice of this research. The discussion on the meaning of postures, composition, lighting, clothing in these old images produced in social contexts different from today supports the reasoning to achieve the desired message of the photographic portraits of this research. Since the research is based on images published in news printed media, my arguments draw on Stuart Hall's considerations on the determinations of news photographs. In Hall's opinion there are two aspects of significations of news: the first one is the news value of the photographic sign, the second one is its ideological level. News values are essential in the elaboration of the story following the common-sense understandings as to what constitutes the news in a newspaper discourse. What supports my reasoning here are Hall's reflections on the ideological value of images and how this aspect is part of a more general discourse.⁶⁰ Images can build attention only if there is a background consensus knowledge, the shared knowledge of social structures. The reader can understand only if there is a foreground knowledge of news stories.⁶¹ An event which is photographed and then selected enters the domain of ideology. This process of selection is a highly ideological procedure. Ideological values are part of the moral-political discourse in society. Newspapers and magazines have editorial lines: it is how they decide to present news. This act is very ideological. In Hall's view, these two acts, the news values and the ideological value, are close. He claims that (Hall 1972: 232) 'in

⁶⁰ Hall (1972: 241) calls it ideological universe of society, an archetypical message.

⁶¹ Boltanski (2018: 202) stresses the same point.

practice, there is probably little or no distinction between these two aspects of news production. The editor not only looks at and selects the photo in terms of impact, dramatic meaning, unusualness, controversy but the resonance of the event also signified, etc. (formal news values): he considers at the same time how these values will be treated or 'angled' – that is interpretatively coded.' This is an ideological decision. I question if this ideological decision is somehow linked to the myth theory of Barthes (1972). Ideology contributes to build myths in modern society. In 'Mythologies,' Barthes analyses myths of our contemporary society, properties and meanings that are assigned to images of things that surround us. In his view, myths are originated in society by groups controlling communications through media and language. We perceive these meanings as part of the natural order of things. It is forgotten or hidden, Barthes states, where the meaning of signs came from and the process that transformed them. These myths generated by these groups filter the political content out of signification. Stuart Hall recalls Barthes' theory of myths when referring to the ideological level of news photographs. Hall claims that, having codes of meaning which make signification possible, news images follow the ideological universe of society. In *Image, Music, Text: The Photographic Message*, Barthes (1977) states that we have to have an historical understanding of the context when images have been taken and of when images are being interpreted. However, Hall (1972: 241) argues that images are part of universal signs otherwise called archetypical messages.

In the essay in the 1965 book *Un art moyen, essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie* edited by Bourdieu (1965),⁶² French sociologist Luc Boltanski (2018: 369) refers to the different kind of photographs which illustrate daily (*France-Soir*) and weekly (*Paris-Match*) publications in France in the 1960s (Boltanski, 2018). In this process, Boltanski raises issues on Barthes's semiology and symbolism in weekly magazines. The objective quality of photography is to record events as well as press does. In his view, photography is the reflection of reality. In the daily publication, photography is important if it captures the event when it happens. The general frame is not necessarily given by the other elements present in the composition (Boltanski, 2018: 200). Separated from context, the action which happens in the photograph cannot be situated without the caption. A weekly publication (like *Paris-Match* in France or *L'Illustré* in Switzerland) has a different approach. The images which illustrate the articles don't show the event itself but they present anecdotes. These anecdotes evoke the event (Boltanski, 2018: 202). Photographs have to be synthetic: characters and objects which allow a story to be told must be represented in one

⁶² I used the revised Italian version (Bourdieu 2018).

image. Furthermore, Boltanski claims that these photographs must be symbolic: each object present in the frame has to recall the background, the memory and synthesize the Barthesian connotation of meaning. Boltanski quotes Barthes' definition of connotation⁶³ specifying that for *Paris-Match* journalists it is synonym of symbolism. These symbols must be present in the weekly publication's photographs. To be understandable, it is necessary that the reader could refer to a symbolism system which he can recall. The key to this symbolism has to be found in the visual familiarity with the event and its actors. Boltanski associates this visual familiarity with the Sartrean *ellipsis*.⁶⁴ In the next pages we will look at the photographs and texts from the most popular French-language Swiss magazine, *L'Illustré*, keeping in mind the idea that there are editorial lines which want to generate 'familiar recognitions.' For the reader, as stated by Hall (1972: 232), it is 'by producing in the reader 'familiar recognitions,' that a discourse becomes ideological.' What kind of visual symbolism was adopted in the 1960s-1970s migration photographs in *L'Illustré* and to which models do they refer? While keeping in mind these questions, after an explanation of the reasons which lead to the selection of this particular period of time and the research method used for the image/text analysis, the following pages will show the five pivotal findings of the research.

1. Why 1960 – 1970?

For the decade of the 1960 and 1970, I have selected the illustrated weekly publication *L'Illustré*. I didn't select other magazines because there were no other significant ones in the same years with photographs. *L'Illustré* is one of the oldest magazines published in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. It was founded in 1921 in Lausanne. Being a popular magazine since the early years, *L'Illustré* is a weekly publication which deals with general issues related to the Swiss Romande society. 572 issues of *L'Illustré* from 1960 to 1970 were analyzed. A total of 8 articles which dealt with migrant workers (not only Italians) were found. Out of these articles, six included photographs (of which one article had no matching images) and two without photographs. These articles are from May 11th, 1961, March 7th, 1963, March 28th, 1963, November 5th, 1964, April 1st, 1965, May 11th, 1967, April 2nd, 1970, and May 7th, 1970.

⁶³ Boltanski mentions that this definition was given by Barthes in a photocopy given during a seminar on semiology at the École pratique des hautes études, 6th section, 1962-1963 (Boltanski 2018: 204).

⁶⁴ Referring to literature, Sartre (1949: 68) states that 'people of a same period and collectivity, who have lived through the same events, who have raised or avoided the same questions, have the same taste in their mouth; they have the same complicity, and there are the same corpses among them. That is why it is not necessary to write so much; there are key-words.'

The decade between 1960 and 1970 was chosen for historical reasons. At the end of the Second World War, there was a new political and economic landscape in Italy. Agriculture was not the main focus of the new economic development (Barbagallo, 2001: 21). The Southern part of Italy, where the economy was mainly based on agriculture was therefore heavily affected by this decision and unemployment drastically increased. Many people were unemployed. Therefore, migration became necessary to relaunch the economy in Italy and in particular in the South. The economist Manlio Rossi Doria in 1958 stated that in the post war period (1950-1960) ‘peasants’ misery no longer existed in inland areas and this substantial progress was due to migration’ (Rossi-Doria 1958: 100). Italian post war Union leader, Giuseppe Di Vittorio claimed that a valid instrument for economic development of Italian post-war political strategy was inevitably migration (Di Vittorio 2012: 81). Despite the fact that the Italian economy blossomed in the 1960s,⁶⁵ Italian workers were encouraged to migrate. Differently from the diaspora of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century which mainly moved to United States, the post war migration was directed to Europe. Italians elected Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain and Switzerland as their main destinations. In 1963, Switzerland was the favorite choice of Italian migrants (about 44 %) (Cerutti 1994: 13). If successfully admitted after a medical check in Brig (close to the Italian border), these workers were allowed to stay in Switzerland for nine months only. This diaspora was not as permanent as the trans-Atlantic migration. As witnessed in *L’Illustré* articles,⁶⁶ a massive number of Italian workers moved to Switzerland, and it represented an exponential progression. The seasonal workers’ (*saisonniers*) impact on Swiss society was perceived as a problematic issue (see the large number of articles published on Journal de Genève, Gazette de Lausanne and Le Nouveau Quotidien). *L’Illustré* dedicated two articles to this issue in March 1963 (n. 10 of March 7th and n. 13 of March 28th) by Maurice Rohrer (1963a, 1963b). The title of the first article is ‘*L’invasion pacifique des travailleurs étrangers*’ with a significant subtitle: ‘*un problème Suisse à l’ordre du jour : 1 habitant sur 8 est étranger*’ (fig. 47).

⁶⁵ Well represented in the 1960 movie by Federico Fellini ‘La Dolce Vita,’ 1960 is considered the symbolic year of the boom of Italian economy from poverty (Ricciardi 2018: 1949). In January 1960, The Financial Times selected the Italian Lira as the most important currency and the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of Italy reached an impressive +8% (Caruso 2016: 7).

⁶⁶ *L’Illustré*, March 7th, 1963 and March 28th, 1963



Fig. 47 – *L'Illustré* - n. 10 of March 7th, 1963, pp. 28-29.

There are no photographs to illustrate the article but there are graphics and charts to demonstrate the big impact of this impressive diaspora. According to this article, 70% of migrants-workers in 1962 were Italians, in front of Germans, Spanish, Austrians, and French. The article underlines how 80% of migrants are coming from Southern Europe (80%) and only 17% are ‘Germaniques.’ The number of migrants is felt as an invasion. In the article, there is a reference to the ‘latinisation’ of Switzerland.⁶⁷ The article states that the 730,000 migrants are equivalent to the entire population of Canton Vaud and Geneva. There is a pessimistic approach about the possible integration: Maurice Rohrer cites what was said by Hans Schaffner.⁶⁸ Reporting the concepts expressed by Schaffner, Rohrer states that ‘Switzerland never feared the influx of migrants. It managed during the years to absorb all those who arrived in the country. It seems, nevertheless, difficult to define the point of saturation of this diaspora’ (Rohrer, 1963a: 28). Starting from this pessimistic view, through charts and diagrams, the article describes the profile

⁶⁷ As noted in the last paragraph of the first chapter, Maiolino writes about the *mediterranéisation* of Switzerland in recent years. In Maiolino’s opinion, this explains the gradual acceptance by Swiss society of Italian cultural aspects (pizza, espresso, fashion, lifestyle, spirit of enterprise). The *mediterranéisation* shows a gradual emancipation of the Italian community in Switzerland (Maiolino 2013: 154).

⁶⁸ Federal Councilor from 1961 to 1969 and President of the Confederation from 1966 and Head of the Department of Public Economy from 1961 to 1969

of these migrants. One of the aspects on which the attention is directed is religion. The majority of the new migrants were catholic. Italian journalist, Concetto Vecchio (2019: 63) in his book 'Cacciati! Quando I migrant eravamo noi' confirms that this mass of Catholics coming from the Southern part of Europe was a concern for Swiss people. One whole page of this article in *L'Illustré* is dedicated to this aspect. The article reports that statistic shows that 467,200 foreigners of the 730,000 were catholic (coming from Italy and Spain). This number would have impacted the balance of the two main religions in Switzerland. On n. 13 of the 28th of March 1963 (fig. 48), Maurice Rohrer continues his inquiry on the strangers' impact on the Swiss economy and their integration into Swiss society.

MAURICE ROHRER CONCLUT CETTE SEMAINE SON ENQUÊTE SUR LE PROBLÈME DE LA MAIN-D'ŒUVRE ÉTRANGÈRE EN SUISSE

LES ÉTRANGERS ET NOTRE ÉCONOMIE

La plupart des étrangers viennent en Suisse pour travailler

Il serait étonné de constater comme les travailleurs les quelques 730 000 étrangers. Ce chiffre est sans précédent pour 2,6 millions de travailleurs. Les étrangers sur cinq travaillent dans le secteur agricole (horticulture, viticulture, maraîchage) et dans le secteur industriel (textile, chimie, mécanique, etc.). Il y a une augmentation de 100 000 par an.

En Suisse, la population non active est de 2 millions. Les étrangers représentent 13,5% de la population. C'est que nous sommes en Suisse, ce n'est pas en France. Depuis 1960, leur effectif a augmenté de 100 000 par an.

Accroissement du nombre des travailleurs étrangers en Suisse

Année	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962
Nombre	270 000	370 000	363 000	368 000	426 000	548 000	645 000

Les naturalisations en Suisse

On naturalise environ 100 000 étrangers par an. Mais pas de Suisse 2000 par an. C'est à peu près 100 000 par an.

Combiné naturalise-t-on chaque année?

On naturalise environ 100 000 étrangers par an. Mais pas de Suisse 2000 par an. C'est à peu près 100 000 par an.

Les naturalisations en Suisse

On naturalise environ 100 000 étrangers par an. Mais pas de Suisse 2000 par an. C'est à peu près 100 000 par an.

Les conséquences économiques de l'immigration

L'immigration de travailleurs peut être bénéfique pour notre économie. Elle permet de combler les besoins de main-d'œuvre dans les secteurs de la construction, de l'industrie et de l'agriculture.

Hero sur le Conseil fédéral?

Le Conseil fédéral vient de prendre des mesures destinées à freiner l'immigration. En fait, c'est d'un véritable contingentement de la main-d'œuvre étrangère qu'il s'agit.

Maïn-d'œuvre étrangère «contingentée»

Le nombre qui ont été pris, avec effet à partir du 7 février 1963, sont étrangers. On se rend compte l'été prochain à quel point elle sont drôles. En quoi consistent-elles? Économiquement en ceci:

- L'employeur ne peut engager de travailleurs étrangers qu'à la condition de ne pas dépasser l'effectif de son personnel à fin décembre 62.
- Si, dans sa branche, le nombre des employés varie en cours d'année, l'employeur ne peut engager d'étrangers qu'en fonction de ce personnel effectif moyen de 1962.

Nous devenons des colonialistes sans colonies!

Il faut reconnaître que l'attraction des étrangers de la plupart des emplois subalternes devient évident et constitue un danger latent.

A ce propos, je relève dans la presse un ouvrage récemment paru, et qui traite de développement démographique d'Italie, que j'ai lu avec intérêt. Il est intitulé: «L'immigration en Italie» et est de l'ouvrage de Maurice Barbi.

«Les dirigeants italiens ont compris que leur pays avait besoin de main-d'œuvre étrangère, et qu'ils devaient s'efforcer de la recruter. Ils ont donc mis en œuvre une politique de recrutement qui a permis de recruter des milliers de travailleurs étrangers. Cette politique a été très efficace, et a permis de résoudre le problème de la main-d'œuvre étrangère en Italie.»

«C'est à l'usage que ces nouvelles mesures se révèlent positives ou négatives. Il en va de même de la situation de la Suisse. C'est pourquoi il est important de surveiller de près l'évolution de la situation de la Suisse. Il sera notamment un excellent argument, puisqu'une réduction de la liberté de circulation non seulement des marchandises et des capitaux, mais également de la main-d'œuvre.

«L'heure de décider est maintenant venue. C'est à l'usage que ces nouvelles mesures se révèlent positives ou négatives. Il en va de même de la situation de la Suisse. C'est pourquoi il est important de surveiller de près l'évolution de la situation de la Suisse. Il sera notamment un excellent argument, puisqu'une réduction de la liberté de circulation non seulement des marchandises et des capitaux, mais également de la main-d'œuvre.»

Fig. 48 – *L'Illustré* – n. 13 of March 28th, 1963, pp. 28-29.

The title of the article is *Les étrangers et notre économie*.⁶⁹ According to Rohrer, after 1960 the number of migrant workers in Switzerland grew with a frequency of one hundred individuals per year, being the majority of them Italians. The fear of the writer is that Switzerland will soon not be able to absorb them. The main consequences of this flow of workers in the Swiss

⁶⁹ Interesting is also the sub-title: the use of the term *le problème* gives a very negative connotation.

Confederation are the stabilization of the economic boom, the possibility for Swiss citizens to avoid the most undesired and less reputable jobs, the aggravation of the housing crisis and the increase of the costs of living. The naturalization of migrants is a rare phenomenon: only three strangers over one thousand become Swiss. Rohrer states that in the US anyone who has been resident in the country for at least five years can automatically ask for naturalization. The final conclusion of Maurice Rohrer is interesting. He wonders if Switzerland was becoming a country of colonialists without colonies, maintaining better jobs for Swiss people and leaving migrants the subaltern tasks. Like the first part of this inquiry, this appeared in the *L'Illustré* issue of March 7th, 1963, and there are no photographs to illustrate this article.

In 1965, a new agreement on workforce recruitment between Switzerland and Italy was reached. Initially signed in Rome on August 10th, 1964 and ratified by the Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation on March 17th, 1965 (Ricciardi 2018: 2197), this act demonstrates that the *überfremdung* (foreign infiltration) of Switzerland was felt as a real social issue. Right-wing Swiss politician James Schwarzenbach promoted an initiative for a referendum to decrease the number of migrants in Switzerland. There was a growing fear of a loss of cultural identity. As already mentioned above, Concetto Vecchio confirms (Vecchio, 2019: 63) that what scared Swiss people in the 1960s and 1970s was the impact that a large number of Catholics coming from Italy would have done to alter the balance between Protestants and Catholics. Vecchio states that it was a fear of losing a typical Swiss identity, the loss of social and religious traditions. In this sense, 1970 was a significant year. Despite the fact that on June 7th the Schwarzenbach initiative was refused by the 54% of the voters, the Swiss Confederation established new laws to control the number of seasonal workers. As a consequence of that and the oil crisis of the 1970s, Italian migrants started returning to Italy (Ricciardi 2018: 2201).

Keeping in mind all these aspects, when looking at these images we have to make a distinction between amateur images and photographs taken by professional photographers. In Switzerland, there is a large quantity of images which represent Italian migrants abroad. They are part of associations and family archives. These images are mainly individual portraits and images related to ceremonies or scenes representing families in different contexts. They are documents which have not been commissioned by public or private institutions (including magazines or newspapers). These photographs have been used for exhibitions or events linked to Italian

migration.⁷⁰ There is a considerable difference between the images by professional photographers who were assigned by public or private institutions to represent the migrant's world and the other ones taken by the migrants themselves. While the first pictures were influenced by editorial policies within the political-cultural context, the second ones seem to focus more on private lives. Being aware that these amateurs' photographs play a significant role in the construction of the visual identity of migrants in Switzerland in the 1960s and 1970s, I am mostly interested in the influence of ideology on the production of images, therefore the attention of the research went mainly towards the images produced by professional photographers. What interested my investigation was the influence of the social context on photographers' decisions in content and composition. With social context I refer to Barthes when he draws the attention to the properties and the meanings we attach to images of the things around us (Barthes, 1972).⁷¹

2. *L'Illustré*: a visual semiotics approach

The analysis of images and text that I found in *L'Illustré* draws on visual semiotics developed by R. Barthes (1977) and M. Joly (2015). Barthes (1977: 15) stresses that press photography is a message which travels from the first point called emission (staff of the newspaper), to the point of reception (the public) through the channel of transmission (the newspaper, complex concurrent messages). The emission and reception points lie, in Barthes' view, in the field of sociology (human groups: attitudes, behaviours to be linked to the social totality). The method of analysis of the message itself is different. The message is not only a product but also an object with a structured autonomy. We need to do an 'immanent analysis of the unique structure that a photograph constitutes' (Barthes 1977: 16). Even in this context of immanent analysis, the image is not isolated. It has to be read in combination with the text (titles, article or caption) which usually is attached to the image. There are, therefore, two planes of analysis: the linguistic part and the part made of lines, surfaces and shades. First, we have to analyze them separately, and only after this we can understand how they complement each other. As stated by Martine Joly

⁷⁰ See the case of the book *Grazie a voi: ricordi e stima – Fotografien zur Italienischen Migration in der Schweiz* (Alghisi et al. 2016). This work is the final result of an exhibition which uses family and associations archives of Italian migrants from 1966 to the 1980s. The exhibition was held in 2016 in the History and Ethnology Museum of St. Gallen, the Rosenegg Museum of Kreuzlingen and the Civic Museum of Rapperswil-Jona (March 5th – June 26th, 2016).

⁷¹ Society with its transformations manages to direct photographers' decisions in producing images (see Bourdieu 1965: 35; Brier 2007: 11; Burke 2001). The perception of the other (understood as migrant different from us) is one of these aspects (see Belting 2013; Brier 2007: 441 - 454; Burke 2001: 123; Rouille 2005). Paola Corti, Contemporary History Professor of the Università di Torino, stated that the public perception of specific events can profoundly be influenced by the media representation (Corti, 2010: 15).

(2015: 64), an image analysis cannot happen without interpretation of signs and symbols. There is a reference to elements relative to the culture and history of the viewer. The connotational message is symbolic and linked to the pre-existing knowledge and shared by the emission and reception parts. Stuart Hall (1977: 236) called it 'background consensus knowledge.' Without this knowledge, the reader or the writer (or photographer) could not 'recognize or understand the foreground' of stories. As a polysemic message, images can be divided into two parts: figurative or iconic signs and plastic signs. Together they are visual signs which are complimentary and distinct at the same time. These elements can help in understanding the signification of the message in combination with the linguistic aspect.

3. Findings

3.1. Number of photographs of seasonal workers in 1960s – 1970s European migration

In her book *Emigranti e immigrati nelle rappresentazioni di fotografi e fotogiornalisti*, Professor of Contemporary History of the University of Turin Paola Corti claims that the production of photographs of the post-war Italian diaspora is relatively smaller when compared to the trans-Atlantic migration of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century (Corti, 2010: 19). This involves both the private production of photographs (self - representation of migrants) and others commissioned to professional photographers by public and private institutions. This phenomenon is the consequence of the different characteristics of the two migration processes. As also claimed by Paola Corti (2010: 22), while the trans-Atlantic migration was further and more permanent (Gabaccia 2000), the same cannot be stated for the European diaspora of the 1960s and 1970s which was characterized by the seasonal workers' phenomenon. Distances were shorter and allowed migrants to return more frequently to their homes. In the trans-Atlantic diaspora, migrants wanted to be portrayed so they could then include the photographs in the letters that they sent home.⁷² Despite the fact that the post-war communication was still mainly through mail, technology partially substituted the use of letters. The need of producing photographs to be sent home was replaced by the use of telephones (Corti 2010: 21). In consideration of shorter distances, the communication of migrants with their country of origin was less frequent than in the trans-Atlantic diaspora. Living in countries like Switzerland, France or Germany allowed seasonal workers to return home more frequently, therefore it was less

⁷² For this aspect see (Blanc-Chaléard and Bechelloni 2007; Corti 2010: 256; Gibelli 1989; Ortoleva 1991: 122; Ostuni 1990; Sotelo Vásquez 2003: 488).

needed to communicate as it was done in the trans-Atlantic migration. The small production of images on the post-war migration produced by professional photographers is also due to the policy of the hosting countries like in the case of Switzerland and of the Italian government (Gabaccia 2000; Ricciardi 2018). The provisional nature of the Italian diaspora in Switzerland meant that the Swiss government paid less attention to the phenomenon and, therefore, it didn't promote any systematic photographic documentation as happened in the US almost a century before.⁷³ The massive Italian migration in the USA became a key subject in the sociological photographic research of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century (as in the case of L. W. Hine⁷⁴) never replicated in the same way in Europe in the post-war period. Italian governments supported the diaspora process as part of their development strategy.⁷⁵ Encouraging Italians to migrate was indeed one of the elements which could relaunch the Italian economy in this period. This plan was never officially declared and mostly hidden from the public. It was therefore purposely never largely documented with photographs and published in magazines or newspapers. The diaspora phenomenon could find space in the newsreels of official public propaganda but in those cases only the positive aspects were highlighted (in particular the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and Italy).⁷⁶ Furthermore Italian post-war photojournalism was not particularly developed and was still largely influenced by how the visual communication worked during the Fascist totalitarian regime mostly based on the propaganda and always government oriented (Bollati and Bertelli 1979: 177). While on the one hand, the post-war Italian photojournalism maintained a sort of conformity of the public image, on the other hand it partially tried to develop a new approach to visual representation with an autonomous point of view. The images produced in these years were aesthetically pleasant but often at the behest of political power (Corti 2010: 25).

3.2. Archetypical messages of migration

In 'The determinations of news photographs,' Hall (1972: 241), images are part of universal signs, archetypical messages. Visual signs are key elements for the establishment of familiar recognitions. I have found several 'familiar recognitions' in the images of *L'Illustré* from the years

⁷³ See (Riis 1971).

⁷⁴ For the work of Lewis W. Hine on Ellis Island see (Hine 1909; Rosenblum 1977; Trachtenberg 1977; Sundell 1986; Seixas 1987; Stange 1989; Kaplan 1992; Longolius 2003; Ureña 2009; Szlezák 2009, 2012).

⁷⁵ See (Ricciardi 2018; Vecchio, 2019).

⁷⁶ For the same situation but related to the Italian diaspora in Argentina, see the movie *Emigrantes* (Fabrizi 1949).

between 1960 and 1970. These iconic messages are the journey (health check-up point), the arrival (train station) and life conditions (working and living conditions). Iconic messages (Joly 2015: 31) like the suitcase, passports and forms to be filled are inducers of associations (Barthes 1977: 22) of the migratory experience. In this part of the chapter, I will demonstrate how these points are confirmed in illustrated articles published in *L'Illustré* in the same years. Many images in *L'Illustré* found their communication with the reader on the visual symbolism of the journey and the arrival to the hosting land. The journey and the arrival are often represented by trains and train stations. These images recall the rhythm and rituals of the transition of migrants in the arrival areas and the forms of control of the trans-Atlantic migration. They substitute what for the trans-Atlantic diaspora were Ellis Island in New York (fig. 49) and the *Hotel des Immigrantes* of Buenos Aires (fig. 50).

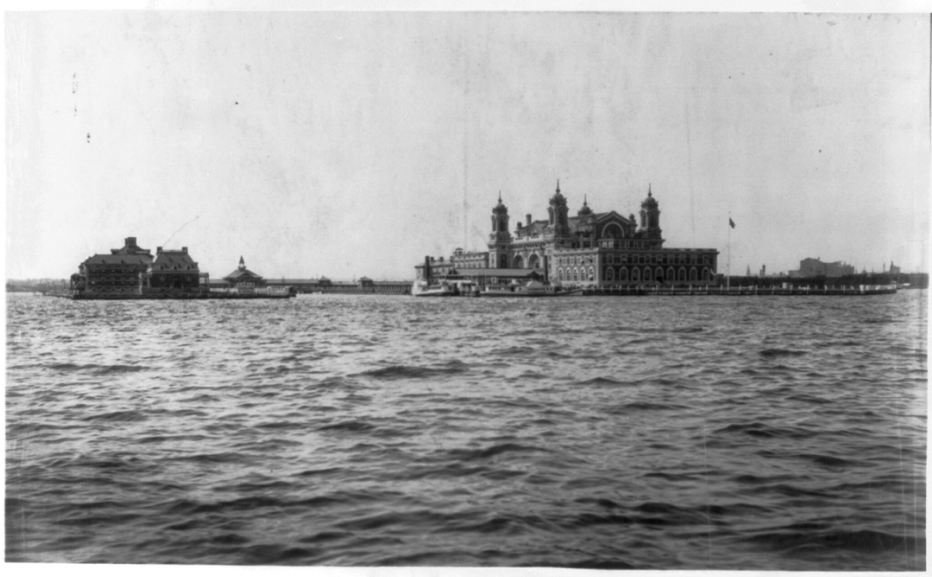


Fig. 49 – Unknown, *Ellis Island, New York Harbor*, 1903.



Fig. 50 – Unknown, *M.O.P.* – *Hotel de Inmigrantes* – *Capital* – *Frente oeste* – *Noviembre 1910*, 1910.

The images of the arrival in America are presented again in the post-war photographic iconography, with the steps and rituals of the migrant routine in being accepted. Police checks at customs are the symbol of contrast between the attempt of the migrant to reach social and financial independency and the bureaucracy of the hosting country. These police checks tried to regulate the migratory phenomenon. To find another example of this symbology, see the movie *The Immigrant* by Charlie Chaplin (Malioza 2017: 8:40 – 8:55). In this 1917 movie, a migrant is going from Europe to United States on a ship. At the entrance of the port of New York we see the Statue of Liberty while on the ship all the migrants get forced to stay behind a rope by a migration officer. The rope is the symbol of the limitation of freedom and, of course, it is in contrast with the meaning of the statue of Liberty. A good similar example can be represented by a photograph by Uliano Lucas (Ruppen, 2003: 30) (fig. 51).



Fig. 51 – Uliano Lucas, *Sottopassaggio_Unterführung*, 1963.

In a train station, there is a sign by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (*Ministero del Lavoro e della Previdenza Sociale*). It indicates where migrants have to stop. It is not by chance that the photographer has included that sign and placed it in the center of the composition. It represents the bureaucratic context in which the migrant lives. It is a context constituted by rules with which the migrants struggle to eventually find the coveted economic and social independency in the country which will host them. Similar symbols related to the arrival and the journey can be seen in the article of *L'Illustré* n. 19 of the 11th of May 1961 (Olivier 1961). This is the only article related to migration in Switzerland I have found in *L'Illustré* from the years 1960, 1961 and 1962 (fig. 52). It is a reportage by René Olivier entitled '*Habitants méridionaux des villes romandes: les italiens*' ('Southern inhabitants of the French-speaking Swiss cities: the Italians'). The first sentence is a description of how Italians look and act in the streets: they, the Italians, are 'short and dark, with black hair,' they walk around in groups, stop at the corner of a sidewalk, argue loudly with a lively tone of voice and animated gesture. It is 'us' and 'them.' Italians are here defined as seasonal workers. They arrived at the train station and are described as a picturesque mass with poorly tied backpacks, boxes of food, Chianti flasks, tight pants and jackets, pointed shoes. They are, as Olivier states, in Switzerland, the land of plenty. Olivier

interviews some of them. The reason to migrate is always the same: the need to work. In this article, these Italians are mainly from the Northern part of Italy (from Genoa and Bergamo). There is also an interview with the owner of a restaurant who is actually in favor of this migration: Switzerland needs, he claims, workers. The last remark of the article is to support the new migrants with ‘*un peu plus de cœur et un peu moins d'égoïsme.*’ There are three photographs to illustrate the article. The bigger one is a double-page vertical image. It represents travellers at a big train station of a city in the French-speaking part of Switzerland which could be Geneva or Lausanne (fig. 52). There are two men and two women standing next to their luggage. We understand that they are migrants from the content of the article and the caption. The sign behind one of the two women says that they are on a platform where a train is going to leave direction Brig-Milan. This image confirms what Paola Corti (2010: 34) states regarding the typical images produced about migration: trains and train stations are places linked to the departure and arrival of mass migration. René Olivier mentions the train station as an arrival point of their journey from Italy, after having passed through the health check in Brig.



Fig. 52 – *L'Illustré* – n. 19 of May 11th, 1961, pp. 24 – 25. Photographs by François Gonet (SCOPE).

This moment is documented by two photographs which document an article in *L'Illustré* no. 45 of the 5th of November 1964 (Senn 1964) (fig. 53). It is an article by Renée Senn which comments on the documentary *Siamo italiani* realized by Swiss Director Alexander J. Seiler in that same year.⁷⁷ A key movie in Swiss filmography which documents the Italian migration process to Switzerland and the *saisonnier* phenomenon, *Siamo Italiani* shows the arrival of migrants to the health check point in Brig or Chiasso, then when they continue to the city and the barracks where they will live for the next nine months, and eventually their work context.



Fig. 53 – *L'Illustré* – n. 45 of November 5th, 1964, p. 81.

The text of the article is very short but there are three photographs taken from the movie. The moment of the self-declaration to Swiss authorities is shown on the largest image of the article (fig. 54). There are migrants waiting in line in a corridor behind a glass door; they all look towards the viewer, waiting for their documents to be checked. A young man in the foreground is about to enter the room. He is the next person to be checked. His eyes are wide open. He

⁷⁷ We have to mention here the works of Alvaro Bizzarri *Il treno del sud*, *Lo stagionale*, *Il rovescio della medaglia* (Bizzarri 1970, 1972, 1974), *Braccia sì, uomini no* (Ammann & Burri, 1970) on the Schwarzenbach initiative by Peter Ammann and René Burri and the documentaries of Katharine Dominice (2010).

seems to be living an intense, emotional moment. It is one of the key moments of a long procedure which will decide whether or not he will be admitted to Switzerland. It represents a crucial change in his life: being able to cross the border and try to change his life to a better life.⁷⁸ The entire scene is played out by the look and the face.



Fig. 54 – *L'Illustré* – n. 45 of November 5th, 1964, p. 81.

Fifteen men are all looking in the same direction waiting to know what they have to do and what will happen to their future. The position of the young man in the foreground is dominant. He is placed by the author of the image in the right crossing line following the rule of thirds. With this

⁷⁸ It reminds me here the poem by Edmondo De Amicis from 1882 'Gli emigranti' (De Amicis 1897: 87):

*Cogli occhi spenti, con le guancie cave,
Pallidi, in atto addolorato e grave,
Sorreggendo le donne affrante e smorte,
Ascendono la nave
Come s'ascende il palco de la morte.*

*Dull-eyed, hollow-cheeked,
Pale, in sorrowful and grave act,
Supporting the distressed and dull women,
They ascend the ship
As one ascends the stage of death.*
(my translation)

trick, the viewer's attention is strongly directed on the sight of this young man, not forgetting, though, to look at what happens in the background. All these other men become like a texture, a backdrop against which the young man in the foreground is more visible. A moment of the health check is documented in one of the small images at the bottom of the page (fig. 55). The caption next to the image states that 'one of the most humiliating elements for the stranger who comes to work to Switzerland is the mandatory health check.' Naked men are in line. There is person in the foreground which creates a sort of a theatrical setting. In the background, among other five migrants, a boy holds in his right hand what could guarantee his identity: a passport. The reference to these types of documents is recurrent even in photographs related to migration from the beginning of the 20th century. Paola Corti (2010: 114) describes a photograph from the early years of 1900s which shows migrants landing on Ellis Island in New York. Loaded with baggage, these people are holding their identification documents in their mouths (fig. 56).



Fig. 55 – *L'Illustré* – n. 45 of November 5th, 1964, p. 81.



Fig. 56 – Unknown, *Immigrants with baggage and identification forms land on Ellis Island, New York, 1900 ca.*

These forms show that these individuals have an identity which is testified on paper and that they need these documents while entering the borders of the hosting country. Passports are icons of identification.

There are other elements that function as icons related to migration narratives. The suitcase is quite recurrent in photographs of migration. Already present on one of the photographs in *L'Illustré* n. 19 of May 11th, 1961, the suitcase is again included twice in an article published in 1965. In *L'Illustré* no. 14 of April 1st of that year, Georges Gygax (1965) presented a journalistic enquiry on seasonal workers in Switzerland in *L'Illustré*. The title was ‘*Travailleurs étrangers : le problème est-il résolu?*’ (fig. 57).



Fig. 57 – *L'Illustré* – n. 14 of April 1st, 1965, pp. 22 - 23.

In the text, Gygax reflects on the already mentioned above 1965 bilateral pact signed by Italy and Switzerland on the status of seasonal workers. The article is illustrated with four photographs, two of which are on the first page. They represent two Italian workers, one from Calabria (fig. 58) and the other one from Abruzzo (fig. 59). On the denotative level, icons of travel and memories are represented on the third and the fourth images which are reproduced on the following pages (fig. 57 and 60). On page. 23, three men, well dressed, with coats and hats, are concentrated in filling a form. One man, probably on his knees, seems to be in the act of copying some information from a document.



Fig. 58 – Unknown, *Travailleurs étrangers*, 1965.



Fig. 59 – Unknown, *Travailleur étranger*, 1965.

The other two stand behind him and follow what the man is doing. The square format of the image is diagonally divided in two parts: the three men are in the upper left corner; the lower right corner is occupied by worn suitcases. These items characterize the individuals. They are

props which tell us more about the three men. They tell us that they are travelling, migrating with their suitcases. The fourth image of the article includes suitcases as well. The photograph is taken in a place which seems to be a construction site (fig. 60). We can see barracks on the right and at the bottom of the picture. There are working tools and debris everywhere. In this desolate context, one man stands on the right-hand part of the photograph, holding a suitcase and stares at two other men who are walking away. They seem to leave because one of the two men has a suitcase in his right hand. As seen above, the suitcase is again the symbol of the migrant worker and represents his life and memory.⁷⁹ The caption at the bottom of the image creates the links with the text of the article suggesting the interpretation of the image: '*Celui qui part. Ceux qui restent*' (Those ones who are leaving. Those ones who are staying). We don't see their faces. We witness the scene as viewers not involved in the process. As in the famous image of Lewis W. Hine (fig. 61), suitcases are icons of migration.

⁷⁹ In *A Seventh Man*, Berger (Berger & Mohr 2010: 183) writes: 'In certain barracks the authorities have tried to forbid migrant workers keeping their suitcases in their sleeping rooms on the grounds that they make the room untidy. The workers have strongly resisted this, sometimes to the point of going on strike. In these suitcases they keep personal possessions, not the clothes they put in the wardrobes, not the photographs they pin to the wall but articles which, for one reason or another, are their talismans. Each suitcase, locked or tied round with cord, is like a man's memory. They defend their right to keep the suitcases.'



Fig. 60 – Unknown, *Celui qui part. Ceux qui restent*, 1965.



Fig. 61 – Lewis W. Hine, *Italian Family seeking lost baggage, Ellis Island*, 1905.

Photographs taken by Mauro Vallinotto (fig. 62) in Germany in 1973 and by Uliano Lucas (fig. 63) in Milan in 1970 confirm this point. In the first case, a migrant is portrayed while playing an

accordion in the street in Wolfsburg in front of a condominium and he is sitting on a suitcase. In the photograph taken by Lucas we see a migrant in front of Il Pirellone, the skyscraper symbol of the modern city development of Milan. He is holding a suitcase and a large box on his right shoulder. Suitcases function here again as icons with the denotation code of migration.



Fig. 62 – Mauro Vallinotto, *Wolfsburg, Germany. Condominiums for the Volkswagen workers*, 1973.



Fig. 63 – Uliano Lucas, *Migrant from Sardinia in front of the Pirelli skyscraper*, 1968.

Similar icons were repeated in other significant works on migration in Switzerland such as *A Seventh Man* (Berger & Mohr 2010). In a section dedicated to Geneva, Jean Mohr's photographs show workers who lived in barracks with basic facilities, small rooms with four beds, acceptable heating during winter time but inadequate noise reduction. There was no real leisure after work. For most of them, the rooms were the place to meet, play cards or listen to music. In both cases, in this book and the article, this reference to music is in common. Migrants brought records from their country of origin and play them in their room. The record is, as mentioned by Berger in *A Seventh Man* (Berger & Mohr 2010: 183), a talisman, which is contained in the migrants' memory, the suitcase. The articles that the migrant has brought with himself in the suitcase are objects which are their 'personal possessions, not the clothes they put in the wardrobes, not the photographs they pin to the wall, [...].' The suitcase is the migrant's memory. Berger mentions that the authorities had tried to forbid workers keeping their suitcases in their rooms but that they resisted this imposition. They don't want to put distance between themselves and the symbol of their memory. In the psychological analysis, Berger underlines the fact that the migrant worker lives mainly for his work (Berger & Mohr 2010: 175). The past and the future are represented by fixed images which do not develop. They cannot develop because migrants have no energy to do it. All their energy is dedicated to work and once they stop working all these static images haunt them. The images of their current and previous lives are very distant. He feels lost and working is the only relief. Images by Jean Mohr in the same book show the barracks (Berger & Mohr 2010: 169). In the reproduction of the contact sheet, we can see that the purpose of the photographer was to show the living context of the workers (fig. 64).

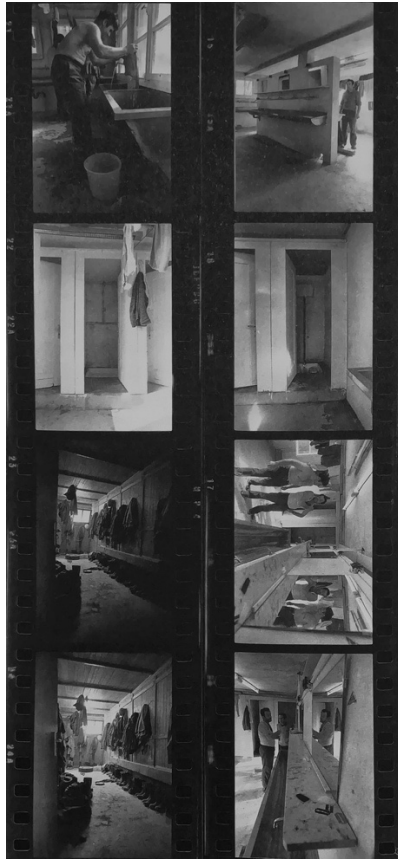


Fig. 64 – Jean Mohr, *Contact sheet*, 1975.

He pictured bathrooms, changing rooms, washing rooms and showers. The last images of pp. 172, 173 and 178 represent the rooms (fig. 65, 66, 67). They are decorated with photographs and posters pinned on the wooden walls. These images tell us something about the personality of the workers.



Fig. 65 – Jean Mohr, *Working and living conditions of migrant workers constructing a tunnel under Geneva, Switzerland, 1975.*



Fig. 66 – Jean Mohr, *Working and living conditions of migrant workers constructing a tunnel under Geneva, Switzerland, 1975.*



Fig. 67 – Jean Mohr, *Working and living conditions of migrant workers constructing a tunnel under Geneva, Switzerland, 1975.*

The image on p. 172 (fig. 65) represents the interior of a room with a bed on the left and a small cabinet on the right. In the middle of the vertical composition, there is a cupboard. Someone has pinned two posters on it. They represent Terence Hill (born Mario Girotti, Italian actor) on the left and a naked woman on the right. Terence Hill has a gun in his right hand and looks straight into the camera. He has a cold and highly self-confident expression. He is the representation of the strong man with no fear, something that probably the migrant worker admired and dreamt to be. The girl on the right has a sexy position and looks at the viewer with a smile on her face. She has an inviting attitude. As described by John Berger on p. 167 ‘several aspects of the self are denied by the migrant’s situation. He has no natural existence as a sexual being [...]’. Still Berger on p. 171 defines this condition as a situation which involves absence and sexual deprivation. The co-presence of the strong man and the sexy girl is clear again on the photograph on p. 173 (fig. 66). Here are four men in a room. Two of them are sitting on a bed and one of the two has a guitar. On the wall behind them there are two posters and a calendar. The poster on the left represents Clint Eastwood in his role as the good in ‘The Good, the Bad and the Ugly’ by Sergio Leone (1966). Next to it, there is the image of a half-naked girl. The calendar on the right shows five images of football players: the other passion of Italian migrants. All these images on the walls

contribute to the representation of the physical and psychological unstable condition of the workers in their dreams, their hopes and their memories. In the majority of the cases of the photographs from the years between 1969 and 1970, sitters don't look straight into the camera. They are portrayed as they are and apparently not conscious of the presence of the photographer. It is a documentation of facts with no apparent interaction with the photographer. As it will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the model of representation of Italian migrants of the 21st century in Switzerland is different. They are generally portrayed while smiling and looking straight into the lens. This gaze suggests an interaction with the subject and self-confidence of the sitters which doesn't seem to be present in these photographs from the last century. Migrants of the 1960s and 1970s in Switzerland were seasonal workers. Experiencing hard-working conditions and difficult living contexts in the barracks, they were lonely men with no families.

3.3 *Au pays de la solitude*: men without families in a foreign country

As also confirmed by Berger (Berger & Mohr 2010: 62), the 19th century diasporas were permanent while the 1960s and 1970s migration in Europe was temporary. Moving to a different country meant to live another life and is described as a metaphor of death (Berger & Mohr 2010: 181). The 1960s and 1970s migrations were mainly temporary (in Switzerland there were only nine-months work permits). As a consequence of being in a temporary condition, seasonal workers live in a cultural *utopos*, a non-place (Maiolino 2013: 156). Migrants have the perception of being imprisoned. They live this experience as being in a temporary space in which they are held far from their families, friends and familiar places. They know that they will eventually return to their homeland therefore they live in a state of apnea. Even the way they decorate the new space/prison where they will live for a few months is comparable to the way the prisoner decorates the jail.⁸⁰ In the articles of *L'Illustré* that I found from the decade between 1960 and 1970 women are not represented as much as men. In the majority of the images, we can see men alone in a non-integrated situation. In the photographs from these years, the presence of only men and clothing hanging next to them show the condition of men without family and women. Figures actually show that around 1950, women represented more than 50% of Italian migration to Switzerland (fig. 68) and in 1970 it was at 42% (Castro 2013: 60).

⁸⁰ 'Today the temporary migrant worker suffers a kind of imprisonment in a prison without frontiers' (Berger & Mohr 2010: 183).

Between 1945 and 1955, female Italian migrants to Switzerland constantly exceeded the male one.

‘But after work and on Sundays it is hellish. Other facts are relevant. That he is barred from natural communication by a language barrier. That his rejection by the indigenous population as a natural inferior denies his present being, and peremptorily throws him again and again back into the past. That his living conditions are humiliating. That he is sexually deprived’ (Berger & Mohr 2010: 200).



Fig. 68 – Unknown, *Seasonal workers in Switzerland in 1950*, 1950.

The lack of integration is confirmed by an article appeared in *L'Illustré* n. 14 of the 2nd of April 1970 (SCOPE, 1970) (fig. 69). The title of the article, ‘*Les étrangers – Au pays de la solitude,*’ and the photographs illustrating it support the point. As already anticipated in previous parts of this chapter, on the 7th of June 1970, Swiss citizens had to vote to decide if the number of foreigner workers in Switzerland had to be decreased down to the 10% of the entire population. This vote was the result of the so-called ‘Schwarzenbach initiative’ named after James Schwarzenbach, the representative of the Swiss right-wing party, the ‘Republican movement.’ Started in 1968, the initiative received the support of the 46% of the voting population of Switzerland. 54% of voters didn’t approve the initiative which was, then, refused. This article was published just a couple of months before the referendum. From the text we understand that the issue of seasonal workers was relevant for Swiss society, and it is quite clear that the article was a way to let people understand the position of the magazine in relation to the Schwarzenbach initiative: ‘*Ils font le bonheur et le malheur de la Suisse. On les appelle “saisonniers.” Ils arrivent chez nous avec le train de Pâques. Et repartent avec le train de Noël, les valises, des cartons et des baluchons sur les épaules. Ils ne*

*vivent pas dans les appartements les plus confortables. Ils ont de la peine à s'intégrer à la société helvétique qui n'est pas nécessairement celle de M. Schwarzenbach. Ils ont le mal du soleil...'*⁸¹



Fig. 69 – *L'Illustré* – n. 14 of April 2nd, 1970, p. 4.

The article is based on six interviews conducted in the French part of Switzerland. They all follow the same structure with always the same ten questions. The interviewees are asked ten questions related to their experience as migrants. The article is illustrated by two images. They are related to seasonal workers but, as stated in a note at the end of the last page, there is no connection between the images and the people interviewed. Both the images are environmental portraits. While one was taken in a domestic environment, the other one was shot during the lunch break on a construction site. The first photograph shows a man in a room (fig. 70).

⁸¹ 'They are the happiness and the misfortune of Switzerland. We call them 'seasonal workers.' They arrive with the Easter train. And they leave with the Christmas train, with their suitcases, boxes, and backpacks on their shoulders. They do not live in the most comfortable apartments. It is difficult for them to integrate in the Swiss society, which is not necessarily that one of Mr. Schwarzenbach. They miss the sun...' (my translation).



Fig. 70 – Unknown, *Au pays de la solitude*, 1970.

It is the room where he lives. There is a bed and a table. On the table there is an ashtray, a record player with a stack of vinyl records, a little mirror and magazines. Under the table there are four bottles of wine. Next to his jacket, posters of actresses and models are stuck on the walls. The man is laying down on the bed in the act of reading a magazine. A black strip on the eyes is used to protect his identity. The second image represents a man during a lunch break (fig. 71). He is sitting down on the ground, his back against the wall and his legs straight towards us. We understand that he is a worker from the soles of the shoes and the caption. He is chewing a bite that he gave to the sandwich he is holding in his left hand. On the ground, not far from him, there are cheese, a knife and a bottle. Both the images repeat the typical schemes of the post-war migrant representation: the context in which they are represented (domestic and work environment), symbols of loneliness (men alone with no family), their attachment to the homeland (posters, wine, records). The message is that they are human beings with feelings. They miss their land and dream about it. As Max Frisch (2009) stated, 'we asked for workers, we had people instead,' the suggestion of the article is for voters not to forget that the referendum is not on workers but on human beings. These migrants have their lives, their feelings, their dreams. One of the two captions claim that their spare- time activities are reading, music and photographs of the sun and the beach.



Fig. 71 – Unknown, *Au pays de la solitude*, 1970.

The second one states that they do not eat too often, and when they do it, they dream of their land between 12pm and 1pm (the lunch break). Recalling here what argued in chapter one about the photographs by Hine and Sherman which documented the trans-Atlantic migration, a similar symbolism was also used by post-war photographer to narrate the migration phenomenon in Europe. However, while the American photographs showed cases part of the integration process,⁸² the same does not seem to happen for the images of the 1960s and 1970s. Corti (2010: 81 - 82) states that this discrepancy was a consequence on the different perception of the migratory processes by the hosting society. The characteristics of the temporary migration of the 1960s and 1970s in Europe contributed to slow down the integration process of migrant workers. The migrants' children had to be left at the borders. This separation didn't contribute to integrate migrant workers into the Swiss society since families were divided.

⁸² See the case of fig. 7.



Fig. 72 – *L'Illustré* – n. 19 of May 11th, 1967, p. 93.

3.4 Les petits enfants de la frontière : divided families

One article from *L'Illustré* (n. 19 – 11th of May 1967) was dedicated to the issue of the migrants' divided families (Cascio, 1967) (fig. 72).⁸³ Five images show children at school, in the playground or simply in groups with friends (fig. 73, 74, 75, 76, 77). Children don't seem to be sad or depressed. They are actually smiling. The message delivered through these articles was that the situation was not complicated and that these kids were actually quite happy to stay in this place. These five images seem to contradict the actual situation explained in the article. We don't have to forget that the article was published in a Swiss-based magazine and the message for Swiss people probably had to be softened compared to the actual situation. In all the images published

⁸³ This article entitled 'Les petits enfants de la frontière' by Carlo Cascio is about the situation of Italian children left at the Swiss borders by their parents, seasonal workers in Switzerland. New Swiss laws did not allow Italian seasonal workers to take their families with them. Therefore, children were left in families or in religious institutes with dorms, refectories, school and playgrounds in Domodossola. It was a hard experience for both children and parents.

here there is always at least one person looking straight into the camera. As said above for other articles, this interaction manages to shorten the distance between the viewer and the photographed subjects. There are only two images where we see children and parents with serious expressions (fig. 78, 79). The strongest of the two is the final image, in the last page of the article. The horizontal frame represents a boy behind a window. The window is divided in three parts and the boy is standing behind the central frame. The glass seems to be misty. Well dressed, with a tie and a jacket, this boy is looking straight into the camera. He has on his face a worried but, at the same time, accusatory expression. His gaze creates a strong connection with the viewer, a strong empathy. The glass behind which he is portrayed functions as metaphor of his condition: this transparent layer represents the separation and distance from his parents. He wants to be with them but actually has to accept this condition of being displaced following the Swiss laws.⁸⁴



Fig. 73 – Unknown, *Les petits enfants de la frontière*, 1967.

⁸⁴ As stated by Sennett (2011), ‘displacement’ is the feeling that is usually combined with the foreigner’s experience. The foreigner who lives abroad in a condition of displacement cannot find himself. He has to construct himself a new identity and has to be creative in doing so (Sennett 2011: 76). Not moving abroad gives a sense of apparent stability (Sennett 2011: 62).



Fig. 74 – Unknown, *Les petits enfants de la frontière*, 1967.



Fig. 75 – Unknown, *Les petits enfants de la frontière*, 1967.



Fig. 76 – Unknown, *Les petits enfants de la frontière*, 1967.



Fig. 77 – Unknown, *Les petits enfants de la frontière*, 1967.



Fig. 78 – Unknown, *Les petits enfants de la frontière*, 1967.



Fig. 79 – Unknown, *Les petits enfants de la frontière*, 1967.

3.5 From the *foule bigarré et pittoresque*⁸⁵ to the Schwarzenbach years: the shift of perception of Italian migrants in Switzerland

In his book *Cacciateli! Quando I migranti eravamo noi*, Concetto Vecchio (2019) narrates the story about the Schwarzenbach initiative for the 1970 (7th of June) referendum on the regulated number of foreigners in Switzerland. One of the central points that Vecchio underlines is the growing intolerance towards Italian migrants from the 1960s to the 1970s. Exactly one month before the referendum on the Schwarzenbach initiative, Paolo Frignani and John Hunger published an article on Italian migrants in *L'Illustré* n. 19 of the 7th of May 1970 (Frignani and Hunger, 1970) (fig. 80). It is stated in the introduction that the Swiss will soon vote on the number of seasonal workers number in the country. As a consequence of that, Frignani and Hunger claim that migrants felt uncomfortable. The journalists are wondering what the situation in the Northern part of Italy was, where migrants from the South arrived to find a job and improve their quality of life. After reading the title and the introductory text, the first thoughts

⁸⁵ 'Colourful and picturesque crowd' (my translation).

one could have are that this article was published to justify the anti-Italian migration reaction of some Swiss people. If Southern Italians are not welcomed in the Northern part of Italy, their own country, how could be expected to see them well integrated in a foreign state like Switzerland? Should it be surprising, then, that the initiative Schwarzenbach was accepted? These are the core questions that seem to drive the spirit of this reportage. Images in this article are stronger than in all the other articles I have seen related to the migrants' condition in Switzerland. The title seems to confirm the above reasoning: '*Ceux du sud chez ceux du nord. Le débat est ouvert: comment résoudre le problème, nos envoyés spéciaux ont fait une extraordinaire enquête sur les Italiens du sud qui vivent dans le nord de leur pays. Ils sont pourtant chez eux...*'⁸⁶

The authors suggest that the solution to limit the Southern Italian migration in Switzerland is to help migrants in their own regions supporting and boosting the Southern Italian economy. In the final paragraphs of the text, Paolo Frignani and John Hunger are wondering how much time it will take for the Italian government to react to such a situation. There are seven images which illustrate the article (fig. 80, 81, 82 and 83). Only one represents people (fig. 84). It is an environmental portrait. It shows a seven-member migrant Southern Italian family. They are sitting around a table, and they are smiling. The man portrayed in the center of the frame is Domenico Martino, the worker who has to maintain the entire family with a small salary. He is described as demoralized, discouraged and old despite being only thirty-four years-old. In the caption he states that he has financial difficulties maintaining seven people. The other five photographs show the living context of this family. The introductory full-page photograph shows the house where this family is living (fig. 80). It is a dilapidated house surviving the 1970s Northern city expansion. We can see a skyscraper behind the old building. The caption claims that next to banks and skyscrapers in the modern and industrial Milan there are hovels (the original text literally uses the term 'masure') where Southern migrants live. In the same page, on the top left corner, an image reproduces a sign stuck on a door in Turin, the second main city of massive migration

⁸⁶ Those of the South among those ones of the North. The debate is open: how to solve the issue. Our special correspondents made an extraordinary reportage on Southern Italians who live in Northern Italy. Yet, they are at home...' (my translation).



Fig. 82 – Unknown, *Ceux du sud chez ceux du nord*, 1970.

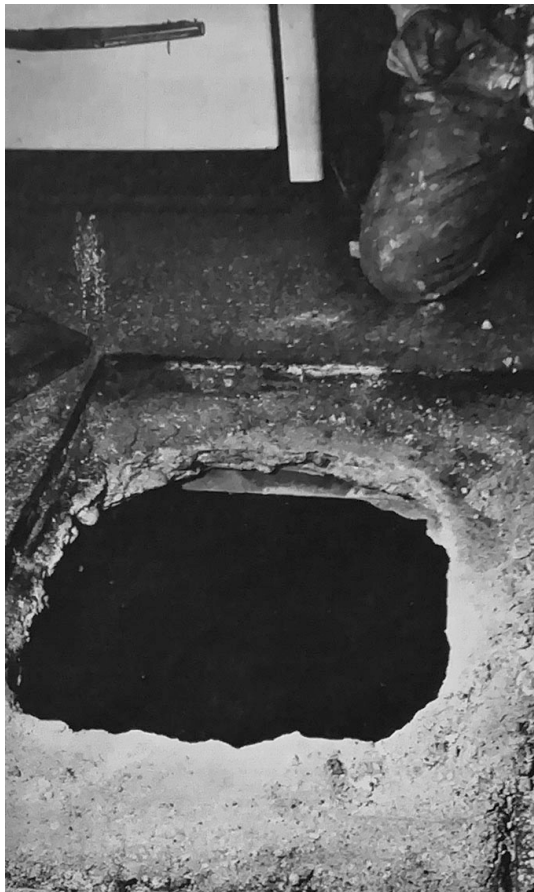


Fig. 83 – Unknown, *Ceux du sud chez ceux du nord*, 1970.

from the South. It says: ‘*affittasi camera – Meridionali esclusi.*’⁸⁷ The caption reports what was said by the owner of the room: ‘They are dirty, ignorant and dishonest.’ This image recalls some signs which appeared in Switzerland in the same years on shop doors: ‘Dogs and Italians not allowed.’⁸⁸ The rest of the images show ruined interiors with dis-repaired ceilings through which it rains. In the captions, the authors of the article underline how there is no heating system in these houses where the temperature in winter can reach -20° degrees. Another two images picture the abandoned state of a shantytown where the local church refused even to build a chapel dedicated to St. Mary.



Fig. 84 – Unknown, *Ceux du sud chez ceux du nord*, 1970.

These photographs show how the way of representing the same kind of people over time has changed and ‘that the world is not united by a smooth surface but by a complex network of frictions’ (Hackett 2016: 14). In the articles of *L’Illustré* from 1960 to 1970, we can see this change due to this ‘complex network of frictions.’ They evolve because society and its perception of the issue of the migrant workers changes. In the publications from the early 1960s, the migration process is represented as under control, then in the following years the situation is

⁸⁷ ‘Room to rent - Southerners people excluded’ (my translation).

⁸⁸ See (Durous 2010: 105) and (Mariani 2010)

perceived as more critical. The first articles represented Italian migrants as *'foule bigarrée et pittoresque'* (Olivier 1961: 24).⁸⁹ Photographs portray Italians working or at the train station, even smiling and chatting.⁹⁰ Approaching the years of the initiative Schwarzenbach, Italians are described as people who face serious issues in their integration process.⁹¹ These images demonstrate what was stated in the initial part of this chapter: familiar recognitions are built and follow ideological decisions (Barthes 1972; Hall 1972). '[...] images were generally designed to appeal to the sympathies of the viewers' (Burke 2001: 22). Swiss and Italian societies have changed, the profile of the migrant has changed. Contemporary migrants are people in translation (Hall, 1996) in globalized imagined communities (Anderson, 1991). Drawing on these considerations, the research will move in the next chapter to recent years and question how Italian migrants have been represented in photographic portraiture in illustrated hard-copy and online magazines in Switzerland in the years between 2006 and 2019.

⁸⁹ 'A colourful and picturesque crowd who was needed by the Swiss economy' (my translation).

⁹⁰ See the central image of (Olivier 1961: 24 - 25).

⁹¹ See the article of *L'Illustré*, April 14th, 1970.

Chapter 4 – 2006 – 2019 Photographic Representation of the New Italian Diaspora on the *Arc Lémanique*.

Introduction

After the analysis of images and text from the 1960s and 1970s, this chapter aims to analyse the results of research conducted with an identical methodology (research of articles and illustrations related to Italian migration to Switzerland) through the archives of *L'Illustré*, *L'Hebdo* and other online magazines issued between 2006 and 2019. The following chapter will summarize the findings and will develop two lines of reasoning. In the first part, the visual semiotic analysis will support the narratives of this new migration phenomenon and will compare it to the former diaspora of the 1960s and 1970s. Secondly, the new Italian diaspora will be framed in a historical and sociological context with the support of scholars' theories. The different profiles of the new Italian migrants will be identified. It is within the intersection of these two reasonings that I will move and develop my practice which has also been integrated with semi-structured interviews that I have conducted with the subjects involved in the research. The questions that the present research has tried to answer are if there is really a new Italian diaspora phenomenon, if Italians are still considered 'migrants' by the public opinion and on visual media in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, who are the new 'migrants' and how the results of this research can be reflected through my practice. While the new Italian diaspora is a very complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that is not really properly visually represented through the media, the aim of my practice is to find ways to re-think photographic portraiture of contemporary Italian migrants who are resident in the area along the *arc lémanique*.

As stated by Valeria Lai (2014), researcher of the Università La Sapienza in Rome, on the Rapporto Fondazione Migrantes in relation to her work on photographic imagery of new Italian migrants in the media, images are part of wider debates and reflections on social and cultural phenomena. In years of globalization, these images support messages which are able to hinder or to promote changes that are happening in contemporary society. The media manages to develop a common shared symbolic environment. Through the analysis of pictures of migrants, it is possible to understand on a bigger scale how the public imagination is shaped, the politics of the 'other' and how society reacts to certain phenomena. Are the changes in representation strategic? If we agree with Bleiker (2001: 515) that meanings are made public through representations, some constructions are made visible to the public. Representations help to develop

categorizations of people and events and are part of the collective process of assigning meanings. 'They form the context for policy making and implementation' (Bleiker 2001: 1017). To build a representation is an act of power and this action is fundamentally political.⁹² The symbols, icons, messages connected with images influence society and the interpretation of specific issues and subjects. In an article on the impact of images on the public opinion's perception of refugees, Heather Johnson⁹³ (2011) claims that the social world of symbols and signs forms knowledge which will 'enable or disable later processes of dominance and resistance' and it is, therefore, very important in the society formation process. These actions will influence how society will interact with particular categories of people. In the case of seasonal workers in the 1960s and 1970s, was the political context influenced by the perception of images or, on the contrary, the political context influenced the public perception of images? How were they produced? Are these questions still valid today? Representation is not only in spoken or written forms but also, especially in these days, through images which operate on different levels. An image communicates not only on a language level,⁹⁴ but on the perception and emotional level (Johnson 2011: 1016). One reacts immediately with emotional responses to inputs like fears, feelings of compassion, etc., that an image can provoke. These images are read by the viewer as the realistic representation of the world (Johnson 2011: 1017). The examination of visual representation of new Italian migrants combined with an analysis of the texts associated with the images allow an understanding of the change of the perception of Italian migration in Switzerland and help to frame it in an historical context. The next paragraph will explain why the time frame between 2006 and 2019 has been chosen for the research of images on Italian migration to Switzerland.

1. Why 2006 – 2019?

The period between 2006 and 2019 witnesses a revamped activity of migration from Italy to Switzerland similar in numbers to the 1960s – 1970s diaspora. After the Schwarzenbach initiatives and the oil crisis of the 1970s, Italian migration to Switzerland decreased (Ricciardi

⁹² This connects with the reason why I am analyzing images published in magazines, who usually use professional photographers and follow editorial lines in specific historical and political contexts.

⁹³ Heather Johnson is Senior Lecturer of International Studies at Queen's University in Belfast.

⁹⁴ R. Barthes (1977: 28 – 29) explains that '(...) the photograph is verbalized in the very moment it is perceived; better, it is only perceived verbalized (if there is a delay in verbalization, there is disorder in perception, questioning, anguish for the subject, traumatism, following G. Cohen-Seat's hypothesis with regard to filmic perception). From this point of view, the image - grasped immediately by an inner metalanguage, language itself - in actual fact has no denoted state, is immersed for its very social existence in at least an initial layer.'

2018: 2201). With the beginning of the 2007 – 2008 global economic crisis, Italy experienced a large new diaspora phenomenon to the traditional countries of migration (Cacciatore and Pepe 2019). Often addressed as a *brain drain* phenomenon, academic studies (Caneva 2016, Franchi 2017, Pugliese 2018) have stated that this narrative is over-simplistic and needs to be re-examined and updated. This diaspora in the age of globalization has new and complex layers (Cacciatore and Pepe 2019: 507). From 2006 to 2019 Italians resident abroad registered on AIRE (Anagrafe Italiana Residenti all'Estero) increased of 70.2%, growing from 3,1 million to almost 5.3 million (Bonifazi 2017: 32; Sanfilippo 2017: 366). In January 2019 the exact number was 5.288.281 (Licata 2019: 4). Almost the half of them came from the Southern part of Italy (48.9%). People between 35 and 49 years old were the most represented group (23.4%) being the majority of them men (57.6%). The level of education is medium-high (52.6% has at least a diploma). The largest communities of Italians resident abroad in Europe are in Germany (764.000), in Switzerland (623.000), in France (422.000) and in the UK (327.000).⁹⁵ These numbers might be higher considering that the Schengen agreement has guaranteed European citizens free circulation throughout Europe. This is not the case for extra-Schengen people moving to Europe. As a consequence of this phenomenon, the calculation of Italian migrants who decided not to register to AIRE is complicated. Many Italian migrants could actually live in foreign European countries without being officially registered on the Italian official records of residents abroad. Hosted by friends or relatives migrated before them, these not-registered Italian migrants tried to find an occupation through personal connections. In an interesting study on Italian migrants in Basel, Switzerland, conducted by Cristina Franchi (2017), one fourth of the subjects involved in the research were not registered on AIRE and therefore did not appear on official data. Figures, thus, show only part of the emerged migrants, probably only those ones who had already a job once arrived in the hosting country. Despite of all these considerations, the public debate has tended to concentrate since 2007 on the *brain drain* phenomenon, the loss of talented, well-educated young professionals or academic.⁹⁶

The causes are usually directed to the economic crisis and the unemployment which it generates. In general, as stated by Caneva (2016), it seems that this process is not considered as 'migration' because it doesn't have the characteristics of the past and of the global migration from Africa and

⁹⁵ See (Licata 2019).

⁹⁶ The *brain drain* phenomenon has been studied by Docquier and Rapoport 2007; Dahinden 2008; Friedrich and Schultz 2008; Cassar 2010; Dequiedt 2011; Boeri, Brucker, and Doquier 2012. Specifically, on Italian migration see, Beltrame 2007; Tirabassi and Del Pra' 2014; Minneci 2015; Tintori and Romei 2017; Franchi 2017.

Western Asia to Europe. A generally accepted opinion (Caneva 2016; Franchi 2017; Pugliese 2018) claims that there is an identification of the past migration of the 1960s and 1970s as a migration of poor people in contrast with the contemporary migration of well educated, talented, young Italians with a distinct separation between mobility and migration.

According to the United Nations (2021), migrants are those people who moved from their country of residence to another one or within a state away from the place of residency.⁹⁷

Following this definition, all Italians who permanently moved abroad should be considered migrants. Migration discourses, however, tend to include recent Italian migration in a different context of European mobility (Smith and Favell 2006; King and Skeldon 2010; Recchi 2013; McKay 2015; Dubucs et al. 2016). There are two lines of reasoning for this: the first one is dealing with migration from extra-European countries and the second one with European migrants within Europe. In the first case, the attention is on migration from the South to the North of the world, populations which are culturally different ones from the ones of the hosting countries. In this case the main point is the integration process of these different cultures. In the case of European mobility, the pivotal point is about the possibility for Europeans to move easily and find job opportunities otherwise not available in their country of origin. This mobility justifies the existence of the European Union and supports the work industry of the hosting countries. This kind of mobility has been supported since the beginning of the 1990s with programs like Socrates and Erasmus⁹⁸ which help students to have experience abroad and reinforce mobility of possible qualified work force. In this sense we could argue that we are talking about a certain type of individuals: European people who have the right to travel and settle down in hosting countries where they are accepted with almost the same rights as the local citizens without any specific discrimination. Apparently, it seems that there are two different kinds of migrations which are called by different names: extra-European migrants without a large variety of rights and European migrants who have the advantage of all the European equivalencies. In the second case, these individuals recall a different kind of European mobility

⁹⁷ “The UN Migration Agency (IOM) defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is’ (United Nations 2021). I am aware of the different meanings that the term migrant can assume (see the case of refugee, expat, immigrant, emigrant) but I included all these categories in the UN definition of ‘migrant’ to maintain consistency and clarity in the reasoning.

⁹⁸ The Erasmus (later substituted by Erasmus +) (Erasmus + 2021) and the Socrates (Cordis 2014) Programs were developed by the European Commission starting in 1987 and in 1994. Both programs intended to facilitate the students’ mobility within the European Union.

which is not led by work necessity but rather by other choices. Pichler (2006) and Quadrelli (2014) call these migrants 'cittadini mobili' (mobile citizens). They are migrants who are more educated than migrants of the past, moving abroad for choices which defer from the economic one. These people are still connected with their country of origin and also easily integrate in the society of the hosting country. Caneva (2016: 202) states that they are representatives of a new kind of migration (Smith and Favell 2006; King and Skeldon 2010) which is a transnational *habitus* (Bourdieu 1986). These migrants are not listed in the group of traditional migration as it was known in the past or in these days from the Southern to the Northern part of the world. Contemporary historiographical scholarship production has identified three big Italian migration processes: the big diaspora of the end of the 19th century, the period between the first and the second world war and the diaspora from the end of the second world war until the 1970s. Scholars research the analogies and differences between the diasporas of the past and contemporary migrations. Pelaggi (2011) claims that in the past Italians migrated for economic reasons and the country to where they wanted to migrate was chosen based on the facility to access it and the presence of *catena migratoria* (chain migration) (Pugliese 2018: 1688).⁹⁹ Modern migration is multi-faceted and characterized by different typologies of causes which bring people to migrate (better quality of life, study, family, work) (Tirabassi and del Prà 2014; Caneva 2016). These elements make it different from migration of the past which was mainly economic (Ricciardi 2018). While the migrant of the past was, following the public opinion's stereotype¹⁰⁰ poor with a suitcase at the train station, the new diaspora seems to be more fluid, with a larger mobility, more open to move in search of a higher quality of life. Despite these differences, other scholars add that they find strong similarities between the old and modern diasporas. In their view, migrants were in both cases part of transnational social networks which characterized the transoceanic migration of the end of the 19th century. In their opinion, this transnational dimension is not a specific, unique characteristic of the modern globalized society but existed already in the past. (Gabaccia 2000; Corti 2011a). According to Caneva (2016), the characteristics of the global contemporary society with accessible mobility, low costs flights, and no border restrictions within the EU have modified some aspects of the modern diaspora if compared to the same one of the past. One clear aspect,

⁹⁹ 'Chain migration can be defined as that movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation, and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social relationships with previous migrants' (McDonald and MacDonald 1964: 82).

¹⁰⁰ See the photographs published on *L'Illustré* in the 1960s and 1970s discussed in the previous chapter.

also confirmed by my practice and interviews, is that it is not possible to identify the new diaspora simply as a *brain drain phenomenon*. It is important to go beyond these stereotypes and understand that the reality is more complex than one might initially think. There has been a tendency by the media to simplify the situation and identify the reasons for this new diaspora with the incompetence of Italian politicians who badly manage the country and not with a more general economic and socio-cultural crisis (Gjergji, 2015, 17). While a *brain drain* phenomenon has really taken place, we have to acknowledge that there are also other aspects which are a consistent part of this new Italian diaspora.

Studies show that these migrants are representative of innovative forms of migration (Smith and Favell 2006; King and Skeldon 2010; Caneva 2016) with a larger spatial mobility which involves different social classes (Faist 2013: 1637 - 1638; Recchi 2013). European citizens are allowed to move within the European Union borders with an easy mobility and access to jobs and social opportunities. However, as reflected on articles published in Swiss magazines in the period between 2006 and 2019, this does not seem to be the case for migrants coming from countries less rich than the hosting nations.¹⁰¹ Romanian or Portuguese migrants, for example, while having the same rights as other EU citizens seem to have more complicated dynamics of integration similar to those ones that Italian migrants had to face when they moved to the Swiss Confederation in the 1960s and 1970s. The migration and mobility phenomenon is more complex than we could initially think. The European Union is not a monolithic entity but more like a structure which reacts to the global migration phenomenon in different ways depending on the categories of migrants. Therefore, the recent Italian diaspora in Europe has to be studied in light of broader reflections on mobility and globalization. The analysis of the photographic representation in Swiss magazines from 2006 to 2019, which is developed in the next paragraph, can help to understand this complex phenomenon and introduce the understanding of different profiles of the new Italian migrants.

2. Visual semiotics image analysis

The aim of this research was to find journalistic articles related to migration to Switzerland with a particular attention to the recent Italian diaspora. While considering the historical and ideological context to understand the larger frame (Hall 1972: 62; Barthes 1977: 28), Gillian Dyer (1982) checklist for a semiotics analysis was used. This list, also mentioned by Gillian Rose

¹⁰¹ This point will be demonstrated in the next pages of this chapter.

(2001), includes fundamental elements of semiotics analysis of other scholars (Barthes 1977; Boltanski 2018) and was considered quite exhaustive in all its aspects (representation of bodies, representations of manner, representations of activity, props and settings). In the process of image analysis, the position of the camera¹⁰² was also taken into consideration. To continue the research explained in the previous chapter, recent copies of *L'ILLUSTRÉ* and *L'Hebdo* were included in this new study. Both weekly French-speaking general interest magazines, *L'Illustré* and *L'Hebdo* were launched in different moments by the same publisher in Lausanne.¹⁰³ While *L'Illustré* was available in its hard copies in the publisher's archives in Lausanne, *L'Hebdo* was only accessible as online archive provided by Lausanne University. During the research, another two interesting articles which dealt with the new Italian diaspora in Switzerland were found. The first one was published in the French-speaking Swiss edition of the *Readers Digest* from 2012 and it was also illustrated on the front cover of the magazine (Favre 2012). The second one was written in 2016 on the Geneva newspaper *La Tribune de Genève*.¹⁰⁴ In her article 'Les Italiens reviennent s'installer en Suisse,' journalist Lucie Monnat highlights how, after a moment of decrease, Italians were moving back in considerable numbers to the Swiss confederation. To illustrate the article, Lucie Monnat used some of my preliminary research photographic portraits of recent Italian migrants and second-generation Italian migrants in Switzerland. An online investigation through the archives of Bilan.ch (Vakaridis 2016) and Swissinfo.ch (Ottaviani 2016a; 2016b; 2016c) was also conducted.

In the case of *L'Illustré*, fourteen years of publications were analyzed (from 2006 to 2019). In the 714 issues there are fifty articles dedicated to migrants, refugees and/or clandestines. The term 'refugee' was used nine times, while 'migrants' five and 'clandestines' four times. Other new ethnicities were included in the debate about migration. While Portuguese and French migrants were also involved in the old diaspora, new nationalities appeared for the first time in this magazine. The recent migration phenomenon lists people from Iraq, Kosovo, Equador, Tunisia, Nigeria, China, Erythrea, Afghanistan, Georgia, Moldova. This is evident in the articles on

¹⁰² Lower, equal or higher position of the camera in relation to the subject's eyes.

¹⁰³ *L'Illustré* was founded in Lausanne in 1921 and is still active. *L'Hebdo* was launched in Lausanne in 1987 and closed in 2017.

¹⁰⁴ *Tribune de Genève* - May 17th, 2016, p. 4. 'Le Italiens reviennent s'installer en Suisse.' Article by Lucie Monnat and photographs by Francesco Arese Visconti (fig. 95).

*L'Illustré*¹⁰⁵ and confirmed by the official data of the Secrétariat d'État aux migrations (SEM 2021).

Only one article was directly dedicated to Italian migration (Clot 2010). Published in the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Schwarzenbach initiative from the 1970s (n. 42 – 20th of October 2010, 'Les années Schwarzenbach, 40 ans après.' pp. 46 - 54), this article was written by Philippe Clot (2010) and illustrated with old black and white photographs taken in the 1970s by Mario Del Curto (fig. 85). These images repeat the symbols found on the images analysed in the previous chapter of this research: presence of the suitcase as icon of migration (p. 46 - 47), health check (p. 48), life in the barracks (p. 49 - top), men alone (p. 49 - middle) and without families and women (p. 49 - bottom). The article insists on the difficulties that these migrants encountered once they moved to Switzerland: 'honte' (shame) and 'ressentiment' (resentment) are the words used by the author to explain how migrants describe their daily experiences in Switzerland. The article is completed with three stories of migrants who still live in Switzerland and eventually were naturalized Swiss. One of them, Pietro Franco Longo, is Italian (fig. 86). In his color portrait, he represented standing next to a net in a tennis ground. The caption states that he is responsible for events at the local tennis club. He is photographed full body in what it seems to be a comfortable and confident position. He is looking straight into the camera, positioned at a lower height. The lower position of the camera gives authority to the subject portrayed and supports the idea that he is probably integrated into the hosting society, and he is not in a weak position. The facial expression with a large smile seems to support this point.

¹⁰⁵ See *L'Illustré* n. 11 March 14th 2007, n. 14 April 4th 2007, n. 15 April 11th 2007, n. 6 June 6th 2007, n. 5 January 30th 2008, n. 32 August 6th 2008, n. 38 September 16th 2009, n. 7 February 17th 2010, n. 49 December 8th 2010, n. 1 January 5th 2011, n. 6 February 9th 2011, n. 16 April 20th 2011, n. 9 February 29th 2012, n. 35 August 29th 2012, n. 23 June 5th 2013, n. 45 November 5th 2014, n. 22 May 27th 2015, n. 23 June 23rd 2015, n. 25 June 17th 2015, n. 16 April 20th 2016, n. 23 June 8th 2016, n. 23 June 7th 2017, n. 37 September 13th 2017, n. 11 March 14th 2018, n. 24 June 12th 2019, n. 44 October 30th 2019.



Fig. 85 – Mario Del Curto, *Arrivée à Genève*, 2010.



Fig. 86 – Mario Del Curto, *Pietro Franco Longo*, 2010.

The research on the online archives of *L'Hebdo* at the University of Lausanne on was limited to twelve years between 2006 and 2017, the closing year. The analysis included, therefore, 612 issues. Eighteen articles related to migration (refugees, integration, foreigners) were found. Only two were dedicated to the new Italian diaspora. All the articles are illustrated with photographs. In an article from November 2012,¹⁰⁶ journalist Matthieu Ruf reflects on returning second generation migrants.¹⁰⁷ Second-generation migrants once lived for a certain number of years in the country of origin of their parents, before deciding to return to the place where they were born and grew up, the hosting country of migration of their parents. Matthieu Ruf describes different experiences of people from Spain, Portugal and Italy. As stated by Susanne Wessendorf (2010), second-generation Italians have similar cultural and socio-economic backgrounds but have different reactions to their parents' homeland or to Switzerland. There are three different reactions. For some second-generation Italians it is not important to feel a sense of being part of this group but rather to develop their own relationships with people with different origins (Wessendorf 2007b). For others, it is fundamental to be an active part of the second-generation Italians group but they cannot see themselves living in a country which is not Switzerland. Others decide to try to move back to their parents' homeland. This last case represents a minority which is probably influenced by their parents' feeling of nostalgia. This is the group of people to which this article is related. The majority of Southern Italian migrants of the 1960s-1970s were farmers or trades people. Their children who grew up in Switzerland were well integrated in the Swiss society due to the strong support of families, the emphasis given by their parents to education and to their socio-economic achievement. These second-generation Italians have a higher level of education than their parents (Bolzman, Fibbi, and Vial 2003b; Juhasz and Mey 2003; Mey, Rorato and Voll 2005). Italian 'nostalgia' in parents was strong and evolved in the so-called 'key scenario' (Ortner 1973: 1339). They had strong transnational relations with the homeland which developed through several visits every year. Second-generation Italians followed them and loved this experience since it was often part of their holidays. In this way, they generated a sense of belonging. Even though they are rare cases, there are second-generation Italians who decided to move back to Italy and live there. This seems to have depended on how much they have been influenced by the feelings of 'nostalgia' transmitted through their parents and by how much they

¹⁰⁶ N. 46 – November 15th, 2012 – pp. 42 – 45 - 'Immigrés de père au fille.' Article by Matthieu Ruf and photographs by Sedrik Nemeth.

¹⁰⁷ On this topic see Seiler 2002; Wessendorf 2007; Wessendorf 2010.

are integrated in the Italian context. These are two different kinds of experiences. In the first case, individuals had an idealized image of Italy and had difficulties integrating. This is the case of Filomena Giannini, the woman portrayed next to her husband, Enzo Lasprogata, in the article of November 2012, n. 46 of *L'Hebdo* (Ruf 2012) (fig. 87). Originally from Avellino, a city in the South of Italy, Filomena and Enzo have decided to go back to Switzerland, the country which hosted her father as seasonal worker in the 1960s and 1970s. Born in Switzerland, Filomena had decided, once an adult, to move to Italy because of the strong sense of belonging to the Italian community but realized after a few years that the living and working conditions in Switzerland were better. In the photograph, Filomena and Enzo are portrayed in their apartment in Switzerland. They are sitting in their armchairs. They look straight into the camera. Filomena and Enzo have a glimpse of a smile on their faces, a sign of self-confidence and relaxation. The photograph is taken from a lower position than their eyes and puts the couple in a dominant position to the viewer. This point gives the portrayed subjects a sense of authority which supports the idea of self-confidence. The same idea returns in the portraits of Italian migrants which illustrate another article of *L'Hebdo* of July 2015 (Lietti and Tauxe 2015)¹⁰⁸ (fig. 88 – 92) and on the online publications of Bilan.ch (fig. 96) and Swissinfo.ch (fig. 97 – 99). On *L'Hebdo* of July 2015, the article describes the experience of foreigners who are living and are integrated in Switzerland. The texts are illustrated with twenty-two colour portraits. Italians are the most represented nationality with five images. Other migrants are from Kosovo, India, Chile, Russia, Benin, Spain, Iran, Macedonia, Australia, Turkey, USA, Greece, Cameroon, Senegal, Hungary, Algeria and Kurdistan. The research on the web on Bilan.ch and Swissinfo.ch produced three pages with articles and photographs on the new Italian diaspora. The first one is from November – December 2016 on swissinfo.ch (Ottaviani 2016a; 2016b; 2016c). This dossier is curated by Jacopo Ottaviani, Daniele Grasso, Sara Moreira and Katerina Stavroula. The photographs are by Jacopo Ottaviani. The title is *Generation E: histoires des jeunes migrants*. The article describes stories of young Italian migrants in Switzerland. The second result of the research is an article from the 20th of May 2016 on bilan.ch (Vakaridis 2016). The article is entitled *Les jeunes Italiens affluent en Suisse*. This page by Mary Vakaridis and photograph by Dominic Büttner is about the new profile of Italian migrants in Switzerland.

¹⁰⁸ N. 31 – 30th of July 2015 – p. 6 – 29 'Ces étrangers qui nous accueillent en Suisse' - Dossier coordinated by Anne Lietti and Chantal Tauxe (Lietti and Tauxe 2015). Photographs by Nicolas Righetti, Sarah Jacquemet, Lea Kloos and Jean-Christophe Bott.



Fig. 87 – Unknown, *Filomena Giannini and Enzo Lasprogata in an interior color portrait*, 2012.



Fig. 88 – Nicholas Righetti, *Roberto Capponi*, 2015.



Fig. 89 – Jean-Christophe Bott, *Luciano Barisone*, 2015.



Fig. 90 – Sarah Jacquemet, *Emanuele Zanchi*, 2015.



Fig. 91 – Lea Kloos, *Mauro Botazzi*, 2015.



Fig. 92 – Lea Kloos, *Antonio Antonazzo*, 2015.

Special attention is deserved by the front cover and an article in the Swiss French speaking edition of the *Readers Digest* of July 2012.¹⁰⁹ This article and the images which illustrate (fig. 93 – 94) it summarize most of the characteristics of the new Italian migrants' profiles which will be described later in this chapter. The title of the article, which is also showcased on the front page, is 'Le nouvel Eldorado – La Suisse, îlot de prospérité pour les Européens du Sud.'¹¹⁰ Journalist Alexis Favre confirms that starting from 2007 Southern Europeans decide to migrate to Switzerland in view of the economic crisis of their countries. The Swiss Confederation is seen as an island of prosperity by young Italians.

Veronica and Giovanni are a couple in their thirties. They appear young and fit in keeping with the general understanding of the profile of Italian new migrants. In these photographic portraits, both subjects are standing on a balcony with their bodies facing the light coming from the inside of the apartment. The woman is in the front of the image. This composition seems to give the woman a stronger visual impact and attracts the attention of the viewer: it goes against the traditional idea of the male-centered Italian society where women seemed to have a secondary role. In this case the photographer communicates the evolution of the modern Italian society in which women are more conscious of their important role. We can also read in the text that Veronica is from the South of Italy and these characteristics are even more evident in that part of the country according to the traditional narrative. Giovanni and Veronica have a confident expression on their faces: the slight smile of the man in the background is repeated and reinforced on the face of the woman in the foreground. It is a smile which communicates a sense of relaxation and self-confidence. The fact that both subjects are looking straight into the camera underlines this perception and creates a direct link with the viewer. They have no props but their clothing assumes an important value in the context of the topic. In her casual jacket, the woman does not repeat the stereotype of the housewife. On the contrary, the elegant coat that she wears fits the idea of a woman who is integrated into modern society. The couple is photographed on the balcony, in a high position. From there it is possible to see the city in the background. Veronica and Giovanni are portrayed in a position which shows that they live in an apartment and have found their place in the city. Similar concepts are expressed on the double-page image which introduces the article. In this case, the woman is on the left and has a relaxed position with

¹⁰⁹ July, 2012 – Front cover and pp. 54 – 55. 'Le nouvel Eldorado.' Article by Alexis Favre – Photographs by Eddy Mottaz

¹¹⁰ 'The New Eldorado – Switzerland, prosperity island for Southern Europeans.'

her elbows on the balcony. The man has his right arm open towards his partner. This gesture creates a link between the two individuals. Giovanni has the other hand in his left pocket. As seen on the front cover of the magazine, again in this photograph the couple has a facial expression which shows self-confidence and no fear of the future. The use of the light and the signs used in these images are very similar to the photographic style of the images seen before on the recent articles of *L'Illustré* and *L'Hebdo*.



Fig. 93 – *Readers Digest* – July, 2012, front cover.



Fig. 94 – *Readers Digest* – July, 2012, pp. 54 – 55.



Fig. 95 – *La Tribune de Genève* – May 17th, 2016, p. 4.



Fig. 96 – Dominic Büttner, Paolo Zenoni and Laura Neri. *Venus d'Italie*, 2016.



Fig. 97 – Jacopo Ottaviani, *Elisa Lovecchio, 27 ans de Pisa, 2016.*



Fig. 98 – Jacopo Ottaviani, *Alessandro Fammartino, 39 ans de Turin, 2016.*



Fig. 99 – Jacopo Ottaviani, *Stefano Da Col 30 ans de Latina, 2016.*

3. Findings

After the collection of information for this research which involves the years 2006 - 2019, there are four main findings that can be highlighted. In the first stance, while there is a large number of articles dedicated to the migration process of other nationalities¹¹¹ (fig. 100), there are not many articles which directly deal with the new Italian diaspora of the years between 2006 and 2019. This is a noticeable difference if compared with what was found in *L'ILLUTRÉ* from the years between 1960 to 1970.¹¹² Despite the fact that the new Italian migration phenomenon was relevant in the period between 2006 and 2019 (Caneva 2016; Bonifazi 2017: 32; Franchi 2017; Sanfilippo 2017: 366; Pugliese 2018; Cacciatore and Pepe 2019; Licata 2019: 4;), only six articles in total related to the recent Italian diaspora to Switzerland were found.¹¹³ The reason of this lack of production could be understood as the general loss of interest towards the Italian diaspora. If we agree with Stuart Hall (1972: 237) and Valeria Lai (2014: 6866) that the news is interesting if dealing with new things and newsworthy, probably the Italian diaspora is not perceived by the Swiss society (including publishers of magazines) as a new thing.

¹¹¹ Fifty articles were found only in *L'Illustré* on legal and illegal migrants and/or refugees from Ecuador, Kosovo, Tunisia, Nigeria, China, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Georgia and Moldova.

¹¹² As described in the previous chapter, in *L'Illustré* between 1960 and 1970 (572 issues) I found eight articles related to the Italian diaspora.

¹¹³ The article on *L'Illustré* n. 42 of the 20th of October 2010, 'Les années Schwarzenbach, 40 ans après' concerns the former diaspora of the years between 1960 and 1970 (Clot 2010).



Fig. 100 – Vivian Olmi, *Hestan*, 16 ans, Syrie, 2017.

After the phenomenon of globalization in recent years, there does not seem to be a deep cultural difference between Italians and the hosting country. Italians don't seem to generate a negative social impact anymore, as was perceived of the former diaspora of the 1960s and 1970s. As anticipated in chapter three, on the articles of *L'Illustré* from the 1970s, Italians are described as people who have great issues in getting integrated in the Swiss society.¹¹⁴ The bilateral agreements (FDFA 2021: 5 - 6) facilitate the integration process of Italians in Switzerland in the first two decades of the 21st century. Secondly, the accent of the articles still focuses on Portuguese and French (fig. 101). Numbers show that the Portuguese and the French migration to Switzerland has still big numbers in the first two decades of the 21st century (FSO 2021). This point is supported by the consistent and large presence of migrants from these European countries in the magazine taken into consideration in this research.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ *L'Illustré* n. 14 of April 1970 (SCOPE 1970: 4).

¹¹⁵ See the graphic on p. 58 of the Swiss French speaking edition of the *Readers Digest* of July 2012 (Favre 2012), p. 44 of *L'Hebdo* n. 46 – November 15th, 2012 (Ruf 2012), the diagram of p. 48 and pp. 54 – 55 of *L'Illustré* (Vassaux 2012), n. 36, 2012, p. 31 of *L'Hebdo* n. 11 – March 12th, 2015 (Dessemontet 2015).



Fig. 101 – Philippe Pache, *Ange Vial*, France, 2012.

The third observation that it is possible to draw is that in the publications between 2006 and 2019 there is a different photographic style compared to the images published in the articles from the 1960s and 1970s. It seems that photographers have moved from a photojournalistic approach to portraits with a frequent use of artificial light in interiors. In these recent photographs, subjects are portrayed in a frontal position and looking straight into the camera. As explained in the first chapter of this research, this direct gaze contributes to the dialogue (AA 2017) with the viewer and can substitute the meeting in the flesh (Gierstberg 2015: 12). While for the majority of the images printed in *L'Illustré* from the 1960s and 1970s the viewer was looking at migrants from a distant point of view without a visual connection (fig. 102), in these images migrants establish a strong visual relationship (Bryson 1983, 1999) and are inviting the viewer to take part of their experience of identity transformation (Van Gelder 2012) (fig. 103). This is one of the points that is repeated in the practice part of this research (fig. 104 - 106): the face as a mask (Barthes 1980: 35) in portraiture and the value of their interpretation in the experience of the beholder in front of a photographic image. The photographic portrait assumes the role of a mirror for recognition, self-recognition and self mis-recognition. Barthes states that

photography can only achieve significance when it shows a mask. To support this point, he refers to the portrait of William Casby taken by Richard Avedon in 1963 (fig. 107). William Casby was the last man born into slavery. Barthes states that Avedon managed to portray here the essence of slavery through a theater mask in the classical sense. This mask is the product of society and its history.¹¹⁶



Fig. 102 – Unknown, *Untitled*, 1965.

¹¹⁶ Italian writer Italo Calvino in his short story ‘The Adventure of a Photographer’ (Calvino, 1970) says that ‘a mask is anything that turns a face into a product of society and its history.’



Fig. 103 – Philippe Pache, *Juana Garcia Verdevio, Espagne*, 2012.



Fig. 104 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *AA*, 2018.



Fig. 105 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *OM*, 2017.



Fig. 106 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *NC*, 2018.

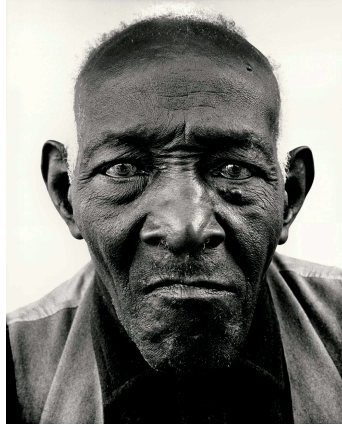


Fig. 107 – Richard Avedon, *William Casby*, 1963.

The first three findings lead to the last consideration. If we agree with Barthes (1997: 22) that images are inducers of associations and are part of debates and reflections on social media and cultural phenomena, it is reasonable to argue that images form the context for policy making and implementation (Lai 2014: 6841) and can be tools of political social justice (Sheehan 2018: 84). These photographs published in magazines between 2006 and 2019 deliver a narrative constructed by the selection process on the new Italian migrant. The profile of modern Italian migrants seems to be supported by their photographic representation on printed and online visual media. It is fundamental to have knowledge of the specific cultural context and its social relations to understand how images are created. If it is agreed that we need a visual familiarity of a system of symbolism to understand and contextualize images (Boltanski 2018) and that the political, historical, ideological context influences the image production, we need a description of the new profile with a sociological approach. Images make visible certain constructions in the public sphere (Johnson 2011). What then is the profile of the new Italian migrant?

4. Profile of the new Italian migrants: a sociological perspective

One of the most interesting aspects of the new Italian diaspora is its complexity and fluidity. The profile of the new Italian migrant is therefore not easy to frame. In a study conducted in 2017, sociologist Cristina Franchi (2017) has identified different profiles of the new Italian migrants in the largest city of the German part of Switzerland. At the moment of the research, the Italian community in Basel was the largest of the Swiss German part of the country (8436 individuals in

2016) and it was the main community of foreigners after the Germans.¹¹⁷ After the big phenomenon of the seasonal workers of the 1960s and 1970s, there has been a decrease of Italian migrants in the region but, starting from the first decade of 2000s, Italians were massively returning. This data is in line with the data in the rest of Switzerland and with what I found in the *arc lémanique* area. Franchi interviewed twenty subjects who migrated to Basel starting from 2007. The economic crisis has had a fundamental role in the decision to migrate. In contrast with the simplified and romantic view of the media (and the above mentioned scholars), these migrants have been forced to migrate due to a lack of work or because of the objective struggle of planning a decent life without any income. These results are in contrast with the idea that migrating is a deliberate choice due to the desire of a stimulating new cultural offer in a fascinating foreign country. These people have been forced to leave for a lack of opportunities in their country of origin. Through this research, Franchi has identified three profiles which are similar with what I have found whilst conducting my practice. The first group lists migrants with a degree with a highly qualified career. In Franchi's case, five out of the twenty interviewed are part of this group. They come from Italy already with a position guaranteed. They have good work conditions which are largely better than what they had in Italy. Moving in one city in Switzerland is actually for them only one leg of their career during which they will very likely move to other countries. They seem to fit in the *brain drain* category or in the group of professionals who work for international companies in cities in different countries for a limited amount of time. Even though the migratory experience was instigated by the economic crisis, for these individuals the choice of moving abroad is a formative decision and not strongly due to an economic discomfort. This cannot be said for the other two groups of migrants identified by Franchi (2017), aligned with my research, which are migrants with a degree and an unstable working position in the hosting country and non-professionally qualified migrants with a good chain migration network. In the first category, there are individuals with a good level of education (usually humanistic degrees) who struggle to find a job corresponding to their exact qualification and, if they find one, have worse conditions when compared with their Swiss colleagues. Despite of the fact that these subjects have different backgrounds, they share the same issues in getting integrated into an unknown context, the deep lack of confidence on the Italian job market and the difficulties in finding a job in Switzerland. They also share an ambiguous

¹¹⁷ A similar situation exists in the French speaking part of Switzerland where the Italians are behind the French community in terms of numbers (FSO 2021).

feeling of satisfaction for having found a job granting them financial autonomy and frustration for not having found a job corresponding to their specific qualifications. They also struggle in managing work and family (children). These are, then, Italians who leave their own country of origin to find an alternative but despite of the fact that they have a degree and a good level of education they end up working as waiters or in cleaning companies (I have examples in my practice). In the second category fall individuals who have a medium-low education and have a migration experience in Switzerland in their family. Initially, taking advantage of the *chain migration* (Pugliese 2018), they are hosted by their relatives who had arrived in Switzerland from the 1960s until the 1980s as seasonal workers. Taking advantage of the family network, these subjects have immediately found a working position with a regular contract. In other cases, they are young people who have finished studying and want to have an experience abroad and take advantage of their family network in a foreign country. Family is therefore a key support, and these individuals seem to show a lower level of frustration compared to the other two groups of people. However, their working situation is not stable and permanent. This situation seems to contradict what is claimed by Lafleur, Stanek and Veira (2017: 202). According to them, there is no link between the older diaspora and the new one due to the massive number of returns to the countries of origin after the oil crisis. The interruption of the migratory flux in Switzerland, in their opinion, is purely symbolic considering the broken link between the migrant community in Switzerland and the country of origin. This aspect, according to Lafleur, Stanek and Veira, would not support the socio-cultural integration process of the new diaspora. On the contrary, Franchi (2017) remarks that there are similarities with the old migration system: in Switzerland many migrants have returned to Italy after the oil crisis, while almost half of them has remained. As reported by the Federal Statistical Office of the Swiss Confederation (FSO 2021), before the oil crisis there were around 600.000 Italians in Switzerland. Until the revamp of the new diaspora, the number of Italians never fell below 300.000. This aspect contributed to guarantee the continuity with the following diasporas in particular for those migrants with a low level of education and a family network in place. While some scholars (Baldassar and Pyke 2014; Coso and Ortega-Rivera 2016; Bartolini, Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2017) still confirm that the new diaspora is only young and talented (*brain drain* phenomenon), this study by Franchi confirms what I have found also through my research and practice: the new diaspora is more complex and heterogeneous than generally thought.

5. Conclusions

The contemporary Italian migrants of the French speaking part of Switzerland hold a cultural identity in flux. As said in the introduction of this chapter, limiting this phenomenon to the *brain drain* narrative would risk being simplistic (Caneva 2016; Franchi 2017; Sanfilippo 2017; Pugliese 2018; Licata 2019). While on one hand it is true that part of the new group of migrants is composed of talented, young, educated individuals who were looking for a more stimulating life experience, on the other hand there is a large, consistent part of the new diaspora composed of people with different titles and different levels of education who were struggling to find a decent job in their country of origin and felt the need to migrate. This is an aspect that has only been studied in recent years. There are some differences between the old and the new diaspora of Italians who moved to Switzerland. The level of mobility for migrants in the 1960s and 1970s was more complicated than the recent one. The rights to be resident abroad were much reduced if compared to the possibilities offered today after the bilateral agreement between Europe and Switzerland. Most of the time the seasonal workers of the Schwarzenbach years had guaranteed work even if it was often only for nine months with the possibility of being renewed yearly. The majority of the new migrants do not seem to have a guaranteed job. While it could seem that there is a repetition of migration model of people always pushed to migrate as a consequence of an economic crisis and unemployment, starting again from 2007, Italians migrated in the same way that the earlier migrants did but the social, political and work context have changed. If compared to the 1960s and 1970s publications, the reduced quantity of articles and images related to the recent diaspora proves that there is a different perception towards the new migration process. Italians today are photographically less visible than the earlier waves. The visual familiarity of a symbolism system evoked by Boltanski (2018) has changed if compared with the images published on *L'Illustré* in the years between 1960 and 1970. The recent image production related to the new Italian diaspora to Switzerland has changed influenced by the new political, historical and ideological context (Johnson 2011) and in photographic practice. This seems to be evident after the research conducted on recent publications of Swiss magazines. Visual signs of migration like the suitcase have disappeared in the photographs published between 2006 and 2019. Strong importance is given to the composition, the use of the light and the face. Due to the time-space compression caused by globalization and *mediterranéisation* of Switzerland, the recent Italian migration to the Swiss confederation is not a visually recognizable phenomenon. Italians are today more integrated to Swiss people if compared to their ancestors

who migrated in the 1960s. They more easily connect to different worlds and contribute to sharing habits, traditions and ways of being which can eventually become part of a new living context.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, migration involves a shift of cultural identity for the individual. This situation increases the complexity of the cultural re-affirmation of the individual and is one of the reasons why it is complicated to represent the contemporary Italian cultural identity in Switzerland with photographic portraiture. Hence the purpose of the practice part of the present research is to re-think ways of photographing portraits of new Italian migrants on the *arc lémanique* in order to give them the possibility to be seen and to establish a dialogue with viewers (fig. 108).



Fig. 108 – Francesco Arese Visconti, *LP*, 2017.

¹¹⁸ See (Cattacin, Pellegrini and Ricciardi 2022).

Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a methodology to portray through photographic means the cultural identity of recent Italian migrants living in the *arc lémanique* area in Switzerland. In the elaboration of this process, this work intertwines the experience of this large community with my personal one as a photographer but, mostly, as a migrant. Through the years of study, I have developed an understanding of the philosophic, psychological, sociological and political implications of photographic portraiture in history and the photographic representation of the Italian migrants in Switzerland. I have never been a migrant before 2007 and I never thought I was going to be when I was still living in Italy. Studying the visual representation of the migrant of the past and that one of the new Italian migrant in Switzerland has led me to understand better my personal experience, and better comprehend my personality. My migratory adventure is similar to that one of hundred-thousand Italians decided to migrate to the *arc lémanique* in Switzerland since 2007. Therefore, the valuable contribution to knowledge of this work is about a phenomenon that is happening now, and it is crucial on a global scale but also on a more intimate, personal level. As anticipated in the introduction and in chapter one, Italians are still today the largest community of migrants in Switzerland.¹¹⁹ This aspect has consequences on Italian and Swiss society. For these reasons, this research is very timely: it discusses aspects of a phenomenon, the 21st century Italian diaspora in Switzerland, which has important numbers and has an impact on the political decisions taken by the Swiss governments. Furthermore, the practice side of the project has a specific aspect of originality because it carried out an empirical work that (to my knowledge) has not been done before. It is the result of a very interdisciplinary approach which has collected and combined theories, concepts, ideas from different fields. Through the application of the different methodologies listed in the introduction of this thesis, this work aims to extend existing research while supporting studies in other fields (sociology and psychology in particular). This perspective gives access to a deeper analysis of the phenomenon and at the same time offers a personal perspective of a migrant (myself) who is trying to understand the phenomenon and portray it through photographic portraiture. While recognizing that this process is not perfect, it is nevertheless an answer that offers something unique: there is not (to my knowledge) any systematic photographic production representing the cultural identity of recent Italian migrants on the *arc lémanique* in Switzerland other than this thesis.

¹¹⁹ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/migration-integration/foreign.html>

The methodological approach of the images produced implies the understanding of the cultural identity of this specific population and in particular brought me to recall the visual outlines of Italian Renaissance portrait paintings. This approach could be applied to different contexts of migration using shared cultural background characteristics as a common platform from which to start visual narratives. Unveiling the complexity of the meaning of cultural identity was one of the first challenges that I had to overcome. In this context I had to understand concepts like the *habitus* of Bourdieu (1986) or the *imagined community* of Anderson (1991) and their implications for the recent Italian diaspora in Switzerland. However, we have to make a clarification regarding the imagined community conceptualized by Anderson. Italians recently migrated abroad on the *arc lémanique* could be identified as an imagined community but not in the strict sense of national identity as given by Anderson. The Italian nation is pretty recent (1860). I therefore here do not refer to Italian citizens as imagined community through dynastic realm or national identity but mostly with a shared cultural background. While being aware of the variety of local differences in Italian regions and how complicated it can be to find a common shared cultural background, we can think of Italians as an imagined community because we share a common historical cultural experience. As explained above in previous chapters, in this research the Italian Renaissance period has been indicated as the shared cultural identity.

There are five main conclusions to which I have arrived through this long and intense journey. Firstly, I wanted to understand how photographic portraiture can stimulate a dialogue between the sitter, the photographer and the beholder. This process is quite complicated. However, through examples and analysis of the work of other photographers like Dijkstra, Hanzlova, Strand, Avedon we can unveil some of the points that allow this process to happen. While engaging with the psychological, sociological, philosophic fields, I understood how important the position of the subject in the photograph and the approach of the photographer are but also the position (physical and psychological) of the beholder. In this context very useful were the reflections of Azoulay (2012) on the civil contract of photography and the idea that photography can become a tool of political social justice raised by Sheehan (2018). With my portraits I want to avoid the passive reception of the image by the viewer. On the contrary, the aim is to stimulate an active relationship of communication, suggesting a sense of empathy in the viewer and his/her participation in the migrant's experience. 'The pain of the other is perceived as the pain of the self,' claims Sheehan (2018: 95). It does not always happen but if it happens we

achieve the point of photography being the tool to disturb the normative in the mind of the beholder and a level of communication is activated.

In a second instance, I discovered what means have been used by photographic portrait practice to represent the cultural identity of Italian migrants in the past. In this sense, the work of Michele Petruzzello on recent Italian migrants living in New York was the key to develop an understanding on the symbolism system used by him and previous photographers to represent the cultural identity of these migrants. There are links in Petruzzello's work to the trans-Atlantic diaspora of the 19th and 20th century to the US and its photographic representation. The stereotypes used by Hine and Sherman to communicate the essence of migration appeal to the background consensus knowledge mentioned by Stuart Hall (1972) and facilitate the understanding of the codes used in Swiss French-speaking magazines to describe the Italian diaspora of the 1960s and 1970s in the area between Lausanne and Geneva. This is the third point that I discovered through my research. In the process of re-thinking new ways of photographic portraiture of 21st century Italian migrants in Geneva, a fundamental step of the research was to clarify how they were represented in the popular Swiss magazine *L'Illustré*. The decade between 1960 and 1970 was selected and I observed how seasonal workers, often identified by the public opinion as migrants, were represented in this magazine. The research investigated different key aspects: firstly it identified significant influences on the composition and content level from other migration contexts; secondly it explored what visual symbolism was developed and its relationship with the previous models of photographic representation (like the Transoceanic diaspora of the beginning of the 20th century); ultimately it questioned the sociological influence on photographers' composition and the visual representation of integration in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. If we agree with Burke that photographic portraits follow social conventions which slowly change over time, on the articles of *L'Illustré* from 1960 to 1970 we can see this gradual transformation. They evolve and they do it because society and the perception of the issue of the migrant workers develops, influenced by the Swiss and Italian political, sociological and economical context.

This knowledge has formed the foundations to, then, develop my fourth conclusion: how important is to analyse the photographic representation of the recent (2006 – 2019) Italian diaspora in the *arc lémanique* area in Switzerland. This process allowed me to compare the

changes in the photographic narrative between the Italian diaspora of the years between 1960 and 1970 with the years between 2006 and 2019. I understood how the ideological discourse supports the production and selection of the images in both times. Italian migrants of the 21st century are differently represented. The codes of visual communication have changed: they look straight into the camera showing a confident expression. There are not too many articles on the new Italian migration. As explained in chapter four the latest Italian diaspora in Switzerland is not felt by the public opinion as an invasion anymore. It is not perceived as an issue, and it doesn't have a negative connotation. Italians are not much visually represented on media. These aspects support the originality and the contribution to knowledge of the photographic production of this research.

The theoretical background and the research mentioned above have supported the methodology of my practice through codes of visual representation like the gaze, the face and the mask, seriality, the body posture and its presence in the landscape. As mentioned above, the Italian Renaissance portrait paintings have played a pivotal role in the narrative of the cultural identity of recent Italian migrants living on the *arc lémanique* area in Switzerland. See as a common native cultural background, Italian Renaissance portrait painting characteristics have deeply influenced the production of my images. I do not want here to create a myth. I recognize that Italians from the different regions of Italy have a large variety of cultural identities. However, as already mentioned in other parts of this thesis, the result of my survey among the recent Italian migrants living on the *arc lémanique* area has shown that the Renaissance period was indicated as the preferred common cultural background.

The final purpose of my practice was an exhibition. Initially thought as a photographic show traditionally exhibited on the walls, I progressively understood that this work had to go beyond the photographic itself and become something more articulated. I refer here to the concept of expanded photography formulated by Lucy Soutter (2016). It is very challenging for photography to represent a cultural background. While acknowledging that the photographic is still fundamental, it is however true that we need more elements contributing to the narrative to enrich the beholder's experience. The expansion of photography to other fields (in my case installation and texts available through QR codes linked to a website) can help to better understand the message and avoid remaining on a superficial level. Certainly, this process has

helped me to deepen my knowledge on my cultural identity. Hopefully the beholder will develop this understanding when put in front of these photographic portraits and will wonder about the complicated, diverse, multi-faceted cultural identity of these Italians, as well about his/hers.

I am aware of the existence of contemporary artists and others sources that could have enriched my research. In particular, the art side of the project could have had a larger reference to contemporary art photography practices, particularly the area at the cusp of documentary and fine art. I am also conscious that there are many other photographers that also have used portraiture and frontal body posture as a communicative strategy.¹²⁰ However, I have selected a number of artists whose works are functional to the purpose of my research. I refer here in particular to photographers whose projects are linked to the migration and/or influenced by Renaissance portraiture (see in particular the series produced by Michele Petruzzello, Rineke Dijkstra and Jitka Hanzlova).

With the proper adjustments, each chapter of this thesis could be submitted in the form of article for academic journals. In this sense, I believe that further material needs to be explored. I refer here in particular to the profile of the 21st century Italian migrant in Switzerland. As described in chapter four, sociologist Cristina Franchi (2017) identifies three types of Italian migrants who have recently moved to Switzerland. I believe¹²¹ that more content can be analyzed around this point. What is missing is an understanding of the important role played by social media and the online communication. The online communities function today as a container of people who have the experience of living abroad but, in most of the cases, don't necessarily know each other. They are the modern and updated development of the concept of *imagined communities* theorized by Benedict Anderson (1991).¹²² These communities are contacted by Italians who still live in Italy and have the desire of migrating to Switzerland. They use them as platforms to communicate with migrants resident in Switzerland to have information, help and, possibly, support to finalize their migratory experience. Modern concept of *chain migration*, this point has

¹²⁰ See the example of 'Fire/Flood' by Gideon Mendel (2023) exhibited at the Photographers' Gallery in London in January 2023. In his work 'Fire/Flood,' Gideon Mendel shows the consequences of climate change catastrophes. He portrays people at the center of a devastated environment. The faces with no expression and the frontal posture of the bodies generate a dialogue with the beholder in the same I have structured my photographs of recent Italian migrants in the *arc lémanique* area.

¹²¹ As supported by recent studies (Cattacin, Pellegrini and Ricciardi 2022).

¹²² Point already largely discussed in chapter one.

also been recently investigated by Cattacin, Pellegrini and Ricciardi (2022) and deserves further investigation in future research on the topic.

This work has also brought me to reflect on my position as an independent cultural producer and the freedom that I had to maintain while working on the project. In the prospect of taking decisions for my practice, I had to understand the differences between photographic images produced for newspapers and those ones for magazines. As anticipated in chapter four, while the first ones have to be contingent and strictly related to the news (Hall 1972), magazines photographs have to illustrate the articles and therefore be a generic reference to the topic (Boltanski 2018: 369).¹²³ As a consequence of the analysis of these processes, I realized that I had to move away and beyond these definitions with the aim of being original and innovative. I, therefore, diverted from the voyeuristic¹²⁴ photojournalistic (Newton: 2001) style but also from the documentary approach in the strict sense (Lugon 2008: 172). In the back flap of his book *Lo stile documentario in fotografia – Da August Sander a Walker Evans 1920 – 1945*, Olivier Lugon states that in the documentary photographic practice the artist disappears to give space to authentic realistic copies of the world. I move away from the two definitions of photojournalism and documentary photography given above, maintaining an independent point of view. I photograph the subjects in the context that they chose, in the clothes that they decided to use but with the lighting, the posture and the facial expression that I have asked them to take. I have the authority of choosing the instant when to press the shutter. That is the moment when I claim my independency as a cultural producer with the freedom of interpreting reality with a specific result in mind.

¹²³ See the example of *L'Illustré* n. 14 of the 2nd of April 1970 (SCOPE, 1970) where the images are not related to the subjects interviewed in the article.

¹²⁴ The subject doesn't look into the camera and the photographer/viewer of the images witnesses what is happening in the photograph without having any visual connection with him/her.

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My photograph.

Fig. 24 – The Swiss Pavillion at the Milan EXPO in 2015 with the exhibition on recent Italian migrants in Geneva.

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Access 08.12.2017.

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From <https://uploads7.wikiart.org/images/masaccio/distribution-of-almes-and-death-of-ananias-1425.jpg!HalfHD.jpg>.

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From www.metmuseum.org/toah/images/hb/hb_49.7.7.jpg.

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From

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From <http://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/martini.jpg>.

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