

## Migration and Divisions: Thoughts on (Anti-) Narrativity in Visual Representations of Mobile People

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**Key words:**

migration; visual  
representation;  
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open borders

**Abstract:** This article developed as part of a dialogue between the two authors. The dialogue was sparked off by MARLEY's response to a seminar presentation by GILLIGAN. In keeping with its origins we have retained the dialogue format. The article focuses on two sets of images—one a still image taken by a photojournalist, the other a sequence of stills taken by one of the authors. The authors use these images to explore the question "what imbues an image with narrative content?" and to explore the possibilities for developing a positive visual representation which promotes the idea of open borders. The article draws on linguistic theory to explore the grammar of visual narrative and relates this to the issue of the visual representation of immigration in contemporary Europe.

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## **1. Introduction**

This article developed as part of a dialogue between the two authors. The dialogue was sparked off by MARLEY's response to a seminar presentation by GILLIGAN. In keeping with its origins we have retained the dialogue format. The article focuses on two sets of images—one a still image taken by a photojournalist, the other a sequence of stills taken by one of the authors. The authors use these images to explore the question "what imbues an image with narrative content?" and to explore the possibilities for developing a positive visual representation which promotes the idea of open borders. The article draws on linguistic theory to explore the grammar of visual narrative and relates this to the issue of the visual representation of immigration in contemporary Europe. [1]

## **2. Visual Studies and Migration (GILLIGAN)**

In recent years I have begun to explore the issue of migration (GILLIGAN, 2008a). I have been particularly interested in challenging the narrowing of the terrain on which the issue of migration has been politically contested, in the West in general, and in the United Kingdom in particular (GILLIGAN, forthcoming). I have also been concerned with the dehumanising treatment of many migrants, particularly migrants from the global South (GILLIGAN, 2009). At the same time I have also begun to take an interest in exploring visual images as a resource for researching social phenomena (GILLIGAN, 2008b). In 2007 I began to combine these two interests and started to investigate the use of visual methodologies for exploring the issue of migration. One of my motivations was to explore the possibilities for making a humanistic case for open borders. One of the things that initially struck me about *visual* representations of immigrants in the Western media was the way in which they mirrored the binary representations of immigrants, as either victims or threats, which I had encountered in text based mass media. [2]

### **2.1 Immigrants as threats/victims**

The overcrowded boat is a common visual representation of threatening immigration to the West. In the European context this is usually a flimsy looking craft filled with black Africans. These travellers take a route to Europe which avoids airports and ferry terminals, those entry points where the surveillance of

movement, particularly non-EU passport holding travellers, has become increasingly restrictive (FLYNN, 2009; ZUREIK & SALTER, 2005). The image of the overcrowded boat suggest that there are lots of "them" trying to come "here". The image also seems to provide a visual representation of the idea that there is "no room here", and a warning of what "our" country would resemble if we do not stop "them" from coming (see Illustration 1). The visual representations of threatening immigrants coming in boats provides a supplement to, or illustration of, the idea of "floods" of immigrants; probably the most common trope in the negative media coverage of immigration (see e.g.: VAN DIJK, 2000). The visual and textual representations of "floods" of immigrants form part of the overall media coverage in which "immigrants or minorities tend to be exclusively associated with negative topics and problems: immigration as invasion, abuse of identity papers, mafias, unemployment, violence, crime, drugs, illegality, cultural deviance, fanaticism, religious intolerance, backwardness, and so on" (VAN DIJK, 2008, p.62).



Illustration 1: Immigration, Spain (Photographer: Arturo RODRIGUEZ)<sup>1</sup> [3]

The representation of immigrants as victims is often employed by immigrant advocates, as part of an attempt to counter the representation of migrants as a threat. The asylum-seeker or refugee is particularly likely to be invoked as an example of the immigrant as victim. In this vein it is argued, for example, that "asylum seekers are tortured and otherwise persecuted by oppressive regimes... [and in the West] they are badly treated by immigration authorities and police, as well as being put in prison" (VAN DIJK, 2000, p.103). In Europe in recent years the image of irregular African migrants washed up on the beaches of southern Europe has become a recurring visual representation of immigrants as victims.

1 Source: <http://www.arturorquez.com/files/images/immigration/IMMIGRATION004.jpg>. The authors have made several attempts to trace the owners of the images to seek copyright clearance to use them. At the time of going to press we had not had any responses to our requests. We assume that the owners of the images are happy for us to use them for educational purposes, and are aware that we are not financially profiting from the use of the images. If our assumptions are wrong we welcome correspondence from individuals or companies which hold the copyright to any of the images which we have used.



Illustration 2: La Tejita Beach, Tenerife, Spain (Photographer: Arturo RODRIGUEZ)<sup>2</sup> [4]

Arturo RODRIGUEZ's award winning photographs of holiday makers and exhausted African migrants, taken on a beach in the Spanish Gran Canaria, are visually arresting examples of these kinds of images (see e.g. Illustration 2).<sup>3</sup> They draw attention to the vulnerability of the migrants. They highlight the contrast between relatively affluent Westerners, interrupted in their leisure activities, and relatively poorer Africans who undertake perilous journeys driven by desperate desires for a better life. Part of the drama of these images is in the way that two worlds, which are normally divided from each other, collide within the same frame.

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2 Source: <http://www.arturorodriguez.com/files/images/thebeach/The-Beach005.jpg>. The authors have made several attempts to trace the owners of the images to seek copyright clearance to use them. At the time of going to press we had not had any responses to our requests. We assume that the owners of the images are happy for us to use them for educational purposes, and are aware that we are not financially profiting from the use of the images. If our assumptions are wrong we welcome correspondence from individuals or companies which hold the copyright to any of the images which we have used.

3 A range of Arturo RODRIGUEZ's photographs are available on his website at <http://www.arturorodriguez.com>.



Illustration 3: Beach, Tarifa, Spain (Photographer: Javier BAULUZ)<sup>4</sup> [5]

The photographic representations of African migrants as threats or victims seem to be examples of what Susan SONTAG refers to as the hunt for more dramatic images.

"Conscripted as part of journalism, images were expected to arrest attention, startle, surprise ... The hunt for more dramatic ... images drives the photographic enterprise, and is part of the normality of a culture in which shock has become a leading stimulus of consumption and source of value" (2003, p.20). [6]

The elevation of "shock" tends to focus on the exceptional, and in doing so such images tend to present immigrants' experiences as radically different to those of the rest of society. They work with stereotypes. They visually represent immigrants' experiences, but they are not representative of immigrants' experiences. Even images with less evident dramatic content, such as Javier BAULUZ's image from Tarifa in Spain, still draw attention to the contrast between African immigrants and Europeans (see Illustration 3). [7]

The representation of immigrants as victims may counter the idea of immigrants as a threat. They do so, however, by robbing immigrants of their agency by presenting them as defined by what is done to them, rather than by their own actions. PUPAVAC draws attention to the dangers of this approach when she says that:

"The contemporary representation of refugees as troubled victims is inspired by compassion... Culturally the trauma tag affirms suffering, but it also suggests

4 Source: <http://www.galeon.com/javierbauluz/Inicio.html>. The authors have made several attempts to trace the owners of the images to seek copyright clearance to use them. At the time of going to press we had not had any responses to our requests. We assume that the owners of the images are happy for us to use them for educational purposes, and are aware that we are not financially profiting from the use of the images. If our assumptions are wrong we welcome correspondence from individuals or companies which hold the copyright to any of the images which we have used.

impaired reason... [and in this approach refugees'] interests risk becoming determined for them —and to their detriment" (2008, p.272). [8]

## 2.2 Positive images of immigrants

Another approach to counter the negative representations of immigrants is to promote positive images. In this vein VAN DIJK argues that in the media coverage of immigrants: "their obvious positive characteristics are systematically denied, ignored or underplayed" (2008, p.62). ICAR, a UK based refugee advocacy group, notes that:

"Many organisations supporting asylum seekers and refugees seek to promote 'positive images' in the media, in order to counterbalance instances of hostile and inaccurate reporting. Typically 'positive images' concern the positive contribution which asylum seekers and refugees make to the host country" (2007, p.35). [9]

It is not just migrant advocacy groups who talk about the need to promote positive images. A consultation document produced by the UK government's Home Office, for example, notes that the "development of inter-community relationships is a driving force for integration" of refugees and that this requires better understanding between refugees and the communities in which they are located (HOME OFFICE, 2004, p.15). On this issue:

"The media can be a powerful force for understanding. But too often people hear of refugees only when some problem comes to light. Efforts are needed for a more balanced coverage by encouraging journalists to look for ways of presenting the many positives about the presence of refugees to the wider public" (2004, p.15). [10]

In their analysis of UK media reporting of refugees ICAR found that the most common subject was government policy on refugees (which accounted for two thirds of the 2,013 articles they examined). The subjects' "Impact on the economy/welfare" and "perceptions of/interactions with asylum seekers and refugees" were each raised in about a third of the articles (ICAR, 2007, p.81). On the issue of positive versus negative coverage they found that articles on refugees and "crime/community safety" were less common (17% of the articles in their sample). They also found, perhaps surprisingly, that on the subject of refugees' impact on the economy and/or welfare the most common topic discussed in the media:

"was the contribution of refugees and asylum seekers to the creative arts, which included art produced by refugees and asylum seekers and art produced by others which is inspired by refugees and asylum seekers or has them as a central character or theme. More than a third of articles within this category were on this subject" (2007, p.91). [11]

This suggests that the people who are most interested in promoting positive images of refugees tend to be located in the creative arts, which is perhaps a reflection of artists' professional concerns with issues of representation. [12]

At first sight the promotion of positive images might seem wholly positive, but some authors urge caution. The images of immigrants as victims may deprive the migrants of agency, but they do tend to draw attention to some of the harsh realities of the experience of some migrants. Positive images can gloss over these harsh realities. They can also provide an equally reductive representation of migrants. Hanif KUREISHI, the UK based writer, warns that:

"Positive images sometimes require cheering fictions—the writer as Public Relations Officer ... If there is to be a serious attempt to understand present-day Britain with its mix of races and colours, its hysteria and despair, then writing about it has to be complex. It can't apologize, or idealize ... If contemporary writing which emerges from oppressed groups ignores the central concerns and major conflicts of the larger society ... they will automatically designate themselves as permanently minor, as a sub-genre" (quoted in HALL, 1991, p.60). [13]

PUPAVAC notes that the focus on positive examples seems to promote a tendency for refugee advocates to plead on behalf of particularly talented individuals, or others who can be presented in an appealing light. This approach, she warns, has been accompanied by a shift away from campaigning for universal refugee rights and opposition to immigration controls towards campaigning around the welfare of refugees and asylum-seekers, and against negative representations. She points to the divisive nature of this shift when she says that: "[a]sylum rights are thereby implicitly made conditional on qualifying as nice, talented, sensitive individuals. But where does this leave any unappealing, untalented, unskilled asylum-seekers with culturally repellent views and habits?" (PUPAVAC, 2008, p.285). [14]

### **2.3 Beyond the exceptional and dramatic**

Both positive and negative representations of immigration tend to focus on the exceptional and the dramatic, "we seldom read about the everyday lives of immigrants" (VAN DIJK, 2008, p.72). In their report on media representations of refugees and asylum-seekers ICAR provide some examples of articles which are examples of good journalistic practice. The report provides the following rationale for one of their selections:

"it was informative—avoiding common positive stereotypes of asylum seekers as victims, or achieving extraordinary financial, sporting or artistic success—it showed an asylum seeker fulfilling a more mundane role, providing, rather than receiving welfare services. It gave international and local context, particularly reflecting local responses to national policy. The sources used were limited but the individual affected by the events reported was quoted" (ICAR, 2007, p.141). [15]

The article avoided (positive) stereotypes, was unsensationalist (mundane role), provided (international and local) context, quoted the individual affected and presented her/him as contributing to the society and community she/he inhabited (providing welfare). [16]

Having considered some of the problems with the representation of immigrants in the mass media, I set myself the challenge of trying to represent immigrants visually in a humanistic way, I wanted to represent immigrants as people, rather than present them as a category: "immigrants". I also wanted to avoid stereotypes and provide context. And I wanted to represent both the complexity and the largely mundane nature of contemporary immigration in Europe. [17]

#### **2.4 Context and complexity of immigration in contemporary Europe**

For a range of different reasons—geographical location, history of past migration flows, labour markets, government migration policy, national citizenship policies, economic prosperity—the national context of immigration varies significantly across Europe (GEDDES, 2003; TRIANDAFYLLIDOU & GROPAS, 2007). Alongside these different national contexts; the levels, origins, destinations and nature of migration flows across Europe have changed in many ways in the last few decades. Some European countries which have traditionally been countries of significant outward migration, such as Spain and the Republic of Ireland, have reversed this trend and become significant destinations for immigrants (FANNING, 2007; GONZÁLEZ ENRIQUEZ, 2007). Since the end of the Cold War there have been new flows of immigrants from the former Soviet bloc, particularly from eastern Europe after the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 (FAVELL, 2008). There are also a wide range of different kinds of immigrant. There are refugees and asylum-seekers, labour migrants (on a range of different kinds of contracts), international movements of students and "lifestyle" migrants, (such as the significant southward migrations of elderly Europeans to enjoy their retirement in the sunnier climes of Spain; see e.g. KING, WARNES & WILLIAMS, 2000. For overviews see: CASTLES & MILLER, 2009; MASSEY et al., 1998). [18]

If I wanted to represent immigration in context I figured I needed to focus on a particular region of a particular country.<sup>5</sup> I was working as a lecturer at Aston University in Birmingham (UK) at the time. The UK is an interesting country to examine contemporary immigration. The UK has a significant history of immigration since the end of the Second World War. For most of this period the term "immigrant" was "often wrongly used to refer only to black people" (SKELLINGTON, 1996, p.68). The 1981 Census, however, shows that the majority of British residents born overseas were classified as "white—from Eire or the Old Commonwealth (Australia, New Zealand and Canada) or from other European countries" (SKELLINGTON, 1996, p.68). During this period immigrants were often visually represented as black. [19]

Two changes have taken place which have made the conflation of "immigrant" and "black" increasingly difficult to sustain in the early years of the twenty-first century. One of these has been large-scale "white" immigration from eastern Europe. The other has been the growing proportion of the "black" population who are British born. In 2004 more than half of those who described their ethnicity as

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5 Immigration is still largely controlled at the national level, despite moves to coordinate policy at the EU wide level (GEDDES, 2008). And there is a significant variation between different regions within countries.



"Pakistani", "Black Caribbean", "Other black" or "mixed", and almost half of those who described their ethnicity as "Indian" or "Bangladeshi", were born in the UK (and an even higher proportion gave their national identity as "British", "English", "Scottish" or "Welsh") (NATIONAL STATISTICS, 2005, p.7). The changing nature of immigration, coupled with the growth of the British-born ethnic minority population, has led one of the leading researchers of migration in the UK to coin the term "super-diversity" to capture to complexity of a situation which: "is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade" (VERTOVEC, 2007, p.1024).



Illustration 4: Ethnic food in a supermarket (Photographer: Chris GILLIGAN)



Illustration 5: Polish shop (Photographer: Chris GILLIGAN) [20]

The city of Birmingham is an interesting setting in which to attempt to generate some "researcher-created visual data" providing representations which capture the complexity of contemporary immigration to England (PROSSER & LOXLEY, 2008, p.3). Birmingham has a sizeable ethnic minority population, both foreign and British born. The city has also been the subject of a number of important social science studies of immigration and "race relations" (HALL, CRITCHER, JEFFERSON, CLARKE & ROBERTS, 1978; REX & MOORE, 1967; SOLOMOS & BACK, 1995). [21]

I first of all tried to generate some visual data by employing a method which could be described as an arbitrary and convenient visual ethnography of migration. This basically involved making use of the camera on my mobile phone as a kind of photographic sketch book. So whenever I was out and about on my everyday travels in Birmingham—to and from work, to and from the supermarket/pub/cinema etc.—I took snapshots of scenes which seemed to me to suggest "migration". One thing I was conscious of was an attempt to avoid the conflation of "migrant" and "black" and so a lot of the snapshots took "new migrant" flows as their focus. My initial attempts were clichéd photographs of Polish food and shops (see Illustrations 4 & 5). These images did not satisfy my desire to provide a humanistic representation of immigrants. The representation of a common experience of living in a consumer society was something which bridged the gap between "us" and "them", but only partially. The images could also be interpreted as representations of "ethnic" food, which suggests cultural differences between "them" and "us". These images also pushed human figures out of the frame and presented immigrants through the medium of consumer goods and consumption. In doing so they dehumanised immigrants by suggesting that they are defined by what they consume, rather than by uniquely human characteristics such as imagination, creativity and aspiration. [22]

## 2.5 Conceptualising migration as mobility

At this stage I thought I needed to think about the *conceptualisation* of migration. Context is not just an issue of spatial location, but also an interpretive context in which we give meaning to phenomena. Immigration also takes place in a social, historical and political context, and is interpreted through a conceptual framework. Challenging the representation of immigration also meant having to think about the conceptual framework through which it was interpreted. So I began to think about how we could make sense of, or give meaning to, contemporary migration in a way that would connect with and resonate with people's experience of the contemporary world. This led me to start to frame the issue of migration as one of mobility, rather than immigration. [23]

A wide range of contemporary social theorists suggest that the times we live in are characterised by mobility. BAUMAN, for example, suggests that there has been a shift from

"modernity in its 'solid' state ... [to a l]iquid modernity ... [which] sets the forces of change free, after the pattern of the stock exchange or financial markets: it lets them 'find their own level' and then go on ... none of the present, and by definition interim, levels is viewed as final and irrevocable" (2001, p.74). [24]

BAL (2008) has coined the term "migratory aesthetics", and suggests that a shared characteristic of video and migration is movement. More fundamentally, she suggests, video artists are able to use video to de-naturalise movement, and the movements of migrants denaturalise our understandings of the world by drawing attention to its cultural variability and constructedness. These video artists do not produce "video" on "migration", but instead draw attention to "movement, time, memory, and contact" (BAL, 2008, p.18). And her use of the term "'Migratory' does not claim to account for the actual experiences of migrants, but instead refers to the traces, equally sensate, of the movements of migration that characterise contemporary culture" (p.19). URRY suggests that there has been a "mobility turn" in the arts, humanities and social sciences:

"a turn that emphasises how all social entities, from a single household to large scale corporations, presuppose many different forms of actual and potential movement. The mobility turn connects the analysis of different forms of travel, transport and communications with the multiple ways in which economic and social life is performed and organized through time and across various spaces. Analyses of the complex ways that social relations are 'stretched' across the globe are generating theories, research findings and methods that 'mobilize' or assemble analyses of social orderings that are achieved in part on the move and contingently as processes of flow" (2007, p.6). [25]

These "mobility" perspectives suggest that movement is something which is not only experienced by migrants, but that it is part of the human condition in the contemporary social world. [26]

I then decided that I should take mobility as my conceptual framework through which to approach the issue of visually representing migration. So rather than try to represent *immigrants* I sought to represent *mobility*. This shift, I reasoned, would enable me to bridge the divide between immigrants and the "host" society by presenting both immigrants and the "host" society as sharing the *experience* of being on the move. At this stage I decided to photograph a sequence of photographic stills in order to capture the idea of movement and flows. So I took a series of photographs at the Bullring Shopping Centre, located in Birmingham city centre. The photographs were shot from the same vantage point at thirty second intervals. The sequence draws our attention to movement, to mobility, rather than the static borders which allow for the division into the categories of "host" and immigrant. The ordinariness of the setting also fulfils my desire to avoid stereotypes and to present the mundane nature of much of the everyday experience of migration. I then presented the sequence (see Illustration 6), and my thoughts on visualising contemporary migration, at a departmental seminar at Aston University.

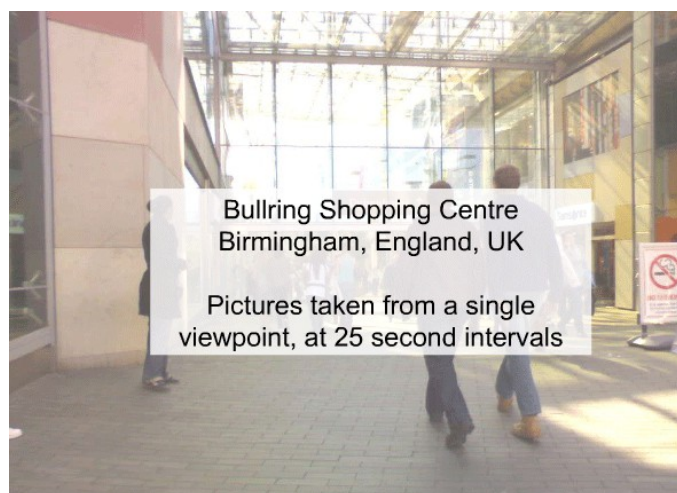


Illustration 6: Bullring shopping Centre, Birmingham, UK. Sequence of images (Photographer: Chris GILLIGAN) [27]

### 3. Narrativity (MARLEY)

As a member of the seminar audience at Aston, I had already seen the single image shown here as Illustration 3 when GILLIGAN later introduced Illustration 6. He had put particular emphasis throughout the seminar on migration as mobility, and the range of ways in which this could be represented, starting with "classic" images, such as those of RODRIGUEZ and BAULUZ. As in the current discussion, he had then moved on to a wider view of the issues and more conceptual representations of mobility, such as for example maps and diagrams. His focus in his introduction to the set of images in Illustration 6, however, was now clearly shifting away from "things" (as represented here by Illustration 4) and back to people. It was in intuitive response to this overtly articulated shift of focus that I found myself consciously prospecting a concomitant shift in effect. In comparison with both the earlier images, single and static, of migrants and with

the later schematic representations of mobility, I fully expected the dynamic potential of sequence to lend this series of multiple, consecutive images a significant sense of narrative—to "feel like a story". On actually viewing the sequence, however, I realised that in reality it had struck me as telling less of a story than Illustration 3, in particular, had drawn me into. [28]

Moreover, my own initial experience of these images in GILLIGAN's seminar at Aston has since been informally confirmed at subsequent presentations, where at least half of the audience members on each occasion have also intuitively judged the single image of Illustration 3 more narrative than the sequence in Illustration 6. There are clearly questions that could be raised here about our apparent desire and predilection for narrative being such that we can have such expectations and be able to make such judgements, seemingly unproblematically. (No member of an audience, for example, has ever reacted by challenging the feasibility or questioning the applicability of making such a decision.) These are questions that have indeed arisen in our later discussions and will be taken up in due course. [29]

In the more immediate aftermath of the Aston seminar, however, my discourse analytical interests in both narrative structure and visual representation provided natural starting points for me to begin exploring my unexpected reactions to BAULUZ's image of the beach in Tarifa and GILLIGAN's images of the Bullring. The sections that follow therefore provide first an outline of LONGACRE's view of narrative analysis (1974, 1983) and then one of KRESS and VAN LEEUWEN's social semiotic approach to analysing visual communication (2006 [1996]). I will try to show how combining the insights that arise from each of these can explain firstly why many viewers find the single still image "more narrative" than the series of images; and secondly how we as viewers are positioned in relation to the story told by the still of the migrant on the beach. [30]

### **3.1 Definitions and models of narrative structure**

Definitions of narrative vary, both according to the discipline in which the research is situated and within a given discipline—from linguistic cognitivist approaches (e.g., RYAN 2003, 2007, p.11), via narratology (e.g., BUNDGAARD & ØSTERGAARD 2007, pp.263-4), to film studies (e.g., BORDWELL & THOMPSON, 2001, p.60) and multimodal analysis drawing on social semiotics. BALDRY and THIBAUT (2005), working within the last of these disciplines, provide a useful summary of the elements common to all these stances. They characterise narrative in terms of the following factors:

"... movement, a temporal situation involving different moments in time as well as the change which occurs with the passage from earlier moments in time to later ones. These three factors together constitute an *event*, which, regardless of the modality of realisation, are the hallmark of narrative. Narratives [...] do not merely signal a temporal succession of events. Most importantly, they show how some aspect of a situation or a participant *changes* as the result of the transition from an earlier

moment to some later moment. Narrative therefore involves change or transformation over time" (2005, pp.12-13, original italics). [31]

From the varying—but essentially compatible—definitions has sprung a variety of models for analysing the internal organisation of specific narratives. The model of narrative structure that I have found most useful in its applicability to a range of narrative types in both written and visual modes of communication is that of LONGACRE (1974, 1983). [32]

A distinctive aspect of LONGACRE's model is that he distinguishes between the "underlying" or "abstract", *notional* level of discourse, which is not language-specific and is independent of particular texts, and the *surface* level in which it is manifested, and which is language-specific (LONGACRE, 1983, p.3). Notional structures are the universal underlying elements that provide the "story shape" of a narrative with which a reader will be familiar in abstract, while the surface structures are the specific textual forms chosen by the writer to realise, or express, the notional level. [33]

There are two fundamentally defining characteristics of narrative discourse at the notional level that set it apart from other types (such as the persuasive discourse of, for example, advertising). The first is fairly straightforward in its equivalence with the definition offered above, in that LONGACRE views narrative as being concerned with what he calls "contingent temporal succession", i.e. a series of events that are connected by some sort of dependency, rather than a merely temporal connection. The second defining feature augments the characterisation so far by adding that narrative is positively oriented to agency. In other words, there is a focus on one or more specific actors who act on, and thus affect, other participants. [34]

### **3.2 Narrativity & the Bullring sequence**

This then, was the theoretical paraphernalia that I subconsciously brought to bear on my first viewing of GILLIGAN's images and his experimentation with alternative ways of representing migration and migrants. It was against this backdrop that I expected the sequence of images taken in the Bullring to have a greater narrative effect than a single still image. In principle, a sequence of images ought to have the greater capacity to convey (a) time sequence and apparent movement through space and time in the succession of images, and (b) a series of events that (c) involve actors acting on goals. At this point, it is worth re-viewing the sequence (Illustration 6, provided again here for convenience), in order to explore whether this is what we see in practice.



Illustration 6: Bullring shopping Centre, Birmingham, UK. Sequence of images (Photographer: Chris GILLIGAN) [35]

These images do quite clearly represent the passage of time and there are multiple potentially agentive actors in the succession of people who move through the series. In this flow and movement of people there is even arguably—albeit superficially, perhaps—a change of state for at least one participant, as I will show. In principle, then, the factors identified by BALDRY and THIBAUT (2005) and also LONGACRE's defining features are all potentially present. Closer inspection, however, helps to identify the stumbling blocks some viewers may encounter in their attempts to make coherent narrative sense of the sequence as it progresses. [36]

Our familiarity with narrative structure, based on stories we have watched, heard or read, leads us to expect that many stories will begin by setting the scene for the events that follow (LONGACRE, 1983; LABOV, 1972). This is exactly what seems to happen in the first frame, where a woman in the middle distance appears to be waiting for someone. The facts, firstly, of her being alone and, secondly, of her face being partly visible set her apart from other potential participants at this point. Together, they invite us to focus on her as a likely agent in the chain of events that we expect to develop from this anticipated narrative kernel (CHATMAN, 1978). The second frame then apparently confirms this expectation, as the woman has now been joined by a man. In addition, there appears to be further confirmation that she/they will be the protagonist(s) in the story. Whereas the woman was the exception in being alone in the first frame, in the second she is now part of a couple, in contrast to all the other potential participants, who are this time all on *their* own. Notably, too, these other potential participants in this second frame are all different from those in the previous one. The constant focus on the woman, then, creates a continuity, which in turn suggests the possibility of the couple adopting agentive roles and acting on each other, in a way that seems less likely to be true of others present in the image. [37]

The third frame, however, appears partly to thwart any such incipient expectations of the developing story, as the man from the couple is still visible but the woman has now apparently disappeared. Moreover, although there is again a whole new set of potential participants present, including another couple prominent in the foreground, none of them seems promising as a focus for subsequent events, since—as in the first frame—they are all visible only from the back. At this point, then, the viewer seeking narrative sense has two options. She may either refocus her expectations of the chain of events the original couple is involved in (MARLEY, 1995), and recast it as part of a putative "couple meet → couple argue → couple split up / reconcile" scenario. Or she may revise her expectations of the story's structure, retrospectively "downgrade" the status of the three frames so far, and reinterpret them as functioning merely to set the scene for a different set of events to follow. [38]

The next frame seems to favour the latter of these two options, since it provides a close-up, front-view of another couple, apparently tourists or visitors to the locale who seem (from their searching expressions) to be in some sort of quandary. This inviting prospect of a new central focus on a couple with some sort of problem to resolve is only fleeting, however, as the fifth frame lacks any sign of them. Not only does this frame thus overturn any expectation of the tourist couple providing the narrative focus, it also prevents a return to the previous hypothesis that the story might be about an on-off relationship between the first couple. It now becomes clear that the apparent disappearance of the woman in Frame 4 was illusory: she had just been hidden by other people in the foreground, obscuring the camera's view of her. In Frame 5 she is clearly back in view, and her smiling expression appears to rule out any argument between these two potential actors, hence also any hypothesised "drama" between them. Instead, they remain notable more for their lack of action. Nor are there any particularly promising new candidates for narrative speculation, since the other people in this frame are again all new and only obliquely visible in comparison to the original couple, who still provide the only hint of contingency—in the attenuated form of mere continuity. [39]

The cycle in Frames 3-5 of expectations being set up and then immediately frustrated is played out again in Frames 6 and 7, although this time it is the man whose apparent disappearance turns out to have been the result of someone else's more foregrounded, obscuring presence. So on two occasions a possible narrative focus on a stormy relationship seems to have been prospected only to be ruled out straight away, effectively both exhausting and negating its narrative potential without substituting a sustained alternative focus. Much as the tourist couple in Frame 4 provided a fleeting prospect of such an alternative focus, so too in Frame 8 does another couple of potential actors, this time a pair of Japanese women, facing the camera in the middle ground. However, by this stage in the sequence, it is more difficult for the viewer to reinterpret the function of successive frames retrospectively. This is partly because if all seven previous frames so far were to be interpreted as merely functioning to establish the background, this would constitute a markedly lengthy orientation, or scene-setting stage for the narrative (LABOV, 1972; LONGACRE, 1983). In addition, and



perhaps more significantly, it would also constitute a markedly stuttering opening to a story, with no fewer than five frames (2, 3, 4, 6 & 8) potentially marking either the onset or the continuation of the main event-line (LONGACRE, 1983; LABOV, 1972; CHATMAN, 1978), only to turn out to be false starts when the next frame appears and rules out the hypothesised connection. And this is again what happens in Frame 9, where the Japanese women have disappeared from view with no sign of having exerted any particular agency or affecting any other participants. [40]

Once more this new frame provides another pair of potential actors, in the form of two young men in baseball caps and jackets, one of whom appears to look into the camera in a way that directly engages the viewer's attention. As with the tourist couple earlier, their presence in the foreground adds to the sense of engagement and underlines the invitation to focus on another possible set of actors. This ninth frame, however, is the final one in the series, so once again the expectation of ensuing action is thwarted. [41]

There is nevertheless one way in which the last frame does provide a possible sense of closure. The woman and man in the original couple, who have been at least partly visible in each frame of the series, have now both indisputably left the scene. From this perspective, BALDRY and THIBAUT's requirement for transformation over time is minimally and superficially fulfilled: the lone woman at the start of the series has by the end apparently become part of a couple. [42]

Crucially, however, LONGACRE's criterion of agent orientation remains unfulfilled. The lone woman may become part of a couple, but after the first two frames, the pair are displaced from central focus by a succession of other potential agents. Nor do any of the potential agents engage in actions that seem to have an effect either on each other or on other participants. In sum then, there may indeed be a moving flow of people in these images, but there is neither realised agency nor sustained focus on one or more agents; and there may be temporal succession and a minimal change of state, but there is no satisfyingly contingent connection between groups or individuals in their movements. [43]

### **3.3 Narrativity in the Tarifa image**

At first glance, the single still image of a migrant lying on a beach may seem even less promising as a candidate for narrative interpretation. Superficially, at least, there seems to be neither action nor contingent temporal succession to drive such an interpretation. However, LONGACRE's model of discourse types includes a further parameter of tension, which characterises many narratives and "reflects a struggle or polarisation of some sort" (1983, p.6). Again, it is worth re-viewing the image (Illustration 3, reproduced here for convenience) at this point.



Illustration 3: Beach, Tarifa, Spain (Photographer: Javier BAULUZ) [44]

Even a relatively casual inspection of this image in terms of its denotational content is likely to involve registering a series of marked contrasts between the white couple and the black migrant: covered vs. uncovered; rich vs. poor; conscious vs. unconscious. Alerted in this way, closer inspection reveals a further series of contrasts between the doubling of the couple and the singularity of the migrant, and their upright postures against his being horizontal; the cool of the shade against the glare of the sun; and the softness of the sand against the hardness of the rock. There are also compositional contrasts, perhaps slightly more subtle: the vertical of the umbrella against the horizontal sweep of the rock; and the positions of the participants in the foreground to the left versus the far-middle ground to the right. Together, all these contrasts clearly represent a marked polarisation and construct a tension that enables us to make an initial connection with narrative, via what we recognise as a "typical story moment". To explore the question of how we make more precise links between picture content and narrative structure, I now turn to KRESS and VAN LEEUWEN's model of visual communication. [45]

## 4. Visual Semiotic Analysis

### 4.1 The grammar of images

Gunther KRESS and Theo VAN LEEUWEN, authors in the 1990s of the seminal work on the grammar of images (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN, 2006 [1996]), adopt the systemic-functional approach of HALLIDAY (1994 [1985]) in viewing all messages as simultaneously making three kinds of meaning and thus performing three kinds of communicative function<sup>6</sup>. Perhaps most obviously, visual messages can be described in terms of their *Representational* function, that is what they show, the content we see when we view them. Additionally, though, they also

6 The term "grammar" is used here in parallel to HALLIDAY's view of language as meaning potential, "in which syntax is not a system of formal rules but a resource for social interaction" (VAN LEEUWEN, 2005, p.69). Language is thus a resource for meaning-making and actual meanings are made by making multiple choices from the array of systematic options the grammar of the language presents.

perform an *Interactive* function of construing a relationship of various kinds with the viewer; and they have a further *Compositional* function<sup>7</sup>, which serves to bind the disparate elements of the image together as a coherent whole. A selective outline of the major meaningful choices made in each of these overarching, metafunctional categories follows, highlighting the aspects most significant for the current discussion. It should perhaps be noted at the very outset, though, that this approach does not take a deterministic view of visual communication and is not intended either to rule out variation in individual viewers' interpretations of an image or to provide an exhaustive description of all that might be said. In the same way as linguistic analysis can provide an objective description of the textual features that provide the meaning potential from which a reader/hearer derives actual meaning, so visual semiotic analysis can provide an interpretive framework, which each viewer will flesh out with their own specific meanings, incorporating connotations, experience, world view etc. (see JEWITT & OYAMA, 2001, pp.134-6, for a particularly lucid and accessible discussion of this point). [46]

#### 4.2 The Representational metafunction

The major distinction under this category is between Narrative and Conceptual representations, according to the way participants in the image are related to each other. Narrative mode represents a relationship of doing or happening between participants and in this sense may be thought of as more concrete than Conceptual mode, which relates participants more abstractly, in terms of their essential qualities or states of being. The key cue to which mode is operative is the presence in narrative images of one or more vectors—a directional line, often diagonal—construing a dynamic connection between participants. The direction of the vector expresses an agentive relationship between the actor from which it emanates and the goal it connects to, effectively endowing them with "active" and "passive" qualities respectively. Where a vector is realised by an eyeline or the direction of someone's gaze, it construes a *re*-action to the "passive" phenomenon observed by the "active" gazer. [47]

In the BAULUZ image analysed here, the eyeline vector, highlighted by the lower of the two superimposed arrows in Illustration 7, makes a clear connection between the couple and the migrant, which is further reinforced by the additional diagonal of the sun umbrella, also highlighted in Illustration 7.

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7 "Representational", "Interactive" and "Compositional" are capitalised here (as are other labels for analytical categories subsequently) to indicate that the words are being used in their technical sense, rather than with their everyday, non-technical meaning.



Illustration 7: Beach, Tarifa, Spain, arrows added (Photographer: Javier BAULUZ) [48]

Together the diagonals effectively make a pointer, alerting us to the narrative significance of the white couple actively observing and reacting to the phenomenon of the impassive black migrant. [49]

### 4.3 The Compositional metafunction

Compositional meanings stem from placement on the page, or within the image. In societies where the Roman alphabet is used for writing, they derive one of their major values from the cultural context of reading from left to right, and from the related linguistic concept of Given-New information structure. [50]

In linguistic terms, the default ordering of information in clauses and sentences is to begin with what can be taken as knowledge already shared between writer and reader and, having established this common ground, to progress to what the writer wishes to present as the newsworthy or focal point of the message. Similarly in visual messages, placement on the left construes an element as representing something that the viewer is already familiar with, as information that can be agreed upon, or taken for granted as shared. The white couple's occupation of the left hand side of this image can thus be interpreted as representing what we might self-evidently expect to find on a beach, something that is in this sense an uncontentious, predictable point of departure for the message. [51]

The migrant's placement on the right, on the other hand, presents him as representing *New information* that is not yet known or agreed upon. In linguistic terms, New information contrasts with what is presupposed as *Given*, by presenting the point at issue in the message, the part of the proposition about which we can argue. In effect, then, the migrant is visually construed as something unpredictable, to which the viewer must pay special attention, and as being potentially problematic or contestable in some way. The effect of the relative placement of couple and migrant is perhaps more fully appreciated by

considering the difference if the image had been taken from the position marked with an **X** in Illustration 8.



Illustration 8: Beach, Tarifa, Spain, X added (Photographer: Javier BAULUZ) [52]

This location, in fact, is almost exactly where BAULUZ wanted to take a picture from, as he notes in his account, "Un cadáver frente a la sombrilla. Historia de un foto" [A body by the beach umbrella. The story of a photo]<sup>8</sup>. In this article, he describes his work that day, including being alerted to the presence of a body on the beach and his surprise, on rushing there, that he could initially see nothing unusual—only people swimming and sunbathing. Finally he notices something odd at the far end of the beach, where the press is gathered near a body lying in a strange position:

"Levanto la vista y veo una pareja sentada bajo su sombrilla con el cadáver a pocos metros. No se mueven de su sitio a pesar de los periodistas, sus cámaras y el muerto. Todavía jadeando disparo tres veces. [...] Una de estas fotos es la de la pareja, la sombrilla y el cuerpo del inmigrante al fondo.

[...] Camino hasta el cadáver con una idea en la cabeza: desde el otro lado se podrá ver el muerto y la playa llena de gente disfrutando. Nosotros y ellos en el mismo espacio pero en dos mundos distintos".

[I look up and see a couple sitting under their beach umbrella with the corpse a few metres away. They do not move from their place in spite of the journalists, their cameras and the dead man. Still panting I shoot three frames. (...) One of these photos is the one of the couple, the beach umbrella and the body of the immigrant in the distance.

(...) I walk towards the corpse with only one idea in my head: from the other side it will be possible to see the dead man and the beach full of people enjoying themselves.

8 The full account is available at <http://www.aespada.blogspot.com/>. A slightly different (and shorter) version of it was published on 2 March 2003, under the title "Aquella tarde en la playa de Zahara de los Atunes" [That afternoon on the beach at Zahara de los Atunes] in the *Magazine* section of *La Vanguardia*, the Spanish paper that originally published BAULUZ's photo in 2000. This latter version also includes a series of other photos BAULUZ took on the same day, which he mentions in both versions of the account. I am grateful to Raquel MEDINA for her help in checking my translations.

Us and them in the same space but in two different worlds.] (BAULUZ, 2003; my translation) [53]

BAULUZ only manages to get a few metres further, however, before a member of the Guardia Civil stops him and, although he explains that he is a journalist, the officer refuses to allow him any closer to the body. So he takes a detour onto the rocks at the far end of the beach and, instead of the photo he had hoped to take, takes the one shown as Illustration 9:



Illustration 9: Beach, Tarifa, Spain, elevated view (Photographer: Javier BAULUZ)<sup>9</sup> [54]

Illustration 9 is taken from a higher vantage point and greater distance—issues that will be taken up in the next section—and is composed around a centre-margin principle, rather than left-right. So it is not as directly comparable with the photo that concerns us as the one that BAULUZ hoped to take might have been. However, what Illustrations 7, 8 and 9 highlight is that in the original composition it is indeed the migrant who is construed as the point at issue, as representing a potential problem. Problems and their solutions, in fact, form the basis of an extremely widespread textual pattern in English-speaking cultures (HOEY, 2001), such that a reader encountering something that is textually signalled as being problematic is primed to expect some response to it, some attempt at solution. The question of who exactly might be called upon to provide such a response in this case brings us to the third of the metafunctions. [55]

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9 Source: <http://hemeroteca.lavanguardia.es/preview/2003/03/02/pagina-58/34413810/pdf.html>. The authors have made several attempts to trace the owners of the images to seek copyright clearance to use them. At the time of going to press we had not had any responses to our requests. We assume that the owners of the images are happy for us to use them for educational purposes, and are aware that we are not financially profiting from the use of the images. If our assumptions are wrong we welcome correspondence from individuals or companies which hold the copyright to any of the images which we have used.

A black-and-white version of the image in Illustration 9, along with a commentary on the photos from Tarifa, can be seen at [http://issuu.com/verpuerto/docs/general\\_view\\_over\\_the\\_beach/2?mode=a\\_p](http://issuu.com/verpuerto/docs/general_view_over_the_beach/2?mode=a_p). Although reproductions of the image shown here as Illustration 3 abound on the web, Illustration 9 is the best quality colour version of this alternative view that we have been able to find. This fact in itself suggests that Illustration 3 is generally perceived as the more "successful" photo in terms of its impact and power, perhaps at least partly for the reasons summarised at the end of Section 4.4. It also almost certainly reflects its powerful combination of narrativity and news values, as discussed in Sections 5.2 and 7.

#### 4.4 The Interactive metafunction

The Interactive metafunction concerns the interpersonal positioning of the viewer in relation to the participants in the image. In the case of photographs, the vantage point of the camera effectively stands in for our own varying physical stances in the different kinds of everyday social interactions we regularly engage in. In this way we may be metaphorically positioned as viewers of an image along a cline of social connectedness in relation to the image's participants, with meanings such as involvement, status and familiarity being symbolically construed by the view the camera affords us. I have already hinted at two noteworthy dimensions of interactive meaning in BAULUZ's photo: Distance and Point of view, both of which are measured along this relative cline of degrees, rather than as absolute either/or categories. [56]

Point of view involves the vertical and horizontal angles from which the image is depicted and the symbolic meanings of power and involvement that may thus be created. In terms of options along the horizontal plane, a frontal angle—full face view—construes positive involvement between viewer and image, while an oblique angle—a view in profile—suggests greater detachment, up to the extreme degree represented in this image by the back view of the migrant. In the vertical plane, the image may be "seen" from a high vantage point, depicting the viewer as being in a position of power, looking down on the participants, while a low vantage point conversely depicts those in the image as having power over the viewer, seeming in the extreme case to loom over us. The mid-range option of eye-level symbolises a relationship of equality between viewer and participants in the image. [57]

The relative Distance from which an image is captured metaphorically suggests the degree of closeness between participants and viewer along a cline of social distance. The norms of our everyday interactions reserve a very close and detailed view for those who are our intimates (and avoiding such scrutiny may become a major preoccupation on crowded public transport). A close-up shot therefore projects the participant so depicted as socially close to the viewer, a member of "our group", while a longer shot suggests a more impersonal relationship, as between strangers in the extreme case. Perhaps rather paradoxically, however, even though we frequently have a close-up view of our intimates and immediate social group, there is a sense in which we are more accepting of them and their belonging to "our group". So we do not routinely subject them to the kind of critical appraisal our intimate view might afford, but rather tend to accept them "at face value". The greater distance of a longer shot, on the other hand, enables a fuller view and seems to open up a physical and mental space for evaluation and appraisal. [58]

At this point, it is worth revisiting Javier BAULUZ's comments, quoted earlier, and specifically his desire to photograph from the other side of the migrant (as shown earlier, marked with X in Illustration 8). Not only did he wish to be able to show that the beach was full of people enjoying themselves, he also provided a telling interpretation of the interpersonal effect this re-positioning would have:

"Nosotros y ellos en el mismo espacio pero en dos mundos distintos".

[Us and them in the same space but in two different worlds.] (BAULUZ, 2003) [59]

The first person plural pronoun, *nosotros* [*us*], is clearly inclusive in this extract, encompassing photographer, viewer and dead migrant in the same social grouping, and is equally clearly set in opposition to *ellos* [*them*]*—*the beachgoers, operating in a different world from *us*. These pronouns, then, seem implicitly to illustrate the photographer's sensitivity to the effect of closeness as a visual resource for construing group belonging and alliance. They may also in part reflect another difference in visual meaning that would result from the hypothetical repositioning, since we would not only be closer to the migrant, but would also be likely to perceive a greater degree of involvement with him by virtue of the concomitant frontal angle and view of his face. [60]

In terms of the actual photograph BAULUZ could and did take, however, the interactive effects are almost diametrically opposed to those I have just hypothesised. The distance of the actual image projects a relatively long shot of the couple, construing an essentially impersonal relationship between us and them, but it is nevertheless notably much closer than that construed between us and the migrant. He is also further detached from us than the couple because we cannot see his face at all, only his back. In terms of vertical angle, too, the couple is again construed as socially closer to us by the choice of a more or less eye-level camera position. (It is worth pointing out here that, whether this position was achieved by BAULUZ himself bending or squatting, or by the use of a special lens, it can only have been a deliberate compositional choice on his part.) [61]

So BAULUZ's deliberately composed interactive metafunction choices place us on an equal footing with the couple and align us with their social grouping, albeit at a distance great enough to invite critical appraisal. Representationally, we are looking at the couple's reaction to the compositionally generated "problem" posed by the migrant. But as viewers we are not fully detached: we too are inserted into this tense story moment by virtue of our social alignment with the couple. Through them, we play a vicarious part in a version of normality that presents them as symbolising the expectable, "common sense" option—of continuing to behave as one might expect on a beach. This is surely a non-response to a problem. Yet no other is apparently forthcoming from the couple representing "our group", whose unmoving reaction we are aligned with. We are thus left to consider our own response to/in this problematic situation, and to wonder whether we are really so very different from them, in our coolly critical appraisal of what we are looking at and our own unmoving reaction. [62]

## 5. Bullring and BAULUZ Images Compared

In the previous section I tried to show how in BAULUZ's photograph visual resources are deployed in such a way as to draw the viewer into a tense story moment, in spite of the still nature of the image apparently involving only one moment in the whole chain of events that would normally be expected of a story.



By aligning us with the non-responsive white couple in a problematic situation which clearly calls for a response of some sort, the image draws us into projecting what our own response would be. Imagining what we would do in this situation, then, precisely involves us in projecting a characteristically narrative relationship of agency (acting) between the moment of the image and the contingently and temporally related next step that would constitute our own response to it. The viewer's personal investment, not only in imagining ourselves as part of the situation, but also in making our own selection of what should constitute the next event, underlines the sense of involvement in a developing storyline. [63]

This contrasts sharply with the lack of narrative connectedness in the sequence of Bullring stills, where attempts to establish contingency between successive images, much less effective agency, are likely to be frustrated for the reasons discussed in Section 3. From this perspective, the "anti-narrative" randomness introduced by GILLIGAN's two-fold decision to take photos, firstly, at arbitrary intervals, and secondly, from a single arbitrary point has further implications relating to the likely effects we might expect such representations of migrants and migration to have. [64]

### 5.1 Flows and pulses of movement

The movement and flow of people in the Bullring series of images seems ultimately to be denied narrative coherence by the lack of sustained connection between participants, in spite of its clearly representing a temporal sequence. For this reason, it did not strike me on first viewing as truly story-like. Yet it did strike me, especially after preliminary investigation, as reminiscent of another potentially narrative visual genre—that of British TV news coverage of migration. [65]

It especially reminded me of news items on "immigration problems", such as that posed by the Red Cross Centre in Sangatte, near Calais (France), where migrants variously referred to by the BBC as "asylum seekers", "illegal immigrants" and "refugees" gathered before it was closed in 2002<sup>10</sup>. Such news coverage frequently presents a kind of video or snapshot collage of migrants, brief shots in sequence, often through a localised passage of time and frequently depicting migrants en masse. These sequences, too, represent various flows of people, but rarely follow a specific migrant through a series of events in contingent temporal succession. Here too, then, in the visuals at least, there is a lack of sustained focus on specific participants to allow a coherent interpretation of the images as representing a particular story, as telling the experiences of an individual. When such personalised narrative elements do occur, they are generally recounted verbally in voiceover, rather than being enacted on screen;

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10 At the time of writing, subsequent BBC news coverage of Sangatte can still be retrieved from the internet. For example, an item entitled "No new Sangatte in Calais" (27.01.09, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/7854694.stm>) and another entitled "Immigrant problem remains in Sangatte" (21.11.05, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid\\_4450000/newsid\\_4457800/4457812.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&news=1&nol\\_storyid=4457812&bbcws=1](http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_4450000/newsid_4457800/4457812.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&news=1&nol_storyid=4457812&bbcws=1)) both show similarities with the Bullring images discussed here.

and both voiceover and graphics also frequently provide statistics to quantify migration as a mass phenomenon, rather than individualise it. VAN LEEUWEN (1996, pp.48-50) observes that such "aggregation" in texts is frequently the lot of immigrants, serving to "regulate practice and to manufacture consensus opinion, even though it presents itself as merely recording facts" (p.49). [66]

Reading backwards to interpret the effect of TV news coverage against the analysis of the Bullring sequence I have presented here, we might add to VAN LEEUWEN's observation. Perhaps one of the effects of the lack of agency and contingent temporal succession in visual TV coverage is to invite us to see migration as an agentless phenomenon, as random or arbitrary in its execution as the timing and viewpoint of GILLIGAN's photos. From this angle, the visual representations in TV news might be seen as setting a scene: not as forming part of the individual story of anyone in particular, but as part of the background to "our" lives. The pulse and flow of people so represented becomes comparable to waves breaking on a beach; and the flooding and swamping imagery evoked by the overcrowded boat finds another echo in this alternative realisation. [67]

## **5.2 Everyday lives—Beyond the exceptional and dramatic**

From another angle, however, this analysis also shows that, in resisting narrative connections of contingency and agency, GILLIGAN's Bullring images do indeed succeed in capturing—much more effectively than either TV news coverage or BAULUZ's photo—the largely mundane and unremarkable nature of many migrants' roles and lives. These photos not only show migration in the sense of movement, but also present the viewer with a multitude of people who may or may not be "migrants" in the sense we have used it so far. Crucially, there is no way of telling which of the everyday day lives that fleetingly pass by us in these images might belong to immigrants in any of the categories discussed by GILLIGAN in Section 2. "They", like "us", are just people in pursuit of their lives. The Bullring images therefore represent some of the very qualities praised by ICAR, quoted earlier (ICAR, 2007, p.141), as constituting good journalistic practice. If we again read backwards, though, to consider ICAR's position against this discussion of GILLIGAN's images, there is again a question to be asked, this time about the standpoint from which ICAR's evaluation is reached. [68]

As the work also cited earlier by SONTAG (2003) and VAN DIJK (2008) hints, representation in hard news genres is shaped by news values first identified over 40 years ago by GALTUNG and RUGE (1965). Of primary significance here is the powerful combination of values of negativity and unexpectedness, which are clearly exemplified in BAULUZ's image of the corpse of a black migrant lying on a Spanish beach. Negativity (in this instance, death) and unexpectedness (the unpredictability of a reclining figure on a beach being dead, rather than merely sunbathing) routinely form the basis on which events are perceived as "exceptional and dramatic"—and hence as newsworthy. In the case of the BAULUZ image, the combination gains support from additional values of personalisation (the death of an individual) and consonance (stereotypes of migrants firstly being black and secondly taking desperate risks). Peter WHITE,

an ex-journalist turned linguist and media analyst, encapsulates such newsworthiness in his choice of "Death, disruption and the moral order" (WHITE, 1997) as his title in research that highlights journalists' textual prioritisation of aspects "which are assessed as constituting the peak or climax of social-order disruption" (p.111). [69]

Even such a brief outline as the thumbnail sketch I have just given serves to highlight that the qualities praised by ICAR may well provide a model of good reporting practice for their humanitarian ends, but are much less likely to propel a story into the hard news headlines. Moreover, as MACHIN and NIBLOCK (2006) show, GALTUNG and RUGE's long-standing news values are themselves increasingly shaped in their application by the particular target audience the journalist has in mind, and may often conflict with the priorities of those involved in humanitarian activities (pp.125-6). Together these observations seem to suggest that anyone seeking to influence perceptions of migrants through changing or challenging representational practices might be well advised to cultivate as sharp a sense of target audience and norms of publication as newsmakers have. [70]

## **6. GILLIGAN's Response to MARLEY's Analysis**

As I read through MARLEY's analysis of the narrative content of the two different sets of images I was intrigued. Her approach seemed to provide scientifically rigorous conceptual tools for visual analysis. My approach, by comparison, felt intuitive. I was guided by: my knowledge of the topic of migration; my exposure to many examples of the visual representations of migration in the mass media; some knowledge of "compositional interpretation" picked up from a year at Art School, and; gut instinct (ROSE, 2007, pp.35-58). Her approach provided tools for analysis of the visual grammar of images, a set of tools which help to discern the underlying rules which structure our reading of images. My approach, by comparison, focused on the surface content (what she calls the representational function). My approach now seemed to me to be highly subjective and superficial. When I read MARLEY's points about flows and pulses of movement I was shocked. I could see the parallels between the television news images and my sequence of photographs. At this point I thought that I had utterly failed in my attempts to present an alternative visual representation of migration. I had, ironically, simply reproduced the most insidious portrayal of immigrants; as waves of anonymous people whose movements are beyond comprehension. [71]

These were my initial thoughts. When I recovered from the jolt that MARLEY's analysis had given me, however, I began to reflect on the limitations of her approach. It seems to me that there are at least two limitations of her approach. Firstly, her analysis is almost completely confined to the site of the image itself (ROSE, 2007, p.13). Although MARLEY acknowledges that the *meaning* of an image is not fixed, (in the way that its compositional elements are), she does not provide any conceptual resources which allow us to analyse the role of factors outside of the image itself. There are, however, a range of factors outside the frame of the image which influence the viewer's interpretation of the image.

Texts, such as captions, attempt to anchor the meanings of images; viewers draw on cultural resources when interpreting images; and the form in which images are presented frames the range of possible viewer responses. Secondly, having less narrative content is not necessarily a weakness of the sequence of images. My sequence of images is arguably a conceptual form of representation, rather than a narrative form (see Section 4.2 above) and trying to analyse them as narrative may be a problem, because the tools of analysis are inappropriately suited to the form of the images. I shall now develop these points in more detail. [72]

### 6.1 Interpretation outside the site of the image

STRAUSS points out that although: "we live in a media environment saturated with visual imagery, these images are almost always accompanied by words... Even television news is to a large extent not visual. It consists mostly of 'talking heads' reading texts" (2003, pp.16-17). Interpretation and meaning are mediated through words. In news contexts images are often presented as "somehow more objective (less ideological) than words" the name of the photographer, for example, is rarely provided (p.16). The anonymity of news images provides an "illusion of objectivity ... No one took these photographs [the anonymity claims]. Or *Newsweek* took them. No one decided what and when" (p.17). News images are presented as images which speak for themselves. The meanings of photographic images, he suggests, are not fixed, and "print news, headlines, captions, and text all serve to resolve the innate ambiguity of photographs and to suppress the central photographic paradox that results from their combination of iconic and symbolic modes of signification" (p.17). Written and spoken words attempt to anchor the meaning of news images and guide the interpretation that is given to them. Both of these elements are situated outside of the image itself. [73]

It is important to remember the crucial importance of written and oral language in the process of giving meaning to images, but this is not to deny the role of visual culture in the process of interpretation. Every culture has its iconography, its shared visual representations and conventions which help to inform the interpretation of images. When we view an image we often compare it to other images with which we are already familiar. WRIGHT, for example, "suggests that many "standard" images of refugees conform to patterns already established in Christian iconography" (2002, p.54). He identifies four categories of "image types" of refugees which draw on Christian iconography. The first two are: Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and; Mary and Joseph's "Flight into Egypt". The third is "Exodus", which he says involves: "the mass movement of people that may suggest the out-of-frame presence of a pursuer" (p.57). The fourth is the Madonna and Child, "which may be incorporated with any of the other categories" (p.57).<sup>11</sup> For viewers who are not Christian, or have not grown up in a Christian culture, these images may have a different resonance, which is not to say that they are less rich in meaning. [74]

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11 WRIGHT suggests that, perhaps the most famous migrant photograph globally, Dorothy LANGE's "Migrant Mother", is a "more contemporary appearance of the Madonna and Child icon" (2002, p.58).

The format in which images are presented also positions the viewer in particular ways. In her analysis of coffee-table books which represent refugees, SZORENYI, suggests that the images in the books

"draw on the tradition of socially concerned photography which has sought to provide a factual record of the suffering of the poor, and on a tradition of humanist discourse which emphasises the value of perceiving and portraying the 'humanity' of people across the globe" (2006, p.24). [75]

The coffee-table books attempt to evoke a response in which the viewer sympathises with the refugees. The form of presentation, however, shapes the nature of the response. She goes on to say that these books are "a form in which the immediacy of war journalism is replaced by the retrospective portrayal of events, and thus seems designed to promote an emotional response rather than immediate political intervention" (2006, p.25). She suggests that the retrospective nature of the images makes a personalised, private and emotional response more likely than an active, collective, political response. The form in which MARLEY first saw my sequence of images, in a research seminar, is significantly different to the form in which you, the reader, views the sequence of images. MARLEY was able to directly engage with me as the producer of the images, and this article is one outcome of that engagement. This is not an option which is available to most of the readers of this article. [76]

When we presented our joint paper to various audiences—at a workshop, a conference, and through the peer review process for this Special Issue—it became evident that images do not speak for themselves. Different audience members interpreted the images in different ways. A minority of audience members, for example, consistently thought that the sequence of images had more narrative content than the single image.<sup>12</sup> Audience members drew on their own frameworks when they interpreted images. There may be a visual grammar of images, but each audience member has their own particular style of interpretation. Images are also, contrary to what MARLEY's analysis might lead us to conclude, polysemic. Different audience members may pick up on different elements within the same image, or imbue the same element with a different meaning. There is no essential meaning inherent in an image. The meaning of an image—or of multiple images, or a sequence of images—is negotiated between the producer(s) of the image and the viewer(s) of the image, and this negotiation is mediated through the image itself. [77]

While it is useful to be aware of the visual grammar of images, and MARLEY's analysis provides many useful insights on this point, the *interpretation* of images takes place outside of the confines of the image itself. Her approach provides some generic rules which enable a rigorous scientific analysis of the narrative content of images. As with any positivistic methodology, however, it minimises the

<sup>12</sup> A number of audience members recalled seeing the still image in the media, in one case an audience member contacted us later and directed us to a webpage which he thought had contained the images, but were actually from a beach in Italy. The fact that this person mistook the images we had presented for ones he had previously encountered suggested to us that the juxtaposition of an exhausted, or dead, immigrant and holidaymakers had become a media trope.

interpretive human dimension. In this regard my subjective intuitive approach can be seen as a potential strength, rather than a weakness. In this vein it is worth citing HOGGART's quote from the poet AUDEN:

"In grasping the character of a society, as in judging the character of an individual, no documents, statistics, 'objective' measurements can ever compete with the single intuitive glance. Intuition may err, for though its sound judgement is, as Pascal said, only a question of good eyesight, it must be good, for the principles are subtle and numerous, and the omission of one principle leads to error; but documentation, which is useless unless it is complete, must err in a field where completeness is impossible" (cited in HOGGART, 1976, p.vii). [78]

Interpreting images of migration, I contend, is not something which can be done by solely looking at the images themselves. We need to grasp something of the character of the society in which they are made and interpreted, not just the content of the images themselves. The character of society, however, is not something which is amenable to "objective" measurement. Grasping the character of a society does require conceptual tools, but grasping the nuances of this character also requires prolonged immersion in the society. MARLEY's approach provides us with reliable tools which allow us to replicate her analysis, in this sense her approach is open and transparent. There is a danger in my approach that I overestimate the clarity and comprehensiveness of my sight. The democracy in her approach is that she provides tools for others to do their own analysis. My approach involves a vision of how things could be different, its democratic potential lies in my ability to inspire people to translate this vision into reality. [79]

## **6.2 Conceptual, not narrative**

The second point is that having less narrative content is not necessarily a problem with the sequence of images. In part that was the intention, or at least the intention was to disrupt the existing narratives around migration. In this regard, however, my sequence of images has something in common with the images produced by Arturo RODRIGUEZ and Javier BAULUZ. Their images jolt us out of comfortable interpretations of migration. They do so, however, in a narrative form. They invite us to engage with the story which is being portrayed. They remind European, and other Western, viewers of their relative affluence in a world where many make huge personal sacrifices and are willing to risk death to try to improve their lives. They are unsettling images because they compel us to look at a harsh reality that we might rather ignore. They maintain the "us" and "them" divide between immigrants and settled populations. Or perhaps more accurately, the divide between "us" who travel as a leisure pursuit and "them" for whom travel is a means to an end. In BAUMAN's terms travel, for most of those who live in the West is the travel of the tourist, in which "his or her curiosity, need of amusement, will and ability to live through novel, pleasurable, and pleasurable novel experiences ... appears to possess a nearly total freedom to 'structure' the tourist's life-world" (1996, p.53). Those from the global south most often travel as pilgrims; they travel with "distant goals, life-long projects, lasting commitments" in

mind (p.51). The images of African migrants on European beaches do not challenge this binary distinction, they draw our attention to the global inequalities and injustices which underpin these social divides. [80]

The work that I was trying to do with the sequence of images was different. I wanted to avoid shocking images. I wanted to take the emotional charge out of the representation of migration. My initial attempts at representation led me to think about the conceptualisation of migration. It was at this point that I decided I needed to reconceptualise the way I was thinking about migration and I began to explore mobility as an alternative way to conceptualise the issue. So perhaps holding up the sequence of images as examples of narrative images and finding them wanting misses the point. As a producer of the images I was not consciously trying to produce narrative images, I was trying to capture an idea of migration as mobility. [81]

### **6.3 Meaning and migration**

I am unhappy, however, with this as a conclusion. Although I feel able to defend the sequence of images against MARLEY's criticisms, that was not my original intention. So where does this leave my attempt to visually represent immigrants in a humanistic way? I am still left with the problem that my attempt has only been a limited success. This raises the interesting question, "why was my attempt only a limited success?" [82]

My response to MARLEY's criticisms has focused on the limitations of her approach. In my desire to defend myself, however, I should be wary of entirely dismissing her criticisms. In part the limited success of my sequence of images may be because they refuse a narrative interpretation, and consequently they make it more difficult for the viewers to read the images in a way which allows them to connect their own experience of mobility with that of immigrants. In this regard there may be something in MARLEY's criticism of my sequence of images. MARLEY's criticisms have also drawn my attention to a weakness which both of us share, a lack of sufficient appreciation of the centrality of audience in the interpretation of images. Why has my sequence of images not resonated more with the various audiences they have been presented to? Perhaps part of the reason for my limited success is because viewers do not link migration and mobility conceptually. Viewers may, for example, think of migration as something exceptional (only 3% of the world's population live outside their country of birth) and mobility as something mundane. [83]

In responding to MARLEY's criticisms I have been forced to think more systematically about how factors outside of the images themselves play a role in the interpretation of the images. It strikes me that any attempt to produce a humanistic representation of migration is destined to fail, if the society in which they are being interpreted does not provide sufficient cultural resources to support such a reading. In this regard it is worth noting PUPAVAC's observation that:

"civil rights are becoming less central to contemporary human rights advocacy, accompanying the shift from human rights activism to human rights professionalism and advocacy around political prisoners to depoliticized victims. UK refugee advocates are less engaged in demands for freedom of movement and opposition to border controls, and relatively more occupied with refugee welfare and media representations of refugees" (2008, p.283). [84]

She suggests that an increasing interest in media representation of refugees is mirrored by a decreasing focus on civil rights. This suggests that the contemporary concern with representation may be part of a shift from political arguments which attempt to make a case for universal freedoms and rights towards political arguments which proscribe certain ideas and behaviours (from a politics of open borders to a politics of "you can't say that!"). A focus on what is appropriate and inappropriate in the representation of migration and migrants suggests that media gatekeepers and state officials—rather than the broader public—are the primary audience for political campaigns around representation. This strategic orientation involves trying to promote cultural change within media organizations and amongst state officials, and assuming (or hoping) that this will diffuse outwards towards the wider public. This approach treats the public as a passive audience. There is no attempt to engage a wider public and win the argument. It is also unclear what the argument consists of, beyond the rather bland idea that we should all think nice thoughts about immigrants. [85]

My sequence of images taken at the Bullring may also be guilty of depoliticising the issue of migration. Part of my rationale was to take the charge out of the issue of migration, but there is a danger here of denying that the issue is politically charged. The images evade the politically contentious issues rather than challenge them. Shifting the terms of the discussion from immigration to mobility may not escape the negative representation of migration. In the twenty-first century the decline of shared moral norms—such as used to be provided by religion and a left-right framework of political contestation—has led to a "loss of meaning and stable framework of guidance provided by tradition" (FUREDI, 2004, p.105). In this context mobility is often experienced as frightening, rather than liberating. Consequently my attempt to shift the frame of reference may simply provide a different way to view migrants negatively. The deconstruction of representations of migrants can draw attention to ways in which these representations are constructed. This can, however, simply feed into a broader sense of a loss of meaning; a loss which is enhanced by the representation of society as characterised by movement. Deconstruction can be useful, but it is also limited. It strips away a layer of meaning, but leaves nothing in its place. This is unsettling. It may resonate with people's experience of the world, but in as far as it does so it reinforces rather than challenges the loss of meaning in contemporary society. (In this sense MARLEY's observation that my sequence of images was reminiscent of television news representations of immigrants is perceptive.) A more radical approach would be for me to attempt to challenge the loss of meaning, and suggest ways forward. All of this suggests that if I want to successfully visually represent migration in a humanistic way I need to complement my production of visual images with the production of arguments in



favour of free movement globally, and I need to engage with a public audience in putting these arguments forward. [86]

## **7. MARLEY's Response to GILLIGAN's Criticisms**

To a certain—and not insignificant, in spite of the length of this section—extent, my response to GILLIGAN's objection that his images were never meant to be narrative, but rather conceptual, has to be one of concession and agreement. The very resistance of his sequence of stills to narrative interpretation, along with the reasons for it, was the main question I set out to explore in our post-seminar discussions, and which I have tried to answer in previous sections. [87]

However, one of the most interesting questions subsequently to emerge from this ongoing conversation—now not only with GILLIGAN, but also with peer reviewers and interested colleagues—is the logically prior, but so far implicit, question of why the predisposition to narrative? Why did I expect, even want, GILLIGAN's sequence of images to feel like a story? The simple answer seems to be that, given what he had already said in his seminar about seeking alternative positive representations of migrants, I was looking forward to an opportunity to engage quasi-personally with real lives, with individuals not defined by the tragedy and threat that I was used to encountering in mass media images of migration. Predictably, however, such a simple answer throws into relief a more complex underlying issue. I was certainly explicitly prepared for the images I was about to encounter to differ from the norm in being positive. But in the absence of an explicit "warning" that they were conceptual, my default expectation for the representation of experience was that the normative framework would be narrative. It is against this background that I want to consider GILLIGAN's critiques of my analysis and suggest that the issues both of entertaining narrative expectations of his sequence and of focusing on the site of the image are closely intertwined. [88]

### **7.1 The narrative turn**

In Sections 3 and 4, I effectively offered only part of a fuller social semiotic analysis of the GILLIGAN sequence and the BAULUZ photograph, namely the descriptive stage of establishing the different compositions and hence potential workings of the two visual representations being compared. Our original aim of exploring the differences in effect between the two, and the ways in which this kind of visual analysis could provide a relatively objective diagnosis of the causes, has inevitably led in my contributions so far to a focus that is largely fixed on the site of the image itself. In other words, my initial interest was mainly methodological, rather than critical—to offer a colleague from another discipline an additional tool for his toolkit. However, continuing the dialogue beyond its original conception calls for a broader consideration of the social context in which the meanings of the images are made, not only by the producers of the images but also by their audiences. [89]

My initial curiosity about GILLIGAN's sequence of images not being as narrative as I had expected was clearly anchored academically in my linguistic background. Equally, though, my expectation of encountering a narrative as the appropriate form for learning about someone's life seems on reflection to be no less than consistent with what has been called "the narrative turn" in social outlook since the mid-twentieth century (see, e.g., BRUNER, 2004 [1987], 1991). Narrative has increasingly become the predominant mode within over-arching, socioculturally available discourse frameworks of contemporary society. The growing prominence of narrative is seen in a variety of arenas—from the personalisation of celebrity and politics (STREET, 2004; JOHANSSON, 2005), and the narrativisation of scientific discoveries for publication in popular science journals (MYERS, 1990, 1994), through to the move towards narrative as a framework, and narrative enquiry as a methodology, in disciplines including medicine and medical ethics (HURWITZ, GREENHALGH & SKULTANS, 2004; HURWITZ, 2003), psychotherapy and psychiatry (BROWN, NOLAN, CRAWFORD & LEWIS, 1996; ANDREWS, DAY SCLATER, SQUIRE & TREACHER, 2000), sociology (BERGER & QUINNEY, 2004) and pedagogy (FRIESEN, 2008). More informally, a similar trend might be noted in popular culture. To the continued popularity of longstanding TV soaps, we might add: the rise of confessional TV chat shows modelled on *Oprah*; reality TV programmes such as *Big Brother*; the burgeoning of the blogosphere; and social websites such as Twitter, which explicitly frames its function as being to answer that fundamentally narrative question, "What is happening?" [90]

In other words, it seems unlikely that I would be alone in my predisposition to expect narrative as a default framework for representing experience, as might paradoxically be evidenced in the split reactions of our presentation audiences. Those who choose GILLIGAN's sequence of images as the more narrative are arguably drawing on exactly such a cultural predisposition to and training in narrative interpretation—to the extent that they are able to "read against the compositional grain", and process a representation that is fundamentally conceptual as one that tells them a story nevertheless. Those who choose the single BAULUZ still as the more story-like, on the other hand, seem to an extent to be overriding the fundamental narrative building blocks of sequence and change of state, in their willingness to engage with the problematic tension in the image and to project their own version of prior and/or subsequent events. [91]

Hence, although I cannot disagree with GILLIGAN's observation that there is no essential meaning inherent in an image and that viewers will draw on their own frameworks, I would nevertheless want to suggest that an audience's sociocultural frameworks are likely to predispose them to certain kinds of readings. Part of the work of a social semiotic analysis can be seen as being to identify those frameworks, both generalised ones such as the predisposition to narrative processing that I have just suggested, and more "local", compositionally specific ones, as I outlined in Sections 3 and 4. Each of these plays a part in considering how the "major compositional structures which have become established as conventions in ... Western visual semiotics" are put to use by

image-makers in the production of their meanings (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p.1). [92]

Captioning in news coverage and the verbal accompaniment to PowerPoint slides in academic presentations are further elements of larger context that play a part in influencing a viewer's interpretation of an image. Indeed these situational contexts (of TV or print medium hard news and academic seminar, respectively) themselves represent distinct genres—a fundamentally social concept in systemic functional linguistics (as outlined in EGGINS & MARTIN, 1997). As such, they have different associated purposes, conventions and modes of engagement, which arguably place them at almost opposite ends of a cline of discursive vividness (LONGACRE, 1983). In terms of discourse typology, news coverage belongs congruently to the engaging macrogenre of narrative, while academic presentations are classically examples of the less vivid category of expository discourse, and as such are frequently consciously enlivened with injections of narrative in the form of personal anecdotes or jokes. [93]

BARTHES (1993) distinguishes between *studium* and *punctum* in photographs, with the former being the element that lends the image unity and cultural meaningfulness, while the latter is an additional sensitive point (p.27), a detail that disturbs or punctures the unity and actively captures the reader's attention. I would not want to make the over-simplified claim that this distinction is equivalent to the differential vividness of narrative versus exposition, or photojournalism and academic research; indeed Barthes is explicit that news photographs frequently contain only *studium* (p.41). However, I do want to suggest a possible parallel in the extent to which the respective audiences of these genres habitually orient to and engage with the images they contain. The "exceptional and dramatic", the vividness of narrative and the *punctum* might all be seen not only as going hand in hand, but also as fulfilling the hard news reporter's perceived need to capture the reader's attention immediately with striking detail (BELL, 1991). Academic audiences, on the other hand, are generally presumed to be willing to invest their time and attention more assiduously and analytically, in an appreciation, perhaps, of the *studium* that might be more typical of the conceptual focus of expository images. [94]

## 7.2 Conceptual versus narrative genres in context

GILLIGAN's intent in producing his series of Bullring images was clearly not to produce a narrative; he was rather producing an academic record, which he presented in an expository academic context. To that extent, it might be agreed that not only was I comparing apples and oranges in my analysis, but also that all I have shown is that GILLIGAN did not achieve what he did not set out to do. On the other hand, he was avowedly aiming to produce a set of images that challenged prevailing representations and conceptions of migration; and their success in this respect depends ultimately on the viewer's resources for engaging with them. As KRESS and VAN LEEUWEN put it,

"texts, literary and artistic texts as much as mass media texts, are produced in the context of real social institutions, in order to play a very real role in social life—in order to do things to or for their readers, and in order to communicate attitudes towards aspects of social life and towards people who participate in them, whether authors and readers are consciously aware of this or not. Producers, if they want to see their work disseminated, must work within more or less rigidly defined conventions, and adhere to the more or less rigidly defined values and beliefs within which their work is produced and circulated" (2006, p.115). [95]

These socially established conventions, values and beliefs constitute the very same resources that provide the bridge between "the image itself, and a knowledge of the communicative resources that allow its articulation *and* understanding" (p.115; my emphasis). They are the resources, in other words, that reader-viewers can be assumed to have available to them and with (or around) which producers must therefore work in order to realise their intended meanings. [96]

Two final points flow from these observations. [97]

The first is that the inadvertent parallel between GILLIGAN's sequence and news coverage of "migration problems" becomes perhaps the more striking. There was clearly no deliberate post-hoc deletion of agency or contingency from GILLIGAN's images, since his consciously chosen method was to stand still and, aiming his lens in the same place, take photos at arbitrary intervals of whatever happened to be in his viewfinder. Nor can it be deduced that there is such deliberate deletion of the elements that render an image narrative when news journalists edit the footage that accompanies reports of migration. What we can be sure of, however, is that the footage has indeed been edited; that there is frequently a lack of sustained contingency and agentive connection in the resulting images as broadcast; and that the journalists are working within their professional conventions in doing so. In the process, much of the narrative scaffolding that might support a viewer's interpretation of the footage as representing the everyday lives of real individuals is deleted. What remains then acts as an invitation to viewers to interpret the footage conceptually, as explaining "the facts"—an aggregation of migrants into a threatening mass—whether this is intentional on the part of the journalist or not. It is an examination of the conventional resources evidenced at the site of the image that allows this insight and equips us to articulate it critically. [98]

The second point follows, in turn, from such critical diagnosis and awareness: if we want to challenge prevailing views around migration, we need to engage with the prevailing media and cultural norms in which most people encounter them. In order to be able to do so, the kind of description I have offered here is—in my view—an important first step. While we certainly cannot fix the meaning of an image we send out into the world, it is surely crucial to be at least aware of how its "fixed" compositional elements are likely to be understood once it is out there fighting to be heard against its competitor images and the normative contextual backdrop they provide. I would prefer to see this not so much as minimising the

human interpretive dimension, as providing a firmer grounding for incorporating it, whether after the fact as an analyst, or from first inception as a producer-disseminator. [99]

In addition, if narrative is increasingly becoming the normative mode of discourse, with a concomitant shift away from analytical and expository genres, then there would seem to be at least two possible implications of this particular analysis for those in pursuit of active intervention. The first of these is the option I have already hinted at (in Section 5.2), namely the importance of targeting both images and texts by genre, according to where they are most likely to be given space, and hence also the opportunity to mount a challenge. From this perspective, it seems no accident that, once published in *La Vanguardia*, BAULUZ's image, with its powerful combination of hard news values, narrative composition and problematic *punctum*, was swiftly taken up and reprinted on front pages around the world. On the other hand, this same example simultaneously highlights the likely difficulty of gaining a positive visible presence for migrants in the news media, with their deeply rooted orientation to negativity. Nevertheless, one possible avenue for experimentation might be to develop a combination of narrative and positive *punctum* designed to harness alternative news values in place of negativity. [100]

The other possible implication allows me a welcome endnote of agreement with GILLIGAN: the work of providing alternative cultural resources for a different reading of migration is a large undertaking. Deliberate and explicit disruption, or at least undermining, of an audience's default expectations can only be a small part of it, and theoretically-oriented discussion in an academic journal a smaller part still. But in the interim it would seem, from the jolts of surprise that both GILLIGAN and I have experienced in the unfolding of this discussion, that both visual experimentation and visual analysis have potential parts to play in the larger project. [101]

## 8. Conclusion (GILLIGAN and MARLEY)

Through the process of this dialogue we have come to realise that some of our disagreements are not actually disagreements, but misunderstandings based on the fact that we have taken different approaches to our analyses. ROSE provides some useful conceptual tools for teasing out the differences between our different approaches to the visual representation of migration. ROSE notes that: "there are three *sites* at which the meanings of an image are made: the site(s) of the *production* of an image, the site of the *image* itself, and the site(s) where it is seen by various *audiences*" (2007, p.13; emphasis in the original). GILLIGAN's attempt to shift the interpretive frame from immigration to mobility is an example of an attempt to make the meaning of image at the site of production. This conceptualisation, as much as the actual taking of the photographs, was part of the process of producing his visual representation of migration. The desire to shift the interpretive frame, however, was itself based on his interpretation of the meanings of the images (i.e. the site of the image) which he viewed in the mass media in the United Kingdom. GILLIGAN initially viewed many of these images as

one of many consumers of the mass media (i.e. as an audience member). MARLEY first viewed the sequence of images which GILLIGAN had produced as an audience member at a departmental research seminar. Her analysis is based on a systematic interpretation at the site of the two different sets of images. So we can say that both of us were involved in making meanings with the images at different sites, but neither of us gave anything more than a cursory consideration of audience. [102]

ROSE makes a further distinction. She suggests that each of the three sites has three different modalities: technological; compositional, and; social. The technological refers to "any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil paintings to television and the Internet" (ROSE, 2007, p.13; citing MIRZOEFF, 1998, p.1). The still photographic image when viewed in a newspaper is being viewed through a different technological apparatus than the computer (with PowerPoint software) and data projector used to present it at the research seminar. GILLIGAN's sequence of images would have looked very different if he had used a different technology (the video camera function on his mobile phone, for example). The compositional "refers to the specific material qualities of an image or visual object ... content, colour and spatial organization, for example" (ROSE, 2007, p.13). MARLEY's analysis focused primarily on the compositional elements of the two different sets of images. ROSE says that her use of the term social is shorthand and what she means "it to refer to are the range of economic, social and political relations, institutions and practices that surround an image and through which it is seen and used" (2007, p.13). GILLIGAN's dissatisfaction with the media images and desire to develop a humanistic visual representation of migration was driven by a concern with the social dimension of the meanings of these images. From this point of view it seems that the differences between the two authors may be to do with the different configuration of sites and modalities through which each of us have interpreted the images. In this sense we do not disagree, we are just looking at the images from different angles, or through different conceptual lenses. [103]

The differences in our approaches have meant that sometimes we have been talking past each other. Sometimes the criticisms that we have made of each other's work have missed the point. There is, however, something in the criticisms that each of us has made. After some consideration we can suggest that GILLIGAN's attempt to represent migration in a way which challenges some of the common representations of migrants is a qualified failure. In its favour is its representation of migrants as part of everyday life. The photographs erase the distinction between "them" and "us" and locate migrants and non-migrants in the same social space, as consumers or flaneurs. The sequence of images also presents movement and ethnic diversity as parts of the modern condition. Both movement and ethnic diversity are presented as ordinary and universal, rather than something alien and particular. The location of the sequence of images in the context of a critical reflection on representations of migration and migrants also helps to ground them. GILLIGAN's attempt to challenge prevailing representations of migrants is, however, severely limited. The representation of migrants as part of everyday life evades the politically charged nature of the topic

of immigration in Europe, and other Western countries, today. The attempt to shift conceptually from an association of migration as immigration to an association of migration as mobility may do nothing to address a sense of unease about contemporary migration. In the context of a wider crisis of meaning it may in fact help to promote negative connotations of migration and of immigrants as the embodiment of a shifting, changing, unsettling, world. [104]

MARLEY's analysis of GILLIGAN's attempt to provide a humanistic representation of migration is also a qualified failure. At one level her analysis ignores the attempt to provide a humanistic representation of migration. Instead she explores the question of why the sequence of images seemed, to her, to have less narrative content than the single photographic image taken by BAULUZ. This has led her to focus almost exclusively on the site of the image itself, which is the main limitation of her analysis. This, however, does not invalidate her analysis. Any attempt to challenge prevailing views around migration, to have any hope of success, needs to engage with the prevailing media and cultural norms in which most people encounter them. Through her analysis she provides insights into the ways that images work, and she provides conceptual tools which both help us as viewers to deconstruct images and view their inner workings. Knowledge of the construction of images also enables the producer-disseminator to construct counter-images which are more finely tuned to their intended audience. [105]

In missing the point of what GILLIGAN was trying to do MARLEY raises some interesting points. What is it that gives an image its "narrativeness"? It was this question which piqued GILLIGAN's interest and sparked the dialogue which developed into this paper. The writing of this paper has been something of a journey. It began with GILLIGAN's quest for a humanist visual representation of migration, and has been propelled along a particular route by MARLEY's interest in the narrativity of images. On this journey we have been sustained by our shared intellectual curiosity, and our shared commitment to a politics of liberation. Along the way we have come to appreciate the importance of audience. We also, however, recognise that an audience is not enough to promote a humanistic case for open borders; nor even necessarily to disturb the comfortably uneasy views of migration propped up by our current representational practices. That quest requires active participants. We invite you to transform yourself from a reader-viewer and join us in that quest. [106]

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## Videos

Video\_1: <http://medien.cedis.fu-berlin.de/stream01/cedis/fqs/2-11/6-Bullring-sequence-3-seconds.flv> (480 x 360)

Video\_2: <http://medien.cedis.fu-berlin.de/stream01/cedis/fqs/2-11/6-Bullring-sequence-3-seconds.flv> (480 x 360)

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