

'Actions of the Eyes of the Fleeing'?

Reflections on the In/Visibility of *Harraga* Videos

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the media practices of the 'summer of migration' in 2015, this article asks if and how cell phone videos recorded by migrants and refugees and circulated via social media channels have not only the capability to change and extend modes of representation. It analyses *harraga* videos — short cell phone clips of the clandestine passage across the Mediterranean, uploaded on YouTube — by focusing on the act of capture. With reference to Helen Grace and Rey Chow, the essay argues that despite the relative invisibility of the videos, they are not just simple documents, but rather constitute the present of the *harraga*, and thereby form (local) publics. In this light, they can be understood as a political (media) practice, which intervenes in the visibilities and visualizations of the necropolitical European border regime.

Images 'format' migration.¹ The European border regime and the discursive construction of mobility produces a net of constantly repeated and circulated images, in which migration is configured as a humanitarian crisis and as danger to the integrity of Europe.² Neither Europe's external (and internal) borders nor the migrants themselves appear to be perceptible outside of these mediatized discourses. Rather, media and the representations they produce, as well as the data they generate have to be understood as constitutive for the appearance of the refugee or the migrant at the European border.

The techniques of visualization at the borders function not only as policing instances for control and regulation of a prior body of migration, but they play a crucial role in locating, fixating and bringing 'migration as attraction' of otherness as yet to be negotiated factor on a social display.³

¹ See Brigitta Kuster, 'Die Grenze Filmen', in *Turbulente Ränder. Neue Perspektiven auf Migration an den Grenzen Europas*, ed. by TRANSIT MIGRATION Forschungsgruppe (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2007), pp. 193–207 (p. 193) (my translation). See also Nanna Heidenreich, 'Editorial', in *Frauen und Film*, 67 (special issue *Migration*, 2016), 5–10 (p. 6).

² See Heidrun Friese, *Grenzen der Gastfreundschaft. Bootsflüchtlinge von Lampedusa und die Europäische Frage* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014), p. 184.

³ Kuster, p. 193 (my translation).

During the short ‘summer of migration’ in 2015⁴ the display of migration as attraction of otherness was raised to another level: the vast distribution of media images — whether press coverage or images distributed by NGOs or ‘first hand’ accounts recorded with mobile phones by the refugees — made the ‘crisis of the European border regime’⁵ perceptible. As a result, it intervened in the modes of representation of migration. In addition to the ‘TV migrant’ who ‘appears at the geographical border to “Fortress Europe” as a body, which is put on display as male, over-visualized, captured by the apparatus of repression, as passive object of caritative treatment, who is a victim of his own uncontrolled and fatal endeavor’,⁶ the recordings capturing the border crossings from Turkey to Greece, the ‘March of Hope’⁷ along the so called ‘Balkan route’, or the arrival in Vienna and Munich, made the refugees also visible as agents of the social and political movement that is migration. However, as soon as the summer was over and the EU-Turkey Refugee agreement had been passed, the migration routes changed from the Eastern Aegean back to the far more dangerous Western passage from Northern Africa to Lampedusa. With them the rhetoric and the images in the media changed too: putting forth representations of refugees as victims — and criminals; again, they were seen as crossing the border illegally and thus becoming *clandestini* — illegalized.⁸

Against this backdrop, it is important to ask how the digital (social) media practices such as ‘citizen journalism’ in the context of the Arab revolutions or more generally ‘shadow media’ which Patricia Spyer has defined as ‘the tangential, mobile infrastructure of a counter-discourse to conventional national and international broadcasting’⁹ change and extend the modes of representation. In this essay, I focus on cell phone videos recorded and circulated by migrants and refugees and ask whether these practices can be understood in terms of what Tom Holert has called ‘actions of the eyes of the fleeing’.¹⁰ In his critique

⁴ Bernd Kasperek and Marc Speer, ‘Of Hope: Hungary and the long summer of migration’, in *bordermonitoring.eu politiken, praktiken, ereignisse an den grenzen europas*, 9 September 2015, <<http://bordermonitoring.eu/ungarn/2015/09/of-hope-en/>> [accessed 15 December 2016].

⁵ Vassilis S. Tsianos and Bernd Kasperek, ‘Zur Krise des europäischen Grenzregimes: eine regimetheoretische Annäherung’, *Widersprüche*, 138 (December 2015), 8–22. Tsianos and Kasperek (p. 9) write: ‘Here, it has to be said clearly that it is less a refugee crisis than a crisis of Schengen, a crisis of the European institutions as well as a crisis of the European project in general. For it has to be stated that neither the current intensity of migration nor the now obviously appearing disturbances in the fabric of the European Union have been foreshadowed for a long time. It is a crisis with announcement, in which Europe fails.’

⁶ Kuster, p. 193 (my translation). The flipside of victimization is criminalization: not only the illegalization of the border crossing, but likewise the demonizing images of the danger of ‘threatening flows of refugees’ or ‘dark masses’ produce the migrants as criminals.

⁷ Kasperek and Speer.

⁸ But also discursively the figure of the refugee can quickly turn into the ‘bogus’ or the ‘could-be-terrorist’. Sara Ahmed, ‘Affective Economies’, *Social Text*, 22.2 (Summer 2004), 117–39.

⁹ Patricia Spyer, quoted in Helen Grace: ‘Monuments and the Face of Time: Distortions of Scale and Asynchrony in Postcolonial Hong Kong’, *Postcolonial Studies*, 10.4 (2007), 467–83 (p. 472).

¹⁰ Tom Holert, *Regieren im Bildraum* (Berlin: b_books Verlag, 2008), p. 207 (my translation).

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of 'visual humanitarianism', Holert takes up Giorgio Agamben's call for a reconsideration of the figure of the refugee in view of the 'imploring eyes' marketed by humanitarian organizations:

The refugee must be considered for what he is: nothing less than a limit concept that radically calls into question the fundamental categories of the nation-state, from the birth-nation to the man-citizen link, and that thereby makes it possible to clear the way for a long-overdue renewal of categories in the service of a politics in which bare life is no longer separated and excepted, either in the state order or in the figure of human rights.¹¹

For Holert, '[o]nly, if the "refugee" is understood as "limit concept", fleeing from the categories of nation states and human rights',¹² the renewal of categories becomes possible. His main concerns are the consequences this renewal of categories could have for the order of images:

The image of the 'imploring eyes' would be replaced by the actions of the eyes of the fleeing. Instead of considering suffering as universal, the images would become instruments of a political practice with focus on the flight from the image evoking empathy and serving as biopolitical regulative. The symbolism of the refugee, as produced by the humanitarian order, would vanish in favour of a deterritorializing-deterritorialized visible.¹³

Holert himself is wary of his hypothesis in terms of its separation of the figure of the refugee from the human rights discourse. Nonetheless, I want to think about his evocation of the 'actions of eyes of the fleeing' by looking at images produced by migrants themselves, which seem to challenge the visibility of the European border regime by the very act of capturing. In order to do so I will focus on the practices of harragas — those who *burn* (their papers) — in their filming of the passage across the Mediterranean with their cell phones and disseminating these videos via upload on YouTube or other social media channels. Rather than analyzing clips in detail in terms of image, narration or motif,¹⁴ I am interested in the acts of capturing and uploading the passage as a form of public appearance

¹¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 134.

¹² Holert, p. 207 (my translation).

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ For a formal analysis of the *Harraga* clips, see Heidrun Friese, 'Y'al babour, y'a mon amour. Rai-Rap und undokumentierte Mobilität', in *Deutscher Gangsta-Rap. Sozial- und kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zu einem Pop-Phänomen*, ed. by Marc Dietrich and Martin Seeliger (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2012), pp. 231–84 (pp. 261–68). For a discussion of the *Harraga* phenomenon see also Réda Bensmaïa, 'La vraie vie est ailleurs: The Harragas phenomenon in African novels and films', keynote lecture held at the conference 'North Africa at the Crossroads: Culture, Identities, and the Politics of Change', Institute for African Studies, Carlton University, Ottawa, 4–5 April, 2012, online video recording: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDjhgwXNv2U>> [accessed 15 December 2016]

in which the present (reality) is enacted and performed.¹⁵ How do these practices intervene in the border regime and its modes of visualization, visibility and disappearance?

Harragas

Harga in arabic means 'to burn', and describes the passage across the Mediterranean from Northern Africa to Europe.¹⁶ *Harragas* are the ones — mostly young Maghrebian men — who burn with the desire for change and who burn their traces — mostly their papers — and get into small boats to follow their claims for dignity and freedom.¹⁷ The anthropologist Heidrun Friese reads the burning of the papers as a 'sign of dissent', a cancellation of consensus, a 'vote with the feet': a 'daily plebiscite against the political, social and economic situation in the Maghreb countries'.¹⁸ By leaving their homes and getting into the boats, 'the harragas give proof to the dimension of the social imaginary and the individual claim for happiness and a good life, dignity, recognition, participation and justice, claims, which also moved, justified politically and constituted the Tunisian revolution.'¹⁹

Fire also marks the beginning of the revolution in Tunisia, in the form of the spark which set off the series of political events called the Arab Spring. On 17 December 2010, the street vendor Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire with gasoline after he was evicted by the police. He died only a few days later from the burn injuries. Between 17 December 2010 and 12 March 2013, 160 young Tunisians ended their lives the same way. 'Better burn, than be humiliated':²⁰ this is how the young *harragas* Friese Tunisia and on Lampedusa explain the motivations behind this praxis. I would suggest, then, that the practices of the *harragas* are linked to that of self-immolation. Instead of setting themselves on fire, the *harragas* burn their papers and risk their lives to escape the 'social death' they face in their home countries. By entering the boats and crossing

¹⁵ Rey Chow, 'Postcolonial Visibilities: Questions inspired by Deleuze's method', in *Entanglements, or Transmedial Thinking about Capture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 151–68 (p. 167). An earlier version was published in *Deleuze and the Postcolonial*, ed. by Simone Bignall and Paul Patton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 6–77.

¹⁶ Nanna Heidenreich, *V/Erkennungsdienste, das Kino und die Perspektive der Migration* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2015), pp. 12–13.

¹⁷ Friese, *Grenzen der Gastfreundschaft*, p. 15. During the 2011 North African revolutions, the numbers of *harragas* on Lampedusa increased: after the fall of the Libyan Regime more than 60.000 *harragas* arrived, fleeing from the NATO airstrikes. When in September 2011 the refugees set the camp on fire, demanding to be brought to the mainland, the state of emergency was officially declared in October 2011. Lampedusa turned into an Open-Air-TV-Studio, which broadcasted the images of the state of emergency on the island around the world. Friese, p. 18.

¹⁸ Ivi, p. 204 (my translation).

¹⁹ Ibidem (my translation).

²⁰ Ivi, p. 203 (my translation).

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the Mediterranean Sea, they not only exercise their right to mobility, but they also violate the border and thus the European immigration law. Thus the *harragas* not only constitute a form of biopolitical control and regulation, 'one that does not have to sentence a life, or a set of lives, to death in order to let them die', but as Judith Butler argues, after Achille Mbembe,²¹ they can also be understood as 'necropolitical'.²² Under such conditions 'the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred.'²³ *Harga*, then comes into view as a form of protest against 'the status of *living dead*'²⁴ — be it in the countries of origin or within the frame of the European migration regime.

But how can we understand the digital capturing of the *harraga*? Within the last ten to fifteen years, an expansive corpus of different forms and formats has emerged documenting or fictionalizing the passage across the Mediterranean. These films range from feature films, such as (among others) *Harragas* (Merzak Allouache, 2009) and *Harraga Blues* (Moussa Haddad, 2013), to documentaries such as *Tanger, le rêve des brûleurs* (Leila Kitani, 2002) or *Barcelone ou la mort* (Idrissa Guiro, 2007)²⁵ through news reports and music videos to the kind of films that which I focus on in this essay: short videos, recorded with mobile devices by the *harragas* themselves, uploaded and disseminated on YouTube or other social media platforms. On YouTube however, when typing in 'harraga' one also finds countless compilations of different forms of (news) footage (photographs, maps, TV features, caricatures, etc.), as well as a multitude of commercial and non-commercial news programmes reporting about failed crossings, ship wrecks and deaths, sea rescues, personal appeals that warn against the passages, music videos, excerpts or full documentaries, trailers and complete movies such as the ones mentioned above. The cell phone videos that capture the passage constitute only a small part of this sprawling image production and distribution of this movement of migration.²⁶ The short clips stand out because as records of the supposedly successful passage — possibly uploaded after the event²⁷ — they add an alternative narrative to the stories of shipwrecks, rescue and death.

²¹ Achille Mbembe: 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture*, 15.1 (2003), 11–40 (p. 40).

²² Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), p. 167. Athena Athanasiou explains: 'As a global modality of power that subjects populations to conditions that ascribe them the status of living dead, "necropolitics" determines who can be wasted and who cannot; it distinguishes those who are disposable from those who are not; and it does so in both spectacular and quotidian ways, insistently and insinuatingly.' (Butler and Athanasiou, p. 20).

²³ Mbembe, p. 40.

²⁴ Ibidem, [emphasis in the original].

²⁵ See also the crime novel by Spanish author Antonio Lozano, *Harraga* (Barcelona: Zoele Ediciones, 2002).

²⁶ See Heidenreich, p. 316.

²⁷ Whether they manage to enter the European Union or not remains uncertain.

Cell Phone Videos

What do the *barraga* videos show? The clips, which are often only a few minutes long, mostly present shaky and rather ephemeral images in low resolution, featuring the sea, the boat, and its passengers. The first clip I saw opens with a shot of the sea, the camera follows a dolphin accompanying the boat;²⁸ the images are dubbed with music. Other videos focus on the sunset or the rising sun above the sea, or they (only) show the (mostly) young men in the boat. Very often, in a circling movement the camera captures the faces of the young men one after the other while they speak, shout, joke, sing or laugh into the camera. Being recognizable as cell phone videos they communicate the relation to the person recording, documenting.²⁹

Not only through the act of *burning* but also by filming on a large scale using cell phones and then uploading the videos on YouTube or other social media channels, the practices of the *barragas* are related to the Arabic revolutions. Like the videos produced in the North African revolutions the videos are characterized by their amateurishness.³⁰ Due to the characteristics of the recording device being ‘small, ubiquitous and not primarily constructed for filming and its content can be made available online anytime’, the cell phone video becomes a means of protest (or resistance).³¹ For Krautkrämer, as soon as the videos are uploaded to the Internet and thereby circulated they become ‘reality-witnessing documentations’,³² whether they subvert the censorship of state run media institutions as in the Arab revolutions, or as in the case of the *barragas* answer to the in/visibility of their ‘undocumented mobility’. This undocumented mobility is constructed in the frame of visualizations of the European border regime in which migration appears as a movement which needs to be controlled — the countless images of boats, victims of ship wrecks, and the individuals rescued by the coast guards in any format.³³

Krautkrämer discusses the ‘reality witnessing’ function of cell phone videos in the wider context of recent cell phone documentaries; he argues that they can be understood as attempts to ‘rescue’ the documents from the original context (such as YouTube) in which their only status is that of the document. In his view only when the material is worked with in the way that the question is no longer only *what* we see but *how*, does it become discursive. This line of argument

²⁸ <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x51zb0_harraga_videogames> [last accessed 25 November 2016].

²⁹ Florian Krautkrämer stresses the gesture of filming with a cell phone. Florian Krautkrämer, ‘Revolution uploaded. Un/Sichtbares im Handy-Dokumentarfilm’, in *Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft*, 10 (2014), 13–26 (p. 116).

³⁰ Ivi, p. 115.

³¹ Ivi, p. 116.

³² Ibidem.

³³ See Heidenreich, p. 17; Friese, *Grenzen der Gastfreundschaft*, p. 185.

entails that the cell phone videos not only stay mute but also invisible.³⁴ Although Krautkrämer — like the works he discusses, such as among others Rabih Mroué's *Pixelated Revolution* (2012) or Hito Steyerl's *Abstract* (2012) — problematizes the reframing of the 'found footage' material which he nevertheless does regard as political, while at the same time reducing it to a mere document.³⁵ But, how can we understand the observed invisibility of the material — such as the *barraga* clips — differently? I will take up some suggestions by Helen Grace and Rey Chow in order to think about the in/visibility not only of the videos, but of the *barga* itself.

Capture and In/Visibility

The low resolution of the videos links them to other 'poor images'³⁶ on YouTube and the circuits they create. Even more, the low resolution 'look', as Helen Grace argues 'allows us to say that the visual is problematized in this sphere, since every subject is abstracted by the rate of compression, and every clip becomes a kind of quotation, either by being sourced from previously existing material and re-presented or, in the case of original material, simply by being uploaded into a stream of pre-existing material.'³⁷ Nevertheless YouTube becomes an 'archive of

³⁴ Krautkrämer, pp. 123–24.

³⁵ My critique is not directed against the aesthetic potential of cell phone documentaries, but I would like to point out an example in which the author of the found footage does not remain anonymous but becomes one of the protagonists of the film. *Havarie* (Philip Scheffner, 2016) is based on a 3:36 minutes long YouTube video made by Terry Diamond, a tourist from Northern Ireland, being on a cruise in the Mediterranean. The clip shows in close distance an inflatable dinghy in distress. In *Havarie* the found footage is stretched to 90 minutes — the time it took for the coast guards to arrive. The soundtrack tells the stories of the people entangled in this situation. The film is a critical reflexion of the image production of undocumented mobility and puts the question of in/visibility at the centre: during the editing process, Scheffner realized that he couldn't stick to his concept of making an essay film due to the images of migration and flight circulating at that time. Instead, he decided 'by condensing sound and disassociating it from the image to create a space of perception that allows the viewers to experience their own position without ever losing sight of the subject at hand.'

(<https://www.berlinale.de/en/archiv/jahresarchive/2016/02_programm_2016/02_Filmdatenblatt_2016_201605829.php#tab=video25> [accessed 15 December 2016].) *Havarie* is a film about 'visual contact' in a relational space, but even more so it makes us think — about the position from where we look and the political, economic, social conditions that determine it (Avery F. Gordon, 'Keeping Visual Contact: Philip Scheffner's HAVARIE (2015)', February 2016, <<http://havarie.pong-berlin.de/en/9/avery-f-gordon>> [accessed 15 December 2016]). 'I am not in that boat' says Scheffner in an interview. See Matthias Dell, Simon Rothöhler, "Ich bin nicht in dem Boot". Interview mit Philip Scheffner', in *der Freitag*, 6 (2016), 11 February 2016 <<https://www.freitag.de/autoren/der-freitag/ich-bin-nicht-in-dem-boot>> [accessed 15 December 2016].

³⁶ 'The poor image thus constructs anonymous global networks just as it creates a shared history. It builds alliances as it travels, provokes translation or mistranslation, and creates new publics and debates.' Hito Steyerl, 'In defense of the poor image', *e-flux journal*, 10 (2009), <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>> [accessed 25 November 2016].

³⁷ Grace, *Postcolonial Studies*, p. 470.

the present³⁸ because it contains and publishes material which otherwise would have been hidden, invisible ‘in unedited form’ — such as the *harraga* videos. Grace argues that the importance of the visual is reduced because the act of *capture* instead of the image is significant ‘as a register of affective engagement in a moment of expressiveness having deep local significance, but which subsequently fails to be communicative, beyond the instant of production, for anyone other than those who have been involved.’³⁹ Thus, what is important is not so much video as document but the act of capture — the production of the image. Its relative non-communicability suggests new relations between public and private spaces.⁴⁰ In her article Grace refers to local protest movements in postcolonial Hong Kong, but it seems the situation described in the above quote can also be applied to the (local) protest of the *harragas* at the European border.

What are the consequences of foregrounding the act of capture? First, as I have already argued, the production of the image communicates the presence of the image-maker in a particular event. Second, it also records an ‘act of presence’ which is rather performative than a memorialization — mostly associated with analogue photography seen as ‘a memorial act’, which ‘assumes the reality of the moment recorded’.⁴¹

Rather, it is the act of ‘capture’ which brings the present into existence, because ubiquitous imagemaking belongs to a world in which the real in itself is so thoroughly mediated that it does not exist without at the same time producing an image of itself and it is this image which secures the lived reality in which the image-maker is situated. This does not mean that the performative and the memorial are opposed; rather it indicates that memory is also secured via the image and, in its embodied form, is brought forth in action and performance.⁴²

Rey Chow takes up this thought in her essay on *Postcolonial Visibilities* (2012), in which she argues for the productivity of Deleuze’s method of reading Foucault’s works on visibility and confinement. Grace’s observations of the media practices of a local political movement in Hong Kong serves her as an example to show what a postcolonial thinking about visibilities beyond the notion that ‘visibility is a trap’⁴³ or the battle for the ‘commodified media frame’⁴⁴ could entail. For

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ Ivi, p. 473.

⁴² Ibidem.

⁴³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 200. However, in his reading of Foucault Deleuze concludes, ‘that nothing in Foucault is really closed off’. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 43. Chow suggests that Deleuze’s method might be useful to reconceptualize the notion of postcolonial visibilities which she then demonstrates by discussing Grace’s findings. See Rey Chow, ‘Postcolonial Visibilities. Questions inspired by Deleuze’s method’, pp. 151–168.

⁴⁴ Chow, p. 160.

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Chow, Grace's observations are illuminating because they point to the fact that with the digital devices and techniques capture now 'emerges as the primary action and event' as it brings the present into existence. Chow stresses Grace's interest in the 'ephemeral coextensiveness of the image and the present' that is brought forth by the act of capture because for her Grace's observation displaces the notion of visibility:

Grace's observations sidestep the large, systemic connotations of visibility-as-confinement that Foucault delineates. Instead, she inserts visibilities into the mundane motions and stoppages of the everyday, replete with the risk (and the certainty) that many of them will remain unnoticed and unseen in the dense strata of online material, except by those with a vested interest in local happenings.⁴⁵

The relative invisibility of the videos does not prevent them from becoming possibly 'news footage'⁴⁶ or a local and particular public. Rather they have to be understood as part of the 'incessant flow'⁴⁷ of images in which the distinction between significant and insignificant moments is blurred. This state of 'visibilities in flux'⁴⁸ seems to challenge not only the notion of visibility in terms of surveillance and control but also the claims for visibility in the battles for the media frame. In this line of thought, the *barraga* videos no longer simply are documents of the *barga*, but acts of capture in which the notion of confinement and freedom is blurred. The *barragas* themselves use their cell phones to record or rather *track* their movements at the European borders — despite the media surveillance via satellites and other observation devices. Thereby they constitute the present of their passage; this present which in Chow's reading of Grace is a 'collective but diffused assemblage of enunciation'⁴⁹ and can only be perceived and recognized when mediated and circulated.

This understanding resonates with Judith Butler's remarks on what it means to appear in contemporary politics, because in order to appear, 'the body must enter the visual and audible field.'⁵⁰ Butler links the bodily action in the street as well as the bodily action of filming with the cell phone and analyses both as 'ways of exercising rights, and that jointly they bring a space of appearance into being and secure its transposability.'⁵¹ For her, the 'conjuncture of street and media constitutes a very contemporary version of the public sphere.'⁵² In the case of the *barraga* videos, I believe that in crossing the Mediterranean in small boats and

⁴⁵ Ivi, p. 167.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Judith Butler, *Notes Toward A Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 86.

⁵¹ Ivi, p. 93.

⁵² Ivi, p. 94.

capturing the passage with the cell phone they exercise their right to mobility as well as their 'right to have rights'.⁵³ It is only by uploading that they constitute a public — probably local and also limited in terms of views or clicks — bringing the moving and speaking or singing bodies in the boats to appearance — against the necropolitical European border regime.

I started my essay by introducing Tom Holert's considerations regarding the reconceptualization of the figure of the refugee. Concerned with the consequences of this categorical renewal for the order of images of migration, he suggests that '[t]he image of the "imploring eyes" would be replaced by the actions of the eyes of the fleeing. [...] the images would become instruments of a political practice with focus on the flight from the image evoking empathy and serving as biopolitical regulative.'⁵⁴ My argument is that the *barraga* videos are not simply instruments of a political practice (or mere documents). Rather the manifold acts of capturing and uploading constitute them as a political practice which intervenes in the order of images of migration, by becoming parts of the 'visibilities in flux'. Then, the 'actions of the eyes of the fleeing' might not be the result of the categorical renewal but that thing that could set it in motion.

⁵³ Hannah Arendt, *Imperialism: Part Two of The Origins of Totalitarianism* [1951] (New York: Harcourt and Brace Jovanovich, 1968), p. 177.

⁵⁴ Holert, p. 207 (my translation).