

Natalie Fritz / Marie-Therese Mäder (Eds.)

UNCERTAIN DESTINIES AND DESTINATIONS

**Audiovisual Perspectives on
Migration and Religion**

SCHÜREN

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Preface

As we write this preface, Kabul is falling to the Taliban. While the political implications of the Taliban's rapid and extensive success remain uncertain, the prospects for the liberal elements of Afghanistan's population, which had been bolstered during the country's more recent history, are alarming. People are seeking to flee with what they can carry, to escape potential prosecution and the constraints that accompany a radical religious ideology. Media are full of images showing desperate people on the move. Yet those images are familiar, for we have been confronted with something very similar almost daily over recent decades.

Those who flee their country of origin for existential reasons, be they political, religious, or economic, are taking a great risk. They may find safety and opportunity, but they may end up in a dangerous or inhumane situation little different from the conditions they had sought to escape. The media tell stories about their journeys, destinies, destinations, and fates from a variety of angles. They also have a diversity of aims, as they seek, for example, to inform, contemplate, criticize, or even entertain. Media representations have in common, however, an engagement with lived experience. They convey to their audience a conversation with social-political events taking place in our society. The media therefore define world affairs for many audiences, serving as their loudest interpreter, which makes critical examination and analysis of their perspective essential. Numerous rich interventions from scholars from a variety of fields are reshaping our understanding of public perceptions of migration and religion. This volume is intended to contribute to a critical reading of mediated stories of migration and religion.

This book contains articles that were first given as papers at the conference "Fluchtpunkte. Religion und Migration im Film" (Vanishing Points. Religion and Migration in Film), held at Schwerte, Germany, from 30 May to 2 June 2018. Many colleagues contributed time and effort to making the conference, and hence this volume, possible. We would like to thank a number of people. The conference co-organizers Stefanie Knauß, Charles Martig, and Daria Pezzoli-Olgati joined us in investing their energies in conceiving and realizing the conference. Members of the international research group "Film and Theology" supported the venture with advice

and actions. The Catholic Academy Schwerte, headed by Markus Leniger, hosted the conference. The authors who have contributed to this volume agreed to expand their presentations into the articles it now contains. Rona Johnston provided her knowledge and skills in closely editing the articles. Annette Schüren, director of the publishing house Schüren, wisely and consummately supervised the production process. The graphic designer Erik Schüßler gave shape to the words and images. And finally, the Catholic Academy Schwerte, Germany, the Catholic Media Center, Zurich, the Catholic Church in the Canton of Zurich, both Switzerland, and the Research Group Media and Religion, generously funded this volume.

Zurich, October 2021

Natalie Fritz and Marie-Therese Mäder

Uncertain Destinies and Destinations

Migration and Religion Mediated

Slowly, Theo (Clive Owen), Kee (Clare-Hope Ashitey) and the crying baby make their way out of the badly bombed building (fig. 1). The firefight between the military outside and the fugitives inside the house continues but forms only background noise as the three people pass by. Instead, the cries of the hungry baby girl cause women and men to crawl out of their hiding places within the building, eyes wide-open in amazement, and form a strange guard of honor in the dusty corridors (fig. 2).

1 Theo (Clive Owen), Kee (Clare-Hope Ashitey), and the baby on their way out of the bombed building. CHILDREN OF MEN (Alfonso Cuarón, GB/US 2006), 01:31:41.



2 The other fugitives in the building form a guard of honor as the three pass by. CHILDREN OF MEN (GB/US 2006), 01:32:05.



A Man, a Woman, and a Baby on their Way to a Better Future

A glimpse of hope comes with the little girl, the first child born for almost two decades. Women touch the baby's feet; men bless mother and child (fig. 3).

For a moment, the fears and the hardships of being a fugitive are forgotten. As Theo and the two females in his care descend the stairs of the building, the extradiegetic music that accompanies the sequence increases. The female voice from the music score evokes religious hymns and thus underlines the miraculous presence of the baby. As the three leave the building, the music stops. The stunned soldiers cease firing (fig. 4). They all look at the wonder in their midst. Some of them make the sign of the cross and some kneel down as they allow the three to leave (fig. 5). The music gets louder and then suddenly the fighting starts again.

The fragility of a fugitive's life is manifest in this sequence – a breathless existence with only short breaks, if any at all, to recuperate. Alfonso Cuarón's dystopian science fiction *CHILDREN OF MEN* (GB/US 2006) uses aesthetic means to have the audience feel the disquiet and insecurity of escape and thereby immerses the audience for a short while in the experience of a refugee. *CHILDREN OF MEN* is loosely based on the novel *The Children of Men* by P.D. James, first published in 1992. The story takes place in a near future, in 2027, when for almost two decades no children have been born anywhere across the globe. This reality has led to major economic and social upheaval everywhere and has turned millions of people into refugees, seeking a better place to live. As one of the last countries still with a functioning government, Great Britain is flooded with immigrants. There, Theo, a cynical former activist for human rights, is forced by a secret militant group to accompany a young woman to the *Tomorrow*, a ship on the coast that is the headquarters of the Human Project, a collective of scientists seeking to cure human infertility. Naturally, the way to this ship is not a walk in the park but rather a highly dangerous journey with the threat of imprisonment or even death lurking around every corner. In the end, Theo, Kee, and her baby reach the *Tomorrow* by boat, but Theo has been seriously wounded and dies before they are saved by its crew.

When the film ends, its audience can simply leave behind the awful setting of Cuarón's film. With a gasp of relief, we can say, "It's just a film!", and then slip into a warm bed or drink a glass of wine while discussing what we have just seen with a friend. But today, 15 years after its release, the film seems even more prescient than ever before. The film seems pro-

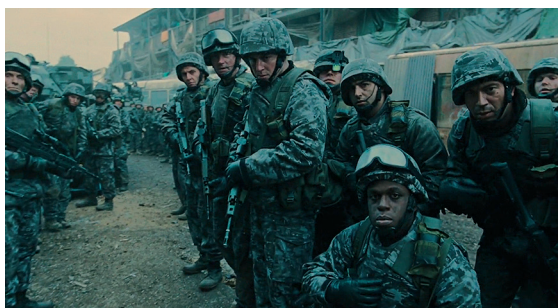
3 Everyone wants to touch or at least catch a glimpse of the wonder, the first baby born in decades. CHILDREN OF MEN (GB/US 2006), 01:32:13.



4 Theo, Kee, and the baby leave the building and the soldiers cease firing and lower their arms. CHILDREN OF MEN (GB/US 2006), 01:33:33.



5 The soldiers let the three pass, with some even kneeling down and making the sign of the cross. CHILDREN OF MEN (GB/US 2006), 01:33:49.



phetic, forewarning us about the heavy migration to Europe that will be caused by famine, prosecution, and wars in African countries and in Syria. Even though CHILDREN OF MEN creates a fictional, dystopian future in part defined by migration, which is a central motif of the science fiction genre,¹ it contains striking similarities to today's reality and to how the media pre-

1 The science fiction film genre articulates possible "things to come" and presents both positive and negative visions of a future world. Escape – in one way or another – from a dystopian scenario for a better life is therefore often the baseline of many science fiction films. Protagonists may escape social inequality (ELYSIUM, Neill Blomkamp, US 2013), wrong/unhealthy bodies (TRANSFER, Damir Lukačević, DE 2010), or time and space (TWELVE MONKEYS, Terry Gilliam, US 1995). See Gittinger 2019; Power 2018.

sents the hardships of a life as a refugee.² And that brings us to an issue often missed in discussions of science fiction films: the specific ways in which this genre engages our contemporary reality. Science fiction films imagine “other realities” and sometimes can be catalysts for new technologies,³ but they often are a reaction to what is going on in our present lives.⁴ When we watch *CHILDREN OF MEN* today, we can associate its disturbing images of a chaotic refugee camp behind barbed wire and the harsh, inhumane treatment of desperate fugitives by British soldiers not only with historical images, for example detention camps during World War II or Guantanamo Bay detention camp established after the September 11, 2001 attacks, but also, and perhaps primarily, with media reports of recent events. As Kristin Thompson has written,

Because the work exists in constantly changing circumstances, audiences’ perceptions of it will differ over time. Hence we cannot assume that the meanings and patterns we notice and interpret are completely there in the work, immutable for all time. Rather, the work’s devices constitute a set of cues that can encourage us to perform certain viewing-activities: the actual form those activities take, however, inevitably depends on the work’s interaction with its and the viewer’s historical contexts.⁵

And it is not surprising that Cuarón’s dark visions from 2006 appear so shocking, familiar, and current when thousands of people are leaving their home countries in the effort to save their lives or support those they love.

The representation of migration in different media draws from a shared pool of images that has formed a specific iconography of escape over the centuries. These representations can have a distinctive impact on beholders, who – with their distinctive background knowledge – interpret the images in a specific context. Thus, perception can be defined as a dialogic interaction between a concrete image that is presented using a specific medium and the beholder who reads or interprets that image.

In this introduction we consider how the media format can influence the reception of migration images. The response to photographs of overcrowded boats trying to cross the Mediterranean will not be the same as

2 See Nicholas Barber’s reflections on the film’s central aspect and its reality check, Barber 2016.

3 New technology such as the tablet, auto-pilot, or virtual communication software like Skype has been inspired by science fiction films. See Blage 2019; Cornea 2007, 247–275.

4 Cf. Cornea 2007; Johnston 2011.

5 Thompson 1988, 25.

the response to a film of those same boats, recorded for a news report for example. In the latter instance, we may hear the desperate cries of the refugees, the waves, or the motor. We can see that the boat is not fast enough to escape the rising storm. The audience's involvement is different because of the technical advancements that allow them to experience sound and movement, unlike in the case of a static and purely illustrative photograph of the same event. Perception also changes, however, when we compare a fiction film with a news report or a documentary on migration. The different audio-visual media formats encode each story with specific dramaturgical and aesthetic means and filmic conventions, which are then decoded by the receiver – some consciously, some unconsciously.⁶

Responses to Science Fiction and Documentary Media

As media-savvy consumers, we can differentiate between a news report and a documentary by interpreting various cues. We know that we are seeing a specific mediation of the world, produced to inform us about current happenings or to allow us to share a specific experience.⁷ These formats evoke distinctive responses, which may be emotion-related.⁸ While watching a fiction film, however, we automatically mark the narrative as staged, even if it depicts a historical subject. Intriguingly, though, the spectator's response to the narrative of *CHILDREN OF MEN* may not center on emotional distance because the narrative is fictional. The audience can empathize with the protagonist in fiction, seeing through his/her eyes, and be drawn into the narrative. Referring again to *CHILDREN OF MEN*, we might say that the emphasis on Theo's or Kee's perspective as they try to reach the ship that can save them can involve us emotionally with the events, a relationship formed in particular through the camera work and the characterization. Designated role models form a significant means for ensuring the viewer becomes involved.

Documentary media can also provoke the spectator's empathy, for example when it contains social actors who share moving experiences. This personal focus may be entirely lacking from a news report or simply scarce, in particular because of the time constraints but also if it is the product of instructions to report facts based on numbers and statistics. In terms of reception, the experience differs according to whether we are simply watching a mass of people behind a border fence or on a boat or

6 Hall 2006.

7 Nichols 1991, 45.

8 Cf. Plantinga 2009.

are provided with audio-visual testimonies by the individuals themselves of their often traumatic experiences.

In highlighting different media formats in a volume that deals with migration, we want not only to identify from a media ethics perspective their distinctive contributions to contemporary discourse and society's response, but also to demonstrate the processes that mark the interdependency and interactions across image, media format, and consumer/receiver.⁹ By differentiating contexts of production, distribution, and reception as spaces of communication, we explain how a specific media's intended message is formed.¹⁰ Each migration image transmitted through a specific format not only has an effect on its consumers but also impacts other media formats, which are in turn also produced by media consumers (every producer is also a media consumer), who may refer to the image in their own way, governed by their own technical possibilities and devices. Images do not appear out of nothing, for they already exist in the social imaginary – although perhaps in another form. As art historian Hans Belting proposes, “it is not at all obvious what we mean when we refer to a ‘new’ image, for all past images were once new. Some may seem new because they employ a new medium or respond to a new collective perception”.¹¹

A Photograph that Became a Metaphor for the Human Cost of Migration

To understand how migration-related images are received, we turn now to one of the most iconic migration images of recent years conveyed by the media. On 2 September 2015 three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, a Syrian refugee, died while crossing the Mediterranean with his family. His body was found on a Turkish beach, and the photographs taken by photojournalist Nilüfer Demir became a grim metaphor for the human cost of the migration caused by the civil war in Syria and the challenging situation in various countries in Africa.

Demir's professional photographs circulated in diverse media all over the world, underlining visually the drama that was happening at Europe's borders every day (fig. 6). The body of the dead boy became an iconic image of the tragedy, a development that Demir could not have predicted in the

9 Cf. Stuart Hall's model of encoding and decoding where he uses the term “consumption” as a synonym for reception. Hall 2006.

10 Fritz/Höpflinger/Knauf/Mäder/Pezzoli-Olgiaiti 2018, 31–49; Mäder 2018.

11 Belting 2014, 36.

moment she took the pictures. She stated in a BBC interview that she had felt compelled to photograph this tragedy to give the migrants a voice. She then added, “I never believed a photograph could have such an impact. I would really like it if it could change the way things are going.”¹² She thus acted in first place as a journalist, with a duty for authentic reporting,¹³ a responsibility to deliver an image of a specific reality at a specific time at a specific place. But surely she also acted as a human being, affected by what she sees, and sought to show the world what she understood to be happening in the world. We might also ask whether she tried to help or whether it is morally justified to take a series of pictures of a dead toddler, important questions that open up discourse about the responsibilities of media professionals when it comes to what they show, how they show it, and the circumstances in which they convey it. But the recipients also have a responsibility: they must receive and distribute with care. The picture of Aylan is hardly a comfortable vehicle for explaining the possible consequences of migration to a five-year-old, but it could serve as visual inspiration for a campaign raising humanitarian aid – and provides a remarkable case study for students of media ethics.

Will Wintercross, an award-winning photographer, has explained the iconic status of the Aylan Kurdi pictures: “This picture wasn’t taken in a warzone, it wasn’t taken in Syria ... The fact that this happened on a beach in Turkey has made people sit up and look.”¹⁴ The public resonance found by the image may indeed in part have resulted from the location at which the boy’s body was found – on a coastline that is also a popular European holiday spot. War and its horrific consequences are no longer literally a distant matter; they are right here, here where we like to relax with our families. When we look at this image of Aylan Kurdi, we might immediately conjure up mental images of happy children playing in the sand, a reaction that multiplies the horror. This could have been my child, we recognize. In an NPR-interview Paul Slovic, professor of psychology at the University of Oregon, explained the impact of these photographs in light of the emotional effect of an image of a suffering or dead child, a child the viewer wants to protect from harm. And, he adds: “Another element is that we don’t quite see his face, you see the side of his face, so you can project onto him the face of someone you know. You cannot distance yourself as easily.”¹⁵

12 See Gunter 2015.

13 Authenticity is a major concern of photojournalism and widely discussed; see, for example, Grittmann 2017; Lester 2016.

14 Gunter 2015.

15 Cole 2017. For the study see Slovic/Västfjäll/Erlandsson/Gregory 2017.



6 Collage of Western (Europe and US) newspapers that refer to the appalling migration situation at the European borders using one of Nilüfer Demir's photographs of Aylan Kurdi.

Depending on the context of their publication – a newspaper's political stance, editorial direction, or type of journalism, for example – the pictures of Aylan might be used to raise awareness for the burden of the migrants' experience and rouse people and political powers to help them or to draw attention to the masses of migrants who want to enter Europe. But the photographs were most often discussed as personalized representations of suffering, as a record of a human tragedy that is about individuals with their own stories. Psychologist Slovic notes that directing attention to the individual is an established strategy for raising awareness and compassion, because we identify more easily with one individual, who relates a complex story from a single perspective. "We call Aylan an 'identified individual victim.' It is similar to the way *The Diary of Anne Frank* and Eli Wiesel's *Night* also helped galvanize attention to the Holocaust. Aylan's photo provided a window of opportunity for individuals to give and to feel [empathy] for the situation, and that is good."¹⁶

The receivers of the image, the media consumers, did indeed react to the shocking images. As *The Independent* and *Chicago Tribune* recorded, people from all around the world wanted to help the migrants, at least by donating money.¹⁷ Furthermore grassroots projects all over Europe collected donations for immediate assistance with food, clothing, and med-

16 Cole 2017.

17 Merill 2015; Parvini/Raab 2015.



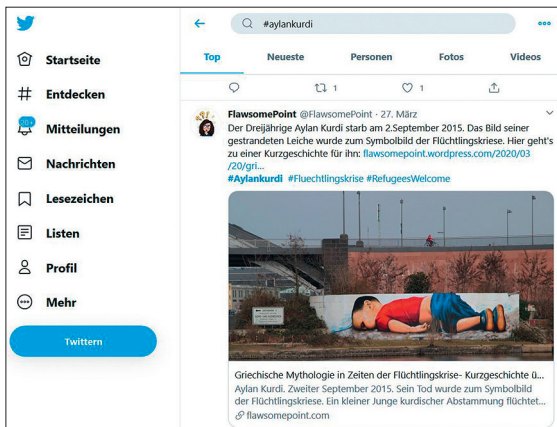
7 Indian artist Sudarsan Pattnaik builds a sand sculpture of Aylan Kurdi at Puri Beach, India. Ruptly TV, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZaph4j5QKE>.

ical aid. And there was more: grief at the death of Aylan, and so many others, sympathy for the bereaved, and recriminations against political powers spread through social media and often became viral.

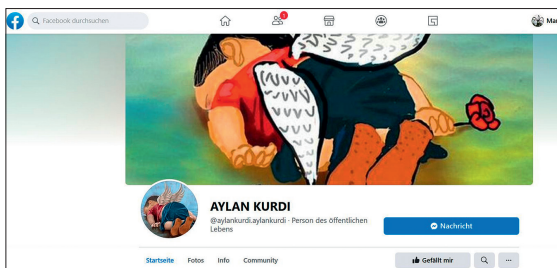
Thus, for example, a sand sculpture by Indian artist Sudarsan Pattnaik that was a homage to Aylan Kurdi (fig. 7) not only received worldwide attention, but also provoked (social) media reactions from a range of people and groups around the globe.

Under the hashtag #AylanKurdi on Instagram or Twitter and on various Facebook pages named “Aylan Kurdi”, people recorded their responses to the death of the little boy and the experiences of his family, created spaces for discussions of migration, politics, and the humanitarian crisis, and shared artworks, thus reaching a public that was less likely to engage with news reports (figs. 8–10).

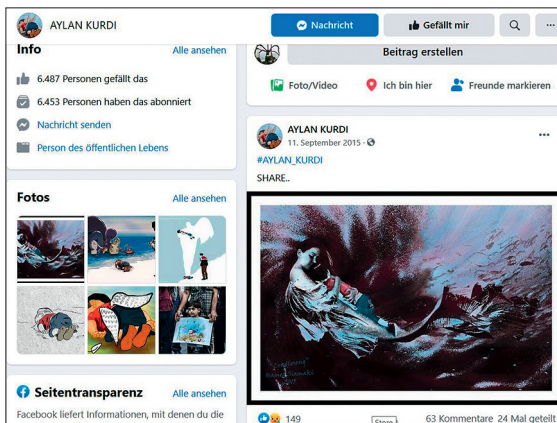
But as with most (social) media hype, the heightened engagement did not persist, and the hoped-for change in migration policies after this mediated outcry did not really happen. Jacob Sohlberg, Peter Esaiasson, and Johan Martinsson, three Swedish scholars of political science, have analyzed the political impact of images like that of Aylan Kurdi: “Our theoretical argument is that, due to the powerful nature of the picture of Alan Kurdi, there was a temporary break in the sway of ideology in September 2015, which consequently increased support for a more liberal refugee policy, even among individuals on the right. This was a natural response since compassion exists among all groups, regardless of ideological



8 Screenshot of Twitter hashtag "Aylan Kurdi". A kaleidoscopic collection of news articles on migration, artwork, and protest actions can be found under this hashtag.



9 Screenshot of one of many Facebook accounts in the name of Aylan Kurdi. It serves as a memorial and as an information page as well as place for sharing artworks.



10 Screenshot of some of the artworks on one of the Aylan Kurdi Facebook accounts (<https://www.facebook.com/aylankurdi.aylankurdi/>).

beliefs.”¹⁸ But then people returned to their daily business and began to rethink the possible consequences a more liberal migration policy might have for their own situation. The Swedish study, which draws on panel data with sequentially embedded surveys, concludes: “Subsequently, when right-lean-

18 Sohlberg/Esaiasson/Martinsson 2019.

ing individuals have had time to think about the implications of a liberal refugee policy and how it relates to their ideology, we propose that they counteracted their initial empathetic impulse and, when faced with the picture again, drew more on their ideology to inform preferences on refugee policies.”

This conclusion underlines a significant aspect of (audio-)visual mass media formats: they produce or adapt content that may be popular for a certain period but subsequently becomes literally yesterday’s news. Even though the image of Aylan Kurdi remains a point of reference for the migration from Syria, the humanitarian crisis receded in everyday life and discussions, outpaced by other news and catastrophes. Still, documentaries and fictional media formats function as archives of a specific moment and in this sense also mirror the socio-political situation in which they were produced. The images they provide can be reactivated if the focus of socio-political events shifts again. Recall our example from the start of this introduction: *CHILDREN OF MEN* with its depiction of so many people escaping war, famine, or poverty is almost more telling now than it was in 2006, when it was released.

The Sea, the Child, and the Hope for a Better Future

In referencing migration, both documentary media and fictional media apply various means to trigger a variety of effects. Both genres work with emotionalizing effects such as sound, camera angle, or lighting. Most science fiction films have a basis in actual societal challenges and problems, and they may even refer to historical events. Further they create a vision of a possible future world through a critical evaluation of the contemporary situation. In this respect, science fiction and other subgenres of fantasy film have parallels with the actual world of documentary media, photographs, and cell phone videos of an actual escape. But they tell their story in another way, may reach a different audience, and ask for a response that differs from the response to a photograph like that of Aylan. We might say that while documentary media use the real world as their raw material, which is then shaped by filmic means, fictional media create their raw material in the first place within the pro-filmic realm. But both media genres tell a story that needs to be decoded by an audience.

The current volume considers fictional and documentary approaches to migration in order to illuminate how the distinctive media formats shape our reception experience and the way we react to the events that are presented on the screen. Images – photographs, film stills, painted depictions, or ideological visions – become iconic because they have a rhetorical strength that engages perceivers in different cultural contexts and times.

In addressing fundamental questions, they also work outside their immediate context. Both documentary and fictional representations not only archive images of a specific time and situation, as we have seen, but also feed the cultural archive with new images.

Our initial illustration, the movie *CHILDREN OF MEN* realizes this statement through its many and obvious cues to the story of the Nativity and the Holy Family's flight to Egypt that are interlaced in Cuarón's film.¹⁹ They are found not only in the names of the protagonists, but also in the constellation of mother, surrogate father, and baby, whose survival may herald a new and above all better future. The dystopian science fiction adapts motifs and symbols from an ancient narrative that has formed, along with other such material, one of the most popular images of our collective imaginary, one that still influences our perceptions of fugitives and our ideas about how migration should be represented.

The Contributions of this Volume

The ten contributions to this volume – nine essays and one conversation, with the Swiss-Iraqi director and producer Samir – address a range of questions about the role that media play in migration debates.

Which approaches can help us study the construction of identity in a post-migration context? forms a central question in Marjo Buitelaar article "Migration and Identity. The Dialogical Self Theory Approach to Study Intersecting Identifications in a Post-Migration Context". She examines the connection between cultural identity and migration and explores acculturation processes across generations in light of the film *LAYLA M.* (Mijke de Jong, NL 2016). In her analysis, Buitelaar highlights the thematic urgency of identity constructions in a post-migrant context and reflects on how we can consider individuals without reducing them to their ethnic or religious identity.

The second article also deals with categorization, noting the often-unconscious verbal violence that can accompany it. In "The Religious-Secular Human. Epistemological Violence and the Resistance of Touching Bodies – Theology in the Context of Film and Migration", Tygve Wyller notes that a term like "migrant" can be understood as a kind of epistemological violence in the sense that the word suggests that a specific group are reduced from being human to being merely migrants. He then develops this issue by asking, how do films that deal with migration avoid epistemological violence and instead enhance humanizing processes? His response is a phe-

19 Fritz 2018.

nomenologically inspired analysis of films that include *THE NINE MUSES* (John Akomfrah, GB 2010) and *FUOCOAMMARE* (*FIRE AT SEA*, Gianfranco Rosi, IT/FR 2016). He also reflects on the impact of aesthetic aspects of the movies on their audiences, noting how a viewer's emotional reaction to the film may change that viewer's understanding of the concept "migrant".

Buitelaar's and Wyller's articles show that migration is multi-layered, involving both those newly arrived and locals. In this sense, the act of migration is just the first step in a larger process of integration and acculturation that effects both parties in various spheres of everyday life. By focusing on the role of the media (mainly film but also language) within a socio-political discourse, the two texts shed light on the difficulties for both sides in relation to intercultural exchange and identity processes.

How is religion present in films about migration on the Atlantic? And what kind of ethics do such cinematic products provide? These questions are central to Reinhold Zwick's contribution, "Atlantic Tragedies. Religion and Ethics in *LA PIROGUE* (*THE PIROGUE*), *DIE FARBE DES OZEANS* (*COLOR OF THE OCEAN*), and *STYX*". Zwick approaches this issue by analyzing three fiction films that all deal with migration by boat and its continuing risks. Zwick highlights how each film criticizes the asylum policies of the European Union, thus adopting a particular ethical view of the situation. The article also points out that the presence or absence of faith and religious knowledge is significant for those who seek to migrate to another country and for those who are directly confronted with the fate of these people. In noting references to biblical narratives and motifs, Zwick opens up a discussion of how films could positively shape the approach to migration of both audience and political decision-makers by depicting altruism, responsibility for others, and empathy as fundamental human qualities.

Marie-Therese Mäder and Natalie Fritz's contribution, "Escape – A Series of Dramatic Events. Analysing the Ethics of Documentary Narratives", picks up on similar themes in its focus on documentary formats used to report on migrants on their way to Europe. Two essential questions tackled by this article are: What values are communicated through documentaries on migration? and What ethics accompany them? In response, Mäder and Fritz provide an in-depth analysis of the following films, which all have a documentary format: *4.1 MILES* (Daphne Matziaraki, GR 2016), *MY ESCAPE* (Elke Sasse, DE/AT/SY 2015), and *STORMING SPAIN'S RAZOR-WIRE FENCE: EUROPE OR DIE* (Urs Jakob, US/CN/SN 2014). They consider how spectators are drawn into stories that refer to actual events, and how these stories are made accessible to a specific audience via selected means of communication. The explicit references to real events call for discussions of authenticity and responsibility on the part of both filmmaker and audience, so in the spaces of both production and consumption.

Zwick's chapter and the chapter by Mäder and Fritz consider how escape is represented in fiction and in documentary formats and show how specific values – religious or not – are communicated with filmic means. The impact of migration stories and the involvement of the audience are evidently determined by the perspective adopted for the filming of each specific situation and of the protagonists and by the whole setting, including, for example, music, camera position, and cuts. By reflecting on how form and content shape each other and the values they communicate, the two chapters highlight aspects of responsibility, ethics, and human empathy.

What does an image that shows refugees in a predicament do to us? What impact do visual representations have on the way we think about a social phenomenon? Which values elicited by images of migration are currently circulating in the media? Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati's contribution, "Moving Images. The Representation of Religion in Migration Films", explores the meaning of "seeing" with regard to representations of migration and religion in films. Her analysis of the feature film *REISE DER HOFFNUNG* (*JOURNEY OF HOPE*, Xavier Koller, CH/DE/IT 1990) and the documentary *FUOCOAMMARE* (*FIRE AT SEA*, Gianfranco Rosi, IT/FR 2016) shows religion is present in both as a meaning-making practice. Here, religion creates feelings of belonging and identity that may move the audience and stimulate their critical analysis of the situations faced by migrants today.

Joachim Valentin's article "Reality Welcome! Migration and Refugees in Contemporary European Film and Television Comedies" deals with comedy, migration, and religion. He asks: What happens when cultural identities meet? Is complete acculturation the only goal? Do we have to take on this challenge or might we not simply accept other points of view and cultural backgrounds as positive addenda to our culture? Valentin analyzes a sample of European feature films and TV-comedies, including *WILLKOMMEN BEI DEN HARTMANNS* (*WELCOME TO GERMANY*, Simon Verhoeven, DE 2016) and *WELCOME TO NORWAY* (Rune Denstad Langlo, NO 2016) exploring the collision of different worldviews and the roles played by religion. The exaggerated confrontation with "the other" in this kind of comedy, Valentin argues, has a healing quality: prejudices are put into perspective and self-righteousness and intolerance are exposed.

Pezzoli-Olgiati's and Valentin's contributions are linked by their interest in how people from different cultural backgrounds are seen or perceived. Both articles approach the performativity of images in specific film formats or genres. Whereas Pezzoli-Olgiati sheds light on the involving quality of religion within the representation of migration, Valentin shows how prejudices can be challenged through comedy. Both articles make evident that even a slight change of perspective can engender empathy or sympathy for the worldviews of others.

Charles Martig deals with Aki Kaurismäki's constant filmic fight for human dignity in his article "Unfortunate Underdogs Fighting for Human Dignity. Cinematic Reconstructions of Realism and Irony in Aki Kaurismäki's *THE OTHER SIDE OF HOPE* (TOIVON TUOLLA PUOLEN)", addressing the question How are people from the margins of society represented in Kaurismäki's films as central and integral parts of a functioning world? He focuses on Kaurismäki's most recent film, *THE OTHER SIDE OF HOPE* (TOIVON TUOLLA PUOLEN, FI/DE 2017), and reflects on how the typical aesthetics of the Finn's cinematic oeuvre and his laconic approach to life help to avoid pathos even in the most terrible situations. People help each other in Kaurismäki's universe – even though they don't speak the same language or have the same cultural background. Martig shows that the discussion about migration and integration in Kaurismäki's oeuvre is not about pity; his concern is always with empathy, tolerance, and dignity.

Walter Lesch's article "Camera Views on Refugees. The Ethics of Testimony and the Spectator Attitude" starts with a text by Hannah Arendt entitled "We Refugees", from 1943, in which she reflected on the names given to those who survive an escape. Lesch then draws a line to the current situation and asks: How do we find words that do justice those affected? How do we define their legal status? How can their stories be told without using incorrect or misleading representations? Focusing on Ai Weiwei's *HUMAN FLOW* (DE /US/CN/Palestine 2017), Lesch reflects on the responsible use of the camera as a means to highlight what is happening – and specifically – what is going wrong in the world. The various representations of people forced to leave their homes all deal with desperation, hope, and dignity. If you are a media consumer (and who is not?), you are confronted with such images. Lesch's contribution makes evident that while films may not change the world, they can turn indifference into sympathy and theoretical values into action.

Martig's and Lesch's articles are linked by the theme of human dignity. Both authors approach this issue from an aesthetic point of view, keeping in mind the values that are transmitted using specific formal strategies and filmic techniques. Whereas Martig remains in the Kaurismäki-universe, now apparently concluded, to highlight the director's perspective on migrants as people with dignity, Lesch's exploration of the representation of refugees considers the audience as an active part of the discourse. They are no passive testimonies who just "consume" moving images, but responsible receivers. Films on migration and refugees require responsible agency on the part of both producer and consumer.

The concluding contribution to this volume is an interview with Swiss-Iraqi filmmaker Samir, whose film *IRAQI ODYSSEY* (IQ/CH/DE/AE 2014) was

shown at the conference at which some of the original papers were presented. It is a very intimate film, because Samir depicts the fate of his Iraqi family members, most of whom now live abroad due to the political situation in their home country. And he includes his own story along with their migration stories: Samir was raised in Bagdad as son of an Iraqi father and a Swiss mother. When he was a small boy, his family decided to settle in Switzerland. Feeling like an outsider in Switzerland, Samir struggled for many years with his bi-national identity and the complexities of belonging, which had an impact on his creative work as producer, director, and screenwriter. In the interview Samir explains not only what inspired him to realize this film, but also the techniques he employed and what family, home, and religion mean to him.

Migration, as this volume explores, is a topic picked up in various media formats and film genres. Different approaches are used to tell these stories and represent a specific aspect of migration, often depending on the broader context depicted – the escape itself, integration in a new location, or the significance of a different cultural background for everyday situations, for example – or the targeted audience. Responsibility falls on both sides of the filmic product – on producers and on receiver – when it comes to the intimate stories of loss, fear, and rootlessness that many migrants tell. How can an exhausted woman who has spent days on an overcrowded boat on the Mediterranean be represented in a documentary without compromising her dignity? What values does a feature film communicate when its protagonist helps an illegal migrant without papers? Migration requires consideration of ethics and the human need for orientation, security, and belonging. Filmic representations can accentuate these facets of migration and integration processes in the longer run because they are able to put us, the audience, in the shoes of the actual migrants. Feature films as well as documentary formats help us to understand processes of acculturation and identity and allow us to hear those who rarely dare speak. Or to quote Samir: “My interest in film helped me to get a new perspective on Switzerland. Film, unlike other arts, has the advantage and the disadvantage that you can’t work alone. [...] Only much later did I find out that half of the people in this action group, in which I was involved were actually “Secondos”, as we say in Switzerland. That is to say, they were second-generation kids. Back then identity policy was no basis for discussion, but yes, that was the moment of change.”

Some of the many issues surrounding migration and religion are addressed here, in a volume that we hope will encourage all of us to ask more questions. And perhaps, we also hope, all these questions will change the world a little.