Document generated on 05/03/2024 11:43 p.m.

Imaginations
Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies
Revue d'études interculturelles de l'image

Migrant Portraiture and Life Imaging in Fazal Sheikh's Photodocumentaries

Birgit Mersmann

Volume 13, Number 2, 2022

Travelling by Photograph: Representing and Reframing Migration

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1094926ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.TP.13.2.3

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

York University

ISSN

1918-8439 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Mersmann, B. (2022). Migrant Portraiture and Life Imaging in Fazal Sheikh's Photodocumentaries. *Imaginations*, *13*(2), 47–78. https://doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.TP.13.2.3

Article abstract

This article explores the role of migrant photo portraiture for life imaging by providing a close reading of two photobooks by contemporary photographer Fazal Sheikh – A Sense of Common Ground (1996) and The Victor Weeps. Afghanistan (1998). Visual storytelling is a core feature of this social and humanitarian photographer's work, through which two main questions are addressed: how are real-life migration experiences as survival stories and personal biographies inscribed in the portraits of refugees and migrants? Which form(at)s of portraits are chosen, and which practices of portrayal are employed for the purpose of documenting migrant lives? Based on Jean-Luc Nancy's portrait theory and Giorgio Agamben's notion of 'bare life', the author introduces a process-analytical category of the 'migrant/refugee portrait' in order to grasp the complex (de-)figuration processes connected with the sociopolitical issues of human displacement. In Sheikh's long-term portrayal of migrant/refugee communities and his concept of relational portraiture, she recognizes an effective documentary photo practice for de-othering and demigrantizing the portrait of the migrant as a stereotypical representation of the 'other'.

© Birgit Mersmann, 2022

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

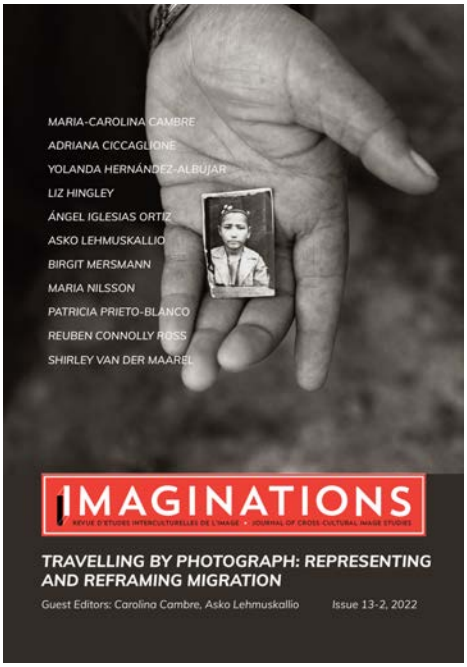
https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

https://www.erudit.org/en/

IMAGINATIONS
REVUE D'ETUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE L'IMAGE • JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES



IMAGINATIONS:
JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES | REVUE D'ÉTUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE L'IMAGE

Publication details, including open access policy and instructions for contributors:
http://imaginations.glendon.yorku.ca

Travelling by Photograph: Representing and Reframing Migration
Guest Editors: Carolina Cambre, Asko Lehmuskallio
2022-11-09

Cover image: Fazal Sheikh's presentation of a portrait shown to him in 1997 at an Afghan refugee village in Ghazi, Northern Pakistan, of a child killed in Soviet bombardment © Fazal Sheikh

To cite this article:
Mersmann, Birgit."Migrant Portraiture and Life Imaging in Fazal Sheikh's Photodocumentaries." *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2022, pp. 47-78, doi: 10.17742/IMAGE.TP.13.2.3.

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.TP.13.2.3

The copyright for each article belongs to the author and has been published in this journal under a Creative Commons 4.0 International Attribution NonCommercial NoDerivatives license that allows others to share for non-commercial purposes the work with an acknowledgement of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal. The content of this article represents the author's original work and any third-party content, either image or text, has been included under the Fair Dealing exception in the Canadian Copyright Act, or the author has provided the required publication permissions. Certain works referenced herein may be separately licensed, or the author has exercised their right to fair dealing under the Canadian Copyright Act.

MIGRANT PORTRAITURE AND LIFE IMAGING IN FAZAL SHEIKH'S PHOTODOCUMENTARIES

BIRGIT MERSMANN

This article explores the role of migrant photo portraiture for life imaging by providing a close reading of two photobooks by contemporary photographer Fazal Sheikh – *A Sense of Common Ground* (1996) and *The Victor Weeps. Afghanistan* (1998). Visual storytelling is a core feature of this social and humanitarian photographer's work, through which two main questions are addressed: how are real-life migration experiences as survival stories and personal biographies inscribed in the portraits of refugees and migrants? Which form(at)s of portraits are chosen, and which practices of portrayal are employed for the purpose of documenting migrant lives? Based on Jean-Luc Nancy's portrait theory and Giorgio Agamben's notion of 'bare life', the author introduces a process-analytical category of the 'migrant/refugee portrait' in order to grasp the complex (de-

Cet article explore le rôle du portrait photographique de migrants dans la construction d'une représentation visuelle de leur vie, en se livrant à une lecture en profondeur de deux ouvrages photographiques du photographe contemporain Fazal Sheikh: – *A Sense of Common Ground* (1996) et *The Victor Weeps. Afghanistan* (1998). La narration visuelle est au cœur de l'œuvre sociale et humanitaire de ce photographe, qui pose deux questions principales: Comment les expériences vécues de migration ressenties comme des histoires de survie et les biographies personnelles sont-elles inscrites dans les portraits de réfugiés et de migrants ? Quelles formes de portraits sont choisies et quelles pratiques de représentation sont employées pour documenter la vie des migrants ? S'appuyant sur la théorie du portrait de Jean-Luc Nancy et la notion de Giorgio Agamben de "vie mise à nu," l'auteur présente une catégorie de procédés analytiques du portrait de communautés de migrants et de réfugiés destinés à ex-

)figuration processes connected with the sociopolitical issues of human displacement. In Sheikh's long-term portrayal of migrant/refugee communities and his concept of relational portraiture, she recognizes an effective documentary photo practice for de-othering and demigrantizing the portrait of the migrant as a stereotypical representation of the 'other'.

pliquer les processus complexes de (dé-)figuration associés au questions de déplacement de populations. À travers son long travail de représentation de communautés de migrants et de réfugiés, et son concept de portraiture relationnelle, Sheikh révèle une pratique de photographie documentaire visant à dé-autériser et démigrer le portrait du migrant en tant que représentation stéréotypée de "l'autre".

The visualization of human migration is connected to documentary photography and photojournalism in particular ways. Movements of people from one place to another require what could be termed a travelling camera, able to track the widely branching network of human migratory routes, nodes, and abodes. In the contemporary world of global migration (Mavroudi & Nagel 2017; Papastergiadis 2000), the condition of travelling photography for production of visibility in migration has been reinforced. Temporally and geographically extensive travels to sites all over the world have become an essential prerequisite for documenting the global dimensions of human migration and displacement via photography. In the context of contemporary photography of migration, its power to this end is attested to by long-term photo documentation projects committed to a form and ethos of visual documentation that has been described as slow photojournalism.[1] Characteristic of this approach are longer production times and long-form narratives of in-depth storytelling.[2] This work method privileges the creation of published output in forms such as the photobook as an alternative, globalization-critical, and reflective "slow-down medium" of journalistic photography.

The connections among human migration, commitment to long-term travel, and slow photojournalism are exemplified well by Sebastião Salgado, Jim Goldberg, and Fazal Sheikh, who invested lengthy phases of intense documentation in the production of their photobooks.

To realize his global-scale photo project "Migrations. Humanity in Transition," Salgado travelled to 40 countries, conducting photography over a span of six years. The arrangement of his material over such an extended time and such vast geographical distances was facilitated by infrastructural and other support from his own press agency, the Paris-based Amazonas Images.[3] The concrete results of his long-term photo documentation project on global migrations were presented in the form of two photobooks, *Migrations: Humanity in Transition* (2000) and *The Children: Refugees and Migrants* (2005). Jim Goldberg, in turn, spent four years in work that led him to nearly 20 countries, from Russia and the Middle East to Asian and African countries, to photodocument the stories of refugees and immigrants who had arrived in Europe. This long-term project was chronicled in a compendium of four photobooks under the title *Open See* (2009). Finally, photographer Fazal Sheikh has travelled widely, to very different regions of the world, among them conflict zones, to work with people living in displaced and marginalized communities. His engagement in photo projects in Africa, Afghanistan, India, and Israel/Palestine is characterized by longer-term commitment to each particular place and/or community. The photobook plays a central role in his work: it serves as a medium for visual narration as well as a means of global communication and orientation for audiences. In his view, this form represents "the best possible, the most complicated, the most accessible, the most engaging way of working because it doesn't have the limitations of something like an exhibition. An exhibition has a restricted number of viewers. Books are much longer lasting. And for me, personally, books are a means of growing. One informs the next" (qtd. in Jobey 2009, 31). His valorization of the photobook medium is expressed in the fact that, since gaining international acclaim, Sheikh has created his own photobook series, the International-Human-Rights Series (IHRS).[4] In keeping with the characteristics ascribed to slow journalism (Le Masurier 2015, 142), he values accuracy, quality, and reportage of context; seeks out untold, visually undocumented human stories; relies on the power of the narrative (of slow storytelling); encourages co-production, even with the people photographed; and views the audience, too, as col-

laborators. In addition to editing his own photobooks, he positions his photodocumentary work in the exhibition field. By crossing the border between photojournalism and (documentary) photo art, he reinvents the practice of photo documentation in the era of global media while creating genre-migrating images.

A closer look at the above-mentioned photodocumentaries reveals that the photo portrait represents a central genre therein, strongly coupled with the photobook format. Since portraits have always been the focus of attention in humanistic and humanitarian photography, it may be unsurprising that they are prevalent in documentary images dealing with human migration. Two major functions and meanings of the portrait appear interwoven in the photobook in constructive application: 1) portrayal of human individuals (also in relation to their groups and communities) and their personal lives; and 2) portrayal of human, social, cultural, political, and economic life conditions in a particular place, time, and situation.

Considering both perspectives, this article explores the role of migrant photo portraiture for life imaging by taking Sheikh's photobooks as its central material. Visual storytelling is a core feature of this social and humanitarian photographer's work, through which two main questions can be addressed: how are real-life migration experiences as survival stories and personal biographies inscribed in the portraits of refugees and migrants? Which form(at)s of portraits are chosen, and which practices of portrayal are employed for the purpose of documenting migrant lives? Before delving into the detailed analysis of Sheikh's photo work, substantive image-theoretical considerations of the notion and meaning of migrant portraiture are required.

1. 'THE OTHER PORTRAIT': FIGURATION IN MIGRANT PORTRAITURE

> "Avec le portrait – avec ces façons, ces manières, ces éclipses et ces ruines – se jout le sort de la figure en général: de la représentation, de la fiction, donc de la présence et de la vérité; du visage, de la présence et de l'absence. De l'autre, de sa

> proximité, de sa distance. Dans le portrait se retrace, se retire, se rejoue, très sensiblement sous nos yeux la possibilité pour nous d'être présents" (Nancy 2014, 12).

This characterization of the portrait, offered by image philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, features several aspects that appear highly relevant for approaching migrant portraiture as a power of figuration. Two semantic senses etymologically inscribed in "portrait(ure)" play a pivotal role in the photodocumentary depiction of migrants and refugees. They seem to be in partial contradiction with each other, although they are intrinsically connected in forming a kind of pairing: drawing forth and withdrawing. The word "portrait" is linguistically derived from the Latin word *protractio*, a nominalized form of the verb *portrahere*, which means "dragging out." It refers to extracting the essence, or a characteristic element, and making it a salient visible feature. The "other" meaning of the portrait is derived from the Italian *ritratto*, a concept that entered general use in Renaissance times for technical reference to a portrait/image. This came from the verb *ritrarre*, which signifies "to represent"/"to depict" but also "to withdraw" and "to retract." Proceeding from this second etymological meaning of the portrait (*ritratto*), Nancy has built a complete portrait theory of what he defines as "the other portrait," *l'Autre portrait*, in his seminal work of the same title (2014). He focuses on the withdrawal inherent to the portrait as a form of visualization. Accordingly, he defines the other portrait as a portrait of "l'autre retiré, l'autre en tant qu'autre du même (ou du propre, ou du soi) considéré dans en retrait – une retraite, un recul, voire une disparation" (2014, 13 *f.*).

Portraits of flight and migration mediate the two complementary meanings of the portrait in their own distinctive ways. They venture into the field of possibility of "being present" and being represented, of rendering visible the lives of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons, who are withdrawn from visibility as "others." Portraits of migration and refugeeism are depictions of transitoriness and fugacity, of the withdrawal from life, of the absence of a dignified human life. They are representations of what Giorgio Agamben in his book *Homo Sacer* (1998, 71 *ff.*) has defined as the "bare life." On one side,

their imagery is on retreat, as they display defiguration as a visual consequence of the disintegration and degradation of life. In this regard, they are "other portraits" in the sense of Nancy's *altro ritratto*. On the other side of this "other," withdrawing portrait, they are revealing and protruding portraits in that they draw absence into presence in search of potentialities and modalities of figuration and representation.

Art historian and image philosopher Gottfried Boehm has called attention to the fact that early definitions emphasised the importance of portraiture as a process of figuration relying on depiction capabilities, before the portrait gained form and qualification as an image genre of *individuum*-bound human likeness (1985, 45 *ff.*). This process-oriented approach to portraiture as an ability to (re)present informs the following efforts to identify the strategies and concepts of migrant portraiture employed by Sheikh for capturing the moving and transitory life experiences and memories of refugees and migrants. These are tools for de-othering and demigrantizing the portrait of the migrant as a stereotypical representation of the other expelled from states, cast out of societies, and often also stripped of human rights.

For purposes of analysis, the category "migrant portraiture" is articulated as a common denominator of two meanings: it refers to the photographic portrait image of migrants, encompassing that of refugees, exiles, and displaced persons,[5] and to the portrait of migration as a depiction of the societal phenomenon of human displacement. The latter facet even allows for an understanding of migrant portraiture as migratory portraiture. Through this double codification, it becomes possible to interlace the representation of persons (from individuals to groups) with portrayals of their living conditions—here, the migrant or refugee condition in specific (geo)political, social, and cultural circumstances of contemporary history. Furthermore, in the notion of portraiture, the representational strategies of *depictio* and *descriptio* are joined in a unique way. This meshing creates a fruitful entry point for analyzing photodocumentary

portraitures as specific media and social configurations of migration (hi)stories.

2. SOMEBODY TO HOLD ON TO. RELATIONAL PORTRAITURE IN SHEIKH'S PHOTOBOOK *A SENSE OF COMMON GROUND*

The contemporary (post-)migrant condition of living in many places in the world (Feldman 2015; Nail 2015; Moslund et al. 2015) is the core subject of Sheikh's photodocumentary portraits. Thus far, he has published five photobooks on the topic of displacement, refugeeism, and migration:[6] *A Sense of Common Ground* (1996), offering a portrait of camps for African refugees in Kenya, Tanzania, and Malawi; *The Victor Weeps* (1998), a portrait of Afghan men, women, and children who for two decades had been living in refugee villages in northern Pakistan on account of the wars in Afghanistan; *A Camel for the Son* (2001), a portrait of Somali refugee women in northeastern Kenya; *Ramadan Moon* (2001), a one-person portrait of Somali refugee Seynab Azir Wardeere, who was under threat of eviction from an asylum-seekers' centre in the Netherlands; and *Portraits* (2011), in effect a meta-photobook on the motivic figure and socio-cultural configuration of the portrait, composed from portraits featured in the other four photobooks.

In his marked photographic interest in the portrayal of displaced people, Sheikh has been driven by his own biography. A second-generation immigrant to the United States, he was born in 1965 as the child of a Kenyan man and American woman in New York City, where he grew to adulthood. His family's migrant path can be traced back to Pakistan: his grandfather was born in (historical) northern India before moving with his family in 1912 to Kenya, at that time a British colony. In Nairobi, the grandfather became a wealthy landowner and businessman. This family history of migration is an important anchor point for understanding Sheikh's photographic work, particularly *The Victor Weeps*, which, in portraying Afghan exiles in northern Pakistan, was motivated by the search for his family roots in Muslim culture and society. Having spent considerable time in Nairobi and being fluent in Swahili, Sheikh can be considered

a migrant between US and Kenyan society, between Western and African cultures. Echoing sentiments of many people with a bicultural background, he once confessed to feeling like a foreigner in Africa on account of being perceived as an American (Jobey 2009, 17). Indeed, his portraits express his longing for assimilation with the people he photographs, to be aligned with them. Sheikh is in constant search of the "other" for finding and defining his self, not in terms of identity but in how he is related to the world. For this reason, his portraits of displaced people amount to self-dialogue portraits. The fact that he began with self-portraits in his early photography, when he was studying photography and art history at Princeton University, and moved on to "venture out into communities" (Jobey 2009, 17) to capture portraits of the other in extreme living conditions affirms this inner portrait connection between introspection and outrospection.

A Sense of Common Ground (1996) was Sheikh's first photobook publication. In 1992 he had been awarded a Fulbright scholarship to photograph among the Swahili-speaking communities on the Kenyan coast. Upon his arrival in Nairobi, he was confronted with the influx of half a million refugees fleeing various war zones in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia. With the assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sheikh obtained authorization to photograph within the refugee communities. He travelled between camps in Kenya, Malawi, and Tanzania for three years, but the decisive visit would be his first trip to the Sudanese refugee camp in Lokichoggio, on Kenya's northwestern border with Sudan, in June 1992: it determined his method of working and how he would portray the refugees' situation in the camp. In the introduction to *A Sense of Common Ground*, he reports on how his fellow photojournalists worked to catch the story quickly and keep to the parts of the camps indicated by the UNHCR public officers.[7] Sheikh recognized the act of photographing as not a quick snapshot but a long-term process of familiarization, of developing mutual interest, trust, and a sense of knowing. First of all, it required permission from the people, their consensus and collaboration. Only under social-relations conditions of mutual agreement and active participation could the photog-

rapher reach his goal: "to be aligned with the people" in the portraits (qtd. in Jobey 2009, 17) in a kind of familial bond.

The photobook *A Sense of Common Ground* is divided into five chapters, each of which covers a particular refugee situation in Kenya. The first one shows portraits from the Sudanese transit camp in Lokichoggio and the more permanent refugee settlement in Kakuma; the second is dedicated to the Ethiopian camp in Walda; the third is devoted to Somali refugees living in camps near Dadaab and Marafa; the fourth addresses circumstances at the Mozambican camps in Malawi; and the fifth considers Rwandan camps in Tanzania. The introduction to each chapter provides concise yet detailed background information on the particular political, ethnic, and/or religious conflicts that caused the refugees to leave their home countries, among them the civil wars in Sudan and Mozambique, the tribal family wars in Ethiopia, and the Rwandan genocide. Comparable to a journalistic report, the introductory portion of each chapter provides, in addition, concrete statistics related to the number of refugees and a map clarifying the refugees' routes and camp locations. This form of presentation makes clear that the unique portraits captured in the various places have not become generalized into a "composite character" and thereby helps the reader to remain oriented. They are clearly located, politically situated, and textually framed.

The image alignment, page layout, and chapter-level organization follow a similar pattern across all five sets of refugee (hi)stories. Sequences of single, double, or triple portrait images filling entire pages of the book; series of nine photographs on one page; and framed photographs set against a white background are interrupted by foldout folio spreads. In triptych format, these bring out the vastness, infinitude, and deadliness of space—be it in panoramic photographs of almost deserted landscapes, of burial grounds, or of large groups of refugees. Thanks to this image arrangement, portraits of individuals, when unfolded to wide-angle images, become positioned in the larger environment of the refugee camp community and the open, endless space of nature.

Figure 1: By Fazal Sheikh, a group portrait of Sudanese unaccompanied minors at the Lokichoggio refugee camp, in Kenya © Fazal Sheikh

A group portrait of about two hundred unaccompanied minors[8] (Fig. 1), captured in the Lokichoggio camp shortly before the children were to continue their migration southward to the next camp, is highly illustrative of this open embedding.

This presents a loosely gathered group of Sudanese child soldiers turned refugees in the open bush land of the desert. They resemble a group posing for a school photograph. By the formal adoption of this portrait type, a social bond and communitarian sense are established among the figures of the minors in this large and anonymous crowd. Only one boy stands out in front of the rest, individualizing the experience of the mass. His gesture—he presents his toy airplane to the camera—could be read as an expression of escape, or the lack of it.

Besides portrait images, the photobook contains personal testimonials—namely handwritten letters in which refugees offer accounts of their situation. The first letter, printed in the second chapter (p. 28), was formulated by elders of the Borana people who had fled the civil war in Ethiopia. It describes the persecution of the Borana tribes by the ruling Transitional Government of Ethiopia and also ongoing tribal clashes in the refugee camps in Kenya that had resulted in the disappearance and killing of Borana refugees. The final words of the letter are an appeal for international assistance: the elders beg for help, to protect them and allow them to return to their homes in Ethiopia. In the second letter (p. 44 *f.*), a group of Somali elders living at the camp in Liboi protest against the decision to close the camp and transfer them to two other camps, further north, which direction for them signified "the way of death." These personal testimonial ac-

counts, juxtaposed with a photo portrait of their authors, illustrate that the refugees' lives are not safe even in the camps; they are exposed to persecution, violence, sexual abuse, and killing. In doing so, they articulate the power of Sheikh's (photo-)documentary method of approaching and living with the people, especially the communities of elders, for directly witnessing their life stories and giving visual and written form to these personal testimonials in his series of photographs.

With his refugee portraits taken on site while living in the camps, Sheikh attempts to revise the stereotypical mass media representation of African refugees. In his view, "the lives of those people are more complex than the way that they have been represented. Being an African or refugee is only one facet of who they are as human beings. I would like to balance out the equation, to broaden and challenge our preconceptions as structured by the media" (qtd. in Light 2010, 3).

What portrayal strategies does this photographer apply to broaden the representational scope of the photo documentation of refugees? The overarching objective behind the visualization could be characterised as a portrayal practice of derefugization, a concept I introduce as one complementary to demigrantization (Römhild 2015; Yildiz & Hill 2015). In Sheikh's portraits, the refugees are not reduced to their status and role as refugees. They are not presented as anonymous human figures but individually identified by name[9] and by the camps where they live. Their agency is acknowledged also in that they are represented not as displaced persons, victims of their past and present life circumstances, but as reorienting individuals who "have grown with their circumstances," carving out "who they are now, for better or worse. Not only for worse" (qtd. in Jobey 2009, 19). Almost without fail, Sheikh captures the refugees in "bettering" circumstances: in moments of friendship and love, as they are about to be repatriated, or in recovery. An example is shown in Figure 2, which includes Athok Duom, recovering from malaria. The figures are seldom singled out (or zoomed in upon) with the effect of declar-

Figure 2: Fazal Sheikh's triple portrait of Akuot Nyibol (centre) with Riak Warabek (right) and the pregnant Akuot's daughter, Athok Duom, who is recovering from malaria, at the Sudanese refugee camp in Lokichoggio © Fazal Sheikh

ing them victims or heroes; they are shown in togetherness, manifesting human bonds.

The choice of double, triple, and group portrait as the predominant formats for portraying refugees emphasizes the element of social humanity that Sheikh values highly. By using a simple Polaroid camera that produces both a positive and a negative, Sheikh embraces a slow production process. His refugee portraits can be described as formal

but not formalized portraits. They are characterized by a simple, direct, and respectful rendering of the person(s) being recorded. One facet of the respectfulness is expressed in the middle distance that the photographer takes (and retains) between his standpoint and the position of the photographed subject(s). He is clearing the stage for the subjects to present themselves to the camera while he withdraws to a position of receiving, letting the pictures come to him. In *A Sense of Common Ground*, one finds no close-ups and no affect images that put expressive faces on display. Usually, the subjects are represented as two-third or full-body figures, with space around them indicating the environment. There is not a single bust-like portrait in these series. That would signal closeness and reduction. His subjects are shown instead in their full corporeal presence, and, most importantly, they are positioned in a way that highlights their physical location and personal (bodily) integrity. They are comfortable and stable on wooden chairs or embankments, standing solidly in a group, and—in a motif that permeates the photobook—shown in front of trees or even sitting in them (as in the case of the picture of Agai Miriam Aden, an unaccompanied minor in the Kakuma camp). Spatial situating, bodily grounding, and symbolic rooting can be identified as major strategic features in Sheikh's portrait repertoire. The combination of uprootedness, fugitivity, and transitoriness of the refugee condition is counteracted by stabilizing placements. Here we encounter rerooting and repositioning.

The mythological uprootedness of the baobab tree, which appears in many of the photographs as a background figure or a trunk to lean on, becomes symbolic of the movement and tension between deracination and the new, firm root-taking. One might, as Eduardo Cadava has argued in his article on Sheikh's portraits (2011, 14 *ff.*), understand the recurring motif of the tree in *A Sense of Common Ground* as a tree of life, a branching-out figure of family genealogies, inheritances, and legacies. The positioning and rerooting of many refugee figures in the lines and networks of tree trunks can be interpreted as an act of inscribing them in lines of ancestry and family history, in parallel with the reproductive life cycle of nature.

Another salient motif tied in with the familial bonds is visible in the close bodily contact that many refugees in the images maintain. In a literal sense, these portraits are touching images, presenting in numerous ways and configurations the touch of hands in deeply reaching gestures of belonging and togetherness, trust, comfort, and protection. Hands might be placed on the chest as self-touching, self-holding, and self-protection; they might rest on shoulders or heads; they may equally support heads or hold other hands, those of loved ones; or they might hold objects (sticks, toys, etc.) or images, whether holy images or portraits of family members who are deceased or otherwise beyond the reach of those hands. The photographs with the touch of hands reach out to represent the intimate social relations and family bonds upheld in the refugee communities. Taken together, they express the attempt to hold on to physical, social, and emotional life but also articulate efforts "to carry and hand over, to hand down, like a kind of legacy or inheritance, a fragment of the past" (Cadava 2011, 21).

In some portraits, the touching hands express the difficulty and burden involved in "holding on." For example, in the portrait of Nyapa Deng and her daughter in Lokichoggio, the male hand upon the bare head of the child has the weight of a burden. It is ambiguous in that its gesture is protective yet at the same time violent also, with a firm grip on the head as if pulling it away. This impression is intensified by the photo's composition. The male figure is cut off by the frame—only this hand and a slight contour line of the man's body remain. The severing of family bonds and the violence of separation caused by flight and migration are hauntingly captured in this double/triple portrait. A similar composition, again with the cropped-out and faceless figure of the father, is found in the portrait of Hadija (Fig. 3).

Sheikh's detailed caption informs the viewer that this eight-year-old girl, Hadija, remained silent ever since she was separated from her mother while crossing the border from Somalia to Kenya. Here, the father's hand speaks of tender bonding and strong protection as the man reaches out from behind his daughter to rest it on her shoulder, to hold (on to) her. The expressive face of Hadija forms a stark

Figure 3: Fazal Sheikh's portrait of Hadija and her father at a Somali refugee camp in Kenya © Fazal Sheikh

contrast to the child's muteness. It is the stillness of photography that enables the muteness to speak vividly. The border at the top of the image cuts directly through the mouth line of the father figure, underscoring the reliance on bodily gestures' communication. Ac-

cording to Cadava, this touching portrait of Hadija reflects how, in the words of Judith Butler, the precariousness of life can be grasped: "One would need to hear the face as it speaks in something other than language to know the precariousness of life that is at stake (...). We would have to interrogate the emergence and vanishing of the human at the limits of what we can know, what we can hear, what we can see, what we can sense" (Butler qtd. in Cadava 2011, 6).

3. COLLABORATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMMUNAL PORTRAIT: SHEIKH'S *THE VICTOR WEEPS*

Sheikh's photodocumentary *The Victor Weeps* can be viewed as a semi-autobiographical book, for it couples the search for his own migrant family history, particularly that of his grandfather, with family stories of Afghan refugees in northern Pakistan. Here, the photographer's personal interest in family life stories becomes evident as the main motivation for his photodocumentary storytelling. Personal encounters with the refugees for an exchange of individual accounts demarcate the beginning of the photo-portraying procedure, with Sheikh first asking "the members of the community for their willingness to collaborate in the documentation" (Light 2010, 2). He commented thus on his way of working: "In my recent work among the Afghan villages of exile, the elder's agreement to work with me, to provide insight, as well as protection, has been crucial" (ibid.). With this collaborative community approach as a given, "[t]he act of photographing becomes an event in the village. We construct the image together. Many of the people have never been photographed before, and the Polaroid provides a point of reference for discussions that follow in which the residents of the community offer their opinions on how the documentation may unfold" (Light 2010, 2).

In the testimonials and evidence provided, the documentation in the photobook is rich and quite varied. It operates on the basis of close interweaving between photography and text. Afghan children's drawings serve as a preface, opening the photobook. They are followed by panoramic photographs of ruined cityscapes from the

Afghan capital, Kabul, captured a month prior to the Taliban's capture of the city. Turning the pages that display these images of the ravages of war, one finds them juxtaposed with Afghan poems commenting on the devastation, on the loss of faith and life. After this unflinching portrayal of the reasons for fleeing Afghanistan, there is a personal account by author-photographer Sheikh. Under the title "The Land of Afghans," he reports on his moving encounter with senior members of the Muslim community in the refugee village of Bizen Khel. This text preludes a sequence of portraits of male elders, most of whom had been Mujahideen fighters. The set of portraits constitutes the first part of the photobook. They are accompanied by personal biographical accounts and a letter from the elderly people in the images but also by poems and poetic comments. The letter, between two of the photo portraits, was written by former elders and commanders of the Agra District, in Afghanistan's Logar Province. In it, they describe their decision for the tribe known as Ahmed Zai to migrate to Pakistan in consequence of the Soviet-Afghan war and there seek international support to enable a return to their home villages. The second part of the photobook follows the same image-and-text composition. Dedicated to portraits of elderly women and children, it holds a mirror to the social hierarchies and gender divisions in Muslim communities. Whereas the biographical portraits earlier in the book highlight the historical hard facts of the Afghan war and the seizure of power by the Taliban through the lens of family history, the second part explores personal war memories and future-focused imagination through "dream stories." Finally, the third part of the book follows the route of the Afghan refugee exodus in reverse, thereby emphasising personal and communal storytelling of remigration and return. It shows portraits of people living along the migration passage between the tribal regions of northwestern Pakistan and the Afghan capital. In the manner of an insert frame, this section sets forth portraits by Jalalabad-based studio photographer Ridzwanul Haq (see Fig. 4), thereby forming both a hybrid and a contrast between Sheikh's own photo portraits and those by the Afghan portrait photographer.

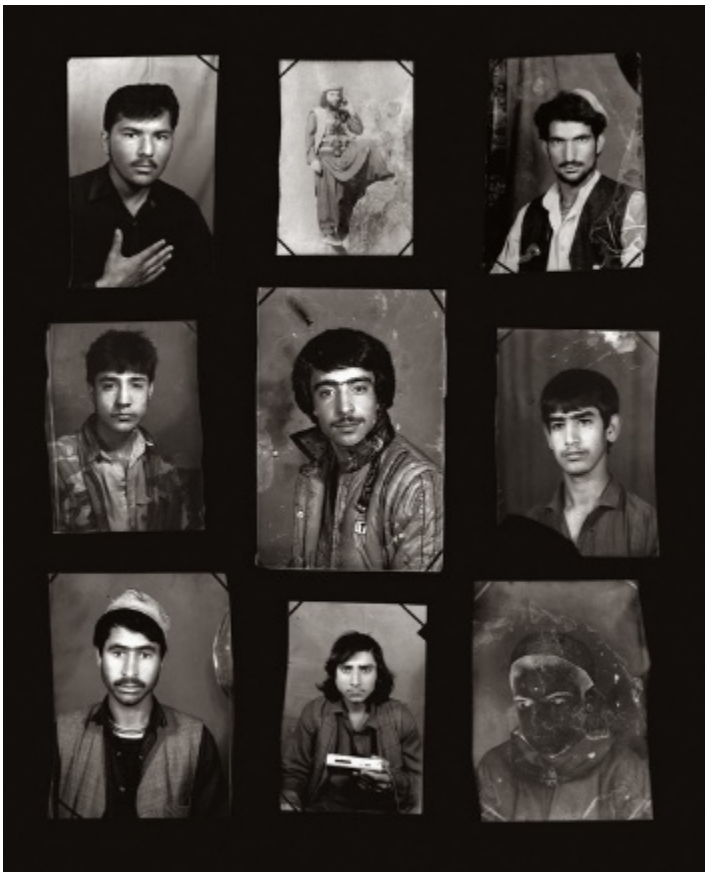


Figure 4: Portrait photographs from Ridzwanul Haq's work at his studio in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, featured in Fazal Sheikh's photobook *The Victor Weeps* © Fazal Sheikh

Faced with the ruling Taliban regime's prohibition of figurative images, the studio photographer had decided to offer his portraits to Fazal Sheikh. In consequence, the studio portraits become travelling photographs themselves, migrating to the pages of the photobook for a place of refuge, medium of protection, and source of remembrance.

The larger portrait of Afghan exiles living in northern Pakistan is constructed by a complex sequence and interrelational layering of

different material forms and media genres of portraiture, among them Sheikh's own portrait photographs of men, women, and children in the community; portrait photographs of deceased relatives that community members brought to him to be photographed; found-footage studio portraits; and autobiographical textual portraits of both the author-photographer and the refugees portrayed. "I was weaving together something much more complicated, not just because of the found pictures, or the testimonials, but also because of my own relationship to the place," explained Sheikh (qtd. in Jobey 2009, 21) in describing his portrayal strategy. With this statement he stresses the role of the photobook as (semi-overlaid or fully overlaid) auto-documentary to connect his own life story of returning to the land of his forefathers with the life stories of Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

The portraits of the community's male elders as presented in the first part of the photobook are very respectful, even though most of them use close-up images. The elders are shown in their traditional clothing as Afghan people and partly also as Mujahideen, with a turban, an Afghan pakol, or a Peshawari topi on the head, and a long beard. The focus of these photographs is on the head and face, appearing out of complete darkness in an almost magical light(en)ing of strong contrasts, be it in profile, three-quarters, or frontal portrait format. The spotlight of the camera is directed at the furrowed faces of the elders marked by their life experiences as fighters, victims of war, and refugees, as fathers and community leaders. Usually, the gaze of the person portrayed is directed away from meeting with the camera (Fig. 5). It is withdrawn from the viewer, in being directed downward/sideways or being hidden by closed or half-lidded eyes or by hands held in front of the face in a rather protective gesture.

When the gaze is oriented toward the viewer head-on, there is no suggestion of direct eye contact and personal address. Instead, the viewer reads reclusiveness, introspection, and even emptiness due to the shadowing and blurring of focus at the eyes. Often, the front-on views are presented from slightly below. This perspective conveys a sense of distance despite the extreme closeness to the person. Most, though not all, of the portrait images are accompanied by a piece of

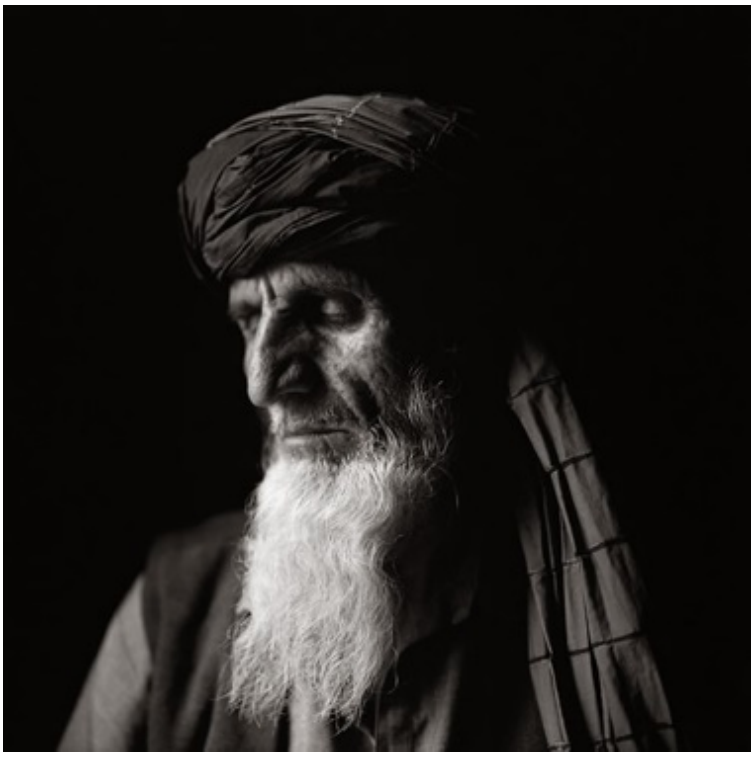


Figure 5: Fazal Sheikh's portrait of Nasruddin © Fazal Sheikh

text, such as an autobiographical account, a poem, or a prose statement by an Afghan poet or historian identified by the image subject as an expression of his view on life and the current situation of Afghan people. This text is directly connected with the image in the layout, too—they are on the same spread of pages. This parallel text-with-image arrangement emphasizes that the portrait images can be fully comprehended only in light of the subject's autobiographical account or chosen excerpt. Rohullah, for example (shown in Fig. 6), tells the reader about the death of his cousin Qari Monir in 1981.

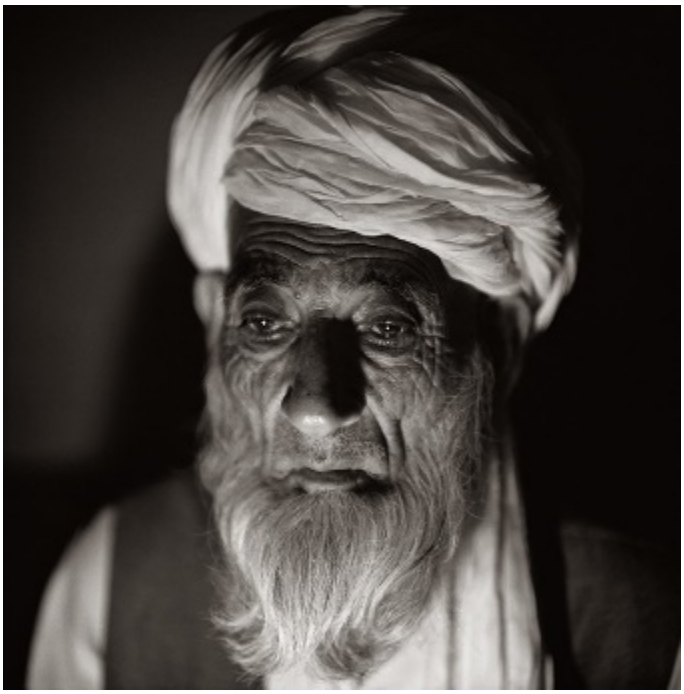


Figure 6: Fazal Sheikh's portrait of Rohullah © Fazal Sheikh

In his personal story, he gives an account of how his cousin, together with other elders and mullahs, disappeared in the desert, having been taken there by communist troops, with a shepherd later finding the bodies of the 14 missing leaders, Qari Monir among them. They had been buried alive. He cites this incident as what convinced him that the communists "were willing to kill us all, not just those who were fighters [...] so we decided to leave the village and take our families to the safety of Pakistan" (Monir qtd. in Sheikh 1998, 61).

In some cases, the photographic portrait is presented as a standalone image filling one side of the two-page layout while the other page is left blank, without any textual comment. This composition gives voice to silence, to a person's speechlessness in the face of the dramatic, trauma-producing events of war, flight, and exile. Muteness

is made visible. Here, storytelling, based on personal encounters between the photographer and the photographed, also allows for voicing personal histories and biographies of suffering that cannot be readily deduced from single photo-portrait images alone. In the case of the woman's image in Figure 7, one might not even be able to state with certainty that this photograph of the person identified as Rohgul qualifies as a portrait photograph, since the face, the marker of a person's identity as an individual, is hidden behind the latticed screen of the burqa.

The objects shown that surround the represented figure—the crutch and the rotated shoe lying on the ground—can be taken as signs for imagining what might have happened to Rohgul, as referring to a handicapped person who nearly lost her life; yet the classical portrait of an *individuum*, her character, status, and expression, is withdrawn in this photograph. This is stressed by the closed gesture of the woman, gathering up the burqa draping in front of her body (while, in so doing, she reveals parts of her feet and legs). From her first-person account, we learn that she had been married to a police officer and enjoyed a good life in Afghanistan until, in 1989, her husband was shot on his way home by one of the Mujahideen factions. Her neighbourhood became the front line between warring Mujahideen forces, and the fighting left her youngest son, Fawad, dead and Rohgul herself seriously wounded. Although doctors at the hospital advised her to have her leg amputated, she refused and ultimately managed to keep it. In the end, she fled to southern Pakistan to live with her cousin. The final passage of her personal account expresses her hope of returning to the land of her birth "when the government gives its people jobs rather than Kalashnikovs" (Roghul qtd. in Sheikh 1998, 140). Only when the photo and text are read in combination, when the visual depiction and textual description are considered jointly to bring visual and oral storytelling together, does the image of Rohgul turn into an individual(ized) portrait of the person as well as a personal(ized) bio-image of Afghan war history. The text-image approach to life documentation is a clearly defined method in Sheikh's photographic work. "It seemed to me almost impossible to sever one from the other—and wholly inappropriate," he stated in

Figure 7: Fazal Sheikh's portrait of Rohgul © Fazal Sheikh

conversation with Liz Jobey, continuing: "I came to believe that the photographs did something very well, but working with the issues I was engaged with, I found it important to flesh out what the photographs didn't do. They were not getting to the depths of what I needed, so I used the people's voices" (2009, 21).

Precisely for voicing their life stories, the Afghan refugees photographed by Sheikh often brought their own portrait photographs into the conversations, among them snapshots of dead relatives or

portraits of heroic fighters who had been killed in the war. These personal photo portraits are included in the photobook as visual testimonials of war victims. They are displayed in particular presentation modes, one of which is hands holding out the photograph to show it to the camera. The gesture is demonstrative, perhaps partly reproachful, but at the same time loving, caring, and protective. It also points to photographs as images that are handed over and collectively shared. On a more general level, it is evidence of photography as a mode of transmission.

Figure 8: Fazal Sheikh's presentation of a portrait shown to him in 1997 at an Afghan refugee village in Ghazi, Northern Pakistan, of a child killed in Soviet bombardment © Fazal Sheikh

The touching hand here connects the lives of the surviving refugees with the lost lives of their deceased family members, most of them sons and brothers killed in Mujahideen fighting but some of them uninvolved children. If this body part is shown as an open palm from which one can read the family's war history (as in Fig. 8), it transforms into a *pars-pro-toto* portrait of the person presenting it.

Another form of memorial portrait demonstration is visible in presenting the photograph on the ground. The stony and dry subsoil forms a stark contrast to the portrait photo.

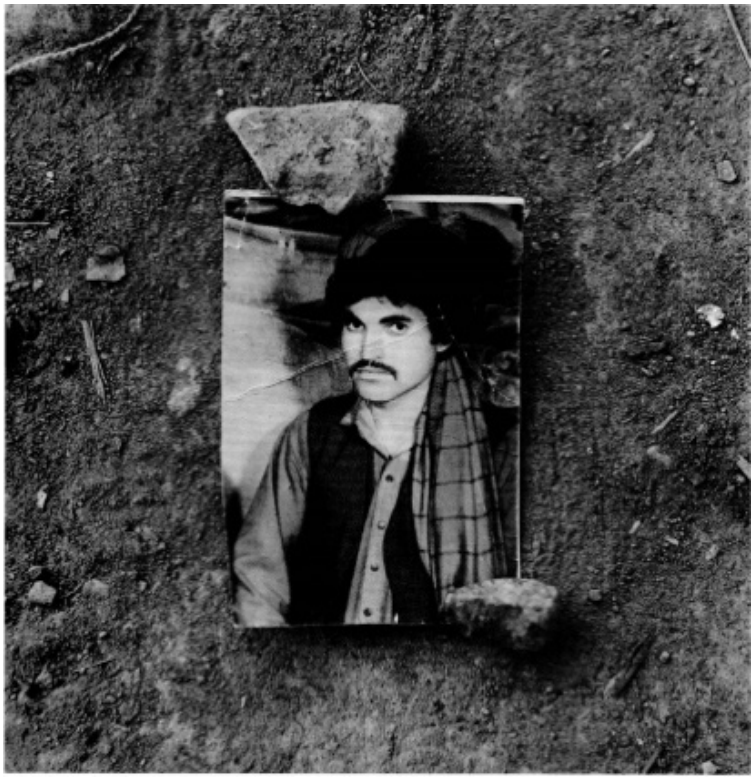


Figure 9: Fazal Sheikh's presentation of Abdul Malik © Fazal Sheikh

In the case of Abdul Malik (Fig. 9), the paper print of the photographic portrait is anchored to the naked earth with stones to prevent it from flying off. If considered in conjunction with the photographs of burial grounds interspersed with the victim portraits, this and the other images of lost persons set against the earth can be interpreted as death portraits, recalling the presence of the person in absence. Through his pictures of the photographic portrait, Sheikh is able to inscribe biographies of suffering and heroic martyrdom directly in his visual storytelling.

In this context, it is important to note that the portrait never exists in isolation in Sheikh's work. In no case is it a single image. Embedded in a series, it forms numerous relationships with other portraits. In the interrelational bonds thus constructed, even non-portraits (such as landscape and gravesite photographs) can be reinterpreted as portrait pictures. Neither is the portrait-based interconnectedness limited to the confines of the photobook as a narrative unit of storytelling. Sheikh often circulates and recirculates his portraits from one photo project to the next. The migration of the people portrayed is reflected in the migration of portrait images throughout his *œuvre*.

Furthermore, the life cycle of portraiture is expressed in Sheikh's repeat visiting and re-photographing of people. Aiming for long-term life documentation, he wanted to find out what became of the refugees he had photographed. Accordingly, in *A Camel for the Son*, portraits from the earlier work *A Sense of Common Ground* were republished in a new arrangement: with a slightly different narrative order, new portraits of the people portrayed were presented alongside the old. Particularly with the most recent group of portrait revisits, Sheikh was able to demonstrate how babies and children had grown into adolescents in refugee camps, spending most of their precious lifetime there. The portrayals did not always determine how the newer portraits were cast; sometimes, in the reverse of this, the course of life was decisive for the life imaging in the portraits. This is illustrated well in Sheikh's photobook *Ramadan Moon*, in which the light-and-shadow play in the portrait images of Somali refugee Seynab Azir Wardeere is an illuminative reflection of the phases of the moon as a natural cycle of life. Finally, the more recent photo-

book *Portraits* can be seen as a meta-portrait, in that it was compiled from portraits originating in all of his various photo (book) projects. Far from being an image-rich refugee-themed coffee table book, it contains the entirety of the textual information necessary for reading the images in accordance with their original publication context, but within a new entity. By assembling and connecting individual portrait images into a new order, it establishes cohesion and togetherness in its cycling and recycling. As Cadava (2011, 11) has pointed out, the togetherness thus created "here means otherness—it is what moves the image away from itself, what prevents it from existing 'on its own,' what ensures it will be transformed and altered in relation to the other portrait." In the end, this togetherness of compiled portraits constitutes global humanitarian portraiture of displaced, expelled, and excluded people around the world.

4. PHOTODOCUMENTARIES AS REFIGURATION ZONES: THE DEREFUGISATION OF REFUGEE PORTRAITURE

In the photobooks discussed above, the life imaging of refugees and exiles follows a sociopolitical agenda of humanitarian photojournalism and photodocumentarism. Within this framework, it ventures into iss I ues of humanity, humanness, and human rights. The life condition of displacement in turbulent times of migration casts into relief the fundamental question of the right to live and what it means to be human. The refugee, deprived of civil and civic rights, excluded from any form of political participation, introduces, according to Hannah Arendt, a breakdown in our contemporary understanding of human rights. In her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she connects the decline of the nation-state with the end of the rights of man. Binding human rights to citizen rights, she argues that "the paradox involved in the loss of human rights is that such loss coincides with the instant when a person becomes a human being in general—without a profession, without an opinion, without a deed by which to identify and specify" the self (1958, 297). From today's perspective of transnationalization, it can be stated that "[t]he crisis within human rights arises from the fact that, with the appearance of the refugee, the presumably sacred and inalienable rights of man are

shown to be entirely alienable, to lack any protection or reality at the very moment in which they can no longer be understood as rights belonging to citizens of a state, or to members of a particular political community" (Cadava, 2011, 8). In all-too-humanness, the "bare life" of the refugee, the loss of human rights takes fleshly form.

The Sheikh photodocumentaries considered here capture this bareness of life while carefully documenting the particular causes, effects, and larger consequences of mass migration and refugeeism in clearly defined locations and tightly confined communities. They portray displaced, dispossessed, marginalised, silenced, and victimized people who, devoiced and without a face, lack means of self-articulation and self-representation. Portraiture is employed as a method, imaging genre, and visualization strategy to render the faceless seen, to give the silenced a voice with which to tell their stories, to allow the effaced to reface. The photobook lends itself to this. It serves as an apt medium for the process of portraiture in that it provides ample possibilities for narration and storytelling via both image sequencing and photo-text links. It permits both creating personal accounts of individuals and generating local micro-histories of refugee communities, such as that of the Afghan exile community in Northern Pakistan in *The Victor Weeps*.

The portrait image as a figuration of the particular plays a vital role in the photobooks analyzed here for counteracting the universalizing and anonymizing effect of refugee representation. It entails particularization of the portrayal of human displacement on the level of the photobook narrative, as well as of the portrait of human beings on the level of the individual image. The portrait as an image of the particular turns anonymous refugee figures into individualized subjects and persons. Sheikh's portrayal strategy is intended to transcend the refugee status and role image of the photographed subject and dive into the complexity of this individual's personal life story. The reconstruction of the *persona* is achieved through intense conversation and co-creative collaboration with the refugees, without neglect for their social environment. As Sheikh's photo work involving the Afghan refugee village in northern Pakistan attests, even portrait photography can become a communal event of life-recording. First-person ac-

counts and documents selected by the subjects themselves; the naming, localizing, and situating of each person photographed via the image caption; and the participatory practice of autobiographical descriptions of portraits support this personalizing subject-centred approach. Only in the format of the photobook as both a medium of visual storytelling and an archive for documentation can the complexity of personalized lives be unfolded. In the words of Sheikh, it is "the individual and his testimony that allows us to access broader themes—through the specific to gain entry to the universal. [...] I try to encourage the medium to pierce the alienation in a return to the basics of humanity" (qtd. in Light 2010, 4).

In Sheikh's photography, the practice of refugee portraiture operates on the basis of relational portraiture, as defined by photography theorist Daniel Palmer in his study *Photography and Collaboration* (2017, 109 *ff.*). With this practice, photography is employed as a communication instrument and a social means of establishing cross-cultural encounters and interpersonal, among them inter-community, relations, thereby empowering the subjects to participate in the photographic act and co-create the final result. It is the medium's potential for collaborative knowledge-generation that affords a qualitative shift from mere contact zones of photo creation to refiguration zones of photographic documentation. In Sheikh's photodocumentary work, the traditional "informal contract between the photographer and the photographed" that tends "towards the presentation of an objectified 'other'" (Palmer 2017, 109) is replaced by a "civil contract" of photography characterized by reciprocal human encounters and relations. A civil (re)contract(ing) of photography, as advocated by Ariella Azoulay (2008), enables anyone—even a migrant, refugee, or stateless person—to pursue political agency and resistance through photography, whether by addressing others through photography or by being addressed by photographs. A new citizenry in migrant and refugee photography, if grounded in relational portraiture, can aid in diminishing, if not completely avoiding, the othering of the photographed. After all, it contributes to a construction of relational variants of the "other portrait" in which the derefugization of refugee portraiture becomes graspable and comprehensible.

For moments of intense human encounters, the bodies, faces, and images in migration are put on hold. Through the contracted stillness of photography, the fleetingness of human migrancy is drawn into the media presence of social life imaging.

WORKS CITED

Agamben, Giorgo. *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. Print.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism.* New York: Meridien 1958. Print.

Azoulay, Ariella. *The Civil Contract of Photography.* New York: Zone Books, 2008. Print.

Boehm, Gottfried. *Bildnis und Individuum. Über den Ursprung der Porträtmalerei in der italienischen Renaissance.* Köln: Prestel, 1985. Print.

Cadava, Eduardo. "Trees, Hands, Stars, and Veils: The Portrait in Ruins." Introduction to *Fazal Sheikh. Portraits.* Göttingen: Steidl 2011. 5-43. Print.

Jobey, Liz. "Fazal Sheikh: A Sense of Common Ground." *Fazal Sheikh.* Exhibition catalogue MAPFRE Foundation. Madrid, 2009. 15-31. Available online under https://www.fazalsheikh.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Fazal-Sheikh/Essays/liz_jobey.pdf.

Mavroudi, Elizabeth, and Caroline Nagel. *Global Migration. Patters, Processes, and Politics.* London: Routledge, 2017. Print.

Le Masurier, Megan. "What is Slow Journalism?" *Journalism Practice*, 9.2 (2015): 138-152.

Light, Ken. "Fazal Sheikh. Portrait of a Refugee." *Witness in Our Time: Working Lives of Documentary Photographers.* Ed. Ken Light. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2010. 153-162. Print.

Nancy, Jean Luc. *L'Autre Portrait.* Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2014. Print.

Padley, Gemma. "Slow Photojournalism: The Rise of Long-term Assignments." *BBC News* 21 December 2015. Available online under https://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-35039054. Accessed 6 September 2018.

Römhild, Regina. "Jenseits ethnischer Grenzen. Für eine postmigrantische Kultur- und Gesellschaftsforschung." *Nach der Migration. Postmigrantische Perspektiven jenseits der Parallelgesellschaft.* Eds. In: Yildiz, Erol, and Marc Hill. transcript: Bielefeld, 2015. 37-48.

Sheikh, Fazal. *The Victor Weeps. Afghanistan*, Zurich: Scalo, 1998. Print.

Sheikh, Fazal. *A Sense of Common Ground.* Zurich: Scalo, 1996. Print.

Sikking, Iris. "A Thing Called Slow Journalism." *issuu* 22 May 2010. Web. https://issuu.com/bintphotobooks/docs/slowjournalism.

Papastergiadis, Nikos. *The Turbulence of Migration. Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity.* London: Polity, 2000. Print.

NOTES

1. The technical term "slow photojournalism" was introduced around 2015 with reference to long-term assignments of photojournalists (see Padley, 2015).

2. The main goal is "to look further than the immediate (hard) news. This makes it necessary to stay longer in a certain area, even though the world's press may already have left. As a result, the photographer not only continues to be an observer but also becomes a participant in daily life" (Sikking, 2010).

3. He established it alongside his wife, Lélia Deluiz Wanick, in 1994.

4. One special feature of this series, which is funded by Switzerland's Volkart Foundation, is that all of the photobooks are made available free of charge on Sheikh's Web site. See https://www.fazalsheikh.org/fazal-sheikh/international-human-rights-series.html (accessed on 4 September 2018).

5. Although from perspectives such as that of human rights law, there is a need to distinguish among migrants, refugees, and displaced persons (formal definitional issues are addressed at http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html and http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/displaced-person-displacement/), the reality of changing life circumstances is testament to widespread fluctuations and transitions between the defined categories in real life. The concept of "migrant portraiture" is introduced

here as an open and collective frame to include all the various groups of displaced people who are in conditions of migranthood. In that sense, it calls into question the division between "migrant" and "citizen" as Gregory Feldman has (2015).

6. Alongside photobooks, Sheikh's work on issues of migration has comprised a series of photographs of migrant workers in Brazil's Grande Sertão and one of immigrants crossing the border between Mexico and the United States.

7. He later reported: "As soon as we landed on the sandy spit at Lokichoggio, the journalists began working. Their stories had to be compiled in hours as they were leaving in the afternoon on the return trip to Nairobi. As I watched them work throughout the day, I noticed they were drawn to the areas that the spokesman had suggested would provide the best footage" (Sheikh 1996, 2f.). He recalled "feeling a sense of unease, an inability to follow along and take the expected photographs. As the days passed, the preconceptions that had been foisted on me in the initial briefing and the shock of the first encounter began to fade away, allowing a broader sense of the refugees and their situation to emerge. It was at this point that I began to ask the community elders and the refugees to collaborate with me in making the images" (qtd. in Jobey 2009, 15).

8. The unaccompanied minors from southern Sudan were boys between eight and 18 years old who had been abducted from their homes and taken to Ethiopia, where they then were trained to fight in the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) against the Islamic regime of northern Sudan. After the Ethiopian government fell, these boys had to return to Sudan, where the SPLA was later defeated. Then, they fled across the border to Kenya on foot.

9. In some cases, the information in the captions includes the symbolic or holy meanings of the forenames.