

Die moderne Subjektivität als ein Fragmentenmosaik

Festschrift für Bernhard-Arnold Kruse

herausgegeben von Gianluca Esposito und Daniela Liguori

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Il presente volume non può non ricordare i Professori Stefan Nienhaus (*1956 †2024) e Aurelio Cernigliaro (*1949 †2024), improvvisamente scomparsi prima della sua pubblicazione.

Nell'ottobre del 2023, il Prof. Nienhaus ha accolto con entusiasmo l'idea di questo progetto, fornendoci preziosi consigli per metterla in atto. Il suo contributo sarebbe stato dedicato alle *Utopie- und Dystopieprojektionen auf den Mars in der Spätaufklärung*.

Nel primo autunno del 2024 ricevemmo, appena tre settimane prima della sua scomparsa, il saggio del Prof. Cernigliaro dedicato al suo amico 'alemannus' Bernhard-Arnold Kruse, l'ultimo regalo che volle fare alla comunità federiciana e alla Scienza tutta.

Napoli, ottobre 2025
Gianluca Esposito e Daniela Liguori

Der Sammelband soll auch zur Erinnerung an die Professoren Stefan Nienhaus (*1956 †2024) und Aurelio Cernigliaro (*1949 †2024) dienen, die beide vor der Veröffentlichung des Bandes plötzlich verstorben sind.

Herr Prof. Nienhaus begrüßte noch im Oktober 2023 die Idee dieses Projekts mit Begeisterung und gab uns wertvolle Ratschläge für dessen Umsetzung. Sein Beitrag sollte sich mit den *Utopie- und Dystopieprojektionen auf den Mars in der Spätaufklärung* befassen.

Im Frühherbst 2024, nur drei Wochen vor seinem Tod, erhielten wir den Aufsatz von Herrn Prof. Cernigliaro. Dieser war Bernhard-Arnold Kruse, seinem ‚Alemannus‘-Freund, gewidmet und stellte das letzte Geschenk dar, das er der Universität „Federico II“ und der Wissenschaft insgesamt hinterlassen wollte.

Neapel, im Oktober 2025
Gianluca Esposito und Daniela Liguori

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Humanitarian Ads Targeting Potential Donors: A Case Study on Save The Children Promotional Strategies

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Abstract: This paper explores the multimodal strategies employed in humanitarian advertisements, with a focus on Save The Children’s campaigns addressing the Syrian civil war. The paper investigates how Syrian war victims and refugees are portrayed through verbal and visual elements and how these representations construct an idealized Western audience. By adopting a multimodal analytical framework, the study analyses the tension between real and constructed images of suffering, the persuasive function of guilt appeals, and the transformation of humanitarian ads into a sub-genre of commercial advertising. Through an analysis of selected images and video campaigns, we identify key narrative and visual strategies that are meant to shape audience perception and engagement. Findings show that Save The Children’s ads rely on demanding imagery and strategic framing, so as to evoke empathy and prompt donations, ultimately positioning the viewer as a guilty bystander, and, at the same time, a potential agent of change.

Introduction

The object of investigation of this paper is focused on the so called humanitarian advertisements and their controversial textual/visual representation of victims in war-ravaged countries. In particular, after the outbreak of civil war in Syria (2011-), international bodies and NGOs periodically launch ad campaigns targeted to Western audiences to raise awareness about the tragedy of Syrian refugees trying to escape from destruction.

Our goal is based on two related issues:

- how are Syrian war victims and refugees portrayed by Save The Children through verbal and visual devices in ads targeted to Western audiences?
- what types of addressees are targeted in Save The Children humanitarian campaign on Syria?

* The authors discussed and conceived the article together. In particular, Martina Perrone is responsible for sections 1, 2, 3, and 4; Paolo Donadio for the Introduction and sections 5, 6, and 7.

The first question concerns the way in which humanitarian organisations produce their ad campaigns, that is to say the verbal/visual devices that are employed to raise Western audiences' awareness and persuade them to play an active role. We will adopt a multimodal¹ theoretical framework to make sense of the combination between words and images produced by the NGO Save The Children engaged in a specific warfare context.

The second question is about the clash between real and unreal, which is increased by the usage of shocking images that not only are meant to stir viewers' conscience and persuade them to act, but construct an ideal image of the Western viewer. The real world is replaced with images of it and someone else's pain is just one of the many products sold in modern post-industrial cultures. In this sense, the humanitarian ad can be seen as a sub-genre of the main category of commercial ads. Both types of ads share a same goal: to construct an ideal 'hearer'² that can be potentially transformed into a customer.

1. *What are humanitarian advertisements?*

Humanitarian advertisements are a form of advertising whose main aim is to persuade people to donate a small amount of money by exploiting viewers' feelings of empathy and guilt. Actually, they are also known as *guilt appeals*, which can lead to several forms of prosocial behaviour such as the charitable donation³.

Unlike traditional ads, humanitarian advertisements are a type of advertisements targeting addressees' psychological, social or symbolic needs: viewers are not persuaded to buy and consume a particular product or service, but to help less fortunate people. Therefore, humanitarian organizations are able to affect public knowledge about 'distant' issues, even if the humanitarian task is not easy, because organizations need to convince people to donate in order to help unknown victims. Not many people are ready to donate their money without being sure about how it is used, and that is why an individual is more likely to help the neighbour's child than the distant stranger⁴.

¹ Gunther Kress / Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design*, Routledge, London, 2006.

² Guy Cook, *The Discourse of Advertising*, 2nd edition, Routledge, London 2001, pp. 201-202.

³ Debra Basil et al., *Guilt appeals: The mediating effect of responsibility*, in: «Psychology & Marketing», 23, 2006, pp. 1035-1054.

⁴ Dennis Kennedy, *Selling the Distant Other: Humanitarianism and Imagery – Ethical Dilemmas of Humanitarian Action*, in: «The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance», 28, 2009, pp. 1-25.

2. Differences/similarities between product and humanitarian advertising

Humanitarian advertisements are not used to sell products, but ‘humanitarian projects’, whose purpose can change according to different international bodies and NGOs. However, there are some strategies in common, such as the use of testimonials, which is, for instance, quite frequent in UNHCR (United Nation High Commission for Refugees) ads. Standard product advertisements use testimonials to create a sense of authentic experience that increases product detection and potential customers’ brand recall, whereas humanitarian ads rely on testimonials to increase the credibility and relevance of the humanitarian mission.

Standard product advertisements, as a specific sub-genre of promotional genre⁵, aim at persuading people to buy and tend to show the product as something essential for us – words like *new, fresh, delicious, special* are commonly used in this type of ads related to consumers good industry⁶. Humanitarian aid advertisements might be considered as a distinct sub-genre, as they do not mean to persuade people to buy a material product, but donate money by showing a ‘humanitarian product’ and using images and words that aim at raising awareness and bring about an emotional feedback.

Vestergaard⁷ talks about two types of appeals, whose persuasive dimensions are different. One is labelled as ‘incitement’, and refers to a rational appeal which gives us factual and contextual information. This persuasion exposes events, causes, consequences, and possible remedies. The other type of appeal, which is crucial in our analysis, is a form of ‘enticement’, as it refers to the emotional dimension targeting potential donors to take action. Enticement, according to Vestergaard, is developed through agency and affinity.

In terms of genre classification, both notions define the communicative purpose of humanitarian ads and contribute to create genre specificity. Nonetheless, two more dimensions need to be considered in order to define such specificity: the a) informative purpose and b) the digital design and distribution.

The former is linked with the communicative purpose of the sense of responsibility, which stems from proper factual information about the real impact of wars and conflicts in countries and regions that are far from our safe

⁵ Vijay K. Bhatia, *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings*, Longman, London 1993.

⁶ Angela Goddard, *The Language of Advertising: Written Texts*, Routledge, London 2002.

⁷ Anne Vestergaard, *Humanitarian appeal and the paradox of power*, in: «Critical Discourse Studies», 10 (4), 2013, pp. 444–467.

homes. In this sense, the «breaking news rhetorics» contribute to create a final product that is based on a genre-embedding «by appropriating generic resources from a specific genre for the construction of another»⁸, as humanitarian ads exploit the conventions of a genre that has different communicative purposes. We will see that this holds to be true especially in the selection of images and the magazine-like layout that is displayed on the screen of our PCs and mobile phones.

The latter increases and customizes the distribution of humanitarian advertising campaigns, thus reducing the geographic distance between viewers and victims and enhancing affinity. Thanks to the use of multimedia technologies, viewers are aware of and even witness remote events. In the global village, media technologies have enabled large-scale humanitarianism and brought it on our mobile phones.

3. *Reading images in humanitarian aid advertisements*

the photographic image, even to the extent that it is a trace (not a construction made out of disparate photographic traces), cannot be simply a transparency of something that happened. It is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude⁹.

What is represented in pictures is always chosen carefully through frames. Photographs select what to ‘capture’ and what to leave aside. This means that images used in advertising campaigns do not represent exactly what is happening, but events *similar* to what is actually taking place. Through images of war, we do not get familiar with individual victims’ stories, but with generic representations of war and destruction. Depicted victims have no identity, history, or family: they are just ‘indexes’ of real victims, as images in the ads ‘mirror’ both the identity of the victim and the action of humanitarian organizations.

Therefore, we might see images in humanitarian ads as if they were speech acts, whose perlocutionary function is to push viewers to react. Images represent both the pain of the victims and the organisation work. The persuasiveness of an emotional ad depends on the level of the message relevance to the ‘consumer’, as well as the level of emotional intensity displayed.

⁸ Vijay K. Bhatia, *Worlds of Written Discourse. A Genre-Based View*, Bloomsbury, London-New York, 2004, p. 99.

⁹ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Picador / Farrar Straus and Giroux, New York 2003, pp. 38-39.

In a multimodal text exploiting both images and writing, writing can carry a set of meanings that is enhanced through images. Photographs of war invoke the illusion of shared experiences¹⁰. Expressing something verbally, visually or in both ways makes a difference. By following a multimodal approach, visual images can be read as a 'text', and grammar is seen as a set of socially constructed resources for the construction of meaning.

Reading visual images in terms of victims' gaze through the codes of offer and demand allows us to identify mood. Sufferers' gaze establishes a direct connection between the represented participant and the interacting participant. This visual configuration is called a 'demand' if the ad producers want to affect viewers in order to generate an imaginary relationship with the represented participants. Another type of visual configuration is the 'offering' image: the represented participant addresses the viewer indirectly, in order to provide factual information.

'Reading' visual images in terms of vertical and horizontal angles can help us understand viewers' positioning and their point of view. Subjective images are those in which everything is arranged for the viewers, positioning them to adopt a particular stance. The vertical angle defines the nature of the power relations between the viewer and the image. If represented participants are depicted from a high vertical angle, the viewers are in a position of power. A low vertical angle, instead, empowers the represented participants in relation to viewers. If the vertical angle is straight, that is at eye level, there is no power difference and the point of view is one of equality¹¹.

Horizontal angles encode the involvement of the reader with the image through frontal and oblique points of view. If the participants in an image are depicted on the horizontal angle from the front, the connection between the represented participants and the viewer increases viewers' involvement. The ad producers, in these cases, want the target audience to know that the represented participant is part of our world. If subjects are depicted by means of an oblique angle, the viewer is positioned to adopt a detached point of view: the participants are not recognised as part of viewers' world.

Kress and van Leeuwen identify the functional role of a number of codes that operate in the layout of an image to produce meaning and create textual coherence. These codes include salience, vectors, and the compositional

¹⁰ Ivi.

¹¹ Kress / van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design*, p. 155.

axes of central and side spaces. Vectors guide the viewer from one element to another. They may take the form of lines, visible or not, generated by gaze, pointing fingers, or extended arms.

The left side usually represents 'given' knowledge: the elements of an image placed on the left side are known or understood by the viewers as familiar and are somehow taken for granted. By contrast, the right side is perceived as new. The elements placed on the right side are representations of what is not known yet, and, therefore, crucial for the analyst to detect the main point of the message.

The vertical axis, by contrast, creates an opposition between *ideal* and *real*: the elements of an image in the upper section are represented as ideal, those in the lower section as real. The ideal contains the most salient part of the image. The real is opposed to this, and usually presents more specific and factual information.

4. *Controversial reactions to humanitarian aid advertisements*

How the viewer feels while watching a humanitarian aid advertisement can change. Shock is one of the emotions associated with these ads. However, the resistance to shocking imagery reflects the critique of distance in the form of two pragmatic risks: bystander and boomerang effects. The former refers to people's indifference to act; the latter refers to people's indignation¹².

Therefore, images of suffering are often contested. Mass media and NGOs have been widely criticized for using images of human suffering to prompt emotional responses in readers and viewers, in order to capture attention, persuade and elicit donations. Images of suffering often can prompt emotional responses for passive suffering, rather than an active support to action.

Shock could alter the conduct. Anyway shock can become familiar and in doing so can invite an active response. But shock can wear off because people have means to defend themselves against what is upsetting: this is adaptive. *As one can become habituated to horror in real life, one can become habituated to the horror of certain images*¹³.

Surrounded by shocking images, viewers might lose their capacity to react. Cultural, religious, and political distance affects our involvement in events

¹² Lilie Chouliaraki, *Post-Humanitarianism: humanitarian communication beyond a politics of pity*, in: «International Journal of Cultural Studies», 13 (2), 2010, pp. 107-126.

¹³ Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, p. 27.

taking place elsewhere in the world. Compassion, one of the feelings arisen by watching images that portray suffering people, should be translated into action. However, if people feel there is nothing they can do, they could get cynical and tired of seeing pains and suffering.

5. *Save The Children images about the Syrian war*

We selected eight Save The Children humanitarian aid images from Save The Children website¹⁴ and one video (1 minute and 31 seconds), which was designed by the agency «Don't Panic» on behalf of Save The Children. The selection is limited to few images as we preferred to focus a) on a single event, that is the Syrian war, and b) on a single humanitarian organization. This allowed us to focus on a specific communicative context and avoid generalizations that may flatten the differences between different types of organizations and their respective promotional strategies.

All the images and the video were displayed on the web from 2012 onwards (the civil war broke out in 2011, even if a truce was called in 2020).



Fig. 1. Save the Children Report, 2012.



Fig. 2. Save The Children UK, 2013.

¹⁴ <https://www.savethechildren.org>.



Fig. 3. Save The Children UK, 2012.



Fig. 4a-b. Save The Children US, 2015.



Fig. 5. Save The Children Report, 2014.



Fig. 6. Save the Children US, 2013.



Fig. 7. Save The Children US, 2016.



Fig. 8. Wish Campaign, Save The Children UK, 2014 (video).

For sake of brevity, we are going to analyse just three images (Figures 1, 2, 6) and the video (Fig. 8), as they can actually be considered as reliable samples of the same communication and promotional strategy. However, more references to all images will be provided during the analysis.

6. *Save The Children: a dialogue through gazes*

From Save The Children website¹⁵, we learn that it is a charitable non-profit organization founded in England in 1919 by Eglantyne Jebb. Initially founded to aid children in war-ravaged central Europe, Save The Children works in more than 120 countries today. Its mission is to protect children's lives through fundraising campaigns and help them in emergencies, by ensuring education as a part of its supporting actions.

Shocking images of destruction, misfortune, and suffering are frequently displayed in Save The Children's humanitarian ads.

6.1. *Demanding images: the viewer is guilty*

In the analysis of a multimodal text such as the one in fig. 1, that is the cover of a report on the war in Syria, then re-used as an advertisement on other websites, visual communication and writing can be analysed in an integrated way in order to reveal its dialectical nature.

If we divide the image into 'imaginary' blocks, the picture of the child on the left is presented as given information, that is to say something real we are already aware of, which is the starting point for the interpretation of the text; the written words, instead, are presented on the top-right area as new elements of information.

The Save The Children logo is below the image and on the right, in order to be noticed as a new factor that can make a difference. In this image, words are written in different fonts and sizes. The first word we notice is **CHILDHOOD**, written in bold and capital letters. Save The Children generalizes the meaning of the image through an abstract rewording (-hood) that transforms a single victim into the symbol of an entire category of human beings. The word *children*, recalling the name of the organization and used as a label for a general category of victims, is repeated in all the images among the ones we selected (figg. 3, 4a, 4b, 5, 6, 7), except for n. 2.



¹⁵ <https://www.savethechildren.org/>.

The choice of different font and styles is used to convey different messages and stimulate a special emotional response¹⁶. The almost universal focus on women and children in position of fragility reproduces particular social hierarchies. Children are innocent, unaware, undefended, and it is difficult to be indifferent to these images; women are often represented as vulnerable and helpless as well, and media have a preference for innocent sufferers¹⁷. In our corpus of images, however, men and women, along with fathers and mothers are absent, as Save The Children's main focus is on children who have been left alone. This is a crucial feature on which the identification of the addressee is based.

The sentence «The impact of two years of conflict in Syria» (also repeated in fig. n. 5) is used by the NGO to make sense of the image: the image shows the reason why this child is suffering, and the aid agency takes for granted that the educated addressee knows *something* about the war in Syria, but needs to know what is *really* going on over there. The outcome of some tragic events are sometimes less known than their causes.

The child is on the left and the words are on the right: the position of the elements points out the relationship between them. The child is the 'anchor' for the message. The gaze of the child is revealing: the child is standing up and staring at us. This image is a 'demanding' image in which the child's gaze demands something from the viewer through the organization, but, at the same time, judges the viewer for his/her resistance to act. All the images we selected, indeed, are demanding images, except for fig. 7, which displays a candid photograph in which the subject is not aware of being portrayed, and is considered the only 'offering image' providing factual information.

The girl in fig. 1 is not crying, and her gaze seems the strict gaze of a mother who tells off her children for their misbehaviour: standing up, closed lips, frowning, one hand taking the other as a mom would do with her child. She is an 'adult' young girl who wears a pink sweater, clearly for kids, which is dirty and stands for her lost innocence.

6.2. *Demanding images: the viewer as an agent*

'Reading' this second image implies a different task, as visual and verbal elements are inverted. Here we are given more information about the victim

¹⁶ Jurate Banyte et al., *Features of shocking advertizing impact on consumers in commercial and social context*, in: «Innovative Marketing», 10 (2), 2014, pp. 35-46.

¹⁷ Vestergaard, *Humanitarian appeal and the paradox of power*, pp. 444-467.

and her personal story: we know her name, that she lost her father because of the war, that her house is reduced to rubble, and that she is just three years old.

«She's one of thousands of Syrian children who've lost everything and have nowhere to go»: Sana, as we said before, is an index representing one of the many tragic cases faced by many Syrian families, and therefore, at the same time, she becomes representative of a social group or category.



The position of the visual elements plays a fundamental role here: differently from the previous image, here written words are placed on the left, while the child is positioned on the right. Written words are presented as given information, as part of a situation that well-informed viewers know quite well, that is the war in Syria; on the contrary, Sana's demanding gaze is introduced to viewers as a new element of information and interaction.

Sana's face is used in several images (figg. 2, 4a and 6) of our series, but, unlike the child in fig. 1, in this case an even younger child is staring at us with pleading eyes from a high vertical angle, which empowers potential donors and their agency. The exploited Western stereotype, in this case, is the request for charity from a young girl, sitting down on the pavement of a crowded street and begging for viewers' attention and a small amount of money, 3 pounds.

The pronoun 'You' is not placed on the left and repeated twice by chance, as it is used to bridge the distance between viewers and the victim and define viewers' duty. Again, differently from the previous image, where the effect was a sense of guilty, here the viewer is turned into a powerful agent of change and knows what she/he would do by donating money: providing Sana with a safe place to live.

By providing names, stories, details of what happened and by saying how money would be used, the ad increases its informative function and the reliability of the image. In small letters, the text tell us that «just £3 could help us»: «us» highlights the mediating role of the agency and viewers' trust is asked by pointing out the way in which money would be spent. The deictic «Tonight» creates an affinity between sufferers and viewers that overcomes time too: not only is it necessary to act in a far country, but it is necessary to do it now.

The last sentence «NO CHILD BORN TO DIE» places a further emphasis on a moral principle that is supposed to motivate and justify viewers' actions and project them in the future, even if it sounds like a slogan containing Save The Children logo. It is true that only adults are supposed to fight and die in a war, but it is true that wars can prevent children from living as well.

6.3. *Demanding images: the viewer as a helper*

As in the previous demanding images, the child in Fig. 5 is staring at us.

Written words and the child are both on the right, as new elements of information. Two different types of font and handwritings are used: «A DEVASTATING TOLL» is in capital letters and bigger than the other words, featuring also a different colour saturation. «High saturation may be positive, exuberant, adventurous, but also vulgar or garish; low saturation may be subtle and tender, but also cold and repressed»¹⁸.

Both words and the represented participant are placed on the right, while on the left we can only see the hand of a man who was not probably able to protect this child in the best way. The man who is taking the child by his hand is presented as given information: it would be a very common thing to see a father who takes his son by his hand. However, in this case, the man is introduced to viewers as an agent who takes care of the young child, but, at the same time, as an agent who needs help to prevent his child from getting injured again.

Perspective is another meaningful element that has to be taken into account when analysing images, as it is another way of bridging the distance between depicted participants and viewers. This is a subjective image seen by viewers from a particular point of view. The quite close shot showing head and shoulders of the depicted subject signals a short distance between the child and viewers. The frontal angle highlights viewers' involvement. The child is turned towards the viewers and his left hand seems to create a distance between him and the viewer, but, at the same time, appears to be in search of a



¹⁸ Kress / van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design*, p. 233.

support or help too – another caring hand. We do not see the man who takes the child by his hand, but the child's gaze tells viewers that Syrian people cannot face the war alone, and need our moral and economic help.

6.4. *Motion images: the viewer as an eyewitness*

In the video designed by the ad agency «Don't Panic» for Save The Children UK, one minute and an half are enough to transform a happy child into a desperate human being. The video was particularly discussed at the time of its release, as it was meant to reduce the space gap between depicted sufferers and viewers. The video shows what would happen if a war broke out «here», in a safe country such as the United Kingdom, and having as a protagonist an ordinary young white girl.



Fig. 8, min 0:01-0:04.

Perspective is a meaningful element that has to be taken into account when analysing images, as it is another way of bridging the distance between subjects and viewers. In this video, the invariable frontal angle highlights viewers' involvement: the quite close shot constantly showing head and shoulders of the depicted subject signals a short distance between child and viewers. However, in this case, the foreground image of the girl is not a demanding one, as the viewer is being involved as a witness of the impact of war on children, not as a direct addressee involved through the child's gaze.

The depicted subject is a white young girl who makes a wish in her nice home when she turns 9 and, after one year, finds herself crying in the bed of a hospital camp, turning 10 and with her mother trying to cheer her up as she did in the past.



Fig. 8, min 1:09-1:17.

Unlike the previous images, we can see through our own eyes, and not thanks to the verbal mediation of someone's else report, the way a life changes when a war breaks out and radically changes life conditions and daily routines of a young and 'recognizable' white girl – not one of *them*, but one of *us*. The video starts with a birthday and ends with a birthday, even if the girl does not express a wish the second time, and does not blow out the only candle stump that is left. Over one year, her life has been changed forever, and it is impossible to make a wish.

This video is designed as an interplay between the fixed foregrounded subject – the young girl – and the fast changing background. The transition from happiness to sorrow and desperation on the girl's face depends on the fast changing events displayed behind her shoulders. Written words appear just at the end and are meant to provide the viewer with an interpreting key about the impact and the 'reality' of what happens in distant countries.

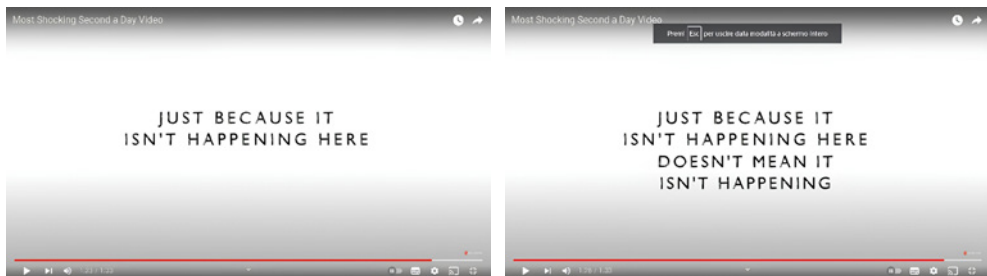


Fig. 8, min 1:23- 1:26

Words, in this case, do not add any factual information, as the deictic elements IT, HERE are now directly addressed to the viewer, who is invited to dismiss his/her role as eyewitness in order to think over his/her own reaction when a war breaks out in distant countries. The war is not named, but shown for more than one minute, which becomes the measure of one year of a child's life spent in a war-ravaged country.

7. *Final remarks*

Through the selection of a corpus of images and a video, we tried to analyse some elements of a humanitarian campaign by using the tools provided by multimodal theory. These tools help us understand both the visual and verbal resources exploited to represent sufferers and the way in which these resources position the addressee and construct a virtual promotional target.

By observing humanitarian images/ads, viewers may experience feelings of empathy, guilt, and compassion for the victims. As a matter of fact, the main strategies exploited by Save The Children to reduce the distance between viewers and the victims are based on some features that are quite distinctive:

- the image perspective creates a contact that involves represented participants and viewers in a dialogue that changes according to the framing angle;
- the usage of pronouns increases viewers' involvement and highlights the relationship between viewers and children;
- all still images, except for fig. n. 7, can be defined as demanding images¹⁹, as children demand *something* from viewers: action, money, and care.

The sufferers' images are, of course, intrinsically narrative, as the final video shows. Pain comes from past events, which are nonetheless displayed on the screen as factual ones, and not as the ultimate result of political and economic contrasts. The customer/donor is appealed to intervene on the future and prevent the past from happening again.

However, guilt appeals vary from a picture to another: viewers are accused of being culturally responsible for the causes of the conflicts that plague so many countries, often former colonies, as it happens in fig. 1 and in the video; however, guilt appeals can highlight viewers' agency and position them

¹⁹ Kress / van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design*, p. 120.

as having somehow the possibility to help who is in danger (fig. 2: «you can't bring Sana's dad back, but you can give her a safe place to sleep tonight»).

The ultimate image of the virtual donor constructed and targeted by Save The Children is that of the missing parent. Syrian children «under fire» are alone in the pics and their demanding gaze is not simply asking for protection by means of a financial support. Who can take care of children if not their mother? The Western cultural stereotype of the careless (Fig. 5) father is exploited to underline the target identity of a Western, educated, middle-class, woman-mother as main addressee of Save The Children ads. The mother is the only one who stands by her daughter in the video of the Wish campaign. In this sense, children's pain displayed by Save The Children is the worst fear for every Western mother: children who are left alone and unprotected in a hostile environment.