

Outer Space Narrative and Humanity's Limits

Will the Space Traveler Meet Agamben's *homo sacer*?

Lena Quelvennec

ABSTRACT

Outer space conquest during the twentieth century has produced new perspectives on borders and the notion of globalization. Space programs have produced extensive images, influencing both representations of the Earth and of humanity. Today, some individuals still wish to represent the whole of humanity outside of its original borders when traveling to Mars and even further. However, behind the question of what kind of humanity was and is represented, the sensitive issue of who belongs to this narrative is raised. As a first step and influenced by the art project *I Will Build My Own Rocket*, this paper will describe the influence of the space conquest narrative on perceptions of Earth's borders. The ways in which both NASA and more recently Mars One shape humanity's representations and its representatives will be analyzed to investigate who belongs to their space narrative. After presenting three different portraits of aspiring space travelers, a parallel between the space traveler's position and the figure of Giorgio Agamben's *homo sacer* will be offered, questioning how this may interfere with the space utopia of a perfect humanity elsewhere.

KEYWORDS

Visual culture, globalization, space conquest, border, politics of belonging, *homo sacer*.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a problematic term. It aims to raise awareness of global phenomena while homogenizing humanity's actions. There are today "historically unprecedented levels of global interconnectedness" which contributes to a "transformation of (the) political community."¹¹ However, unlike what "global" may seem to imply, the experience of globalization varies in regards to where, who or what is analyzed (Held et al. 1990, 28). Globalization interests me in its capacity

Junctions: Graduate Journal of the Humanities
Lena Quelvennec. 2018.
Vol 3(2): 53-67. ISSN: 2468-8282
<http://junctionsjournal.org/>



¹¹ In *Global Transformation* (1990, 10), David Held, a British political scientist, distinguishes three theses explaining globalization: the hyperglobalist thesis, the skeptical thesis, and the transformationalist thesis. The one presented here is the transformationalist.

to reveal master narratives¹² (more particularly Western ones) and to question how history may be approached from new perspectives. Visual cultures are shaped by globalization and globalization is shaped by visual cultures as is starkly demonstrated in attempts to create global representations that include everyone. How can humanity be characterized? Who belongs in these representations and who is excluded from them? And what does outer space add to these questions?

Starting with a video taken from my art research, I will first describe the influence of the space conquest narrative in relation to a sense of belonging to Earth. I will then analyze the ways NASA and Mars One shape the image of humanity's representatives and who belongs to their space narrative. Concluding with the space utopia of a perfect humanity elsewhere, I will offer my own perspective by drawing a parallel between the space traveler and the figure of *homo sacer* by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben.

NEW BORDERS

The space exploration narrative started in the middle of the twentieth century and had a great influence on Western populations and their relation to science, technology, and images. It has also developed a form of spectacle that is easily identifiable and often reproduced. This is where it meets my artistic interests. My artistic research is based on the relationship between YouTube videos and mimicry. People, not necessarily from the same group, share



Fig. 1. 12 Photograms. Quelvennec. Lena. 2013. *I Will Build My Own Rocket*. Geneva: HEAD

images with the same codification of representation because they somehow feel it is the right way to do it. The video, *I Will Build My Own Rocket*, contains 32 films of rocket launches taken from YouTube – from the water bottle in the backyard to the NASA Space shuttle. [Fig. 1] I collected videos of people spending time sending “stuff” or rockets into the atmosphere. Through these acts, they acquire the capacity to reach the sky, temporarily expanding the frontiers of what they can access. By recording, they reenact the history of space exploration

¹² I use this term in reference to the Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal: “visual culture studies should take as its primary object of critical analysis the master narratives that are presented as natural, universal, true and inevitable, and dislodge them so that alternative narratives can become visible (2003, 22).”

(countdown, dramatic music, scream...) and create a powerful mix of joy and violence. Because of YouTube's context of diffusion, I selected comments from the wide range of recordings and added them like subtitles, mixing a pro-science space conquest discourse with aspects of DIY methodology.

By offering to make space accessible to everyone and not only to an elite group of scientists, I reacted to NASA self-proclaimed right to speak for the whole of humanity and its future. This is even more relevant knowing that, with globalization, some new participants became part of the outer space history. For example, China and India are more and more engaged in space, and the attempted space programs in the 1960s from Lebanon and Zambia are being recognized and discussed by the US-European public.¹³ As discussed in the book *Meta-geopolitics of Outer Space*, "Today, more than 60 countries have at least some presence in space, even if it is only a weather satellite or sending researchers to the International Space Station (ISS)" (Al-Rodhan 2012, 4). This information is very relative, since sixty countries are still less than a third of all the countries on Earth. However, it contributes to the feeling that space is becoming more international, as do DIY technologies. Also, thanks to our current access to technologies (light camera, GPS, rocket kits...), some of these rockets allow people to record their own images of the planet from outer space. The democratization of image-production further develops the scopic regime noticed by the German artist and philosopher Hito Steyerl:

"With it [the invention of aviation] – and especially with the conquest of outer space – comes the development of new perspectives and techniques of orientation, found especially in an increasing number of aerial views of all kinds. While all these developments can be described as typical characteristics of modernity, the past few years has seen visual culture saturated by military and entertainment images' views from above" (2011, 6).

Besides the military origin of these views, the public has also become more accustomed to a new definition of borders, perpetuating a feeling of belonging on Earth that accompanies the space exploration narrative. All space programs produce images. All events are fully documented and shared on media channels.¹⁴ This seems understandable given that space programs must be accountable; they cost large amounts of money, paid for by the states through

¹³ The Lebanese space program is documented in the movie *Lebanese Rocket Society* (2012) by directors Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige. The Zambian space program acquired a symbolic value in Zambia's independence as the Spanish artist Cristina De Middel recalls in her work *The Afronauts* (2013).

¹⁴ The two main protagonists of space conquest – the US and the Soviet Union – used their programs events and participants as soft power in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, the latter regularly sent "cosmonauts [...] as informal ambassadors to Eastern European countries where they conveyed a more likeable image of the Soviet Union than politicians, soldiers and tanks." (Maurer et al. 2011, 6).

taxes. But as noted by Swiss historians Julia Richers and Monika Rütters, the reason is also because of narration:

“The quantity of visual representations of the cosmos and of cosmonauts is astounding. There are several possible reasons for this phenomenon. Since spaceflights and the physical experience of the cosmos was something limited to a handful of chosen people, imparting knowledge about the cosmos and space travel fell into the realm of imagination, and was therefore fueled especially by pictures” (2011, 229).

The programs need society to dream with them and to accept their narratives.

HUMANITY WITHOUT BORDER

Space exploration has generated a feeling of belonging as an accomplishment of the human race. NASA, one of the influential programs, thinks of itself as a human representative in space and has tried, at least twice, to represent humanity for the ultimate Other: the extraterrestrial being.

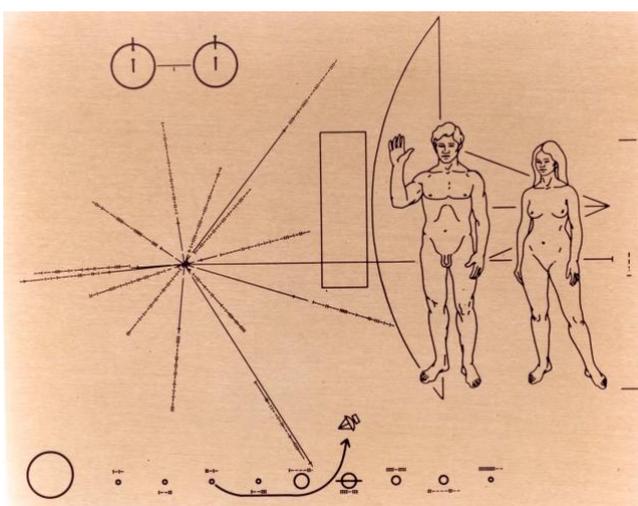


Fig. 2. NASA. 1973. Pioneer Satellite plaque.

The first representation of humanity was transported into space by the Pioneer satellite, launched in 1973 [Fig. 2]. In 2017, I saw this famous drawing again, in *Après Babel, Traduire* exhibition in the MUCEM museum in Marseille. It was exhibited as an illustration of symbolic language that seems universally decipherable. I rather agree with the Italian philosopher Umberto Eco who, in his book *The Search of the Perfect Language* (1995), discussed

the illusion behind this idea.¹⁵ This plaque was not addressed to aliens but to mankind. NASA wanted to unify humanity behind its project, allowing its representatives to speak in the name of mankind. In his text entitled *White*, the British scholar Richard Dyer writes: “There is no more powerful position than that of being ‘just’ human” (1997, 2). He explains that historically, white people have experienced the privilege of being able to represent all human beings unlike

¹⁵ Umberto Eco referred to a report from Thomas A. Sebeok in 1984. This American semiotician was commissioned to find a communication solution about the dangers of nuclear waste and concluded that it is impossible to be understood by anyone after a duration of 10,000 years or, for what it is worth, by extraterrestrials using only visual signs (Eco, 1995, 176-177).

people of color, who are still only able to represent their specific race. In the Pioneer's image, it is visible that the couple is Caucasian, the man has a more active role than the woman, and their body shapes are standardized. NASA clearly acted supported by the same privileged as Dyer's white "just" human. By thinking it was figuring more than its own norms on this plaque. Humanity is much more complex to represent.

In 1977, NASA launched the probes Voyager I and II containing the Voyager Golden Record aiming for the outer Solar System [Fig.3].¹⁶ Although the selection of images appeared slightly

more diversified, showing different cultures and societies, the people credited for these pictures were all Western photographers stemmed from NASA, UN or NAIC.¹⁷ People with the same Western perspective keeps choosing who is represented and how without questioning its position. The American feminist scholar Donna Haraway explains how this is related to the way objectivity is often imagined as a "gaze from nowhere" (1988,

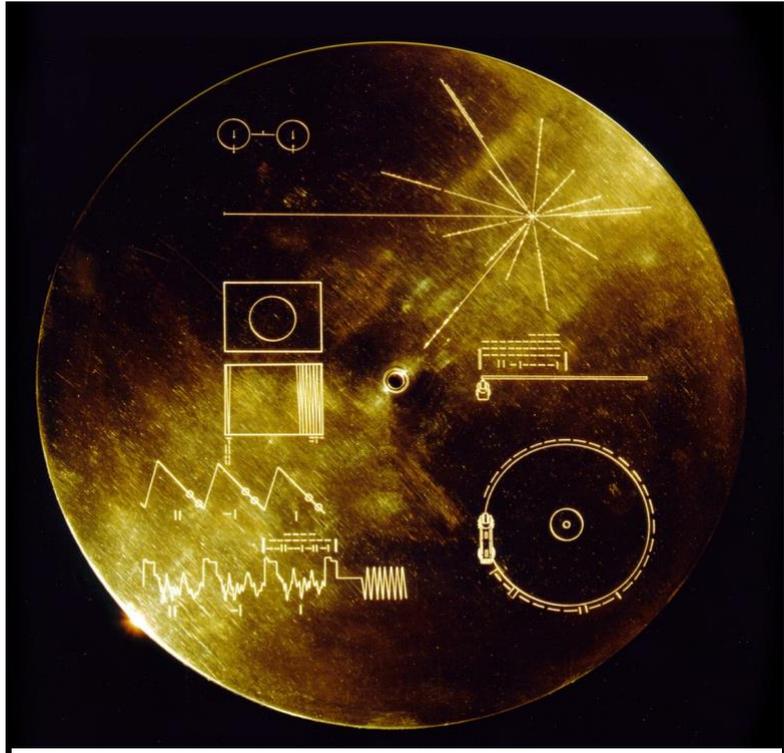


Fig. 3. NASA. 1977. Voyager Golden Record.

581). NASA, as a largely white

and male institution, forgets that knowledge is always situated and the enterprise to represent humanity from only one angle can never be enough. But what is NASA angle?

These images are intriguing because of their illustration of a peaceful, united and knowledgeable humanity. Of all 116 selected images, no war, religion or conflict is depicted. The images only show physical and biological information, nature and the environment, some human activities like craftsmen, farmers and laboratory workers, and methods of transportation [Fig. 4-11]. Within the selection, humanity's biggest problem seems to be rush hour traffic. The distortion is so obvious that the artist Steve McQueen used it in his 2003 artwork *Once upon a*

¹⁶ NASA. Golden Record. Website: <<http://goldenrecord.org/#discus-aureus>> (accessed June 10, 2018)

¹⁷ NAIC stands for National Astronomy and Ionosphere Center.

time, adding a soundtrack in all tongues to the images. Jean Fisher, a British art critic, perfectly described the final result in her text *Where here is elsewhere*:

“Although patently lacking ‘truth’, the slow fading in and out of these estranged images is hypnotic and emotional in its effect, invoking the pathos of human desire’s betrayal by representation” (2008, 72).

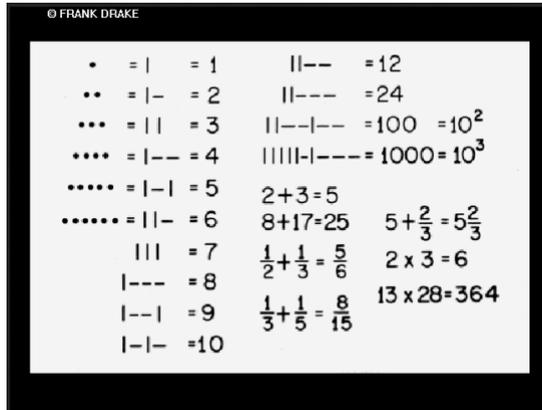


Fig.4. Frank Drake. 1977. Mathematics formula.

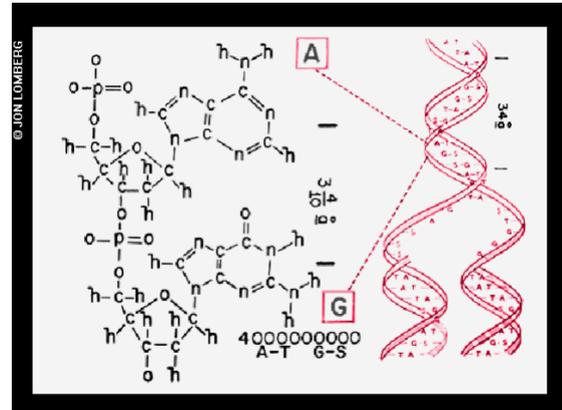


Fig.5. Jon Lomberg. 1977. DNA structure.

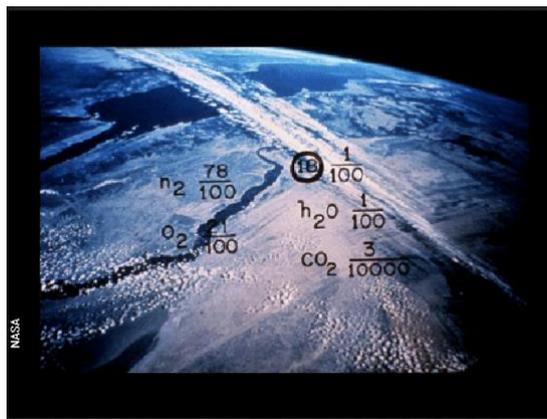


Fig.6. NASA. 1977. Egypt. Red Sea. Sinai Peninsula and the Nile.



Fig.7. UN. 1977. Man from Guatemala.

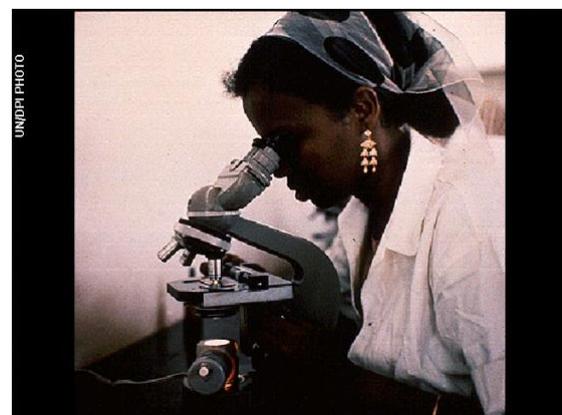
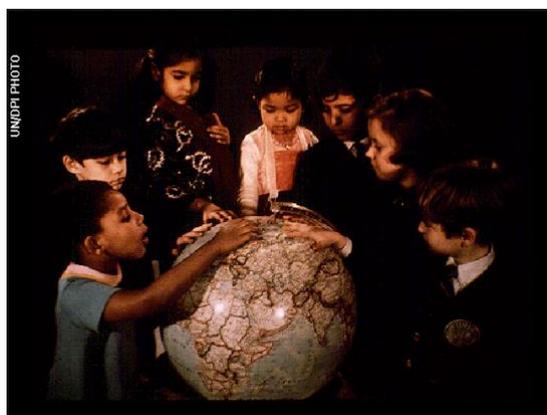


Fig.8. UN. 1977. Children with a globe.



Fig.10. NASA. 1977. Astronaut in Space.

Fig.9. UN. 1977. Woman with a microscope.

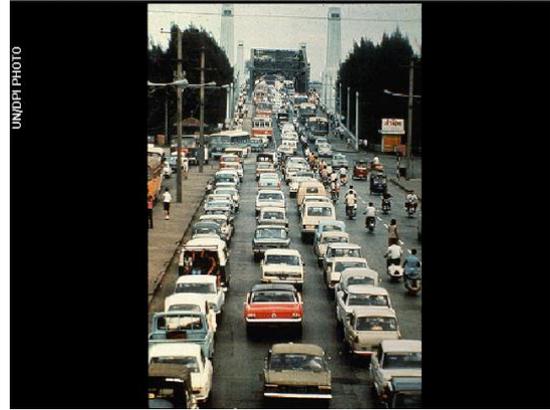


Fig.11. UN. 1977. Rushing hour in Thailand.

Besides the fact that NASA's leaders were not questioning their privileged narrative at the time, the two Voyager attempts revealed the difficulty of figuring a group as big as humanity without excluding someone.¹⁸ Globalization, interconnecting and separating, makes humanity realize its diversity. The tendency of the West to speak in the name of mankind – which is a feature of some Enlightenment philosophers and Western Imperialism – is confronted by counter-narratives of minorities that want to be incorporated into this definition and at the same time see their differences recognized (Hall, 2006). Everyone belongs to humanity, but it is probably impossible to create a global representation. Judith Butler writes in her chapter *We the People*:

“Zooming in and zooming out will not help us here, since those are precisely ways of editing and selecting what and who will count, which means that we cannot separate the question of who the people are from the technology that establishes which people will count as the people” (2015, 165).

In this quote, Judith Butler explains how complex it is to define who belongs under the term “people”. Her reflection can also be applied to NASA's representation of mankind. Whenever it zooms in or out, it is clear that NASA and its technologies selected who belonged in its vision of humanity.

NASA desired the visual narrative of a unified human community. These very clean, “objective” and peaceful pictures help the association to plan its Western Space Utopia, washed of all disagreements and conflicts, picking only the better representations in a very subjective way. Beneath this, there is a complex narrative, convinced that humanity, once it will leave

¹⁸ NASA has realized some part of the problem. As Miriam F. Williams observed on the website of the 50th anniversary of the NASA, they have started changing their communication since 1980s. “But even without the captions and the recurring use of the word *first*, viewers can clearly see that the photographs of ethnic minorities and women in the photomontages from the 1980s to the 2000s are included to demonstrate the agency's success in creating a diverse workplace and employing crew members from all walks of life” (2012, 379).

Earth, is destined to become better; as if the earth, filled with human borders and differences, was only a draft. This dream-like idea probably influences – and is influenced by – the way space is legislated. For example, space cannot be claimed by any nation according to the Outer Space Treaty ratified in 1967 by all the spacefaring nations.¹⁹ If it belongs to no one, it belongs to all: no border. The reality, however, is that a large part of humanity is still excluded from this story and its representation.²⁰

NEW HUMANITY?

Bas Landsdorp's private spaceflight project Mars One, founded in 2012, promotes a new process to select humanity's representatives. They use a strange mix of popularity ranking, fundraising, real training and evaluated capacities to choose which four people, of the 200,000 people that seem to have answered their open call, will be chosen for a one-way flight to Mars.²¹ Currently, about 100 people remain in the competition.

The Mars One project believes in the future of humanity on another planet. It is stated on the project's website that "Human settlement of Mars is the next giant leap for humankind. Exploring the solar system as a united humanity will bring us all closer together".²² Strangely, unity is achieved by traveling the furthest possible distance away. The selection process, even if opened to all, works as globalization by including and excluding parts of the world. Their communication affirms that everyone will be part of it because it will be recorded as a reality TV show and is funded by crowdfunding. However, it promotes only one type of applicant: well-educated people, from developed countries with efficient economies.²³ Just like other models of representation in our society, this produces a division between the human beings that belong to this narrative and the others. This is in line with the two registers explained by Laymert Garcia dos Santos (2008) in "Belonging and *Not* Belonging".²⁴ Those able to pay and

¹⁹ "That engages in space travel." "spacefaring", n. and adj. OED Online. June 2018. Oxford University Press. <<http://www.oed.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/view/Entry/185420?redirectedFrom=spacefaring>> (accessed June 10, 2018).

²⁰ When looking at who goes into space, it shows clever and intelligent scientists and researchers or rich and healthy human beings coming mostly from Western countries, or at least the upper classes of society. For example, there are currently in space: two Russians, three Americans, one Japanese; total: six men. It has shown more diversity before but it remains a very exclusive sample of humanity. Eshbach. How many people are in space right now. 2014. <<http://www.howmanypeopleareinspaceightnow.com/>> (accessed April 4, 2018).

²¹ For more information: Mars One. 2013. <<http://www.mars-one.com/>> (accessed June 10, 2018)

²² "Mission." Mars One. 2103. <<http://www.mars-one.com/mission>> (accessed June 10, 2018)

²³ <https://community.mars-one.com/last_activity/ALL/18/82/ALL/ALL/5/3> (accessed June 10, 2018)

²⁴ 'As demanded by economic acceleration and total technology, selection would be a way of 'processing' social categories and populations according to two registers. The first would neutralize (if not annihilate) those who exclude themselves or who are excluded by the total movement, either because they reject it or because they prove incapable of following it, thus becoming, in the words of Subcommander Marcos, "disposable". In the second, it is a matter of promoting and stimulating those categories and populations that confer maximum efficiency on the economic and techno-scientific order according to the parameters of total acceleration. In other words, selection discriminates and operates a division between those who belong and those who do not belong in the future evolution of humanity.' (Garcia dos Santos 2008, 57)

able to master space technologies will be included, and the others, unable to catch up with the requirements – or not willing to – will be excluded. My concern is about the fact that if Mars One really believes in Mars settlements as the future of humanity, they are creating a future reserved for a small group, as often happens in our globalized societies (for example, in the uneven distribution of resources between the Global North and Global South).

The motivations of the candidates for the project also reveal much about the reasons why Mars One's narrative works. In February 2015, *The Guardian* and StateLess Media shared a video that piqued my interest about three candidates.²⁵ The video, entitled *If I Die On Mars*, is organized around their three intercut interviews. It is always the applicants speaking (no voice-overs) with a few scenes where the interviewer's questions can be heard. The potential space travelers are presented as followed:

- Ryan [Fig. 12]: a white English male, 23 years old, a theoretical astrophysicist that knows Pi digits by heart and is not interested in sexual relationships. What he wants is to leave a legacy. He is depicted as a nerd, but they take time to humanize him by talking about his childhood.

Corresponding images: Ryan teaching and writing down physics formulas, using a giant telescope, and a family moment with his grandparents.



Fig. 12. Ryan. *The Guardian*, StateLess Media. 2015. *If I Die On Mars*.

²⁵ *If I Die On Mars*. 2015. Directed by E. Perkins, produced by P. Savodnik. *The Guardian* and StateLess Media. February 9. Available Online: <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/video/2015/feb/09/volunteers-first-manned-mission-mars-video>> (accessed April 8, 2018).

- Dina [Fig. 13]: an Iraqi woman, 29 years old, living in the United States. They do not mention what her job is, but she is very sportive. She thinks that because she already left her country once, she can leave Earth to Mars. She has already given up on everyone and everything. She is depicted as a marginal figure, who does not care about love.

Corresponding images: Dina in a big city near the ocean, running, swimming and looking at the sunset. She is always alone.



Fig. 13. Dina. The Guardian, Stateless Media. 2015. *If I Die On Mars*.

- Jeremiah [Fig. 14]: a Mozambican young doctor, who thinks Earth is not doing well. He believes in starting a better humanity on Mars but may not go if he finds love on Earth. He is depicted as an idealist and a believer.

Corresponding images: Jeremiah in the street or in café with his friends, and a family moment.



Fig. 14. Jeremiah. The Guardian and StateLess Media. 2015. *If I Die On Mars*.

This video does not explain why they specifically chose these three figures: a nerd, a loner, and an idealist; but I would guess it is linked to the journalist's definition of "craziness". The choice of images is not particularly subtle, consisting of sky time-lapse pictures and dramatic landscapes. The music is emotional, like the tone of the questions. Even if the participants are depicted as strange, they are mostly respected. The journalist focuses his story on three points: their reasons, their relation to sex and love, and their feelings about dying on Mars. The candidates' answers give me the feeling that their current life is not offering them enough. They want more: Ryan wants to be remembered, Dina wants to escape the "normal" schema of life

(more specifically the “wife with children” narrative), and Jeremiah wants a better future. They strive for visibility, but they look for an escape route as well, which seems easier for them than trying to change society.²⁶

Ryan is the only one still in the competition, and he happens to be the person among the three candidates that corresponds the most to the previous NASA/Mars One representative.²⁷ Very intelligent, he is also actively promoting the project by participating in conferences, school speeches, and interviews. He belongs to the good community to start with since he is a male scientist from Europe and speaks English. On the other hand, the first sequence in which Jeremiah makes his entry shows people laughing when he announces that he wants to be part of the mission. Society still seems far from the day it will take a Mozambican candidature seriously. Dina is the most surprising figure and gave me a pause for thought. She raises a very interesting point: the similarities between the status of refugees and Mars explorers’ future conditions.

THE SPACE TRAVELERS MEET THE *HOMO SACER*

Dina had to leave Iraq because she was unhappy there, struggling with the societal norms and “rules over her woman’s body”.²⁸ The video does not really expand on the conditions of her immigration, but she apparently suffered enough to leave her whole family and culture behind. She affirms that this could be her strength in the Mars One project since she has already cut all her emotional bonds and renounced her citizens’ rights in the past. Her argument can be highlighted by a comparison with Giorgio Agamben’s *homo sacer*.

Agamben elaborates the figure of the *homo sacer* in his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998). The *homo sacer* (Latin for “sacred man”) comes from ancient Roman law. It refers to a person that has been banned from society and can be killed without repercussion. It is considered as bare life, the animal life (*zoe*) distinct from the political life (*bios*). Agamben examines how this status still applies in the current states. Some human beings are beyond the reach of national citizenship laws and international human rights, because they live or are kept in refugees’ camps, in prison, or are *sans-papier*. However, in contemporary societies, it becomes more and more complicated to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the nation-state anymore. Agamben, developing on how the refugee status alters the narrative suggesting that “birth immediately become nation” states “the novelty of

²⁶ I use the word ‘visibility’ as developed by Natalie Heinich (2012), who presents it as a Maussian’s “total social fact,” influencing all the layers of the society.

²⁷ <<https://community.mars-one.com/profile/349bbeee-5d8f-4869-bf21-f6770a0fa49f>> (accessed December 12, 2017)

²⁸ This is her choice of words: *If I Die On Mars*, The Guardian and StateLess Media, 9 February 2015.

our era, which threatens the very foundations of the nation-state, is that growing portions of humanity can no longer be represented within it” (1995, 117-118). As the number of refugees rises, the *homo sacer* is less and less an exception. For Agamben, this observation should force the nation-states to question the validity of their definitions of borders and territory. They could even turn into “extraterritorialities,” but space conquest offers an excuse to avoid this difficult question.

Another point is raised in *If I die on Mars*, when the interviewer questions Dina about her sexuality, pretending that there will be no sex on Mars. Besides the quite puritan vision of society that seems to be awaiting future colonizers of Mars, this also recalls her reason for leaving her former country. Dina does not want to become a mother whose purpose is to give birth. Maybe, she does not want to participate in the narrative associating birth and nation. On Mars, sexuality will disappear, as will all the other differences that do not allow humanity to become a perfect unity. To this idea that seems unachievable on Earth, she answers that she can take care of herself and that she is ready for the sacrifice. She also states that where she dies does not really matter. Dying on Mars would be an accomplishment.

In this sense, a refugee is not exactly in the same position as a space traveler. In Agamben’s words, if the *homo sacer* can be killed with impunity, it cannot be sacrificed. There is the question of choice, even if I feel some of Mars One applicants may think they do not have a choice. Finding someplace for your own safety is not the same as deliberately choosing the path where you will die far away from home. The space travelers can win something bigger than life – the recognition of their importance for society.

Nevertheless, their future political status is blurry. They are in “zones of indistinction” that isolate them from their previous communities. Anthony Downey describes Agamben’s “zone of indistinction” as a place “where the dividing line between citizen and outlaw, legality and illegality, law and violence and ultimately life and death are strategically and at times fatally blurred” (2009, 112). Even if this zone is not deliberately created, as in the case of refugees, this is probably one of the biggest challenges of living in outer space. It is difficult to predict how people will react once isolated in a context where the media is their last connection with their communities. Once in space, the candidates would be on the margins of the world. If anything happens, they would be, literally, beyond the reach of any international authorities, left without sovereign power to protect or punish them. Astronaut and *homo sacer* have nothing in common at first glance but may be associated in the future.

CONCLUSION

The project Mars One may very well never happen. They keep pushing back their schedule and some people from the inside have started expressing their worries about Bas Landsdorp's way of managing money and people (Medium, 2015). Either way, this project is representative of how some people seem to think it would be better to start over on another planet instead of dealing with the situation on Earth. These three candidates of the Mars One project could be given huge representative power and they know it. When considering how they present themselves, they talked about being an example, being a hero, being part of history. They all wish to represent the largest community on Earth: humanity. They relate to the NASA and Soviet Union astronauts in the 1960s. Like Neil Armstrong, they hope to say: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind". Because humanity is impossible to represent, role models are created, important figures to represent everyone. These representatives that are supposed to create a feeling of belonging remain produced by a dominant vision, which pretends to erase the borders it creates itself. This vision sells a narrative of a perfect humanity elsewhere where all the crimes and inequalities it is responsible for would disappear and be redeemed. To do so, a sacrifice is necessary. The Mars pioneers may be one of these representatives, but when the only thing left to them will be their humanity, what will come out of it? The Mars conquest narrative adds an escape route to human history, a place to start again. For some people, it brings hope and a feeling of belonging. However, by apparently destroying the last border, they may discover, instead of a better humanity, the *homo sacer* reality and its isolation in cold, dark space.

REFERENCES

- Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University.
- Agamben, G. 1995. "We Refugees". *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures*, 49 (2), pp.114-119.
- Al-Rodhan and Nayef R. F. 2012. *Meta-Geopolitics of Outer Space, An Analysis of Space Power, Security and Governance*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Après Babel, Traduire*, exhibition curated by Barbara Cassin, Mucem, Marseille, from December 14, 2016 to March 20, 2017.
- Bal, Mieke. 2003. "Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture". *Journal of Visual Culture* 2 (5): 5-32. <http://vcu.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/2/1/5> (accessed September 24, 2016).
- Butler, Judith. 2015. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- De Middel, Cristina. "The Afonauts." LaDeMiddel. <http://www.lademiddel.com/the-afonauts-1.html> (accessed June 14, 2018).
- Downey, Anthony. 2009 "Zones of Indistinction: Giorgio Agamben's 'Bare Life' and the Politics of Aesthetics". *Third Text*, 23(2):109-25.
- Dyer, Richard. 1997. *White*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Eco, Umberto. 1995. *The Search of the Perfect Language*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Eshbach, Brad. 2014. How many people are in space right now. <http://www.howmanypeopleareinspace.com/> (accessed April 4, 2018).
- Fisher, Jean. 2008. "Where here is elsewhere". In Kamal Boullata (ed.), *Belonging and Globalisation: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture*, 61-75. London, San Francisco, & Beirut: Saqi.
- Garcia dos Santos, Laymert. 2008. "Belonging and Not Belonging". In Kamal Boullata (ed.), *Belonging and Globalisation: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture*, 49-61. London, San Francisco, & Beirut: Saqi.
- Hall, Stuart. 2006. "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power". In Maaka Roger and Anderson Chris (eds.), *The Indigenous Experience: Global Perspectives*, 185-227. Toronto, Canadian Scholars Press.
- Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective". *Feminist Studies*, 14 (3): 575-99.
- Heinich, Natalie. 2012. *De la Visibilité, Excellence et Singularité en Régime Médiatique*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Held, David, McGrew, Anthony, Goldblatt, David, and Perraton, Jonathan. 1999. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, and Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- If I Die On Mars*. 2015. Directed by Ed Perkins, produced by Peter Savodnik. The Guardian and StateLess Media. February 9. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/video/2015/feb/09/volunteers-first-manned-mission-mars-video> (accessed April 8, 2018).
- Keep, Elmo. 2015. "Mars One Finalist Explains Exactly How It's Ripping Off Supporters". Medium, March 16. <https://medium.com/matter/mars-one-insider-quits-dangerously-flawed-project-2dfef95217d3#.xb4r01kx1>.
- Lebanese Rocket Society*. 2012. Directed by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige. France: Urban Distribution.
- Mars One. 2013. <https://www.mars-one.com/> (accessed June 14, 2018).
- Maurer, Eva, Richers, Julia, Rùthers Monica and Scheide, Carmen (ed.) 2011. *Soviet Space Culture, Cosmic Enthusiasm in Socialist Societies*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- NASA. Golden Record. <http://goldenrecord.org/#discus-aureus> (accessed June 10, 2018).

- Quelvennec, Lena. 2013. *I Will Build My Own Rocket*. YouTube Video. Geneva: HEAD.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_yWZDbmhZQ (accessed June 10, 2018).
- Steyerl, Hito. 2011. "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective". *E-Flux Journal*, 24.
<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/24/67860/in-free-fall-a-thought-experiment-on-vertical-perspective/> (accessed October 10, 2016).
- Williams, Miriam F. 2012. "Reimagining NASA, A Cultural and Visual Analysis of the U.S. Space program". *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 26 (3): 368- 389.
Available online: <http://jbt.sagepub.com/content/26/3/388> (accessed January 9, 2017).