



**BIBLIOTECA “MARIO GATTULLO”  
DEL DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE DELL’EDUCAZIONE  
ALMA MATER STUDIORUM - UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA**

We were extremely sad to learn about the passing of the photographer Yannis Behrakis, on 2 March 2019.

We wish to thank him for his work and his great involvement with all those forced to flee from their own country and their loved ones as a consequence of wars and conflicts.

Paraphrasing his own words, we wish to thank him for being “the voice of the persecuted and at the same time the eyes of a global audience; through his images and his reports, nobody can say ‘I did not know’”.

We do not wish to celebrate him only as an important photographer, but also as an extraordinary person. His generosity, after we asked him to set up our exhibition, was really boundless and it means even more to us considering the devastating illness he was fighting against – which we were not aware of.

We feel bound to say that his outlook on the world, as seen through his invaluable and immense photographic work, has always allowed him to show “the truth” of the real situations he personally experienced, even at the risk of his own life; he was also able to embody a kind of respect, a compassion which was never intrusive towards the people and the stories he was telling. Some of his photos – which are and always will be icons of our own times – are real masterpieces from a strictly photographic-aesthetic point of view, but at the same time free from any forced showmanship, or any exploitation of human pain. They are reality shots, true shots, compelling us to understand, to open our eyes, to avoid averting our gaze and missing the worth of a human being or the momentous paths of hope and despair which are being trodden in so many parts of the world, right up to “our doorstep”.

In his exhibition, we were particularly touched and moved by the way he represents childhood. In nearly all the pictures, children are present, though they may be almost invisible. This is why it was so important for us to combine the exhibition with the conference on “Migrating Childhood: understanding, telling, welcoming”, which took place in our Department on 13 February 2019.

We wish to highlight just two shots, both about hope. The first one shows a laughing little girl having fun as she’s being thrown up in the air, in a playful improvised game, by two men, possibly the father and an uncle, two older brothers, in a refugee camp. A playful moment based on virtually nothing but the mere strength of arms and charms.

The second one is certainly set to become an icon of our times, and it is the most emblematic image of our exhibition. A father is walking across the border bridge between the Republic of Macedonia and Greece, his daughter in his arms.

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He is kissing her. The strength in his eyes is inexpressible. It conveys the satisfaction of having carried her “to a safe place”, with infinite care; there, we see all the “fatherhood” of a man who, although shattered, worn out, clothed in a cloak made from a black rubbish liner, looks like – as others have said – the most invincible of all superheroes. The child is facing backwards, looking at her past, the road travelled, her origins, her memories, reserving the right not to see all this demolished and annulled in her place of arrival. The father is looking at the girl who is his future, and he’s also looking forward, towards a new life, a new beginning. He’s holding her tightly in his arms, but we are also reminded of the enormous weariness of those arms. A student shared her incredibly beautiful impressions: “You almost feel you want to run towards them, and say to this father “Leave her with me” – exactly as you do with children and parents you know well – “leave her with me, she’s in good hands, now you can rest from your long journey”.

We want to thank Yanni Behrakis for all this, for his immense sensitivity and his work.

*Buon viaggio, dear Yannis...*

The Director of the Department of Education of Bologna University

The exhibition curators

The students, researchers, teachers and lecturers of the Department of Education

The “Mario Gattullo” departmental Library of the Department of Education

The Bologna University Alma Mater Foundation