Borders Cuts Images

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Sommario

A look from outside
Foreign photographers in Palermo between the 19th and the 20th century

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During the first half of the 19th century the introduction of photography was far from being only a matter of technology. Photography took its first steps in a changing political and social context, strongly marked by the concept of progress, and was linked to very different fields – such as arts, sciences, communication – influencing the way people were experiencing the world, other cultures and themselves.

In 1839, when the daguerreotype was presented to the world, Italy was still a patchwork of smaller independent states: in the north, the Kingdom of Sardinia included the island itself, Liguria and Piedmont, while the Austrian-Hapsburg dominated Venice, Lombardy and Tuscany, as well as the cities of Parma and Modena; Rome and the central part of the peninsula constituted the Papal states, and in Southern Italy and Sicily, Bourbons ruled the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Although divided and evolving at different speeds, each part of the country was moving towards the innovation of its infrastructures and transportation, and this was starting to radically change the circulation of people, goods and information. During 1839, the first railway in Italy was inaugurated between Napoli and Portici, and the *Società italiana per il progresso delle scienze* organized in Pisa the first Congress of Italian Scientists, the first public meeting of men of science from the various states of the peninsula, gathered under the common attribute of 'Italians'. Nonetheless, the strong relationships among the different parts of Italy and other European countries – especially with France and Great Britain – made it very clear to the cultural, scientific, and political elite that there was a wide lag in the modernization and industrialization of the country. The awareness of not being able to compete with larger and stronger economic and productive systems, as well as the social discontent towards old political institutions,

first led to the revolutionary waves of 1820-21 and 1830, and inevitably played a role in developing an aspiration to national unity. As a large stream of literature outlines, the comparison among the different independent states, and their ties with other European countries had a great influence on the construction of national identity (De Seta 1982, 2014; Zannier 1997; Di Matteo 2008). Since the 17th century, Italy has been considered a unity from an artistic and cultural point of view, and as the cradle of Western civilization, became an essential learning ground for the education of young aristocrats and their courtiers.

Literary and artistic representation of the country, which those travelers had shaped during the Grand Tour, gradually contributed to composing Italy. These travelers, unfettered by the rivalry and the divisions that ravaged the country, developed an external gaze, which could convey a more complete picture of a land that in their mind was already spiritually united by religion and culture of humanism.

> È nello specchio del Grand Tour che l'Italia assume coscienza di sé: e alla formazione di tale coscienza il contributo maggiore lo portano proprio i viaggiatori stranieri attraverso la loro diretta esperienza [...]. Parallelamente si afferma il genere del vedutismo di interesse topografico: disegni, dipinti, incisioni eccetera fissano le immagini stereotipe di ogni città [...] si forma così un modo di guardare e di pensare il Paese Italia (It is in the mirror of the Grand Tour that Italy assumes self-consciousness: and the major contribution to the formation of this consciousness is brought by foreign travelers through their direct experience [...]. At the same time the genre of topographical painting develops: drawings, paintings, engravings, etcetera, fix the stereotypical images of each city [...] thus, a way of looking at and thinking about Italy is formed) (De Seta 2014, 35-36).

Until the mid 18th century, travelers were mainly coming from England, France, and Central Europe. They habitually started their itinerary from Genoa or Turin and then moved towards the most important cities of Northern and Central Italy, such as Florence, Bologna, Ferrara, Venice, and Rome, often concluding their journey in Naples and its surroundings. The south of Italy and Sicily became a part of the Italian travel itinerary only during the second half of the 18th century thanks to the discovery of its ancient ruins, as well as Johann J. Winckelmann's interest in ancient Greek

architecture: with the publication of the short essay *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* in 1755, he awakened a huge public interest for classical art and significantly influenced the formation of the neoclassical movement. Hence, in most cases the motivations behind travels began to change. They eventually lost their former remit of being a pedagogical tool for the young elite (De Spuches 2003, 158) and instead, became a means to physically and cognitively explore the world: during what has been defined as *viaggio di conoscenza* (journey of knowledge) travelers investigated, classified, listed, described, and catalogued the nature and the remains of classical culture (Berrino 2010, 366-367).

In this context, the opening towards Southern Italy and Sicily was part of a larger itinerary that also involved Greece and the Near East, researching particularly the roots of European civilization (De Seta 1982, 228). Then, towards the end of the 18th century, the drive for encyclopedic knowledge was slowly substituted by the emotional dimension of traveling, leaving more space to individual sensorial experience in the descriptions of the visited places. If we look at what has been published about Sicily during this century, it is possible to see this gradual evolution (Cometa 1999): only after a large number of antiquarians and archaeologists, such as Giuseppe Maria Pancrazi (Pancrazi 1752-53), and Jacques Philippe D'Orville (D'Orville 1764), wrote accurate essays on the ancient history of the island, the reason for traveling switched towards emotional experience of the journey. In addition, the attention focused on the symbiosis between the natural landscape and architecture, as expressed by early travel writers like Baron Johann Hermann von Riedesel (Riedesel 1771) and Patrick Brydone (Brydone 1773), who established the so-called "discovery" of Sicily during this century (Tedesco [1979] 2001, XXXIII). Clearly, this new interest that travelers and artists addressed to Sicily, and in particular to Greek Sicily, needs to be related to the rediscovery that Sicilians made of their own classical past. In 1758, for example, Ignazio Paternò Castello Prince of Biscari promoted the archeological excavations in Catania, opened there its *Museum*, and became an important reference point for travelers in Eastern Sicily by publishing one of the few local guides about the ancient island (Biscari 1721). In 1764, Lancellotto Castelli, the Prince of Torremuzza, initiated a series of archaeological researches in the western side of the island, aimed mainly at developing a Sicilian antiquities

catalogue (Fiorentini 2005, 20). All of the aforementioned experiences and travel accounts led to the foundation of a successful new route. However, with few local exceptions (Bova, Leanti 1761), the image of the island appears to be depicted mainly by foreign artists, like Richard Paine Knight, Jacob Philipp Hackert and Charles Gore (Dunker, Hackert 1782) and through a series of popular illustrated travel books, such as the *voyages pittoresques* of Abbé de Saint Non and Dominique Vivant-Denon, Henry Swinburne or Jean Houël (Saint Non 1785; Swinburne 1783; Houël 1782).

> I Siciliani infatti, per gran tempo e almeno fino al primo Ottocento non contribuirono sostanzialmente alla formazione di questo grande archivio figurativo (In fact, for a long time and at least until the early 19th century, Sicilians did not substantially contribute to the creation of this large visual archive) (Di Matteo 2008, IV, 9).

The accounts made by foreign travelers widened and promoted the image of Sicily during this period, like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe successfully did with his *Italienische Reise* (Goethe 1816-1817). However, the local society also played an important role in its building (Tedesco [1979] 2001, XIV). Because of the nearly complete absence of suitable accommodation facilities on the island, travelers were hosted and guided by local noble families and clergymen. Therefore, the image of Sicilian cities was clearly constructed through the encounters the European travelers had with the Sicilian elite (Iachello 2000, 43). The use of high society connections was a distinctive feature of the classical *Grand Tour*, which is conventionally considered to have ended with the Napoleonic wars, but remained as a long lasting tradition throughout the 19th century (De Seta 1982, 260). Yet, the condition of accommodation facilities and transportation in Sicily did not evolve until the middle of the 19th century: the Palermo-Agrigento was the first railway line planned and its sections were progressively inaugurated between 1863 and 1876, but the completion of the Sicilian network was completed only during the last decades of the century (Canciullo 2016). Therefore, making the journey by sea remained the preferred way to visit the island. This was probably one of the reasons behind the establishment of a coastal itinerary which included Agrigento, Catania, Messina, Palermo, and Syracuse.

At the beginning of the 19th century, many travelers were inspired by the increasing travel literature about Sicily and decided to discover this exotic *terra di confine* (Maffioli 1999, 23). By sharing their experience, they were essential for the development of a series of literary and iconographic stereotypes, which resulted from the affirmation of the neoclassical vision and the first development of the Romantic ideology (Kanceff 1989). Using these literature, it is currently possible to track the main points of interest of that time and link them to the tastes and fashions of the European elite of that time. Besides the attraction to its classical antiquities and 'sublime' nature, a renewed interest in medieval culture led travelers also to explore churches, convents, and religious festivals. To be specific, Annunziata Berrino, in her studies on tourism history (Berrino 2010, 2011, 2016) defines the early 19th century tours of Italy, *viaggi di diporto*. Even if the itineraries and the interests are similar to the 18th century knowledge journey, the experience it is not anymore limited to aristocracy, the interest toward antiquities starts to be influenced by the romantic gaze and alternates moments of knowledge to others of escape and emotion. As a transitional phase between *Grand Tour* and organized tours, it can be considered a preparatory stage to the organized tourism that developed in Italy after the 1860s.

As a large body of literature suggests, the discovery and diffusion of photography in Sicily followed the same itineraries as the last century, and gradually attracted itinerant daguerrotypists to these places (Mirisola, Di Dio 2002; Mirisola 2008; Hannavy 2008, 753). In early 1840, soon after a public demonstration of this new process by an unknown French photographer took place in Palermo, Romualdo Trigona, prince of Sant'Elia, acquired a camera, a set of plates, Daguerre's manual, and on the 19th January 1840 took the first known daguerrotype of the city. Some years later, the local newspaper *L' occhio: giornale di scienze, amena letteratura, e belle arti* (16.05.1943 issue) advertized the temporary daguerreotype cabinet of Mr. C. Fischer, hosted by the prince of Cutò in his palace until the 20th of the month. According to the sources, the names of a few local photographers who were active in Palermo during the 1840s, such as Stefano Bugliarelli and Giuseppe La Barbera, are known. However, none of their daguerreotypes or salted paper prints from calotype has been uncovered until now (Morello 1999, 13-14). This means also that, between 1840 and 1860, the vast majority of the photographs of

Sicily were taken by foreign travelers. These travelers were likely envisaging the new media to record their experience, a role previously attributed to drawing, engraving, and painting. Adventurers, scholars, and architects, such as George W. Bridges, Alfred Nicolas Normand, and some other pioneers of travel photography (Bouqueret, Livi 1989), followed the itineraries and the visual tradition built between the 18th and the beginning of 19th century, and reached Sicily to capture the monuments and the landscape of the island that had fascinated so many. Therefore, as this essay aims to show, it is not surprising to see how much the long tradition of *vedute* affected photography, particularly its choice of subjects, vantage points, and framing of cities (Bonetti, Maffioli 2003, 31-40). Also the technical limitations of the new invention conditioned this choice: buildings, works of art, and landscape topography, as static objects, became the favorite subjects for the early photographers, due to limitations in technology, such as the necessity for long exposures (Watson 1980, IX). At the end of the 1850s, a group of French photographers established their studio in Palermo including, among others, Victor and Edouard Laisné and Eugène Sevaistre. They became witness to the changes the city went through during the revolutionary events which led to the unification of Italy in 1861 (Morello 1999, 15).

When photography was introduced in Sicily, the island was going through radical changes in the administrative system, inspired from the English state model: during Napoleonic wars, Great Britain elected Sicily as its stronghold in the Mediterranean sea, establishing a political, cultural, and commercial influence that lasted during the whole century, especially in the western side of the island. Even though this "anglomania" (Russo [1979] 2001, XXXVI) had an upper hand in Sicilian society, the French revolutionary ideas which were changing the whole Europe surely had an impact on it. These changes, directly or indirectly, were delegitimizing the noble elite and favoring the middle class (Iachello 2003). After the Bourbon restoration and the formation of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies in 1816, the centralization of power in Naples and the severe repression increased the level of frustration among all Sicilian social classes, and this led to the 1820 and 1848 revolution, anticipating and opening the door to the process of unification with the rest of the country (Riall 2003, 33).

In 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi's Expedition of the Thousand put Sicily under the spotlight. The interest for the island grew among the travelers in Europe, and Sicily was more and more reported on national and international press. The correspondents were sent to Palermo from the newspapers of the entire Europe and the United States, among others the *London Daily News*, the *Illustrated London News* and the *Times* (Pizzo 2011, 32). The unification brought new investments in infrastructures, which expanded the possibilities of traveling outside the circle of scholars, and influenced also the number of professional photographers visiting the island. To respond to the ever-increasing demand of souvenirs and the needs of the newly formed country, photographers started to build a catalogue of views illustrating the main cities of the country and developing a series of iconographic types that contributed to strengthening national identity (Pizzo 2011; Maffioli 2009). Regardless of these events and the multiplication of cultural actors, it is ironic to see how photography in Sicily, and especially in Palermo, remained under strong foreign influence during the second half of the 19th century. On the one hand, the international travelers were the principal audience of souvenir photography – as national travel to Sicily was still uncommon (Berrino 2011, 28). On the other hand, between the 1860s-1870s, the first ateliers of local photographers, such as Giuseppe Incorpora, the Fratelli Tagliarini, and Eugenio Interguglielmi (Bajamonte, Lo Dico, Troisi 2007, 18), which slowly entered the market, practiced essentially portrait photography. Therefore, the most common images of the city and its monuments were taken and distributed by Eugène Sevaistre, Gustave Eugène Chauffourier, Giorgio Sommer, Robert Rive, and some larger studios set up outside the island, like Alinari in Florence (Maffioli 2017). As the same Incorpora explained during his relation at the *Il Congresso fotografico Italiano* (1899), the development of local photographic industry was stagnating and was widely depending on foreign purchase:

> La gente del luogo non ama in generale acquistare collezioni. Sono forestieri, o per lo meno i non isolani, che ne fanno acquisto. [...] Di certo le fotografie dei monumenti di Sicilia son più largamente vendute da stabilimenti fotografici del continente, che mandano qui a fare impressionare i loro fototipi (The locals do not generally like to buy collections. It is the foreigners, or at least people coming from outside the island, who buy them. [...] Certainly the photographs of the monuments of Sicily are more widely

sold by photographic establishments of the continent which send here their
photo types to have them impressed) (Incorpora 1899).

During the 1880s, the definitive recognition of the gelatin silver process
over the collodion allowed professionals to work more easily on an
increasingly industrial scale, and amateurs to practice photography. The
"massification" of the photographic medium (Zannier [1988] 2007, 72)
involved more cultural actors, increased the level of production and, more
generally, its success. These changes, marked by a stereotyping process in
the representation of the cities (Vinardi, 2011), are especially evident in
the popular travel boxed sets developed at the beginning of 20th century
by stereoscopic companies in order to answer the demands of a broader
public to travel the world in a more comfortable (and affordable) way
(Parmeggiani 2016, 35). This persistence of a foreign gaze over Italian
cities' monuments and landscapes led to the choice of sources in this
article. It is for the same motivation that the pictures of the monumental,
archaeological, and historical-artistic heritage of Palermo produced by
foreign photographers were placed at the center of this study. Drawing on
Palermo as a case study for investigating the cultural, social, political, and
commercial trends on regional and national level, in this article we want to
discuss the process of construction of photographic *topoi* in the 19th and
the early 20th centuries in relation with the previous visual tradition, and
try to understand how the vision of photographers from different cultural
backgrounds influenced the way in which the city was pictured. Starting
from a catalogue of photographs of Palermo made by foreigners, hereby
compiled from local, national, and international photographic archives, in
order to have a representative list of materials produced between 1839
and 1914, this work offers, in addition to the visual comparison of the
sources, a comparative analysis of a set of maps that locate, first the
subjects illustrated in the most common *voyages pittoresques* and in
essays on Sicilian architecture published until 1840s, then the subjects
depicted by those photographers, and finally, the places of interest
pointed out in a popular travel guide in the second half of the 19th century
(Baedeker 1867). This comparison highlights the relationship of the choice
of subjects made by these photographers, the locations illustrated in
voyages pittoresques, the points of interest in travel guides and the urban
evolution of the city.

Framing Palermo: the influence of the painting and engraving tradition in travel photography

In the 1840s, the first sets of images of the Italian artistic heritage made by daguerreotypists demonstrate the best known application of this new technology, the documentation of monuments and topographic views. As a perfect convergence between arts and sciences, these pictures inherited their characteristics from the 18th century figurative tradition of *vedute*, but introduced the objectivity of vision, which was a new factor, typical of the positivist culture developed at the beginning of the 19th century (Bonetti, Maffioli 2003, 31). Similar encyclopedic and scientific motivations, moving artists in the representation of nature, can be found in the first publications illustrated by engravings from daguerreotype views, such as *Les Excursions Daguerriennes* (Lerebours 1840-1842) and the *Vues d'italie d'après le daguerréotype* published by Ferdinando Artaria e Figlio between 1840 and 1847. The translation of daguerreotypes into printable plates allowed their reproducibility on a larger scale and strengthened the bond between the newborn photography and the engraving tradition. However, the Sicilian heritage never appeared in these publications, and only a few of anonymous daguerreotypes taken on the island are known today. Yet, the early travelers, mostly working with paper negative, still considered the monuments of Sicily as fine subjects (Chazal 2010). Following the past travel itineraries and trends that we already mentioned (De Seta 1982, 228), they visited Sicily between 1840s and 1860s mostly as a layover in their journey to discover the ancient civilizations around the Mediterranean sea.

The early travelers were mostly foreign scholars that used photography to collect evidence for their research on archeology, natural science or architecture. Sharing a common cultural background, those photographers relied on similar references in terms of travel literature, practical guides, and illustrated books (Miraglia 2009). The *voyages pittoresques* illustrations and the landscape painting tradition shaped the image they had of Italy before reaching the destination, and thus influenced their way of taking photographs. In the case of Sicily, it is striking how the work produced from the 1700s to the 1850s by engravers and painters, such as those by Jean Louis Desprez, the Comte Louis Nicolas Philippe Auguste De Forbin, Franco Zerilli or Giovan Battista Lusieri, inspired subjects and

vantage points for the first photographers visiting the island (Di Benedetto 2009).

The illustrations taken into account [Fig. 1], together with the aforementioned publications of Saint Non, Vivant-Denon, Houël and Swinburne, were a part of some of the most common *voyages pittoresques* published between 18th and 19th century. These include, among others, *Voyage Pittoresque de Sicile* (1822-24) by Jean-Frédéric D'Ostervald (inspired by the drawings that the Comte De Forbin made in Sicily around 1820), *Sicilian Scenery* (1823) by Peter DeWint and William Light, *Italie pittoresque...* (1836) by Jacques Marquet de Montbreton, baron de Norvins, and the illustrated essays on Sicilian architecture that showed the increased interest in Norman heritage, like Jacob I. Hittorff and Ludwig Zanth's *Architecture moderne de la Sicile* (1835) [1] and Henry Gally Knight's *Saracenic and Norman Remains to illustrate the 'Normans in Sicily'* (1840). In addition, it is also important to take into account also *Lo stato presente della Sicilia* (1761), which was a very well-known illustrated book about Sicily written by the royal historian Angelo Leanti and illustrated by Antonino Bova, because it was probably inspired (or commissioned for) the work in twenty-four volumes of Thomas Salmon, *Modern history or, the present state of all nations* (1739-1761) which was translated into French, Italian, Dutch, and German (Di Matteo 2008; Cometa 1999; Garnero Morena 1997; Tuzet 1945, [1955] 1995). A comparison between the abovementioned imagery and the first photographs made by foreign travelers during the second half of 19th century of Palermo suggest how these followed the canonical cuts and frames used in printing tradition, and were aligned in terms of selection of subjects (Barbera Azzarello 2008; Barbera Azzarello, Ferrara 2017).

1a | Subjects of Palermo and its surroundings illustrated in *Voyages pittoresques* published between 18th and 19th century by Bova, Leanti 1761; Houël 1782; Swinburne 1783; DeWint Light 1823; Hittorff, Zanth 1835; De Norvins 1836; Gally Knight 1840; Saint Non 1785; D'Ostervald 1822-1824 (created by the author with GoogleMyMaps 2020).

1b | Subjects of Palermo and its surroundings photographed by G. Bridges, A. Normand, G. De Rumine, L. Vignes, J.A. Lorent from 1840s to 1860s (created by the author with GoogleMyMaps 2020).

Coming twice to Sicily between 1846 and 1847, the English reverend George Wilson Bridges visited Palermo on different occasions, as a part of a longer tour revolving around Southern Europe and Near East. The main goal for the journey (from 1846 to 1853) was to take photographs and prepare an English version of the *Excursions daguerriennes*, thus to extensively document the great ancient civilizations that once prospered on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea [2] (Brettel 1984; Lassam, Gray 1988; Militello 2018; Taylor, Schaaf 2007; Schaaf 2015-2020). Only a few of his photographs of Palermo are still extant today. As Bridges explains in some of the letters he sent to William Henry Fox Talbot – the father of the calotype that taught him the photographic process he invented, under the condition of a commercial exploitation of the photos the reverend collected abroad (Militello 2018, 95) – he decided not to bring its camera to his first visit to Palermo because of some technical problems with the photographic paper and the lack in chemicals (Schaaf 1999-2020, n. 5871, Malta, 2 February 1847).

Even later, the want for the paper supply and frequent failures in the developing process (Schaaf 1999-2020, n. 5915, Malta, 4 April 1847) hindered Bridges original project: "There is a building at Palermo I am anxious to take, The old Convent where originated the 'Sicilian vesper?' [...]. There are also some fine Saracenic remains thereabouts & I shall have, for a companion, one" (Schaaf 1999-2020, n. 5840, Malta, 2 January 1847). In his correspondence we can also see how enthusiastic is the response of Sicilians towards the new technology: "The monks [of the Benedictine Convent at Catania] are quite alive to their promised treat of copies" (Schaaf 1999-2020, n. 5840); "A Baron Borgia, *Intendente* of Sicily, will probably apply for your License & instructions" (Schaaf 1999-2020, n. 5871). Despite the technical challenges, we still have a number of images taken by Bridge: a view of the city from the slopes of Monte Pellegrino, the cathedral, a portrait of two people in front of a palm tree, probably taken in the Orto Botanico and a view of the Marina taken from Palazzo Butera, which includes Porta Felice and Monte Pellegrino. This last picture (see *Fondazione Alinari per la Fotografia*, online collection, inv. FVQ-F-040166-0000) follows a well established *topos* of the seafront promenade of the city and the increasingly iconic mountain embracing the sea, which is also present in the works of H. Swinburne, D'Ostervald, DeWint, and William Light.

Another emblematic subject was the cathedral, a magnificent building lying along the main road of the city (named Cassaro, then from the late 16th century Via Toledo and, after 1860, Via Vittorio Emanuele) already present in most of the voyages and essays on Norman architecture. Photographed also by Gabriel De Rumine and Alfred Nicolas Normand it later became a cornerstone subject of the post-unification ateliers (see Sevaistre and Rive [Fig. 5b, 5a]). Normand, an architect pensionnaire of the French Academy in Rome between 1847 and 1851, was conscious of the value of photography in his architectural studies when he arrived in Sicily to find an ideal subject for his restoration project (Ducros 2013, 876, letter 20), as he already based his essays on architectural restoration of Pompeii and the Imperial Fora on the calotypes he realized during his educational tours around Italy. The French architect used a more scientific approach closer to the earlier tradition of planimetrics, a system for the measurement of the buildings, to document the Cathedral of Palermo. He photographed the building parallel to his long axis, while focusing on

specific sections of the church to avoid distortions and converging lines (those calotypes are part of Paris *Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine* collection, inv. NRM00076-NRM00080, see also Dercks 2019, 34).

2a | Vauzelle (from C.te De Forbin sketch), *Vue de l'église de Santa Maria della Catena à Palerme*, Print in J.F. D'Ostervald, *Voyage pittoresque en Sicile*, Paris 1822-1824.
2b | G. De Rumine, *Palerme, église de Santa Maria la Catana*, Albumen print, 1858-59, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet Estampes et photographie, n. FRBNF45856809 (photo by the author).
2c | L. Vignes, *Dans la rue de Tolede à Palerme*, Salt paper print, 1860, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet Estampes et photographie, n. FRBNF41460340 (source Gallica.bnf.fr/ Bibliothèque Nationale de France).
2d | G. Incorpora, *55 Palermo, Chiesa della Catena*, Albumen print, 1870s-1880s, private collection (photo by the author).

Along the Cassaro, the road stretching from the seafront to the Royal Palace, the Church of Santa Maria della Catena was another favorite subject of 18th century travelers, showing the renewed interest in medieval culture. [Fig. 2] shows the building slightly to the right of the facade mimicking the same point of view used in D'Ostervald's *Voyage* [Fig. 2a], captured by the Russian aristocrat, engineer, and photographer Prince Gabriel Wassiliewitch De Rumine [Fig. 2b] in 1859 (Bouqueret Livi 1989; Durand 2015) and by the French Navy officer Louis Vignes [Fig. 2c], that took some pictures of Palermo in July 1860 after the clashes between the Garibaldian troops and the Bourbon navy, as he was stationed on the Donnawerth during the revolution (Aubenas Roubert 2010; Durand 2015). The same angle has repeatedly been preferred by following photographers, and entered the collection of later local photographers like Incorpora [Fig. 2d]. Rumine's interior pictures of the Cathedral of Monreale (stored at *Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet Estampes et Photographies*, catalogue n. FRBNF40467345, see for example n. FRBNF45853458) and the photographs the German scientist and archaeologist Jakob August Lorent (1813-1884) took in Palermo and Monreale in 1865 (stored at the Württembergische Landesbibliothek of Stuttgart, SWB-Katalog n.1486423183) similarly followed the development of studies around Norman arts. Both photographers were likely informed about the work of Hittorff, Zanth, and Gally Knight, as many of their pictures emulated its illustrations and followed a similar itinerary. For what I think it is more than a coincidence, for example, Lorent introduced in his photographs of the Cubula (Bennici 2017, 19, n. 252) and the Cuba palace (Bennici 2017, 19, n. 253) some human figures in the exact same positions depicted by Gally Knight [3]. To further clarify the early travel photographers' path and their vision of 'objective' eye, both of which followed *voyages pittoresques* of a century earlier, I have developed two maps. The first highlights the subjects of Palermo and surroundings that were included in the aforementioned illustrated books and *voyages pittoresques* [Fig. 1a]. The second one shows the locations of Bridges, Normand, De Rumine, Vignes, and Lorent pictures, taken between 1840 and 1860 [Fig. 1b]. When the two maps overlaid, it is noticeable that in both the main focus of the subjects lies mostly on the seafront, along the Cassaro (the main thoroughfare along which were located the principal churches and palaces), piazzas and main gates (Porta Nuova and Porta Felice). These locations identify and celebrate the places of religious and

political power while emphasizing the particular relationship that links the city with the sea.

After the revolution: from travel photography to commercial photography

3 | *Le couvent de Santa-Catarina après le bombardement à Palerme*, engraving from a photograph taken by Billardet & Laisné, printed in "Le Monde illustré" 4/169, 7.7.1860,13 (source Gallica.bnf.fr/ Bibliothèque Nationale de France).

During the 19th century, Palermo was the scene of a number of revolutionary events and major changes in the urban layout that would lead to the expansion of the city to the north. After the uprising of 1848, the short-lived revolutionary parliament that last until 1849 (Rial 2003), decided to extend Via Maqueda (the road that crossed Cassaro street in the Quattro Canti place, dividing the old city center into 4 parts) towards Monte Pellegrino, designing Viale della Libertà outside the original city walls. Between Italian unification in 1860 and the end of the century, this development and the opening of Via Roma – an intervention conceived in 1885 as a part of the Giarrusso urban plan and realized between 1895-1920, that slashed the old town in order to connect the train station that was inaugurated in 1886 to the port and the new northern residential areas – meant a gradual shift of bourgeois elite from the crowded and unhealthy old city center to the free and natural spaces available along the new roads.

Following the will of Palermo's entrepreneurial middle class, the crowning achievement of this new city center was the construction of the theaters, Politeama and Massimo, which were inaugurated in 1874 and 1897, respectively, and the hosting of the National Exhibition held in 1891-1892 (De Seta, Di Mauro 2002). A second major source of influence on photography, besides the urban and social evolution during that time in Palermo, was the huge change in the political system due to the Unification of Italy in 1861. The occurrence of such unique events at the heart of Europe made the island the center of attraction for journalists and

photographers from all over the country and the Western World (Pizzo 2011, 32).

The Revolution of Palermo, which saw Garibaldi troops and the Bourbon army clash between May and June 1860, was documented by the well-known Gustave Le Gray (1820-1848) [4] and by other French photographers settled on the island in the middle of 1850s to escape the fierce competition in their country (McCauley 1994), such as Victor Edouard Laisné and Billardet who were correspondents for the newspaper *Le Monde illustré*, and Eugène Louis Sevaistre, who settled in Palermo during 1858 (Bajamonte, Lo Dico, Troisi 2006 & 2007). Their images of a war-torn Palermo can be considered among first photo-reportages, but some of these survived only as newspaper illustrations, like the ones by Laisné & Billardet that appeared in *Le Monde Illustré*, on the 7th and the 14th July 1860 [Fig. 3].

Both Le Gray's portraits of Garibaldi and his generals and Sevaistre's stereoscopic series *Révolution de Palerme* [5] taken between May-June 1860 immediately became famous as reproductions for illustrated books celebrating the deeds of the general and the Thousand, such as with the *Album storico-artistico: Garibaldi nelle Due Sicilie* published by the Fratelli Terzaghi in Milan (La Duca [1882] 1982). Their idea behind the project was to create a popular and common 'monument' of the historical moment. The diffusion of this kind of publications and prints started the constitution of the iconographic mythology of the Risorgimento and showed the potential of photography as a propaganda tool. At that time, Sicily saw a proliferation of its images beyond the national boundaries. In France, where the events in Italy were followed closely, and publishers such as *Gaudin Frères* commercialized a large stereoscopic collection about Sicily, advertizing them on the weekly journal *La Lumière – Revue de photographie* from June 1860 onwards (Lacan 1860). Founded in 1842 by Marc-Antoine and Pierre Ignace Alexis Gaudin, then joined by their brother Charles Jacques Emmanuel in 1854, *Gaudin Frères* was one of the oldest Parisian company selling photographic materials and daguerreotypes. The Gaudin brothers soon became successful publishers of stereoscopic collections from around the world. For their series they used to acquire images from different photographers but, as it was common at that time, the names of the authors remain mostly unknown (Durand 2015; Fanelli

2020). Sevaistre or Claude Grillet, another French photographer who owned a studio in Naples, probably took the majority of the Sicilian pictures sold by *Gaudin Frères* (Fanelli 2020; Bennici 2015a, 2015b).
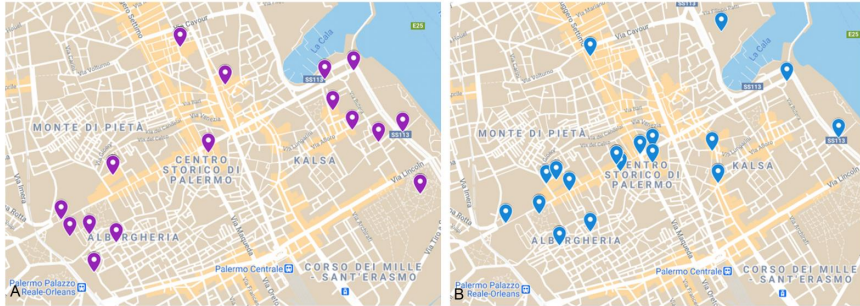
4a | Subjects of Palermo centre photographed by G. Bridges, A. Normand, G. De Rumine, L. Vignes, J.A. Lorent from 1840s to 1860s (created by the author with GoogleMyMaps 2020);
4b | Pictures of the revolution in Palermo during 1860 photographed by Billardet & Laisné, G. Le Gray, E. Sevaistre (created by the author with GoogleMyMaps 2020).

The wide circulation of these photographs though the press, publications, and international societies in the following years, together with the social and economic changes occurred, forever changed the way the city was perceived. A comparison between the maps of subjects depicted by early travel photographers with the ones portrayed during Palermo revolution [Fig. 4], suggests that the latter moved the gaze of spectators around the world on less common and mainstream routes and places. Among others, these include small streets of Albergheria and Kalsa districts, and defense structures, such as the Castello a Mare and Porta Maqueda. After the Unification of Italy, the growing demand of souvenir images increased and this, matched with a policy aimed at celebrating the national heritage to promote the cohesion of the country, favored the proliferation of professional photographic studios. Facilitated by the simpler and faster wet-collodion plate process published by Frederick Scott Archer in 1851 (Watson 1980, X), the newborn ateliers engaged in the construction of a complete visual archive of Italian cultural heritage. This experience was probably inspired also by the *Mission Héliographique* that the French *Commission des Monuments historiques*, entrusted to five photographers – including G. Le Gray – in 1851: a large photographic campaign to

document the most important national monuments inspired by the growing consciousness around cultural heritage and its preservation.

> Si fece sempre più evidente l'intenzione di utilizzare il tanto celebrato patrimonio artistico italiano per facilitare la coesione nazionale […]. La fotografia partecipò a questo medesimo clima culturale nell'assoluta certezza che le opere dei grandi artisti del passato dovevano contribuire a diffondere gli ideali patriottici e nazionali (The intention to use the much celebrated Italian artistic heritage to promote national cohesion became increasingly evident […]. Photography participated in this same cultural atmosphere under the absolute certainty that the works of the great artists of the past could contribute to spreading patriotic and national ideals) (Pizzo 2011, 138).

Sicily started to welcome more visitors traveling also for leisure, and this encouraged other foreign photographers to establish their studio on the island, as Gustave Emile Chauffourier. Working in Palermo from 1862 up to about the 1870, he first opened the *Photographie Parisienne*, and later started the atelier *Chauffourier & Girgenti* specializing in sights, reproduction of monuments and works of art, and collaborating with a local photographer. After a failed marriage, Chauffourier left the island around 1870 to work in Naples and finally settled in Rome, maintaining his partnership with Girgenti in Sicily (Cartier-Bresson, Maffioli 2006; Cavazzi Paladini 1977; Mirisola 2008). Meanwhile, other larger ateliers started to conduct a series of systematic photographic campaigns in order to cover the entire heritage of Sicily between 1860 and 1890, like Giorgio Sommer and Robert Rive. The first was born in Frankfurt, but in 1857 he decided to settle in Naples where he opened a photographic studio. Operating from 1857 to 1888, Sommer produced thousands of images of archaeological ruins, landscapes, art objects, and portraits, becoming one of the Europe's most prolific and successful photographers of the time (Miraglia 1992; Fanelli 2007). Robert Rive was a Prussian-born photographer that opened his studio in Naples around the 1850s. Similarly to Sommer, he conducted a series of systematic photographic campaigns around Italy. After his death in 1868, his brother Julius Otto took over the studio until 1888 (Fanelli 2010). After the Unification, travelers started to rely more on first travel guides, like the Baedekers [6] and the few standardized services already available (Berrino 2011), than on the network of the high society

(a characteristic aspect of the previous era). Trying to satisfy their desire to return with an accurate visual 'report' of their journey, professional photographers adapted the former visual tradition to the systematic documentation of the Sicilian heritage, aligning themselves to the past *topoi* identified by their forebears, and started to look for a way of narrating the changing face of contemporary cities (Vinardi 2011). The description of the Cathedral of Palermo and Monte Pellegrino, for example, has preserved the same points of view throughout the entire century [Fig. 5], building on a visual tradition founded upon linear perspective and balance of forms inherited by the local photographers who opened their atelier after the 1860s-1870s, such as Francesco Pelos [Fig. 5d].

5a | R. Rive, n. 1627, *Palermo, veduta della Cattedrale*, Albumen print, 1868 ante, ENSBA Paris, inv. PC 4671-II-96 (photo by the author).
5b | E. Sevaistre, *Madri chiesa di Palermo*, Salted paper print, around 1860, Raccolte Grafiche e Fotografiche del Castello Sforzesco. Civico Archivio Fotografico di Milano, Fondo Lamberto Vitali, inv. LV 25/6.
5c | G. Sommer, n. 1319, *Palermo, Monte Pellegrino*, around 1860-1865, private collection (photo by the author).
5d | F. Pelos, n. 10, *Palermo, Porto (fatto nel 1563)*, 1880s, private collection (photo by the author).

In some other cases they set a model in the illustration of a subject, like Sommer did with the cloister of Monreale Cathedral during his first campaign in October 1860, commissioned by Domenico Benedetto Gravina for the volume *Il Duomo di Monreale illustrato* (Gravina 1859-1869). His description of this space focused mostly on the decoration of colonnettes and capitals, photographing each one of them systematically with the same framing.

This approach influenced the work of local photographers and impacted on the development of comparative visual analysis of artworks (Dercks 2019, 36). After the 1880s, the introduction of new photographic and photomechanical processes allowed professional photographers to work more easily on a growing industrial scale and amateurs to practice photography, marking the surge of the real "massification" of photographic medium (Zannier [1988] 2007, 72). The proliferation of images between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, produced by both local and foreign amateurs and professional photographers, hinders any systematic study of their work on Sicily. However, to investigate the external gaze over Palermo, the present work focuses on its commercial aspect by analyzing stereoscopic photography: the most popular expression of the emerging voyeuristic desire of a broader public to discover the world in the comfort of their homes and the ideal medium that middle-classes used to know and describe themselves (Fiorentino 2007).

6 | Underwood & Underwood, *Mummies of old Sicilians that startle the visitor to the Cappuccini Convent*, Palermo, Sicily, (7) 8560, Silver Gelatin Print, 1906, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., inv. 2020684061 (Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/2020684061/).

Published before World War I to build an educational visual encyclopedia of the world, travel box sets developed by American stereoscopic companies, such as Underwood & Underwood – a company founded in Ottawa, Kansas in 1881 that became the largest publisher of stereoviews in the world (Hannavy 2008, 1417-1420) – and Stereo-Travel co. (Anselmo, La Cecla, Lo Dico 2008), were composed by views that could recreate an immersive experience of the journeys by using exactly the same viewpoints of tourists. Using the itineraries suggested by increasingly popular tourist guides as a reference, just like photographers like Sevaistre and Sommer did, The anonymous American photographers who produced the views of Palermo for collections used, like Sevaistre and Sommer, the itineraries suggested by the increasingly popular tourist guides as a reference, following a precise route. This was based on the main visual stereotypes of the city, including once again Monte Pellegrino, the city gates, the port, buildings of power, and the monuments of the Norman architecture that were especially important to the Sicilian identity. At the same time, they testified an ever-growing interest in the human aspect, depicting both the most 'folkloric' expressions of society, like the uncanny Cappuccini catacombs [Fig. 6], and the everyday life in the newly constructed spaces that benefited the industrial middle class. An exploration this large body of commercial photographs, taken between 1860 and 1910, suggests that those professionals internalized the former visual tradition to the point of exasperating it into stereotypes, which in some cases became identifying characters for locals.
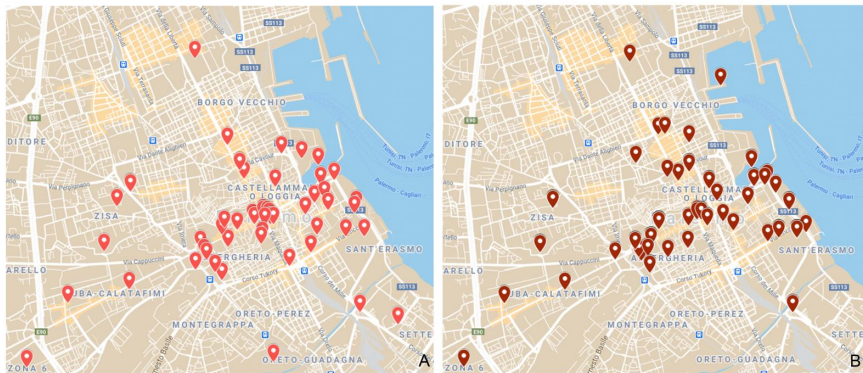
7a | Points of interest in the center of Palermo selected in K. Baedeker, *Italy Handbook for travellers, Part III: Southern Italy, Sicily, The Lipari Islands*, Koblenz 1867 (created by the author with GoogleMyMaps 2020);
7b | Subjects of the center of Palermo included in the catalogues of E. Sevaistre, Gaudin Frères, G. E. Chauffourier, R.Rive, G. Sommer, Stereo-Travel co., Underwood & Underwood from 1860 to 1908 (created by the author with GoogleMyMaps 2020).

The present analysis also outlines that, while the first generation of photographers were driven by a desire to compose a complete inventory of Sicily's heritage, they progressively aligned their catalogues with the itineraries of tourist guides. This emerges in the case of Palermo by overlaying two maps showing the places of interest selected by the Baedeker guide of 1867 [Fig. 7a] and, in the second one, the locations of the subjects photographed by professionals between the late 19th and the early 20th centuries [Fig. 7b]. Their representations, however, involved also the social and urban transformation of the city, and thus explored a larger area, which was beyond the main street of the Cassaro and its surroundings.

The views of the city moved towards the backstreets and marketplaces in the historical quarter and up north, to Via della Libertà (compare map 1 and 7), where the emerging industrial bourgeoisie was building its new residential area along with its new icons, such as public parks and theaters [Fig. 8], the new temples of modernity presented with the same majesty of the cathedrals. On the other hand, photographers began to capture more peculiar subjects (like the Cappuccini Catacombs and the exotic Chinese Palace) and to also describe the life of inhabitants to satisfy the growing interest of the public in folklore and domestic customs.

8 | G. Sommer, *9030 Palermo Politeama*, Albumen Print, 1877 post, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg (MK&G), inv. P2015.2.11.

Conclusions

The above analysis shows that, in a period of extreme changes in the political and administrative systems, in the travel habits and in the urban layout, the photographic images of Palermo heritage taken by foreigners between 1840 and 1914 may have contributed in building the visual identity of the city. Like the other travelers, early travel photographers were attracted to Sicily mostly because of their common interest in ancient civilizations. But their pictures also show that they were attentive to the Norman art, following the new interest on Middle Ages culture that was widely developing together with the new medium. As recipients of the tradition of 18th century *vedute* and of the visual tradition of *voyages pittoresques*, these early photographers likely acted as a bridge between this culture and the one of local photographers, who entered in the market only some years after the Unification of the country. With its 'objective' vision and its new language, photography also pulled painters of the second half of 19th century, like Francesco Lojacono, Michele Catti, and

Antonio Leto, towards the use of a changing focus on perspective plans, influencing their choices of subjects and their way of framing the Sicilian natural and urban landscape (Miraglia 2005). Foreign photographers were the first capturing the battles for the Unification of Italy in 1860, and thus showed to the world an unusual Palermo, contributing to the construction of the first icons in the Risorgimento imagery. Their presence during this period likely allowed them to be visual agents of a new common image of Italy leaned on its cultural heritage.

After the 1870s, a new generation of local photographers raised and started to share the market with the foreigners, which lose their predominance. Nonetheless, the number of visitors in Sicily continuously increased, but most of them were international travelers relying on travel guides published abroad. Indirectly, this represented a continuum of foreign influence on the choice of subjects for souvenir photography.

As predictable, the foreign photography impact faded during the period of democratization of the medium, between late 19th and early 20th century, when local actors and new interests entered in the game. However, with the present study we tried to show that foreign stereographs of this period could exemplify a homologation process (Zannier 1997, 59) of Palermo image, that reflects a general trend in the representation of the Italian cities: a common consolidation of canonical cuts and frames that was linked to the diffusion of organized travel and, later, with the evolution of the tourism industry (Berrino 2001), that will take place in the whole country (even if at different speeds on a local level).

Notes

[1] In the list of subscribers of this work, we can see few of the most important names linked to the early history of photography, like Louis M. Daguerre and Paul Delaroche, enabling us to picture how those images were spreading through the small circle of Parisians photographers, hungry for exotic subjects.
[2] Around 1852 he published some of the 1.700 photographs taken during this tour, *Selections from Seventeen-Hundred Genuine Photographs: (Views – Portraits – Statuary – Antiquities) Taken around the Shores of the Mediterranean Between the Years 1846-1852, With, or Without, Notes, Historical and Descriptive by a Wayworn Wanderer*.
[3] Gally Knight' *Saracenic and Norman Remains to illustrate the 'Normans in Sicily'*

plates are available in MIT Libraries online collection. For the Cubula plate see n. 183788, and for the Cuba palace see n. 183789.

[4] Parisian photographer and inventor of the *papier ciré* process, he was traveling with Alexandre Dumas when the revolt started and they quickly join the Expedition in Palermo. The pictures he took some days after the battles are in Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet Estampes et Photographies, catalogue n. FRBNF40462979 (n.16-26). See Aubenas 2002; Longo 2010.

[5] This series can be found in the photographic collection of the Salinas archeological Museum of Palermo, in the *CRICD* (Centro Regionale per l'inventario, la catalogazione e la documentazione dei beni culturali della Regione Siciliana) and, together with his other Sicilian pictures, in the *Civico Archivio Fotografico di Milano.*

[6] Published by the German Karl Baedeker since the 1830s, those guides started to be really successful during the 1860s. The *Handbook for travellers* that included Sicily was first published in 1867 (Baedeker 1867) and had seventeen new editions until 1930.

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English abstract

When photography entered the scene in the mid-19th century, the representation of Sicily consisted largely of drawings, paintings, and written accounts that foreign travelers made during the previous century and, even after the diffusion of the new medium, the photographic description of the island was mostly left to them. The continuity of this 'external gaze' motivated the choice of an analysis aiming to explain its influence over the photographic image of Sicilian cities. Using Palermo as a case-study, this article investigates the relationship between the previous visual tradition and the repertories of foreign photographers. Its purpose is to understand how their description of the city evolved between the 19th and the early 20th century, and in what way their choices in subjects, cutting and framing influenced the construction of visual tropes.

keywords | photography; travel; Palermo.

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