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**From heroic values to everyday life: the Refugee Crisis narrated
by Ai WeiWei and Ana Luísa Amaral**

In 2021, Portugal dedicated a whole exhibition to the Chinese artist Ai WeiWei named “Rapture”. Among many pieces was displayed *Odyssey Tiles* (2021), a reworking of the 2016 *Odyssey*, made now with 180 Portuguese handcrafted tiles and centered on the Refugee crisis. Coming from a different context but with a similar sensitivity for this humanitarian conflict, we can find some poems by the Portuguese author Ana Luísa Amaral, from the book *What’s in a name?*

These artistic examples I have just introduced explicitly dialogue with one of the foundational Western narratives: *The Odyssey*, attributed to Homer. This canonical text has been possessed of a social function over time: that is to encourage and strengthen a certain community. In some ways, we could say that they were used to reinforce the idea of the European civilization against the barbarians.

Although WeiWei’s and Amaral’s work respect some of the formal codes of the original text, they also embrace an everyday discourse, which I would like to present as a tool of rethinking the way Europe constructs itself. Using the same scenario (the Mediterranean Sea), the same story (a trip in a postwar period) and even the same forms of creation as the original text, they focus on those who are normally marginalized. They dislocate the center of the narrative and then build their discourses not from the inside of the “Fortress Europe” (Lutz 1997; Kofman and Sales 1998) but from the point of view of the “subalterns” (Spivak 1985) and their ordinary actions. As Amaral herself has argued several times, if we give more importance to the little actions we do ordinarily, the world would be a better place, because war is precisely the opposite of everyday life.