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THE BIOPOLITICS OF BORDERS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

SAARLAND UNIVERSITY

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Introduction: Borders, Biopolitics, and Crises in Europe and North America

Astrid M. Fellner and Eva Nossem

This collection of essays pays attention to the biopolitical intricacies surrounding borders, with a particular focus on the Global North, encompassing North America and Europe. It dwells on the growing importance of biopolitical perspectives in Cultural Border Studies and aims at re-thinking Europe and the Americas through the crises and challenges they pose. By scrutinizing biopolitics, the negotiation of crises, and the state of exception in literature, the arts, and political discourse, this thematic issue probes the multifaceted dimensions of biopolitical control, highlighting the interplay between state authority and the lives of those impacted by these regulations. Border biopolitics then emerges as a complex nexus of authority, surveillance, control, and management of human lives on, at, and across borders.

Border, biopolitics, crisis, Global North, Cultural Border Studies, literature, arts, discourse

Einleitung: Grenzen, Biopolitiken und Krisen in Europa und Nordamerika

Diese Aufsatzsammlung befasst sich mit den biopolitischen Verwicklungen rund um Grenzen, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf dem Globalen Norden, insbesondere Nordamerika und Europa, liegt. Im Zentrum steht die wachsende Bedeutung biopolitischer Perspektiven in den Cultural Border Studies und die Beiträge zielen darauf ab, Europa und die Americas durch die Krisen und Herausforderungen, die sie darstellen, neu zu denken. Durch die Untersuchung von Biopolitik, der Verhandlung von Krisen und des Ausnahmezustands in Literatur, Kunst und politischem Diskurs erforscht dieses Themenheft die vielschichtigen Dimensionen biopolitischer Kontrolle und beleuchtet das Wechselspiel zwischen staatlicher Autorität und dem Leben derer, die von diesen Regelungen betroffen sind. Die Biopolitik der Grenze entpuppt sich dabei als komplexes Geflecht aus Autorität, Überwachung, Kontrolle und Management des menschlichen Lebens an, auf und über die Grenzen hinweg.

Border, Biopolitik, Krise, globaler Norden, kulturwissenschaftliche Border Studies, Literatur, Kunst, Diskurs

Introduction : Frontières, biopolitiques et crises en Europe et en Amérique du Nord

Ce recueil d'essais s'intéresse aux complexités biopolitiques entourant les frontières, avec un accent particulier sur le Nord global, qui englobe l'Amérique du Nord et l'Europe. Il s'attarde sur l'importance croissante des perspectives biopolitiques dans les Cultural Border Studies et vise à repenser l'Europe et les Amériques à travers les crises et les défis qu'elles posent. En examinant la biopolitique, la négociation des crises et l'état d'exception dans la littérature, les arts et le discours politique, ce cahier thématique sonde les multiples dimensions du contrôle biopolitique, en soulignant l'interaction entre l'autorité de l'État

et la vie de ceux/celles qui sont touché.e.s par ces réglementations. La biopolitique frontalière apparaît alors comme un lien complexe d'autorité, de surveillance, de contrôle et de gestion des vies humaines sûr, à et au-delà des frontières.

Frontière, biopolitique, crise, Nord global, Cultural Border Studies, littérature, arts, discours

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Introduction

The borders of our time are arguably more complex than ever: On the one hand, they are unstable concepts with shifting meanings and paradigms of thinking; on the other, they are hard facts, fortified geographical shells, which are hard to penetrate, and which are often deadly. It is safe to say that in our current moment of polycrisis, times of several simultaneous catastrophic events “where disparate crises interact such that the overall impact far exceeds the sum of each part” (World Economic Forum, 2023, p.9), borders have moved to the very heart of heated debates. From the porous interior boundaries of the Schengen space to the mass migration challenging the external limits of the European Union, to the isolationist thrust of Brexit and the subsequent border negotiations between the UK and the EU, and the current Russian war of aggression Ukraine: After a period of de-bordering, we are facing a re-bordering, and the meanings of Europe and the ideals of democracy and civil society they stand for are being challenged. Concurrently, a discernible global trend is manifesting in the form of heightened incidents of border-related violence and the concomitant psychological distress associated with traversing international boundaries (Jones 2017). Evidentiary instances include the fatalities along the U.S.-Mexico border, constrictive passages within Central America, and locales proximate to the Mediterranean.

Generally speaking, the dream and ideal of open borders (Ohmae, 1999 [1990]) seems poised on the brink of extinction: building walls is increasingly becoming the dominant narrative of today’s politics, institutional as well as cultural. By focusing on a securitization of borders and a politics of deterrence, national states thus become “walled states,” a development that, while reflecting the decline of sovereign states in a neoliberal and globalized world, according to Wendy Brown (2010), shifts the focus from state sovereignty to the psychology of its subjects by appealing to their fantasy of being sheltered and protected within the confines of the state. The “theatricalized and spectacularized performance of sovereign power” (Brown, 2010, p.26) through the erection of walls paradoxically aims at establishing an external ‘they,’ which is different from an internal ‘we.’ However, walls “project an image of sovereign jurisdictional power and an aura of the bounded and secure nation that are at the same time undercut by their existence and also by their functional inefficacy” (Brown, 2010, p.25). While ‘protection’ and ‘security’ have become buzzwords at the center of current global political debates around borders, the ‘outside’

evoked in political discourse now serves as the projection space for fatal threats.

Not only has the border become the key site of distinction between ‘inside’ and ‘outside,’ but it has also turned into a catalyst of securitizing policies. The protection of the State, the border politics of securitization, have found their materializations in violence and wars both beyond state borders as well as right on the border, for example in Trump’s Border Wall policies and in the EU policies to protect its outer border, e.g. in the Mediterranean. Concurrently, as Chris Rumford has put it, the “‘borderless world’ thesis” in the context of globalization (2006, p.182) has given way to a “‘rebordering’ thesis” (2006, p.184) that attends to the need for securitized borders in a world of global threats and crises. The new phase of rebordering also goes hand in hand with new functions and uses of borders. Crucially, borders “are no longer entirely situated at the outer limit of territories; they are dispersed” throughout society (Balibar, 2004, p.1). As such, the border is much less place-bound than in previous times; it has become mobile and fluid and can be encountered anywhere. It is therefore clear that we do not live in a world of bounded territorial nation-states, but that borders have now become ubiquitous. “They are in fact elsewhere, wherever selective controls are to be found” (Balibar, 2002, p.84).

They now become closely related to biopolitical control. In fact, as parts of shifting regimes of “differential inclusion” (Mezzadra/Neilson, 2013), borders have turned into social methods of division as well as of multiplication, which not only divide geographical and social space but also multiply social differences. Inasmuch as borders delimit territories, so, too, do they separate human experience and the lives of people. As Amoore has stated:

The management of the border cannot be understood simply as a matter of the geopolitical policing and disciplining of the movement of bodies across mapped space. Rather, it is more appropriately understood as a matter of biopolitics, as a mobile regulatory site through which people’s everyday lives can be made amenable to intervention and management (2006, p.337).

With this focus away from the territory and onto the body, the border turns into a filter, into a control mechanism of bodies, particularly of those who cross it, of border crossers. The field of Border Studies has responded to this new function of the border. Instead of viewing borders as “passive territorial markers of sovereign jurisdiction,” there now is an understanding that “it is precisely *through* border performances that

sovereign authorities can be seen to be (re)produced across social space” (Vaughan-Williams, 2016, p.231, emphasis in the original). As Nick Vaughan-Williams has put it, there has been a shift “from the study of borders as primarily geopolitical institutions to an understanding of bordering practices as biopolitical phenomena” with borders being “increasingly theorized as portable machines of sovereign power that are inseparable from the bodies they performatively produce and sort into different categories” (2009, p.39). The legal scholar Ayelet Shachar uses the traditional metaphor of a “gate” through which people may (not) pass to foreground this sorting mechanism, as also sketched out by Steffen Mau in his book *Sorting Machines* (2022). Shachar points out that “‘our gates’ no longer stand fixed at the country’s territorial edges” but that, instead, “[t]he border itself has become a moving barrier, an unmoored legal construct.” (2020, p.4). She observes: “Increasingly, prosperous countries utilize sophisticated legal tools to selectively restrict (or, conversely, accelerate) mobility and access by detaching the border and its migration-control functions from a fixed territorial marker, creating a new framework that I call the *shifting border*.” (Shachar, 2020, p.4, emphasis in the original). Her “shift” entails a change of research focus away from “studying the *movement of people across borders* to critically investigating the *movement of borders to regulate the mobility of people*” (Shachar, 2020, p.7, emphasis in the original).

This turn towards a biopolitical conceptualization of the border has ushered in a series of new studies with a decided focus on biopolitical borders and the various border-related crises that have affected Europe (Vaughan-Williams, 2015; 2016; Davitti, 2019) and the United States (Doty, 2007; Jones, 2012; Androff and Tavassoli, 2012; Slack, et.al. 2018; Soto, 2020).

European and American biopolitical border discourses show many similarities: from the discursive use of the so-called ‘refugee’ or ‘migration’ crisis in Europe as a means to illustrate supposed dangers of mass migration, the humanitarian crisis at the US-Mexico border and in the Mediterranean, to the transnational mutual support of conservative and right-wing parties expressed for each other’s political, ideological, and performative stance, European and North American border discourses and politics of today almost routinely meet and intertwine. At the same time, intra-American border conflicts stemming from the history and reality of settler colonialism have become prevalent. Most notably resistance by Indigenous people which actively revives the problematic of (broken) treaties and problematizes the very

notion of the nation, and with it the national border, garner international support not only from other Indigenous nations within the Americas, but also from Indigenous groups and well as non-Indigenous allies throughout Europe. As borders tighten and close, bodies become increasingly vulnerable, rendering every political crisis a potential humanitarian disaster.

This collection of essays zeroes in on the biopolitical intricacies surrounding borders, with a particular focus on the Global North, encompassing North America and Europe. It reflects on the growing importance of biopolitical perspectives in Cultural Border Studies and aims at re-thinking Europe and the Americas through these crises and the challenges they pose. In so doing, it will specifically engage the transformation of European and American body politics in times of austerity, hyper-securitization, protest suppression tactics, and war. By approaching the current European and American crises through the conceptual field of the ‘border’ and considering their impact on biopolitics in the fields of politics, literature, language, and culture, this volume will contribute both to a critical analytical delineation of current (dialogic) processes in European and American civil societies and offer impulses towards the formulations of new visions of border conceptualizations and management.

The concept of biopolitics, as coined by Michel Foucault, refers to the strategies and mechanisms employed to manage the intricate processes of human life. Border biopolitics then emerges as a complex nexus of authority, surveillance, control, and management of human lives on, at, and across borders. Foucault developed his theory of biopower in the late 1970s in a piece entitled “Right of Death and Power over Life,” which was part of his book *La volonté de savoir* (Campbell and Sitze, 2013, p.3). Examining the modern proliferation of power, Foucault analyzed the development of the interrelation between life and law in modern politics, a process that displaced the power of the sovereign “to take life or let live” with a governmentality that focused on “the power to ‘make’ live or ‘let’ die” (Foucault, 2003 p.241). With the publication of Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) and his rereading of Foucault’s formulation on biopolitics, a proliferation of studies on the relations between ‘life’ and ‘politics’ ensued, paving the way for the “biopolitical turn” in the social sciences (Campbell and Sitze, 2013, p.4). Agamben showed how in “modern biopolitics, sovereign is he who decides on the value or nonvalue of life” (Agamben, 1998, p.142). Especially, Agamben’s conceptualization of

biopolitics and his notion of the state of exception have become prominent in Border and Migration Studies and are “useful to understand what moves the externalization and privatization of migration and to ascertain how international law has enabled the emergence of this ‘crisis’ framing” (Davitti, 2018, p.1174). According to Agamben, the state of exception is “the ability to decide if the law applies to a situation or if the law is held in abeyance due to an emergency or crisis” (Salter, 2008, p.366). However, in recent times, this *exception* has been prolonged indefinitely and the border, as Mark Salter has it, has become a perennial state of exception (2018). It is a unique political space where “individuals are subjects to the law but not subjects in the law” (Salter, 2008, p.367).

Consequently, “it is still very useful to ‘think biopolitically’ when it comes to understanding contemporary border practices and mobility (especially forced)” (Minca, et.al. 2022), and Agamben’s definition of the state of exception can serve as a “framework to examine the protracted, and, to an extent, normalized, state of ‘crisis’ that has delineated itself” along both EU and North American borders (Davitti, 2018, p.1178). However, neither Foucault nor Agamben have written about biopower and its relation to colonialism. Within the context of the Americas, the biopolitics of borders needs to be addressed within the context of settler colonialism. “Indigenous peoples’ seemingly contradictory incorporation within and excision from the body of white settler nations” (Morgensen, 2012, p.52) are the result of the workings of biopolitical mechanisms of settler colonialism. In “Indigenizing Agamben: Rethinking Sovereignty in Light of the ‘Peculiar’ Status of Native Peoples,” Mark Rifkin amends Agamben by “arguing that the ‘geopolitics’ of conquest place Indigenous peoples in a state of exception that simultaneously troubles the territorial and national integrity of settlers as representatives of Western law” (Morgensen, 2011, p.55). In dealing with biopolitical borders in North America, this issue not only examines how border regimes function on the U.S.-Mexican border but also looks at the legacy of settler colonialism, showing how borders have also affected Indigenous peoples, shedding light on their role in the management and filtration of individuals attempting to traverse the borders of reservations, political formations that Mark Rifkin has called “*bare habitance*” (2009, p.94, emphasis in the original). Similar to Agamben’s space of the camp, reservations in the United States function as a “space that while governed under ‘peculiar’ rules categorically is denied status as ‘external,’ or ‘foreign’” (Rifkin, 2009, p.94).

The discussions of the interventions of literary, artistic, and cultural practices within the biopolitical debates therefore do not only center around the journeys of those seeking entry into Europe and the United States but also those who cross social borders within the racialized economy on Native lands within the United States. By scrutinizing the biopolitics and the negotiation of crises and the state of exception in literature, the arts, and political discourse, this thematic issue probes the multifaceted dimensions of biopolitical control, highlighting the interplay between state authority and the lives of those impacted by these regulations. Underscoring the intricate relationship between borders, governance, and human existence, the following essays offer insights into the broader implications of border policies on individual lives, identity, and societal structures. They show that borders are not physical markers but that they are enmeshed in social, political, and cultural forces that shape concepts of identity, belonging, in/exclusion, and the intricate intersections between the individual agency and the societal norms. Written from a humanities and social science perspective, they direct their attention towards the nuanced interplay of biopolitics, crises, and borders, exploring these intricate dynamics through three distinct yet interconnected lenses. These perspectives encompass a comprehensive understanding of how biopolitical influences intersect with border constructs, offering a rich tapestry of insights.

The first lens, “Defying the Biopolitics of Borders in (Border) Art,” delves into the ways in which artistic expressions challenge the boundaries imposed by biopolitical frameworks. Through the lens of art, these essays examine instances in which artists wield their creative prowess to disrupt and confront the constraints placed on human movement and identity by border policies.

The second perspective, “Challenging Biopolitical Borders in Literature,” delves into the world of literature as a vehicle for contesting and interrogating the influence of biopolitics on border phenomena. By scrutinizing literary works, these essays unravel the narratives that subvert, critique, and expose the complexities of border control and its impact on the lives of those affected.

The third lens, “Examining Border Regimes and Border Figures in Action,” places under scrutiny the actors and mechanisms engaged in the implementation and questioning of border policies. These essays dissect specific instances in which border figures and regimes are active agents in either upholding or dismantling of the biopolitical structures that dictate the movement of individuals across borders.

Defying the Biopolitics of Borders in (Border) Art

The essay “Artworks on the U.S.-Mexico Border: Architectural Responses Defying the Limit” by Imen Helali deals with the return of reclosing borders, rebordering, and the emergence of new walls at present. The author supports the idea that artworks exhibited on the wall between the U.S. and Mexico are a form of protest and struggle, and that through interactive and spatial art installations and performances the artists are redefining the wall and its environment. This paper pays attention to the role of both the creators and the participants of those art projects. Overall, Imen Helali concludes that any wall becomes a specific contact zone, on the one hand, and a subject to transgression, on the other, as well as the border art is simultaneously a remarkable movement and a political medium.

The concept of border art is further developed in Anja Benedikt’s paper “Resistance and Remembrance in Border Art: A Response to EU Border Violence in Tunisia.” This paper looks at how the border crisis in the South-Tunisian town of Zarzis is discursively represented in art constellations and writings of a local artist Mohsen Lihidheb. The paper shows that Lihidheb’s art renegotiates the border as a frontier of continuing North-South inequality that, in the artist’s eyes, gives legitimacy to cross-border movements and entails responsibility for border deaths at the EU level. The author supports the idea of visibility of alternative representations of the EU border such as Lihidheb’s.

The corpus of analysis in the paper “No Room for Bare Life on Stage: The Biopolitics of Syrian Migrant Artists” by Ruba Totah comprises such art forms as Syrian migrant artists’ biographies performed on theatre stages in Europe. The paper shows how the artists use their biographies within post-migrant spaces to represent the self, the other, and the other self; it illustrates how Syrian migrants generate resilient and non-resilient attributes of compliance, suffering, and confrontation with biopolitics.

Challenging Biopolitical Borders in Literature

Silvia Ruzzi’s essay “Necropolitics at Sea: A Reading from Mediterranean Border Fiction” zooms in on the Mediterranean Sea imagery in recently published novels. Having analyzed three samples of Mediterranean border fiction from the

first decade of the twenty-first century, the contributor concludes that the Mediterranean border is a force in motion whose amplitude and potency reflect the power of border control whereas migrants’ deaths at sea have to be understood as the consequence of necropolitical border practices. Thus, the Mediterranean is framed as an aesthetic and political category for the understanding of current maritime border crossings.

In “Dismantling the Binary Opposition Between Reservation and City in Louise Erdrich’s *Future Home of the Living God*,” Svitlana Kot explores the transformative impact of bordering processes on the Americas’ geopolitical and sociocultural landscapes. She examines Louise Erdrich’s novel *Future Home of the Living God* to carve out how the protagonist’s urban perspective challenges the city/reservation binary, offering insights into the deconstruction of symbolic borders in Indigenous writing.

Defying Border Regimes and Examining Border Personae in Action

In his paper “Reassessing the Periphery, Challenging the Re-Politicizing Struggles,” Marco Mogiani focuses on the port area of Patras in South-Western Greece where he spent a nine-month-long fieldwork conducting interviews with professors, workers, officials, police officers, social worker, volunteers, and migrants. Mogiani argues that border areas at the periphery of Europe can function as crucial viewpoints for the analysis of border and migration regime at the heart of Europe. Thus, the article investigates how the categories of center and periphery have been continuously reassessed and redefined across space and time.

Eva Nossem, in turn, elucidates the biopolitical dimensions of borders by examining how gender dynamics intersect with the European border regime in the Mediterranean. The symbiotic interplay of gender norms and border securitization policies in the Mediterranean as a site of deadly border struggles is carved out in a detailed, qualitative analysis of discourses evolving around Carola Rackete, in 2019 captain of the Sea Watch 3, the boat of a private sea rescue NGO, whose actions challenged border enforcement and gender norms simultaneously. Taking into consideration both attacks on Carola Rackete (on (social) media) as well as statements in her defense (on social media, in visual artworks), Nossem unravels the interplay of

misogynist discursive strategies in coaction with both securitizing and humanitarian discursive strategies, as concentrated in the public debates on (social) media in 2019 and projected on Carola Rackete as a border figure.

Each essay within these perspectives collectively explores cases where the biopolitics of borders are actively resisted, defied, and challenged. These cases are not limited to the agency of those crossing borders themselves; they extend to encompass the creative expressions of artists and writers who address these issues head-on. Furthermore, the essays spotlight the roles of various border figures in the broader discourse surrounding the renegotiation of borders.

In sum, this volume brings to the fore a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted ways in which biopolitics and borders intersect and interact in times of crisis. Through these diverse perspectives, the collection illuminates the myriad strategies individuals and entities employ to transcend, resist, and reconfigure the biopolitical underpinnings of border governance. We hope that this collection contributes to a deeper understanding of how biopolitical forces intersect with border dynamics, ultimately shaping the experiences of people who navigate these challenging and often perilous journeys across the borders of the Global North.

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ADDRESSES

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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EVA NOSSEM is a graduate translator for German, English, and Italian. She is the scientific coordinator of the UniGR-Center for Border Studies at Saarland University (Germany). She is the co-editor of the trilingual *Border Glossary*, a collection of key concepts in the field of border studies, and the editor of *Border Languageing*, a volume focusing on multilingual practices on the border. She is an instructor in English linguistics at Saarland University and is currently working on a project in Italian linguistics: *Un dizionario Queer – il lessico italiano della noneteronormatività*. Both in her teaching and research, she aims at bringing together approaches from gender/queer studies, cultural studies, and linguistics, with a particular focus on critical discourse studies, multilingualism, lexicography, and sociolinguistics. Her research interests include Cultural and Linguistic Border Studies, Italian and English linguistics, Multilingualism, Gender and Queer Studies, and translation studies.



Artworks on the U.S.-Mexico Border Architectural Responses to Defy the Limit

Imen Helali

The Berlin Wall, a barrier, caused multi-leveled political division; it divided the city, Germany, Europe, and cut the Eastern Bloc off from the Western world. This wall stayed up for three decades until its fall in 1989, when it became a symbol of freedom and unification in the eyes of the world. However, a borderless world remains a metaphor; in 2016, the U.S. President's declaration to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border aroused strong reactions of contestation. Thus, border artists, like many activists, oppose it through means of subversive productions. This paper sheds light on a series of performances, showing how these artistic productions positioned themselves vis-à-vis this border fence. I will go through a sampling of works to argue that responses tend to be architectural when artists proceed by spatializing an area's boundary, allowing me to further demonstrate how they are redefining the geopolitical and biopolitical features of the border.

Border, wall, border art, architecture, performance, biopolitics

Œuvres d'art à la frontière entre les États-Unis et le Mexique. Réponses architecturales au défi de la limite

Le mur de Berlin, une barrière, a provoqué une division politique à plusieurs niveaux ; il a divisé la ville, l'Allemagne, l'Europe et coupé le bloc de l'Est du monde occidental. Ce mur est resté en place pendant trois décennies jusqu'à sa chute en 1989, devenant alors un symbole de liberté et d'unification aux yeux du monde. Cependant, un monde sans frontières reste une métaphore ; en 2016, la déclaration du président américain de construire un mur le long de la frontière entre les États-Unis et le Mexique a suscité de vives réactions de contestation. Ainsi, les artistes frontaliers, comme de nombreux activistes, s'y opposent par le biais de productions subversives. Cet article met en lumière une série de performances, montrant comment ces productions artistiques se sont positionnées vis-à-vis de cette barrière frontalière. Je passerai en revue un échantillon d'œuvres pour soutenir que les réponses tendent à être architecturales lorsque les artistes procèdent à la spatialisation des limites d'une zone, ce qui me permettra de démontrer plus avant comment ils redéfinissent les caractéristiques géopolitiques et biopolitiques de la frontière.

Frontière, mur, art frontalier, architecture, performance, biopolitique

Kunst an der US-mexikanischen Grenze. Architektonische Antworten zur Anfechtung dieser Grenze

Die Berliner Mauer, eine Trennwand, verursachte eine politische Spaltung auf mehreren Ebenen; sie teilte die Stadt, Deutschland und Europa und schnitt den Ostblock von der westlichen Welt ab. Diese Mauer blieb drei Jahrzehnte lang bestehen, bis sie 1989 fiel und in den Augen der Welt zum Symbol für Freiheit und Vereinigung wurde. Eine grenzenlose Welt bleibt jedoch eine Metapher; 2016 löste die Erklärung des US-Präsidenten, eine Mauer entlang der Grenze zwischen den USA und Mexiko zu errichten, heftige Reaktionen der Anfechtung aus. Wie viele Aktivisten wehren sich auch Grenzkünstler mit subversiven Produktionen dagegen. Dieser Beitrag beleuchtet eine Reihe von Performances und zeigt, wie sich diese künstlerischen Produktionen gegenüber dem Grenzzaun positionieren. Anhand einer Auswahl von Werken werde ich darlegen, dass die Reaktionen eher architektonischer Natur sind, wenn die Künstler die Grenze eines Gebietes verräumlichen, und so zeigen, wie sie die geopolitischen und biopolitischen Merkmale der Grenze neu definieren.

Grenze, Mauer, Grenzkunst, Architektur, Performance, Biopolitik

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Introduction

Since the Roman *Limes* or the Great Wall of China, walls have constantly served sovereignties as artefacts of protection and defense. Throughout history, barriers such as the Berlin Wall or the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) have proliferated as a result of division and warfare.

A literature review informs us about the ancient walls, serving as testaments to the advent of the phenomenon of territory delimitation, a most recent development taking the form of a hybrid structure. Also, part of the literature on the art world informs us of the treatment of this question by artists.

Starting in the early twentieth century, contemporary borders have become remarkably visible and extremely closed off. According to the most recent research and studies of Élisabeth Vallet and the Frontiers team from the Raoul-Dandurand Chair of the University of Quebec, the number of border walls worldwide is estimated to 70 total built and projected in 2017 (Vallet, 2017), measuring 40,000 kilometers, the equivalent of the circumference of the Earth, and the result of a frightening world. The research's data number was quoted by a Trump's tweet (77 walls) to defend his project. For her part, Vallet tweeted that the use of her material by the American President was incomplete to support his words (Riga, 2019). According to her, the total number of walls more than tripled in the 20 years after the end of the Cold War (Vallet, 2014, p.1-2). Furthermore, she calls for drawing distinctions between contemporary border walls and the border fortifications of the past, due to the changing nature and function of the wall. She adds: "the modern wall, as a 'post-Westphalian' phenomenon, extends beyond the limits of the military structures, such as the Maginot Line or the Siegfried Line, which typified the 1945–1991 wall's period from classical border barriers by three features: control of the border, physical demarcation of the border and asymmetry," she considers that "These walls are artefacts of a new era in international relations and of a new understanding of the very idea of the border" (ibid., p.2).

After the Cold War, Vallet recognized two accelerators, the first being the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the United States, and the second being the Arab Spring of 2011.

Since the 1990s, the closure of borders has been reinforced by the upsurge in seeking security, spurred by the events of 9/11, manifested through a rebordering and reconfiguration of territories. In fact, according to Balibar's proposal, the border is no longer on the margins of the state

but constitutes the heart of politics (Amilhat Szary and Giraut, 2015, p.6).

The border solidifies inequalities in wealth and power between the United States and Mexico, in addition to the latter's subjugation principally through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994, the same year in which a metal wall was raised in Operation Gatekeeper. Rachel St. John reports:

Under Gatekeeper, by June 1998 the total length of border fences and walls within the San Diego sector increased from nineteen to over 45 miles, the number of Border Patrol agents rose from 980 to 2,264, 766 underground sensors were installed, and the number of infrared scopes in use increased from twelve to 59. A ten-foot-high metal wall replaced the chain-link fence along the boundary line between San Ysidro and Tijuana (St. John, 2011, p.204).

The separation barrier between the U.S. and Mexico, in its present form, was mostly erected under the administrations of G. W. Bush and B. Obama, and has been nicknamed 'Bush wall' or the 'Tortilla Curtain.' This metal barrier spans about one-third of the 3,141 kilometers (1,952 miles) which make up the entire length of the frontier, and it towers higher than five meters. Rachel St. John traced the transformation of the Western U.S.-Mexico border, "of the once-unmarked boundary line into a space of gates, fences, and patrols" (St. John, 2011, p.2). She furthermore speaks about the boundary's metamorphosis (ibid., p.12).

Contrary to all his predecessors, Donald Trump did not erect a meter of his wall. The 1,600 kilometers (994 miles) project, requesting an exorbitant budget of 25 billion dollars, is still blocked. Moreover, no variant was approved among the eight prototypes he examined in San Diego in 2018. All of the above precedes arguments the politicization of the border and its materialization since 1990. The political border discourse in 2016 shifts from the previous wall to Trump's projected one.

During his 2016 campaign, Donald Trump stated, as his key pledge, that: "We will build a great wall along the southern border." He has committed to seal off the frontier with Mexico in its missing parts and to reinforce it where he deems necessary. Against this backdrop of the U.S. President's hardline stance on immigration, drastic decisions were made: the barrier is over-equipped with projectors, heat sensors, and motion detectors, while heavily armed U.S. soldiers patrol the line. The wall became a symbol of nationalism, xenophobia, and protectionism for some, though 50% of U.S. citizens are opposed to

it. It has also been widely condemned internationally. Considered metaphorically as a new apartheid (the former policy of racial divide in South Africa, repealed since 1991) artists, architects, and activists moved against this wall by creating poignant art which raises questions about nationalism, origins, racism, immigration, censorship, surveillance, and identity. In fact, a myriad of boundaries and divides float above the surface. That is what Guillermo Gómez-Peña, reverse anthropologist and political artist of the first order, demonstrated to be a complexity of the border: "My journey not only goes from South to North, but from the past to the future, from Spanish to English, and from one side of myself to another" (Gómez-Peña, 1991, p.23).

Besides, Gómez-Peña through the iterations of his serial performance from 2006 to 2008 of "The Mexorcist 2" and "3" assaults the demonized construction of the U.S.-Mexican border as a literal and symbolic zone lined with rising nativism, three-ply fences, globalization forces, and transnational identities.

Thus, the dividing wall is a free-fall into the space between the two cultures, and a scar upon the territory which splits North from South. This border is the most frequently crossed international frontier in the world, with an estimated 350 million legal crossings against 400 thousand illegal crossings entering per year. Meanwhile, the region of San Diego-Tijuana records fifty million crossings. The border wall cuts deeply through sister-city communities, namely San Diego-Tijuana and El Paso-Juarez, where the maquiladoras have developed, breaking the cross-border area and destroying its local economy.

Concerning the threats of drug traffickers and smugglers on the one hand, and terrorism on the other, Vallet, the Canadian geographer, states: "Since 2001, the purpose of new walls has been not so much to convert a front line into a *de facto* border as to address two threats: migrants and terrorists (the two sometimes overlap or blend together in the pro-wall discourse)" (Vallet, 2014, p.3).

On the social front, the divide separates families from members who live at its south. In particular, the fence in the San-Diego sector, which was made with a single strand of a cable of welded metal panels, was replaced by double layers consisting in steel mesh and in some places triple-fencing, where the Friendship Park is situated next to the Pacific Ocean; in between the two main fences there is a "no man's land."

Evidently, each wall reinforces its logic of transgression. Thus, the U.S.-Mexican border has more than 150 tunnels, and there is much

bypassing of walls and barriers by sea with submarines or by air with drones.

These artistic performances or international conjecture introduces "border art." The latter may concern any physical or imagined boundary and deals with socioeconomic and political tensions. The term was coined in 1984 by a binational artist collective in the United States/Mexico called the Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo (BAW/TAF) based in San Diego-Tijuana, where the artists charged the borderlands for activism and the production of art. They mixed videos, performances, and site-specificityⁱ in their works. One of its founding members was the Mexican/Chicano artist Gómez-Peña. In 1979 he performed *Border Walker* where he walked from Tijuana to the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Los Angeles in two and a half days, in addition to *The Loneliness of the Immigrant* where he wrapped his body and put it on the ground in a public elevator for 24 hours, a performance which was fully documented for the art world.

He explained the propagation of these performances and of border art using the involvement and exposure of the body: "My experience is not unique by any means. Thousands of artists in the U.S. and other countries are currently crossing different kinds of borders. And as they do it, they are making a new kind of art, an art of fusion and displacement that shatters the distorting mirrors of the 'Western avant-garde'" (Gómez-Peña, 1991, p.23).

Across border walls and frontiers, contemporary art has addressed political issues on the one hand and served as a subversive, activist, and militant medium on the other. It ostentatiously started with graffiti and tags of freedom and revolt on the Berlin Wall which is considered as a pioneer of early art on/at the border, as it was in the 1980s the target of art works produced by future big names of contemporary art such as Thierry Noir in 1984 or Keith Haring in 1986.

However, sometime before this, in particular in the 1960s, land art dealt with borders according to a landscape approach which Amilhat Szary proposed to call "Artscape": "Political landscape can, therefore, be as much transformed as highlighted by what we can tentatively call an 'artscape' or 'borderscape'" (Amilhat Szary, 2012, p.217). In fact, she recognizes the passing from landscape to artscape, through land art. To highlight the importance of landscape, as an open and a free area, "Dennis Cosgrove who showed how, during the modern period, landscape was naturalizing power" (ibid., p.215).

In 1976, Christo and Jeanne Claude presented *Running Fence*, which is an artificial barrier over nearly 40 kilometers (25 miles), as a metaphor for

the arbitrary nature of political and geopolitical frontiers. The ephemeral installation lasted for only two weeks.

Border art is most present around the more criticized or mediatized walls such as those found in Israel/Palestine, the U.S.-Mexico, Berlin, Belfast, and Cyprus. These fences are taken up by contemporary artists and become their canvas, with artwork by guerrillaⁱⁱ artists such as JR or Banksy on the U.S.-Mexico wall, as well as the mythical character of the graffiti scene around the Israeli separation barrier.

The post-9/11 era spread fears of terrorism succeeding the backdrop of insecurity bred by globalization, which was supposed to abolish fences, as borders conversely become more topological.

Michel Foucher, expert in geographical frontiers, tends to be less alarming, if we know that all it about a manipulated discourse: "Contemporary analyses have pointed to a particular category of reaffirmation, that of 'walls.' Although they are in the minority, in Western opinions – which lean towards a bad conscience – they have come to symbolize the realities of the border" (Foucher, 2016, p.15, translation IH).

According to him, since "We forgot that our peaceful borders were former front lines," questioning the phenomenon of rebordering in light of the geopolitical order inherited from 1945-1991 can be significant in the context of an active border scene.

In our era, walls play a dual role to legitimize their erection: 1) they maintain feelings of insecurity, 2) they assuage fears and create a feeling of security for those who are inside. The border as a geo/bio-political artefact is far from being considered a trace on a map. Indeed, the line from the poem "Mending Wall" by Robert Frost remains resonant: "Good fences make good neighbors."

This is what the present paper will expose and investigate. How does art deal with borders? Through which meanings does it ignore boundaries and geographical limits? At last, how does it reduce the border's thickness?

Art "on/at" the Border

Through an ambivalence between the site and its causality, art on the border, art born from the border, and art against the border, an obvious site-specificity emerges.

Firstly, I will attempt to highlight the diversity of works of art that treat of the U.S.-Mexico border, namely: graffiti, political art, public art, and guerrilla art. The wall is mostly marked with tags, crosses, photos of undocumented migrants or "*wetbacks*,"ⁱⁱⁱ deceased over the course of their

psycho-physiological trials in the crossing of the line, destined to perpetual motion until borders become fully closed and walls are built so as to become the final destinations for migrants established mechanically as "immigrants." Consequently, much of the artwork was not claimed by artists but by migrants/immigrants, and remains anonymous, as traces and remembrances, per this quote: "Among the traces to be preserved, there are precisely those of the sufferings of others, those that we inflicted on them. The reason why we must not forget is that this way we can continue to honor the victims of the violence of the past" (Ricoeur, 1998, p.31, translation IH).

Behind these pieces of art as traces, there is an artistic emergence which occurs at the border and constitutes the core of my essay. I investigate the impact of using art to politically critical locations such as international borders in general and the U.S.-Mexican border in particular. Art such as graffiti and guerrilla art has dealt with politics in public spaces or walls. However, I am aware of the peculiarity of this mode of expression born on and at the border, in the sense that these modes of display in disputed territories contribute to the legitimization and the emergence of 'art geopolitics,' as suggested by Amilhat Szary (Amilhat Szary, 2012, p.222), according to whom borders, borderlands, and conflicts produce art.

Amilhat Szary adopts a critical position towards the influence of this art on the perception and the reception of borders: "By multiplying [...] images linked to the border, even if they claim to be politically subversive, this border art contributes in its way to disseminate, reinforce the idea among a general public that borders are problematic, violent and closed places, while closed barriers represent only 10% of borders" (France Culture, 2019, translation IH). Additionally, she mentions the relation between this art style and the art market. Border walls are designed to impose a geopolitical vision through the effects of geopolitics on geography (physical or human), politics, and international relations, as political borders remain in our times basic elements of the international system. To quote Morrissey and Warner:

Through these artists' engagement with history, their art forms depict border spaces that are characterized by intersecting geopolitical and biopolitical modalities. In other words, the artworks deconstruct causal relationships between geography and the assumptive power and authority of the nation-state in addition to examining the politicization of the human body. (Morrissey and Warner, 2018, p.196)

They understand “geopolitics as a method of analysis that examines the relationships between geography and the power and authority of politics. Additionally, for Michel Foucault’s analysis of biopolitics—discourses that politicize the body, medicine, and science” (ibid., p.212). Thus, the implication of border art in the geopolitical and biopolitical parameters of the divide becomes evident.

According to Michel Foucault, biopolitics refers to political power over every feature of human life. In *Security, Territory, Population*, he conceptualizes biopolitics as operating through apparatuses of security. Thus, he relates the two terms. To quote:

What is involved is the emergence of technologies of security within mechanisms that are either specifically mechanisms of social control, as in the case of the penal system, or mechanisms with the function of modifying something in the biological destiny of the species. (Foucault, 2007, p.25)

Foucault looks into borders and territories in relation to sovereignty: “Baldly, at first sight and somewhat schematically, we could say that sovereignty is exercised within the borders of a territory, discipline is exercised on the bodies of individuals, and security is exercised over a whole population. Territorial borders, individual bodies, and a whole population, yes ... but this is not the point and I don’t think it holds together” (ibid.). Amilhat Szary agrees with Foucault’s proposal: “Walls and barriers are only one part of this phenomenon, the other being that surveillance ‘dispositifs’ (or sets of techniques and practices in the Foucauldian sense) rely on hard devices to support all networks and the topological circulation of information” (Amilhat Szary and Giraut, 2015, p.5, author’s italics).

During the construction of the sampling, I was confronted with a multitude of expressions and techniques, and that is why it became necessary to build a mode of selection. After investigation, I noted a specific and relevant criterion in some artwork about “spatializing the wall” and creating an area around it; the representativeness of this criterion permitted me to structure my taxonomy on the one hand, and to debate the question from an architectural perspective on the other. Also, the negation of the wall was mainly achieved by transforming it into space, by spatializing and “architecturing” it. Thus, I opted for samples treating the border wall by extending its line of separation into a zone of communication and connection, making it a part or an accessory within a whole installation and a line negotiated by the minds and bodies of the actors on both sides. Creating space around Trump’s wall leads

to the denial of its main divisive function while switching it for a substitute function, albeit temporarily, such as for exchanging, playing, congregating, or eating.

As the major assumption of this paper is the presence of an architectural aspect in the artwork, of a faculty to redraw land-borders, and of a biopolitical dimension in the performances at and around the border, I mount my observational scaffolding according to two parameters which are elements of the “new” functions. By the first, I mean architecture’s montage, and by the second, the activities allowed by the temporary installation.

This artwork, consisting of pieces of design activism, is now-viral content generated through real-time connections and through new communication interfaces, specifically Instagram and Twitter, where artists’ posts appeal to followers to interact and participate in their performances by maximizing likes and shares. This type of art at the border seems to be more courageous by displaying a riskier act targeting the advance and deployment of the line over the two sides.

Firstly, I should state that the list of examples is selective. Secondly, we also note that the interpretation which is outlined in what follows does not exclude other lenses. Lastly, I am prioritizing my workload to ensure spatial and architectural criteria to deal with the geopolitics of the policed territory as well as with the biopolitics of the performances.

The four border art pieces bear witness to a range of techniques and media used by different artists and by an architect. Also, they reproduce the experiences of humans in trouble, principally migrants, to render visible their many forms of daily suffering.

I present the artworks while conceptualizing their creation based on the chronology of their exhibitions.

It should also be mentioned that these are the most “salient” works and the ones most frequently circulated on social networks, and given that this is a fairly recent phenomenon; I cover the period from 2005 to 2017, all the more so because these artists used the internet to disseminate, support, and promote their works.

From footage to visual art, and from architectural proposals to art installations, I have gathered the most circulated performances exhibited in border art. Also, the pieces are spread over the last two decades, with an average of two per decade. Thus, I start with the piece *Walleyball* edited by Brent Hoff in 2006 (A1), then I look at *Erasing the Border*, the project by Ana Tereza Fernández from 2011 to 2016 (A2).

Later, I address the intervention by architect Ronald Rael through his work *Teeter-Totter Wall* set up in 2016 (A3), to finish with a last artistic reaction towards the border, JR's *Giant Kikito*, an artwork created in 2017 (A4.a/b). It must be noted that this order is not only temporal; it also follows the catalysts of spatial evolution throughout the changes undergone by the artistic exhibitions, with more mobile works and a remarkable presence of videos, performances, and installations, as will be shown in the second part. The implantation of artworks has developed all across the U.S.-Mexico border; the first sample was exhibited on the border fence separating Tijuana Playas from San Diego's Border Field State Park: this region, as mentioned above, was marked as being a cradle for border art and is still inspiring artists and activists. The second was made in El Paso-Juárez. The third was a multi-location performance (first in San Diego-Tijuana), and the last one was in Tecate.

After their presentation, I will proceed to their analysis through their architectural features including geographical and territorial paths, and then through their biopolitical ones.

After an explanation of the political context in which these works flourished, and their inscription within the movement of border art and guerrilla art, the analysis will be structured first by the description of the formal aspects of the work and the techniques used.

The speeches of artists, being media of communication, are as meaningful as their works, and so I will also transcript and explore them, as a data base, to spread the artistic artwork in all its scope.

In terms of biopolitics, I will deal with the position of these works concerning the body, whether that of the artist or those of the participants appearing as co-performers.

Artwork Sampling and Analysis

Border art/artists often address the forced politicization of human bodies and of the physical land as well as the arbitrary, yet incredibly harmful separations that are created by these borders and boundaries. Art pieces make viewers interact with objects and installations in new artificial and ephemeral environments. At the same time, I recognize the recourse to the site-specificity of the border as forming the core of all the artworks. I see that these artistic works' deploy the wall architecturally. The "spatialization technique" used by the artists is striking; no poster or "linear" artistic modes: their answers are architectural

and "*architecturing*," i.e. acts of doing architecture. They create a space, an extension to the border line.

Presentation

WALLEYBALL, BRENT HOFF (2006)

Brent Hoff is an American writer and filmmaker. As a co-founder of Wolphin DVD, he filmed *Drunk Bees* and *Born Like Stars*. In 2006, he made a playful yet subversive plea for humanity on the U.S.-Mexico *frontera*. He imagined the first international border volleyball game in the world, *Walleyball*, amid the stern hum of helicopters. A friendly game exposed two Mexican beachgoers to two Americans in a volleyball match over-the-fence (fig.1).

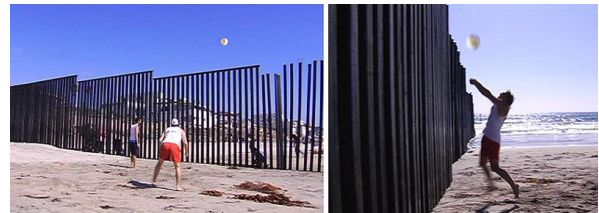


Fig.1: Walleyball

Source: <http://www.borderwallasarchitecture.com/?projects=walleyball>

Players had to throw the ball higher than 20 feet (five meters), though Brent Hoff's *Walleyball* was not the first such game. After Naco-Arizona and Naco-Sonora had been split by a roughly 13-foot high border fence, a famous game of volleyball was played in 1979 between their citizens during the Fiesta Bi-Nacional: "This annual gathering of residents from Naco and Naco defies enforced division by temporarily reuniting the communities through a celebration of art, music, dance, games and food, transforming the fence into a point of connection rather than a security barrier" (Weber, 2011, p.81).

Brent Hoff describes the border as a covert demilitarized zone (DMZ):

There is enough border patrol agents on the U.S.-Mexico border to put one every thousand yards from the shores of the Pacific to the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. All the military surplus from the Vietnam War landed on the Mexican-American border; [it's a militarized border they have heat sensors, motion detection sensors [xxx] ^{iv}, they use military weapons, military vehicles, [xxx], they have helicopters, they have horse patrols. They really consider themselves in a war zone. (*Walleyball*, 2006)

By using a ludic simulacrum, the wall is assimilated to a makeshift net. I should note that the game was possible because the top was not

angled, as in some places with triple fencing, inward to make it harder to climb over.

The three-minute film was shown live in 117 countries as part of TED's "Pangea Day." It immerses viewers in a virtual reality and transports them to the conflict line. It was also projected later on CNN's "Christiane Ammanpour – The Power of the Interview" in 2009, as part of the show's commemoration of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

On the matter of physical effort, Hoff's teammate says: "After an hour or so, we call it quits. Our wrists are red and raw as we go to the fence to shake hands. A crowd gathers for this moment of cultural exchange, which turns into a photo opportunity" (Bearman, 2006, n.p.).

Walleyball documented the racialization of borders and the use of citizenship by the sovereignty and by dominant (anti-immigrant) groups, including pro-Trump groups. This artwork bears witness to people who would be free to play together against those forces determined to keep them separated.

ERASING THE BORDER/ 'BORRANDO LA FRONTERA,' ANA TEREZA FERNÁNDEZ (2011–2016)

Mexican visual artist performer and painter Ana Tereza Fernández has dealt with the border on many occasions; namely since 2005 with a performance documentation entitled *No puedo pasar/I Can't Pass*, with *Front Wet Back* in 2011, and *In Between/En Medio* in 2013. She is preoccupied with the female body, race, and gender, which, through her performances, she turns into an aesthetically charged medium. She says regarding her project "*Erasing the Border*" (fig.2):



Fig. 2: Erasing the Border

Source: Ana Teresa Fernández 2020.

The idea aims to emulate the continuation of the sky like if it was a curtain placed in front of it. And we made it specifically in this space because there

is a street that starts in Mexico and continues in the United States, but there is barrier that prevents movement across it. So we intend to create the illusion like there is only sky. (AJ+, 2015)

Actually, the first edition of the performance took place in 2011. The second one was through a community engagement with people from all over Arizona in 2015, the third was in 2016.

Prior, the artist explains the political context in which her creation was made: "... it was in 2011, where I saw that this area [above: Friendship Park] where people used to converge at the border, people from all over the world, from Latin America and the US, Canada, and beyond, they would come here and meet sometimes after 20 years of being separated and embrace and touch and hug. Under the Obama administration, sadly, Friendship Park closed its doors until people were no longer able to touch, and that was I think one of the most heart-breaking moments for me, to witness how that separation occurred where people were only able to see themselves across this metal mesh. And [that]'s when I knew I had to do something, and I came up with the idea of *Borrando la Frontera* which was to bring the sky back down between the U.S. and Mexico border" (LatiNation, 2017).

She painted a part of the border wall while imitating the tones of the landscape. At a certain distance, the slats seem to be erased and let the picturesque view on the Pacific Ocean appear freely. She used a chromatic artefact close to the landscape's palette to ensure visual continuity. The artist creates a concept of unity from the sky taken as scenery; she uses the blue color to conceptualize a new geography and thus a new geopolitical structure with erased and porous borders.

The artist described the violence and suffering inflicted by the wall upon the lives of Mexicans: as a symbol of pain, where the lives of those who failed to cross it were deplored.

The artist witnessed the success of the effect of illusion she produced: "I was almost done when I heard a loud voice: 'I get it! I get it!' I'm doing this because I'm a runner coming from far away. I got down from the ladder, and this runner said, 'I thought the wall was coming down, and for a minute, I was able to imagine what this place would look like: What if there were no walls?'" (TED, 2017). Fernández continued: "This image went viral, and in 2015, I was invited to do the first artist statewide residency. The talk about building another wall was rampant at that time. So we decided to do '*Borrando la Frontera*' again, but this time at the Nogales border, as a community engagement project" (ibid.).

In 2016, the artwork was instantiated in three locations at the same time: Mexicali, Agua Prieta, and El Paso, with activists and artists at all locations engaging with it as a form of community intervention³: “We hit three different states at the same time and perforated it with the sky and we projected it at those three different locations worldwide and just like sharing this thought of like ‘not having a wall divide us’” (LatiNation, 2017).

She used “site-specificity”, the category which had emerged during the 1960s in the art world, doing so in three states, indicating the scope of the amplification and the enormous geographic and geopolitical expansion of the border.

For the residents of the border town of Nogales, Mexico, blue has become a symbol of open skies and porous borders. For the groups of volunteers from both sides joining the artist to “erase” the border, the blue-painted fence represents not only a new view, but a brand new way of reflecting on the experience of the border for those whose lives are impacted by it.

Following this experience, the artist has been encouraged to expand the series to other cities along the border.

TEETER-TOTTER WALL, RONALD RAE (2016)

The architect Ronald Rael got involved in the situation of the divide through his architectural projects. He declares: “My interest in borders came about when I was searching for an architecture of the borderlands. And I was working on several projects along the U.S.-Mexico border, designing buildings made out of mud taken right from the ground” (TED, 2019).

Inspired by Egyptian architect, Hassan Fathy, who stated “architects do not design walls, but the spaces between them,” Rael responded: “So while I do not think that architects should be designing walls, I do think [it]’s important and urgent that they should be paying attention to those spaces in between. They should be designing for the places and the people; the landscapes that the wall endangers” (ibid.). Considering the problems of the border wall, Rael maintains his fundamental question: “Is the wall architecture?” He describes his projects, such as “Prada Marfa,” as land-art sculptures that cross the border between art and architecture. He argues that architecture could communicate ideas that are much more politically and culturally complex, as he explains: “architecture could be satirical and serious at the same time and it could speak to the disparities between wealth and poverty and [what]’s local and [what]’s foreign” (ibid.), adding: “where the actions on one side had a direct consequence on what happens on the other side.”

Over the course of his book *Borderwall as Architecture: A Manifesto for the U.S.-Mexico Boundary*, Rael runs through a number of ruminations by activists and scholars to show the absurdity inherent to the wall as a piece of architecture, and furthermore to show the futility of the project of splitting sister-city communities. For his installation, Rael needed a support for the teeter-totter. He reused the wall, changed its state from an austere barrier to a support and turned it into a fulcrum for the game. Straddling the steel border fence separating El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, Mexico, the architect installed the Teeter-Totter Wall using the divide as an enabling device. He set up three pink seesaws allowing children on both sides to play together and interact (fig.3).

The Teeter-Totter Wall illustrates the delicate balance between the two nations. “The wall became a literal fulcrum for U.S.-Mexico relations,” he said in an Instagram post about his art installation once the swings were added for an only 40-minute-long temporary playground. While playing, with all of the properties of the game contributing (rules, freedom, and pleasure), the participants felt the freedom of the game neutralizing the peculiarity of the environment as border area and area of conflict.

Rael recognizes the spatial, psychological, social, and architectural repercussions of the border: “As an architectural intervention, the wall has transformed large cities, small towns, and a multitude of cultural and ecological biomes along its path, creating a Divided States of North America, defined by some as a no-man’s-land and by others as a third nation” (Rael, 2017, p.11).



Fig. 3: Teeter-Totter Wall
Source: Rael 2019.

Ronald Rael explained his work as being both ‘public art’ and ‘guerrilla art’; intended to be an act of protest, it remained unsanctioned. He considers the wall a public space and defended the architectural project for the line. In fact, he declared that the Teeter-Totter Wall was meant to reinforce the laudable idea that borderlands need to remain accessible to the public rather than turning into inaccessible demilitarized zones (Rael, 2019).

GIANT KIKITO, JR, 2017

JR is a Parisian guerrilla artist, author of the Face 2 Face project on the Israeli West Bank barrier, who installed an XXL photomontage entitled *Giant Kikito* in Tecate, a part of the San Diego-Tijuana metropolitan area and on the border with California (JR, 2018).

In fact, Kikito is the little boy painted on the photomontage. He lives in Tecate with his mother who permitted to JR to install his work on her land. The installation was set up with the help of Mexican curator Pedro Alonzo.

The black and white photomontage uses a "trompe-l'oeil"; the child is peeking curiously over the border to the U.S. side, the only place from which the whole installation is visible. JR draws attention to the U.S.-Mexico border wall from the ingenious perspective of a child who doesn't either see or understand the concept of borders. He shares: "One day I woke up and I saw a kid looking over the wall. I was wondering; What is this kid thinking? What would any kid think? We know that a one-year-old doesn't have a political vision, or any political point of view and doesn't see walls as we see them" (JR, 2019a).

Black and white replace colors for JR, and with them, the photographer erases socio-cultural differences, and even skin color and race. Once the artwork was installed, people from the two sides began to gather and wave all around to meet each other. JR dislikes separation, which is why his work focuses on connecting people. To quote him on Instagram: "Separating babies from their mothers is not the answer and is immoral." Photos of the art installation began to surface in social media. JR declared to *The New Yorker* that his work aimed at a human conversation, as a peaceful message about child immigration, rather than a political conversation. The project lasted for only a month, at the end of which JR decided to mark the closing of the installation, so he advertised on his Instagram: "Giant picnic' today in Tecate ... people eating the same food, sharing the same water, enjoying the same music (half of the band on each side) around the eye of a dreamer ... we forget the wall for a minute..." (JR, 2017).

It is a transposition and a reuse of a real scene of life, as JR attested: "seeing all those people meeting at the border during that entire month and exchanging their phones through the wall, it gave me the idea to do a next step of the project which was the closing" (JR, 2019b). The long table has Mayra's^{vi} two eyes printed on it. The artist uses a "trompe-l'oeil," and four metal rods are pasted on the table on the Mexican side, to render and imitate the effect of continuity. The table, in its religious Christian and symbolic dimensions (Eucharist), is only built on the

Mexican side; on the U.S. one, it is spread out on the floor (JR, 2019b).

This scene reminds us of a saying: "When you have more than you need build a longer table, not a bigger fence." The huge table along both sides creates a space of sharing by deploying this specific and symbolic furniture in the two fields, through the metal pylons, where people pass food and goods through the wall.

Analysis

THE REDEFINING OF ARCHITECTURAL AND TERRITORIAL FEATURES

Before proceeding further with the discussion of these artistic exhibitions, it is necessary to pause for a moment in order to consider the ability of imagination regarding the possibility of unification, to measure its creative power to gather people and, eventually, be it for only a moment, to tear down the border wall or any kind of barrier or fence. In view of this, discounting the concept of boundary is allowed and widely encouraged by the art.

As I have opted for the analysis of a variety of works and techniques, I recognize different schemes for the architectural aspect of the territory around the wall. Indeed, as for border art, I recognize the reflection pertaining to border architecture including with American architects who have dealt with this specificity since 2001. However, in contrast to the border seen as a political artefact, I aim to highlight the act of "architecturing" the wall as a form of protest. I state that the greatest struggle against a line is to make it into space. This is the architecturing act that I deal with it.

Altogether, the sampling assembled here supports a waxing of the space through the concept of architecturing and conversely the waning of the line. The following descriptive diagrams illustrate and synthesize the idea of the spatial implementation (fig.4).

In Brent Hoff's work, the spatialization scheme is constructed as a connection through the play between the two separate territories (fig.4: A1).

For architect Ronald Rael, the pink swings are a peaceful bridge between the two neighbors for them to spend a moment of pleasure and exchange, especially for children. In the elementary scheme of the work, the structure of balance between the two entities on either side is clear, as Rael explained that everything that happens on one side will have its consequence on the other (fig.4: A2).

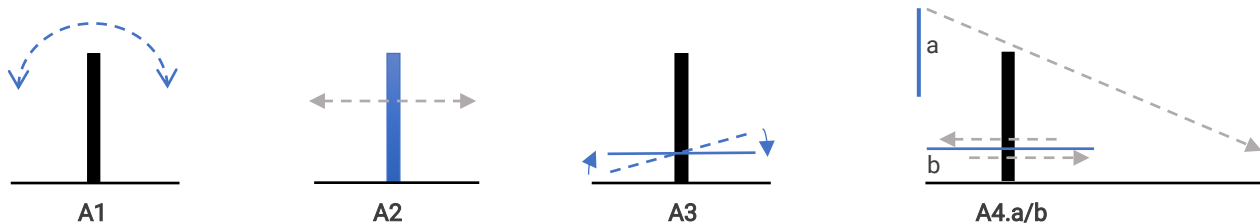


Fig. 4: Spatialization concept of artworks
Source: author's own elaboration 2022.

The concept of unity is originary for Rael: "Walls do not define distinct landscapes, but rather divide into two what was once one" (TED, 2019). Ana Tereza Fernández's work was undertaken in several cities at the same time and later relaunched as a serial performance, where she proceeds to an architecturing of the territory by employing the landscape and the sky which, for the time being at least, continues to escape divisibility (fig.4: A3).

At this point, it is essential to share the opinion of geographer Vincent Veschambre, who considers marking to be a materialization of the appropriation of space, besides its symbolic dimension. According to him, marking presents two forms of material actions:

Either through manufacturing, reuse (or even destruction) of significant markers (boundary markers, barriers, signs, graffiti, sculptures, monuments...) who register more or less in duration and leave a mark. Or through the presence of bodies and of the signs which they carry (clothes, placards, etc.) during events which are recurrent (demonstrations, parades, parties, etc.) or exceptional, which 'make their mark' on the mind and associate a place to social groups or institutions who stage themselves there. In the first case, we could speak of 'trace marking', and in the second, of 'presence marking,' these two forms of material action not being mutually exclusive. (Veschambre, 2004, p.73, translation IH)

JR's architecturing the borderlands from a specific point of view, projects something akin to a beam cast upon the neighbor. The one-year-old baby, by his innocent and disengaged touch upon the American border from the Mexican side, is trying to look over to the other side. JR proceeded by a visual projection whose drop point is located on the American neighbors' land. It thus forms an artefact of extension and connection between the two territories (fig.4: A4. a).

The proximity between A1 and A3 shows the expansion of the symmetrical pattern for the spatialization of the wall.

The A2 scheme that merges with the wall accentuates the visual effect of its destruction by

mere coloring, in addition to highlighting the power of these performances to emphasize the physical work carried out by the performer and by the contributors. Thus, the work amplifies both symbolic and aesthetic demolition. In A2, the territory is virtually unified and the wall, in its linear definition, is restricted to the benefit of spatial maximization. In contrast to the A1 and A3 schemes, A4.a proliferates a tension between the two terrains and builds causality between them, whereas A4.b uses the symmetrical scheme, the one seen in A1 and A3 and which is the most common, to architect and create a connection through the wall.

The A1 scheme is a borrowing one, being mostly inspired by popular responses already practiced by the populations along the border, the A2 work concretizes the pinnacle of border art; like graffiti, it is a reflection of the gesture and of the transient identity of the 'tagger' where the artist's intervention is concentrated on the barrier. Otherwise, this scheme offers the most extended space, which is somewhat unexpected.

We should mention that this scheme is somewhat 'illusory architecture,' which further reinforces its strong visual effect.

Brent Hoff's artwork, as mentioned above, is very close to the popular and spontaneous form of protest which occurred when citizens from the two Nacos played volleyball as a commemoration of the bi-national heritage, with transnational cross-border volleyball having endured for forty years. As for JR's work, the giant Kikito with its over-sizing and scaling amplifies the ambiguous effect of domination in a sort of dizzying overlapping of opposite dualities: child/big-child/border, big-wall/biggest-Kikito, etc. The "big," as a concept developed through JR's work and photomontages, sticks well with Trump's quote of "A Biiiiig Wall."

Yet this representative sampling makes it possible to classify the works of art into three types of deployments modifying the border's conception and perception from a rigid and separating line to a space of connection and exchange.

Thus, I want to itemize (see fig.5):

– **“the symmetrical” (1)**: two outside points set the line as a middle line, as it deploys two “equal” parts (A1, A3, and A4.b).

The basic scheme draws a balanced effect as inherent to the ontology and phenomenology of the wall. It is the more common and traditional scheme.

– **“the on” (2)**: virtuality and aesthetics on the line, using visual effects (A2)

The second scheme works as graffiti or border art and bears witness to its development over four decades, with its wall-as-canvas approach; it is the more aesthetically developed. It is more closely related to the processes of graffiti and ‘trace-marking,’ in an ostentatious way.

– **“the asymmetrical” (3)**: one point outside the line creates a perspective effect using a combination of projection and visual effects resulting in spatial tension (A4.a).

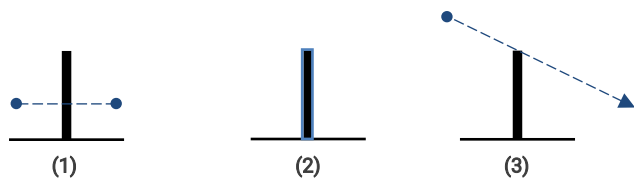


Fig. 5: Artwork schemes

Source: authors' own elaboration, 2022.

The last scheme is more tensional one; it probably aims to force the barrier and the observer by presenting other points of view and dynamic balances.

Thus, in all the artworks presented here, we move from divided borderlands with two undefined entities (fig.6.a) to a common area and space of connection with a single defined unit (fig.6.b), through an artistic work which has for main consequence the negation of the border wall. The pattern emerging is graphically represented below: (fig.6)

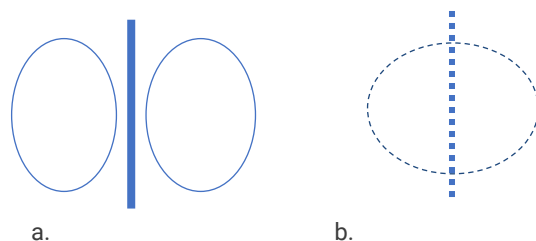


Fig. 6: Changing a territory's configuration from separation to unification

Source: author's own elaboration 2022.

THE REDEFINING OF THE BIOPOLITICAL FEATURE

Foucault, outlining the operational mode of any sovereignty to control population, explains the concept of “milieu”: “The sovereign deals with a

nature, or rather with the perpetual conjunction, the perpetual intrication of a geographical, climatic, and physical milieu with the human species insofar as it has a body and a soul, a physical and a moral existence; and the sovereign will be someone who will have to exercise power at that point of connection where nature, in the sense of physical elements, interferes with nature in the sense of the nature of the human species, at that point of articulation where the milieu becomes the determining factor of nature. This is where the sovereign will have to intervene, and if he wants to change the human species, Moheau says, it will be by acting on the milieu. I think we have here one of the axes, one of the fundamental elements in this deployment of mechanisms of security, that is to say, not yet the appearance of a notion of milieu, but the appearance of a project, a political technique that will be addressed to the milieu” (Foucault, 2007, p.38).

The architectural path leads us to deal with the geopolitical aspect of conflicting borderlands, while the use of the body throughout the performances leads us to deal with biopolitics. The use of the human body as a site for political resurgence is a biopolitical display *par excellence*. Besides, the bodywork includes the participation of the spectators who in such cases are no longer mere spectators as they take part in the performance, participate, and contribute.

Foucauldian biopolitics, as a technique of exclusion through gender or race, was manipulated by the artists' embodiment of the border through the experiences of immigrants.

Is this game legal? Is Hoff endangering himself?

In fact, as the *LA Weekly* writes: “Hoff suddenly wonders if hitting the ball back and forth constitutes a violation of U.S. Customs law, since goods are technically being transported across an international border. ‘Does a nice volley amount to three strikes? Can we all get thrown in the slammer?’ One friend of Brent's refused to come down because he thought we'd all get shot” (Bearman, 2006, n.p.). Besides, some measures were taken: smooth and friendly talking, to add a surreptitious camera placement.

In *Walleyball*, the instability of the camera and the low quality of the picture due to the lack of a fixed position from which to film show the truth conveyed by the movie. It was conceptualized as a war picture captured hastily and discreetly, and as a testimony of the risk taken by the reporter in

this critical context (fig.7). This is also clear from the noisy voice of the audio's footage making speech inaudible in some segments, as I indicated by inserting in brackets Brent Hoff's quote above.



Fig. 7 : Helicopter's surveillance

Source: <https://aeon.co/videos/the-world-s-most-illegal-game-of-volleyball-was-played-over-the-us-mexico-border> 2006.

Similarly, Ronald Rael wrote on his Instagram: "This moment. We [weren]'t sure what was about to happen, but the soldiers allowed everyone to continue to play, smiled, and took photos" (fig.8).



Fig. 8: Body performance amid patrol agents' control
Source: Rael 2019.

Regarding the work of Ana Tereza Fernández amid surveillance by patrol agents, she reported her experience:

The next morning, at the border, I went there with my mother at 7 a.m., and I began to erase it. Fifteen minutes into it, we heard these glaring sirens come through the beach, on this pickup truck. Two border patrol agents attempted to arrest me. Had I not been wearing a dress and stilettos, which completely baffled them, I think they would have!! But it allowed me to start talking about the concept and what I was trying to do. And I could see over time that they started grasping the idea, and after 45 minutes of debating back and forth, they finally allowed me to proceed (TED, 2017). (see fig.9)

Marina Abramović, the 'grandmother of performance art,' is one of the artistic influences of Fernández. Therefore, she performs with her



Fig. 9: The Border Patrol

Source: Ana Teresa Fernández 2020.

body to reveal gender and the ambivalence of femininity through the body's endurance. Bob Dickinson reported her bodily expressions:

Wearing a black cocktail dress and pumps, and seen in several of the photographs standing on top of a ladder, the artist's performance comments on the contradictory demands the border places on Latin American women, as it offers hope but also demands labour.



Fig. 10: Body on the border

Source: Ana Teresa Fernández 2020.

(Dickinson, 2018, p.12) (see fig.10).

I recognize the ladder used by the artist as an artefact related to illegal immigrants – for them it is "tailor-made" workmanship reminiscent of the famous quote by Arizona's Governor: "You show me a 50-foot wall, and [I]'ll show you a 51-foot ladder^{vii}" (attributed to Napolitano 2005, Greenhouse, 2011, n.p).

Such workmanship is used by graffiti, street, and guerrilla artists, and by public art, because of the hidden, even nocturnal, dealing with urban space, buildings, and places which are in many cases inaccessible.

As for JR, he evokes biopolitics regarding origins, inequalities, and racialization through his use of black and white as an artistic signature by which he endeavors to erase, respectively, cultural differences, social conditions, and races. JR's artwork is also subject to border patrol surveillance (JR, 2017).

The giant picnic would not have taken place on the two sides without the contribution of the spectators in the performance, something he

mentioned witnessing when he said: “For the last 10 years, I have been working in conflict zone, jails, borders, and I always found an ‘angel’ that helped us make the impossible possible... The picnic today was clearly forbidden, and yet it was not shut down. It’s always worth trying” (JR, 2017). Surprisingly, nobody came. Only after one hour a patrol agent approached the scene. JR reported his talk with him:

[...] he came and we talked and I proposed him to share tea and he accepted and so I took a cup of tea he took one and we chinned [sic] through the wall and he actually stayed for another hour talking with people, talking with Mayra and we couldn’t believe what was happening and he was sharing stories with her about the fact that he also have [sic] family on the other side and that he understand[sic] but at the same time he have [sic] to do his job but today they closed their eyes on this and they saw it from the hills and decided not to do anything. (JR, 2019b).

A video was posted on his Instagram including the patrol agent’s peaceful intervention during the picnic. The participation of the people in the installation of the table on the U.S. side was relevant, JR reports: “there was nobody on the other side, because we couldn’t build a table,” until something happened:

After like an hour or an hour and a half you know, people were coming [...], we told them wait! Can you grab this? And we pass them the top through the fence, then they hold the top open then we sent little drone and we try to match the table with the top, and then we told them that’s good that’s good don’t move just put it on the floor, and they all sat, and then we’re like okay maybe we only have couple of minutes because the Border Patrol are watching so let’s go fast and so we started passing food” (JR, 2019b).

Thus, participants on the U.S. side can actually be considered as co-artists and co-authors from the Mexican side in the case of this particular artwork. Meanwhile, the wall seemed to fade out of existence and to matter no more: “and we started picnicking, and after 10 minutes after 30 minutes after 45 minutes no one came and stopped us so we started to relax, and we started to enjoy the moment and even almost forgot that the wall was there it was really a moment of time where we forgot, people were talking to each other passing the salt through the wall” (ibid.). In fact, by relying on the artworks’ playful (A1, A3) or chromatic (A2, A3) aspects, or on activities of throwing (A1), of “connecting” (as a tenet of JR’s work) (A4.a/b), or eating (A4.b), the artists had

other plans for the border than having it be a mere line. The colorful palette chosen by the conceptual-artists (blue (A2), pink (A3)) created an upbeat atmosphere, sending a message of hope. The black and white, as an uncolorful palette, yet a lightening balance, could put the spotlight on the precise limits of bordering between the U.S. and Mexico. I synthesize the geopolitical biopolitical parameters of artworks which I compared to the initial configuration imposed by the border as a political artefact, in a manner as to emphasize the manipulation of those parameters in favor of “no border,” which allows me to draw the following table (see fig.11).

	Territory: Geopolitics	Bodies: Biopolitics	Intentional embodiment
Initial Configuration	Separation: 2 entities	Climbing, passing food, phones, goods, digging	
A1. Walleyball Brent Hoff	Connected space 1 entity	Playing, jumping	Game strategy: socialization, abolishing racialization and determinations
A2. Erasing the border. A.T. Fernández	Extended space 1 entity	Body-artistic performance: Effort/aesthetical + painting Participants contribution symbolic painting	A strong embodiment expressing endurance, Aesthetics features
A3. Tetter-Totter Wall R. Rael	Connected space 1 entity	Playing, laughing, gathering	Game strategy: playful bodies, socialization, abolishing determinations
A4.a Giant Kikito. JR	Connected space 1 entity	Shooting, connecting with Kikito	Visual connection with the child portrait, visual endurance, aesthetic racialization
A4.b Giant Picnic. JR	Continual space 1 entity	Eating, passing food	Symbolic/religious/ ritual sharing, racialization abolished

Fig. 11: Redefining Geopolitics and Biopolitics Through Artworks
Source: authors' own elaboration 2020.

Conclusion

In matters of art, walled frontiers have historically engaged and inspired artists as these reached the Berlin Wall as one of the largest canvases in the world. However, the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall appears to have broken the record within its first decade. The period preceding the era of globalization witnessed the erection of borders and walls. Our current era, for its part, marks the return to a politics of paranoia triggering a period of reclosing borders, rebordering, and the emergence of walls throughout a Walled World. Indeed, security has become the corollary of present-day globalization with a thriving market of borders as the 'security industry' continues to manufacture borders and walls.

The architectural response made it possible to manipulate parameters that are more geopolitical than biopolitical, in contrast to artwork involving only on the canvas.

Artwork exhibited on the wall that lines the U.S.-Mexico border are a form of protest and struggle carrying a discourse of subversion. Through interactive and spatial art installations and performances, artists proceed to redefine the wall and its environment for the time of the artwork's lifespan. Whether they use symmetrical schemes or asymmetrical ones, artists agree about their subversive position against the wall as endangering human values which they defend and believe in, values such as freedom and equality.

Walleyball shaped the artists' but also the viewers' impressions of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands through a destruction of the racializing wall by using the strategy's game allowing socialization and taking a distance from determinations. JR also dispels the racialization of the border by means of a black and white non-chromatic but lightness binarity.

Ana Teresa Fernández performs with her body to embody gender and endurance on the border.

The artists' conception of land and territory and the interpretation of their bodies or of those of the participants testify to the whole meaning of the border with respect to the territory and to the population under a sovereign hegemonic system. Brent Hoff's footage is an artistic film project linking migration and space exploration through the game, where racialization is unknown.

Fernández's artwork, through the representation of the landscape and the use of her body in the first iteration of the work, encompasses both a geopolitical and a biopolitical dimension of the wall. Proceeding through community engagement in the two subsequent reiterations of "Erasing the Border," the artwork amplifies the protest message and aspires to become an icon of resistance.

The pink seesaws formed an installation balanced between the two borderlands, forming "*dyads*" connecting people through the game, mainly children being the future generations. For them, the seesaws will symbolically remain to swing until attaining equality between its two sides.

The black and white Giant Kikito seems to leave unanswered the child's question: "What is a border?"

All the performances took place in real-time, in "the here and now," in the "Hic et Nunc," in a kind of endurance of this "present moment." However, in relation to the concept of endurance as an artistic reference in the art world, the present was extended for as long as the observer-participant interacted with the artwork. This endurance allows assimilation of the experience of the suffering of people at the border in both psychological and physiological terms.

Moreover, artists' speeches are another means of communication; they are conveyed by virtual platforms or social networks, promoting on the one hand the documentation of the work and its reception and dissemination on the other. In addition to the conventional speeches developed on behalf of the work, the artists, except for Brent Hoff, gave TED conferences (TED: Technology, Entertainment and Design).

With the passage from canvas to performances, the perception of the work and its reception in the sampling analyzed is no longer anchored to the comfort of disengagement. The receiver leaves the status of an observer who stands in front of a canvas in a state of aesthetic contemplation to become, through the work, as involved as the artist, with a status of participant making a committed contribution.

These persons who were invited and involved, notwithstanding unconsciously, proved that they had resources; the explanation of this is found in the game's spring and principles inherent to performance art. In addition, the public was invited to participate and act in a way as to temporarily embody a "new biopolitics" through playing, painting, and eating; all this while temporarily dismantling the old biopolitics as oppressive, degrading, and even deadly status.

Regarding the geopolitical features of the territory, we notice that frontiers no longer provide the distancing of borders thrown over the far reaches, that the territory no longer offers the buffer that once surrounded it. The border is instead moving closer to the inhabitants, to the capital, to the state. Modern society does not provide the historical and geographical margins that traditional society did. Many other parameters can be considered to contribute, such as the bordering urbanization, the hyper-development of the security industry, and the

warfare arsenal. Modern society proceeds by putting lines in the front, in contrast to the backward-looking lines of the past.

Notwithstanding that, in reality, the wall is still maintained by force, power, and defended by the fear of others, it nevertheless carries the remembrances of the victim-dreamers on the other side of the "World/Wall." Theoretically, the artists show that the border as a line cannot exist because it does not resist simultaneous interactions between its two sides.

A borderless world remains utopian and metaphoric, being affronted with the upsurge of new fences and walls entailed by the processes of reordering and rethinking frontiers as seen during the globalization and post-9/11 eras.

Two realities are to be identified, though they seem to oppose the essence of the wall, which is that of separating and keeping away from its line, but paradoxically, they are inherent to it: the first is that no wall can withstand simultaneous forces of tension on either side of its surface. It becomes a remarkable contact zone. The second is that a wall, like any boundary, is subject to transgression. It may be diverted, exceeded, marked, deteriorated, and demolished. Besides, one stay perplexed about how many raised barriers there will be to collapse?

Frontiers and borders elicit the interest of scholars and researchers who study the issue of borders and territorialization, such as geographers (especially after the rise of cartography), geopoliticians, economists, and, more recently, artists have also been showing their interest in borders. This paper has explored the issue of how art comes to be grafted onto border fences and walls as a specific movement of border art that turns into a politically engaged medium, which may serve as a springboard for a new field in border studies through art, architecture, and the humanities. It has focused on the border wall and should provide a contribution for new border scholars taking an artistic approach to widen the view over the possibilities of expression according to other parameters, tools, and techniques.

To end on a poetic note, I think that as long as the sky is one for all of us, I can say: "Something there is that doesn't love a wall" (Frost, 1914).

NOTES

ⁱ *Site-specificity – (or site-specific), is term used to describe art that relates to a specific site and to emphasize the contextual quality of certain installations, “Border Door” being a masterpiece by Richard Lou (1988).*

ⁱⁱ *It is a street art that appeared primarily in the UK after which it spread across the world and became established in most countries where graffiti had already been developed. The principal tenets mentioned is that artists leave installations or pieces of art in public places, specifically unauthorized spaces, to express their views and opinions to a large audience in an anonymous way.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *It is a derogatory term used as an ethnic slur. It was originally coined and applied to Mexicans who entered by swimming or wading, getting wet in the process.*

^{iv} *Inaudible segments*

^v *Specified to me by the artist after a brief exchange with her through social media (Acknowledgements go to Ana Tereza Fernández).*

^{vi} *Mayra, a migrant/dreamer, is from San Francisco, but she was born in Mexico and came at a young age with her mother.*

^{vii} *Janet Napolitano was the Governor of Arizona (2003–2009) and President Barack Obama’s Secretary of Homeland Security (2009–2013).*

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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The research focuses mainly on the concept of the limit in architecture, which she pursues through and in-depth analysis using semiotic and linguistic approaches. As part of her work, Imen Helali studies the terminology of borders, boundaries, limits, fences, and frontiers in the various lexicons besides to the interdisciplinarity with urban history or urbanism for example, specifically with geography where geopolitics and biopolitics mainly highlighted the political dimension, respectively of territory and of people's lives.



Resistance and Remembrance in Border Art: A Response to EU Border Violence in Tunisia

ANJA BENEDIKT

The rebordering of the Mediterranean has led to a crisis in migrants' plight and death. The South Tunisian town Zarzis represents an externalized borderland between the EU and North Africa, in which the biopolitical impact of the EU border regime becomes visible. Faced with a never-ending stream of migrant bodies washed up on the shores of Zarzis, this article investigates this border crisis through the eyes of local artist Mohsen Lihidheb. It also argues that his border art establishes a space for resistance and remembrance which make migrant deaths uniquely and authentically visible. It will further show how the artist contests and renegotiates the hegemonic representation of the EU border and its security narrative, thereby locating responsibility for border deaths with the EU.

Border Art, Border Violence, Resistance, Remembrance, Tunisia

Widerstand und Gedenken in der Grenzkunst: Eine Antwort aus Tunesien auf die EU-Grenzgewalt

Das Rebordering im Mittelmeer hat eine Krise ausgelöst, die Not und Tod von Migrant:innen mit sich bringt. Die südtunesische Stadt Zarzis stellt ein externalisiertes Grenzgebiet zwischen der EU und Nordafrika dar, in dem die biopolitischen Auswirkungen des EU-Grenzregimes sichtbar werden. Angesichts eines nicht enden wollenden Stroms von Migrantenleichen, die an den Ufern von Zarzis angespült werden, untersucht dieser Artikel diese Grenzkrise mit den Augen des lokalen Künstlers Mohsen Lihidheb. Er argumentiert auch, dass seine Grenzkunst einen Raum des Widerstands und der Erinnerung schafft, der den Tod von Migrant:innen auf einzigartige und authentische Weise sichtbar macht. Darüber hinaus wird gezeigt, wie der Künstler die hegemoniale Darstellung der EU-Grenze und ihr Sicherheitsnarrativ anfechtet, neu verhandelt und so der EU die Verantwortung für die Todesfälle an der Grenze zuweist.

Grenzkunst, Grenzgewalt, Widerstand, Gedenken, Tunesien

Résistance et mémoire dans l'art frontalier : Une réponse à la violence aux frontières de l'UE en Tunisie

Le rebordering de la Méditerranée a entraîné une crise du sort et de la mort des migrants. La ville de Zarzis, dans le sud de la Tunisie, représente une zone frontalière externalisée entre l'UE et l'Afrique du Nord, dans

laquelle l'impact biopolitique du régime frontalier de l'UE devient visible. Face au flot ininterrompu de corps de migrant.e.s échoué.e.s sur les rives de Zarzis, cet article étudie cette crise frontalière à travers les yeux de l'artiste local Mohsen Lihidheb. Il affirme également que son art frontalier crée un espace de résistance et de commémoration qui rend les décès de migrant.e.s visibles de manière unique et authentique. Il montrera en outre comment l'artiste conteste et renégocie la représentation hégémonique de la frontière de l'UE et son discours sécuritaire, attribuant ainsi à l'UE la responsabilité des décès survenus à la frontière.

Art frontalier, violence frontalière, résistance, mémoire, Tunisie

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Introduction

The continuous rebordering of the Mediterranean by means of increased securitization, militarization, and externalization of the EU border regime, has led to a crisis in migrants' plight and death. This paper investigates the biopolitical impact of this border crisis through the eyes of South-Tunisian artist Mohsen Lihidheb, arguing that his border art is characterized by resistance and remembrance that on the one hand reconstructs and renegotiates the border by making border deaths visible, but on the other hand also deconstructs the border by creating a space of 'disbordering.'

Ever stricter entry and visa regulations have been imposed on non-EU citizens by the European Union (EU) since the signing of the Schengen agreement in 1985 and the subsequent implementation of freedom of movement among initially seven EU member states in 1995 (Zagaria, 2020, p.541; European Commission n.d. a). The continuous internal de-bordering of the EU with the Schengen visa now comprising 26 member states (22 EU and 4 non-EU) and 3 EU member states in the process of joining (European Commission n.d. b), has led to a rebordering and fortification of the EU external borders (Godenau, 2014, p.128).

EU external borders are above all characterized by the increasing securitization and militarization of border management operations that have the aim of deterring irregular migrants (Csernaton, 2018; Godenau and López-Sala, 2016). This is not least aided by the EU border management agency Frontex (Frontex, 2020a). Since this strategy of deterrence has however not hindered larger numbers of irregular migrants from arriving on European shores, the EU has particularly since 2015 re-focused its emphasis on transit countries (e.g. Turkey, Libya, Mali) as well as on rebordering the sea including international waters, in its strategy to externalize and outsource border enforcement and to block migrants from reaching Europe (Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016; Andersson and Keen, 2019; Bialasiewicz, 2012; Godenau, 2014, p.129).

As a result, on the one hand, the rebordering of EU external borders is a "hard fact" (Eder, 2006; Lybecker et al., 2018, p.530) that has made irregular migrants more vulnerable by forcing them to undertake ever more perilous journeys and to be exposed to dangerous, often life-threatening situations including torture, dehydration and starvation, sexual exploitation, infection, and drowning (Schindel, 2019, p.11). More than 7.000 border deaths have been recorded in the Mediterranean since 2014 (IOM, n.d.), although the numbers remain an estimate

with there likely being a large number of unreported or undetected migrant deaths (Deardon et al., 2020).

On the other hand, borders are a 'soft fact' (Eder, 2006). They are not a naturally existing but a socially constructed phenomenon that can be reconstructed, renegotiated, or deconstructed and rejected by different types of actors (Eder, 2006; Sinatti and Vos, 2020). For instance, the externalization of border enforcement to transit countries or remote places also allows EU member states to further outsource the violence and death caused by its border regime. With the idea "out of sight, out of mind," the EU and its member states can conceal EU violence and make border deaths invisible (Sinatti and Vos, 2020, p.75). Nevertheless, the media, and above all NGOs such as Alarmphone, Sea Watch, Open Arms, etc., have increasingly monitored and criticized unlawful deterrence of migrants and border deaths. They have contested the narrative of humane EU border enforcement and have criticized the exclusion of migrants.

This paper looks at how the border crisis of migrants' plight and death is narrated in border art in the South-Tunisian town of Zarzis. It investigates how the artist Mohsen Lihidheb confronts the harsh reality of local border deaths and how the EU border regime is discursively represented in his constellations of art and writing. It will argue that this border art contests the dominant EU narrative of a non-violent border and hence constitutes a form of resistance and remembrance that makes migrant deaths uniquely and authentically visible. The paper further shows that Lihidheb's art renegotiates the border as a frontier of continuing North-South inequality that, in his eyes, gives legitimacy to cross-border movements. As a result, Lihidheb's border art will be argued to reject the hegemonic security argumentation of the EU border and will instead find responsibility for border deaths at the EU level.

The paper is structured as follows: the first part will outline migration routes, numbers, and developments in the Mediterranean and will describe the specific geographical and migratory context of the South-Tunisian town Zarzis. The second part elaborates the concept of the border as a social construction and how border art can both reconstruct or dismantle the border particularly in the context of border deaths. In the third part, the artist Mohsen Lihidheb and his work will be introduced and the data sourced, and method described. The fourth part then discusses the findings of how Lihidheb's border art is a space of resistance and remembrance that makes migrant deaths visible, and that contests the dominant security narrative of the EU border

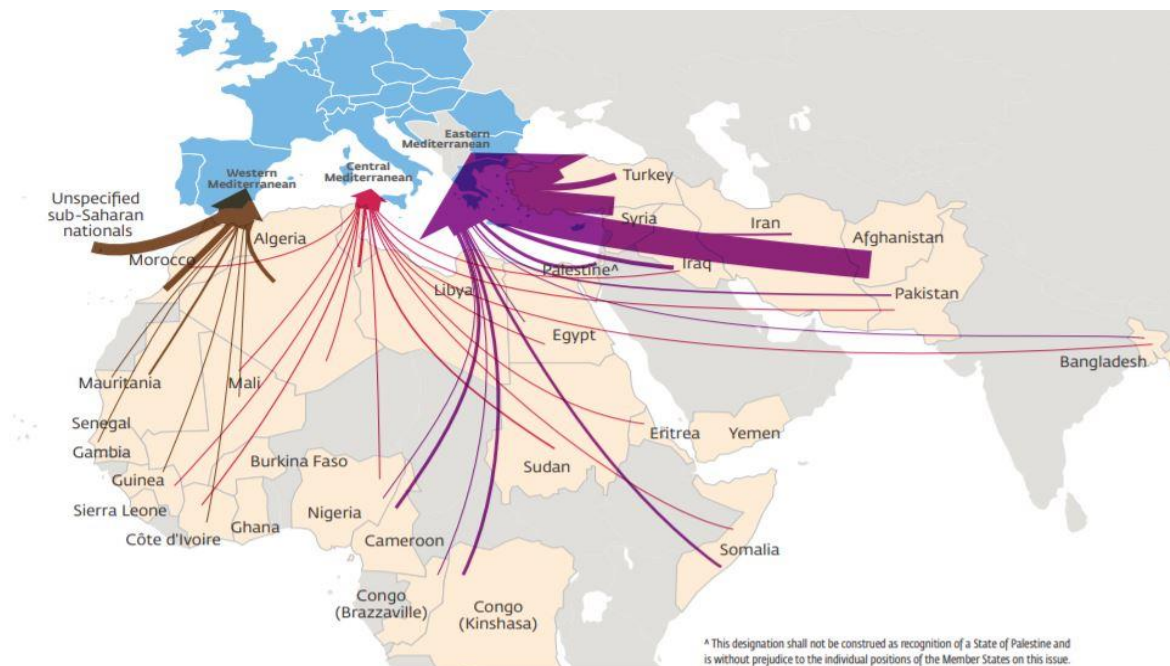


Fig. 1: Irregular Migration in the Mediterranean in 2019
Source: Frontex, 2020b, p.22.

by assigning responsibility for border deaths to the EU.

The Borderlandⁱ of Zarzis

There are three different routes for irregular migration across the Mediterranean to Europe (see fig.1) (Last and Spijkerboer, 2014, p.86; Frontex, 2020b; Alarmphone, 2019). While the Eastern Mediterranean route represents the border crossing from Turkey to Greece, the Central Mediterranean route refers to migration from Tunisia and Libya to Italy and Malta and the Western Mediterranean route from Morocco to Spain, as well as from Western Africa to the Canary Islands (Last and Spijkerboer, 2014, p.86; Frontex, 2020b). Hence, two of them constitute routes of irregular migration from Africa to Europe. The number of irregular migrants on these different routes has fluctuated over time depending on networks and smuggling routes, crises in the countries of origin, and the strategies of border enforcement enacted by European national and supra-national border agencies (Last and Spijkerboer, 2014, p.86).

Irregular migration via the Central Mediterranean route peaked in 2011 due to the Arab Spring revolution that started in Tunisia and influenced other Arab nations such as neighbouring Libya (Blakemore, 2019). The political vacuum or the lack of authority for border enforcement in the two countries led to an increase from 5.000 detections of border crossings in 2010 to 64.000 detections in 2011 (Frontex, 2012, p.15). While

Tunisian citizens represented the largest number of migrants to Europe in the initial months of the revolution, subsequent detections in border crossings along this route involved Sub-Saharan migrants who were either expelled or fled from growing civil unrest in Libya (Frontex, 2012, p.15). From 2012–2017, Libya represented the main transit and departure point for Sub-Saharan migrants from Africa to Europe (Frontex, 2020b, p.50), reaching its highest number of 181.000 detected border crossings in 2016 (Stierl and Kopp, 2019).

In the last few years, the number of irregular migrants on the Central Mediterranean route has decreased due to a rebordering of the Mediterranean, an increasingly fortified EU border and growing violence against migrants in Libyan detention camps (Stierl and Kopp, 2019). The EU discontinued its public search and rescue operations (SAR) in the Central Mediterranean in 2014/2015 and private SAR operators have increasingly been criminalized. Moreover, the EU is funding and training the so-called Libyan “coastguard” that has since 2018 been tasked with preventing the departure of migrants and with intercepting their boats (Stierl and Kopp, 2019). While less migrants are crossing the Mediterranean, those who do, have become more and more vulnerable. The NGO Alarmphone recorded a disproportionately large amount of distress calls from migrants trying to escape Libya in 2019 compared to previous years (Stierl and Kopp, 2019). The Central Mediterranean route has already previously been characterised as the deadliest border crossing in the world (Stierl and Kopp, 2019; IOM, 2020), but political

decisions and EU border enforcement have aggravated the vulnerability of migrants and have brought about a growing number of border deaths (Zagari, 2019, p.541). More than 7.000 border deaths have been recorded in the Mediterranean since 2014 (IOM, n.d.), although the number remains incomplete and is solely based on estimates (Last and Spijkerboer, 2014).

In this context, the South-Tunisian town Zarzis has arguably become a central migration hub in Tunisia for departure, transit and arrival. The fishing town of 75.000 inhabitants represented the main Tunisian departure point for irregular migrants leaving for Europe during the revolution in 2011 (Sayare, 2011) and continues to do so (REACH and Mercy Corps, 2018, p.29). Located 70km of coastline from the Libyan border (Carlino, 2018, p.38), Zarzis is the most southern Tunisian seaport and the second town reached when crossing the border from Libya. It is estimated that from October 2018 to August 2019, 80% of Sub-Saharan migrants have entered the country via the Southern border with Libya or have been picked up at sea following a failed attempt at crossing the Mediterranean (REACH, 2019).

Due to the currents of the sea and the specific geographical location of Zarzis, local fishermen do not only frequently engage in the rescue of shipwrecked migrants from Libya (MacGregor, 2019), but are also confronted with migrant bodies trapped in their fishing nets (Carlino, 2018, p.39). In addition, migrant corpses have been found washed up on the coastal shore across the Zarzis region on numerous occasions.

The media reported on a larger shipwreck of about 80 migrants in July 2019 that led to 58 migrant bodies being recovered in Zarzis (Euronews, 2019). Apart from such mass casualties, there has been little reporting by the media on single or fewer migrant deaths in the area, although the extent of the phenomenon has been communicated in international news media covering the single site of the “Cemetery of the Unknown” (fig.2) that hosts over 400 unidentified migrants in a former waste recycling site in the desert (Aljazeera, 2018; Zagaria, 2020). Consequently, Zarzis can be conceptualized as an externalized borderland between the EU and North Africa, in which the biopolitical impact of the EU border regime, and more specifically its violence, becomes visible.



Fig. 2: Cemetery of the Unknown, Zarzis
Source: Anja Benedikt, 28 October 2019.

The Making and Un-Making of Borders

Borders have been argued to represent both a ‘hard’ and a ‘soft fact’ (Eder, 2006). On the one hand, the above-described reality of border enforcement and border deaths are ‘hard’ undeniable facts. On the other hand, borders are anything from naturally occurring or pre-existing delimitations but instead are socially constructed imaginations of boundaries and belonging – ‘soft facts’ (Eder, 2006, p.256; Lybecker et al. 2018, p.529). In other words, borders are not physically and temporally fixed entities, but are social and political constructs (Lybecker et al. 2018, p.529; Schindler, 2019, p.8; Magyar-Hass, 2012). Subsequently, borders are symbolically and discursively created, re-produced or contested by different social actors (Schindler, 2019, p.9; Lybecker et al., 2018, p.529). This is, for instance, realized in the continuous narration of the border as a story thereby providing the border with meaning (Eder, 2006, p.266).

Firstly, since socially constructed phenomena are subject to interpretation, power and politics play an important role and lead to the creation of hegemonic discourses, hierarchies and boundaries that assert inclusion and exclusion (Amilhat Szary, 2012, p.214; Magyar-Haas, 2012). As Lamping (2001, p.22) explains, “Where borders are drawn, power is exercised.” Due to political power mostly resting with governments and global elites, nation-states have predominantly constructed borders to demarcate their territory and area of interest, although the media is also acknowledged to be vital in reproducing that image and construction of the border (Lybecker et al., 2018, p.529).

Secondly, socially constructed borders represent a dynamic reality that is positioned in time and place, and open to change (Eder, 2006, p.269; Magyar-Hass, 2012). Particularly, situations of crisis, of instability and change, trigger the discursive reproduction or re-negotiation of the border (Eder, 2006, p.258). This certainly also holds true with regards to the crisis of border deaths. Sinatti and Vos (2020, pp.72–73) maintain that the narrations and representations of border deaths are politically laden and further advance the reproduction or re-negotiation of the border itself, whereas Pécoud (2020, p.380) argues that the representation of border deaths is highly political because it involves assigning responsibility. Indeed, representations of border deaths are positioned based on who is narrating, what is reported, and for what cause (Sinatti and Vos, 2020, pp.73,78). For instance, the number of border deaths can be used to make the scale of migrant deaths “visible” but can also be used to make their deaths “invisible” in the form of reducing their personal stories to a sheer number (Sinatti and Vos, 2020, p.74).

Pécoud (2020, pp.380–381) further outlines two established frameworks for explaining border deaths: 1) The security framework identifies border deaths as a result of smugglers and insufficient border surveillance; and 2) the state-centered framework identifies the lack of legal migration routes together with migration control as the cause of border deaths. As a result, border deaths can be employed both in the argument in favor of or against restrictive border policies (Sinatti and Vos, 2020, p.77). Pécoud (2020, p.381) explains that while the latter framework is factually more convincing, it is the former security framework that is dominant in public discourse and hence in exerting political influence. The security argumentation can therefore be found in relevant political institutions.

For instance, albeit not mentioning the issue of border deaths, the European Parliament (European Union, 2019) claimed that the unprecedented arrival of irregular migrants via the East Mediterranean border in 2015, has “exposed a series of deficiencies” of the external border, which required reinforced border control and security in order to protect the functioning of Schengen, and to protect from “terrorist and serious crossborder crime activities.” Following the stand-off between Turkey and Greece with regards to the migratory pressure at their common border in March 2020, the European Council (2020) released a statement that the EU stands firm to protect its border from ‘illegal crossings’ and that “Migrants should not be encouraged to endanger their lives by attempting illegal crossings.” Lastly, also Engelbert et al.

(2019, p.136) point out that the readmission agreements such as with Turkey or Sudan assume that refugees are protected when being discouraged from migrating to Europe, and that in this sense their rejection is legitimized.

Yet, the crisis of border deaths has also created new opportunities for non-state actors or ordinary people to engage in discursive practices of re-negotiating or contesting the representation of the border and border deaths through speaking, writing, documenting, exhibiting and performing (Sinatti and Vos, 2020, pp.71, 73). SAR NGOs have actively challenged hegemonic constructions and dynamics of the EU border regime with their monitoring and reporting of migrant rights violations and border deaths (Cuttitta et al., 2020, p.46).

Cuttitta et al. (2020, p.38) assign researchers, writers, and artists an important role in the representation of border deaths and the foregrounding of different issues based on their specific perspectives. Directing the focus on artists, border art can be understood as “art on the border, art born from the border, art against the border” (Amilhat Szary, 2012, p.213). By realizing and framing alternative representations of the border, artists can contest dominant narratives and create an active space of resistance (Giudice and Giubilaro, 2015, p.80). Resistance is furthermore practiced in the artistic expression of literature, which provides a space for the subaltern to challenge hegemonic ideas by revealing the sufferings of the oppressed (Indumathy, 2014, pp.56–57). In fact, resistance literature is argued to have an obligation to propagate the ordeals of those being dominated (Indumathy, 2014, p.70).

As borders demarcate territories, they also regulate the movement of people and hence “differentiate, filter and control bodies,” which inherently involves a form of violence that can at its extreme result in death (Giudice and Giubilaro, 2015, pp.83–84). While this biopolitical impact of the border is often rendered invisible, border art can make it visible and can therefore represent a powerful tool for transforming the hegemonic discourse of supposedly non-violent, static, objective borders (Giudice and Giubilaro, 2015, pp.80,84). Artists have the opportunity of creating alternative, dynamic and performative spaces that can be understood as a framework for processes of disbordering – of continuously re-constructing boundaries (Giudice and Giubilaro, 2015, p.84).

Why is this important? For the construction of borders, cultural and narrative practices are as much required as border technologies and enforcement (Engelbert et al., 2019, p.133). Indeed, it is argued that the “soft facts” are

essential for “naturalizing” borders as “hard facts” (Eder, 2006, p.256), and that borders will always require narrations in order for them to function and to exist as a real instrument (Giudice and Giubilaro, 2015, p.83). Hence, their material and discursive production are mutually dependent (Magyar-Haas, 2012). In this context, I will analyze the border art of Mohsen Lihidheb and examine his understanding and interpretation of the border crisis, as it is displayed in his physical work of art, collection, and writing.

Methodology

The Artist

Born in Zarzis in 1953, Lihidheb worked for the Tunisian post until 1993, when at the age of 40 he decided to fully devote his time to his activism (Lihidheb, 2013, p.8). With his house not far from the sea, Lihidheb searches the beach for items every day (Zaiane-Ghalia, 2016, p.133), which he then collects and stores in his home, the Sea Memory Museum (Musée de la Mémoire de la Mer et de l'Homme). In 2002, he was awarded the Guinness world record for having collected the most items (26.820 different objects) within 6 years on the beach of Zarzis (Zaiane-Ghalia, 2016, p.133). He however does not simply store and preserve collected items from the sea, but assembles them into different objects (Cimoli, 2014, p.50), thereby creating artistic constellations “that are subject to continuous change and dynamic interpretations” (Cimoli, 2014, p.39). For instance, one of his records includes creating a pyramid of 100.000 objects collected from the sea (Lihidheb, 2006).

Lihidheb sees himself as an artist “who uses neither brush nor canvas, but accompanies objects in their forms, colors, lights, dimensions and aura” (Lihidheb, 2004). He intends to let the “objects express themselves,” which he thinks is an action expressing the “sublime beauty of nature” (Lihidheb, 2004). Apart from the assembling of objects, writing also represents an essential component of Lihidheb’s art and activism (Cimoli, 2014, p.40). He has written over 130 poems, many more testimonies and opinion pieces, which are entertained in eight blogs (Lihidheb, 2006; Lihidheb, 2013, p.8). As a result, he identifies himself among other as an ecological and humanitarian activist, artist, poet, writer, and blogger (Lihidheb, 2019) as well as philosopher and environmentalist (Lihidheb, 2004).

Lihidheb started to collect and to assemble objects from the sea out of global environmental

concerns. Yet, human ecology and the problems of undocumented immigration became part of his focus since 1995 when he started to find objects and bodies of migrant victims that were in his words “rejected by the sea” (Lihidheb, 2019). The sea is thought to have brought the migrant victims, who have failed to reach Europe and have drowned on their journey, back to their point of departure, back to Africa (Cimoli, 2014, p.39).

While the story of the migrant victims is not the main concern in his Sea Memory Museum, it has come to take up a significant amount of space and also to represent “an enormous part” of the narrative (Cimoli, 2014, p.39). Lihidheb furthermore documents and reflects on his encounters with migrant bodies or belongings in his book *Mamadou et le silence de la mer: Témoignages et poèmes* and continues to write down his experience and testimony in a blog that is particularly dedicated to the topic of the migrant victims. Lihidheb is keen on seeing his artwork and writing not as a hobby, but as activism (Zaiane-Ghalia, 2016, p.133). The wall of his Sea Memory Museum reads «NO WORK, NO HOBBY > AN ACTION» (Lihidheb, n.d.).

Sources and Method

For the purpose of investigating the representations of the border and of border deaths in his border art, I draw on his blogs, the mentioned book *Mamadou et le silence de la mer: Témoignages et poèmes*, as well as images of collected migrant belongings, of artistic constellations and of his museum as units of analysis. Furthermore, these sources of data are enhanced by having gained an insight into his collection during a personal visit to his museum in October 2019 and by conversations with the artist.

The data then is broadly analyzed under the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA as the guiding framework for analysis is applied firstly because it views discourse as a form of social practice, in which social phenomena, such as the representations of borders and border deaths, are produced in discourse (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p.258; Wodak, 2002, p.7), which corresponds with the assumption of borders as ‘soft facts.’

Secondly, CDA does not only address socio-political discourse but also recognizes power relations that inherently play a role as a result of the co-constitutive nature of discourse and social phenomena (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p.258; Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p.10). While CDA is more often involved with identifying and criticizing hegemonic discourses of the powerful elite, it can

also look at ordinary discursive reproductions or re-negotiations of less powerful actors (van Leeuwen, 2009, p.279; Wodak et al., 1999). This outlook is necessary when analyzing discursive productions that are politically laden and subject to power relations, as is the case for the representations of borders. It frames the analysis in the assumption that certain representations of the border and border deaths are dominant or hegemonic such as the representation of borders put forward by governments and border management agencies as well as the security framework rationalizing border deaths.

Thirdly, CDA seeks to critique in the form of uncovering social injustices and by revealing "critical knowledge that enables human beings to emancipate themselves from forms of domination" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, pp.6–7). Indeed, the framework of CDA is helpful with the aim of identifying and uncovering alternative representations of the EU border and its biopolitical impact. Generally, the framework of CDA allows to go beyond the analysis of content by not only identifying certain messages or visualizations themselves but also what impact they have (e.g. visibility of border deaths).

While there is no single method within CDA (Wodak, 2002, p.7), the process is data driven and based on a range of different analytical tools and research schools. The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) by Wodak and colleagues is useful with regards to combining the analysis of content, discursive strategies, and means of realization (Wodak et al., 1999, p.30). The analysis of content involves answering questions such as *what* characteristics do borders have and *what* consequences of borders can be identified? By investigating discursive strategies, and means of realizations, on the other hand, questions such as *how* are these consequences narrated, based on which argumentations and for what purpose(s)?", can be answered.

Apart from the common tools available such as argumentation schemes, lexical analysis, and referential strategies, in this particular context, a multimodal analysis was also required for the analysis of images and constellations of art (see Kress and van Leeuwen, 1998, p.186). Additional aspects for the analysis of images involve iconography (what is shown in the image?), attributes (what values and ideas are attributed to them?), and salience (what is highlighted?) (Machin and Mayr, 2012, pp.49–56). Answers to these questions and, overall, how the border and its crisis are represented in the border art of Tunisian artist Mohsen Lihidheb, will be presented in the following section.

Border Art as Resistance and Remembrance

Border Violence

With his collection, constellations of art and writing, Lihidheb contests the dominant representation of the border and reconstructs it as a place of inherent violence. He shows how the border violently controls human bodies. Firstly, he achieves this by documenting and testifying to border deaths, thereby making them "visible." Both in his blogs and in his book, he gives testimony about the migratory situation in Zarzis and his own encounters with belongings of migrant victims or migrant bodies. Explaining that "Zarzis was always a witness to this dramatic and genocidal exodus"ⁱⁱ (bastaharraga, 9.6.2017), in his collection of testimonials, he, for instance, notes: "2008.07.02 – In recent days there have been two bodies of shipwrecked people on the beach of Hassi Jerbi and another today in El Ogla." (Lihidheb, 2013, p.73). While referring to the encounter with border death as "this infinite cycle" (bastaharraga, 28.8.2015), and observing to find more and more traces of migrant belongings (bastaharraga, 25.4.2016), he elsewhere notes in relation to graves: "here a five-year old child, here another seven-year-old" (bastaharraga, 16.6.2017).

Secondly, apart from the numbers and general observations, the testimonials also specifically document the violence involved in border deaths. Lihidheb describes that some collected shoes from migrant victims still entailed human toes (2013, p.45), and portrayed one migrant victim as the following: "His head scalped to the bone shone by its whiteness and by the contrast with the black algae deposited all around what was left of his body. There was not much left of my friend" (2013, p.54). Naively asking Lihidheb how or where he found migrant victims during my visit to the museum, he was quick to point out that he once also discovered a lifeless body by hearing it and that the poem *Funérailles de "brûleurs"* is dedicated to that encounter. A paragraph from this poem reads (Lihidheb, 2013, p.29):

Your head was banging on the rocks,
Ding Ding,
Driven by the waves of the pier, Ding
Ding,
Your body was all loose, Ding Ding,
Naked like a newborn, Ding Ding.

Lihidheb further represents the border as an encounter of violence by collecting migrant belongings and displaying them in his museum, which apart from his writing also enhances the

visibility of border deaths. Fig. 3 shows a part of the displayed clothes and shoes of migrant victims in the Sea Memory Museum. With the almost playful constellation of the shoes, Lihidheb seeks to not only gain the visitor's attention but to also point to ongoing suffering and violence distressingly. He thereby creates a dynamic space that is different from the typical museum-style exhibition, where items are separately and neatly displayed as relics of the past.



Fig. 3: Sea Memory Museum, Zarzis
Source: Anja Benedikt, 28 November 2019

To illustrate just how much this representation of the border contrasts with the official narrative of a non-violent border, this is set in comparison with an image from Frontex's current risk analysis report in fig.4.



Fig. 4 : ©Frontex, 2018
Source: Frontex, 2020, p.25.

Thirdly, Lihidheb does not simply create visibility by abstracting border death with numbers and by documenting its violence, but instead he also creates, as Sinatti and Vos (2020, p.75) call it, a "human and embodied understanding" of the border space and its violence. Lihidheb re-

humanizes migrant victims by calling them "Mamadou," which is the West-African version of the name Mohammed. Although migrant victims are not necessarily from West African countries, the name here signifies that they are Sub-Saharan migrants, while the choice of "Mohammed" is based on the name being one of the most common ones in the Arab world and hence being representative.

A human understanding is furthermore fostered by describing his emotional involvement that is characterized by helplessness, anger, and sadness in the encounter of migrant bodies. For example, Lihidheb (2013, p.39) describes when reading a prayer to Mamadou II: "I have to admit that the words did not come easily to me, however sacred they were, and I had to end with a passionate cry of disapproval." In relation to Mamadou III, Lihidheb (2013, p.54) recollects that "the pain was unavoidable, intense and very painful, when I found my new friend."

Resistance & Remembrance

By challenging the hegemonic representation of the border and by exposing the suffering of the oppressed (the migrant victims), Lihidheb also creates a space for alternative representations (one of border violence) and one of resistance. Yet, resistance here is twofold. On the one hand, documenting and testifying border deaths and thereby representing the border as a space of violence can be classified as resisting dominant security representations of the border. On the other hand, Lihidheb also performs resistance to the encountered border violence.

Firstly, he practices this resistance by documenting his personal commitment to solidarity and humanitarianism in every encounter with Mamadou or his belongings. For instance, when finding shoes of migrant victims, he wishes "peace" to his friends and reiterates to stand united in solidarity (bastaharraga, 17.11.2015). He furthermore documents engaging in solidary and humanitarian acts such as sending half-filled bottles with fresh water drifting onto the sea (2013, p.43), reciting prayers to the victims each time (2013, p.51) and giving victims' bodies a dignified burial (2013, pp.55–56).

Secondly, he creates resistance by representing Zarzis overall as a welcoming place of friendship and solidarity that stands in stark contrast to the border violence that it is exposed to. It appears that the positive representation of Zarzis as well as his own acts are a way of dealing with and compensating for the border violence that is forcefully placed on the region as a result of the

externalization of the EU border regime. In one of his poems, Lihidheb (2013, p.14) narrates how Mamadou arrived on a peaceful shore of friendship and that he can tell his mother that Zarzis welcomed him. Also the fishermen of Zarzis are positively represented as honourable due to assisting and helping migrants particularly in the form of rescue at sea (bastaharraga, 21.8.2014; 16.6.2017). Following the revolution and Tunisia taking in thousands of refugees from Libya that were mostly placed in the Choucha camp at the Libyan border, Lihidheb (azizi-bouazizi, 26.4.2011) certifies that families in the south attended to refugees and welcomed them like family members. This positive representation of Zarzis is supported by the region's history of conviviality (bastaharraga, 10.12.2019), which is, for instance, evidenced by the Jewish community in Djerba.

More so, Lihidheb creates an artistic space for resistance, as he describes that he is not only engaged in practicing material and literary acts of solidarity, but also remains committed to artistic solidarity and protest (bastaharraga, 16.2.2017). He explains (2013, p.36) that each time he comes across an object of belonging of a migrant victim, he feels "a violent feeling of compassion" to collect, clean, and display the item in his museum, which he sees as a form of showing solidarity and respect with the victims. Lihidheb (bastaharraga, 2.5.2016) then creates different constellations of art with the items of the shipwrecked with the aim of dissenting and protesting and hence resisting the violence of the border. For instance, he assembles different objects with the victims' shoes (fig.5).



Fig. 5: Constellations of Victims' shoes

Source: Lihidheb, Bastaharraga, 13 April 2015.

The fluidity of the changing constellations is argued to represent performance art that is illustrative of the continuous migratory flows (Carlino, 2018, p.43). Lihidheb turns the objects of the dead into a "living question" thereby constructing a space for stories "that have not been told yet" (Carlino, 2018, pp.43, 50). Consequently, Lihidheb lends victims a voice and with it a form of agency that in an unfolding dynamic of storytelling by means of migrant relics shows resistance and opposition to the representation of the supposedly static, objective EU border. Lihidheb (2013, p.22) humanizes and gives life to the victims by, for instance, sometimes wearing their clothes, which he sees as "I carried you in my heart." Another time, following the finding of a girl's red waistcoat, Lihidheb (2013, p.35) re-enacted a wedding procession placing the coat on a tree and driving it amidst the honking through town, before creating a new configuration with the coat playing the central role in his Sea Memory Museum (fig.6).



Fig. 6: Memorial for the Sea Mermaid

Source: Lihidheb, 2013, n.p. between pp.48–49.

While Lihidheb sees such acts as solidarity and respect towards the victims, it also restores the agency of victims giving them a voice by means of a fictional story. Cimoli (2014, pp.39, 50) argues that in the absence of family members and official burials and graves, such actions seek to fill the void caused by death and assist the grieving process as well as the recovering from collective trauma and loss.

Lastly, as the examples have already shown, Lihidheb's art serves the purpose of remembrance. He understands his constellations and collections in his museum as a memorial. Indeed, he asks that collective memory cannot forget the migrant victims (2013, p.82) and that his museum serves as a memorial for them (bastaharraga, 10.12.2019). Apart from the assembling of objects within his museum, he has also created objects in the salt lake Sebkhia Touila between Zarzis and Bengardane (town between Zarzis and the Libyan border) as a memorial for the migrant victims, which could be seen from the road and hence had the purpose of reminding people of the ongoing drama (Lihidheb, 2013, p.46). He argues that the objects are the only monument memorializing the ongoing "massacre" (Carlino, 2018, p.43).

Responsibility for Border Violence

Resistance in Lihidheb's border art can also be identified with regards to the representation of why border deaths occur and who is responsible. Lihidheb's writing and art constellations contest the hegemonic security narrative of the EU and instead blame the absence of legal migration routes and EU border control and securitization for migrant deaths. As such, he reproduces the second state-centered framework that locates responsibility for border deaths at the level of national governments, the EU and border enforcement agencies. For instance, Lihidheb (2013, p.65) explains that irregular migration occurs, since regular visas and work contracts in Europe are almost impossible to obtain.

Yet, apart from the state-centered framework, Lihidheb's main narrative renegotiates border violence because of remaining global inequalities. While he essentially sees "closed" borders as a problem and as "unnatural behaviour" (Lihidheb, 2013, p.49), he also argues that the facilitation of visas and open, legal migration routes can only be "part of the solution of such a complex problem" (bastaharraga, 17.6.2017). This is based on his rationalization of continuing South-North migration because of remaining global inequalities. The South is above all represented as poor, with problems of "poverty,

disease, unemployment, underlying slavery" (bastaharraga, 6.1.2016). He furthermore identifies the South to have a structural problem of climate change and an impoverished economy (zarzisitarzis, 4.5.2018). On the other hand, the North is characterized by 'polarization' and "attractions of consumption and acculturation" (bastaharraga, 31.10.2016).

Lihidheb essentially constructs this as a global problem and not simply as one between Africa and Europe. For instance, he also identifies a North-South frontier between Mexico and the U.S. (bastaharraga, 6.1.2016), between the Middle East and the North as well between the Philippines and Australia (zarzisitarzis, 4.5.2018). While this global representation of a North and South divide essentially reconstructs a border between the two based on the identified differences, Lihidheb argues that it is precisely these differences, this disparity in global economic opportunities and the ability to create a decent life, that makes (irregular) migration from the South to the North legitimate. The argument of a legitimate crossing of borders then once again deconstructs the idea of the border.

Lihidheb describes migration towards the North as responding to "the innate reflex of survival" based on an equal right to work and well-being (bastaharraga, 28.9.2018). Consequently, migration is, beyond the mentioned reflex of survival, seen as an "irresistible cultural call to the north" (bastaharraga, 9.6.2018) that is fundamentally legitimate. While he distinguishes between environmental refugees from the South and migrants from the Maghreb, he also represents the latter with a rightful reason to migrate based on seeking to improve their living conditions and by working hard (bastaharraga, 9.6.2017). By reconstructing a global North/South divide and by arguing for migration to be legitimate, Lihidheb also engages in a representation of disbordering. Mamadou is characterized as continuing to migrate and to attempt to cross borders independent of European actions of rebordering (bastaharraga, 4.7.2019).

On the other hand, Lihidheb also knows that a new approach and solutions are required (bastaharraga, 20.10.2017) that essentially address the problem of global inequality at its root (Lihidheb, 2013, p.61). He asks European governments to "leave their fortress" (bastaharraga, 9.6.2018), to assist local development and to stop with racial boundary drawings (zarzisitarzis, 4.5.2018). Moreover, he argues that solutions must be based in human solidarity, diversity, and mutual respect (bastaharraga, 20.4.2018).

These representations from his writings can furthermore be identified in his artistic constellations. The constellation in Fig.7 is formed with the life jackets and shoes found and collected from migrant victims. The shoes are placed to form a circle representing the globe. Yet, they are all pointing towards a light at the top, which signifies the global migration towards a shining North. Lihidheb further points out that the nature of the shoe generally expects movement towards the front, which hereby denotes the one-way direction of migration towards the North (bastaharraga, 3.11.2014). While the aspect of the life jackets is left open for interpretation, one could argue that their exterior placement signified their uselessness, since Lihidheb mentions that they have not saved migrants from drowning.



Fig. 7: Eco Art: Clandestine Emigration
Source: Lihidheb, bastaharraga blogspot, 3 November 2014.

Lastly, the signpost reading 'Basta Harraga' needs to be addressed, which is also the name for his blog dedicated to the victims of irregular migration. The word 'basta' in Italian means 'enough.' The word 'harraga', on the other hand, comes from the Arab word 'to burn' and is used in Magreb countries for the literal expression of 'burning borders' or 'irregular migration.' Nevertheless, the term 'harraga' has far more implications. M'charek (2020) explains that the term has a history as an activity of planning or preparing for departure, of leaving for better economic prospects, yet simultaneously doing so by defying state rules and boundaries. Moreover, the term 'harraga' has post-colonial implications implying that while there is continuous exploitation of natural resources easily being shipped out of the country, people are stopped from migrating and have to do so undocumented (M'charek, 2020, pp.423–425). Together, the expression 'enough of irregular migration,' however, is argued to be a political statement against the system inducing irregular migration to the North and not against the people migrating

irregularly (M'charek, 2020, p.427). This understanding of 'Basta harraga' then also corresponds with Lihidheb's criticism in his writings of a global system of inequality inducing migration on dangerous journeys to the North. In summary, Lihidheb connects local experiences of border violence to a global system of inequality that can only be addressed and rectified by a global humanitarian approach of solidarity. With this, he adds a significant layer to the state-centered framework that solely addresses border violence by disbordering the border itself but not in the form of addressing global structural inequality.

Conclusion

The discussion of the theoretical underpinnings outlined that discursive constructions and narrations of the border stand in a co-constitutive relationship with the material production of the border. The dominant story of needing to "protect" EU external borders against irregular migration or migration from specific third countries in itself or in order to ensure the freedom of movement within the EU, provides the basis for the continuous material fortification of the EU border regime. On the other hand, the mounting pressure of irregular migration and border deaths at the increasingly securitized EU border, reinforce the narrative (security framework) on needing to "protect" and to securitize the EU border.

The border art by Mohsen Lihidheb has been shown to represent an important contribution for contesting this dominant and official EU representation of the border as a humane frontier protecting from outside intruders. Instead, his art and writing convey by means of personal testimonies and collected belongings from drowned migrants, the inherent violence of the border and the EU border regime. New forms of representation are argued to be required for migration and hence also borders (Cimoli, 2014, p.51). Lihidheb delivers such new representations of the border and border deaths by providing eye-witness testimonies about occurring incidents "on the Tunisian coast in real time" (Cimoli, 2014, p.51). His access and location as well as the conservation and artistic use of the migrant "relics" from the sea credit him with authenticity and a unique approach of narrating and remembering migrant victims.

Lihidheb's border art further contests the dominant security argumentation that represents the official narrative of the EU. Instead, Lihidheb explains border deaths as result of the absence of legal migration routes and the increasingly

securitized and militarized EU border and hence identifies responsibility for border deaths with the EU. His representation of the border is furthermore framed by a global post-colonial understanding of the border as a North-South divide that is shaped by global inequality. As a result, the border art of Mohsen Lihidheb can be said to create a space for alternative representations of the border and a space of resistance.

This is of course not to say that alternative representations and spaces of resistance do not also exist in Europe. Many (SAR) NGOs and their increased activity on social media certify to the existence of both material and discursive resistance. Nevertheless, I argue that it is vital to further increase the visibility of such alternative representations from the EU border. Visibility is important because the act of transferring and disseminating the experiences and messages from outside the EU border to its inside is an act of resistance, of crossing the border, in itself. Visibility furthermore is paramount because it resists the current dominant trend of externalizing and outsourcing EU border enforcement and its inherent violence. Increasing the visibility of local border art, therefore, such as the one by Mohsen Lihidheb basically returns both the material violence as well as the alternative representation of a violent EU border back to Europe.

It has moreover been argued that it is important to gain an insight into the perspective and representations of art from the “other side” of the border per se (Berelowitz, 2006). Ideally, visibility

of border violence and a humanization of migrants could further be enhanced by giving migrants and their families a voice. Since the identity of migrant victims in Zarzis remains largely unknown (only 1 identified border victim so far), Lihidheb fills this gap by speaking up on behalf of the victims. His art can raise awareness not only with regards to alternative representations of the border, but also in relation to the situation and circumstances that the local Tunisian population faces by unwillingly having become the externalized borderland between Europe and North Africa.

A shortcoming of Lihidheb’s art in this sense is its reach. While he has welcomed journalists in his museum over the years and has participated in cultural art exhibitions in Italy and Tunisia, his level of dissemination does not compare to that of active SAR NGOs that are equipped with funding, volunteering and social media staff. Lihidheb in this sense is a one-man operation on a limited budget strongly motivated by personal convictions but not in support of government funds. As he testified in his blog, he is enthusiastic about visits to the museum, educational activities with the local youth, participating in documentaries and giving radio speeches, but has not received promotional support from local hotels, travel agencies or the Office for Tourism. As a result, if the aim is to diversify representations of the border and increase the visibility of border violence, alternative spaces, and voices such as the one provided by artist Lihidheb need to be supported.

NOTES

ⁱ Borderland is understood as the “Territorial system that is under the impact of border factors” (Spiriajevas, 2019, p. 18).

ⁱⁱ All translations from French to English from the artist’s work are my own.

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No Room for Bare Life on Stage: The Biopolitics of Syrian Migrant Artists

RUBA TOTALAH

No Room for Bare Life on Stage: The Biopolitics of Syrian Migrant Artists

Since 2015, many artists have joined migrating people from Syria. After arriving in Europe, their biographies, shared via post-migrant performing art spaces, have been contributing to the political debate on migration. These biographies promote solidarity with Syrian migrants and enhance diversity in the host countries. However, by examining transnational aspects of artists' performativity and resilience mechanisms, they contribute to further understandings of these biographies beyond the limitations of the host societies' politics. This paper examines the biopolitics of Syrian migrant artists' performativity beyond the border crossing experience. It redefines artists' biographic representations through tensions emerging between subjectivities and citizenship demands.

Performativity, Biography, Resilience, Post-Migrant Theatre, Arab Performing Arts, Biopolitics

Kein Platz für das nackte Leben auf der Bühne: Biopolitik syrischer migrantischer Künstler*innen

Seit 2015 haben sich viele Künstler*innen den flüchtenden Menschen aus Syrien angeschlossen. Nach ihrer Ankunft in Europa tragen ihre Biographien, die sie in den Räumen der darstellenden Künste nach ihrer Ankunft in Europa teilten, zur politischen Debatte über Migration bei. Diese Biographien fördern die Solidarität mit syrischen Migrant:innen und tragen zu mehr Vielfalt in den Aufnahmeländern bei. Indem sie jedoch transnationale Aspekte der Performativität und der Resilienzmechanismen von Künstler:innen untersuchen, tragen sie zu einem erweiterten Verständnis der Migrant:innen über die Grenzen der Politik der Aufnahmegesellschaften hinaus bei. In diesem Beitrag wird die Biopolitik der Performativität syrischer migrantischer Künstler:innen jenseits der Erfahrung der Grenzüberschreitung untersucht. Indem er die Spannungen zwischen Subjektivitäten und Anforderungen der Staatsbürgerschaft in den Blick nimmt, definiert der Artikel die biografischen Repräsentationen von Künstler:innen neu.

Performativität, Biographie, Resilienz, Post-migrantisches Theater, arabische Performance-Kunst, Biopolitik

Pas de place pour la vie à nu sur scène : Biopolitique des artistes migrant.e.s syrien.ne.s

Depuis 2015, de nombreux artistes ont rejoint les mouvements migratoires en provenance de Syrie. Après leur arrivée en Europe, leurs biographies, partagées via les espaces artistiques post-migrants, ont contribué au débat politique sur la migration. Ces biographies favorisent la solidarité avec les migrant.e.s syrien.ne.s et renforcent les formes de participation et de diversité culturelles dans les pays d'accueil. Cependant, les mécanismes de performance et de résilience des artistes sont soumis à ces cadres politiques post-migrants. Cet article examine la biopolitique de la performance des artistes migrant.e.s syrien.ne.s au-delà de l'expérience du passage de la frontière. Il redéfinit les représentations biographiques des artistes à travers la relation entre les subjectivités et les demandes de citoyenneté.

Art du spectacle, biographie, résilience, théâtre post-migrant, art du spectacle arabe, biopolitique

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Introduction

In the past six years, the Syrian displacement challenged social and political regimes of countries hosting hundreds of thousands of displaced people (Dinan et al., 2017; Hess and Kasperek, 2017; Huysmans, 2000). The Syrian migrant figure has been represented widely, particularly within the performing arts scenes in Europe (Baltaci, 2017; Bouziouri, 2019; De Smet et al., 2019; Litvin, 2018; Cox and Wake, 2018; Ragab et al., 2017, Sharifi, 2017; Wilmer, 2018). Many theatres adopted post-migrant visions of solidarity and resilience against populist and racist adversities that confront societal changes. They established programsⁱ that invite Syrian migrant artists to reflect on their experiences aesthetically (Totah and Khoury 2018). By taking part in such theatre programs, performing artists' biographies were able to contribute substantially to the political debate about migration in Europe. One of these performing artists is the Syrian actress Seham (53) who was forced to leave Syria. Since 2015, her life story has been presented in at least three productions, among many others she played at theatres in Germany and France. As documentary theatre, these plays staged Seham's memories of past and current confrontations with forms of authority. By preparing these memories for theatrical use, Seham's life story became a hub for political and cultural relationships emerging between her personal experiences, the theatre institutions' visions, and the host societies' receptivity of the productions. Dynamics of these relationships introduce several powers that influence what Rosenthal (2004) called the dialectic interrelation between experience, memory, and narration in forming a person's biography. They subdued Seham's authority over her life story narrations. The biographical narrations of migrant artists, such as Seham's, contributed to the socio-cultural and aesthetic role of theatre in the debate about migration in Europe (Wilmer, 2018) and introduced self-reflexive cultivations of the migrant state in applied theatre (Tinius, 2015; De Smet et al., 2019). Such representations of biographies negotiate and substantiate public consciousness on migrants seeking asylum (Cox, 2017). However, they focus on political understandings connected with and limited to the crossing of borders and integration issues in European societies. They confine representation of migrant artists to exoticization, biographical voyeurism, and debates of ontological worthiness (Litvin and Sellman, 2018). As a result, migrant artists' representations, I argue, disregard momentous attributes of artists' performativity and minimize subjectiveⁱⁱ schemes of their artistic

identity formations. Therefore, there is a need for a biographical approach that mirrors past and on-ground biopolitics at several nation-states' regimes where migrants encounter severe citizenship regulations; that is to say an approach comprising biopolitics at borders as well as within migration contexts. Such biographical understandings disclose the narration mechanisms of artists beyond host countries' inhibiting schemes of the figure of a Syrian migrant artist. It invites wider circumference of biographic explanations, including resilience, gender, and memory aesthetics, from a transnational perspective.

Through a socio-anthropological analysis of artists' life stories, this paper examines how they perform as Syrian migrant artists and generate resilient and non-resilient attributes to defy, assert, and coexist with authoritative regimes on their life experiences. For Syrian performing artists who became migrants, like Seham, their life histories reflect various modes of movement, including the physical crossing of borders, remnant movements from past experiences, and others related to their inner selves. Situating these movements within the framework of biopolitics explains how artists perform their life stories to become Syrian migrant artists, borrowing Beauvoir's term of 'becoming' (Butler, 1985; Tedd, 2004). Their becoming is not only corporeal; it signifies what Sartre calls the context and medium of all human strivings, where the bodies implicate what is 'beyond' themselves in that they are in constant need for being surpassed (Blau, 1991; Butler, 1985). The paper examines artists' cognition of their performativity by revealing opposites and emerging negations within their practice of 'becoming,' whether before or after displacement. Through comprehending these aspects of their performativity, the paper offers new venues of their biography understanding.

This paper is in line with studies on biopolitics that examine the link between migrants' endangered bodily experiences and various powers affecting them as they cross borders (Demos, 2013; Ince, 2018; Mansoor, 2010; Sanyal, 2017; Totah, 2020a, b). It also extends studies on resilience that describe human behavior following crises or moments of hardships in their daily lives or at workplaces (Bourbeau, 2018; Branicki et al., 2019). By investigating biographies, the article is connected with Butler's (1990, 2009b) concept of 'performativity,' which explains gender as a ritual of body practice. By adopting a wider perspective, performativity does not only mean the way an artist does gender or performs it. Neither does it exclusively mean the way theatre is done or performed, nor does it imply that doing theatre is

vital to explain the life experiences of artists within creative processes. Performativity, in this paper, refers to artists' overall narrated life experience, which includes their profession and their gender. Aspects of artists' performativity are induced through microanalysis of a specific narrative of a Syrian artist (Seham), who currently lives in Europe. In this way, biographic representations of Syrian migrants become part of the artists' cognition process. My analysis illuminates subjective processes of biography constructions which enable negotiation with these representations. By doing so, the paper contributes to an understanding of heated concepts in theatre practice, such as post-migrant and post-Heimat (Home) from a transnational, and ontological perspective.

Methodological Approach

This paper relies on the transnational biographical interview analysis (Apitzsch and Siouti, 2015; Cassell and Symon, 2004; Charmaz, 2014; Czarniawska, 2004) as a method to gather and analyze first-hand qualitative research material from a group of sixteen artists forced to leave Syria after 2012. Personal semi-structured interviews were conducted over two years (2017–2019) with artists currently living in several European countries. All artists had over five years of professional experience in dance or theatre, completing at least five productions before leaving Syria. Upon arrival in Europe, the artists obtained various legal statuses and engaged with several theatre institutions. For inducing the results, a microanalysis of an anonymized artist (Seham) narrated life story was carried out, followed by an examination of the resulting themes identified within the life stories of the remaining group of sixteen artists. By using an empirical approach embedded in grounded theory, the processes of events experienced by artists are described, including how they structured these processes in actions that pushed forward creative transformations. There are several references and mentions of experienced events in the analysis. They are presented through what Rosenthal (2004) calls a life story, which refers to the narrated personal life in conversations with the artists in the present time. They are also presented as life history (ibid), which refers to the lived-through life of an artist. Rosenthal distinguishes both presentations by introducing a relationship between experience and memory with the narration. It connects the past perspective of biographers to the displacement experience and present migrating processes. As such, Seham has constructed her

past (life history) by presenting it in her narrative (the life story) in the present.

The Biopolitics of Syrian Migrant Artists' Performativity

Seham's life story is a micro-historic account of the nexus relationships between authoritative regimes and an artist's corporeal experience. These regimes consist of totalitarian governmental institutions, such as in Syria (see Fares, 2014; Kassab, 2015), which produce and enact despotic economic or nationalistic obligations on an artist through contracts or discourses. Others encompass the rigid cultural norms (Sharabi 1985) imposed on the artist. Moreover, they involve applying borders and migration policies' security regulations on the artist's citizenship processes (Totah, 2020a, b). Politics of control by these regimes require certain interactions from individuals. For artists, their interaction infiltrate in their corporeal experiences, which comprise behavioral habits in daily life, at work, or during and after displacement. Substantially, these artists' biographical narrations reflect how their interactions constitute the biopolitics of their lives. Seham's narration exhibited a behavioral tradition performed for more than twenty years since she graduated from theatre school. I watched her perform a play in Berlin in 2017. Propelled by what I perceived as an incest sceneⁱⁱⁱ in the play that contrasts with norms prevailing in Arab cultures, I wanted to know about her life history, so I asked for a meeting. Her narration revealed dissatisfaction, for reasons not related to the scene. It provided insight about various exasperating authorities over her life experience, comprising dictatorship, patriarchy, and the power of memory, and borders and migration. The way she has continuously struggled to handle these authorities throughout her life explained and curtailed her discontent with the play. Her narration provided a synthesis of references and events temporalities that described control over Seham's decisions. She referred to a Syrian theatre system that congealed on the journey of being an artist. "I felt trapped in a box, and I wanted to travel and see more theatre." The theatre system dictated a lust for stardom among its practitioners. '[D]ictatorship caused us, in the [theatre] field, megalomania. It covered the feeling of inferiority that the [Syrian] regime causes.' Later the system reconstituted megalomania transnationally. She referred to the example of the Syrian director of the production I saw in Berlin. The director transgressed and

misused her memories, but she could not stop it, as she said, "There were contracts, and in the end, I was doomed to them." Besides, the theatre system repressed her desires. Throughout the rehearsals, she complained about exposing part of her memory without dramaturgical revisions, and that the director overlooked several improvisations to rework the material. She explained, "For me, the performance lacked dramaturgical work, and it simply lacked the story." Such an authoritative theatre system directed mental and corporeal processes of her memory, her body utilization, and her artistic choices and imagination spaces to comply with its control. Her compliance, while attempting a profession under the totalitarian regime, iterated the control of the regime and caused memory distortion and megalomania, accompanied by continuous frustration.

Moreover, the transnational aspect of the narration regenerated the impact of memory and experience on the biopolitics of Seham's life. She referred to a phone call incident (memory) with her father in Syria. She asked about being accurate in using (experience) a certain memory in the piece, that included him. She said:

He told me that there is a memory, and there is a remembrance, so I need to keep this in mind and not to rely on my memory because it could be powerfully misleading. He encouraged me to think about what I would like to remember and why? This question changed my perspective, and I was no longer convinced by this work.' (Seham, 2019)

The call incident created a dialectical relationship between her past experiences with parents in Syria, including her remembering behavior experienced previously, and currently, and her experiences in narration. The relationship reworked the phone call narration across several temporalities to serve the current verdict about misusing her memories on stage. As such, biopolitics of Seham's life are constituted through continuously connecting geography and past events with present narrations. It comprised compliance with social, political, and economic pressures of authoritative regimes. These pressures established a boundary that limited Seham's behavioral habits. Constant enclosure within such boundary turned them to an authoritative historical inscription, which engulfed Seham's body within frames congregating the visions that the regimes had about her identity. The inscriptions represent what Foucault calls 'governmentality,' aims to regularize the body's behavioral processes (Davitti, 2018), where Seham's artistic, national, and transnational identity processes became

regulated by these regimes. Overall, they shaped the present life history into a specific biography, which is mainly connected to biopolitics.

Thus, practices of governmentality regulated both internal and external processes of Seham's biographic experiences. These practices inhibited Seham's explanations of her biography within physical, global, and objectified explanations of these powers. Externally, they regulated the physical cross-border movement between the East and the West, which implicated the racial control of a migrant's behavior (Stoler, 1997). Besides, they reconstituted her life history within the global refugee art market, which turn the body of the artists into a patriarchal commodity (Totah, 2020b). Also, they objectified authoritative inscriptions within art productions. The play on stage corporeally resembled how Seham is performing the subjection of her body to the authoritative regimes. Internally, these practices evoked a complexity of irritation and defensive feelings, demonstrated in the narrating voice that reflects inner positions on the regulating practices. Performing these inner (suffering) and outer (compliance) behavioral patterns interchangeably as positions, they constitute a consciousness, where an artist constantly reconsiders and transforms understanding of the regulations. These shifts in consciousness and the accompanying positions explain that being a Syrian artist is not something one is, but rather something that one does or constantly performs while interacting with various authorities despite the geographical location and time. The explanation agrees with Butler's (in Butler and Salih, 2004) definitions of performativity in that it is not a singular act. It is a repetition, a ritual which achieves its effect through making it natural in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained act. Through being performative, Syrian artists can constantly transform narrations of a life history to introduce various understandings of authoritative practices and produce various possibilities of biographies. As such, the biographical constructions establish biographies as performative acts.

Performing Transnational Resilience

In addition to compliance and suffering positions, Seham's narration demonstrated confrontations with the authoritative regimes. The confrontations combined both the inner and outer positions. By referring to a specific incident with her parents, which took place more than 15 years ago, the three of them had a moment of extended truthful confrontation about personal issues, suppressed fears, and pressures. The moment

which was filled with elaborations on patriarchal powers reflected courage to confront and respect freedom. It helped break away from conventional familial rules and hierarchies, generally characterizing Arab families, because it was based on a decision the three of them made together. Thus, it formed a turning point that disentangled her from the patriarchally organized family system (see Sharabi, 1985; Joseph, 1996), which has societal consequences of asserting patriarchy as a social system. It evoked an agency to challenge these systems. She added, "I needed this confrontation because I did not want to live in delusion, nor in taboos, in *haram*, or *halal* whatsoever. I decided to be real, and being real makes you undesired [in the Syrian societal context]. It means that what I think is what I say, and I know this is hard because then what I communicate to others might be a taboo for them." The confrontation incident affected her later work and perceptions profoundly:

I did *Phèdre*^{iv} in 2004. Both my parents attended, and I had no fear. I was relieved. I no longer handle any kind of authority over me, or any form of dependency, which we [Syrians] later rebelled against [10 years ago]. For me, rebelling against the rule of the house and society are fundamentals to the extent that without them, you just repeat what [authoritative relations] you were rejecting. (Seham, 2019)

The confrontation moment further displayed the performative aspect of Seham's biography under the regulating authority. It revealed an agency to deviate from preset images of a woman as an inferior body that is subject to societal taboos such as honor, fertility, and obedience to patriarchy. In daily behavior, she restyled her body again by ceasing to reiterate typical submissive gender relationships and recurrently attempted to reverse superior attitudes of a group over another. The behavior highly depended on art as an emancipatory practice, which influences professional endeavors. In theatre practice, the agency of artists grows as they join collaborative creative processes because these processes infuse questions about behaviors, intentions, and mischief of characters (Totah, 2020b). They also seek and exemplify transformations of characters, especially in epic theatre (Benjamin, 1968). In Seham's case, the narration described an implicit agency accumulated through practicing theatre, which enabled her to propose and apply this confrontation with her parents, being figures of patriarchy. By accumulating this agency, new performative attributes are born. They are counter-performative of what constitutes a Syrian artist and function against

inscribing her body to the regulated role of femininity being submissive, obedient, and inferior to the male figure. These counter-performative attributes can be described as an artist's mechanism of resilience facing national powers of dictatorship and patriarchy. Attempting to perform these attributes in the homeland, Seham rebutted an expressive model of the rigid cultural meaning of a 'true Syrian,' and the Syrian artist, emphasizing that actually there is no such person as a 'natural Syrian artist' who pre-exists governmental, institutional, and patriarchal powers.

Recent migration and management studies introduced resilience as processes of bouncing back from adversities that migrants are facing within professional venues at institutions of the host country (Bourbeau, 2018; Branicki et al., 2019). These processes comprise receptivity, adaptability, reflexivity, and the capacity to learn. Seham's biography revealed that, after the legal status of a migrant, she performed transnational-based confrontations with a dictatorship regime at the workplace. She continuously sought new theatrical experiences with emerging dramaturgs and directors not affiliated to the regime and its idols. It also provided that in response to transnational suppression, Seham resumed attempting to style her body as free from forms of patriarchal and totalitarian subjection by despising exposure of her memory. Agency to confront suppression evoked reflexive attention to questioning what constructs her image in exile and what compelled complying with the contract that guarantees her economic status as a migrant. It included questioning the ethical motivation of receiving her as a migrant in Europe and accepting her as a migrant artist in the European theatre scenes. "[W]hat investments are they intending through us [workers in theatre from diverse backgrounds and languages], why do they fund our works, and why they want the German society, and the Arabic groups in Germany too, to know us?" Such reconstruction of resilience as an accompanying life position, not limited to the migrant status, embedded resilience within Seham's performativity. It lost its significance as a sole marker of migrants' experiences. Resilience became, in agreement with Branicki et al. (2019), a ritualized repetition of acts bouncing against adversities on various levels of life matters in the biographic construction.

In addition to Seham, other artists' narrations disclosed compliance, suffering, and confrontations or resilience as performative attributes under authoritative regimes. Previous studies (Totah, 2020a, b) on life experiences of migrant artists coming from Syria found that to

cope with border and transnational powers, they repeatedly styled their experiences to disentangle from memories and cultural references of the homeland before reaching Europe. They then re-entangled with them again when they reached the host country. The studies also revealed that the artists identified with nation-states regimes, migration policies, and integration programs throughout their life. The dis/re-entanglement and identification formed artists' trajectories to reconstruct themselves 'home' again after displacement. However, the trajectories included compliance with the various powers governing their lives and their losses of home. These trajectories regenerated the relation between memory and biopolitics of their lives. At borderlands, memory formed a personal and emotional tool to connect, contrast, and confront with regulating authorities of what constitutes a domestic space. In the course of creative processes in Europe, their memories, like Seham's, became media of negotiating artists' identities, where their agency and their choices, references, remembering, and confrontations in improvisations became part of the memory work that served their confrontations. Therefore, memory evolved as a counter performative resilience mechanism: by recreating their memories, artists continuously connected geography and past events with present narrations to maintain the confrontations with the encountered regimes.

However, if Seham and the other artists engaged in memory work that repeatedly failed to produce an accurate memory, this reiterates that a Syrian migrant artist is constantly and simultaneously constructing the past and present. Memories, being continuously exposed and directed by boundaries of the various powers regulating artists' bodies in homelands, at borders, in borderlands, and in the current destination of their displacement, these artists recapitulated that a biography of a migrant artist relies on a various and interchanging set of memories. Consequently, being a migrant artist is also performative, showing that there is no 'natural' Syrian migrant artist, which pre-exists migration policies and border controls and integration programs. By explaining migrants' resilience attributes as a continuous reshaping and confronting with fixed representations at home and outside it, this explanation recalls Arendt's (1973, p.281) argument that the 'naked man' figure is a human who breaks the relationship between man and citizenship and who is unbound by human rights or international policies. Once given a migrant status, Seham and the artists became bound again with political interpretations. Failing to produce an accurate

memory describes artists' attempts to maintain the naked man figure, which continuously questions to shake the biopolitics.

In summary, by demonstrating the performativity of Syrian migrant artists, their biographical constructions provide subjective explanations of their experiences. These include personal compliance, suffering, and confrontations with authoritative regulating regimes. Some of these experiences are contradictory but are taking place simultaneously to produce consciousness of movements that are influencing the 'becoming' of a Syrian migrant artist. It is a process of connecting inner with outer performative attributes, which contributes to the emergence of the Syrian migrant artist subject^v and its current appearance. If this subject is constantly represented politically through the many times that the artists narrated their life story, or reconstructed their life history, or produced their biography, then the representation of the biography of a migrant artist relates to the migrant artist subject's state of becoming itself. Artists' biographic representation becomes the object of a Syrian migrant artists' 'surpassing' in that they are in constant need to know about themselves through their other, and their biography. This object as produced biography can be explained through what Hoskins (2006) calls a 'biographic object,' which is connected to the person but is at the same time detached from them. In the next section, I will provide an in-depth analysis of Seham's cognition of the performative attributes of her subject to demonstrate how the subject's desire structure established her biography. The aim is to gain further knowledge of a person's identity, challenging fixed political representation.

Cognition of Migrant Syrian Artist's Performativity

As the governmentality of becoming a migrant artist stimulated producing a biographical object, cognition of this object includes transnational movements of the Syrian migrant artist subject between at least two sets of cultures and theatre styles.^{vi} It comprises layers of desire to explore these theatre styles and the self through them, and one's biography. Fulfilling this desire developed in what Butler (1985) explained as a synthesis of movement between the subject and its alterity.

In Seham's case, when she was still in Syria, she longed for establishing a new Syrian theatre style: "[M]y aim is to search for a reality Syrian theatre style." She fulfilled this desire by experiencing as

many diverse theatre styles as possible. Later in Europe, she resumed to desire these explorations: "I am very grateful to have been able to explore my potential in communicating with the women [she worked with on a theatre project] even if we did not speak the same language." Her desire comprised an arrangement of relations between the conscious actions that motivated learning these styles and unconscious interactions, which related to alterity or lost opportunities that she missed throughout performing herself as a Syrian migrant artist. These movements comprise a desire-structure where the theatre styles represent the other, and where the migrant artist constructs the biographical objects and implements the movement between the self and its alterities. The following is an analysis of Seham's structure of desire to explore new theatre styles across cultures and how the biography of a migrant artist is located within this structure.

Migrant Artists' Desire and Alterity

Seham's structure of desire includes reflexive and intentional conscious and unconscious elements to achieve satisfaction. She started to be reflexive after graduating from the Syrian theatre school when she traveled to explore other^{vii} diversified theatre experiences. The main tool of the exploration was her body, which she consciously used in order to eliminate cultural and political boundaries that categorized and limited her theatre explanations.^{viii} After several travels, she came to the realization that the boundary eliminating character of theatres seemed to result from their specific philosophical attitude: most theatre schools share a philosophy centered around honesty of the actor in staging a character to serve its transformation throughout the play best. Her travels and experimentations ensued a way of character-embodiment.^{ix} It is a process that explains how Seham combined her corporeal experience with her mind and thoughts to fulfill her desire by finding characters in her surrounding life whom she could embody. Then, by connecting with this person through her body and mind, she reproduced that person and herself anew.

[T]hrough my research, I do not rely on the plot because this is happening either way. I search for what a character wears, the shoes, do they affect movement or speech. If she reads the Quran, I read and learn about the physical experience of a woman reading the Quran. I need to believe the character to engage in being this character despite all the differences

between us. I would never make sacrifices for men in a love story as she would. I know what love is, but I stop and think if it is worth it. There is someone I know, a neighbor of my friend, she complains about her boyfriend, who does not show up. For me, this character wants to be someone else but cannot because she is stuck with that person. It is like she cannot get out of the house. How do I put her on stage, what do I do to my voice and body to help her? Here I rely on my consciousness as an actress. I realize that there is no lying here or even acting because I need to be this character and lead her transformation, or else why would this character be on the stage. This moment of honesty makes the character decide to transform. (Seham, 2019)

The process has the effect of what Walter Benjamin (2008, p.479) describes as aura, "the unique apparition of a distance, however near it be." It describes the unique reproduction of a character and the character embodiment act. The aura of character-embodiment cannot be eliminated because neither the artist nor the character is the same after it happens; they both transform. However, its effect on both, especially the artist, is enchanting because it unconsciously widens the boundaries of the self. Through her narration, Seham stated that she did not only play those embodiments on stage but that she dragged the practice even closer to identify with others in daily life. She revealed other situations where she had daydreams about finding a character-embodiment of people even without putting them on stage. She has been transforming gossiping rituals about people with her friends by finding solutions like those she performs on stage, and sometimes she took real actions. By numerous recurrences of this character-embodiment throughout her life, this process became an unconscious reflexive pattern. It created an inner movement through which Seham surpassed what she knew about herself by things that she did not think she knew. She experienced what Hegel (in Butler and Salih, 2004) calls the rhetorical agency where a subject always knows more than it thinks.

Thus, by desiring diverse theatre styles, she unconsciously discovered dimensions of her own identity. If her behavior tradition constituted inscriptions, then the discovered dimensions of the identity by being reflexive constitute all behaviors that do not fall within this tradition and all that is not governed by biopolitics. She may not have necessarily intended to discover them but she did. In the context of theatre, these discoveries are relational (Bourriaud et al., 2002). They elaborate on artistic meanings through

character-embodiment. They also introduce ethical and political change (Tinius, 2015) that serves a new political goal of many European theatre institutions, which call for diversity in theatre practice. By being reflexive, both Seham's consciousness and the object of her desire, which include her biographical object, theatre styles, and the self, are transforming and replacing the static truth of any political representation of a Syrian migrant artist. In this respect, the desire-structure demonstrates that the biography of an artist is constructed through a reflexive pattern of transformations that does not entitle biography to one representation and makes it unable to seek one ethical and political change. It comprises the plurality of changes sought by confrontations with biopolitics, such as the new identity figurations of reflexivity, and the diversity calls of theatres.

In addition to reflexivity, the structure of desire is unconsciously intentional, as it unconsciously intends to widen self-understanding by inviting ontological disparities (Butler, 1985). Seham's processes of character-embodiment underlined an unconscious surpassing of personal boundaries, such as being an educated and self-esteemed actress, or a Syrian, or an artist, or even a woman. It also shed light on identifying ontological relations with others outside these boundaries. By identifying with others, she intended a set of actions to make others' experiences like hers. Then, she chose to contribute to these characters' transformation through conscious acts she decided, and by so doing she is satisfied. Her identification took place at two levels: Firstly, the psychological level demonstrated ascribing to herself the characteristics of what is opposite to her. Secondly, the sociological level demonstrated how she included herself to the circle of the social group that the character represented. She explained, "I need to believe the character to engage in being this character despite all the differences between us." Through such identification, she transformed the external interactions with characters into internal ones where differences that appear as disparate are considered part of the ontological integrity of her experience.

Also, she invited ontological relations with opposite representations of her legal status. Through a German woman character-embodiment, she was reproducing herself and the character anew, which in this case was the negation of her status as a migrant in Germany. She explained that dealing with this character was like dealing with any other character, but it served **breaking away** from racial boundaries. The experience, as she reflected, was illuminating for

herself and the audience, especially about the image they both had on being non-German. She commented, "they were amazed by the role even if I said no German word." The narration referred to several other negations connected to Seham's status as a migrant, such as a dependency on governmental income or becoming international through her experience. She was handling these negations to find not only an active style of living her body in the world but also a way of resuming her resilience mechanisms.

In summary, the character-embodiment enabled unconscious identification with what she had previously disfavored as other, the negation of her desires, or the undesired features which she separated from her being. By referring to her friend's neighbor who complained about her boyfriend, she explained, "I realize that there is no lying here or even acting because I need to be this character and lead her transformation." She achieved the transformation when her body became the hub for those disparities and represented the negating other. The 'I' continued presenting her soul, and the mind connected with the body to serve a transformation through the body. Through performing these negations and seeking their transformation, she shifted the consciousness of both herself and the opposite. Intrinsically, in addition to reflexive patterns of transformation, the desire-structure comprised intentional opposites inclusions that entitled biography to a plurality of representations, which may agree or contrast with the ethical and political change it seeks. It is through being an artist that this turbulent construction of biography is made possible, which constantly introduces a certain representation, as well as its opposite, thus not allowing a fixed political representation.

Migrant Artists' Gender and Loss

Performativity by Butler (1985) introduced the structure of desire around gender, which explained gender as an active style of living one's body in the world. It plays a central role in the cultural meaning of the body. Performing one's gender contributes to transforming the consciousness of the self and its alterity. For a Syrian migrant artist like Seham, practicing character-embodiment included imagining, believing, and questioning a female character, which are seen as repeated acts to produce the appearance of a woman as a natural being. This regulatory frame congealed over time as the female character appearance of Seham. However, there are counter-performative attributes which enabled her to confront this frame by mocking the expressive nature of sexual

relationships. She explained how she questioned frames related to a father-daughter relationship and homosexual love. She said, "[A]t the time, I defended my right for feelings that are considered taboos like admiring my father. I wanted to rebel against everything." Her rebellion extended by the confrontation with family frames and by similar embodiments of such questions on stage. She performed other character-embodiments of peers and friends who avoided naturalizing an unregulated performative ritual of their bodies as women and men. Such performance explains her corporeal experience as a mediator of ontological disparities, which includes encounters with gender differences, although she maintains performing her gender as a woman. Repeating the process of utilizing her body to confront with congealed understandings of being a woman is another counter-performative attribute that shakes the substance appearance of a Syrian artist woman and a Syrian migrant artist.

Moreover, despite the reflexive and intentional constituents of her desire to defy regulated behavior of gender, forms of identification do not only relate to desire, but also, as Butler (1995) explains, they contain prohibition, and so they embody the ungrieved loss.^x In Seham's case and those of the other artists, forms of identification included identification with another gender, different from their appearances, in addition to an identification with different theatre styles and different representations of a biography than the ones they narrated in their life histories. Also, identification encompassed prohibitions of unselected memories in exile and non-compliant performative attributes. It included what was left unperformed as a migrant artist, and in Seham's case, the Syrian migrant artist woman. Therefore, despite the transformed appearances that are achieved through character-embodiment, the characters' new appearances continue to comply, suffer, and confront the powers because they did not achieve a radical turn over on each character-embodiment. Counter-performative attributes and character-embodiment failed to resolve the various sorts of the melancholy of herself and these characters, even if unconsciously intended. That is to say, the structure of desire, although it expands the boundaries of the self, does not eliminate boundaries on her performativity.

To summarize, the socio-anthropological analysis of the Syrian migrant artist expression enabled us to understand biographies of its holders through their performativity. The micro-historic analysis on the Syrian migrant artist's expression relied on the Hegelian perspective of a subject as a being whose consciousness and relationships are based on doing, recognizing, and continuing a sense of identity. It provided the

cognition of biographies as comprising unconscious identifications with alterities and losses, which widen the space of representations of biography to include contrasting, performative and transformative ways of introducing multiple understandings of ethical and political change.

Discussion

Syrian migrant artists' cognition of their performativity embrace biography as part of a migrant's subject. It constitutes the subject's alterity, the desired object. By connecting with several anthropological interpretations (Hoskins, 2006), an object is perceived to have a biographic connection, such as the biographic connections of humans, and a transformative agency related to the persons who produce and circulate it. By understanding the produced biography of a Syrian migrant artist as a biographic object, which is inhibited within physical, global, and objectified explanations of the biopolitics of the subject, its agency mediates transformations of these explanations and reflects the subject's suffering. Kopytoff (1986) proposes perceiving a biographic object as animated and malleable commodity that is linked to various explanations by humans which result in transformations. For migrant artists, these transformations serve a post-migrant vision of theatre institutions in a migration context.

Post-migration has been introduced as an analytical framework on the dynamics of globalized societies such as European societies. It emphasizes the concept of citizenship through promoting a space for negotiation between cultural encounters while being together within the same society, and a space for sharing democratic values centered on diversity. It focuses on the processes constituting this space that comes after the migration (Foroutan, 2015; Peterson, 2020; Peterson and Schramm, 2017). Post-migrant theatre visions generally question existing frameworks of knowledge related to migrants by inspiring new understandings through voicing migrants in the theater space. However, the post-migrant space focuses on European societies' needs and interpretations for diversity and citizenship, which are centered on eliminating prejudices and discriminations. It situates the material produced by the artists within frames of diversity in the host society and neglects artists' other subjective concerns.

The analysis revealed that such theatre space has failed to enable artists to restructure their biography beyond their compliance with authoritative regimes that they experience transnationally. Therefore, the biography of the

Syrian migrant artist becomes an object inhabited by compliance with the citizenship obligations of this space. Recent post-migrant visions introduced the concept of migratory aesthetics (Bal, 2015) to shift the focus from artists to the artwork itself and the aesthetic experience of its audience. It aimed to avoid the exclusionary effect of the concept called 'migrant theatre' or 'migrant art,' where artists are considered as outsiders. These artworks constituted the produced biographies on the artist's life history, which according to the analysis form the alterity of the artist. However, by attempting to avoid this exclusion, a substantial part of the artist's subject is neglected.

Moreover, Gell (1998) links the agency of the biographic object with an ability to stimulate emotional responses. Nevertheless, by accumulating compliance in a post-migrant context, artists' emotional responses are governed and channeled toward the alterity of their subject: the attempt to transform the biographical explanations of migrants questions the post-migrant and post-Heimat (home) perspectives and points out their limitations and eurocentrism. It questions their missions of seeking diversity of European societies representation by inviting to dialogue issues related to the pre-migrant state of the subject, and its governmentality, a reflection which may include colonial and global political topics. Recently, Peterson (2020) combined a post-migration approach with a post-colonial one, bringing together post-colonial issues of oppression and subaltern cultures, difference, and hybridization, with current formations of citizenship from a post-migrant perspective. Such combination includes the various constructions of the migrant's subject and its multiple confrontations. As such, it brings to discussion biopolitics of borders as part of the overall experience of migrants, not as their only experience.

As the agency of the biographical object reflects an agency of the subject for surpassing itself, and as artists have multiple agencies to confront with biopolitics, artists display their counter-performative resilience as a decolonial confrontation within the post-migrant space. These confrontations, as explained by De Certeau (2004) through his understanding of how culture is consumed, are artists' tactics, their maneuver, within the power's territory, where the space of confrontation is the space of the other. These tactics constitute their way of negotiating and readjusting the post-migrant political representation of migrants. Artists use their biographies as an object of tactics, and they use the theatre ensembles within post-migrant

spaces as opportunities for representation of the self, the other, and the other self. However, continuing to seize the opportunity to provide their objects within these spaces repeat a performative routine that congeals their objects into a representation specifically connected with these spaces. Therefore, the post-migrant representation demands are becoming additional authoritative inscriptions of artists' experiences.

The resilience of a Syrian migrant artist subject is perceived as surpassing one's performativity to introduce new attributes that continuously integrate past connections (not only the ones related to displacement) within current narrations to keep recreating new versions of artists' biographic objects beyond crossing the borders. It continues to widen the circumference of artists' identity-making by maintaining identification with what is prohibited, or what is not performed and preserves a balance with the migrant representation. The resilience of Syrian migrant artists proposes a practical understanding of losing home and rights and becoming a 'naked man' as described by Arendt (1973). It also iterates what Agamben (1995) calls 'bare life' where there is a part of being human that no security measure can protect. Artists' confrontations within the post-migrant and post-Heimat (home) spaces, which call for specific political change that neglects part of their subject, constitute their breaking with being humans and with being migrant citizens. By losing homes because of displacement, and by losing identification due to current post-migrant visions that accumulate biopolitics of their experiences, the opportunity of artists to integrate into these host countries is challenged. These circumstances lead humans to stop wanting any integration (Arendt, 1973). The bare life situation describes the state in which a Syrian migrant artist negotiates insecurities and resilience opportunities between subjectivity and post-migrant, post-Heimat (citizenship) calls for diversity.

This paper has illustrated how Syrian migrants generate resilient and non-resilient attributes of compliance, suffering, and confrontation with biopolitics. They provide several biographic potentials, all inhibited by biopolitical explanations. It has also illustrated that post-migrant visions of diversity provide a space for these biographical representations. However, by neglecting the various biopolitical influences on the artists' performativity, they transform into a challenge themselves. The resilience mechanisms of artists continue to generate biographical productions, attempting to disconnect with both subjective and citizenship representations.

NOTES

ⁱ For example, the Münchner Kammerspiele theatre in Germany introduces its Open Border Ensemble goal 'Against a backdrop of crises migration, exile and violence worldwide, the ensemble wants to open up new collaborative paths and oppose artistic isolation.' For Agamben (2009), subjectivity results from 'the relentless fight' between living beings and non-transcended powers, which can only be resisted by radical ontological indifference.

ⁱⁱ An Unusual scene of a brother and sister making love, mostly the sister, was deluded by the striking question she was trying to answer about her father being a police officer at the Syrian regime.

ⁱⁱⁱ It is a French tragedy by Racine.

^{iv} A subject, being embedded within the concept of subjectivity, it comprises consciousness and awareness of the self and the objects.

^v These cultures include sustained rituals on networking and employment mechanisms that formulate the disparities between theatre practiced in Syria from theatre practiced in France or Germany

^{vi} The Syrian theatre style, as she provided, is mainly inspired by the soviet experience.

^{vii} These boundaries include geographical borders, governmental visions, and racial references.

^{viii} Brecht and Plessner have argued about the relationship between theatre art and real-life as reflecting each other (Fiebach, 1999).

^{ix} Butler considers for her theory of the gender question that the structure of desire embodies the ungrieved loss of the homosexual catharsis.

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Necropolitics at Sea: A Reading from Mediterranean Border Fiction

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Whereas living migrants are conceived as objects of interest and control of biopolitical regimes, those who perish in the attempt of crossing the Mediterranean Sea remain uncoun- ted and unidentified. In current times of clandestine Mediterranean crossings, the maritime stretch turns into the liquid terrain of mobility conflicts: migrants are either detained or let drown *at sea* and *through* a strategic use of the sea. It is in this context that I will investigate the imageries of the Mediterranean Sea as a biopolitical and necropolitical dispositif as they transpire in Mediterranean border fiction. The corpus of analysis comprises three literary works set in the first decade of the twenty-first century that address the theme of clandestine migration across the Mediterranean borderscape.

Clandestine migration, Mediterranean borderscape, border fiction, border aesthetics

Nekropolitik auf See: Eine Lektüre mediterraner Grenzliteratur

Während lebende Migrant:innen als Objekte des Interesses und der Kontrolle biopolitischer Regime betrachtet werden, bleiben diejenigen, die bei dem Versuch das Mittelmeer zu überqueren umkommen, ungezählt und unerkannt. In Zeiten der ‚illegalen‘ Überquerung des Mittelmeers wird die Seestrecke zum flüssigen Terrain von Mobilitätskonflikten: Migrant:innen werden entweder festgehalten oder auf See ertrinken gelassen, und zwar durch eine strategische Nutzung des Meeres. In diesem Zusammenhang untersuche ich die Bildsprache des Mittelmeers als biopolitisches und nekropolitische Dispositiv, wie sie in der mediterranen Grenzfiktion auftauchen. Der Analysekorpus umfasst drei literarische Werke, die im ersten Jahrzehnt des 21. Jahrhunderts spielen und das Thema der ‚illegalen‘ Migration durch die mediterrane Grenzlandschaft behandeln.

Illegale Migration, mediterrane Grenzlandschaft, Grenzfiktion, Grenzästhetik

La nécropolitique en mer : Une lecture de la fiction frontalière méditerranéenne

Alors que les migrant.e.s vivant.e.s sont conçu.e.s comme des objets d'intérêt et de contrôle des régimes biopolitiques, ceux qui périssent en tentant de traverser la Méditerranée ne sont ni recensés ni identifiés. À l'heure des traversées clandestines de la Méditerranée, l'étendue maritime devient le terrain liquide des conflits de mobilité : les migrants sont soit détenus, soit laissés se noyer en mer, dans le cadre d'une utilisation stratégique de la mer. C'est dans ce contexte que j'étudierai les images de la mer Méditerranée en tant que dispositif biopolitique et nécropolitique telles qu'elles transparaissent dans les fictions frontalières méditerranéennes. Le corpus d'analyse comprend trois œuvres littéraires situées dans la

première décennie du XXI^e siècle qui abordent le thème de la migration clandestine à travers le paysage frontalier méditerranéen.

Migration clandestine, paysage frontalier méditerranéen, fiction frontalière, esthétique frontalière

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Introduction

Clandestine migration across the Mediterranean Sea has been on the rise since the mid-nineties, when many EU nations implemented the Schengen Agreement to abolish border controls at the mutual borders of the member states and fortify external ones. Efforts to prevent the clandestine maritime crossing has deadly consequences and migrant deaths have become part and parcel of current clandestine migration. Since the early 2000s, the Mediterranean basin has been named a “maritime cemetery,” the ultimate resting place of an average of two thousand migrants per year (Brian and Laczko, 2016, and Papadopoulou-Kourkoulou, 2008, p.2). The ongoing death of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea has come to play a fundamental role in the politics of migration and borders. The upsetting presence of corpses after a shipwreck, as well as the haunting absence of those who have drown and never been found, have stimulated political debates in contradictory ways. As Heller and Pezzani (2018) claim, migrants deaths are not only condemned by those demanding justice for the dead and the missing, but also, spectacularized by the authorities to support their securitized border practices. Thus, the maritime stretch turns into the liquid terrain of mobility conflicts: migrants are either detained or let drown *at* sea and *through* a strategic use of the sea. The geopower of the sea, understood as the “forces that precede, enable, facilitate, provoke and restrict life” (Grosz quoted in Depledge, 2013, p.91), is maneuvered by geopolitical practices that shape the way in which the maritime geopower functions, and therefore affect the ways in which some people are empowered and others limited by it. In other words, the liquid terrain of the sea has been turned into a device, “enabling a form of killing without touching” (Heller and Pezzari, 2018, p.2) whereas migrants’ death at sea have to be understood as the consequence of necropolitical border practices that highlight the ways in which migrants’ lives and deaths have been made to not matter.

It is in this context that I will investigate the imageries of the Mediterranean Sea as a biopolitical and necropolitical dispositif as they transpire in Mediterranean border fiction. The corpus of analysis comprises three literary works set in the first decade of the twenty-first century that address the theme of clandestine migration across the Mediterranean borderscape. In these novels, the Mediterranean border appears as a force in motion, whose amplitude and potency reflect the power of border control itself. Catozzella’s bio-fictional novel, *Non dirmi che hai*

paura (2014) [*Don’t tell me you are afraid* (2016)], narrates the Mediterranean borderscape as a space in which two imaginaries establish points of connection between incompatible yet simultaneous heterochronotopes: the heterotopias of the sea as a refuge and of the sea as a cemetery. Within these space-time continuums that overlap but remain divergent to each other, contrasting experiences of living and dying across the Mediterranean are encountered. Whereas in *Non dirmi che hai paura* [*Don’t tell me you are afraid* (2016)], the Mediterranean borderscape takes the contours of a character with two dissimilar sides – a liberatory expanse versus a deadly space – in Khaal’s semi-realistic novel, *African Titanics* (2008, English transl. 2014), the maritime border is a place where the conventions of law cede, unmediated violence intrudes and inequities are most intensely made manifest. The novel’s ultimate scenario – the drifting boat and the eventual shipwreck – is evocative of the migrants’ disorientation and precariousness at the crux of statelessness at sea. Lastly, Pajares’ detective novel, *Aguas de venganza* (2016) [*Waters of revenge*], explores the experiences of migrants who, caught between death and detention facilities, enter the spiral of the sovereign ban (Agamben, 1998) and necropolitical zones of exception (Mbembe, 2003), literally a regime of death, as the state applies its bio-power on people’s lives by turning human beings into non-subjects and therefore exposing them to a legal suspension of rights.

Dreams Interrupted: Catozzella’s *Don’t tell me you are afraid*

Catozzella’s *Non dirmi che hai paura* (2014) [*Don’t tell me you are afraid* (2016)] is the fictionalized account of the life of Samia Yusuf Omar, a promising athlete from Somalia who aspires to take part in the London Olympics of 2012. She lives to run, and her desire for running forces her to sacrifice more than she can possibly expect: her own life. The bio-fictional novel, told in a first-person retrospective narrative, begins in 1999, with the eight-year-old Samia running through the streets of Mogadishu, a city torn apart by civil war and ruled by the fundamentalist militias of Al Shabab. The war has undermined her living conditions and it has taken away one important thing for the young Samia: the access to the sea. The sea that, in her eyes, resembles “a beautiful expanse, gigantic, like a sleeping elephant breathing deeply” (Catozzella, 2016, p.15, further

quotes are from this edition) is out of her reach, but it constitutes still a constant presence in her life: it is seductive, it lures her to approach it, its currents symbolize movement and immense possibilities, whereas her passion for running “is [her] sea” (p.16), and her legs flow ahead “like waves driven by an energy that wasn’t [hers] [...] like the gravitational pull of the moon and the sun on the sea’s tides” (p.51). The more Somalia gets shaken by political and war disputes, the more Samia dreams of leaving her country. Even though she is not specifically targeted, she feels that she has no alternative other than migrate. Hence, moved by the desire to find a competent coach in a place in which “she could do everything like a normal person, like any other girl” (p.172), on July 15th 2011 Samia sets out on the journey. The passage through the Sahara Desert, and eventually across the sea, is orchestrated by a well-organized human smuggling ring, and Samia does not have difficulties in finding her first contact person, Asnake, who promised to bring her to Kharthoum, in Sudan. Her first leg of the trip from Addis Ababa to Khartoum takes place on the open bed of a jeep together with other seventy-one persons. From the very beginning of the journey, she feels like a nonentity, “a mere thing being transported from one place to another” (p.178). Dispossessed of her humanity, she is turned into a commodity, an inanimate object that is marketed, bought, and transported. She and her fellow travelers are turned into non-persons and relegated to an airless, crowded and uninhabitable space where they must endure the smell of excrement, and vomiting which adds a layer of abjection to their objectification. The complete dehumanization and distress of Samia and her fellow travelers are met with indifference by the people on the street. Such a dehumanization paves the way for their exclusion from the category of legitimate human rights-holders (Bauman, 2016, p.86) and suggests that they have no socially recognized existence outside of their traffickers.

During the Sahara crossing, the migrants feel disorientated by the landscape that surrounds them: “an endless ocher-colored expanse of nothing [...] All around, a lunar landscape in which earth and sky are one. Your points of reference vanish. It’s like *diving* into a mirror. An endless expanse of sand” (pp.184,191 italics added). In the latter quote, the description of the desert’s vast and indeterminate expanse, without clearly defined landmarks, resembles the gigantic expanse of the sea mentioned at the beginning of the novel. Both limitless expanses give a sense of the infinite and the unknown, but the opposition between Samia’s initial and sentimental attachment to the sea and the devastating power

of the featureless and barren desert marks the differing emotional feelings provoked by the two spaces. Whereas, in general, the land’s assumed stability is opposed to the fluidity and flux of marine environments (Steinberg and Peters, 2015), in the novel the two landscapes, and the intrinsic dangers of two different seas – the sands of the Sahara and the waters of the Mediterranean –, are pivotal metaphors for the different phases of the migratory journey: sand stands for the crossing of the desert while water stands for the sea crossing, but the two elements cannot be easily separated from each other because, as expressed by the image of “diving into a mirror,” the sea of sand is in a way a mirror of the Mediterranean Sea. Indeed, even though Samia eventually reaches the Libyan shoreline, sand continues to cling to her, as to suggest that the waves of the sea are an extension of the desert sand dunes.

Five months after the departure, on December 15th, she reaches the Libyan capital. For Samia, Tripoli is only a transit point, and the proximity to the sea makes her feel confident and hopeful. Despite being warned about the danger that the maritime crossing entails, that “the sea is a bigger obstacle than the Sahara” (p.212), and that “its power is capable of engulfing [the boat] at any moment” (ibid.), she doesn’t presume it true since her romantic view of the sea blinds her in front of the life-threatening journey she is about to undertake. For her, the Mediterranean Sea is no obstacle, but the logical next step in her seemingly unlikely project to compete at the Olympic games in London. Prior to her departure, she fantasizes about sailing across the sea, she romanticizes about the moment in which she and the sea would finally meet up, and about the first thing she would do: “plunge into it and enjoy the vast, welcoming vastness” (p.212). Her failure to acknowledge the meaning of the Mediterranean as a barrier conveys the perception that she has no clear idea of what the maritime crossing holds for her.

Samia’s maritime crossing towards Lampedusa is scheduled for 11pm; the boat is crowded with three hundred other migrants, and it is described as a microcosm in terms of the represented categories of gender and age, “men, women, and children, from infants to the elderly [...] a crowd of excited, hopeful ghosts” (p.219). The passage presents an imagery of the migrant boat as a contained structural entity that promotes a shared future of both hope and death. Such understanding considers the boat a space just like other spaces of social organization and collectivity – not a heterotopia *par excellence* – and a world that compels a terrifying psychic communion between its passengers, designating

a group of people attuned to the precariousness of existence and the imminence of death. At the beginning of the crossing, even though the vessel is ill equipped, the boat is not regarded as a threat that potentially condemns its passengers to death, but as a regenerative space where Samia feels hopeful because “the sea conveys an energy [she] has never felt before” (p.221). At first, the navigation is easy and constant as the sea is docile, even submissive, innocent and “friendly” (p.220). However, on the third day, due to an engine failure, the boat stops, and remains at a standstill for about fifteen hours and, “fifteen hours are endless if you know you are just a step away from the goal line” (p.221). In the latter quote, Samia compares her border-crossing with a race of which the finish line is understood to be the Mediterranean border. For her, crossing is doubly meaningful, signifying ‘running’ and ‘running away.’ Indeed, from the moment in which Samia decides to migrate, she no longer runs for pleasure or for sport; she only runs for her life. In this light, her migratory experience is reminiscent of Agamben’s allusion of ‘bare life’ who “can save himself only in perpetual flight” (1998, p.183). However, whereas Agamben emphasizes the looming presence of the massive structure of dehumanization and his formulation of the victimized state of bare life makes impossible any form of agency, both during her migratory journey and her competitive races, Samia goes through a decision-making process. She employs a tactic, a route and a strategy, and, in both situations, she weighs her options and makes calculated moves to achieve the final goal. Yet, the border/finishing line is out of her reach, and Samia finds herself confined on the boat, in an imprisoning space, suspended in time, and in a gloomy atmosphere that anticipates her future. Her mobility is defined by stagnation and she is trapped inside the boat, which was meant to be only a temporary and intermediate space between points of departure and arrival, but is now a claustrophobic place. The vastness of the sea contributes to the creation of a feeling of suspension and immobility in which the maritime crossing is conceived as an interminable transit without an arrival. During such endless transit, Samia compares again her situation to a race: “it’s as if at the end of a race, just when there’s one step left to go, one final stride to plow through the finish line, you were to run up against a transparent wall” (pp.221–222). In terms of her migratory experience, the maritime crossing is the last leg of a long and strenuous journey and even though Samia is geographically close to reach her destination, the sea constitutes an impossible intermediary space that prevents her from seeing beyond the horizon of her present

situation. The rhetorical analogy of the transparent wall counteracts the understanding of the sea as a topographical expanse to cross; a point of passage on the way to points of landing, a border-bridge, a platform towards something or somewhere else. Rather, it consists of a translucent border with a peculiar epistemological dimension – the border is transparent and invisible – which at the same time represents a power relationship and a form of exclusion. In this light, the transparent wall allows migrants to imagine reaching destination, but bars them from actually moving onwards. The transparent border “establishes the [internal and the external], thus framing the visible and the invisible” (Brambilla and Pötzsch, 2017, p.151); it is topographically displaced in a way particular to borders, and it is symptomatic of the way in which EU border shapes, and is shaped by the extended Mediterranean borderscape. That is to say, the maritime border is shifting and inescapable. It tends to be “duplicated, multiplied and projected below and beyond the line itself” (Cuttitta, 2007, p.61) as it enables and/or prevents the passage of flows; which means that it is fundamentally mobile – designated to be portable as the persons and goods it monitors – and virtually ubiquitous. It resembles a *sponge* that takes the liquid first and then releases the content into two repositories, one to be taken inside and the other to be emptied out. This “intelligently porous” (Green, 2012, p.584) practice of bordering is designed to restrict undesirable migrant circulation, while the flow of assets and commodities continues.

Even though the transparent border cannot be seen and the geopolitical plane of it cannot be located, its epistemological plane (between known and unknown) is accentuated: it operates as an invisible space that divides, creates distance and ambiguity stressing its invisible but prevailing power. The in/visibility that the border confers on the migrants is double-edged. The maritime border invisibilizes the characters, dehumanizing them into ‘illegal,’ even as it facilitates their movements because of its very invisibility. Thus the border encourages and entangles the migrants; either stopping them, or enabling them to secret themselves in its folds that sometimes hide or kill them. This doubleness can be interpreted as the logic of the simultaneous but mutually exclusive aspects of the maritime border: mobility and blockage, visibility and invisibility, openness and entrapment.

Waiting to be rescued by the Italian coast guard, Samia starts thinking about jumping off board, when “a force greater than [her] makes [her] climb onto the rail [...] It’s that force that seizes [her] and

makes [her] straddle the rail. It is not [her], it's that force" (p.224). It is an alien force, an inassimilable Other that pulls her down into the ice-cold water, and "decides to take [her] in hand" (p.225). The psychological as well as physical power exerted by the sea, leads her to envisage her body as somehow alien from her: she does not have control over her movements and her body is not only beyond control, but also an instrument that turns against her. Under water, in a desperate attempt to disable the devastating power of the sea, she tries to give it a familiar feature and to describe its consistency: she opens her eyes and "there's a world of bubbles above [her]. There are slow, larger ones close to [her] head and small, very tiny ones racing swiftly the light, up to the surface. The water cradles [her] and takes hold of [her]" (p.225). Her contact with the sea entails a journey back to the source, a memory of an initial liquid state, whereas the Mediterranean waters represent both a source of life that might give Samia the possibility of re-birth and a parental figure, a protective space that cradles and guides her. Here, water assumes a symbolic valence that relates both to the stream of life – and thus to the promising future that crossing the Mediterranean might signify – and to a parental figure, a subterranean womb. These symbolic connotations attached to water ascribe a positive value to it: a vital element, the source from which everything stems. However, even though water is an emblematic symbol of salvation, purity and regeneration in biblical terms, it also alludes to destruction. Where salvation is announced, disaster is also predicted; one becomes particularly dependent on the other. Hence, the liquidity of the sea is related to fusion and division at the same time: it makes reference to the reproductive amniotic fluid on one hand, and to the draining of the waters on the other; it is a life-source and a life-taker. In this light, the liquid component links both the idea of creation and of engulfment which suggests that the sea-as-source-of-life can easily turn into a sea-tomb in which the protagonist finds herself trapped in a limbo existence, between life and death. Cast at the beginning as a source of life and dreams, the sea is now a life-threatening force. Under water, Samia's feeling of being adrift, lost, and unmoored is exacerbated even more by the disenchantment that she feels plunging into the sea. That sea that she craved to meet turns into a site of struggle for survival, a limbo of precarity and indeterminacy, a horrific cradle of death, and finally a paralyzing trap.

Heterotopias of the Sea: Protecting Refuge and Merciless Cemetery

The novel is open-ended: her dream fulfilled in an imaginative after-life breaks the narrative link between death and narrative ending so that it is possible to envisage a future of hope and survival for other migrants. *Don't tell me you are afraid* raises an important question regarding current Mediterranean clandestine crossings: what will become of the many migrants, such as the protagonist, those who will never make it to the other shore, but will remain instead at the bottom of the sea, along with other unnamed bodies of the sea bed of Mediterranean history? In this seascape of waves, currents, frail boats, ongoing border enforcement, indifference towards the plight of migrants, sites of memory are created to counteract sites of dispersal. If unaccountability persists, history obliterates individuals from the discourse, if episodes of human rights violation continue to be ignored, the aesthetic production functions as a textual memorial through which the author suggests venues for memory, critique and, eventually, change of heading (Derrida, 1992). In the novel, the Mediterranean Sea is a space in which two imaginaries attached to it establish points of connection between incompatible yet simultaneous heterochronotopes: the heterotopias of the sea as a refuge and of the sea as a cemetery. These violently disjunctive perspectives of the same space that are inscribed onto the sea enables the conceptualization of the maritime stretch of water as a space where absolute differences coexist simultaneously. Within these space-time continuums that overlap but remain divergent to each other, contrasting experiences of living and dying across the Mediterranean are encountered. As analyzed, the romantic, liberatory, and nourishing aspect of the sea is opposed to its paralyzing characteristic of a contemporary border regime that aims first to turn the sea into a separating line, and secondly to discipline movement across it. Moreover, bringing together through the trope of water mutually exclusive features, such as continuity and rupture, stasis and movement, hope and despair, Catozzella demonstrates a way of exploring the contradictions of border crossing. Lastly, by employing the genre of the bio-fictional novel, he demonstrates that the literary representation designates another coordinate in the configuration of the Mediterranean borderscape, a space from which the stories of those who

attempted the maritime crossing can be (re)invoked, (re)formulated, and (re)examined.

Fire at Sea: Khaal's *African Titanics*

Published originally in Arabic in 2008 and translated into English in 2014, *African Titanics* revolves around the story of a group of migrants from Eritrea headed towards the coast of Tunisia in order to clandestinely cross the Mediterranean Sea and reach the southern coast of Europe. The first pages, that function like a preamble, frame the events that in the following ten chapters will be recounted. Migration is there described as a wave "flooding through Africa [...] sweeping everything along its wake" (Khaal, 2014, p.3, further references are from this edition), it is no longer an individual and marginal occurrence, but rather a mass phenomenon which lead to the emptying of Africa that "will soon be no more than a hollow pipe where the wind plays melodies of loss" (ibid.). Migration is compared to a flood, an environmental catastrophe beyond human control that echoes inundation, whose spell captivates Africa's youth: "not a single young soul was left untouched" (ibid.). Not only migration is compared to a wave, that through its deluge causes disorder, but also to a "pandemic plague [...] calling one and all to its promised paradise" (ibid.) provoked by a dark sorcerer and its "magnificent bell" (ibid.). People's minds are *infected* by "the migration bug" (p.8), and are obsessed by pursuing the chiming and seductive bell that tempts them to start the "ceaseless roaming [...] luring them away from their quiet lives" (pp.4–5). The omniscient narrator of the first pages describes the migration urge in terms of superstition and myth-making to which the migrants fall prey, which he blames a demonic force "casting a hypnotic spell over the villagers and transforming [them] into *hideous beasts*, submitting mindlessly to his every command" (p.4, italics added).

The following chapter begins *in medias res*, once the main character, Abdar, who speaks on behalf of the collective as chronicler and observer, has already started his journey and is already in the city of Khartoum in Sudan where he learns of the following steps of the migratory travel. His journey continues through the Sudanese desert during which he and his fellow travelers have to face the first adversities: the police who demand bribes from them in order to proceed the trip and, worse of all, the unpredictability of the desert "[whose] anger whips [them] relentlessly with storms of sand" (p.36). The barren landscape of

the desert, its hostile environment, and the constant threat of death from exposure or dehydration pose particular challenges to the migrant group: the desert "changes every day, always surprising you with some unexpected shift [...]. It's a wilderness. But not the romantic kind of wilderness you read about. When a sandstorm comes, it's like Judgment Day's upon you" (p.28), it defies human orientation; there are "no fixed landmarks. Sand dunes constantly on the move. A great sandy mountain, stretching off to the west, becomes no more than a speck in the eye" (ibid.).

The desert, rather than being a privileged topology for the nomadic sentiment of modern thought (Chambers, 2014, p.87), is a place where one gets lost, where somebody's existence is swallowed up and canceled. The desert is an ecosystem with a logic of orientation unique unto itself and it represents the first obstacle of a long series of challenges that the characters must overcome before reaching the sea. Both at sea and in the desert distances are distorted. Both places are difficult to navigate in any reliable way. They are resistant to markers, constantly shifting and difficult to measure. Desert sand undulates and slides as do waves in the sea whenever someone attempts to size or mark it. Sea and desert: one a gigantic expanse of water and the other a dry waste of sand, one a "liquid hell" (p.28) the other "a wide ocean of desert sand" (p.29), are, in the words of the narrator, impossible "to be placed one above the other [because] one's a devil, the other's a demon" (p.28).

After fifteen days of traveling, the Libyan city of Kufra is on sight. There, the few left alive rest a bit before heading to Tripoli. In the Libyan capital, the protagonist gets in contact with some smugglers who promise him accommodation and organization of the sea crossing. He is brought to a garage with other migrants where they are supposed to wait before being brought to a hideout closer to the coast. During their stay at the garage, the characters wait for food and water, they wait for good weather conditions that would speed up their departure, they wait for the smugglers to come and bring them to the crossing point and, above all, they wait for the possibility of crossing the sea. The characters' waiting suggests a standstill during their journey; it represents a fixation on a place, and it is a symbolic and psychological practice of subjection to the passing of time and dependency on other people's decisions. The practice of waiting is felt by the characters as a practice of containment in a spatially ordered space set out by others, and it is a crucial aspect of the border itself: a regulatory temporal device that maneuvers the migrants' movements.

During their waiting at the garage, they exchange information about the crossing, stories about friends who made it, expectations about the future, fears and doubts:

Could the smugglers be trusted or would they disappear with our money? When would our journey finally end? Would the boat prove watertight, or be no more than a leaky sieve? Would the police discover us, storming the building and leading us away in handcuffs, our money lost? And what about the sea? Was it impatiently awaiting us, ready to offer us up in sacrifice to its god? (p.44)

The above-mentioned quote shows that the characters are not in full control of their own travel as their movements depend on the smugglers' decisions, weather conditions, the boats' state and, above all, bordering techniques enacted by exerting control over and through time and space. Their movement is, thus, partly dependent on others, their dependency forces them either to wait for a better opportunity or to find alternative routes to avoid the obstacles. Such spatio-temporal features of the bordering practice break the linearity of the characters' journey from their places of origin to their destination, and focus instead on discontinuities during their trip: interruptions such as stopovers, unexpected settlements in transit spaces, and eventually forced returns.

At the garage, the migrants keep themselves informed about maritime conditions: the speed and direction of the wind, the height of the waves and the degree of visibility in the Mediterranean Sea. Even though they are well aware that "every week, one of their Titanics would leave for the far shore, completely devoid of safety precautions, and likely to sink a few miles out of sea" (p.41), the precaritization and insecurity that pervade their current situation leave them no other solution than continuing their journey across the sea. However, their last step – the sea crossing – becomes more and more difficult to arrange. One of them comments: "How can the journey from shore to shore be so very difficult? It seems so simple on the maps" (p.47). Even though maps make locations seem graspable and tangible, for the migrants the close proximity between the African coast and Lampedusa (on a map) goes hand in hand with the impossibility of reaching their destination. Paradoxically, Lampedusa is geographically close but unreachable. Notwithstanding, the geographically short stretch of water is a determining factor in the characters' plans for migrating: the brief span between shores functions as a magnet that lures the characters with the illusion of an easy passage due to the apparent feasibility of the crossing.

Mapping is also the preliminary condition for the crossing to happen; it is the cognitive grid that allows migrants to have a sense of direction, to position themselves and to move within space. The map, like a narrative, requires from the migrants a practice of navigation/reading that relies on shared assumptions of at least two factors: destination and definition of coordinates. However, during the maritime crossing, the fact of being afloat rather than being grounded, shifts people's points of reference. Hence, the maritime crossing becomes a destabilizing moment through the breaking down of pre-existing spatial references and points of orientation, depriving the migrants of the coordinates that would help them navigate the sea. Indeed, some of Abdar's travel companions board a boat head to Lampedusa and many feel on the edge as they are caught between the vast sea and the assurance of the shore: "[i]t is hard to describe the fear that grips you at the hour of departure. You approach the boats in the darkness as they rock violently on the water. At that moment, you truly understand the meaning of terror" (p.61). The sea's movement and fluidity are perceived as uncontrollable forces which frustrate and disorientate whoever decides to set sail and, because of that, many jump overboard before the boat even leaves the shore or "are swept to sea without ever having resolved whether to stay or go" (ibid.). The swell of waves, the vagueness of the horizon, and the atmospheric changes all make precise orientation an ideal rather than a possibility. Thus, the attempted border-crossing reveals to be a terrifying and an immobilizing experience during which the longed-for moment of the crossing – the arrival – is questioned and foreclosed since departure never happens.

Nonetheless, for those who manage to depart, the sea reveals itself as a paralyzing trap and, after days of being adrift at sea, "doubts begin to stir as it becomes apparent the boat has drifted from its course" (p.61). Amidst the hunger, thirst, fear and death, as people lose consciousness, conflicts on board erupt for no reason:

At one moment the air is filled with sobbing and the next with hysterical laughter [...] Their jaws seem to stretch, primed to swallow you whole as they despoil corpses of random, valueless objects [...] They fight to death, bent on destruction with every fibre of their beings. They have become animals, and you fear that you have become one too (p.62).

The drifting boat is a scene of fatal disorientation, in which losing one's way has the most dramatic of consequences: the passengers become animals and monsters transforming the boat's

narrow deck into a place for attack and assault. The conversion of people into animals reminds the reader of the initial description of how the migration spell turned people into *hideous beasts*. In the latter quote, however, it is the fatal sea that transforms the migrants into animals. However, the comparison stresses the fact that during the migratory journey, the dehumanization of the travelers is the last resort in order to remain alive. It highlights that during the maritime crossing, the sea turns itself into the scenario of desperate efforts to survive, and it becomes the malevolent antagonist which reflects the larger forces the migrants must grapple with. Solidarity between the passengers is subverted by hostility and conflict. Such a conversion reflects the struggle for survival whereas their efforts to master the sea are futile as they are reminded of the limits of human power against the *spell* of a demonic, alien and hostile maritime environment. The image of the drifting boat suggests first precariousness at the crux of statelessness at sea and secondly it brings to mind the current disputes in policy debates regarding resettlement and granting political asylum. Political controversies concerning SAR (Search and Rescue operations), disembarkation in the Mediterranean Sea and refusal to let NGO vessels enter EU ports, have resulted in unsettled diplomatic disagreements between European governments and EU institutions (Basaran 2015; 2016, p.210). Besides, the drifting boat's image alludes to the bio-power of both nation-states and the EU that require the "excluded in order to maintain the inside" (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2004, p.36), resulting in the Mediterranean sea as a space of exception, wherein migrants are excluded as bare life at sea in the effort to maintain the apparent order of a closed EU.

Whereas some of his companions try to cross the sea, the narrator stays in Tripoli and finds accommodation with other migrants. There, like previously in the smugglers' garage, they keep themselves updated about the weather reports, rehashing the forecast for the upcoming days. After promising weather reports, they chant and hope that their departure will be scheduled soon. Yet, as a companion suggests, the media is not to be trusted, one should not "get fooled by what you hear on the telly. They said it'd calm, did they? Nonsense. A calm sea is just an illusion, meant to trick anyone gullible enough to set off across it" (p.60). The sea is tricky, unpredictable, and "a big fat liar [...] a great pool of poison [...] a killer and all *her* crimes are premeditated" (pp.60–61, italics added). The possessive adjective *her* feminizes the maritime basin which contrasts the long history of employing the female body to represent land (Lemke Sanford, 1998, p.63). The female

figure, which is in general related to fertility and nurture, is in the latter quote paralleled to a murderer. Far from being the cradle of civilization, the Mediterranean Sea described above is a horrific cradle of death.

While waiting for the crossing to happen, Abdar finds a note from a fellow traveler whose poem entitled "Crossing" depicts their arduous condition, and the one of other clandestine migrants:

*Without an amulet/ I slid through the
guarded gates/ Crawling like a worm/
Through barbs and wire/ Swallowed by
salty swamps/ Surrounded by desert
dogs [...] Between wicked trees/ Clawing
at my clothes/ while rain lashed me/ I
watched my legs/ Sink into graves of
clay/ Dissolving into watery floods/ I
crossed/ But now I must find an amulet/
To cross/ Straits of fire/ Towards
continents of snow (p.101) (italics in original).*

The latter quote not only reveals the hard realities faced by migrants who risk their lives in order to reach what they consider the land of opportunities, but also how they cope with and circumvent impediments to their (im)mobility, and how they strive during dangerous situations.

The *wet border*— the sea — is strikingly depicted as 'straits of fire' which combines the two elements of water and fire. This juxtaposition not only recalls the heat and dryness of the desert that the characters just crossed, but it also suggests that the experience of crossing the Mediterranean Sea is like *being in hell* where you feel the fire burning. Also, the straits of fire evoke the neologism employed in the Maghreb to refer to clandestine migrants, *harragas* (burners), those who literally burn their documentation to prevent deportation (Abderrezak, 2016, p.7). The mentioned border figure, conveying two facets of the border — liquid and burning —, combines two seemingly incompatible elements, and it contradicts the common understanding of water extinguishing fire. However, it draws an analogy between the magnetic attraction of water — as represented in *Don't tell me you are afraid* — and the mesmeric quality of fire. Both water and fire share some qualities: elusiveness and transmutability, perpetual change and motion. Pursuing the border figure of the *straits of fire*, one can further infer that the fire results in incineration, namely, the end of the previous existence. By 'burning' the Mediterranean border, the migrant meets a symbolic death by fire. Moreover, the oxymoron of the *burning water* evokes the border figure of the *liquid hell* mentioned at the beginning of the novel, and they both refer to the Mediterranean border as a site of symbolic and actual death.

Having decided to attempt the crossing from the Tunisian shoreline, the protagonist together with his fellow travelers head towards Tunis. There, some of them board a boat heading to Lampedusa whereas the protagonist stays in Tunis since the conditions of the vessel are very poor. The boat, which should be the characters' shelter during the maritime crossing, is however a place of potentially claustrophobic confinement since "to make more seating, freezers used for storing fish had been carelessly removed" (ibid.) and "the suffocating acrid smoke of the engine" (ibid.) prefigures the fate that awaits its passengers. In addition, throughout the novel, the general name given to any vessel bound to Lampedusa, *Titanic*, recalls the most famous ship that wrecked in 1912 whose disaster remains one of the most recognized maritime tragedies, at least in U.S. and Europe. This famous wreck has drawn and still draws attention not only for its high drama, but also for the moral issues exposed by the tragedy: the incommensurate number of fatalities among third-class passengers compared with first-class ones (Miskolcze, 2013, p.171). Consequently, the naming of the migrant's vessel *Titanic* engages with historical and contemporary moral judgment about controversial matters surrounding class and ethnicity¹. Moreover, the novel's title *African Titanics* frames the clandestine crossing as a shipwreck employing the topos of the latter as "a powerful symbol of mortality adrift in a hostile universe" (Mentz, 2008, p.166).

During the attempted border-crossing, the boat proves to be a weak means of transport, as "waves the size of mountains smashed angrily against the groaning boat [...] and the deck creaked and bits of wood began to splinter off" (p.108), the consoling metaphor of the boat as a means of escape disappears and it is instead turned into an inescapable prison, a place of no exit. The passengers on board are terrified; they are constrained to remain inside a boat, lost at sea, and at the mercy of the waves. After eight days of being adrift, they reach international waters and hope that other vessels will save them. As one of the passengers says "[w]e're in international waters now, so other ships will rescue us if necessary. Just keep calm" (p.108). The few left on-board scan the horizon in search for any other kind of vessel navigating in their direction. At the sight of an oil tanker, the few left alive wave at it asking for rescue but "a small group of sailors grouped motionlessly on its deck, surveying them in silence [...] The sailors made no response and the steamer continued on its course" (p.110). The migrants' boat begins to go under, people throw themselves into the icy water, and one of the passengers lays floating on a

plank reciting verses he wrote, asking the sea for mercy:

*Oh Sea!/ In the name of the faces/
Etched on your memory/ In the name of
those/ Who have imprinted their cries/
On the air/ Restrain this tyrannous wind/
And still these hungry waves* (p.113,
italics in original) *but in response Their
corpses are raised high/ Like plunder*
(p.114) (italics in original).

The sea is held to be divine, stressed by the capital letter 's' of 'Sea' whose force is great against the helplessness of the passengers. Water, as a fluid and transparent substance, seeps into cracks leading to the ultimate destruction of the vessel and, as revealed from the quoted passage, water has the power not only to capsize, but also to rip apart the boat resulting in the drowning of those on board. The strength of waves to carry migrants across the sea is counterpointed by the destructive quality of the very same waves. As both means of passage and menacing obstacles, waves are either the bridge to the other shore or life-takers.

The disputes that have arisen among Mediterranean states over the responsibility for rescuing migrants in distress at sea and the duty to disembark rescued migrants, reveal that the sea is crisscrossed by multiple lines that delineate contested areas of responsibility. The paradox lies within the malleable framework of international law, in that it is not the lack of regulations that allows for divergent interpretations, but their conflicting nature and their range across a plurality of actors and legal rationalities, which in turn, have been used as the very means to evade responsibility. This fragmented territoriality of the sea has become a deliberately productive spatial model that has opened up a field of possibilities and strategies constantly exploited by different actors. As William Walters (2008) states, the sea "may have been striated by the modern forces of commerce, geopolitics and international law [...] [but] there are circumstances under which the ancient idea of the high sea as a lawless space beyond sovereignty and justice is capable of being reactivated" (p.5). Even though jurisdictionally the Mediterranean Sea does not represent a maritime legal void, it does evoke images of a void when migrant vessels are concerned, in particular when they capsize, and persons drown. Indeed, unaccountability, impunity, and exception at sea persevere and, with it, the capability of the sovereign states to re-activate the powerful function of the sea as a deadly void. As an almost too literal example of biopolitical governmentality (Foucault, 2003), power in this instance is exercised not only by actively protecting the life

of certain populations, but also by causing the death of others simply by abstaining from any form of intervention. Silenced, invisible and excluded from the political space of Europe, reduced to naked, or bare lives, the characters during their crossing enter a space in which forms of legal and political de-legitimization go hand in hand with the suspension of human rights: they are abandoned in a space of disputed jurisdiction, to the forces of exception and to a hostile environment. At the Mediterranean border, inclusion and exclusion collapse together to produce alternative forms of “differential inclusion” (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013, p.159) that work to define, stratify and divide people through the imposition of multiple, or absent, legal status. In this light, the maritime border represents a space that creates legal and social uncertainty in which the characters’ political agency is temporarily deferred, and thus repressed while their human status obliterated. In the days that follow the unsuccessful border-crossing of some of his fellow travelers, the main character remains in Tunis but gets arrested on his way back to the hostel. Following his arrest, he is brought to a detention center, which functions as an outpost of the border located outside Europe. After being interrogated, beaten up and brutally kicked, he is deported back to Eritrea. His deportation gives an insight into contemporary migration practices, focusing on the impacts and implications of northern African countries’ role in transnational management of border control, therefore bringing into view EU border regime’s close connections with the Maghreb in its effort to prevent access to Europe. Abdar’s failure to complete his migratory journey highlights the forced immobility perpetuated upon migrants. Yet, his failed attempt forcefully brings him back to his role as the novel’s narrator and recasts him with renewed agency: a chronicler whose function is to memorialize the tragic loss of many migrants’ lives. Having collected stories and songs during the travel, Abdar rehearses a poem written by one of his deceased friends:

*To all the pounding hearts / In feverish
boats / I will cut / Through these paths /
With my own liberated heart / And tell my
soul / To shout of your silenced deaths /
And fill / Palms of dust with morning dew
/ And song (p.122) (italics in original).*

The final poetic insertion within the prose text is a dedication to all those who lost their life at sea, and it commemorates the persons whose deaths may remain unaccounted, in order that their stories and lives will not be buried in the grave of oblivion. The closing poem provides some sort of closure to the suffering described throughout the

novel, and it enables the narrative to reverse the perception that such lost lives will be overlooked because not considered grievable, hence valuable (Butler, 2009, p.25). In the quoted passage, there is once again the reference to the burning/feverish quality of the maritime crossing, whereas the Mediterranean border comes to represent the Styxⁱⁱ, the netherworld dividing the living and the wandering shadows of the dead.

Migrations Stories and Geopolitical Strategies: An Entanglement

As analyzed, *African Titanics* narrates the strenuous journey across the Sahara desert and the sea, describes the dangerous passage that the characters undertake in order to reach the other shore, and their struggles during the migratory journey. The narrative depicts the Mediterranean border as a space that encapsulates both human hope and human despair, and as an arena in which people and stories are enmeshed with the geopolitical. The ship’s wreckage and the ‘invisible’ trails and traces that mark the characters’ unsuccessful crossing invest the Mediterranean border with their claims for safe passage and, at the same time, they fill the maritime basin with dread, terror and eventually death. In this sense, the maritime basin is a place of exception where “the conditions and the distinctions of normality and everyday life are normally suspended” (Balibar, 2010, p.31), where the conventions of law cede, unmediated violence intrudes and inequities are most intensely made manifest. The maritime border is what Mbembe (2003) evocatively defines a “necropolitical” space whereas water becomes the very geopolitical material that produces the conditions in which migrants either become managed persons outside of the limits of nation-states or are marked as disposable.

A Sea of Revenge: Pajares’ *Aguas de verganza* (2016) [Waters of Revenge]

As shown in the previous analysis, the Mediterranean basin becomes the scene of migrants’ attempt to reach European soil, the locus of many hopes, fantasies, and fears. In contrast to the previous novels, in Pajares’ *Waters of revenge* the sea-crossing is not specifically

described, rather it is rendered invisible, a hauntingly absent presence. Through this subversion, the maritime stretch takes on a renewed symbolic meaning beyond its relevance as the site in which many migrants have lost their lives. Indeed, in Pajares' novel the Mediterranean Sea is the place where criminality and disregard for human life are at their highest points.

Set in the Catalan capital of Barcelona, the detective novel opens with the protagonist, Samuel Montcasa, chief police officer of Barcelona's *mossos de esquadra*, at a crime scene in which a drowned child is found in a swimming pool with his father dead at the pool's edge. While his case at first seems to concern interpersonal matters, ultimately it is linked to the transnational business of clandestine migration (Andersson, 2014). Hence, in order to resolve the case, the detective is called to sites that show the toll taken by the Mediterranean turbulent waters, and he is forced to immerse himself into the deep underworld of violence and impunity that fills current migration across the Straits of Gibraltar. In the effort to achieve some evidence, he travels to Tangier and interrogates a survivor of a shipwreck that occurred in the Strait, and in which two civil guards are supposed to be guilty of puncturing the floats of fourteen migrants trying to reach Spanish soil. In pursuing some evidence, Samuel is however faced with reticence since the entire event is shrouded in absolute silence given that, as one of his informants suggests, "what happens at the border, stays at the border"ⁱⁱⁱ (Pajares, 2016, p.172, all further quotes are from this edition. The translation is mine; the original text can be found in the endnotes). To avoid any leaking of evidence "both in Spain and in Morocco, the police and the army are completely protected by the very same judges"^{iv} (p.127) whereas "the secret services of both countries cooperate. The same is done together with the [secret] services of other countries"^v (p.84). The quoted passages point to the extra-official means by which Spanish and EU authorities participate in mobility management outside their jurisdiction and emphasize the concealed and doubtful legality of these practices. Security practices within and beyond the Mediterranean Sea are increasingly carried out secretly, occurring in situations and sites where the limits between legal and illegal, licit and illicit blur and the nested scales of national and global no longer hold tight (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2020, p.23). It's in such ambiguous and turned into "exceptional" borderscapes that discrimination and injustice are expressed not only through border deaths but also through pre-emptive mobility practices. And, as the informant in Tangier suggests to the detective, "all European countries fail to observe

the Geneva Convention [...] The walls that the refugees crash against, are not the fences but the agreements that European nations have with their neighboring countries, so that their police prevent [the migrants] to reach the border"^{vi} (129). It is not only the perilous maritime crossing that represents an obstacle for the migrants, but also the invisible barriers which are scattered throughout the world.

Empty handed and on his way back to Barcelona, Samuel ponders upon his own obligations as police officer: "[h]e always thought he was doing his police work well and that he was doing it for the society, but now he suspected that everything was about keeping a *status quo* in which huge injustice had free rein"^{vii} (p.129, italics in original). Despite of all his efforts to do his police work well, Samuel is inevitably part of the injustice that exists in the system, and so it should come as no surprise that, throughout his investigation, he is very limited in finding the perpetrator(s). Samuel also wonders: "and if the thirty thousand shipwreck victims who died in the Mediterranean [...] were also murders? [...] Even though the civil guards were following orders, somebody must have been charged"^{viii} (p.129). Samuel is dazed about the fact that certain persons can be deprived of their rights, that no action committed against them can appear as a violation, and that nobody is found responsible for their deaths. Moreover, the passage stresses the fact that, so perversely, European power lies in its ability to let die: first, by ignoring, then by systemically overlooking and ultimately fostering indifference towards those who arrive at Europe's shores. Hence, border violence is perpetuated with impunity and the phenomenon of border deaths combines the fatal consequences of militarization of borders, externalization of them, the use of force (push-backs operations), and the criminalization of assistance. It leads to the understanding of the state not just as a rule maker and enforcer but also as a breaker of its own rules, which suggests that the authorities who determine and shape the law are those whose activities ought to be criminalized. And these considerations paradoxically lead to the question: to what extent is the state willing to investigate the crimes it might be indicted for? If inquiries have to be posed about the state's legitimacy, such question should also extend, in the context of transnational crime and securitization, to the border regime's networks. Indeed, Samuel's thoughts expose the relationship between border deaths, migration policies and state impunity, stressing that border practices are directly responsible for the escalating numbers of migrant deaths in the Mediterranean. Those who died in the crossing

are portrayed as necro-figures (Mbembe, 2003) – persons who can be injured or killed without repercussion. As a consequence, acts of violence and injustice towards them are no longer seen as crimes punishable by law. However, through the words of the detective, the drowned bodies at sea turn from being traces of border violence to subjects of law. Samuel ponders on the meaning of these deaths, not so much from the event of the shipwreck, but rather from the ethical and political point of the right to migrate. Such change of approach – from bodies to persons of rights – makes visible the invisibility of their deaths, and questions the restrictions applied to mobility flows: instead of describing the event and the horrors of the shipwreck in itself, it reveals something that is invisible, “something that precisely has no ‘natural’ image – inhumanity, the process of negating humanity” (Rancière, 2014, p.49).

While discussing the recent findings with a colleague, Samuel exposes his moral issues about the investigation and about the broader topic of migration: “how is it possible that the same Europeans, who flaunt about their democratic societies, could show so much cruelty towards persons who are looking for a place to have a decent life”^{ix} (p.204). And, above all “[h]ow did the Europeans reach the point to believe to have the right to convert their territory into a fortress surrounded by wire fences? [...] Why [in the case of migrants] is the application of human rights ignored?”^x (p.205). Samuel’s words conjure up the invisibility of migrants in front of the law and their non-political essence, as if they have fallen into a political loophole. His queries point not only to the geopolitics of the “Fortress Europe,” but also to the biopolitics of bordering practices and the inherently biopolitical quality of the security regime. To his questions, the colleague replies that if the same actions were executed against other persons, the authority would be considered a criminal, whereas against migrants the evidence is just ignored. Samuel is perplexed by this. However, the colleague keeps explaining “our society is provided with the necessary metaphors for it. We talk about the deaths at the border like they were fatalities; the crimes appear to be accidental facts originated by the inevitable task of protecting the border. And the result is that in few cases they [the deaths] are investigated”^{xi} (p.210).

Metaphors matter, especially when it comes to migration. The semantic machinery that creates the definition of migrants and border deaths is never neutral. Metaphors that parallel border deaths to fatalities are at their most effective when they pass unremarked into the language, thus remaining uncontested. As Bourdieu (1986)

wisely says, “the fate of groups is bound up with the words that designate them” (p.480), the language that is employed to chronicle clandestine migration has consequences on how the issue is perceived. As Samuel’s colleague observes:

the language that it is employed [in referring to migration] has a lot to do with the fact that for immigrants and refugees the application of human rights is not the same as for our citizen. We talk about immigration in terms of flood, invasion, massive assault ... We always refer to it employing metaphors that indicate danger or threat, so that we see it as if it were something from which we need to protect and defend us^{xii} (p.212).

The metaphors invoke a sense of destruction as this uncontrollable mass enters the country. In particular, the usage of threatening marine figures – “flood” – in connection with “migration” reinforces the idea of a calamity from which it is hard to escape. Metaphors employing water imagery suggest something “out of control”: the underworld/underwater that rises and overwhelms, generating fears of invasion. Even though, these figures and other “invasion” narratives are often based on hypotheses rather than actual numbers (Carr, 2012, p.22), their employment “permits us to justify the cruelty with which we treat these persons, or at least it helps us to look at the other side”^{xiii} (p.212).

While seeking to unveil the identity of the murder, Samuel’s investigation gets more complicated when two more corpses are found and the dead bodies belong to the two Spanish coast guards who were first accused of murder. At the sight of the corpses, he understands that the crimes he is investigating not only emulate others committed years before, but they are also “macabre representations of crimes committed against migrants”^{xiv} (p.243). Drowning is the pattern that connects the murders, and as Samuel observes “there is an obviously intentional symbolic load [...] And a particular cruelty is evident: one lets the victims know how their ending will be in order to intensify their suffering”^{xv} (p.171). Water links the three homicides, echoing “deaths at sea”^{xvi} (p.252) and “what is happening at the Southern border [...] the numerous unpunished crimes”^{xvii} (p.268). Water, and therefore the sea, plays a role both in the crimes Samuel is investigating and in the broader issue of maritime border violence. It conceals the traces of criminal practices and compromises pieces of evidence, which are inescapably destined to come to the surface. In light of the new evidence, both the submerged crimes committed by the border police and those committed throughout the narrative emerge.

Samuel uncovers the links that connect them and, consequently, resolves to question the only person that he never even considered to identify as the murderer, one of his first informants for the crime committed against the father and the son: Ibra, the Senegalese man who, in order to bring Samuel on the false track and obtain from him the names of the two Spanish guards, had pretended to have been an acquaintance of the victim. It is at this point of the narrative that Samuel understands that the crimes he is investigating are acts of revenge committed against border guards who in the novel are responsible for migrants' deaths. Nonetheless, the detective connects the dots only towards the end while, throughout the novel, he is brought from one 'migrant crime scene' to another by the sophisticated arranging of Ibra. Samuel goes to Ibra's office and finds him waiting for him. As soon as the detective opens the door, Ibra confesses: "[t]he only thing that kept me alive was my desire for revenge"^{xviii} (p.272). His "desire for revenge" also discloses his broader commitment of disseminating "the crimes that are committed at the border, [so that] the atrocities at the border would come to light [...] In this way, he will do justice, not only to [his] dear ones, but also to the rest of the migrants and refugees who die at the borders of your fortress"^{xix} (p.277).

Ibra's revenge exposes the organized hypocrisy (Cusumano, 2019) about the normalization of border deaths: while border deaths should be the exception, they have become the way through which mobility is governed. One of the consequences of such mobility strategy is that restrictive border policies lead to an indifference towards violence at sea and border deaths (Basaran, 2015). Ibra's resolution to the use of violence in order to firstly confront the unequal distribution of power and secondly to balance the scales of justice, is however pointless for Samuel who declares that he has just added his crimes on top of those that others have committed. To such accusation, Ibra replies

You are wrong. You talk about judgment and right of defense, but you don't consider that this official and institutional justice does not reach everywhere. In these weeks you got to know about the huge amount of crimes that are committed at the border, crimes which are committed by the members of the law enforcement [...] How many of these crimes have been brought to trial? How many police officers [...] are accused for these crimes? There are areas where the institutional justice does not reach [...] So, the question that I lay out for you is quite easy: isn't it fair that the victims try to impart justice by their

own where there are no institutions doing it?^{xx} (pp.278–279).

What lies beneath Ibra's revelation is the question concerning the reasons why the law enforcement agencies' priorities are the defending of the authorities' integrity rather than valuing human life. For Ibra, the use of violence in response to a perceived harm is required to balance the scales of justice, insofar as it is infused with the belief that those who hurt others deserve to be hurt in return. The point is not to define revenge as either barbaric or as a core value, but to emphasize the (im)proper use of violence to confront the unequal distribution of power. The morally ambiguous behaviors of both Ibra and the border guards draw attention to the fact that moral values are in decline in both institutional and social life.

The end of the novel takes on a dark tone and closure of some kind remains a seemingly unachievable ideal: Samuel is unable to both answer Ibra's question in relation to the culpability of the system and to see a killer in him. However, he carries out his duty: he states Ibra's rights, leaves the room, and lets the officers detain him. While leaving, Samuel thinks about the fact that, during the investigation, he stumbled over more crimes than the ones he was appointed to solve. Despite getting Ibra arrested, and making him pay for his crimes, he knows that "nobody would pay for all the others" (p.280). For Samuel the pursue of justice, in contexts where intra-governance management of migration is entwined with indifference, is an impossible venture. Even though the ending speaks for the need for the assignation of criminal culpability that account for the suffering referred to throughout the novel, Samuel's final words express profound pessimism both about the execution of justice – because there is not one murderer, but many –, and about the possibilities of any change within the migration system. Nevertheless, even though the ending addresses Samuel's ultimately failure in uncovering "all the other crimes", his apparent failure can be generative in the respect that his investigation opened up a glimpse into the (dis)functionings of the migratory regime, uncovering its effects.

Migrants' Deaths at the and the Question of Responsibility

The novel confronts the readership with the maritime border as a space of violence and death. Rather than simply employing crime fiction as means of finding border criminality's

consequences, *Waters of revenge* manipulates the literary genre to provide a sort of analysis of the geopolitical conditions that exacerbate them. Not only does the novel posit its audience as moral witnesses to the ongoing crimes happening at the Mediterranean border, but it raises many questions and leaves them unanswered: whose rights are at issue, and which injustice is to be confronted? Are the migrants' deaths occurring in the Mediterranean a crime? And if they are, who is responsible for them? Could a person who witnesses a crime be charged with complicity for not assisting the victim? What happens when the society displays the same behavior but nevertheless there is no charge because it is not even considered a criminal negligence? Are we all guilty? And if so, of what? The novel does not simply ask who is culpable, but dares to ask if anyone is not.

In describing the socio-political ethos in which border crimes take place, *Waters of revenge* stresses the importance of the maritime geopower, understood as the politics connected to nature, and how this form of power comes to be organized, mapped and shaped in order to facilitate certain kinds of life at the expense of others (Depledge, 2015, p.92). Geopower, the relationship between the earth and its life forms, running underneath and through power relations, manages population dynamics employing nature as the object of strategies of power (Luisetti, 2019, p.351).

Conclusion

In summary, in the three novels the maritime stretch turns into the liquid terrain of mobility conflicts: migrants are either detained or let

drown *at* sea and *through* a strategic use of the sea. In other words, the sea has been turned into a device, "enabling a form of killing without touching" (Heller and Pezzari, 2018, p.2) whereas migrants' death at sea have to be understood as the consequence of necropolitical border practices that highlight the ways in which migrants' lives and deaths have been made to not matter. The Mediterranean border appears as a force in motion, whose amplitude and potency reflect the power of border control itself. To conceive the sea as a border means to make references to the tensions related to its function of control and regulation of migratory flows, to assume that it constitutes a geopolitical delimitation, a buffer zone, a water barrier, a fracture between supposedly divergent realities, and a 'materialization of authority' that aspires to suspend the continents' entanglement creating "quarantined realms" (Chambers, 2008, pp.3,6). Not only are the Mediterranean waters treacherous, but, thanks to bilateral agreements between European and non-European countries, migrants can be returned to places where their rights are not recognized or enforced. These practices embody a political nexus which confines migrants between death and conditional salvation/rescue, where they become at once rescuable and killable; both saved and abandoned. Therefore, layered and archival, spatial and temporal, the Mediterranean Sea delineated in the novels grapples with relevance "with respect to the present" in Giorgio Agamben's formulation (2009, p.40), and it probes the critical stance of the Mediterranean as an aesthetic and political category for the understanding and the interpretation of current clandestine maritime border-crossing.

NOTES

ⁱ *It is difficult to offer precise data and numbers concerning clandestine migration by boat across the Mediterranean sea, but it is estimated that a migrants' vessel has three levels: the upper front is the first-class area where migrants pay up to 1500 dollars for their passage, the intermediate level is where they pay about 1000 dollars, and the bottom part of the vessel is where they pay 800 dollars. In the bottom area, there is no air and it is particularly hot, and migrants often die during their crossing from suffocation rather than perishing at sea, often suffering from fuel burns produced by the combustion of fuel mixed with salty water, which leads to severe if not fatal burns (see Del Grande 2006).*

ⁱⁱ *In Greek mythology, the Styx is the boundary that divides the world of the living from the world of the dead. According to the myth, the only way to cross the Styx is in a boat rowed by Charon, the ferryman who demands payment for carrying the souls to the other side. One could even compare the myth to the clandestine crossings of the Mediterranean Sea, in the view that the seascape represents the passage between the two sides – the Styx –, and the trafficker, who in general navigates the vessels, demands payment for his service, as Charon does. Interesting enough, an Austrian movie entitled Styx was released in 2018 featuring a German doctor, sailing across the Strait of Gibraltar, who encounters a sinking migrants' vessel.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *"Lo que pasa en la frontera, se queda en la frontera" (p. 172).*

^{iv} *"En España, igual que en Marruecos, a los policías y los militares se os protege todo lo posible de lo jueces" (p. 127).*

^v *"En esto cooperan los servicios secretos de ambos países. Como lo hacen con los servicios de otros países" (p. 84).*

^{vi} *"Los muros contra los que chocan los refugiados no son sólo las vallas, los más insalvables son los acuerdos que los Estados europeos tienen con los países vecinos para que sus policías impidan que lleguen a la frontera" (p. 128).*

^{vii} *"Él siempre pensó que hacía bien su labor policial y que la hacía para beneficio de la sociedad, pero ahora tenía la sospecha de que todo se reducía a mantener un statu quo en el que campaban a sus anchas unas injusticias monumentales" (p. 129).*

^{viii} *"¿y si los treinta mil naufragos que habían muerto en el Mediterráneo [...] fueran también homicidios? [...] Aunque los guardias civiles cumplieran órdenes, alguien debería haber sido imputado" (p. 129).*

^{ix} *"cómo era posible que los mismos europeos, que tanto presumían de sus sociedades democráticas, pudieran ejercer tanta crueldad con personas que lo único que buscan es un lugar en el que tener una vida digna" (p. 204).*

^x *"¿Cómo habían llegado los europeos a creerse con el derecho de convertir su territorio en una fortaleza rodeada de alambradas? [...] Por qué con ellos se*

prescindía de la aplicación de esos derechos humanos?" (p. 205).

^{xi} *"nuestra sociedad se ha dotado de las metáforas necesarias para ello. Se habla de las muertes que se producen en la frontera como si fueran fruto de la fatalidad; los crímenes aparecen como hechos accidentales derivados de una labor de protección fronteriza que es inevitable" (p. 210).*

^{xii} *"el lenguaje que se utiliza tiene mucho que ver con el hecho de que a los inmigrantes y los refugiados no les apliquemos los estándares de derechos humanos que sí aplicamos a nuestros ciudadanos. Hablamos de la inmigración con términos como avalancha, invasión, asalto masivo ... Siempre nos referimos a ella con metáforas que indican peligro o amenaza, y así la vemos como algo de lo que debemos protegernos y defendernos" (p. 212).*

^{xiii} *"nos permite justificar la crueldad con la que tratamos a esas personas, o al menos nos ayuda a mirar otro lado" (p. 212).*

^{xiv} *"macabras representaciones de crímenes anteriores" (p. 265).*

^{xv} *"[h]ay una carga simbólica claramente intencionada [...] Y vuelve a apreciarse especial crueldad: se hace saber a las víctimas cómo será su final para intensificar su sufrimiento" (p. 171).*

^{xvi} *"muertes en el mar" (p. 252).*

^{xvii} *"lo que pasa en la frontera sur [...] cuántos crímenes impunes" (p. 268).*

^{xviii} *"Lo único que me mantenía vivo era mi deseo de venganza" (p. 272).*

^{xix} *"los crímenes que se cometen en la frontera. [así que] las atrocidades de la frontera saldrían a la luz [...] Así haría justicia, no sólo con [sus] seres queridos, sino también con todos los demás inmigrantes y refugiados que mueren en las fronteras de vuestra fortaleza" (p. 277).*

^{xx} *"En eso te equivocas. Hablas de juicio y de derecho a la defensa, pero no tienes en cuenta que esa justicia oficial e institucional no llega a todas partes. En estas semanas has podido saber la enorme cantidad de crímenes que se cometen en la frontera, crímenes que cometen los miembros de los cuerpos de seguridad [...] ¿Cuántos de esos crímenes han sido juzgados? ¿Cuántos policías [...] están condenados por esos crímenes? Hay terrenos a los que la justicia institucional no llega. De modo que la cuestión que yo te planteo es bien sencilla: ¿allá donde no hay instituciones que impartan justicia, no es lícito que las víctimas traten de impartirla por su cuenta?" (pp. 278–279).*

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

SILVIA RUZZI holds a PhD from Humboldt University in Berlin. Her PhD thesis examined the literary representations of the Mediterranean Sea as a border space in border-crossing fiction of the twenty-first century, with emphasis on the intimate interconnections between geopolitical implications of border imaginaries and aesthetic practice. Her recent publications have focused on U.S.-Mexico border fiction and Mediterranean border fiction.



Dismantling The Binary Opposition Between Reservation and City in Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of The Living God*

Svitlana Kot

This paper explores how borders real and imagined shape the perception of self and others, with a focus on Indigenous peoples of America. It investigates the historical impact of bordering processes on Indigenous communities and highlights the growing urbanization of Native Americans and their invisibility in cities which can be seen a result of colonial 'othering.' Louise Erdrich's novel *Future Home of the Living God* is analyzed as a case study, demonstrating how it challenges the city/reservation binary by textualizing liminality, fluidity, hybridity, and double belonging.

Border, hybridity, Indigenous nations, reservation, urbanization

Die Überwindung des binären Gegensatzes zwischen Reservat und Stadt in Louise Erdrichs *Future Home of The Living God*

In diesem Beitrag wird untersucht, wie reale und imaginäre Grenzen die Wahrnehmung des Selbst und des Anderen formen, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf den indigenen Völkern Amerikas liegt. Der Beitrag untersucht die historischen Auswirkungen von Grenzprozessen auf indigene Gemeinschaften und beleuchtet die zunehmende Urbanisierung der amerikanischen Ureinwohner:innen und ihre Unsichtbarkeit in den Städten, die als Ergebnis des kolonialen Otherings Fremdbestimmung betrachtet werden kann. Louise Erdrichs Roman *Future Home of the Living God* wird als Fallstudie analysiert, um zu zeigen, wie er die Binarität Stadt/Reservat herausfordert, indem er Liminalität, Fluidität, Hybridität und doppelte Zugehörigkeit textualisiert.

Grenze, Hybridität, Indigene Nationen, Reservat, Urbanisierung

Démantèlement de l'opposition binaire entre la réserve et la ville dans *L'Enfant de la prochaine aurore* de Louise Erdrich

Cet article explore la manière dont les frontières réelles et imaginaires façonnent la perception du soi et des autres, en mettant l'accent sur les peuples indigènes d'Amérique. Il étudie l'impact historique des processus frontaliers sur les communautés indigènes et met en évidence l'urbanisation croissante des Amérindiens et leur invisibilité dans les villes, qui peut être considérée comme le résultat de 'l'altérisation' coloniale. Le roman de Louise Erdrich, *Future Home of the Living God* [*L'Enfant de la prochaine aurore*], est analysé en tant qu'étude de cas, démontrant comment il remet en question le binaire ville/réserve en textualisant la liminalité, la fluidité, l'hybridité et la double appartenance.

Frontière, hybridité, nations autochtones, réserve, urbanisation

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Introduction

In the history of the Americas, various bordering processes have brought about changes so dramatic that they have redistributed geopolitical, sociocultural, and discursive landscapes of the continents and changed the course of history. While free and unrestrained space of the continents has gradually become fragmented and measured, indigenous nations have always been those most painfully crossed by borders. Alongside ongoing bordering processes in the geophysical space of the United States, evident from political and legal disputes, there are also symbolic borders which bisect the spatial reality of Native Americans into two juxtaposed topoi: 'reservation' and 'city.' The former is stereotypically perceived as innate to Native Americans and the latter as hostile. Even though more than two-thirds of the Indigenous population in the USA live in urban areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), they continue to be invisible in cities. Such invisibility can be seen as a leftover colonial strategy of 'othering' which perceives urban space as 'civilized' and progressive and Indigenous people as rural and marginal. Thus, the binary opposition between 'city' and 'reservation' can be perceived as an offspring of the racialized symbolic border.ⁱ Although Indigenous writers have been striving to remap American space and aesthetically reconsider various types of borders along with those which tend to keep them in a marginal position, including but not limited to the one discussed in this paper, the mechanisms through which Indigenous writers deconstruct these borders remain uncharted.

In her novel *Future Home of the Living God*, Native American author Louise Erdrich makes a city the main arena of actions. Published in 2017, *Future Home of the Living God* is a dystopian novel set in the near future. Written as the diary of pregnant woman named Cedar Hawk Songmaker to her unborn child, the novel describes an apocalyptic world in which evolution has gone backward. The plot centers on Cedar's attempts to escape an oppressive system of control that haunts fertile women. The main character, Cedar, is a Native woman adopted and raised in the city of Minneapolis by two "liberals" (2017, Location No.26), as Erdrich calls them, Sera and Glen Songmaker. Cedar's biological family lives on the reservation, which she must visit in search of her medical history. The novel presents a transformation of the city/reservation dichotomy in which the

experience of the protagonist is one of a city dweller, while the reservation remains a secondary topos. This paper compares the space of the city and the reservation viewed from an urban Indigenous perspective and examines the spatial borderscapes of the novel. The first section of this paper will outline the historical background of how various borders and the symbolic borders between city space and reservation were established and have evolved in the North American spatial paradigm. Then, by applying a transcultural approach, I attempt to show that Erdrich challenges binary thinking and representations of dualities by textualizing liminality, fluidity, hybridity, and double belonging. This study aims to contribute to the growing area of research by exploring the symbolic border in the classic dichotomy of reservation/city and the way in which Native American authors can overcome this binary opposition.

Drawing and Redrawing Geopolitical and Symbolic Borders

Borders, boundaries, and frontiers are primarily spatial concepts. However, when they become part of the human mental map, they shape people's perception of the self and others within space and culture. The two major transformational processes that 'redrew' the map of North America—the advance of the American frontier to the West and the resettlement of Indigenous peoples into the borders of reservations—were interconnected but opposite in nature. For a long time, the former was considered crucial to the consolidation and formation of the American nation but at the same time meant the expansion of settler colonialism in the geopolitical space of the continent. The latter was the relocation of Indigenous people to the confines of reservations which resulted in disrupted and disintegrated tribal spaces that gradually shrank while expropriated by settlers.

Research indicates that forced removals, fragmentation of space, and establishing reservation borders were designed to erase Indigenous people and their rights to the land (see Wolfe, 2011; Mayer, 2014). In his article *After the Frontier: Separation and Absorption in US Indian Policy* Wolfe writes:

The frontier had become coterminous with reservation boundaries. At this point, when the crude technique of removal favor (sic.) of strategies for assimilating Indian people now that they had been contained within Euroamerican society, we can more clearly see the logic of elimination's positivity as a continuing feature of Euroamerican settler society. (2006, p.399)

Elsewhere, Wolfe quotes the words of a Chickasaw treaty negotiator regarding Native Americans being left with little room to maneuver during the Indian Removal Act of 1830: "They could either stay behind, lose their name and language, and become White, or they could cross the Mississippi and lose their homeland" (2011, p.20). Similarly, in her 2014 monograph *Narrating North American Borderlands*, Evelyn Mayer claims that the boundaries drawn by colonial powers reduced Indigenous people in multifaceted ways (p.35). Campaigns such as Dawes General Allotment Act of 1887² and the Indian Relocation Act of 1952³ aimed at assimilating Indigenous nations by imposing both physical and cultural boundaries on them. These geophysical boundaries were demarcated through forced relocation, reservations, and land allotments. Thus, throughout the history of the Americas, various geophysical borders drawn by colonial powers separated Indigenous people and white settlers, establishing a binary choice for Native Americans: either dissolve in the white society, or preserve the tribal culture by staying marginalized on the other side of those imposed boundaries. These boundaries not only shaped the geophysical landscape but also deeply influenced social and cultural landscape of Native American communities. Spatial borders both marked and invisible are superstructures with symbolic, narrative, and semiotic layers of meaning which intersect and set the process of bordering in motion. Bordering tends to activate various antagonistic processes. It can create binary oppositions between central and periphery zones, thereby switching on the 'othering' process, and striving to deconstruct the border. As Mayer writes:

Bordering can transcend locality and include the formation of bordering processes and liminal spaces, the construction of clear divisions and distinction between 'us' and 'them,' or create a sense of order. Bordering processes and practices entail othering, ordering, constructing,

maintaining, crossing, transgressing, blurring, and deconstructing boundaries and borders. Going beyond border binaries and establishing an in-between space, a Bhabhian 'third space,' could be a result of bordering processes and practices. Bordering occurs in social relations between people, but it unfolds as well on urban, regional, or national levels. This phenomenon has echoes in simultaneous globalization and deterritorialization forces. (2014, p.32)

Among the most powerful tools of 'othering' in the case of Indigenous nations were colonial narratives. Such narratives aimed to dominate the space and focus on representing Native Americans as the Others who were deemed inferior to colonial civilization. Henrice Altink and Chris Weedon claim that gender and racial borders set between men and women and white and non-white people have always been affirmed not only by religion but also by science (Altink/Weedon, 2010, p.6). Thus, the scholars demonstrate that the borderline between these binary oppositions tend to be defined as 'natural' or 'God-given.' Moreover, two sides of a binary opposition have rarely been equal, with one having a higher status or value than the other (Altink/Weedon, 2010, p.6). In the same manner, the colonial strategy of seizing Native lands was based on the idea of the exaltation of colonial civilization as both a universal value and God's will, according to which the land is free to settle after first being cleared of the 'aboriginal' people that inhabit it.

The stereotypical image perpetuated in U.S. popular culture of American Indians as 'noble savages' living in the wild could be a contributing factor. This image anchors Indigenous peoples in the past and limits the range of spatial representation to wild landscapes, teepees, and rural areas. As the city was always considered to be industrial and progressive, the invisibility of Natives in the city may be due to the remnants of this colonial misconception that juxtaposes the urban and the indigenous. In their book *American Indians and the Urban Experience*, Kurt Peters and Susan Lobo state that "the rigid rural/urban dichotomy is not a true expression of Indian reality, yet it has been one of the moulds and barriers that has continued to shape research, writing, and, to a lesser extent, creative expression" (2002, p.iii). They list three reasons why both Native writing and studies have had an 'almost exclusively' rural focus: the domination of rural areas as the site for Native

dwelling, which made researchers focus primarily on genocide, loss of control of land and resources; a strong anthropological influence on Native American studies with an emphasis on the “ethnographic present”; and common stereotypes “colored by romantic views of the past” (p.xiv). They argue that both the media and the educational system reinforce these popular stereotypes throughout contemporary Native and non-Native society, making them very difficult to discard (p.xiv). As a result, there is a strong focus on the hostility of urban spaces towards Indigenous people and ignores success stories of those who have lived in cities for generations. Peters and Lobo criticize the ways in which many scholars see the urban setting as the site of victimization, emphasizing loneliness, despair, anomie, the problems of alcoholism, racism, and poverty (p.xiii). The researchers combat the long-standing stereotypes of indigenous urbanization as “social disorganization” and a symptom of “cultural break-down” (p.xiii). Despite any mistaken dissociation between Indigenous people and urban space that stemmed from colonial discourse, Native Americans became accustomed to living in urban spaces prior to the establishment of reservations. Jack D. Forbes reports that the urban tradition of Native Americans dates back to 1600–1700 BC (sic.) when the Americas became the global center of urban life with the development of the world’s largest cities at that time (Forbes, 2001, p.5). This view is supported by Laura M. Furlan, who asserts that while big cities always had quite a favorable geo-position and were used as trading centers, they never ceased to be inhabited by Native Americans. Dismantling the dominant narrative about American Indians who “were not adoptable, assimilable, and did not belong in the city,” Furlan claims that urban areas have always been indigenous cities with a long history of colonial contacts, therefore making cities appear to be “contact zones” (Furlan, 2017, p.12). Nevertheless, a dramatic increase in the number of Native American people living in cities occurred over the last century due to the Indian Relocation Act. This relocation program significantly increased the urban Indigenous population. Between 1940 and 1960, over 122,000 Native Americans moved into cities, a shift that Kenneth R. Philp refers to as “an unprecedented Indian exodus from reservation to urban areas” (1985, p.175). Likewise, in her study of Native women writing remapping settler geographies, Mishuana Goeman calls

this process the “1950s construction of the urban Native” (2013, p.7). Despite acknowledging multiple problems such as the lack of assistance in adaptation to city life, a limited job market and perplexity in dealing with social services (1985, p.189), Native Americans nevertheless succeeded in reconciling and integrating into the urban schema.

Cities, as places with high population density as well as considerable population diversity, presume frequent close cultural contacts. Individuals are exposed to a variety of cultural elements due to cultural collisions when living in urban spaces. Large metropolitan areas function as prime agents of globalization, thereby giving additional ground to transculturation processes. Traditionally, it has been postulated that relocation aimed to remove Native Americans from their communities and weaken tribalism through assimilation. However, integration never meant complete assimilation as federal officials hoped. Choctaw scholar Karina L. Walters analyzed the acculturative behaviors and concluded that when living in urban space Native Americans do not fully assimilate or acculturate. To counteract the negative colonizing process and maintain positive identity attitudes, urban Natives can transform native cultures by integrating them into new spaces and “taking the best of both worlds” by internalizing positive self-views and externalizing negative preconceptions of the dominant culture (Walters, 1999, p.163). Such findings support the idea that cities appear to be transcultural spaces that do not presume assimilation but rather provide freedom for individuals to choose from a variety of cultural components.

In the case of urban Indigenous people, transculturation often implies blurring distinctions between various Native nations—a tribal cosmopolitanism. Philip notes that Indigenous people in cities were able to maintain separate cultural heritages through Pan-Indian activities such as powwows at tribal centers. Indigenous individuals would be mainly associated with other members of their own tribes, which led to certain self-segregation (Philp, 1985, p.189). This would contribute to the preservation of the tribal and physical self, which can pose a daunting challenge for a city-dwelling Indigenous person. Likewise, Furlan (2017) holds the view that in the case of Native Americans, urban life has led to the formation of a new collective Native Identity—that of the “intertribal” or “pan-Indian” which “evokes the purposeful erasure of difference” (p.16). She

claims that although urban Native Americans can maintain ties to their nation's cultures and spaces, they tend to form intertribal communities that transcend tribal borders (p.9). Thus, urban Indigenous narratives reflect a tendency toward tribal cosmopolitanism which was the primary means of cultural survival and resistance. Therefore, a transcultural approach should be adopted to allow more in-depth insight into the complexities of urban Native culture. As Furlan writes:

My work instead suggests a more transnational reading of contemporary American Indian literature and proposes that we begin to think through the boundaries of national identity for modern tribal people, especially those who live away from their ancestral homelands and reservations. These texts and their inherent characters are border-crossers. Allegiance to a nation is sometimes complicated by factors of geography and history and political affiliation. By crossing the imperial borders of the reservation and the conventional reservation novel—the dominant mode for more than 100 years—urban Indian texts challenge images of Indians as savage, anachronistic peoples confined to rural, captive places and instead reimagine Native peoples as complex, cosmopolitan subjects (2017, p.9).

Furlan's observations seem to suggest a pertinent role for urban Native texts to erase borderlines which confine Native American identities exclusively to the reservation space. Even though urbanization demanded a break from reservation space, the image of the reservation can be immanent and juxtaposed to that of the city. However, the former would play a secondary role in relation to the cityscape. Much of the available literature points out the idea that urban Natives strive to return to reservations for empowerment and healing, while Furlan claims that such idea is coherent with the prevalent view of Indigenous people as people connected with land. Furlan (2017) suggests reconsidering the image of Natives as 'rooted people' (p.8). The researcher reminds us that Indigenous people were often travelers and ignored borders (p.8). In a similar vein, Goeman (2013) questions "colonial spatiality" (p.7), which frames Native Americans in terms of the city/reservation dichotomy, a framework Goeman's personal experience leads her to question. She asserts that Native Americans

"exist somewhere outside that paradigm" (p.7). Likewise, Carol Miller (2002) considers the influence of urbanization on cultural identities and tribal communities, the maintenance of ancestral values, and ideas of the homeland. She points out that urban Native writing assumes a "double breaking out" (p.29)—first from the historically-imposed boundaries meant to contain and isolate Indigenous people, and then from the confinement of anachronistic stereotypes of Indigenous people living in the wilderness (p.29).

Though reservation and land may seem to be anchors for Indigenous tribal identities, as noted by Renya R. Ramirez, maintaining a connection with one's tribal roots is not contingent upon living on the homeland. This connection to land becomes stronger when Indigenous individuals live in urban spaces. Ramirez remains optimistic about the cultural future of Indigenous people who travel, relocate, and adapt to an ever-changing world and posits that urban Indians bridge geographic distances, promote their tribal cultures, and rejuvenate Indigenous culture (Farca, 2011, p.17). Jesús Benito and Ana Maria Manzanias, developing Teresa McKenna's idea of migrants, view Native Americans as border-crossers who always have a double voice (Benito/Manzanias, 2002, p.13). Therefore, these scholars ultimately refer to Indigenous literature as border literature, not only due to its postcolonial nature but also because it is a constitutive part of the American literary landscape (p.15). Native American literature textualizes a constant interaction, negotiation, and exchange of cultures stemming from contact zones which are a part of Native Americans' current context. Therefore, urban Native writing often means a blurring of various borders: borders between different Native nations, borders between Native Americans and other cultures, borders between urban and rural settings, and borders between cultural heritage and modern realities of globalization.

Writing Liminality and In-Between Space

Having delineated the background of the stereotypical binary opposition reservation/city and fallacies that continue to fuel it within American culture, I will now move on to discuss the way Louise Erdrich in particular is able to

vanquish the binarity by depicting multifaceted spatial paradigms of modern Indigenous people. Thus far, several studies of Erdrich's 1998 novel *The Antelope Wife* have demonstrated a strong connection between urban Native communities, city space, and reservations (see Ramirez, 2007; Farca, 2011; Furlan, 2017). Ramirez claims that Erdrich's protagonists become "Native hubs" as they cross the boundaries of the reservation, live in other places, and return to the reservation (p.17). Ramirez's insightful theory clarifies urban Indigenous people's choices to live in cities and maintain connections to their lands and communities in villages and reservations. Ramirez's work on *The Antelope Wife* is complemented by Furlan's (2017) who believes that Erdrich attempts to "re-narrativize Indian Life by portraying the reservation as a global place and Minneapolis as a 'hub' and a site with historical Indian understructure" (p.11). Furlan argues that Erdrich tries to remap the space, extend reservation boundaries, and break the dichotomy of city and reservation.

This study of *Future Home of the Living God* supports evidence from previous observations which demonstrate that city and reservation do not display many contradictory qualities that make them mutually exclusive spaces. On the contrary, they have merged borders and are interwoven. The protagonist belongs in both spaces as well as their own individual space, which is characterized by a certain degree of liminality which could be attributed to a particular Native spatial borderscape.

The theme of 'In-betweenness' is a recurrent motive in the novel's spatiotemporal patterns. Erdrich's protagonist, Cedar, a pregnant mixed-blood woman, finds herself straddling the realms of Ojibwa and Euro-American cultures, navigating the divide between the city and reservation, balancing between the orderly world and the apocalypse. While the protagonist's adoptive family dwells in a desirable part of Minneapolis city, her biological family has a house on the reservation, and her own house is somewhere in-between. Calling all the places home and moving back and forth from one to another, the protagonist experiences neither boundaries nor dramatic differences in any of the topoi that could otherwise make her feel like an outsider. Moving between these settings establishes her as a liminal character. The manifestation of liminality is particularly acute in reference to the private locus — the house the protagonist owns and occupies. It stands on a quiet street, a "forgotten cul-de-sac [...] untouched either by

gentrification or destitution" that "ends at an old railroad embankment" (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.1157). The marginality of her homeplace is described as being on the boundary between urban industrial territory and the wild.

My backyard's unused rail spur has not yet been converted to bicycle trail. That, in turn, merges with an overgrown and half-abandoned shipping yard and several acres of city park that lead to a corridor of wildness, ravine, tangled groves of grapevine-throttled trees, and an abrupt drop down a steep bank to the soggy headlands of a serene, almost hidden lake. Because of the luck of this convergence, I have always seen an unusual number of birds and animals for a person who lives in the city. (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.1469).

Described here, the wild landscape will later be a desirable getaway when the urban loci become prisons. Unlike her neighbors who separate themselves from the urban outside by "strict, tight chain-link fences at the borders to the railroad land" (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.1481), Cedar does not have the fence at the boundary of her home and frequently takes advantage of the opportunity to encounter wildlife. Raised in the city, the protagonist behaves the same way we might expect from an average Western person when thinking about their surrounding space from a pragmatic standpoint, yet she also seems to possess survival skills traditional to her indigenous roots. In the apocalyptic world in which the city may stop functioning effectively and fail to provide the essentials for life such as food, the protagonist is ready to turn to her indigenous 'genetic' memory and make use of food sources offered by the environment. It is vital to bear in mind the possible bias in such interpretation as it infers clichés of Natives as people being close to nature and alien in the urban landscape. However, Erdrich's text is not constructed to provoke binary thinking. Quite the contrary: as evident in the novel, Cedar is a liminal person who lives not behind the borders but on the borderland between urban space and wild landscape, being able to accept and appreciate each spatial paradigm.

By drawing on the concept of borderscapes, Chiara Brambilla insists on the need to resolve the geopolitical problem of seeing space in binary terms by employing a new politics of becoming based on pluritopical and plurivocal

interpretations of borders (2015, p.29). Similarly, Erdrich, in her book, underscores the border consciousness and moves beyond binary thinking, creating vivid liminality and in-betweenness.

Writing Fluid Identities

Another significant aspect of the borderscape setting is the fluid cultural identity that can reconfigure and reshape itself depending on the cultural environment. This cultural identity, in turn, is highly dependent on the spatial paradigm. Let us now consider the ways in which the cultural identity of the protagonist is constructed and transformed within the cultural environment of the novel.

Stereotypically, the city is seen as a place where the breakdown of Native traditions is inevitable. However, in Erdrich's novel, the city serves not only as the place that defines a person but also as a setting in which people can maintain connections and preserve culture. Cedar's adoptive parents strive to cultivate and promote her ties with native heritage. As representatives of white, non-Indigenous culture, they provide their own understanding of what constitutes Native culture, which makes their modern, urban home in Minneapolis an exclusive contact zone marked by a unique fusion of cultural elements:

Bubbles of public speculation float over us. During one of Sera's many self-invented ceremonies, which she put together from her eclectic readings on indigenous culture and Rudolf Steiner, we placed sacred tobacco all around our house and then smudged white candles with sage and stuck them in the ground and lighted them. We ate bread, walnut pâté. I drank ginger beer, and my parents drank wine. We curled up on blankets in the grass and sang peace-march songs until we fell asleep. It is one of the best memories of my life. (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.861).

These self-invented native rites and practices were designed to establish and preserve Cedar's native identity. Inspired by Indigenous culture but not always authentic, such artificially constructed Native culture nevertheless helped modify the home into a transcultural site and create culturally hybrid identities for those involved.

Despite great respect to Native traditions and heritage and being spatially and spiritually

separated from Native culture, the girl becomes a simulacrum of an American Indian in the city—"a theoretical Native" (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.53). As with any simulation, drawing a boundary between what is real and what is an imitation is complicated. The stereotypical image of an Indigenous person as the one close to nature is perpetuated at the girl's every step.

But even one-braided, even as a theoretical Native, really, I always felt special, like royalty, mentioned in the setting of reverence that attended the study of Native history or customs. My observations on birds, bugs, worms, clouds, cats and dogs, were quoted. I supposedly had a hotline to nature. (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.54).

Erdrich draws on popular clichés and stereotypes that still exist in American society. The father of Cedar's future child associates her with Land O'Lakes Butter Maiden, a stereotypical image of a Native girl depicted on a butter box, which he finds salacious. This brand logo shows a Native girl in a pastoral scene of lakes, pine trees, flowers, and grazing cows. By playing with this cliché of "a lovely, voluptuous Native girl kneeling in a lake landscape [...] in a short dress of fringed buckskin" wearing high-heeled leather moccasins (Erdrich, 2017, Location No. 1340), Erdrich not only questions the appropriation, commodification, and sexual objectification of Indigenous women as well as the refusal to understand them as contemporary and multi-dimensional, but also draws upon the stereotypical setting of the pastoral wilderness as an indispensable component of a simulated American Indian identity. This infinite-loop motif in which the image of the Native girl is repeated within itself is a repetition of the simulacrum in American culture symbolically embodied in the image. Through this image, Erdrich seems to illustrate Vizenor's (1999) ideas about Natives as a simulation. We can observe a gap between 'real' Native people – 'ordinary' people of the 21st century – and the stereotyped image that Cedar and those around her are familiar with and expected to embody.

Nevertheless, Cedar seems proud of her Native background until her adolescence, when she starts to meet other Native Americans. She begins questioning her Native identity and no longer feels special as a Native in the city. Cedar's own clichés about Indigenous cultures, including those of long-standing complex problems that both rural and city Natives are

associated with, begin to fade. The stereotypes, which served as the initial pillars of her Native concept of self, begin to crumble and trigger an identity crisis.

I became ordinary, then. Even worse, I had no clan, no culture, no language, no relatives. Confusingly, I had no struggle. In our talking circles, I heard stories. Addictions. Suicides. I'd had no crises in my life, besides the Retro Vinyl clerk, so I invented one. I chopped off both braids, then stopped going to classes. I'd been a snowflake. Without my specialness, I melted. (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.57).

Here, Erdrich suggests that a Native identity is maintained through connection to community, culture, and stories: everything that Cedar does not have.

As a city dweller, Cedar feels the need to visit the reservation at critical points in her life. She seeks out her tribal family to research the medical history of her biological family but also to search for her identity. This search for the reservation is connected with the search for roots and blood ties, perhaps the embodiment of what Mark Shackleton calls the 'homecoming' (2004, p.39). Cedar's symbolic homecoming is especially evident in the case of her biological family, whose house becomes the central reference point and the main landmark of the reservation space. The reservation defies her previously held clichés—instead of having extraordinary powers with sacred animals or healing spirits, she finds her biological family living a mundane middle-class life in an ordinary modern space. Cedar's shock and disappointment does not deter her, however. On the contrary, this realization encourages her dynamic nature to rethink her Native identity and to search for an authentic cultural environment.

It is also significant that the protagonist escapes the oppressive regime in the city to give birth in the safe place she imagines as a Native paradise. The future home of her unborn child is therefore linked to Native American culture, which the protagonist strives to connect with. The reservation compensates for the relative lack of explicit American Indian space and identity in the city, which heightens the protagonist's sense of Nativeness as a vital part of her cultural identity. She points out: "Maybe I look more Native than usual today, darker and more raven-haired from being on the reservation. I hope that's it." (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.744) Thus, although being a secondary space in the protagonist's life, the

reservation in Erdrich's novel serves as the primary anchor of Native identity by preserving and reinforcing it. Meanwhile, it is demonstrated that her identity is not rigid but fluid, subject to constant changes and transformations in which spatiality occupies a crucial role.

One anticipated finding was that the protagonist's house appears to be a primary safe hub that anchors her in the geophysical space of the city while at the same time protecting her from the outside. "One's true sense of identity becomes revealed" only in the most intimate personal space; for Cedar this place is her city dwelling, a house which belongs solely to her. The domestic space allows Cedar to be an authentic self instead of a public persona. She admits:

Still, this is our haven and our den, the place I can be merely the nameless being I am, a two-decade-plus collection of quirks and curiosities, the biochemical machine that examines its own mind, the searcher who believes equally in the laws of physics and the Holy Ghost, in reading my favorite theologian, Hans Küng (the one chastised by Ratzinger but loved by our present pope), and trying to live by the seven Ojibwe teachings, Truth Respect Love Bravery Generosity Wisdom Humility, which I've only read about and do not know from, say, a real Ojibwe person. (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.1038).

Her awareness of self as a multifaceted transcultural identity stems not from the either/or oppositions but from both aspects. The combination implies Cedar's unconditional acceptance of her cultural hybridity.

Writing Hybrid Spaces

Having discussed how the borderscape is formulated through an internal frame of reference, the following section of this paper addresses ways of constructing the panorama of the novel's spatial coordinate system. Due to practical constraints, this paper will factor out the influence of the dystopian genre on the spatiality of the text and instead focus specifically on the intersectionality and overlapping of the reservation and city topoi. Reservations and cities often follow contrasting spatial patterns. While the rigid schemes and cellular structures mark the city as a distinctive form of industrial space, the

topos of the reservation becomes a dispersed space of landscapes and significant loci. The chaos of the city is linear and organized by names of streets, numbers, distinct landmarks, and addresses. A space with a dense concentration of heterogeneous strangers, the city can make people invisible but also easily traceable. The reservation, in contrast, is free from constraints of geolocation, global positioning, and even addresses. Erdrich depicts the reservation as a space mapped not through exact naming and modeling, which represents a Western concept of mapping, but as a network of landmarks in the mind of local people. When the protagonist escapes from the structured urban schema with no reference points, she gets lost. Not structured and mapped, this space confuses the woman and initially disorients her.

'Looking for Mary Potts!' 'Dunno!' 'How about . . . Sweetie?' The woman slowly raises one arm, keeping the baby safe with the other, and points back down the same road. Tears sting my eyes. So it's no use, I think, shoving the car into reverse, pulling out of the driveway. Bitterness rises in me. I'll probably take every left turn off this road and cross every bridge and river—how many can there be? Is it all one river, maybe, bigger and smaller in places, winding through like a snake? Is there some kind of settlement besides the casino? A water tower? Maybe a food store? Some place that people can visit for the education and health care I have read is guaranteed to us by nation-to-nation treaty? (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.233).

As we can see the only guiding line Erdrich depicts in the reservation is the community itself, which unites the vast and unfragmented space. Thus, the city seems more vibrant but also more fragmented, in contrast to the reservation, which exhibits a higher level of vibrancy and closeness with its members, driven exclusively by the close-knit community it includes.

The reservation is portrayed in the novel as a site of ongoing cultural vitality, resilience, and innate strength. Facing the looming apocalypse, its inhabitants are depicted as maintaining composed demeanor and getting ready to adaptation, as exemplified in an episode where Cedar's biological mother's husband Edie states in the conversation with Cedar:

Indians have been adapting since before 1492 so I guess we'll keep adapting. But the world is going to pieces. It is always going to pieces. This is different. It is always different. We'll adapt. (Erdrich 2017, Location No.455).

Having withstood centuries of colonial expansion, forced assimilation, and genocide, which Erdrich thinks is similar to surviving the apocalypse, Native Americans on the reservation not only exhibit the capacity for adaptation but also possess a potential to gain political power and fight to reclaim Native land. Thus, the reservation in the novel is depicted as a center of Native resistance with the substantial potential for cultural regeneration. However, the observed difference between the city and reservation in this study was insignificant. Erdrich does not juxtapose them or present them as worlds apart. Neither is portrayed as idealistically plain. On the contrary, both topoi appear as ambivalent, culturally heterogeneous, and hybrid. There is nothing pastoral in Erdrich's construction of the reservation space at first sight. The way to the reservation and the reservation itself appear to be a customary American topos with prototypical places and characteristics. "I go through a typical car entrance at a typical fast-food franchise, and eat an egg-cheese biscuit and drink two cartons of milk" (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.208). Ironically, Erdrich emphasizes that the protagonist's Native 'ancestral holding' (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.209) is a 'super pumper' (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.209) characterized by a lighted canopy of red plastic and a copy of Dostoevsky's *Idiot* that had been read by Cedar's step-father. Such an image ruins both the protagonist's and readers' expectations of the reservation as a site of Native authenticity while simultaneously deconstructing clichés regarding Native Americans existing within American culture.

Further insight into the novel offers an image of the reservation as a hybrid space, a cultural borderland, where Indigenous elements clash or fuse with American consumer culture, globalized mass culture imagery, and Catholic spiritual ideas. The houses "decorated with plywood bears and moose" combine with those embellished with "bent-over-lady-butts with dotted bloomers" (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.215). Birdhouses in the yards go together with barbecue grills, "kid swimming pools of brilliant blue and pink plastic, a trampoline, dead cars, stove-in boats getting patched,

heaped-up lawnmowers and little rusted-out lawn tractors" (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.217). All of these elements add a somewhat realistic, even naturalistic picture of the space, its dwellers hindered by a deficient economy but still willing to enjoy life.

As with other reservation loci, the house of Cedar's biological family also features some eye-catching hybridity. Looking quite ordinary and secular, "a yellow, newish, two-story ranch with white trim and a front porch with a wheelchair accessibility ramp for Grandma" (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.178) with trees and cars in the yard, it also includes a sweat-lodge frame—the remnants of the Indian ceremonial structure used for praying and healing. This religious and cultural spatial element represents the spiritual component of the dwelling and may signify the purification and healing of the very home space (which the sweat lodge ceremony is supposed to provide). Along with modern-day facilities like air conditioning and a 'wheelchair accessibility ramp it has a space for a Catholic shrine in the form of a Blessed Virgin statue placed in an inverted bathtub. The odor of cigarette smoke mixes with natural smells such as bark, birdseed, and boiling berries, symbolic of more traditional ways of life or Indigenous medicine. Transculturation affects different generations of the same community or even family in unique ways, creating distinct cultural configurations by incorporating various components from different cultures. This becomes vivid in Erdrich's description of interior of the house. It is particularly apparent in the room of Cedar's sister, Little Mary:

I close the door, the reverse side of which is pasted over with hand-drawn green Magic Marker hearts, vintage stuff— a tragic-eyed Siouxsie and the Banshees poster, an Alien Sex Fiend T-shirt, a thong with actual little silver spikes in it, held up by a tack, many German beer coasters, and what-all else. Frills, those too. Bucketloads of frills— lots of candy-pink flounces and bows. I turn around. Little Mary is sitting on the gigantic pile of clothing that is probably her bed. (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.627).

The interior of this room shows the undeniable belonging of its owner to the goth youth subculture, which developed in England from the audience of gothic rock music. Such a modification of the private space of the young Indigenous girl can be attributed to the influence of global media culture, which is now

a significant contributory factor in the development of transculturation.

The heterogeneity of cultural elements on the modern reservation is sometimes sarcastically hypertrophied in the text. The casino, a popular spatial cliché of American Indian reservations, clashes with Catholic imagery. A Catholic saint, Saint Kateri is believed to appear in between the parking lots of a casino. "The sacred oval of earth lies between the north and south parking lots, and the committee has decided to begin by grassing it with sod, which was scheduled to arrive an hour ago" (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.400). A surreal interaction of spatial elements—a boulder which marks the very place where Saint Kateri made her appearance, a shrine behind the "newly surfaced and paved" parking lots (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.400), a statue of the saint to be built—interweave profane with sacred, Catholic with pagan. Various communally significant locales imbue and transmit the interaction of cultural meanings, becoming a locus with the most intense accumulation of hybridity: "Where she stood on the grass, just under her feet, two crosses were scorched into the sod" (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.1666). This event transforms the space itself into the source of other combinations of signs, which further cultivates and spreads them. With a touch of irony, Erdrich paints the site of the casino as a place where, following the appearance of Saint Kateri, people begin to arrive with their Bibles. The image of a Catholic Saint of Native origin, a Mohawk woman named Kateri, embodies versatile transcultural meanings. Sweetie, Cedar's biological mother, explains that the Mohawk girl who took her name from St. Catherine of Siena was

born in 1656 at Osserneon, New York, the daughter of a Christian Algonquin woman named Kahenta. Kateri's mom married a pagan, of the Turtle clan, and died during a smallpox epidemic that also left Kateri's face scarred and her eyes weakened. She converted and was baptized in 1670, and thereafter lived a life of remarkable virtue, even, it is said, in the midst of scenes of carnage, debauchery, and idolatrous frenzy.' 'Idolatrous frenzy. Is that something like traditional religion?' asks Bangs. 'Yeah, it is,' says Sweetie. 'I'm a pagan Catholic.' (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.365).

The term 'pagan Catholic' is itself based on the opposition between the two and becomes a quintessence of the hybrid nature of

Catholicism on indigenous lands. Moreover, with time, some additional semblance of transcultural meanings are added to the prototype. The symbolic figure proceeds to develop new connotations to meet the needs of the community that worships her, which is why she is believed to intercede effectively for those who are in need. Erdrich's choice of this particular saint does not seem to be arbitrary, as Kateri is the patron saint of ecologists, exiles, and orphans, which intersects with the main themes of the novel.

There is no single rigid cultural frontier that forms the borderscape between Native and Euro-American culture. Rather it is defined by a range of adaptable actors, factors, and locales. Various components mix with what the global economy and consumerism culture impose on people which leads to further heterogenization. Erdrich makes this particularly evident through the novel's references to Saint Kateri. The sacred locus between the two parking lots where the saint appeared is compared to a site on Long Island, New York, where a few appearances of the Virgin Mary are claimed to be registered and which now financially benefits from the pilgrimage crowds. As seen here, the Christian concepts, values, and practices as part of the American cultural context were incorporated into an Indigenous way of life long ago, and now those elements undergo modification imposed by global consumer culture. The novel ironically displays how the Catholic imagery was modified within the context of modern American consumer society, which sells, buys, and makes a profit of everything be it a hamburger, a ticket for pilgrims to enter the sacred shrine or the rose petals from the roses over which the Blessed Virgin waved her hand.

Despite the tendency to hybridity, the reservation is depicted as the topos which gravitates towards spirituality, while the city appears as a secular space almost devoid of sacred centers apart from a church. However, the church is portrayed as a locus neither in form nor in content carrying transcendently metaphysical meanings. Being "a humble place" in comparison with limestone cathedrals and basilicas it functions as a site which gathers "the most destitute people in the city, the cast-asides, the no-goods, the impossible, the toxic and contaminated" (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.1145). As Cedar says, "Mine is not a church of the saved, but a church of the lost" (Erdrich, 2017, Location No.1147). It is commonly assumed that sacred geography embodies the belief system of a community

through its spatial structure. Unlike the monumental Catholic basilicas that dominate the surrounding space and strive to approach the divine or lavish exurb Protestant churches that mirror the spirit of the consumerist epoch, the uniformly plain church Cedar attends praises not a deity but a human being. Instead of being named after a saint, her church — called Holy Incarnation — glorifies human nature as omnipotent and declares that the conception of divinity as a universal life force is immanently present in every person, especially those who are castaways in a hard world.

The protagonist's spiritual search starts with a fascination with Catholic rites and artifacts and gradually transforms into a sincere pursuit of a sense of belonging. At first spatially and spiritually separated from her Native community and biological family, Cedar points out that she embraced Catholicism in her attempts to rediscover connections with her mother and people. Thus, by drawing on the isolation of an individual in the urban environment, Erdrich emphasizes communal identity, which some researchers believe (see Owens, 1994; Weaver 1997) is especially strong with Indigenous Americans and serves as the primary source of their sense of spirituality. Therefore the city space, although lacking consecrated loci, upholds spirituality as embodied in human beings and advanced via communal connections, which can connect multiple spaces and dismantle any borders in the attempt to be established.

Conclusion: Undermining Binary Thinking

In conclusion, it appears that while a stereotypical symbolic border between city and reservation still juxtaposes the topos and denies Indigenous people the right to be perceived as fully-fledged urban dwellers, Native urban writing often attempts to dismantle this border by portraying hybrid spaces in borderscapes. Louise Erdrich's apocalyptic dystopia *Future Home of the Living God* with its stereotypical urban protagonist effectively challenges anachronic stereotypes about Native Americans as rustic people. Although *Future Home of the Living God* may seem to be a decisive break with the reservation novel tradition, it is not truly so, as the reservation space is often vividly present in the novel both as a reference to both Ojibwa communal

identity and cultural roots. Neither the reservation nor the city appears to be hostile or repellent. Quite the contrary: Erdrich metaphorically marks the protagonist as belonging to both by drawing parallels between the reservation as space where Native Americans belong by birthright and the city where they belong by adoption. As the novel indicates, the city's lack of authentic Indigenous representation compels urban Natives to search for the reservation as a site of cultural vitality. The evidence from this study also suggests that both the reservation and the city are culturally non-homogeneous. While the city acts as the agent of globalization and consists of multiple cultural contact zones, the reservation can preserve tribal culture yet cannot avoid hybridization, which according to Benito and Manzanos is an impact of the border (2002, p.10). To effectively adapt and navigate within and between both heterogeneous spaces, one must not only occupy the liminal position and exist in between them but also possess a fluid identity and border consciousness which negates binary thinking. As Gloria Anzaldúa reminds us in *Borderlands/La Frontera*:

The work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war. (1987, p.80).

Likewise, in her novel, Erdrich aesthetically overcomes the binary of space by giving her protagonist a double voice and dual ability to represent and belong to several spatial and cultural paradigms, thus dismantling the border while simultaneously creating a borderscape.

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Reassessing the Periphery, Challenging the Center, Re-politicizing Migrants' Struggles

Marco Mogiani

Drawing from empirical research in a purportedly peripheral location within a peripheral country – the port area of Patras in south-western Greece – the article will critically reflect upon the intertwining, overlapping and increasingly blurred categories of 'center' and 'periphery,' arguing that borders can provide a crucial viewpoint for the analysis and potential challenge of the European border and migration regime. It will do so by a) theoretically analyzing Balibar's idea of the 'everywhere-ness' of borders in combination with feminist and postcolonial approaches; b) empirically investigating the continuous interplay between center and periphery, visibility and invisibility, border enforcement and border struggles in the port area of Patras, exploring in particular the multiple nuances, contradictions, and conflicts unfolding on the ground; c) reassessing the political importance of migrants' invisible struggles from the margins not only in the redefinition of borders, but also in the reconfiguration of the European border and migration regime itself.

Patras, borders, migration movements, European border and migration regime, center/periphery.

Réévaluer la périphérie, défier le centre, repolitiser les luttes des migrant.e.s

S'appuyant sur une recherche empirique menée dans un lieu prétendument périphérique au sein d'un pays périphérique – la zone portuaire de Patras dans le sud-ouest de la Grèce – l'article propose une réflexion critique sur les catégories de « centre » et de « périphérie » qui s'entremêlent, se chevauchent et s'estompent de plus en plus, en soutenant que les frontières peuvent fournir un point de vue crucial pour l'analyse et la remise en question potentielle du régime européen des frontières et des migrations. Pour ce faire, il s'agira a) d'analyser théoriquement l'idée de Balibar sur l'omniprésence des frontières en combinaison avec des approches féministes et postcoloniales ; b) d'étudier empiriquement l'interaction continue entre le centre et la périphérie, la visibilité et l'invisibilité, l'application des frontières et les luttes frontalières dans la zone portuaire de Patras, en explorant en particulier les multiples nuances, contradictions et conflits qui se déroulent sur le terrain ; c) de réévaluer l'importance politique des frontières et de l'immigration dans le contexte de la mondialisation ; c) réévaluer l'importance politique des luttes invisibles des migrant.e.s depuis les marges, non seulement dans la redéfinition des frontières, mais aussi dans la reconfiguration des frontières européennes et du régime migratoire lui-même.

Patras, frontières, mouvements migratoires, régime européen des frontières et des migrations, centre/périphérie.

Peripherie aufwerten, Zentrum herausfordern und Kämpfe der Migrant:innen neu politisieren

Ausgehend von empirischen Untersuchungen an einem vermeintlich peripheren Ort in einem peripheren Land – dem Hafengebiet von Patras im Südwesten Griechenlands – wird der Artikel kritisch über die ineinandergreifenden, sich überschneidenden und zunehmend verschwimmenden Kategorien von ‚Zentrum‘ und ‚Peripherie‘ reflektieren und argumentieren, dass Grenzen einen entscheidenden Gesichtspunkt für die Analyse und potenzielle Herausforderung des europäischen Grenz- und Migrationsregimes darstellen können. Dies geschieht durch a) eine theoretische Analyse von Balibars Idee der ‚Allgegenwärtigkeit‘ von Grenzen in Kombination mit feministischen und postkolonialen Ansätzen; b) eine empirische Untersuchung des ständigen Wechselspiels zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie, Sichtbarkeit und Unsichtbarkeit, Grenzdurchsetzung und Grenzkämpfen im Hafengebiet von Patras, wobei insbesondere die vielfältigen Nuancen, Widersprüche und Konflikte, die sich vor Ort entfalten, untersucht werden; c) die politische Bedeutung der unsichtbaren Kämpfe der Migrant:innen von den Rändern aus nicht nur bei der Neudefinition von Grenzen, sondern auch bei der Neugestaltung des europäischen Grenz- und Migrationsregimes selbst neu zu bewerten.

Patras, Grenzen, Migrationsbewegungen, europäisches Grenz- und Migrationsregime, Zentrum/Peripherie.

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Introduction

In the port of Patras (Greece), events seem to unfold following a perpetual routine. Every afternoon, ferryboats return from the Italian ports of Bari, Ancona or Venice and release lorries, cars, and passengers, which quickly disperse around the city. Meanwhile, hundreds of other vehicles dispatch the security checks and prepare to board the ferryboats to Italy. Several police and port police officers, in cooperation with the private security members of the Port Authority, incessantly patrol the area to prevent threats from disrupting the daily procedures, guaranteeing the safety of port operations. Their cars and motorbikes go back and forth the perimeter of the port to monitor the parking lot and the surrounding roads, activating the sirens to scare off undesirable people. Gathering around the premises of nearby abandoned factories, indeed, dozens of migrants¹ constantly attempt to cross the port fences and to sneak under those lorries that will bring them to another Europe.

At first sight, the port of Patras is located in a relatively peripheral position vis-à-vis the global and regional geographies of capital, goods, and migrant mobilities. The recent economic crisis impacted on a territory already devastated by the advent of neoliberal globalization and the relocation of production at global level, which led to the closure of the most important manufacturing activities and to the reconfiguration of the local economy from the industrial to the service sector. While the “revolution in logistics” (Cowen, 2014) significantly affected the port of Piraeus, which has developed in recent decades as one of the privileged terminals in the Mediterranean Sea for the arrival and distribution of goods from China, the port of Patras, lacking container handling facilities and intermodal links with the main logistical networks, has continued to operate mostly across the Adriatic Sea. The events of the notoriously – but improperly (Bojadžijev and Mezzadra, 2015) – called “refugee crisis,” which affected the islands overlooking the Turkish shores and the routes towards the northern border, remained only a distant echo.

Yet, despite its peripheral location, the port of Patras represents an important standpoint from which to observe and grasp a multiplicity of processes and dynamics that originate further away in space and back in time, and that generate, in turn, distant spatio-temporal repercussions. By taking a relatively marginal location as a point of departure, the paper will argue that border areas at the periphery of Europe can function as crucial viewpoints for the analysis and challenge of the border and migration regime at the heart of

Europe. The paper will construct the argument in three ways. First, it will critically reflect upon the intertwining boundaries and changing meanings of center and periphery in border studies, starting from the exploration of Balibar’s idea of the paramount importance of borders in understanding the center, and enriching it with feminist and postcolonial approaches on the study of borders. Second, it will investigate the interplay between center and periphery in the port area of Patras, looking at how their boundaries have been continuously changed through space and time and generated unequal power relations at and across multiple scales. Third, it will empirically reassess the political importance of migrants’ struggles from the border, suggesting that the practices of negotiation and resistance that migrants have performed through time can constitute an important tool to unveil and challenge power relations in the center.

Although theoretical abstractions enable the comprehension of a wider and clearer picture, ethnographical analyses remain fundamental to enhance “the fullness and complexity of social and political life” (De Genova, 2012, p.131). The article draws from a nine-month-long fieldwork in Patras between January and September 2015. During this period, I have conducted semi-structured interviews with professors of the University of Patras, independent experts, members of the Port Authority, police and port police officers, social workers, local volunteers and, of course, migrants. Besides, a great amount of field notes has been produced through participant observation and informal conversations with migrants in the factories. The empirical analysis of the intertwining events occurring across the port of Patras invites to rethink the contours of center and periphery as geopolitical and analytical categories, exploring the multifarious nuances, contradictions, and conflicts that unfold on the ground.

Borders are Everywhere, but Where Exactly?

While the idea of a borderless world was pervading mainstream discourses and policies in the early 1990s, border scholars directed their attention to the multiple ways through which borders were actually reproducing, shifting, and proliferating across space, in order to regulate the differential mobilities of capital, goods, and people traversing them. Far from disappearing, borders were transforming their ontological and empirical meaning, operating not just as dividing lines to protect nation states from external

threats, but as porous membranes that, positioned along crucial nodes and articulations, govern the multiplicity of flows crossing them. The construction of the European Union – which accelerated in the 1980s with the advent of neoliberal globalization – epitomizes this process: while internal borders between member states have disappeared and made way for the expansion of the common market, losing their traditional sense of protection and nation-building, border controls have relocated and multiplied within, across and even outside of the European space.

One of the first scholars to grasp the transformation of the meaning and practice of borders is the French philosopher Étienne Balibar. In a lecture delivered in Geneva in 1993 and later published in *Politics and the Other Scene* (2002), Balibar attempted to define such transformations, outlining the main functions that borders were carrying out within a global reconfiguration. Borders, according to him, have three main characteristics: they are overdetermined, as they are the result of complex and continuously changing historical processes; polysemic, as they have different meanings for different people; and heterogeneous, as they no longer coincide with the cultural, political or socio-economic boundaries of the nation-state, but are placed “wherever selective controls are to be found” (2002, p.84). A few years later, during another lecture in Thessaloniki which appeared in *We, the people of Europe? Reflections on transnational citizenship* (2004), Balibar famously stated that borders are no longer situated at the edge of nation-state territories, but “are dispersed a little everywhere, wherever the movement of information, people, and things is happening and is controlled” (2004, p.1). In this respect, they have become central to the constitution of the polity, as they define the modalities of inclusion and exclusion within a certain territory.

The conception of the ‘everywhere-ness’ of borders has sparked a lively debate within border studies: scholars and researchers have started to investigate the myriad of places where borders appeared, the multiplicity of agents involved in their multiplication, and the variety of functions performed (see, among others, Cooper and Rumford, 2011; Johnsons et al., 2011; Jones and Johnson, 2014). While sharing several points of contact and interest with such a literature and acknowledging its role in unveiling often invisible border practices, agents, and functions, the current article aims at further exploring the central tenets of Balibar’s idea, investigating the interrelations and continuously changing boundaries of the ideas of center and periphery. The assumption that borders are everywhere may

disclose two interrelated corollaries. The first is to inherently assert the parallel, relative irrelevance of borders themselves: if they are everywhere, then they are nowhere. The second is to implicitly declare the disappearance of the center: if borders are no longer located at the edge of nation states but ramify into the heart of the polity, then what, or, even better, *where* is the center?

The outline of the characteristics of borders can help us identify with more precision where borders are placed and who the agents performing, implementing, or experiencing them are. If borders are located ‘wherever selective controls are to be found,’ our field of research can be restricted to those places where controls operate distinctions on the basis of class, race, gender, and nationality, generating differential spatio-temporal mobilities. In defining the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion from the community, borders are inherently political, imbued with a horizontal, ubiquitous form of power that tends to control people rather than territories (see Foucault, 2007; 2010). If borders regulate the movement of people, then they must adapt to the continuous changes in their migratory trajectories, patterns and flows; they should be flexible, porous and hybrid, in order to be quickly responsive to policy changes, trend irregularities, and potential threats.

By the same token, Balibar’s definition of the center can clear some doubts on the multiplicity of ways in which the center, far from disappearing, is transforming its nature and location. The notion of a center, Balibar reminds us,

means the concentration of power, the localization of virtual or real governing authorities [...] But this notion has another, more essential and elusive meaning, which points to the sites where a people is constituted through the creation of civic consciousness and the collective resolution of the contradictions that run through it (2004, p.2).

Just like the border, the center is defined in a political way: it is the place where power originates, takes shape, and institutionalizes itself, dominating territories and people. At the same time, however, it is also the place where power is challenged, resisted, and contested, bringing to light new political subjectivities and social conflicts.

These definitions, however, further complicate our attempts to locate centers and peripheries: not only are the boundaries between the two increasingly blurred, but they continuously shift across space and time. Far from being fixed and

well-defined terms, center and periphery appear, therefore, as socially constructed categories that have a relational, variable, and contested meaning: what we perceive as center or periphery is not only the result of specific historical and political-economic conditions, but also of the negotiations and struggles that determine it, and that might continuously change across space and time. In this respect, how can we grasp the continuous interrelations and changes between the boundaries of center and periphery in the analysis of borders?

In general, by subverting the way to conceive and perceive borders, feminist and postcolonial approaches can help us delve into this question, looking at how power is organized, distributed, reconfigured, and contested across society. While feminist approaches can disclose the multiple ramifications of power within and across social groups, disassembling the negotiations and conflicts that the process of bordering has historically entailed (see Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy, 2019), postcolonial ones can emphasize the polyhedral identity of the subaltern subject, initiating a process of liberation from the colonial mechanisms of the capitalist system (see Jenkins and Aitken, 2000; Mignolo, 2015).

In particular, feminist and postcolonial approaches can enrich our vision of borders and identify the changing relations and locations of the boundaries between center and periphery in three ways. First, by disassembling the multiple uneven and contested ways through which the European border and migration regime has developed, they allow a grounded examination of the dislocations and relocations of the multiple power relations across Europe. In so doing, not only can they provide a more honed critique of such a regime, disclosing its patterns of development while opening up splinters of struggle and resistance, but they can also allow to investigate the continuous interplay between center and periphery on the ground, positing borders – wherever they are to be found – as central devices for the understanding and functioning of the border and migration regime itself (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Novak, 2019). Second, in rejecting the categorization of migrants as a unified political force, feminist and postcolonial approaches tend to examine the differential repercussions that the border and migration regime engenders on migrant bodies, analyzing the reproduction of class, race, and gender divisions among migrants themselves (see Scheel, 2013). The analytical breakdown of the multiple fractures traversing migrant bodies, it is argued here, could lead to reinforcing, rather than simply criticizing or undermining, the process of formation and development of a

migrant political subjectivity, disclosing the grounded difficulties that need to be overcome for a more efficient and coordinated struggle against the border and migration regime.

Third, by considering the variegated ways through which bordering practices are reproduced across society, feminist and postcolonial approaches can help us look at peripheral, imperceptible acts that put into question and sometimes overtly challenge the whole governmental apparatus for the selection, filtering, and channeling of migration flows. Through the disclosure of the deficiencies and brutalities of the European border and migration regime, the everyday struggles at the periphery of Europe – Calais, Ventimiglia, Idomeni or Lampedusa are the most representative in this respect – acquire a visible political (Rancière, 2009) resonance, transcending the local boundaries and reverberating at the center of Europe.

In this respect, not only are feminist and postcolonial approaches attentive both to the changing dynamics of capitalist operations and to the violence they exercise on the bodies of migrants, but they also have the merit of reinstating migrant agency, giving political visibility to their everyday struggles against the border and migration regime. In placing the oppressed, the marginalized, and the subaltern at the center of their analysis, these approaches amplify the distant voices of voiceless subjects, making them resound through the heart of the regime. In putting migrants' peripheral struggles in the spotlight, they re-center borders' distant locations, giving spatio-temporal coordinates to their indeterminate sense of 'everywhere-ness.'

In conceiving borders as crucial devices that condense the multiplicity of struggles between capital and (migrant) labor, they subvert center-periphery relations, laying bare the interrelations and contradictions between the capitalist regime of accumulation and dispossession, the border and migration regime that filters labor mobilities, and the migrant turbulence that constantly attempts to defy or escape it.

Through a more nuanced analysis of the dominant system of border controls and its repercussions on migrants' everyday life, this article aims to enrich the ethnographical research from the margins and to bring to light less visible struggles, opening up new ways to redraw and subvert center and periphery as analytical and geopolitical categories. In so doing, the article will show how blurred and mutable the contours of center and periphery are, arguing that not only is it possible from the margins to look at, analyze, and eventually challenge the center, but also that what is considered as marginal can indeed acquire at times social and political visibility,

making it a central spot in the analysis of certain phenomena. In particular, the article will explore three interrelated dimensions of the construction of the categories of center and periphery in the port area of Patras – the logistical networks, the European border and migration regime, and the migration movements crossing its port – looking at how these dimensions continuously intersect, overlap, and clash.

From Patras to the Center of Europe

Despite its remote location within the European map, Patras condenses a multiplicity of dynamics that originate at the heart of – or even outside of – the European Union and propagate across its territory. As these dynamics intersect across the port of Patras, they acquire their vivid materiality and negotiate their presence on the ground, generating changes and conflicts. The uneven development of such dynamics, as well as their continuous changes through space and time, constantly reconfigure the boundaries of center and periphery, subverting power relations across and within them. The critical analysis of these events, I argue, can provide more grounded and honed tools for a more overarching examination of the European border and migration regime, laying bare its inner contradictions, as well as the challenges that are advanced against it. This section will look at the uneven development of these dynamics across the port of Patras through time, highlighting the repercussions and contradictions they have engendered on the ground.

Throughout its millennial history, the city has developed a close relationship with the contiguous sea, making it a vibrant commercial and cultural crossroad, as well as a strategical hub subject to military threats (Laiou, 2002; Rizakis and Petropoulos, 2006). This relationship became more evident after the Greek War of Independence (1821–1829), when a symbiotic affinity evolved among the regional environment, the urban socio-economic fabric, and the port. After the independence, the city expanded towards the sea, with the creation of a geometrically structured neighborhood between the hill and the seafront, and the gradual enlargement of the port. The cultivation and commercialization of Corinthian raisin, the main agricultural product of the region, boosted the local economy and prompted the proliferation of satellite activities. For most part of the 19th century, the port of Patras operated as a strategic hub for the export of agricultural products and the

import of consumption goods and raw materials for construction and the industry, contributing to the economic development of the whole region (World Port Source, 2005).

The idyllic relationship between the city and the sea wavered around the end of the century. The completion of the Suez and Corinth Canals, in 1869 and in 1893 respectively, fostered the development of the port of Piraeus. Besides, in the context of a general economic crisis at national and European level, the raisin trade started to decline, causing mass unemployment and emigration (Kasimis and Kassimi, 2004). The beginning of the 20th century saw the development of industrial activities in Patras, which partly absorbed the outgoing migration and attenuated the decline of the raisin trade. Benefitting from the proximity with the port, the connection with the newly built railway, and the abundance of water, the first factories appeared in the surroundings of the city. After the world wars and the following civil war, industrial and port activities stimulated the economic recovery, although with renovated configurations. Since the 1960s, the Adriatic Sea emerged indeed as an important corridor for goods and passengers, and the first ferry lines to and from Italy began to operate. Despite its transition into a hub for general trade and passenger traffic,ⁱⁱ the port managed to maintain tight connections with the local economy, resulting in a twenty-year-long period of harmony.

The advent of neoliberal globalization represented a turning point for the future of the city and its port. The reshaping of the geographies of production and distribution at global level and the parallel process of deepening and widening of the European market opened new geopolitical and socio-economic scenarios. The relocation of productive activities from global capitalist centers to peripheral countries had profound repercussions on the socio-economic life of the city and on Greece as a whole. Despite governmental attempts to rescue the industrial sector, several factories were forced to close, leading to a period of high unemployment and to the restructuring of economic activities. Whereas the northern part of the city developed around the service sector, the city center and its southern periphery – where the new port is now located – still languish from the never-ending economic crisis.

Border Destruction: the Development of Logistical Networks within Europe

Since the process of de-industrialization, the port of Patras has almost completely abandoned

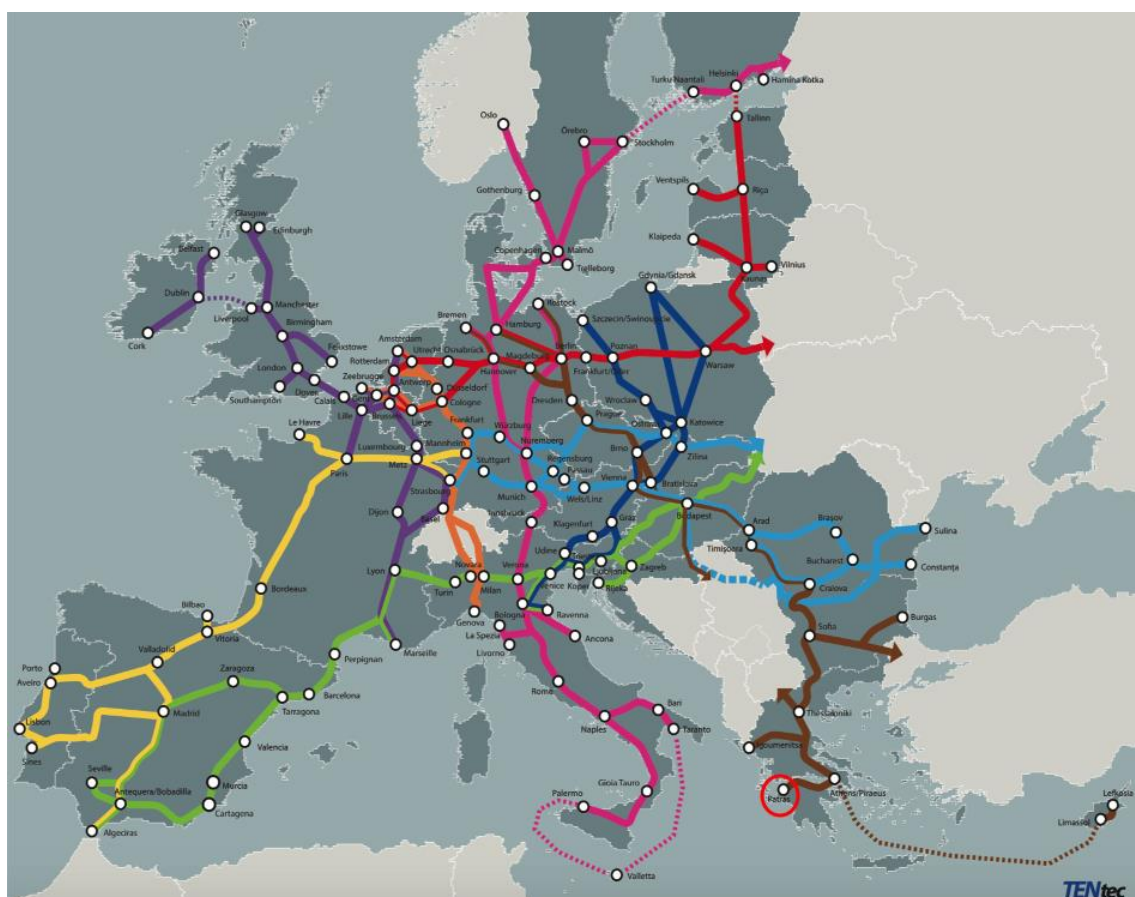


Fig. 1: TEN-T core network corridors (in brown, the Orient/East-Med corridor; circled in red, the city of Patras)

Source: Elaboration from European Commission, TENtec Public maps, <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/tentec/tentec-portal/site/en/maps.html>

freight activities and lost its integral connection with the socio-economic fabric of the city, developing on a single-dimensional basis for the circulation of passengers and lorries. At the beginning of the 1990s, however, two main factors caused an unscheduled growth in transit traffic. First, the connecting roads through the Balkan region were inaccessible due to the geopolitical instabilities in the then Yugoslavia, making Greece a necessary transit route between the Middle East and northern Europe. Second, the port of Igoumenitsa in northern Greece, which could have been used as a transit hub to improve the time efficiency of supply chains, was at that time only a small installation with limited maritime and road connections. As it was incapable to bear such a load of traffic, the increased connections to and from Italy had to transit necessarily through Patras, bringing about environmental and traffic problems in the city center. Due to the increase in transit traffic and the positive market prospects, the expansion of the port was deemed necessary. Yet, this project was not merely a local or national concern but intertwined with the geopolitical and economic transformations at European and global level.

time, the European Community was indeed accelerating the construction and development of the common market, through a series of dispositions and practices aiming at eliminating the internal borders between its member states. According to European institutions, internal borders had become indeed an inefficient obstacle to the realization of a worldwide-competitive common market, impeding the unbounded mobility of capital, goods, services, and workers (Walters, 2002). Driven by the advent of new relationships between capital, labor, and the State at global level, the European Community could finally implement what had remained, until then, a seemingly unattainable dream in the mind of its founders. Despite the fact that the preamble of the 1957 Treaty of Rome clearly stated that the European Community should have laid the groundwork for “eliminating the barriers which divide Europe” and establishing “an ever-closer union among the European peoples,” the first steps for the creation of an internal market were taken only in the 1980s. Times were finally ripe for “Completing the internal market,” as the title of the 1985 White Paper of the European Commission enthusiastically proclaimed.

The creation of the Trans-European Networks (TEN) aimed precisely at extending, reinforcing, and homogenizing the common market, by developing a Europe-wide system of transport, energy, and telecommunication infrastructures that would have connected the whole European space and extended even beyond it (Figure 1). The establishment of TENs – already envisaged in the founding Treaty of Rome but officially launched only with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty – should have promoted a “harmonious and balanced development of economic activities, [...] a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States” (Council of the European Communities and Commission of the European Communities, 1992). The transport sector, in particular, should have constituted a fundamental pillar in the construction of the internal market: in the proposal for the development of a Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T), it represented “an important instrument for the cohesion policy of the Community [that ensures] the flows of goods and persons on the links between the regions and the activity centers of Europe” (European Commission, 1994).

Border Construction: the Border and Migration Regime in Europe

The creation of a common market should have necessarily entailed not only the abolition of internal borders between member states, but also the parallel relocation and reinforcement of border controls within and outside the European space, in order to guarantee the safety and security of market operations (Mitsilegas, 2002; Walters, 2004). The White Paper itself remarked that the same physical, technical, and fiscal barriers that “perpetuate the costs and disadvantages of a divided market” could not have been removed unless the European Community “found alternative ways of dealing with [...] public security, immigration and drug controls” (European Commission, 1985, Introduction). A wide array of legal dispositions, procedures and practices needed therefore to be put in place to guarantee the security of external borders and the regulation of the different mobilities (criss)crossing them.

Such dispositions became all the more urgent as the development of the common market was occurring in concomitance with other, important phenomena that were reconfiguring the geographies of migration and mobility at regional and global level. At that time, southern European

countries were transforming indeed from emigration into immigration countries, attracting regular and irregular migratory movements from the Middle East, Northern Africa, and former Soviet states. Within the process of European development, however, these countries were no longer passive and isolated recipients of migratory movements, but also external outposts of a supra-national political organization whose borders had to be reinforced against external threats. Following Balibar (2002), the borders of peripheral countries became charged with a multiplicity of meanings that, transcending the national level, turned them into external border posts for the whole European Union.

The 1985 Schengen Agreements and the following Convention – initially conceived beyond the realm of the European Community and later incorporated in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam – set the stage for the simultaneous expansion and protection of the European market, managing the multiplicity of flows traversing it (Bigo and Guild, 2010). The Schengen system envisaged the progressive elimination of internal border controls between member states and the parallel strengthening of the external ones, “with a view to ensuring the free movement of persons, goods and services” (preamble of the Convention, 1985). Besides, it established the conditions for border crossing, exhorting member states to harmonize their policies on entrance and circulation of immigrants, reinforce their cooperation in combating cross-border crimes, and protect their territory against illegal immigration and security threats. Necessary as they were for the process of market expansion and homogenization, such measures generated variegated mobilities across Europe, creating a multiple-speed mechanism where capital, goods, services, and European citizens can travel boundlessly across the continent, while third-country nationals are always subject to an uneven regime of increasingly repressive measures that decelerate, divert or prevent their circulation.

While the Schengen system appointed peripheral member states with the protection of the external borders of Europe and the regulation of incoming mobilities, the 1990 Dublin Convention burdened them with the responsibility of the examination of asylum applications, the readmission of those applicants that moved to other European countries, and the expulsion of failed asylum seekers (Dikeç, 2009; Mouzourakis, 2014). The principle of the “first country of asylum” established indeed that the European member state in which asylum seekers first set foot is responsible for the examination of their asylum claims and for the follow-up implementation of their decision. With the increasing illegalization of

migration movements, this burden has particularly weighed on those member countries located at the periphery of Europe, which became therefore pivotal for the regulation of the access of thousands of migrants to the European Union and their circulation within it.

The multiplication of border controls within, across, and outside the European territory, as well as the wide variety of procedures, practices, and measures designed and implemented to guarantee the security of logistical and commercial operations within it, have a two-fold purpose: first, they regulate and govern the turbulent character of migrant mobilities rather than simply deterring or restraining them; second, they allow the access and circulation of a highly exploitable and deportable workforce to be employed or disposed of according to the continuously changing labor market needs (Andrijasevic, 2010; Karakayali and Rigo, 2010; Tazzioli, 2015). Whereas certain flows have been enabled and speeded up, others have been diverted, sanctioned or decelerated, but nevertheless included through different spatio-temporal modalities, according to a process that Mezzadra and Neilson (2012; see also De Genova, 2008) have called “differential inclusion.”

The case of Greece is paradigmatic in this sense, as it can provide important insights on the uneven and contested development of the European market on peripheral regions, and show how the fragmentation of migration policies at national level has facilitated the – decelerated and controverted – circulation of migrants across Europe. While the inauguration of the Schengen system repositioned Greece along the periphery of Europe, appointing the country with the reinforcement of its external borders, the entry into force of the Dublin Convention charged it with the responsibility to examine the asylum applications of those migrants who had entered its territory – a duty that the country initially performed with a certain degree of reluctance.

The increase in incoming migration flows at the beginning of the 1990s led to the elaboration of the first policy responses at national level, which reflected the conception of migrants as exploitable and cheap workforce to be kept under constant control (Antonopoulos, 2006). Following labor market needs, these policies ensured the subjection of migrants into the productive system with barely any legal or social recognition. Whereas periodic procedures of regularization could guarantee the precarious inclusion of some migrants within society, security checks, arrests, and deportations – which reproduced border practices in the streets and in workplaces – condemned others to an invisible existence and

forced social exclusion (Dimitriadi, 2018; Triandafyllidou and Ambrosini, 2011).

The evolution of the European border and migration regime from the 2000s onwards, in particular through the operations of FRONTEX and the dispositions of the Common European Asylum System (hereafter CEAS), constitutes another step towards the protection of the external borders and the regulation of cross-border mobilities. In a context of increasing curtailment of regular migration flows, the creation of FRONTEX in 2004 responded to the need of fortifying European external borders and protecting its internal territory (especially in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks), while controlling cross-border flows and preventing undesirable or illicit agents from infiltrating the European space (Bigo, 2005; Neal, 2009). Although representing “a fundamental component of an area of freedom, security and justice” (European Council, 2004), FRONTEX operations do not simply delay or divert migrants’ access into, and circulation within, the European space, but they also deter and jeopardize their journeys (De Genova and Peutz, 2010; Hess and Karakayali, 2018).

In the attempt of homogenizing asylum procedures at a wider level, CEAS reconfigured the spatio-temporal geographies of asylum in a conscious attempt to defer, filter or decelerate migrants’ entrance and circulation in the European territory (Tsianos and Karakayali, 2010). Through the institutionalization of the Dublin Convention and the ratification of other asylum directives, CEAS established common minimum standards for the determination of member states’ responsibilities for the examination of asylum applications, the definition of asylum procedures, the reception of asylum seekers, and the recognition and content of the refugee status. Yet rather than harmonizing asylum procedures, CEAS left member states with ample decisional powers on the implementation of such common standards, generating discrepancies in asylum recognition rates across different countries. In this way, not only did CEAS further fragment rather than harmonize the European asylum system, but it also stimulated, instead of precluding, the (regular and irregular) circulation of asylum seekers within the European Union (Tazzioli, 2017).

In the same period, the Greek legal framework has advanced further steps towards the communitarization of migration and asylum issues for the establishment of a European area of freedom, security, and justice. The national dispositions promulgated in the 2000s reflected the government’s growing attention to the

question of immigration and its apparent commitment to respect migrants' rights. The implementation of more liberal policies, however, coalesced with restrictive measures on regular and irregular migration alike and with detrimental procedures to regulate asylum issues, curbing the possibility of obtaining international protection in the country (Triandafyllidou, 2009). Besides, bureaucratic constraints and economic concerns de facto prevented the regularization of hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrants, who continued, willingly or not, to remain invisible (Cheliotis, 2017). Throughout the 2000s, migration policies remained therefore characterized by a balanced attempt to shrink the

possibilities for entering or staying regularly in the country, while managing irregular flows so as to absorb part of them into the country's reserve army of labor (Karyotis, 2012).

Patras from Center Stage to the Margins

At the turn of the century, Patras became, for a series of geopolitical and economic factors (see previous paragraphs), a crucial crossroad of variegated mobilities, which intertwined and overlapped across its port. Despite its peripheral



position, I argue, the intersection of logistical activities, securitization measures and migration flows made the city not only an important location to observe and analyze these phenomena, but also a central node within the process of border reconfiguration in Europe. However, just as those geopolitical and economic factors contributed to the increased centrality of Patras within the European space, so they also determined rapid, negative changes that, in few years, precipitated the city and the whole country at the margins of the European polity. It is only by reassessing, reconnecting, and re-politicizing invisible border struggles that it will be possible to subvert center-periphery relations and challenge the current border regime across Europe.

In relation to logistical configurations, the port of Patras should have developed within the TEN-T framework as one of the main transit nodes along the commercial routes stretching from the Middle East to the northern European countries, via Turkey, Greece, and eventually Italy. Given its international relevance and potential contribution to the development of an intermodal transport network across Europe, the port of Patras was included among the core seaports (Figure 2). Together with that of Igoumenitsa, it should have acquired a fundamental role in the south-eastern European region, being at the extremity of the railway and road corridors connecting Greece to central Europe via the eastern Balkan countries. The southern periphery of the city was designated as the most favorable area for the construction of the new port of Patras, as it could have provided not only a comparative advantage in relation to other locations with regard to technical, economic, and accessibility factors, but also a potential interconnection with the surrounding road and rail networks, which in fact underwent a similar process of development in the framework of the TEN-T.

As the process of elimination of European internal borders was proceeding at a relative fast pace, the first Kurdish migrants – fleeing from the instabilities in the Middle East and the war in Iraq – appeared in Patras. Determined to escape the country without leaving visible traces of their passage, migrants started to occupy abandoned buildings in the proximity of the old port (Spinthourakis and Antonopoulou, 2011), in the attempt to surreptitiously sneak under the ferryboats towards Italy and the rest of Europe. Their increasing presence slowly clashed not only with the anger of some local residents and the periodic evictions from the police, but also with the ambitions of local authorities and urban developers to regenerate the area. Following the eviction from one of these buildings, migrants moved to a green space in the northern end of the port area, strategically located along the logistical networks traversing the city. As the migrant population changed and grew from the turn of the century, with the increasing presence of Afghan migrants, conflicts with local authorities and citizens intensified, propagating at European and international level (Lafazani, 2013; Mantanika, 2009).

In that same period, Patras and Greece as a whole were under the spotlight: while the country was preparing to host the 2004 Olympic Games, the city was appointed the 2006 European Capital of Culture. The momentousness of the city necessarily clashed with the undesired visibility of the camp, which reached its peak of about 1,500 occupants, and the parallel coveted invisibility of migrants, whose intention was to leave the country unseen, concealed inside ferryboats (Hole, 2012). Located in the city center and surrounded by middle-class residential buildings, the camp became a site of contentious politics between, on the one hand, local citizens, police authorities, and municipal institutions, and, on the other, local and international humanitarian



Fig. 3: Location of the abandoned factories squatted by migrants in relation to the new port of Patras
Source: Elaboration from Google Maps.

organizations that would bring their material and political support (Hole, 2012; see also Mantanika, 2009). On the early morning of July 12, 2009, after increasing tensions, the police entered the camp, evacuated, or arrested its remaining occupiers, and eventually set it on fire.

In reshaping the geographies of migrant presence within the city and the whole country, the arson of the camp arguably constituted the most visible moment of the border spectacle (De Genova, 2013). With the intensification of border controls and the crackdown on irregular migration even before the arson, migrants had sprawled into the city, moved to other smaller settlements, or left Greece through other routes (Hole, 2012; Lafazani, 2013). The dismantlement of the camp further accentuated these processes, leaving only few hundred migrants around the port area and in the city. The opening of the new port in July 2011 subverted the center-periphery relations and re-compacted the spatial fragmentation of migrant occupations (see Gandolfi, 2013). Profiting from the never-ending crisis and the failure of urban redevelopment projects, migrants – now also including some Sudanese and Somali migrants who had arrived in Patras in the late 2000s – squatted an abandoned industrial area opposite the new port (Figure 3), transforming the empty factories into their own living place.

By the time of the new port inauguration, however, a series of geopolitical, economic, and logistical factors at European and global level made Patras lose its central position within the European regime of government of mobilities. In the logistical sector, the end of the Yugoslav Wars opened new traffic routes along the Balkans, allowing direct road connections from the Middle East to central Europe. The 2006 inauguration of the Egnatia Roadⁱⁱⁱ incremented the traffic base of the port of Igoumenitsa, which, following a parallel process of expansion in the framework of the TEN-T, was now capable of absorbing the transit traffic from North Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Turkey, once directed towards Patras (Psaraftis, 2007). Furthermore, while the port of Piraeus had strengthened its spatial advantage within the international supply chain, the port of Patras was not able to develop as a joining link in this process, losing access to a potential vast market (see Arvis et al., 2007). The decline in transit traffic downsized the initial project for the port expansion, leading to the construction of only five out of the nine berths originally envisaged. The subsequent economic crisis represented the last straw, delaying and in some cases abruptly halting the construction of the rail and road connections around the port. Over the past decades, Patras has therefore turned from a lively commercial and industrial center with

ramifications extending from the Middle East to central Europe, to a regional hub connecting the two sides of the Adriatic Sea.

Although having little consequences on the already pronounced decrease in port activities, the economic crisis had tremendous repercussions on the everyday lives of migrants, who experienced a further multiplication and tightening of border controls. Since the burst of the crisis, the legal channels to access the Greek territory were increasingly restrained, while security measures to expel the ‘excess’ of migration intensified (Cheliotis, 2017; Yousef, 2013). The implementation of ‘sweep operations’ performed by the Hellenic Police to detect irregular migrants in the streets led to the capillary proliferation of border controls and to the widespread perception of migrants as either redundant workforces to be expelled or threats to social security (Dimitriadi, 2018). With the crisis of the construction sector and the liberalization of the visa regime with Albania^{iv}, once the main source of undocumented labor migration, many Albanians went either back to their country or towards other destinations (Gregou, 2014). The Greek-Turkish border became the main entry point for undocumented migrants, whose only possibility to enter the country was through irregular means and the following submission of an asylum application, thus blurring the boundaries between migration and asylum inflows (Tazzioli, 2016; Walters, 2012).

With the economic crisis, the Greek asylum system itself underwent a breakthrough modification (Katsiaficas, 2014): the old system, under the control of the Hellenic Police, was characterized by a surprisingly small recognition rate, an inadequate reception system, and numerous violations during the examination process. The deficiencies of such a system would force prospective asylum seekers either to refuse the registration process or to remain in the illegality, enriching the ranks of low-skilled and low-paid workforce (Cheliotis, 2017; Rozakou, 2012). In June 2013, an independent Asylum Service was created in the framework of CEAS, in the attempt of absorbing some of the “excess” of migration that a devastated labor market could no longer bear (Maroukis, 2016; Triandafyllidou, 2014). Although suffering from a chronic lack of financial and human resources, the new Asylum Service led to a general increase in first-instance recognition rates and to a significant reduction in response times. Despite the improvements of the asylum system, some migrants still attempt to eschew the securitarian apparatus of the European border and migration regime with its backlash of criminalization/victimization of border crossers (Squire, 2017), performing

autonomous trajectories of settlement and escape.

Border Challenges: Migrants' Struggles from the Margins

Among the multiple mechanisms that regulate the opening and closure of borders, control the access of capital, goods, services, and people within the European territory, and govern their spatio-temporal circulation through logistical infrastructures, something always escapes domination and subjection (Mezzadra, 2011). With the opening of the new port, the factories became an attractive pole for those migrants willing to reach Italy and other European destinations by clandestinely boarding the ferryboats. The geographical marginality of the settlements seems to have reduced the cruel spectacle of the border, while the decreasing number of migrants apparently abated the political dimension of migrant struggles. The socio-spatial divisions between locals and migrants – now relegated in the southern periphery of the city at the edge of a former working-class neighborhood – have further exacerbated the invisibility of the latter, replacing the political activism of organized groups with individual humanitarian acts that define migrants as vulnerable and de-politicized agents (Cantat, 2018). Although relegated in a marginal location, migrants have continued to adopt escape tactics and practices that still reverberate at wider European level, advancing powerful political claims for their freedom of movement against the continuous violence of the border and migration regime.

Through the calculated distinction between visible and invisible, legal and illegal, orderly and disorderly, the political community continuously redefines its boundaries of belonging, excluding non-citizens from their right to claim rights. By the same token, migrants adopt in/visibility and il/legality as practices of "spatial disobedience" (Tazzioli, 2017) to challenge or elude the complex apparatus of border controls and migration policies superimposing at national and European level (Papadopoulos et al. 2008). In the old migrant camp, such distinctions cutting across the political community came periodically – not without struggles – to the fore, through the (unwanted) spatial and political visibility of the camp. In the factories, in/visibility and il/legality are constantly reconfigured and negotiated, both through contacts or conflicts with external actors and at individual or group level. In both cases, I argue, the continuous interplay between in/visibility and il/legality that migrants

alternatively adopt as a silent yet powerful expedient against border controls and practices have made Patras a central articulation in the process of re-politicization of migrants' struggles vis-à-vis the perverse dispositions of the European border and migration regime.

Invisibility constitutes an important way not only to remain unseen inside the ferryboats, but also to avoid the stop-and-search operations that the police regularly performs in the streets and inside the factories. In this respect, the re-appropriation of the streets, alleys, shortcuts, and hideouts that surround the occupied factories allows migrants to escape police intrusions or pursuits (see Gandolfi, 2013). When "sweep operations" unexpectedly penetrate the settlements, staying concealed within the premises or dashing off quickly through back exits represents a necessary option to avoid capture. Unlike the sporadic yet intimidating stop-and-search operations, the daily cat-and-mouse chase between police hunters and migrant preys constitutes the most iconic and reiterated scene in the port of Patras (see Andersson, 2014). "It is like the cartoon, Tom and Jerry" – an Afghan migrant^v once told me, with the police-cat trying to run after the migrant-mouse before he could reach the embarking area. The aim of this "border game" (Andreas, 2009) is less to arrest or capture migrants, than to prevent them from crossing the port fences and reaching the ferryboats, therefore delaying their access to Italy. For migrants, the crossing thus becomes a question of chance that will eventually occur: "No chance today" – told me a Sudanese migrant after having attempted to sneak under a lorry – "Tomorrow it will be better, inshallah"^{vi}.

Invisibility can be also expressed through the deliberate refusal to apply for asylum in the country, contesting the rigorous dispositions of CEAS. In this respect, invisibility intertwines with, and turns into, illegality as a necessary tactic to leave the country without leaving traces. This act of refusal is sometimes dictated by the resource- and time-consuming practices of the Greek asylum system, which compels migrants to travel to and remain in Athens for several days before lodging their claims. An Afghan migrant, for example, confessed that he did not apply for asylum because "you have to queue for three or four days, and I didn't have money to sleep or eat there [in Athens]."^{vii} Other migrants, however, do choose to remain in the illegality to avoid being stuck in a crisis-ridden country with scarce possibility of either obtaining asylum or work (AIDA, 2015). During the "long summer of migration" (Kasperek and Speer, 2015), which saw a partial opening of the borders through the Balkans, another Afghan migrant admitted his preference to remain in Patras and continue his

invisible attempts of border crossing, rather than reaching Hungary where he could have been potentially registered upon his arrival.^{viii}

The continuous intertwining of in/visibility and il/legality as social and individual practices to escape the mechanisms of the European border and migration regime have concrete repercussions on migrants' everyday life, generating variegated (im)mobility patterns. Whether shaped by their knowledge of CEAS dispositions or by the dense network of underground information, personal ambitions, and socio-economic resources, the multifarious strategies and coping mechanisms that migrants adopt make their struggles fragmented and often unheard. The deliberate decision of eluding the asylum system, for example, can affect migrants' internal organization within the factories and their mobility patterns, generating frantic accelerations throughout their relatively immobile everyday life. While those who applied for asylum can avoid potential capture and arrest, negotiating a (ephemeral) social recognition within the city, the precarious legal status of other migrants, combined with the scarce socio-economic resources at their disposal, seems to entice them to reckless efforts to cross the border to Italy.

Besides, economic, social, and legal constraints constantly cut across migrants' lives, shaping and differentiating their everyday experiences. Sharing the same conditions of social marginalization and displacement does not necessarily entail the rupture of boundaries between individuals and groups: class or ethnic divisions have in fact always reproduced and perpetuated among migrants, redefining the boundaries between the different groups while accentuating social conflicts among individuals (see Yuval-Davis, 2013). The internal sub-division into groups does facilitate the organization of their everyday life (see De Angelis, 2010), but, at the same time, it tends to draw lines of demarcation that visibly penetrate the factories, dividing migrants according to their country of origin or ethnic group. Although officially "There are no bosses here [in the factories], everybody is his own boss,"^{ix} as an Afghan migrant once said to me, some charismatic figures do tend to emerge within the factories, while others are compelled to hide their national or ethnic background in order to avoid intergroup conflicts. On the other hand, power relations are continuously negotiated and subverted, attenuated through linguistic and religious commonalities or blurred through constant exchanges between the groups, thus enabling a processual and positional understanding of identity formation (Anthias, 2002).

The analysis of the reproduction of class, ethnic, and religious boundaries across migrant groups does not aim at negating or reducing the intrinsically political character of individual acts of resistance and escape. Quite the contrary, it attempts to show how such acts – although performed from a relatively remote and negligible location as Patras – can and do unveil the strict functioning of the European border and migration regime and challenge its mechanisms of regulation of migrant mobility. Deliberate acts of crossing a fence, sneaking under a lorry, and escaping police identification constitute, I argue, inherently political actions that subvert a whole series of policies and mechanisms of control aiming to select, filter, and channel migrant mobilities. Yet, the visible and political relevance of migrant struggles seems obfuscated, on the one hand, by the same peripheral location of such acts within the regime and its disconnection with other local and transnational struggles, and, on the other hand, by the power relations and conflicts within migrant groups. An important academic and social work of political coordination and emersion from the socio-political invisibility in which they are often confined is therefore necessary to make these acts of resistance and escape central in the challenge against the European border and migration regime.

Conclusion

Starting from Balibar's famous idea that borders are everywhere and adopting feminist and postcolonial approaches to enrich it, this article has shown how the boundaries of center and periphery in the analysis of the European border and migration regime have been continuously redrawn, negotiated, and subverted by a myriad of actors and dynamics that operate across different levels. It has done so by standing from the port area of Patras and observing the multiplicity of events therein intertwining and clashing. Despite its relatively peripheral location vis-à-vis a) the logistical networks traversing the European common market, b) the securitized apparatus of the European border and migration regime, and c) the most visible migrant struggles for freedom of movement, Patras provides, I have argued, a crucial viewpoint for the critical analysis of such processes and of their repercussions at grounded level.

Far from erasing the categories of center/periphery or the power relations they convey, the article has instead investigated how such categories have been continuously reassessed and redefined across space and time,

changing their meaning and shifting their boundaries on the ground. Even in Patras, center and periphery have been continuously reconfigured and rearticulated in relation to local, national, and European instances, reshaping or subverting their boundaries through negotiations and conflicts. Over a span of few years, Patras found itself first in the spotlight – with its port traversed by a multiplicity of mobilities, whose flows were regulated through a series of policies and mechanisms originating at European and global level – and then at the margins of Europe, with the ever-changing geopolitical, financial, and logistical dynamics of capitalism drawing the curtain over the city and its port. Disconnected from the main logistical flows, from the mid-2000s the port saw a tremendous decline in transit traffic, turning into a secondary hub within the Adriatic Sea. Following the tightening of the border and migration regime, even migrant mobilities have diverted their paths or changed their strategies, with only few dozens of them trying their luck by sneaking under the lorries. Despite their confinement within less visible boundaries, migrants' everyday practices of in/visibility and il/legality still represent important acts of contestation that surreptitiously evade or overtly challenge the European border and migration regime. However, such practices are often contaminated by class and ethnic

distinctions that cut across migrant groups, weakening their political struggle. Far from undermining their relevance, however, the analysis of such practices aimed at achieving a two-fold purpose. First, it provided a more grounded examination of migrants' everyday struggles against the border, not only by taking into consideration less visible and peripheral practices, but also by disassembling the contrasts and contradictions that prevent the formation of a migrant political subjectivity. Second, it reassessed the analytical dichotomy between center and periphery, challenging the severe dispositions of the European border and migration regime from a relatively marginal location. Aware of the contradictions and conflicts between the regime for the government of mobilities and the unpredictable character of migrant movements, feminist and postcolonial approaches, I argue, could effectively link capitalism, securitization, and migrant mobilities through an organic and coherent narrative, looking at the spatial and temporal relations that these processes create and continuously reconfigure on the ground. Yet, more ethnographical and political work remains to be done in order to unveil and reconnect migrants' (central and peripheral) struggles against the border and migration regime.

NOTES

ⁱ Being aware of the blurred legal boundaries between the categories of "migrant" and "refugee" (De Genova, Garelli, and Tazzioli 2018) and of the problematic definition of the "migrant" itself (Anderson and Blinder 2017), I employ the term "migrant" as devoid of any legal, social, or political implications, simply referring to a person en route through a place that is neither their home nor their destination.

ⁱⁱ The technical term to refer to such ports is RO/RO-PAX, which underlines the possibility to host ferryboats that provide roll-on and roll-off facilities for vehicles and carry passengers.

ⁱⁱⁱ A 670-km-long motorway connecting Igoumenitsa to Thessaloniki and eventually Turkey.

^{iv} In view of its admission into the EU, in 2010 Albania obtained freedom of movement for its citizens within

the Schengen area after having proved to successfully readmit Albanians citizens expelled from other countries in the previous years (Gregou 2014).

^v Informal conversation with H., Afghanistan, 01/08/2015.

^{vi} Informal conversation with A., Sudan, 06/08/2015.

^{vii} Semi-structured interview with A. H., Afghanistan, 26/06/2015.

^{viii} Informal conversation with an anonymous migrant, Afghanistan, 27/07/2015.

^{ix} Informal conversation with A., Afghanistan, 06/08/2015

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Of Saints, Saviors, and Smugglers: The *capitane* in the Mediterranean and the Border-Gender-Nexus

Eva Nossem

This paper explores the interplay between gender dynamics and border control strategies in the discursive framing of private sea rescue operations in the Mediterranean. The case of Carola Rackete, in 2019 the captain of the Sea Watch 3 and a prominent figure in the Mediterranean migrant crisis, serves as a focal point to unravel these complexities. The analysis underscores that using gender as a regulatory force becomes a potent tool to assert and strengthen established structures. Carola Rackete's role as a border-crossing and gender-defying figure makes her susceptible to both border and gender policing discursive attacks. Exemplified through the case of Matteo Salvini's attacks on Rackete, the paper reveals how the border and misogyny are intertwined, serving as mutually reinforcing elements that safeguard the cis-hetero-patriarchal nation-state. Furthermore, the paper carves out the Rackete's glorification in visual representation. The analysis reveals the co-activity between border and gender discourses, underscoring how these discursive regimes strategically coexist within the border-gender-nexus.

Border-gender-nexus, Mediterranean, gender, securitization, humanitarianization, discourse, border figure

Von Heiligen, Retterinnen und Schmugglerinnen: Die *capitane* im Mittelmeer und der Border-Gender-Nexus

In diesem Beitrag wird das Zusammenspiel von Geschlechterdynamik und Grenzkontrollstrategien in der diskursiven Rahmung privater Seenotrettungsaktionen im Mittelmeer untersucht. Der Fall von Carola Rackete, im Jahr 2019 Kapitänin der Sea Watch 3 und eine prominente Figur in der Migrationskrise im Mittelmeer, dient als Brennpunkt, um diese komplexen Zusammenhänge zu entschlüsseln. Die Analyse unterstreicht, dass der Einsatz von Geschlecht als regulierende Kraft zu einem wirksamen Instrument wird, um etablierte Strukturen durchzusetzen und zu stärken. Carola Racketes Rolle als grenzüberschreitende und geschlechtsverweigernde Figur macht sie anfällig für diskursive Angriffe sowohl auf die Grenze als auch auf die Geschlechterpolizei. Am Beispiel von Matteo Salvinis Angriffen auf Rackete wird aufgezeigt, wie Grenze und Frauenfeindlichkeit miteinander verwoben sind und als sich gegenseitig verstärkende Elemente zum Schutz des cis-hetero-patriarchalen Nationalstaates dienen. Darüber hinaus wird die Verherrlichung der Rackete in der visuellen Darstellung herausgearbeitet. Die Analyse zeigt die Koaktivität zwischen Grenz- und Gender-Diskursen auf und unterstreicht, wie diese diskursiven Regime innerhalb des Grenz-Gender-Nexus strategisch koexistieren.

Border-Gender-Nexus, Mittelmeer, Geschlecht, Versicherheitlichung, Humanitarisierung, Diskurs, Grenzfigur

Des saintes, des salvatrices et des contrebandières : Les *capitane* en Méditerranée et le Border-Gender-Nexus

Cet article explore l'interaction entre les dynamiques de genre et les stratégies de contrôle des frontières dans le cadre discursif des opérations privées de sauvetage en mer en Méditerranée. Le cas de Carola Rackete, en 2019 le capitaine du Sea Watch 3 et une figure éminente dans la crise des migrants en Méditerranée, sert de point focal pour démêler ces complexités. L'analyse souligne que l'utilisation du genre comme force de régulation devient un outil puissant pour affirmer et renforcer les structures établies. Le rôle de Carola Rackete, qui traverse les frontières et défie le genre, la rend vulnérable aux attaques discursives de la police des frontières et de la police du genre. Illustré par le cas des attaques de Matteo Salvini contre Rackete, l'article révèle comment la frontière et la misogynie sont entrelacées, servant d'éléments se renforçant mutuellement pour sauvegarder l'État-nation cis-hétéro-patriarcal. L'analyse révèle la coactivité entre les discours sur les frontières et sur le genre, soulignant comment ces régimes discursifs coexistent stratégiquement au sein du nœud frontière-genre.

Border-gender-nexus, Méditerranée, genre, sécurisation, humanitarisation, discours, figure frontalière

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Introduction

When stories have been told about seafarers, they have mostly been about ‘explorers,’ ‘conquerors,’ and pirates. These stories about seafarers, whether fictional – ranging from Ulysses to Captain Ahab to Popeye – or historical – from Francis Drake, Walter Raleigh, James Cook, and Christopher Columbus to Störtebeker and Blackbeard (with especially the latter two blurring the lines between fictional and historical) – all share one key ingredient in their recipe for success: masculinity. Stories about seafarers, sailors, and particularly captains have been stories about great men, about heroes. The legendization and heroization traditionally painted them in a noble light, even – as for Columbus and the like – shrouding in a cloak of silence their crucial role as the main figures, faces, and drivers of inhuman racist and oppressive European colonialism.

Over the last decade, the new stories told in Italian media about captains of the present (in and around Italian waters) have struck a different chord: When in 2012 the cruise ship *Costa Concordia* hit a rock and capsized, leading to the death of 32 passengers and crew, her then captain Francesco Schettino reportedly broke with the legendary reputation of heroic captains: Not only was he among the first to escape the stricken ship, violating both the masculinist code of conduct “Women and children first” and also the moral obligation of leaving the ship last as a captain; he reportedly even refused to return back on board when ordered to do so by the Italian coast guard. As the recorded conversation brought to light, he put forward the quite unusual explanation of slipping and consequently falling into one of the lifeboats, earning himself the dubitable nickname “captain coward.”

Again in 2019, captains dominated Italian media debates. This time the focus was on Pia Klemp and particularly on Carola Rackete, between 2017 and 2019 seafarers and captains of the *SeaWatch 3*, a vessel of the German NGO *Sea Watch*, one of the major actors of private sea rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea. These captains’ declared mission of saving lives at sea could lend itself well for restoring the heroic reputation of captains, were it not for the fact that they were sailing against strong headwind because of their contested role with regard to both the border- and gender regime, of what I will outline as the ‘border-gender-nexus’ in the following chapters.

While the male heroized seafarers of the past sailed the seas to push the frontiers of European empires and to subject the entire world to European economic and geopolitical power interest and exploitation, today’s *capitane*^{viii} travel

well-known bordered and international waters in the Mediterranean; not commissioned by the Crown or State but driven by proclaimed humanitarian goals; not to further trade and maximize gains, but to save human lives – surely good material for storytelling.

The different mandate of these modern seafarers, but particularly the intertwining of their gender in combination with the contested space of borders at sea shape their exacerbating hero(ni)zation and vilification in public discourses. In this paper, I will carve out the interplay between the current gender and border regimes as discursively materialized in Italian news, social media, and artworks/visual representations about Carola Rackete in 2019. My analysis will show the decisive role of the question of gender in discourses evolving around Rackete as a figure who dwells on, challenges, and straddles Europe’s outer liquid border. Struggles of gender domination, I argue, as well as the EUropean external border in the Mediterranean Sea as a site of border making and breaking play a key role in the discursive production of the captains Klemp and particularly Rackete either as saints, saviors, or smugglers.

The Mediterranean Sea as Europe’s Southern Border

The Mediterranean (Sea)

Different spatial and temporal perspectives have suggested different views of the Mediterranean, understood either as the Mediterranean Sea or as the entire area comprising water and land. Building on the very name and thus proposing a literal understanding, the Medi-terranean was considered as the Middle Sea, the sea “between the lands,” an in-between space.

Countless representations (mostly put forward by historians, geographers, and thinkers coming from its Northern shores) focused on its role as a connecting space, depicting the Mediterranean as a fertile common ground for the nascency of (Western) civilization:

Three continents have always been facing the Mediterranean, and such a meeting of theirs in just one place has dissolved the differences, started a hybridization of the different, the great antidote against fundamentalisms and ethnic purges. The physical unity of the Mediterranean is not a touristic invention, but a common anchorage against divisions, the physical and material anchorage of a great common

homeland, a root made of stone and sea, which is stronger than the differences of the shores, than the continental drift, than religions and ethnic prides from which the fundamentalist temptation endlessly arises. (Cassano, 2000, p.19, as quoted in and translated by Gjergji)

The romanticizing image of the Mediterranean as a “common homeland” and the “center of the world” is also outlined by Georgakis:

The political landscape of the Mediterranean is in many ways one of nostalgia for the image of a Mediterranean that is the “center of the world,” that both separates and links civilizations. The historical literature concerning “Mediterranean Studies” is both romantic and dramatic about the significance of the sea not just as an ecologically significant space, but as a birthplace of civilization. (Georgakis, 2014, p.21)

In a historicizing way, the Mediterranean is represented as a space “where the Occident and Orient, the North and the South, are evidently entangled in a cultural and historical net cast over centuries, even millennia” (Chambers, 2008, p. 3). But Ian Chambers also observes different “understandings of the Mediterranean that are always subject to contestation and reconfiguration; that is, to historical processes and shifting geographies of power” (Chambers, 2021, n.p.). Georgakis juxtaposes the opposite/diverging qualities ascribed to the Mediterranean:

[T]here are two primary modalities through which the Mediterranean is characterized in relation to Europe. First, there is a common assumption that the Mediterranean represents (geographically, culturally, or otherwise), a clear, distinct ‘divide’ between Europe on the northern shore and Africa on the southern shore. Contrasting this characterization, the Mediterranean is alternatively seen as intimately integrated into the history of Europe, a position that sees the people and cultures on either shore as having a history of intermingling, conversing, and communicating for thousands of years. (Georgakis, 2014, p. 29)

In more recent times, though, it rather seems as if this first view were gaining the upper hand, namely the one highlighting the dividing quality of the Mediterranean Sea, viewing it as a separator between Europe and Africa and the Levant, (or even between the global north and south), depicting it like a borderlands in an Anzaldúan

sense “where the Third World grates against the First and bleeds” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.3).

The Mediterranean as Border and the Borderization of the Mediterranean

[I]nstead of being a place for a meeting of differences, the Mediterranean has turned into a permanent, mobile, and enveloping border, preventing meetings and separating people, especially the rich from the poor, the ‘haves’ from the ‘have nots,’ the ‘white’ from the ‘colored,’ Europe from Africa. (Gjergji, 2015, pp.154–155)

In this way, the Mediterranean Sea assumes the double function also held by the border, both in the form of its two-fold material quality as a connector and a separator, and also for its imaginary as a site of desire and fear, in line with what Henk van Houtum termed the Janus face of the border (van Houtum, 2010; 2015):

Borders are a result of desire, but a border is at the same time the result of the reverse of desire, namely of fear. The fear is addressed by what is not included in the border. [...] A border, the desire to select and include, creates at the same time its own fear, therefore, namely for what is excluded. (van Houtum, 2010, n.p.).

And in this line, Iside Gjergji suggests: “The universe of borders is the best prism through which one may view the contemporary Mediterranean in all its complexity” (Gjergji, 2015, p.155). Borders act as powerful sites of identity articulation, around which notions of the nation, citizenship, community, or cultural belonging are constructed. As such, the Mediterranean as border has gained importance as Europe (the European Union, in particular) moved closer together in search of a common identity. Paradoxically, though, the Mediterranean as border has thus turned into a site of articulation both of the national (Italian) and supranational (European) identities, generating thus a field of tension in which certain political actors in an attempt to distinguish themselves try to assert their (nationalist) positions. The Mediterranean as border thus functions as a burning glass which bundles radiating discourses of nationalism and supranationalism, of bordering and debordering, of humanitarization, securitization, and border governance.

The Mediterranean as a border thus does not represent the limits to territorially fixed entities, but [...] rather continually ongoing projects that come

to be negotiated and reified through political practices that are focused, in this instance, on asserting where the “outside” of “Europe” begins. [...] First, the Mediterranean is theorized as a fluid and porous space. Secondly, and more importantly, the Mediterranean is a key site for an investigation into the (re)production of politically and culturally saturated discourses of belonging and otherness.” (Georgakis, 2014, abstract ii)

By focusing on such meaning (and identity) making processes, the border takes on a delimitating role through which the own and the foreign, the self and the other, the inside and the outside become experienceable, intelligible, and definable. As such, the Mediterranean offers the site in which such identity questions are negotiated, particularly in political discourses – as the examples analyzed later on in this paper will show.

The Mediterranean as the World’s Deadliest Border

The dualism of debordering and rebordering has dominated European policies since the very beginnings of the EEC/EU in 1957 (Yndigegn, 2011, p. 47). Increasing rebordering tendencies and the construction of the so-called ‘Fortress Europe’ primarily affect the outer borders of the EU, such as the liquid border in the South. Tens of thousands of people have lost their lives attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea since the beginning of the new millenium, turning it into the world’s deadliest border (Albahari, 2016).

At what could be considered a defining moment for the so-called ‘migration crisis’ or ‘refugee crisis,’ (not only of 2015 but of the last decade) the Italian then minister of internal affairs, Angelino Alfaro, pointed out the double function of Italy’s Southern border. On the occasion of a migrant shipwreck leading to the loss of more than 300 lives in 2013, he affirmed: “This is not an Italian tragedy, this is a European tragedy [...] Lampedusa has to be considered the frontier of Europe, not the frontier of Italy” (Muir, 2013, n.p.), thus throwing the ball back to the EU.

Europe’s Outer Border in the Mediterranean: Securitization vs. Humanitarization

Since the early 2004, the EU has been running a border control agency under different names,

currently *European Border and Coast Guard Agency*, best known as *Frontex*. The renaming of the agency goes hand in hand with a steadily increasing budget (more than half a billion in 2021) and number of staff (a prospective 10,000 over the next few years). As specified in the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, Frontex is assigned the following tasks:

To establish a technical and operational strategy [...] for European integrated border management; to oversee the effective functioning of border control at the external borders; to carry out risk analysis and vulnerability assessments; to provide increased technical and operational assistance to Member States and third countries through joint operations and rapid border interventions; to ensure the practical execution of measures in a situation requiring urgent action at the external borders; to provide technical and operational assistance in the support of search and rescue operations for persons in distress at sea; and to organise, coordinate and conduct return operations and return interventions. (Regulation EU, 2019/1896)

Out of the seven listed tasks, five focus on the “functioning of border control” and merely two consider the involved human bodies: only one task focuses on the support of rescue operations at sea, and is immediately linked to the last task, the organization and implementation of return operations. On their website, Frontex briefly sums up its tasks stating the mission to “[t]ogether with the Member States, [...] ensure safe and well-functioning external borders providing security” (Frontex, 2021, n.p.). This clear prioritization shows that the EUR 0.5 bn funding that the EU reserves annually for Frontex are not intended to address humanitarian issues but serve for securitization and border control purposes. Monitoring and ‘securing’ the EU’s external borders did, of course, not slow down migration, but deferred it to alternative, ‘illegal’ high-risk trajectories. With the knowledge of these fabricated tragedies, a tug of war has been going on in EU (and European national) politics between efforts of securitization and humanitarianization.

To prevent these deaths, search and rescue activities of people in distress at sea have become part of border policing methods of European forces and are operated in national and international waters. Not only ‘official’, state-led operations have begun operations in the Mediterranean but also patrols led by civilian actors such as NGOs, humanitarian activism has become a

part of the discussion. (Deffner, 2018, p.7)

Since the neglect of the EU for maritime patrols to rescue migrants on the perilous crossing, this task has now been taken on by private sea rescue operations. In politics, (social) media, as well as in the public sphere in general, news reports about rescuing operations quickly transform into raging debates between supporters and representatives of pro- and anti-immigration policies; opposing humanitarian and securitizing discourses boil up, collide, and fuel each other.

Border Figures and the Border-Gender-Nexus

Border Figures between Securitization and Humanitarization

The different border politics between securitization and humanitarization correlate with the perceptions and representations of the involved human 'border figures.' The relevant public debates seem to evolve around border crossers, especially those traveling from the Global South to North, to the EU. What is striking, however, is that these border crossers are often assigned the passive role of the object of debate instead of being perceived as border figures in their own right, with agency. The divergence between securitizing and humanitarian political stances becomes particularly salient in their case: "[W]ith with Mediterranean crossings becoming a matter of life and death [...], irregular crossers are not only classed as threats, but also as victims to be 'saved'" (Moreno-Lax, 2017, p.4). While border crossing migrants are thus often perceived and represented as passive and being without agency, the perception and depiction are different for other border figures such as Rackete and Salvini, who are discursively constructed as powerful actors on/of the border, as trailblazing policy-making leaders, as border makers (Salvini) and border breakers (Rackete).

The examples set out in the following sections will show how these opposing political stances (of securitization or humanitarization) figure in discourses about Carola Rackete. As the captain of the sea rescue NGO SeaWatch, she and her team do not cross the border in order to get from A to B, but rather dwell on and straddle border; they navigate in international waters in the very in-between space of the border. In their sea rescue operations, they negotiate and challenge the position, the work, and the effective range of the

border, and even defy the pertinence of the border^{ix}.

Due to this fact, classifications of such border figures as threats or victims (as observed for border crossers, see quote above) are not applicable to border figures such as Rackete both because of her relation to the border and particularly because of her agency in moving on, across, between, and from one border to the other. I will carve out representations and depictions for border figures like Carola Rackete, who oscillate between the extremes of a criminal smuggler and a saint-like mother figure. My analysis is based on (social) media discourses and visual/artistic representations, which put particular focus on how gender is strategically drawn upon discursively.

The Border, Gender, and their Intertwinings and Coactions

The intertwining and coactions between the bordering processes and gender become evident when scrutinizing notions of 'border' and 'gender' as well as their works and functioning in existing power structures. As laid out in recent theorizations in Border Studies, the 'border' can be thought of as an intertwined net of correlating discourses, practices, policies and regulations, and their materializations (e.g. Nossem forthcoming). Borders fulfil the role of ordering principles: "Borders aim to establish or maintain orders, be they specified in law, handed down through history, or expressed through symbols" (B/Orders in Motion, 2021, n.p.) and as typographically visualized in their working concept "B/Order," or by van Houtum and van Naerssen as "(b)ordering" (2002, p.125). As such, the 'border' can be employed as a tool and a strategy either to enforce and strengthen or to challenge and fight existing power structures, i.e. in the case of national borders, the nation-state. In a similar way, 'gender' can also be called into action in order to regulate and subject bodies to existing power structures, i.e. in that case patriarchy. Following Kate Manne's conceptualizations, we can consider patriarchy as the ordering system of domination, and misogyny as a tool of gender policing in order to support, strengthen, and perpetuate the patriarchal system: "I argue that misogyny ought to be understood as the system that operates within a patriarchal social order to police and enforce women's subordination and to uphold male dominance" (Manne, 2018, p.33).

In the attempt of bringing together discourses of borders and gender and to lay bare their intertwining and coaction, I would like to suggest

an intertwined consideration of the 'border' and 'gender,' invoked here as the 'border-gender-nexus.' This intersected view will allow me to focus simultaneously on the discursive strategies which aim at border securitization, humanitarianization, and reproducing gendered roles, as they are deployed strategically to reinforce the white cis-hetero-patriarchal nation-state.

Discursive-Semiotic Choices and Strategies in (Social Media) Representations of Carola Rackete

In 2019, private sea rescue operations and particularly Carola Rackete, her actions, as well as the attacks on her person dominated Italian public debates and news and provided us with a plethora of examples. It would have been possible to collect a rich corpus also for a quantitative analysis; for the purpose of this paper, I have, however, decided to limit my corpus to some selected examples in order to provide a more in-depth qualitative analysis. In my exemplary analysis, I will draw on a selection of tweets on Twitter and posts on Facebook, with social media being one of the main battlefields where the politicized debate between Matteo Salvini and Carola Rackete was carried out.

Discourse and DHA

In line with Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach, 'discourse' is understood as "a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices [which are both] socially constituted and socially constitutive" (Reisigl and Wodak 2009, p.87; Wodak, 2015, p.5). The consideration of utterances in "their broader sociopolitical and historical context" (Wodak, 2015, p.5) is as fundamental to a critical analysis as the examination of "extralinguistic social variables and institutional frames" (Wodak 2015, p.5), of intertextual and interdiscursive references, as well as of immediate, text-internal linguistic means (Wodak, 2015, p.5).

In the previous chapters, I have outlined the socio-political-cultural context of the events of 2019, which will be examined in the following section. I will briefly contextualize each example before delving into an intertextual and text-internal examination (with 'text' understood here in its broadest sense as a multimodal "semantic unit; a

unit not of form but of meaning" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, pp.1–2). Wodak's discursive strategies (nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification, as outlined e.g. in Wodak, 2015) will be applied not only to linguistic-textual means but also to the semiotics of visual language. The focus will be to highlight the interdiscursivity between 'border' and 'gender.'

Securitizing Discourses in Defense of the Patriarchal Nation-State

The following examples show how gender is discursively called into question in order to put actors who defy and breach the norms of the border and gender regime 'in their place.' The examples are taken from the Italian right-wing politician Matteo Salvini (and his far-right allies), who stylized himself as the main antagonist of Carola Rackete's and the operating sea rescue NGOs and positioned himself as a fierce promoter of securitizing discourses and defender of the patriarchal Italian nation-state, as a tweet by Salvini's party, Lega, on 10 January 2020 clearly shows:

Example 1: "La difesa dei confini è sacra"

As this tweet shows, for Salvini, defending the state borders is a sacred task:

Despite all insults by the Left: the Italians are more and more taking sides with the Captain! The defense of the borders of our country is sacred! (translation EKN)

Furthermore, we see how Salvini is referred to as "Capitano," a word choice (strategy of nomination) I will focus on in more detail later on. This tweet also shows the strategy of argumentation by claiming authority for Salvini's actions on a supposedly increasing support by the electorate.



Fig. 1: Lega (2020): 60% of the Italians stand with the Captain

Example 2: "sbruffoncella"

The following example is one of the most widely debated 'highlights' of Salvini's attacks against Rackete, used here as quoted in an article by Rara Piol in Huffpost.it, 06/26/2019.



Fig. 2: Huffpost.it : Salvini - "Sbruffoncella"

After taking 42 persons on board who were found in distress and a subsequent period of two weeks at sea waiting for an open port to be assigned to the Sea Watch 3, Captain Carola Rackete declared to head to the port of Lampedusa without entry

authorization. As a reaction to this statement of intent, Matteo Salvini published a statement in the above video on his Facebook account, in which he attacks Rackete:

If someone does not care about the rules, they will have to answer for that. This is what I'm telling this little bragger ["sbruffoncella"], the commander of the Sea Watch, who is doing politics at the expense of migrants and who is paid by who knows whom. (translation EKN)^x

With the quite unusual lexical choice "sbruffoncella," which led to much (media) attention, Salvini used a derogatory expression to mock Rackete. The root "sbruffon-" could be loosely translated as 'bragger' or 'show-off,' with a pejorative, even criminalizing connotation; the infix "-cell-" is added as a diminutive, hinting to Rackete as 'less-than-a-person,' and finally the suffix "-a" specifies the female gender, conferring the statement a clear misogynist tone.

SBRUFFONCELLA



"bragger,"
"show-off"



diminutive



gendered
-female

Fig. 3: author's own visualization

Furthermore, Salvini makes reference to an Italian *fumetto* of the 1950s and 1960s, in which the protagonist, a tall, blonde, ponytailed woman constantly craving for recognition and always finding herself on the losing side, is referred to as "Pimpinella la Sbruffoncella" (for more details see Cortelazzo, 2019, n.p.).

In addition to this derogatory mocking and nicknaming, which can be classified as a strategy of nomination, several further discursive strategies can be found in this quote. The use of the ridicolizing diminutive serves the purpose of belittling (predication, intensification), potentiated by the supposed carelessness of Rackete's actions, as hinted at by "...doing politics at the expense of..." and delegitimizing Rackete as the responsible captain of a ship. The phrasing "doing politics" refers to the political-ideological side of Rackete's actions in a pejorative way, attacking her in her role as the main protagonist of humanitarian border activism in the Mediterranean (nomination, predication, perspectivization). By framing Rackete's actions as political, Salvini emphasizes the role of border politics in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, he discursively constructs Rackete as a political actor (and not as a humanitarian actor) and, as

such, as an attackable political enemy and an opponent to his securitizing border politics. The clear threat “they will have to answer for that” shows a strategy of intensification and a deontic status. By including himself in a first-person statement, Salvini assumes the role of an agent (behind the threat) and positions himself in a patriarchal way as the defender and enforcer of the prevailing norms and regulations (perspectivization). By hinting at a dubious *svengali* behind Rackete’s actions (“paid by who knows whom”), Salvini follows a strategy of obfuscation (predication), even invoking conspiracy theories, while, again in a misogynist/sexist move, denying Rackete the agency of her own actions.

Example 3: Gender policing: ‘the missing bra’ & ‘not a real woman’

Media coverage of Carola Rackete’s appearance in Court in the Italian right-wing newspaper *Libero*, 07/21/2019.



Fig. 4: *Libero*: Rackete in Court without a bra

After ignoring orders not to approach Italian waters and instead entering the port of Lampedusa with more than 40 rescued persons on board on 29 June 2019, Carola Rackete faced charges for favoring illegal immigration. When she appeared at the Prosecutor’s Office in Agrigento (Sicily), apparently Rackete did not wear a bra. The right-wing newspaper *Libero* turned this news into a scoop, attacking Rackete for her “effrontery” and “shamelessness” and accusing her of indecent and improper behavior.

Sea Watch, Carola Rackete at the prosecutor’s office without a bra! What a boundless affront – the detail that has escaped the attention of many. (translation EKN)

The mere attempt of reporting about it and making the observation a scoop that a woman might not be wearing a bra in public, can serve as a prime example of misogynist gender policing in Italian media. The very idea of scooping this news is underlined by the subheader “the detail that has escaped the attention of many,” turning the observation into the newspaper’s exclusive news (perspectivization). Speaking of “a boundless affront” shows a strategy of intensification (“boundless”) and perspectivization (“affront”).

Example 4: the transphobic conspiracy

The gender policing in Italian far-right news groups and (social) media went even further in the following months, when conspiracy theories boiled up, spreading transphobic rumors that Carola Rackete was ‘not a real woman.’ The rumor was that Carola Rackete actually was a different person, namely a German reality star who came out as a trans woman in 2018 and died by suicide shortly after. It remains an open and irrelevant question whether this rumor was ever meant to be taken seriously; the most obvious purpose of it was to use it as a transphobic attack to discredit and to ridicule Carola Rackete (strategy of predication). The word choice “is a man” and “has changed sex” (nomination) clearly shows the transphobic phrasing.



Fig. 5: *Libero*: Carola Rackete is a man

Example 5: “battleships and Italian TV/media”

When news broke that Carola Rackete was invited by TV presenter Fabio Fazio into his show *Che tempo che fa* on 24 November 2019 on the Italian national TV channel Rai2, Matteo Salvini reacted on social media. In his protest, he hinted at an event in spring 2019, when Carola Rackete hit an Italian military vessel while defying a naval blockade in an attempt to dock her ship in the port of Lampedusa.



Fig. 6: Salvini: Fabio Fazio

*An excited Fazio will have the "pleasure and honor" to host Miss Carola, at your expense.
Nota bene: If you haven't rammed any Italian military ships, don't even try, you won't get invited.
IF YOU DON'T RAM MILITARY SHIPS; FABIO FAZIO WON'T INVITE YOU ON TV (RAI).*

In this tweet, Matteo Salvini quotes Fabio Fazio's previous tweet (in which he announced to host Carola Rackete) and establishes a causal relation between Carola Rackete's maneuver leading to the accident in the port of Lampedusa earlier that year and Fabio Fazio's invitation to his TV show in the Italian state TV channel RAI2. Savini ironically quotes Fabio Fazio's "pleasure and honor" and alludes to the role of the tax-funded Italian state TV by stating that the show and the invitation takes place "at your expense."

The strategies of predication and perspectivation become evident in Matteo Salvini's depreciation of Fabio Fazio, on the one hand, by addressing him only by his last name, by adding an ironic tone to the quote as explained above, and by characterizing him as 'excited' (predication). On the other hand, Matteo Salvini's position with regard to Carola Rackete becomes clear in his patriarchal patronizing manner of referring to Carola Rackete as 'la signorina Carola,' i.e. by using the sexist/misogynist form of address "signorina" (Miss) and limiting himself to her first name (nomination).

By alluding to and framing Carola Rackete's accident in the port of Lampedusa as a voluntary

act of "ramming military vessels," Matteo Salvini follows a strategy of predication and tries to criminalize the event and Carola Rackete's actions.

In a populist move, Matteo Salvini furthermore constructs victimhood for himself and his allies, whom he depicts as ordinary people, and contrasts them with Carola Rackete, represented here as a criminal. Furthermore, he suggests the media (in the person of Fabio Fazio) privileges the latter ("don't even try, you won't get invited") (predication, perspectivation).

Example 6: "criminals and enemies/EU"

Later in 2019, Matteo Salvini, then the Italian minister of internal affairs, was put under investigation for kidnapping because of his refusal to allow the disembarkation of migrants in the port of Lampedusa.



Fig. 7: Facebook: Minister defends his country

Minister defends his country: investigated for kidnapping. She rams [a boat] risking killing soldiers: applauded by the left and by the EU parliament

Matteo Salvini complains about the decision to investigate him for kidnapping charges in several of his tweets, such as the one shown above. In this example, Matteo Salvini again focuses on the strategies of criminalization and victim-playing (nomination, predication), which are taken a step further in this example. Both through the selected images and the text of his tweet, he creates a strong binary opposition between himself as the defender (of Italy) and Carola Rackete as the aggressor (perspectivation). The word choice (nomination) underlines this opposition, as

especially the verbs belong to the lexical field of 'war' (defend (his country), ram, risk, kill (soldiers)), thus constructing an imminent danger from which one (the country) needs protection (argumentation).

Following a typical populist strategy, he stylizes himself as the victim of the ruling class in the form of the Italian justice system and depicts Carola Rackete as his antagonist who is privileged by the left and European Parliament. Again, he takes up the accident in the port of Lampedusa and, in a strategy of intensification, exaggerates the event by stating that lives (of Italian military) had been at risk – a claim he has voiced several times even though an official investigation excluded any such risks.

Particularly striking in the selection of the visual elements of this tweet is that while Matteo Salvini is shown all by himself, in a white shirt, with some document in his hands, Carola Rackete shares the second half of the picture with a racially diverse group of women who seem to applaud her for her actions.

Humanitarian Discourses in Defense of the Rackete's Sea Rescue Operations

While the previously cited examples all show attacks on Carola Rackete, mainly by her adversary Matteo Salvini, her supporters also played a visible role in the discussions about her and her action in 2019 in the Italian public sphere. On 3 July 2019, Sea-Watch, the private sea rescue organization by whom Carola Rackete is employed as the captain of one of their boats, tweeted the picture below (Example 6) to comment on the court decision which had just hit the headlines that Carola Rackete was acquitted of all charges after hitting a military vessel when docking in the port of Lampedusa – the event which was at the center of numerous rants and accusations by Matteo Salvini, as described above.

Example 7: "ci sono capitani e capitani"



Fig. 8 : Twitter: Sea-Watch, Captains

In what can be read as a visual strategy of intensification, the drawing shows a strongly oversized Carola Rackete and a Matteo Salvini on her hand, en miniature. While Carola Rackete radiates calmness and composure, Matteo Salvini is fretting and fuming. Carola Rackete's confident appearance conveys a sense of grandeur, from a gendered perspective it can also be read as her fulfilling the female duty of composure, while Matteo Salvini, in his role as a man, can allow himself to let out his rage. His masculinity is highlighted by anger as an expression of male dominance, represented in this picture by masculine, aggressive gestures like his clenched fists and a grim face (predication). In harsh contrast to this, Carola Rackete's face even shows a suggested smile – an expression of the accommodating gendered behavior expected of her (also predication).

Also the choice of the title of this picture deserves some more detailed attention: The authors of this drawing added the caption "Ci sono capitani e capitani," translated into English "there are two sorts of captains," implicitly evaluating and distinguishing them into good ones and bad ones. This implicit assessment classifies the drawing as an act of perspectivization, as the authors clearly take sides with Carola Rackete. When one analyzes this discursive strategy of nomination, it is striking that the authors opt for a generic masculine form 'capitani' to refer both to Carola Rackete and to Matteo Salvini instead of using gendered forms 'capitane' and 'capitani'. I can only hypothesize that by this choice, the authors wanted to avoid the emotional reactions to female-gendered professional titles as they are

flaring up again and again in Italian debates. Their choice seems an explicit attempt of excluding issues of gender from this debate – not really a felicitous attempt, as we can see from the description above. Of particular relevance for the Italian context is the word choice of ‘capitani’ (captains), not only because of Carola Rackete being the actual captain of a ship (oftentimes now also in Italian referred to as ‘capitano’ o ‘capitana’ instead of ‘commandante,’ as an interference from English), but particularly because of “capitano” being the title of address Matteo Salvini prefers for himself. What is striking is that Matteo Salvini claims this title for himself in an attempt of assuming this authoritative role, though he actually has no reason to bear this title, as he has neither served in the military nor commanded a ship or anything else that could have earned him this title. On the other hand, Carola Rackete is entitled to be called captain as she is the commander of a ship, the Sea Watch 3. But Matteo Salvini has always refused to refer to her as such and to make use of this correct form of address – which can be interpreted as his refusal to accept the authoritative and thus gendered role, which he claims for himself. This detailed analysis shows how this caricature aims at needling Matteo Salvini, while elevating Carola Rackete on a pedestal. While it explicitly tries to factor out issues of gender, it nevertheless acts within the given framework of gender roles, thus upholding and reinforcing the current gender regime.

Example 8: “Grazie Carola”

Other private humanitarian organizations and volunteers also joined the raging debate between the opposing strands of humanitarian vs. securitizing policies in the Mediterranean, concentrated, in attacks on and in defense of Carola Rackete.

In her support, the activist Francesco Piobbichi created the drawing below, entitled “Grazie Carola,” to thank Carola Rackete for her work. The image was shared by the activist himself on his twitter account on 26 June 2019.



Fig. 9: Piobbichi: Thank you Carola

Tweet and drawing by Francesco Piobbichi, activist of Mediterranean Hope and member of the Forum Lampedusa Solidale.; 26 June 2019.

Thank you, Carola! Thank you for burdening yourself with the weight of humanity in this big world governed by egoism. [...] Whoever saves one life saves the world entire. (translation EKN)

Visually, the author plays with the elements of fire and water. Indeed, the sea is depicted as the unknown and the uncontrollable from which the people in the boat need to be rescued. The background above the sea is depicted as if it were in flames. With this intertextual reference, the author picks up the song and homonymous movie *Fuocoammare* (Fire at Sea, 2016) a film about refugees on the island of Lampedusa, which has risen to fame over the last decade.

Both image and text assign Carola Rackete the role – and weight – of saving the whole of humanity. The author strikes a rather religious tone both in his linguistic and semiotic choices. As in the example before, this author also makes use of the semiotic strategy of instensification by depicting Carola Rackete as a giant emerging out of the sea, carrying in her hands an entire boat full of people. While Carola Rackete is clearly

recognizable, in face and through the logo of her NGO, Sea Watch, on her T-Shirt, the people in boat are depicted as a faceless mass of tiny figures. Strikingly, the author chose “umanità” (humanity) as the name of the boat rescued by Carola Rackete. By carrying the boat and thus rescuing boat and load, Carola Rackete is not part of humankind, but becomes a supernatural savior, whom the author worships in a quasi-religious manner (argumentation, predication, nomination).

The discursive frame of religion is strongly evident also in the text of the tweet. Not only does the author quote a saying from the Talmud, “Chi salva una vita salva il mondo intero” (Whoever saves one life saves the world entire), a paraphrase of the Sanhedrin 37a of the Babylonian Talmud, known to a wider, also non-Jewish audience as quoted in the film *Schindler’s List*. His lexical choice of “peso dell’umanità di cui ti sei fatta carico” (burdening yourself with the weight of humanity) even alludes to religious descriptions of a Messiah (argumentation, perspectivization).

The masculine gendering of such a figure and their respective role (both the task of ‘man’ of saving lives and thus ‘mankind’ in the Talmud as well as the assumption of messianic burdens in Jewish and Christian texts) seems to have been smoothly overcome in Francesco Piobbichi’s text and image. Manifestations of gendered discourses, however, can be found both in the text and image of this tweet. Using the informal form of address in the verb form “ti sei” and the first name “Carola,” index a familiarity and the deliberate decrease in social distance as it can be found often in media when talking to or about women. More female-gendered markers can be found in the visual depiction. While Carola Rackete is depicted as holding the boat up in the air above her head, this position has nothing to do with the triumphant position of winners lifting their trophy into the air, though her bodily posture is exactly the same. The core difference lies in Carola Rackete’s eyes: Her lateral, lowered gaze is very much in line with female-gendered norms and prohibit a triumphant, self-confident straight look into the spectator’s eye.

Strikingly similar is Elvira Giannattasio’s drawing of Carola Rackete, see Example 9, as published (and criticized) by the Italian writer Igiaba Scego on her Facebook account on 21 November 2021.

Carola Rackete vista da Elvira Giannattasio
<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10157824055724846&set=a.10150668874289846&type=3&theater>, accessed 15 August 2021.

N.B.: The image has been removed from most websites in the meantime. Currently the only available source is Gelvisdesign, the website of the artist.

Example 9: “mother – savoir – saint”

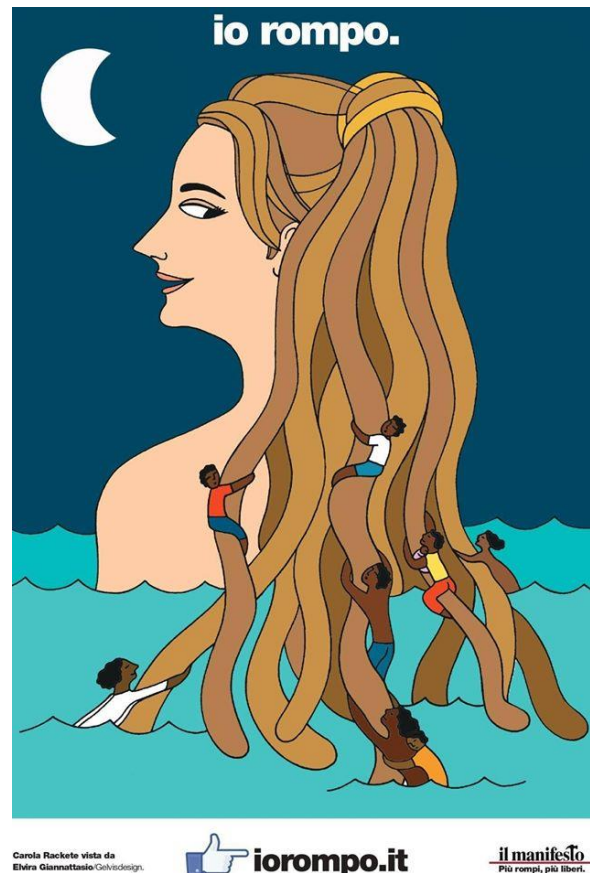


Fig. 10: Giannattasio: Portrait Rackete, Manifesto

In this example, too, the artist chooses the strategy of intensification, depicting Carola Rackete again as a giant emerging out of the sea. Her charactersitic dreadlocks are reaching into the water, and miniature-sized Black and Brown people save themselves by climbing them like ropes out of the water. The gendered and racialized depiction of Carola Rackete particularly catches the reader’s eye (nomination). Not only are the Black people inferiorized and, again, visualized as a faceless mass of people. What is more, Carola Rackete’s face is very pronounced, her traits are highly gendered as female, and her skin color is particularly bright. Her face shows a pleased and content smile, with her eyes gazing at the tiny figures climbing her hair.

The following image of Carola Rackete picks up this sanctification in an exaggerated and thus rather ironic manner. Indeed, Tvboy, the artist, created this image as a murale in the streets of Taormina, Sicily. Pictures of this murale were widely shared on Italian (social) media.

TV Boy "Santa Carola protettrice dei rifugiati"
Taormina, Sicily

The exaggeratedness of this depiction is also reflected and highlighted in the title of this artwork, "Santa Carola protettrice dei rifugiati" (Saint Carola, the patron saint of refugees). Her representation as a saint is also visually indexed

Example 10: "mother – savoir – saint"



Fig. 11: TV Boy: "Santa Carola" (Taormina)xi

through the halo. In addition, she carries a veil like the Virgin Mary, which, though, is drawn here in pink color (all nomination). On her left arm, she carries a first aid kit, underlining her role as a savior, but this time through a very earthly sign. The depiction of Carola Rackete as a saint is complemented in this picture by her taking on the role of a mother, carrying a black child wearing a life jacket on her arm. In contrast to the two previous depictions, both the dimensions and the ratio between Carola Rackete and the "refugee" is balanced and realistic, and the Black child has a face and a facial expression.

While this representation of Carola Rackete explicitly moves away from the intensification in her depiction as a white savior in the previous examples, the artists here strongly highlight the gendered roles Carola Rackete supposedly takes on – that of a saint and a mother (predication).

Conclusion: Defying and Reinforcing the Border-Gender-Nexus

If the *nómos* on land is defied at sea, as Di Cesare (Di Cesare, 2020, p. 125) has it, then additional sets of norms need to be called into action in order to stabilize the dominant prevailing hegemonic patriarchal state model. What better way than to use the normative, regulatory social force of gender to assert and reinforce existing structures! Carola Rackete as a border-breaking and gender-defying figure becomes a target of border- and gender policing discursive attacks. As the selection of examples above has shown, Carola Rackete hit the headlines in 2019 in Italy (and also in the rest of Europe) because of how she navigated the border in the Mediterranean Sea. In her role as a border breaker who facilitated migrant border crossings, she ended up being a target of the attacks by Matteo Salvini, the self-declared defender of the Italian border. While the question of the degree of the permeability of the border in the Mediterranean lies at the core of the politicized debates about the sea rescue operations, on the discursive surface, the battle is fought out in the realm of gender.

The examples of Salvini's attacks above have shown how both the border (as the controlling tool of state territories) and misogyny (as the systemic manifestation of patriarchy) are not only intertwined but can be used strategically to reinforce each other in defense of the cis-hetero-patriarchal nation-state. By employing strategies of nomination and predication (name calling and nicknaming, impolite forms of address, avoidance of professional titles), Salvini not only reduces the social distance between himself and Rackete, but also tries to belittle her, mock her, and undermine her professional and personal authority. In his strategies of argumentation, Salvini calls upon religion in proclaiming it his 'sacred duty' to defend borders and claims to fulfil the will of the majority of voters, thus relying on religion and the electorate as authoritative sources in an attempt of strengthening his own position vis-à-vis Rackete. Through strategies of perspectivization and intensification, he tries to give additional weight to his assertions. For him, gender thus serves as a tool to assert his position of dominance; he acts as a catalyst for the securitizing border policies of his and his allies.

The drawings in support of Carola Rackete are prime examples of glorification, not only of her actions but also of Rackete herself in her role as

the (white) savior. The depiction of Rackete in this role is carried to an ironic extreme by the Tvboy murale: The artist plays with exaggeration to criticize and counteract both the sanctification of the white savior and the racist depiction of migrants as a faceless mass of miniature people, as in many other examples.

Both sides seem to struggle with Rackete's agency and powerful courage: While one side delegitimizes her actions through overt gender-policing and by attempts to re-establish male dominance over Rackete, the other side (sometimes ironically, though) exalts her to a saint-like mother figure.

It becomes evident how the instances of discourses and semiotic choices (both socially constituted and socially constitutive) outlined above are both the product of the current border gender-nexus and, at the same time, play an active role in producing and reinforcing it.

Both the vilification and sanctification of Rackete operate within the given frame of the acceptable

gender roles for females, either by producing and re-affirming them or by enforcing them through explicit gender policing. As such, Salvini's attacks on Rackete are read as manifestations of patronizing attempts of upholding or re-establishing male dominance. Also the visual means in support of Rackete by and large contribute to the upholding of the status quo in terms of the border-gender nexus. While her adversaries launch misogynist attacks on Rackete as a woman, Rackete's supporters elevate her to a more-than-woman figure by assigning her a specific role, as a mother, a saint, and a (white) savior. It is this particular role that grants her an exemption, which, however, also still operates within the framework of misogyny.

As the analysis of the examples above has shown, the concurrence of border and gender discourses is not a coincidence: Two discursive regimes co-occur here strategically in the form of the border-gender-nexus, as an expression and a driver of the dominant cis-hetero-patriarchal nation-state.

NOTES

ⁱ Italian for "captains" [feminine]. Though the standard term for the commander of a ship in Italian is "commandante," [masculine and feminine] also "capitano" [masculine] and "capitana" [feminine] can be found, particularly in the debates about Carola Rackete, probably as a calque from English.

ⁱⁱ At least this seems to be the prevailing representation in media and public discourses. Though countless attempts have been made so far to criminalize their activities as 'smuggling' and 'human trafficking,' court decisions have shown that they operate showing acute awareness of and acting in line

with the given legal framework, acknowledging indeed the respective emergency assessments, placing international law and conventions above national interest, and corroborating their obligation to provide assistance to persons in distress at sea. For an overview of international law and rescue at sea see the UNHCR Legal Brief on International Law and Rescue at Sea (UNHCR, 2022, n.p.).

ⁱⁱⁱ "Chi se ne frega delle regole ne risponde, lo dico anche a quella sbruffoncella della comandante della Sea Watch che fa politica sulla pelle degli immigrati pagata non si sa da chi."

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