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HUMANITARIAN BATTLEFIELD

MICHELE CUSI

In the days after the 2013 Lampedusa tragedy that saw 368 migrants drown in the Mediterranean, Italy held a day of mourning. A mass funeral and memorial ceremony concluded with the Italian government awarding all 368 dead migrants honorary Italian citizenship.[1] This gesture did not include any of the survivors detained and charged with illegal entry at Lampedusa's detention center.[2] Such a tragedy underscores the seemingly contradictory ethos driving Italian border control: at once benevolent and humanitarian yet simultaneously militarized and punitive. Following the memorial, Italian authorities launched Mare Nostrum: a military-backed humanitarian operation that sought to protect Italy through the detention and arrest of smugglers while simultaneously saving migrants through search and rescue missions (SAR).

This article is divided into two parts: the first focusing on the historical and material implications of Italian border management, the second investigating the theoretical underpinning of seemingly contradictory bordering strategies. Part one highlights how the ethos driving Italy's colonial empire in the 19th and 20th centuries guides contemporary border control. Precisely how the management of human mobility has and continues to inform Italian intervention in the Mediterranean.

Part two surveys the processes that produce and maintain migrant criminality. Following a discussion into how media narratives about "the migrant crisis" fuel both military and humanitarian interventions, I will utilize Achile Mbembe's necropolitical framework to harmonize these otherwise dissonant bordering strategies. I argue that humanitarian efforts and military interventions are mutually reinforcing, each fueling a necropolitical borderspace that seeks to leverage death to maintain life.

PART I: HISTORICAL CONTINUUM

EMPIRE

It is perhaps due to the relative brevity of Italy's empire that many of its features and formations fade into historical obscurity. Because of this colonial amnesia, a satisfactory critique of Italy's border control necessitates untangling the threads connecting Italy's past to its present. Italy's current practice of deportation and incarceration echoes the methods and techniques guiding Italy's past colonial ambitions. Central to both is the manipulation of human mobility.

The Mediterranean served as a legitimizing force for the colonialization of North Africa. Its proximity and history

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[1] Musarò, Pierluigi. Beyond the border spectacle: Migration across the Mediterranean Sea. Entrapping Asylum Seekers (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 12

[2] Ibid, 12

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of trade and commerce framed Italian expansion as a logical next step.[3] However, the sea that "unified" the two lands became the very medium through which the Italian state imposed their violence. Deportation and forced relocation to island prison camps on the Mediterranean was a central facet of Italian colonial expansion.[4] During the colonization of Eritrea in the 1890s, deportation to the nearby island of Nokra set the stage for future endeavors in North Africa.[5] Similarly, Libyan subjects were shuttled to Lampedusa and other carceral islands across the Mediterranean in an effort to dislocate them from their homes and entrench Italian dominance in the region.[6]

The role of mobility as both a weapon and a threat to the Italian Empire was most evident through its relationship to Libya's Beduin tribes. Il Grande Nomadismo, or the great nomadism, of the Beduins in Italian-controlled Libya was seen as an existential threat to the Italian state.[7] Their untethered movement directly challenged the order Italy's colonial empire was seeking to establish. In 1930 Italy declared a state of emergency against the Bedouins tribes. Pietro Badoglio, the colonial governor of Libya, sought to physically distance the rebellious Bedouins from the rest of the subjugated population.[8] Bedouins' movements became strictly controlled by the Italian authorities who forcibly marched them across the desert into sixteen newly erected detainment camps. Of the one hundred thousand Bedouins resettled

there, an estimated seventy thousand died.[9] Whether it be through the hyper-mobility of deportations and relocations or the immobility of detention and death, control of mobility was a foundational element of the way in which the Italian empire was strengthened and maintained.

A century later, Italy's sovereignty and local dominance is exerted and maintained with near-parallel practices. The same ports, beaches, and sea routes are used to detain, arrest and deport immigrants. The bedrock of this colonial continuum is the control and manipulation of human mobility.

EXTERNALIZATION = EVAPORATION

The ghosts of the largely forgotten Beduin genocide are rematerialized through today's border control regime. The exact plot of land where one of those camps was built is now a Lybian-run, yet Italian financed, detainment camp imprisoning illegal migrants.[10] The continuity of past and present is obscured through a strategy called border externalization. Within this process, humanitarian and military state apparatuses work to reterritorialize the border far beyond Italy's shores. Doing so prevents migrants from entering the territorial jurisdiction of Italy, thereby offshoring Italy's responsibility to grant asylum and evaporating migrants' legal protections under international law.[11] The process of externalization is not unique to Italy, all of Europe has increasingly displaced

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[3] Hom, Stephanie Malia. Empire's Mobius Strip: Historical Echoes in Italy's Crisis of Migration and Detention. (Cornell University Press, 2019), 14

[4] Ibid, 44

[5] Ibid, 42

[6] Hom. Empire's Mobius Strip, 47

[7] Ibid, 101

[8] Ibid, 95

[9] Ibid, 90

[10] Hom. Empire's Mobius Strip, 31

[11] Frelick, Bill, Ian M. Kysel, and Jennifer Podkul. "The impact of externalization of migration controls on the rights of asylum seekers and other migrants." Journal on Migration and Human Security 4.4 (2016): 190, 195.

much of their migration management to the shores of North Africa.[12] As the Schengen area effectively evaporated Europe's internal borders, an interest in fortifying its outer ones emerged.[13] Europe's integration meant that states renounced some level of sovereignty; this was countered with an increased fortification of its external borders, reaffirming Europe's sovereign boundaries.

HUMANITARIAN EXTERNALIZATION

The conflation of bordering practices with humanitarianism began in the late 1990s.[14] Rather than deal with asylum claims and migrants on European land, humanitarian policies sought to stem the push factors fueling migration in the first place.[15] These policies focused on stimulating economies, developing democratic institutions, and strengthening the rule of law in emigration countries.[16] Beneath these righteous goals was the underlying effect of absolving Italy of migrants' wellbeing. As those humanitarian programs failed to mitigate migration, new forms of externalized control took place.

Border externalization evolved to incorporate increasingly aggressive policies. Regional Protection Programs (RPP) were developed in third countries[17], allowing Italy to push back migrants seeking asylum. According to the UN High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) the function of these programs is to protect migrants in countries who would otherwise not be considered "safe" states. These RPPs comprised a prominent aspect of Italy's border externalization strategy. They circumvented international law prohibiting Italy from deporting migrants to states with potentially unsafe conditions.[18] Through these RPPs, Italy deported countless migrants from its shores— highlighting the fissures between its "humanitarian" externalization policies and their underlying military impulse.[19]

MILITARIZED HUMANISM

Italy's colonial past is most evidently experienced through its militarized border regime. The same strategies, sites, and avenues that fueled Italian sovereignty in the 19th and 20th centuries are now reanimated to enforce its borders. Rather than the unilateral imposition that characterized Italy's colonial expansion into Libya, the two countries now collaborate on border control.[20] With a surprising acknowledgment of Italy's colonial history in Libya, Silvio Berlusconi, Italy's prime minister, initiated the 2008 Italy-Libya Friendship Pact with Libya's leader Muammar Gadafi. Superficially, the pact seemed to provide $5 billion in reparations for the detrimental impacts of Italy's reign over the country. Underneath the surface, however, the agreement opened up Libyan oil and gas reserves for Italian investment in addition

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[12] Haddad, Emma. "The external dimension of EU refugee policy: A new approach to asylum?" Government and Opposition 43.2 (2008): 191

[13] Ibid, 197

[14] Ibid, 191

[15] Ibid, 191

[16] Frelick, Bill, Ian M. Kysel, and Jennifer Podkul. "The impact of externalization of migration control. (2016): 195

[17] Third countries being states that are neither the departing nor destination state, but which nonetheless host many migrants on their journey to Europe, Libya is a prime example.

[18] Haddad, Emma. "The external dimension of EU refugee policy, 206.

[19] Abderrezak, Hakim. "The Mediterranean Seametery and Cementery in Leïla Kilani's and Tariq Teguia's Filmic Works." Critically Mediterranean. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 154.

[20] Andrijasevic, Rutvica. "Deported: The Right to Asylum at EU's External Border of Italy and Libya." International Migration 48.1 (2010):154

to securing training for militias to intercept potential Mediterranean crossers before they reach Italian waters.[21] Multiple detention centers were erected to detain "irregular" migrants, and deals outlining deportation schemes back to Libyan authorities were cemented.[22] The painful correlation between past colonial efforts and the current "Friendship Pact" was only exacerbated by constructing these "new" camps on the very sites where Italian colonial authorities organized the death of thousands of Beduins a century earlier. A few pages of legalese and a wire transfer are all that separate colonial detention and plunder to the border diplomacy of today.

The Friendship Pact had devastating consequences for migrants' rights and safety. Deporting them to Libya served to remove them from Europe while pushing them into detention systems run by ad hoc local militias.[23] Despite the lack of accountability in the Libyan state, Amnesty International was able to shed light on the fates of migrants detained in Libya. Many were subjected to torture, slavery, extrajudicial killings and often deported back to their countries of origin.[24] The paradox of military obstacles to migration is that limiting safe, legal pathways into Italy forces migrants into increasingly perilous journeys requiring humanitarian intervention.[25] One arm detains and drowns, while the other, armed with video cameras and blankets, descends on the wreckage to rescue and bury.

MARE NOSTRUM

There is no clearer example of the intersection between the colonial influence on Italian border management and the military-humanitarian efforts of the Italian state than the commencement of Mare Nostrum: an Italian state-sponsored military-humanitarian operation introduced soon after the 2013 Lampedusa tragedy.[26]

Mare Nostrum, meaning Our Sea in Latin embodies Italy's two-pronged attitudes toward migrants. On the one hand, it being our sea Italy takes the noble responsibility to rescue any precarious migrants. On the other, the emphasis on the possessive nature of the sea delineates the Mediterranean as a white, European space. In fact, Mare Nostrum has a long history of both legitimizing Italian expansion across the Mediterranean and cementing Italy's distinction from Africa. The concept of Mare Nostrum originated in reference to Rome's unification of the lands surrounding the Mediterranean under its rule.[27] Millenia later, Benito Mussolini revived the phrase to legitimize his imperial ambitions for a fascist Italy. By connecting Italy to the Roman Empire, he framed colonial expansion as a natural return to what had belonged to them since antiquity.[28] However, since 20th-century decolonization, contemporary uses of Mare Nostrum focus on an exclusionary interpretation of the phrase. Neofascists wield the phrase in an effort to separate migrants from white Italians.[29] Accordingly, the presence

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[21] Hom. Empire's Mobius Strip, 31

[22] Andrijasevic. "Deported: The Right to Asylum at EU's External Border of Italy and Libya.",154

[23] Hom. Empire's Mobius Strip, 32

[24] Adrijasevic. Deported: The Right to Asylum at EU's External Border of Italy and Libya, 161

[25] Ibid, 160

[26] Andersson, Ruben. "Rescued and Caught: The Humanitarian-Security Nexus at Europe's Frontiers." In The Borders of " Europe", pp. 64-94. (Duke University Press, 2017): 79

[27] Agbamu, Samuel. "Mare Nostrum: Italy and the Mediterranean of Ancient Rome in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries." Fascism 8, no. 2 (2019): 254.

[28] Ibid, 260

[29] Ibid, 269

of the migrant is seen as an abnormality, an abject body that must be dealt with either through deportation or death.

Harkening a more paternalistic interpretation of the phrase, Operation Mare Nostrum's search and rescue campaign had two guiding missions: save migrants and arresting the traffickers responsible for their mobility.[30] During its brief, year-long campaign, Mare Nostrum saved over 100,000 from the journey across the Mediterranean, an indisputably positive result.[31] However, the impacts of humanitarianism during times of heightened international attention and emergency serve underlying functions beyond providing direct aid.[32]

The Italian Navy used an array of representational strategies to convey its newfound role in the unfolding migrant crisis. Photos showcasing noble white sailors standing proud in front of recently rescued migrants signal Italy's shift toward paternalistic and humanitarian practices. The use of huddled, precarious migrants is set in opposition to the Navy's values of compassion and shelter. Yet what is missing from those pictures is the ways in which Italy produces the very conditions that fuel the need for rescue missions in the first place.

Subsuming humanitarianism into military operations obscures the distinctions between rescuing and capturing. In fact, Matteo Tondini argues that it is only through the mechanisms of humanitarianism that the Italian navy has any legal ground to intercept migrants on the high seas.[33] Furthermore, by changing focus away from Italian shores and toward the sea, the cause and culpability of this crisis are externalized. The outcry against Italian inaction toward the sinking ships on Lampedusa's shores is diverted towards human traffickers on Lybian shores, absolving the Italian Navy while framing them as benevolent saviors.

PART II: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

THE ISLAND

Lampedusa has, for centuries, demarcated between Italy's own and its others. Before it imprisoned colonial subjects, internal enemies of the state were shuttled to its shores.[34] Anarchists, those opposed to Italian unification, and antifascists populated its prison. Yet, more fundamentally, its cultural and physical proximity to Africa made it to many an inherently non-Italian space.[35] The entirety of southern Italy was seen through a racialized lens. To the northerners, the southerners were of an intrinsically different race "by nature anarchic, undisciplined, and unsuited to long-term political preparation."[36] During Italian unification, Lampedusa, sitting a mere 70 miles away from Africa, muddled

[30] Ministero Della Difesa. Mare Nostrum Operation. (2017) http://www.marina.difesa.it/EN/operations/Pagine/MareNostrum.aspx

[31] Scherer, Steve & Massimiliano Di Giorgio. Italy Ends Sea Rescue Mission that Saved 100,000 Migrants." (Reuters, 2014). http://www.reuters.com/article/us-italy-migrants-eu- idUSKBN0IK22220141031

[32] Andersson, Ruben. "Rescued and Caught: The Humanitarian-Security Nexus at Europe's Frontiers." In The Borders of " Europe", pp. 64-94. Duke University Press, 2017.

[33] Tondini, Matteo. "The legality of intercepting boat people under search and rescue and border control operations with reference to recent Italian interventions in the Mediterranean Sea and the ECtHR decision in the Hirsi case." Journal of International Maritime Law 18, no. 1 (2012): 59-74.

[34] Hom. Empire's Mobius Strip, 42

[35] Agbamu. Mare Nostrum: Italy and the Mediterranean of Ancient Rome in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries, 255-256

[36] Schneider, Jane. "Introduction: The dynamics of neo-orientalism in Italy (1848–1995)." In Italy's" Southern Question" (Routledge, 2020), 12

the neat distinction Italian officials sought to create between Italy and Africa. For centuries the people inhabiting these southern Mediterranean islands and the northern shores of Africa considered themselves part of the same geographical community: trading, fishing, and moving freely between shores.[37] Thus, the process through which Lampedusa was "made Italian" required artificially erasing entrenched histories of cooperation. Informed by this obscured past, the current inviolability of Lampedusa's shores by African migrants feels all the more arbitrary.

What happens in that 70 mile stretch of Mediterranean water? What legal, social, and racial processes occur to so fundamentally transform a human being? The consequences of floating to Lampedusa are not inherent; they are produced through legal decrees in the halls of Italy's parliament hundreds of miles away. Yet much of that is obscured by the hypnotizing spectacle created by the mediatized portrayal of the "migrant crisis." The long history of shared mobility, trade, and customs throughout the region is subdued by the seemingly inviolable yet arbitrary distinction between us and them. What was once a space of questionable Italianness has become among the chief zones of distinction between who belongs and who does not.

MANUFACTURING ILLEGALITY

A brisk bike ride from the detention center housing the nearly drowned migrants of the Lampedusa tragedy is, according to the 2013 trip advisor rankings, the highest rated beach in the world, Spiaggia Coniglio.[38] Here, the world's legal travelers can enjoy the serene, turquoise water and daily boat trips featuring a fresh lunch paired with an excellent Prosecco. The painfully violent distinction between these two Lampedusa experiences is normalized through sustained media representation of the migrant crisis.

Migrant's illegality is intertwined with the inviolability of a border; without one, you cannot have the other. Therefore, just as a border is politically produced, so is the migrant's criminality.[39] Because the essence of both the border and the migrants is not inherent but rather manufactured, it requires a perpetual need to reinforce. The endless stream of images showing migrants arriving on Lampedusa's shores serve this function perfectly. They concretize the notion of an invasion, framing the illegality of the migrant as an unfortunate yet natural consequence of their presence on European land. These pictures, in turn, produce the perception of an existential crisis for Europe, legitimizing the need for militarized state intervention.[40]

Conversely, depictions of suffering or dead migrant bodies fuel humanitarian interventions.[41] When the photo of Alan Kurdi's three-year-old body washed up on European shores circulated the internet, a collective shock reverberated across the world. How could this happen? What can be done to prevent it? And most importantly, who is to blame? The answers to these questions highlight one of the principal functions of the humanitarian border: the creation of a villain and a victim.

Alan Kurdi's tragic yet not uncommon story encapsulates this process painfully well. In the aftermath of the dissemination of the photo, French President Francois Hollande stated, "Europe is a group of principles, of

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[37] Hom. Empire's Mobius Strip, 38

[38] Tripadvisor, "Rabbit Beach Nominated As Best Beach In The World by TA" https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g262047-i3104-k6169508-Lampedusa_Islands_of_Sicily_Sicily.html

[39] De Genova, Nicholas. "The border spectacle of migrant 'victimisation'." The Passerelle Collection 107 (2015): 108

[40] Ibid, 108

[41] Musarò. Beyond the border spectacle: Migration across the Mediterranean Sea, 62

values which oblige us to welcome those who are pushed out and look for refuge because they are persecuted".[42] Alan Kurdi is now the namesake of a humanitarian rescue vessel, reminding the world of both the tragedy and the humanitarian efforts Europe has taken in response. In March of 2020, three Syrian nationals were identified as the culprits and sentenced to prison for their role in capsizing the boat that led to Alan's death.[43] Alan Kurdi's story is a paradigmatic humanitarian spectacle. Victims are highlighted, their pain is reproduced ad nauseam, a perpetrator is identified, and Europe's values are advertised in opposition to that villain.

The power of this border theatre is its ability to create two seemingly opposed representations of the same people. The same transgressing criminal eroding the sanctity of Europe, on the one hand, is somehow the blameless grieving father of a lost child on the other. This schizophrenic vision allows Italian border control to situate its Mediterranean interventions with moral pride. The humanitarian border is not a constant feature of Italian border security. Rather it exists in specific places and times; it is made to be seen.[44] After a tragedy gathers international attention, the humanitarian arm of the state is there to shelter and heal. It provides those watching with an overarching narrative: someone, over there, far beyond our lands, caused this child

to die; we, strengthened by our universal ideals of equality, justice, and mercy, will save these wounded victims, for they know not how to save themselves. Yet, this attention only entrenches a need for heightened security and militarization, producing the very conditions that endanger the migrant's journey.[45]

Of course, the war in Syria was the principal push factor that caused Alan Kurdi's family to seek shelter. Yet, his death was produced by the deterrence philosophy guiding Italian and European border patrol. The Mediterranean is the deadliest border crossing in the world, claiming over 70% of migrant casualties worldwide in 2015.[46] Frontex, the EU agency tasked with border enforcement estimates that in 2014 one of every four migrants that attempt to enter Europe through the Mediterranean will die at sea.[47] The deadliness of crossing the Mediterranean is not simply due to environmental obstacles; it has coincided with a rapid increase in heightened border control and deterrence policies.[48] The fundamental flaw in leveraging death as a deterrence policy is an assumption that those seeking a better life in Europe have a choice.[49] As the poet Warsan Shire painfully attested:

i want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun

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[42] Fantz, Ashley, and Catherine E. Shoichet. "Syrian Toddler's Dad: 'Everything I Was Dreaming of Is Gone'." CNN. Cable News Network, September 4, 2015. https://www.cnn.com/2015/09/03/europe/migration-crisis-aylan-kurdi-turkey-canada/index.html.

[43] The New York Times. "3 Men Sentenced to 125 Years Each in Drowning of Syrian Refugee Boy." The New York Times. March 13, 2020. Accessed July 05, 2021.

[44] Musarò. Beyond the border spectacle: Migration across the Mediterranean Sea, 13

[45] Andersson. "Rescued and Caught: The Humanitarian-Security Nexus at Europe's Frontiers." 79

[46] Lo Presti, Laura. "Terraqueous Necropolitics: Unfolding the low-operational, Forensic, and Evocative Mapping of Mediterranean Sea Crossings in the Age of Lethal Borders." ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies18.6 (2019): 1348

[47] Jones, Reece. Violent borders: Refugees and the right to move. (Verso Books, 2016), 33

[48] Ibid, 32

[49] Ibid, 34

and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore…[50]

Focusing on the migrant's decision to migrate exonerates European policies while laying blame on the shoulders of migrants. The deadliness of crossing the Mediterranean thus becomes a way to justify both humanitarian and military impulses.

NECROPOLITICAL SYNTHESIS

What then is the relationship between the humanitarian and military appendages of Italian border control, the representational tactics that undergird them, and the mass grave hiding beneath the Mediterranean? Achile Membe's concept of necropolitics harmonizes these interrelated processes. Put simply, necropolitics is how a state leverages death to manage life.[51] When situated against the backdrop of the artificial deadliness of the Mediterranean, necropolitics unites the Italian government's myriad bordering practices, allowing us to understand the seemingly contradictory security strategies through a unified theory of death production.

Simplified migration maps showcasing uninterrupted lines from Sub-Saharan Africa into Europe hide migrants' actual trajectories. They obscure the treachery of the paths they must travel through.[52] From dehydration and extreme heat in desert landscapes to the torture and labor camps in Libya and sinking ships in the Mediterranean, migrants do not have the luxury of a smooth continuous voyage. Their hazardous situation is not accidental. Their trajectories are designed, monitored, and maintained to satisfy a necropolitical desire to let die in order to allow Europe to live. That is to say, necropolitics weaponizes the landscape to deter further migration attempts.[53] Italy's restrictive visa regime funnels migrants away from safe passage across land or air onto the shores of the Mediterranean.[54] With Libyan militants hunting them from all sides, the only way out is through the liquid cemetery. At which point, policies designed to delay search and rescue operations along with an outright ban on assisting migrants all but guarantee a deadly passage.[55] Italy has systematically criminalized most charity-run rescue boats to entrench their deterrence policy further, effectively appropriating humanitarian rescue missions into the jurisdiction of European and Italian Navies.[56]

Borders, within a necropolitical framework, extend beyond their physical origins.[57] They create landscapes of brutality that produce abstracted migrant corpses. Here we come full circle to the role that migrants' bodies play in constructing necropolitical narratives. Necropolitics functions not merely through amphibious topographies of death but also media representations.[58] It places

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[50] A. Zimet, "No One Leaves Home Unless Home Is the Mouth of a Shark," Common Dreams, September 4, 2015, commondreams.org/further/2015/09/04/no-one-leaveshome-unless-home-mouth-shark.

[51] Mbembé, J-A., and Libby Meintjes. "Necropolitics." Public culture 15.1 (2003): 11-40.

[52] Lo Presti. "Terraqueous Necropolitics" 1349

[53] Ibid, 1349

[54] Musarò. Beyond the border spectacle: Migration across the Mediterranean Sea, 12

[55] Lo Presti. "Terraqueous Necropolitics" 1349; Hockenos, Paul. "Europe Has Criminalized Humanitarianism." Foreign Policy, 1 Aug. 2018, foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/01/europe-has-criminalized-humanitarianism/.

[56] Hockenos. "Europe Has Criminalized Humanitarianism."

[57] Mose, Kirstine Nordentoft, and Vera Wriedt. "Mapping the Construction of EU Borderspaces as Necropolitical Zones of Exception." Birkbeck L. Rev. 3 (2015): 278.

[58] Smith, Angela. "Risky bodies offshore: spatialisation, securitisation and visual regimes of migration." (2014): 63

the misery and death of a single migrant as a signpost to both deter migration and, as discussed above, to legitimize humanitarian and military intervention. As seen through images of Alan Kurdi's corpse, death becomes a tool to exercise European values while simultaneously providing the kindling to strengthen their borders.

Conversely, necropolitical border regimes also obscure death. The innumerable bloated bodies gathering below Italy's summer waters are rendered invisible. The death and pain of the globe's unwanted populations yearning to be heard are lost beneath the tallies of abstracted dead migrants. In his article on Racial Europeanization, Theo Goldberg summarizes how "numeracy dissolves death, liquefying it in a sea of numbers."[59] In much the same way, the necropolitical production of death worlds evaporates death behind ever-growing numbers on a screen. Furthermore, the racialization of the migrant as a black body feeds into violently flawed narratives that situate blackness as inherently un-European, forever "outside." Hidden beneath the phrase Mare Nostrum is, therefore, a threat: these waters are ours, they are white, they signify the boundary between "you" and "us," and as you cross them, you surrender your right to life. This process of otherizing migrants renders their death all the less shocking, reducing Europe's collective guilt for swimming in the very waters where migrants took their last breaths.

The necropolitical bordescape continues to exert its morbid presence beyond the reach of border regimes. In its production of death, it highlights who can live. Thus the abject migrant body echoes its opposing figure, the spectator. Within the macabre spectacle that is the necropolitical borderscape, a relationship is delineated between whose humanity is worthy of existence and whose is erased; who can watch die, and who can die watching.[60] Militarized humanitarianism can thus be understood as a way for necropolitical policies to speak different languages to different audiences. Spectators hear the calming sounds of rescued children and grateful families, while migrants hear nothing but the incessant wailings of an aquatic necropolis, threatening them to stay away.

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[59] Theo Goldberg, David. "Racial europeanization." Ethnic and racial studies 29.2 (2006): 341

[60] Smith, Angela. "Risky bodies offshore: spatialisation, securitisation and visual regimes of migration." (2014): 63

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border control operations with reference to recent Italian interventions in the Mediterranean Sea and
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