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ZONES OF EXCEPTION BIOPOLITICAL TERRITORIES IN THE NEOLIBERAL ERA

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Contemporary discourses on economic, social, and cultural exclusion are deeply associated, especially in the media, with images of militarized, fiercely controlled borders and coastlines, as well as with recurrent commonplaces about the widening gap between rich and poor, between the “privileged” and “wretched.” But however much these boundaries and these social maps can be presented as fixed in order to satisfy the anxieties of the audience (anxieties, in turn, systematically reproduced and stimulated by the media), they are also extremely precarious and unstable. The very insistence on phrases such as “fortress Europe,” the proposals for a “double” or “triple fence” on the US-Mexico border, or the claims for more security and vigilance in upper- and middle-class neighborhoods in the cities—all are symptomatic of defensive reactions to an increasingly unstable economy of inclusion/exclusion and inside/outside. It is as if the effort to reinforce the borders between territories and between groups and populations were menaced not only by the quantitative increase of people trying to cross borders or of poverty and “social danger,” but also, and perhaps more decisively, by the closeness or immediacy of an “outside” that should be kept out, fenced, constantly pushed away—an “outside” thus that cannot be understood exclusively in spatial or territorial terms, but that points toward an economy where territories, politics, and life intertwine in specific ways. Our media are characterized by a rhetoric of emergency: images of packed migrants in the Centers of Temporary Permanence being prepared to be returned to their countries of origin, or directly—as in Ceuta and Melilla, the Spanish cities in North Africa—being physically rejected, and in some cases killed, by border patrols; of indigents increasingly visible and present (and thus persecuted) in cities throughout the globe. The concurrent instability and violence rupturing different territorial and social boundaries point toward a dynamic in which what takes place is not only a social conflict between rich and poor, or between privileged and unprivileged, but also a tension—and an ambivalence—at the level of the inscription of bodies, and of life itself, in the social and political order.

The “outside,” then, although represented and “materialized” in spatial terms, seems to point toward to another dimension that is not exclusively territorial, geopolitical, or cultural, but fundamentally biopolitical: the dimension or the level at which human life is inscribed, constituted, recognized, and defined within a given sociopolitical order. What is deployed through the rhetorics and the politics of borders and boundaries, what the media stages in the spectacle of the territorial security and perpetual danger, be it at a transnational or an urban scale, is a split or division at which “human life” is separated from the unrecognizable, the residual, life reduced to its “merely biological” status—“bare life,” to use Agamben’s expression, which is in many ways identified with the diverse forms of poverty and indigence so deeply intensified in the neoliberal era.

National or continental borders are, as we currently see both in Europe and the US, constantly redrawn, pushed further and further from the “inside,” to contain the so-called

“flows” or “waves” of migrants.¹ At the same time, urban landscapes throughout the planet are reshaped by rapidly changing maps of safety and risk, due to the “sudden” outbreaks of social violence and criminality and the reinforced claims for security and “safety zones.” All these dislocations of the maps of “security” and “containment” show to what extent the distinction between inside/outside has become more ambivalent, more fractured, and thus more defensive and paranoid. This ambivalence and this internal fracture, we want to suggest, has to do with the biopolitical dimension from which such dislocations originate. As the “outside” becomes more proximate and immediate, violence intensifies. At the same time, it forces a redrawing of the very boundaries of the political.

As Giorgio Agamben and Roberto Esposito have, in different manners, explained, the inscription of life in modern political regimes, and the very political recognition of life as “human life” takes place as an ambivalent split or division. Agamben discusses the politicization of life in terms of the “inclusive exclusion” of “bare life” or *zōē*, that is, the “mere life” that has no human or socially recognized status. This “merely biological” life is the threshold of human life, at the same time exterior and interior, included as that which needs to be constantly separated, expelled, so that the “form of life,” or *bios*, can be recognized as “human” and be protected by the legal and the social order. In this ambivalent and violent threshold between *bios* and *zōē*, writes Agamben, “the humanity of living man is decided” [HS 8].²

Roberto Esposito, in turn, describes the politicization of life as “immunization” or “negative protection of life”: as power takes hold of the biological foundation of the species, it finds within life itself that which can threaten it. Sovereignty thus takes place in the paradoxical movement of separating or dividing life from itself in order to protect it. If politics is “the possibility, or the instrument, to keep life alive [*la possibilità, o lo strumento, per trattenere in vita la vita*]” [Esposito 42], then immunity functions to segregate life from that which threatens its perpetuation and its potency. The paroxysmal paradox of this *dispositif* is that, in trying to preserve life, immunity may eliminate life itself. In order to protect “the People,” biopower can erase large sectors of the population; in order to increase health, it can destroy the body. In this vertiginous ambivalence, argues Esposito, we need to understand some of the most dramatic paradoxes of our era that, under the logic of security, can normalize and make acceptable any form of violence.

What these two approaches (which are far more complex and rich than we can elaborate here) have in common is the paradoxical dynamic of the political inscription of life: a paradox by which the “excluded” reinscribes itself systematically in the “included,” and the “outside”—the residual *zōē* or the threats to life—breaks in and disrupts the “inside.” It is in relation to this threshold that many *dislocations* of contemporary societies can be read: no border or zone, no stigmatized identity can contain or suffocate the ambivalence and dislocating force of this process by which human life is separated from itself in order to be inscribed in and shaped by the political order. The outside is made of these biopolitical divisions, or, as Agamben says, these “biopolitical caesuras” by which life is politically inscribed and constituted through a process of separation and distinction that is constantly haunted by its own ambivalence.

1. For instance, the US plans to increase control of the migration flows at the border between Mexico and Guatemala, the EU has decided to send patrols to the Atlantic Ocean to prevent the crossing of pateras (precarious boats) to the Canary Islands, and Italy set up patrols in the Adriatic and in Libyan waters. There are many such adjustments to borders that we might invoke here.

2. And he adds: “There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life as inclusive exclusion” [8].

In this essay our modest aims are to explore two examples of the dynamics whereby distinctions associated with the territorial—such as inclusion/exclusion, inside/outside, emigration/immigration (or even immigration/migration, upheld by some thinkers), abandoned culture/destination culture—enact a biopolitical logic. We bring together two extremely heterogeneous phenomena to sketch out in the broadest strokes how issues of territoriality and biopolitics intertwine. We look first at the disruptions of the “neoliberal city” by the Argentine movement of *trabajadores desocupados* (unemployed workers) or *piqueteros* (picketers), exploring how the very logic of the *piquete* sheds light on equations between territory and politics of life that are characteristic of neoliberalism (or that at least have become intensified in the neoliberal era). Secondly, we explore how *clandestines* (sometimes officially known as undocumented migrants) are portrayed by the media and by political rhetoric against the background of increased anxieties about borders and flux in Italy (and the European Union in general). Both the *piqueteros* and the *clandestines*—who, when caught, are brought to CPT (*centri di permanenza temporanea*)—represent developments of the 1990s that continue to have repercussions in the present. As such, they take part in the sociopolitical landscape shaped by the global expansion of neoliberalism. By this gesture we mean only to refer in the general sense to an economic and political context, but we are in no way positing neoliberalism as the only frame within which to think about these issues, nor are these issues exhaustive of the era itself. In many cases the *piqueteros* and *clandestines* can be said to be products of the neoliberal era, yet they also produce, on microlevels, transformations of the landscape.

Disruptions in the Neoliberal City

The *piquetero* movement originating in Argentina during the '90s, is an extraordinarily powerful and creative response to the mechanisms by which neoliberal modernization constitutes entire populations as “residual” and “nonviable” within the narrative of social transformation, showing at the same time to what extent the fracture brought on by neoliberalism takes place at the level of the biopolitical, that is, at the level of the inscription and (re)production of “human life,” from the biological to the social. Formed by ex-State employees left jobless after the privatizations during the '90s,³ the *piquetero* movement became a “movement of movements” articulating multiple demands from diverse social sectors marginalized by neoliberal rule, from the new unemployed to the “structurally” poor and the retired, and politicizing spheres of the social that had remained for a long time distinct from politics (such as poor women and children).

The neoliberal reforms in Argentina, as is well documented, dismantled the structure of one of the largest welfare states of Latin America. The aim was to replace the welfare state with the neoliberal “model of entrepreneurship” regarded as the key to social and economic dynamism.⁴ Instead of the disciplined worker subjected to the State company—which on many occasions supposed networks of political *clientelismo*, that is, political “exchange of favors” through State jobs and social aid—the new era promoted a work

3. Principally, the privatization of the national oil company (YPF, *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales*), a large and traditional state company which provided high standards of social protection to its employees.

4. In his seminar, Foucault characterizes Liberalism as an “art of government” in a tradition he had explored in the Christian pastoral. In this tradition, neoliberalism emerges as “a global exercise of power” [Naissance 137] whose goal is “to constitute a social fabric where the basic unities would have precisely the form of the enterprise” [154]; in other words, neoliberalism aims to demultiply the form-enterprise in the interior of the social body, making of the enterprise and the competence the basic *dispositif* fueling the economy but also organizing social life.

culture focused on business and the necessity of converting oneself from “employee” into “entrepreneur.” Those who failed to adapt to the new model—to the new equation between capital, work, and life designed by neoliberalism—became economically “non-viable,” “surplus population,” residues of History. In fact, this was the fate of many of the Argentine “future entrepreneurs” who failed to “reinvent” themselves due less to their inability to adapt to the new rules (or, as some with racist undertones suggest, because they lacked “work culture”) than to the dismantling of the productive structures of the country at the hands of financial speculation. The case of Argentina, where in a few years large sectors of the populations were pushed to the threshold of indigence by the neoliberal reforms, has become the monstrous mirror for other processes that take place throughout the entire planet; it is in this violently altered landscape that the *piqueteros* movement emerges around 1996, from the critical situation of individuals and populations thrown to the threshold of absolute poverty and lacking any form of aid from a State that eliminated most of its traditional structures of social protection.

Instead of rallying at traditional political sites such as public squares, in front of government buildings or at factories, *piqueteros* emerged as a political force demonstrating at national routes and city streets with picket lines (*piquetes*), turning themselves into obstacles to circulation and contesting the ways in which the public space is used. The first *piquetes* in the mid-'90s took place on national highways in the provinces of Neuquén and Salta.⁵ Later the methodology migrated to the cities and to the other provinces, where the protestors blocked key access to and from the cities, as well as central avenues and significant urban sites. *Piqueteros*' methodology of protest, as much as their very existence as a political force, is thus a contestation of the new political distributions of space, and of the very notion of “public space” in the context of increasing privatization and zoning of “safe areas,” as well as of violent containment of “dangerous” individuals and populations in controlled areas. The *piquetes* are thus significant not only because of the resistance they posed to the neoliberal rule in a context of wide complacency of the middle classes, and the creation of new forms to politicize and contest a brutal dismantling of social protection, but principally because they expose the extent to which neoliberalism constituted itself as a *politics of space*, that is, as an economy of territorial distribution, location, and separation of individuals and populations (in terms of included/excluded, employed/unemployed, legal/illegal, productive/nonproductive, healthy/unhealthy, and so forth) that at the same time deepens former social divisions and transforms them in new ways.

Perhaps the most evident icon of the neoliberal politics of space is the gated communities that proliferated in Argentina during the '90s, called “countries,” using the English word (evoking, at the same time, the rural scenario and a different nation, as a “country” within the country). The gated community maps the boundaries between the “inside”—wealth, safety, cleanliness, quality of life, and so forth—and an “outside” marked as dangerous, unclean, crowded, and miserable. This logic of internal borders, of tracing new boundaries or retracing old ones, shows to what extent neoliberalism imagines itself as a politics of space by which the “quality of life” (wealth, health, safety, beauty, cleanliness, and so forth) can be cordoned and secured in a given territory (and thus produced as an effect of the territorial division). And it is precisely this logic that *piqueteros* disrupt, pointing not only to the inequality and injustice of such a design, but principally to a *structural ambivalence*, a sort of *internal failure or fracture* that dislocates the neoliberal boundaries and divisions.

5. Neuquén and Salta, in the southwest and the northwest of Argentina respectively, had two of the largest plants of the privatized oil company, whose ex-workers were the protagonists of the first puebladas that later turned into models for the piquetero movement.

This ambivalence springs from the very mechanics of neoliberalism. At the same time that the neoliberal State cuts most of the social protection and abandons to their own fate those who are expelled by the new economic game, it develops mechanisms to *contain* these populations: urban surveillance, police control, housing projects where the “leftovers” produced by the neoliberal reforms can be separated and kept away from the rest of society and whose circulation and movements can be regulated and controlled by police and private security. Thus entire sections of the *conurbano* of Buenos Aires (the cities surrounding the capital) that had been working-class neighborhoods until a few decades ago, have become territorial “containers” for populations now considered “non-viable.”⁶

Neoliberalism has not only increased the number of poor; it has also transformed the ways in which poverty as such is dealt with and inscribed in the social landscape and the public imagination. It turns poverty—or the threshold of “absolute poverty,” the limit of indigence—into a terrain where the very status of the “human” is called into question, that is, the terrain where the normative and recognizable forms of life are split from “mere life,” from the life reduced to biological survival and abandoned by both the legal and the social order. The indigence that neoliberalism constantly reproduces is placed at this crossroads between the suspension of the legal order and the restriction, or simple elimination, of social protection: in this double suspension, which neoliberalism has rendered systematic, human lives are turned into *zōē*. The neoliberal politics of space thus reflects this more fundamental, biopolitical division between “human” and “less than human”: the “outside” of the neoliberal city is not merely the periphery or “dangerous zone.” It is the biopolitical threshold that traces the difference with the “less than human,” with those bodies marked and presented as degraded, unrecognizable life that have become more immediate than ever.

By interrupting streets and routes, by disrupting the public order of the city,⁷ *piqueteros* bring back the life that has been banned and that the neoliberal city wants to contain or make invisible. But this reinscription is not only a call to the State for jobs and social aid or to other social sectors to create new modes of solidarity, reversing their stigmatization in the media; it is also a dislocation of the strategies of separation and confinement of bare life. The interruption of a central avenue in the city or a national route in the provinces is a way to prevent not only the separation and invisibility of the poor, but also to contest *the territorialization of what is fundamentally biopolitical*, rendering paradoxical the territorial mappings of inclusion/exclusion, and exposing the mechanism by which neoliberalism divides life in productive/nonproductive, healthy/unhealthy, included/residual subjects, at the same time that it makes these distinctions vertiginously unstable and precarious.⁸

6. Similar conditions apply to new housing projects developed in other Argentine cities, where the eradication of shantytowns closer to downtown was followed by the creation of peripheral cities where the indigents or the poor are relocated. In this sense, neoliberalism has attempted to deepen, reinforce, and multiply social boundaries that are projected onto the urban landscape and reinforced through media rhetoric focused on the criminalization of the poor.

7. As many analysts have noted, once the factory stopped being a site of social and political inscription for the workers, the *barrio* became the new domain where the reproduction of life is ensured and where the political struggles are originated and debated. The *barrio* became thus a crucial dimension of social inclusion and survival. But at the same time, and for the same reasons, it can be turned into a containment zone, as it deepens the boundaries of invisibility and political nonexistence of the unemployed and destitute. See Svampa and Pereyra.

8. We think, in this sense, that Agamben’s notion of the (state of) “exception” is a crucial tool for understanding the dislocations neoliberalism brings to the social order: it captures the double articulation between protection and abandonment of life, which is inherent to the managerial decisions of the neoliberal “entrepreneurship”; and at the same time it verifies the disruption of the

The translation of the biopolitical divisions into the neoliberal politics of space is, as we see, condemned to failure. Spatial distributions can, temporarily, contain and, in a way, materialize or even realize the difference between the “assimilated” and the “residual,” but eventually the distinction—threshold and ambivalence—reinscribes itself inside, fracturing the *bios* and disrupting the order with residues that cannot be contained in any outside, fundamentally because *there is no longer an outside*: the biopolitical division takes place within life itself, at the level of the way life is inscribed and (re)produced, and not at the level of material spaces and political boundaries. The excluded, the outside is *zōē*: the merely biological life is what constitutes the external threshold of our societies. And it is this external threshold that is systematically reinscribed inside: the more neoliberalism pushes away its residues, the more they break into its order; the farther they are expelled, the stronger their disruption through the faultlines of the social map. As Agamben writes:

The political system no longer orders forms of life and juridical rules in a determinate space, but instead contains at its very center a dislocating localization that exceeds it and into which every form of life and every rule can be virtually taken. [HS 175]

Piqueteros, as well as other forms of biopolitical struggle, act within this “dislocating localization” of which Agamben speaks. They exist at that point where the strategies of containment cannot confine in space what is a *general* biopolitical condition, not because “we all are residual,” but because we are all constituted at the threshold in which our humanity is separated and split from “mere life.” In neoliberal societies this threshold becomes ever more unstable and paradoxical given the economy of protection and abandonment of life. The threshold of exclusion is thus increasingly mobile—and it is exactly this mobility that we think is captured by Agamben’s notion of exception: a mobility that should not be understood purely in spatial terms, but in terms of the “dislocating localization” that takes on different space-temporal configurations as it emerges from a biopolitical logic. The dislocation *piqueteros* inscribe in the neoliberal city exposes the threshold of destitution and precariousness to which everybody is virtually exposed under neoliberalism. As a society of risk the neoliberal society universalizes the possibility of social and economic destitution. By inscribing themselves in the public space as *desocupados*, as social residues, and by politicizing the very limit that separates them from the rest of society, *piqueteros* expose precariousness as a shared condition and turn it into a dimension of (bio)political struggles. It is very significant, in this sense, that the most interesting cultural production in Argentina and Latin America takes place around this ambivalent threshold of exclusion and precariousness, which becomes a zone of aesthetic and ethical experimentation and an instance where new commonalities can be explored. Literary texts by Rodolfo Fogwill, Diamela Eltit, Fernando Vallejo, João Gilberto Noll, or Mario Bellatin, for instance, explore, in the most diverse ways, the relationship between language and this life stripped of social place and legal recognition, even a legal name, as a dimension where new subjectivities, new logics of experience, and alternative economies of sociality and affect can be investigated. The threshold of “bare life,” its disruption in the neoliberal city, can be turned, then, into the instance of exploration of new political and cultural practices.

“merely biological” in the social order as the kernel of the most significant political struggles taking place in our societies. He speaks of the economic policies that produce “bare life” as an example of modern sovereignty: “And in a different yet analogous way, today’s democratico-liberal project of eliminating the poor classes through development not only reproduces within itself the people that is excluded but also transforms the entire population of the Third World into bare life” [HS 180].

Sociologists Maristella Svampa and Sebastián Pereyra write that *piqueteros* are the movement of those who “have nothing but their own body exposed in the streets” [30]. The expression resumes exactly our point here: it is the mere life of a body, not a person’s status as citizen, worker, or human fellow, *nothing but their own body*, whose *self-exposure* dislocates the strategies of containment and turns its residual life into *force*: force of interpellation as much as material, physical presence. If the *piqueteros* were marked as “surplus,” if they were defined and constituted as such by managerial decisions as much as by a media discourse that insistently depicted them as “leftovers,” “misfits,” and “scum,” they reinscribed that threshold and transformed it into political force and into new modes of subjectivity.

Piqueteros played a key role in the mobilizations that brought down the Argentine government in 2001 in the middle of a catastrophic economic default. Large sectors of Argentine society, many of which had attacked the movement in the ’90s, turned the *piqueteros* into the symbol of the resistance against neoliberalism. In the new era opened by the current government of Nestor Kirchner, which claims a center-left position and the responsibility for normalizing the social, economic and political life of Argentina, some sectors of the movement were coopted by the government in an alliance aimed to keep social peace and to open new possibilities for the excluded. In a global economic context that seems auspicious for Argentina’s upper and (some) middle classes, the more combative sectors of *piqueterismo* are, once again, stigmatized as misfits and criminals. The criminalization of protest on the basis of the disturbance of public order and obstruction of public streets has been one of the most salient reactions against *piqueteros* during the recent years [see Svampa]. And in the new conjuncture allegedly aimed at expanding “social inclusion,” the nonplace of the *piqueteros* in society is once again instantiated as exception: the “banned life” whose presence in the social order is a disruption as well as a challenge to the normative mechanisms and the systematic violence by which neoliberalism turns “life” into “human life,” and vice versa.

Clandestines: Spectacle of Bare Life

Neoliberalism, as is well known, has had a profound impact on the movements of populations and individuals in the current geopolitical arena. The neoliberal state obsessively insists on the free transit of commodities from one area of the world to another, while it simultaneously cuts social protections for and abandons those subjects who are “residual,” as we have seen. One of the most symptomatic and paradoxical institutions of the neoliberal era is the CPT—Temporary Centers of Permanence—that have cropped up at the margins and even in the urban centers of Europe.⁹ Their constitution has been accompanied by a journalistic rhetoric of indignation and demands for full accountability and access; and by a simultaneous flow of panic and trauma, by the (re)counting of numbers of bodies found washed up on the shores or drowned in territorial waters; bodies crammed into small spaces with lack of hygiene; sirens in the night; peppered with

9. *The CPT—and the equivalents in Spain and other European countries—in certain cases replace what used to be called the “Welcome centers” (centri di accoglienza) for clandestines, who may be “detained” for a period of no longer than twenty days. Many of the current “emergencies” perpetuated in Italy arrive directly from Libya, a stopping-off place for immigrants from Eritrea, Egypt, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Sudan, Ethiopia, and even Bangladesh, among other points of origin. The majority of people who pass through them are men, although women (including a number of pregnant women who give birth on European soil) and unaccompanied minors are not unheard of. In a fascinating move that we cannot explore in depth here, in 2004 the Italian government claimed to have begun constructing mirror versions of the CPT in Libya, the point of origin of many of the clandestini boats.*

anecdotes (some hopeful: a birth or reunification of parents and children; others horrific). The bodies that stream into Italy—and the ambivalent territoriality of water is crucial to our argument—are normally identified not as migrants or refugees but as *clandestini*. We choose to maintain this term in our discussion in order to preserve, if possible, the broader matrix in which the bodies circulate, and to avoid any tendency to redeem or humanize. For it is precisely such a redemptive, humanizing, rationalizing mode of treating the *clandestini* that characterizes the politics directed toward solving “the immigration problem,” to say nothing of discourses of rights or (Catholic) discourses of charity. To be sure, one would hope for the best possible conditions for subjects that are taken from ships and conveyed to the CPT. Access to decent meals, bathrooms, minimal health care, immigration lawyers, charitable organizations, and EU rights advocates are not things that we argue against. In the context of our argument the *cannonate* (military patrols of the territorial waters with the right to shoot) suggested by the right in Italy and ridiculed in the mainstream media do not appear as anomalous. Rather, both antiracist rights language and belligerent militarism are symptomatic of a politics that diverts our attention from the biopolitical core of the phenomenon; both forms of discourse tend to reproduce and naturalize the division between “human” and “less than human.”

Again, the neoliberal era has seen the advent of various proposals amply discussed in the media. One variant amounts to a contract between destination and culture and immigrant: you agree to learn our language and adapt to our culture—to take on our forms of *bios*, if you will, and in exchange we will sustain you as *zōē*. In France, then-Interior Minister Sarkozy contracted with migrants: you agree to return home—to remove your body from our territory—in exchange for enough money to sustain yourself (if you can avoid punishment, that is) for an indefinite period of time.¹⁰ And Sarkozy’s complementary proposals for selective immigration are yet another example of a rhetorical-symbolic structure that intersects with the strictly political in various manners, creating what some African leaders have called a “brain drain” to the North. In the Veneto region of Italy, the Zanussi Corporation sponsored a significant number of return immigrants from the Córdoba province of Argentina to work in its appliance factories. Italy has signed agreements to increase the number of immigrants as incentives for countries like Albania, Egypt, and Lebanon that are seen to cooperate by policing their own territories, and so on. Simultaneously, European nations have stepped up efforts to stop the flood of bodies washing up on the shores. In Italy Berlusconi claimed to have signed an agreement of cooperation with Qaddafi, but recent testimony before a magistrate reveals that no such formal (written) contract was ever made between the two leaders.¹¹ Some of Italy’s regions have refused to accept CPTs altogether, not out of NIMBYism so much as on the grounds that they may be unconstitutional. The left and right argue over access to the CPTs and over who has legislative responsibility for their development. Rhetoric, that is, forms a kind of protective barrier to keep the *clandestines* at just the right distance.

As interesting as such developments may be from the point of view of international law, they have the effect of obfuscating, precisely, the fundamental ambivalence between containment and failure to contain that we have been discussing. On the other hand, if we really attempt to think the peculiar difference that is constituted by the CPT we confront in all of its contradictory nature the kind of “dislocating localization” highlighted

10. Sarkozy’s proposal called for two thousand euros per adult and five hundred euros per dependent child. In many cases, this exceeded the cost of transport into Europe.

11. In April 2006, an inquiry into ministerial misconduct revealed that there are no formal accords beyond that signed by Minister Lamberto Dino (of the Center-Left) in 2000, which allowed for exchange of information between Italy and Libya. But in 2004, after Berlusconi claimed to have signed an agreement, more than 100 immigrants were killed during operations to transfer them back to their countries of origin.

by Agamben. So, for instance, consider a blazing siren cutting through the arid quiet of Lampedusa, as young *carabinieri* or finance guards, perhaps themselves Southerners hailing from “the Africa of Italy (or Europe),” convey a group of *clandestines* to a crowded facility in a bare stucco building near the tiny airport. The *clandestines* cannot be said to constitute a movement in the sense of the *piqueteros*, yet as they are counted, fed, and led onto Alitalia commercial planes (probably for the first and last time in their lives), they form a spectacle that transforms the landscape of Italy.

Like the *piqueteros*, the *clandestines* are not a static category of subjects, but they are constantly in movement. There are frequent innovations in their mobility and status: new modes of transport (lightweight, prefabricated boats, for instance, that do not require the services of trained sailors, but can be driven by a small group with minimal skills and at minimal cost). There are return immigrants (especially, one imagines, those who have received money to repatriate). Some are deposited in places far from their “homes” where they find themselves doubly displaced and may have to forge new trajectories. Migrants have found alternative spaces in which to set up temporary shelter, and in cases where their labor may be useful local authorities have looked the other way. There is, in other words, a growing production of knowledge about/of clandestine immigration to Italy on “both” sides of the border. Information about the best places to disembark are shared, and there are strange encounters. A boat landed, for instance, on a broad sandy beach (*la spiaggia dei conigli*) overlooked by a characteristic Lampedusan house (*dammuso*) once owned by pop singer Domenico Modugno. Tourists amply armed with cell phones photographed the arrival and called authorities, who promptly took away the *clandestines*. Fights break out between individuals housed in the CPT: there have been a number of escapes following melees. Some migrants have begun to find seasonal or permanent work on Lampedusa itself (known, ironically, as “the whitest island”)—some Romanians and a handful of Eritreans are working in the hotels or as waiters. What is named “bare life” interrupts “the good life” of wealthy tourists as it interrupts “our” lives—those who follow them at a spatial remove, in the media.

What all of these anecdotes suggest is that the CPT are places where different people are formed into a unity. The media present the *clandestines* as an indistinguishable mass of bodies with no collective knowledge, as victims that require assistance because they do not know where they are or what they are doing. It is important to counter this, then, with the understanding that the CPT represent reciprocal structures: they are not just containers for immigrants (not mere storehouses for *zōē*) but are actively shaped by the presence of subjects (the *bios*) that pass through them.

As with the *piqueteros*, the bodies that appear in the CPT are constituted as “bare life.” In fact the bodies are legible as “bare life” precisely because of the CPT. The *clandestine* body does not look like “our” bodies—that is, the body of the audience “presupposed” and produced by the media—not only because of racial marks (many are black-skinned, but not all). They are crowded together on boats, herded in vans, made to walk hand-in-hand in double columns, and kept in close quarters. Because they are not legible as individual bodies, they are not “us.” As spectacles of “bare life” that wants to become “life,” they also serve to interpellate “us” (in reality, of course, “we” represent a heterogeneous group—all those who have a home and are not in migratory motion) as a unified whole. They remind “us” both of what we have and also of the precariousness of our own condition. And in contrast, again, to the *piqueteros*, it is far easier for containment to work in such a way that “we are not them and we will never become them because they are so utterly different from us.” However, where the two phenomena may be said to overlap is in the following: if the *piqueteros* try to undo the invisibility to which they have been banned, they also try to block the *territorialization of what is fundamentally biopolitical*, of what goes beyond the social mappings of inclusion/exclusions and points toward

the inscription of life in the political order. The *clandestines* are supposed to be virtually invisible. We are not talking, however, about increased visibility (through literary production, for instance, or even through forms of legal representation). Instead, we suggest that as they move from the boat to the CPT, from the CPT to the plane, as they form alliances and trade knowledge, as they slip through the cracks, or even as they perish in the territorial waters, they cause microfissures in the monolithic fortress of Europe. Included as excluded, they occupy the ambivalent position of lives that are mediatized, and so serve as disciplinary spectacles, warning other migrants, ideally signaling the border between Europe and Africa as a border between *bios* and *zōē*, satisfying “our” sense of privilege. The border, however, is, literally, water.

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