7   Letting The Dead Teach

The Pedagogy of Arkadi Zaides' *Necropolis*

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This chapter discusses the educational power of Arkadi Zaides' choreographic work *Necropolis* (2017), a research-based collaborative performance that interweaves artistic practice, forensic science, and activism. It revolves around the following questions: What can the dead teach the living in and for a posthuman, "post-climate change" world, and how can we make ourselves available to them and respond ethically? *Necropolis* is the invisible city of the dead, whose ever-expanding cartography of marked and unmarked graves of hundreds of thousands of deceased refugees and undocumented asylum seekers emerges from beneath the European topography, generated through the use of corpse data and digital counter-mapping techniques. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's hauntology and Vinciane Despret's methodology for remembrance, the present reflection explores the dual aesthetic and pedagogical orientation of *Necropolis*: both a haunting to address the unspoken that appears unresolved, and a *re*-presentation of the dead, a making present enabling responsiveness. I discuss how this artistic approach creates the conditions for an encounter offering the opportunity to encourage an ethic of death that opens new ways of thinking about, perceiving, and feeling relationships with the "dead others-*othered.*" More specifically, Zaides invites us to consider two death practices as an alternative framework – one that enables a critical and creative engagement with the countless deaths emerging from the interwoven crises characteristic of the Anthropocene: the fabrication of a counter-cartography in which the public is invited to participate, and the re-enactment of a forensic ritual, a right denied to the unjustly dead. The artwork, aesthetically provoking and ethico-politically significant, also holds pedagogical potential through its thought-provoking and creative qualities that facilitate learning to coexist with the dead by creating impersonal forms of connections (i.e., not grounded in a shared personal past), and encouraging critical questionings of the bonds we, as audience, do or do not establish with those with whom we have no apparent ties, and who are rendered invisible by a necropolitics more powerful than any individual. This chapter concludes by highlighting the contribution of the arts to pedagogy, which in this context deepens the experience of a sense of ethical response and posthuman posthumous justice.

Introduction

What can the dead teach the living in and for a posthuman world and how? This is the key question

addressed in this chapter. To formulate an answer, I transpose the model of an ethico-political interaction

with the dead that choreographer Arkadi Zaides proposes in his research-based performance *Necropolis*

(2017) in order to draw out its pedagogical dimension. Charting a path from the movement to Jacques

Derrida's (1994) hauntology to Vinciane Despret's (2023) methodology for "making memory *with* the dead"

(p. 16), Zaides' work provides a compelling pedagogical avenue for an ethico-political engagement with the

unjustifiably dead, aimed at drawing the living toward what Delphi Carstens (2021) calls "a justice-to-come"—that is, "a more inclusive sense of justice that resists the gendered, racist and anthropocentric onto-theological legacies of capitalism" (p. 124). In seeking to move beyond problematic modes of representation of forced illegal migration (Banerjee *et al.*, 2023; Gallien, 2018), *Necropolis* offers an approach to a posthuman justice by providing practical and conceptual tools to enable the living to encounter the "other" through their death, as a premise for an ethical response that would allow us (the living / the public) to learn "to live differently," i.e. "more justly" and "with them," in Derrida's words (1994, p. xviii).

In this, the staging of an "aesthetic encounter" (Todd, 2023) between worlds strictly separated by Western onto-epistemic normative orders presupposes recognition of the fundamental principle that death does not dissolve the relational obligation of the living to these other beings (see, e.g., Despret, 2021; Lykke, 2022; Shildrick, 2020). Here, these others are not just any dead, but those who have found themselves outside the protection of the nation due to the political crises associated with migration (and exacerbated by current anthropocenic conditions);[1] they are the "excluded, expelled and invisible others of social production" who have become, as Carstens (2021) puts it, "the ghosts of those bodies not included in the category of 'human'" (p. 123). Zaides, and through his project, turns to them, inspiring new social imaginings of death, informing a post-capital, justice-oriented pedagogy that stirs strange hopes for the deceased victims of displacement and exclusion. While examples of artistic projects on migration injustice abound, with work such as Joe Robertson and Joe Murphy's *The Jungle* (2017), *Law of the Journey* (2017) by Weiwei, and *Lampedusa* by Anders Lustgarten (2015), to name but a few, Zaides' powerful and unique proposal reveals that migrant subjects denied rights in life are also denied rights *after* life, in their death. Rejected by hegemonic powers and jurisdictions, the process of othering to which migrants are subjected

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[1] Although the artwork focuses on migration death specifically, its content and pedagogical contribution remain relevant to the present publication. For the fundamental reason that transnational migration will only intensify and accelerate due to climatic disruption caused by global dependence on fossil fuels linked to capitalist models of extractive and exploitative production. Additionally, the rise of fascist politics and racialized nationalism continues to consolidate systemic and structural injustices of the migration regime, based on the operation of Eurocentric matrix of power linked to the project of modernity and its colonial history of violence, separation and domination (Mignolo, 2011). The colonial/modern nexus is considered to be at the heart of the Anthropocene (Davis and Todd, 2017), the epoch turned marker of all eco-social injustices, where, among other problems, vast migratory movements entangle humans and more-than-humans in mortal assemblages as climate change and ecological devastation fundamentally redraw the map of habitable places, endangering the planet's most vulnerable communities.

during their exile is prolonged in death, excluded from "grievability," in Judith Butler's sense (2004, pp. xiv–xv)—an exclusion that maintains and produces a hierarchy between the dead, i.e. those who deserve public recognition and those ignored, often anonymous and conveniently forgotten. This denial of death and justice echoes Despret's (2021) provocative assertion that abandoning the dead is tantamount to killing them a second time. In refusing this redoubling of death, *Necropolis* is an important response to racist violence, which the artist expresses through the creation of an ethico-political and artistic project of posthuman sensibility in its attempt to develop new relationships with the dead, "with those who have no voice or cannot be seen," and to imagine other potentialities of existence (jagodzinski, 2015, p. 126), through its ability to combine forensic science, art practice, and activism. Pedagogically, as we shall see, the aesthetic encounter forged by Zaides offers an occasion to connect subjectivities beyond the spatio-temporality of the performance itself, where the audience is not simply an observer, but brought into relation of response.

This essay begins by defining Despret's parameters and Derrida's conceptual ideas, which are then mobilized for my reading of *Necropolis*. I then provide a description of the work integrated within a discussion of the tools in use that include counter-mapping and the reenactment of a forensic ritual. Through this pedagogical analysis, divided into two parts, I seek to highlight the way in which art lets the dead speak and thereby teaches us something otherwise silenced and invisibilised. This educative force is facilitated by the modes of resistance and gestures of care staged by the artist, which consist not only in making us see what is invisible, but also in seeing *what is not there*, as a deeply felt form of haunting confronting us with what is, *in the present*, as ongoing violence. I will conclude with a brief summary on the pedagogical possibilities offered by this artwork for thinking differently about spatio-temporality, aesthetics, and political action in the service of a "liveable and more inclusive future" amidst the ruins of capitalism and environmental racism (Carstens, 2021, p. 121).

The Haunting Ghost and the Dead as Subject

Both Derrida and Despret are theorists who have productively placed the dead within our thinking. The difference between them is an important and productive one. In *Specters of Marx* (1994), Derrida develops

the concept of hauntology, a near-homonym to ontology, i.e. the "state of being," to give attention to the state of "non-being" (p. 12)—namely, that which is absent or made ostensibly liminal and yet lingers in the present as a "haunting" (p. 10). Haunting is a mode of critical, embodied, and dynamic relating to ghosts of past injustices that return unceasingly to haunt the present, in the shadow of forgotten pasts and tragic futures of repetition. If communist specters are Derrida's central subject, haunting is not limited to Marx's socio-political project, but structures all hegemonic power that have set in motion an unprecedented process of planetary instability, thus manufacturing new specters (Carstens, 2021). Derrida thus opens up fruitful conceptual avenues for demonstrating that injustices haunt the living, inscribing an unbearable past at the heart of the present, and enables the unveiling of omissions and deliberate erasures, so as to account for the ongoing violence of the "colonial/modern" project (Mignolo, 2011). In contrast, refusing the spectral grandeur of the Derridean approach, Despret (2021) considers the dead as real, as *social beings*, and not aspects of the collective unconscious, or one's psyche resulting from a repressed injustice or tragedy. She points to the (pedagogical) risk of the spectral as being a "mortifying trope that comes along to efface the bodies and voices of those who continue to live and pay the consequences of past injustices" (ibid., p. 54). If she rejects the register of spectrality, it is partly to avoid falling into allegorical modes of representation that only seem to "express the anxieties and taboos of the epoch" (ibid., p. 53) with the added harm of trapping singular beings exclusively in relation to retribution, revenge, and victimization. Instead, Despret takes an empirical approach, examining the active, ongoing relationships unfolding between the living and the dead, and how these dynamic exchanges transform the lives of those who engage with and respond to the dead.

To this first distinction, another comes to view. Whereas Derrida in a way states what is the case (i.e., the resonance of those no longer with us that we must learn to live with), Despret articulates a methodology for doing so. Taking seriously the assertion that those who are no longer with us *are* with us and have an impact on us—as Derrida does—she takes this idea a step further: It is the dead (singular or plural) who make(s) the living act. At the heart of her methodology lies the key question: What can the dead make the living do? Despret's (2021) method aims to retrace the stories of "those who insist" (p. 13) on making the living continue what has been left unfinished, thus enabling the dead to accomplish something on their

4

behalf. This prolonged existence can be materialized through the vector of an artwork that consists in "making memory-*with*" the dead (Despret, 2023; emphasis in original). She writes: "The dead are endowed with the power to continue to act in this world, not only by helping the living to 'do with this world' but also by transforming it through the vector of a work of art" (ibid., p. 13; my translation). Put simply, the dead are both summoned into the artwork; at the same time, it is they who produce the very fact that there is an artwork.

Zaides plays with both registers. By proposing a pedagogical and performative model oriented toward aesthetic, ethico-political modalities whose aim is to account for and listen to the victims of racial, murderous injustice, he stages a haunting to explore the unspoken that surfaces as unresolved and elaborates new, dynamic ways of "*re*-presenting" the dead (Despret, p. 18; my emphasis)—namely, to make the dead exist *as* active subjects in the here-and-now. Specifically, he challenges us to reflect on two situated death practices as an alternative framework, which, in my mind, provides a compelling both critical and creative approach to address the countless deaths arising from the entangled ecological and social crisis characteristic of the Anthropocene. These are: the fabrication of a counter-cartography in which the public is invited to participate as part of a public search to locate corpses and recover their identities, as well as the reenactment of a forensic ritual that performatively illustrates the right to a proper burial that makes possible the conditions of "grievability" (Butler, 2004). This is where I situate what *Necropolis* does best: the articulation of a model for how the living can ethically interact with those who have died unjustly. A model that generates diffracted modes of relations and becomings, which entails the necessity of moving from virulent individualism to a conception of relational subjectivity, no longer contained within an educational paradigm of resilience where the subject (the audience member, the learner) is (or should be) apolitical, competitive, and docile, but, instead, "vulnerable," in the sense that Michalinos Zembylas (2018) understands it: "as an openness to an encounter with the other," here with uncanny, marginalised others, "the point of departure for ethical transformation" (p. 103). *Letting the dead teach*, as the title of this essay suggests, evokes a relational shift toward the dead, who in turn compel Zaides to stage a challenging yet essential artistic encounter and

experience—one that prompts the audience to confront life as inherently relational, encompassing both its generative and destructive aspects, shared with both the living and the dead.

Necropolis (2017)

The fundamental tool providing context for this work originates in the 1993 "UNITED List of Refugee Deaths" regularly updated in the archives of the non-governmental organization *United for Intercultural Action*, which groups together over five hundred anti-racist organizations in forty-eight countries. Since its creation, the list has recorded 60,620 deaths due to "The Fatal Policies of Fortress Europe" and includes basic documentation on each of these cases (*United*, 2023). In perusing the document, Zaides and his collaborators noted that one could "hardly ignore the fact that only a very small number of the deceased were mentioned by name, leaving the vast majority of the reported dead without identifying details" (Zaides, 2022, para. 5). *Necropolis* is a collective investigative effort, leveraging the UNITED list as a central database and complemented by active research to locate all remaining burial sites of refugees and undocumented asylum seekers and to identify unreported deaths. This dataset overflows with neglected and harmed bodies, geographies, histories, and displacements, which the team meticulously assembles and converts into an ever-growing computer-generated cartography, laying the groundwork for an architecture of death: a multimedia, choreographic performance combining documentary images, counter-mapping, and stage installation. The artwork has been preceded by extensive preparation and research (Zaides, 2021; Stalpaert *et al*., 2021) and follows rigorous protocols and procedures, echoing the scientific/artistic/activist work of the *Forensic Architecture* collective in its quest to hold States accountable for the violence they commit (see, Institute of Contemporary Arts, nd).

Making Visible the Invisiblized with Counter-Mapping

The performance begins with a text projected onto the screen, announcing that *Necropolis* is not a show nor a usual performance to be applauded. Rather, it is the presentation of an ongoing process of archival work. The set consists of an austere, dimly lit room, with a large screen in the background and a high-tech

workstation in the foreground. Zaides and fellow researcher Emma Gioia, seated at their computers, turn their backs to the audience. A spatial map is projected onto the screen, displaying Google Earth 3D satellite images of the performance venue. The unhurried, virtual journey begins, unveiling the ever-expanding cartography emerging beneath the European topography and its necropolitical zones—the Mediterranean Sea, the English Channel, and the Balkan Route. It always begins from the geographical position of the host theatre, where the performance is taking place. A first red pin pops up, marking the nearest grave a few kilometres away from Ghent, Belgium, where the theatre is located. Its geographical coordinates appear on the map, followed by a brief description: name, place of birth, and cause of death. This is enough to make you shudder.

The use of Google Earth and Google Maps, originally developed for military purposes and territorial control, is repurposed to challenge their underlying history of racialization and dehumanization. This counter-mapping seeks to disrupt dominant power relations by providing sensory and affective understanding of the materiality of social exclusion that kills (socially and physically), and to reveal the destruction of marginalised bodies kept out of the mind and sight of everyday European citizenry. This morbid visual field is enhanced by a disembodied voice that magnifies the voices of the dead, as if drawn from oblivion, which addresses the audience directly. From the outset, the audience is caught within a reversed situation: They are the ones entering foreign territory to which they do not belong.

In order to gain the right to live in Necropolis, one has to die in an attempt to enter it.

Citizenship is granted posthumously to dismembered, decomposing corpses. (Voice-Over)

As the operators slowly zoom in on the exact location of the burial site, Google Earth fades to reveal documentary footage of the physical cemetery. An unknown visitor films their walk from the entrance to the grave.[2] This choreographed ritual is repeated according to a pre-established protocol, performed each time a

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[2] Here is an example of such short film projected during the performance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ANv__sOHtU

grave is found. The walk toward the grave serves to illustrate an "embodied practice" so that the researchers (and the public) can approach the body from an "eye-level perspective" and pay their respects at the same time (Staelpert, 2021, p. 16). Drawing on Donna Haraway's essay "Situated Knowledges," Staelpert *et al.* (2021) explain how the visit to the cemetery articulates an "embodied investigation," enabling the localization of knowledge, creating an interesting tension with Haraway's critique of the "gaze from above," enacted by the virtual tour through the mapping devices used to locate the graves. The entanglement of these two perspectives, they note, blurs the boundaries between binaries, allowing us to think jointly of death's immateriality and materiality, unsettled past and unsettling present, and moving beyond modern conceptions of the separation between life and death, absence, and presence. A liminal space is created, interweaving "geographies, mythologies, histories, movements, and anatomies of individuals who lost their lives on the way to Europe" (ibid., p. 16). By setting these tools in motion (cartography, text, film, sound recording), the aesthetic framework of *Necropolis* thus veers away from the reproduction of an ethereal, transcendental universe separated from material bodies and earthly ecologies. Rather, it acknowledges and addresses the relationship between sites of destitution and hegemonic power while materially, historically, and locally situating the dead in order to see reality from a politically informed understanding of the present.

This is precisely what Despret (2021) suggests a work of art can do: it "fabricates" through "fabulation" (pp. 6–7) fragments of a world that makes new realities possible—here, the new reality is The Necropolis, a thanatic, digitally-mediated territory in which the entangled voices of the dead are not reduced to silence but speak from within the abusive laws of racial/nationalist capitalism (Walia, 2021). Not only does Zaides' artwork give the dead visibility, but it also seems to offer them, at last, a refuge. For Despret (2021), to bring the dead into existence, the question of space and spatiality is absolutely key (more so than temporality, as is the case with Derrida)—she writes: "wherever the dead are active, places are designated—in a very concrete fashion" (p. 9). The construction of *Necropolis* as an aesthetic and technologically mediated landscape literally "makes space" for the dead to be "instaured" (ibid.), and, in doing so, defies and resists the logic of erasure and closure that holds them in a supposedly fixed and resolved past. What I find particularly relevant for pedagogical thought is that this act of *instauration* is both relational and ethical, as

"it engages the responsibility of the one doing the *instauring*, to welcoming a request" (ibid., p. 7). Such request is conveyed (*inter alia*) by the voice-over that addresses the audience directly:

> As you walk out into the street, remember. Every blade of grass pushing its way through the pavement is growing out of their rotten flesh. Living trees are their tombstone. The air that you breathe is their sigh. You inhale, and they are inside of you. You exhale, and the wind blowing through the branches speaks in their voice. Please listen. (Voice-Over)

The act of "instauration" (Despret, 2021) thus reveals how death engenders certain forms of relationality and response-ability, in the sense Haraway (2008) intends—namely, a process of making each other capable of response, which in this case entails, to "listen" and "remember." Zaides powerful proposition grants a certain level of subjectivity and a new form of existence to the "dead-other '*othered*'" (Zaides, 2022; his emphasis), which, as Despret points out, does not mean that they have the ability to act *in* the world, but rather that they are conceived as *enablers.* In this sense, through their *instaured* presence within the work, the dead *enable* the audience to think, feel, or perceive otherwise, in a way that grounds the possibility for the living to face up to their response-ability.

In substance, the contemplative itinerary through the redrawn cartography exposes a thousand marked and unmarked graves, implicitly revealing the everyday violence and injustice entangled with the present realities of audiences. For instance, the disclosure of nearby graves surrounding the theatre and unfolding deployment of geographical coordinates produces a disturbing, affective force that directs our attention to the fact that migrant deaths and brutal treatment are happening right next door, not merely in distal places, in the past, or confined to iconic events such as the Lampedusa shipwreck. Moving beyond representations, *Necropolis* productively collapses binaries and, to some extent, subjectivities (compelling one to ponder: Who is now living? Who is dead?) in way that reveals the constitutive ghostly entanglements running through the daily life of the European subject as citizen and rights holder: the many hi/stories of life and death that continue to make contemporary Europe. Hence, regardless of the cultural and political forces

that impose oblivion onto the dead, the audience bound to these historical and social effects of loss, exclusion, and death is spatially caught in a "fabricated" necroworld free of an instituted border politic (be it geographic, epistemic, or ontological). *Necropolis* is built in excess of "Fortress Europe" (*United*, 2023) and its states of surveillance protected behind the verticality of thick walls erected because of the very fear of their disintegration. In this sense, the dead of *Necropolis* are not messengers of hope or despair, nor vectors of guilt. They confront the audience with the expendability of their lives and the anonymity of their deaths, eliciting incisive reflections on the systemic erasure of the ethical and political significance of unofficially recognized dead bodies and their invisibilization within white-centred social life. This reality refers to Achille Mbembe's (2003; 2019) reconceptualization of sovereign power as the exercise of and control over mortality, termed "necropolitics." These death-optimizing mechanisms, produced by the persistent traces of colonialism, and today's neoliberal capitalism, enrol *non-citizen* (human and otherwise), into a process of death in which their bodies are "let to die" or killed with impunity out of public sight. To counter this death disavowal, *Necropolis*' nonhuman voices invite the audience, in non-prescriptive yet confrontational ways, to bear witness to the kind of world that is built when *certain* lives are deemed expendable and even sacrificed for the creation of the physical and ideological boundaries of the sovereign state.

By forging a liminal space where the "dead-other *othered*" speak, the artwork's unsettling address opens new spatio-temporalities, affects, and thought, compelling the audience into the role of witness, if only in the instant of a fragile encounter. At this juncture, an ethic of visibilization and remembrance emerges, as the modes of perception and creation have shifted and the dead are no longer produced by or for nationalist, racial-capitalist narratives of the ruling elite. In this way, as an amplified pedagogical and politically informed space, *Necropolis* has the effect of bringing its viewers outside of a state-based politics of memory and beyond the anonymization of statistics (Shildrick, 2020). This is how I see Zaides' project "making memory *with*" the dead, activating what Julie Gibson (2021) terms as "counter-memory," i.e. the "refusal to forget" (p. 29), which she places at the heart of a "death ethic" for tackling the injustices of the Anthropocene. The "with" is essential here, because it allows us to move beyond a pedagogical approach that merely extracts and controls (historical) knowledge, unambiguously transmits past stories, and

paradoxically hopes to rectify—or worse, rebury— the past. This, to me, means veering away from tendencies in education that instrumentalize the dead as objects of learning, and heading instead toward relational, fabulist, and justice-oriented pedagogies. This, in order to engage the memory of those who died unjustly and prematurely in order to resist forgetfulness and amplify ethico-political horizons of thought and perception in the present. This approach evokes what Sharon Todd (2015) sees as the possibility of an educational approach to injustice: one that "outlines commitment to confronting what is in the present" (p. 54). In this case, it brings radically different modes of existence together—not under an idealized notion of shared humanity, but as part of a staged aesthetic encounter (Todd, 2023) between lives that exist and perish in close proximity yet have never intersected.

Therefore, although individuals in the audience are not personally responsible for violence or harm, *Necropolis* grounds the relational conditions in which collective responsibility can be assumed. Crucially, this requires openness to the teachings of the dead, a process that involves making oneself vulnerable as a catalyst for fostering sites of "ethical responsiveness" and "political action" (Zembylas, 2019). Taking my cue from Gert Biesta (2014), "such teachings often provide insights about ourselves and our ways of doing and being—insights that we were not aware of or rather did not want to be aware of" (p. 96). Yet, when we allow the dead to teach us if we agree to "welcome the unwelcome," it reveals to us that death is not just an obstacle, but a vector for an affirmative ethic of transformation (Braidotti, 2019). This affirmative orientation is here based on highlighting what needs to be confronted *in the present*: namely, what is not accounted for, what can/should be resisted, what is possible, and what is left to be done—not as something to be achieved once and for all, but as an ongoing, active task of educational worth.

The Counter-Forensic Ritual and Search

How to move beyond representations of these denied deaths, not merely as a haunting but to bring solace to the dead, is a profound pedagogical question that Zaides grapples with. If the slow voyage evokes ghostly traces—the injustice that haunts—the audience encounters the dead, as we have seen so far, in a very material and situated way: in Despret's terminology, they are literally "given a place" through the artwork,

fabricated by means of data collection, identification, and an emphasis on places of death (burial sites and mass graves). In the second part of the piece, however, the counter-forensic re-enactment reveals the fault lines of death's un/representability; here a pedagogical tension unfolds, and to which I turn to now.

The slow-moving journey through the digital landscape is interrupted rather abruptly by a dramaturgical shift: The performers leave the stage and come back with a forensic table lit by bright red spotlights, on which lie hyper-realistic, gory-looking human body parts. With focused care, they both reorder the artificially made, freshly burned and calcined limbs, torso, and head, while large scanned images of each part are projected onto the screen. This process emblematizes performatively a forensic autopsy—"a procedure that a lot of the bodies of migrants who died at Europe's doorstep never have access to" (Zaides, 2022, para. 23). These dis/assembled, disproportioned human remains seem to metaphorically reflect the dislocation and dispossession of migrant lives and highlight the connections of a singular fate with large-scale networks of transnational migratory flow, part of the new ecology of human/nonhuman mass death in the Anthropocene. Piecing together parts that come from different bodies to form a single body is provocative in that it exposes an inconvenient truth: the degrading and collective reality of death in migration. This materialising of violent death could be read as something compelling, for it addresses unequivocally the invisibility of the exercise of power over the reality of harm and humiliation of bodies rendered invisible, placing the corpse not merely within a biological category, but within a product of necro-politically situated matter (Edwards, 2018). By reconstituting a body, the intent of the ethical gesture of performing the counter-forensic ritual is potentially convincing, since it tells a story about the response-ability of the living to address unresolved claims (the right to be identified, named, and grieved). This autopsy of the inautopsiable, this act of counter-forensis invites the audience to collectively experience the transmission of another form of mourning—namely, one that *re-activates*, to use Despret's wording, the beneficial power of ritual, conceived as a form of repair to what has not been done—and performatively restores grievability. Moreover, by staging a ritual, Zaides transposes what many of us would consider a private and personalized event into one that suddenly touches on collective life, transforming the dead of a

few into what Despret (2023) calls "our common dead" (p. 14, my translation). By this, she means that death becomes the vector of a common concern—a shift that the work of art as a public place makes possible.

As a member of the audience, however, I was slightly taken aback by this macabre representation and how two performers lorded over these body parts representing actual people's suffering and making that on display. This artistic intervention, I wondered, borders on the subjective imposition of a body of research, but also calls into question its pedagogical contribution, making the work vulnerable to criticism of being more performative than educationally substantive. In contrast to the overwhelming number of dead as they previously appeared on the map, singular in nature, the corpse generalises. Indeed, as it is meant to represent *everyone*, exemplifying all bodies as "the" dead body, it erases singularity, hides specificities, and instead embodies mass destruction—a sort of materialist haunting that may be the affect that the artistic project intends to convey. What is questionable, from a pedagogical standpoint at least, is the risky proposition of recomposing a body from disparate fake fragments, evoking a rather Frankensteinian imaginary. Given such an imaginary, one wonders what ethico-political orientation the piece might suggest, since it could refer to the prejudicial articulation of the perceived monstrosity that weighs upon the migrant subject who is denied of humanness—the same framework that responds to forms of justification for their rejection and killability. In my view, this entails a significant pedagogical risk, for it relays a sense of essentialization of the migrant subject, situated in a necropolitical continuum in which they are forever condemned, fabricating a social imaginary solely in relation to his or her tragic fate. In this regard, Despret (2021) aptly suggests that "a tragic death often reconstructs the life of the victim as if it could only lead to that tragedy: that's all that is remembered, as if everything that had gone before had been turned towards death—so we kill people twice" (p. 26). From this perspective, "making memory *with*" the unjustly dead means more than acknowledging their tragic end. While Despret's stance on the dead does not flatten singularity, Derrida's project lends itself to generalization—two visions that are not mutually exclusive but important to keep in mind when developing pedagogies focused on absent presences, since their "re-presentations" (Despret, 2023, p.18) are integral to how we apprehend the dead and cultivate a capacity to respond.

Beyond this critique, the re-enactment also metaphorically serves to convey the necessity of the formation of a community of counter-forensic researchers, originally founded by Zaides and his team. From the outset, *Necropolis* offers to all the opportunity to participate in the public and participatory forensic search of thousands of bodies still awaiting identification. By presenting an fixed protocol accessible via an Internet link, the artist offers a potent pathway to audience members (and beyond) to engage in a transformative, ritualised process "to share a space with them and to confront the fact of their death, not in order to undo what has happened (that cannot be done) but to transform their silence and disappearance into names, stories, and claims" (Keenan, quoted in Zaides, 2021, p. 342). In crossing the boundaries of the performance, this invitation further helps to obscure the real/imaginary divide of seemingly separate worlds (i.e., the living and the dead; the victim and the implicated; the spectator and the watched) through the concretization of a possible lived encounter with the "dead-other *othered*" in their actual place of death. The ethical task of recovering an identity, in a profound way, gives an existence meaning that until now has had no social visibility or significance. Yet, of course, this process points to "the final impossibility of full justice," as Shildrick (2020) notes, and serves to remind that "what is necessary is to move beyond the idea that historical wrongs can be brought to light and through a process of censure, shame and recompense be effectively reburied. That cannot be what living well with the dead entails" (p. 176). *Necropolis* follows this line of thought in holding the present open to the non-ending nature of its project that has "no clear beginning or end since this kind of killing doesn't stop and will probably escalate" (Zaides in Noeth, 2020, p. 52). By the fact that *Necropolis* can never be an "accomplished" work in the sense of being final and finished, it shows us that an ethical response to the dead is indeed "accomplishing" something but needs to be constantly renewed (Despret, 2023).

Going beyond the simple act of making visible, this invitation and its protocol call upon the responsiveness of those who are addressed to expand and give a future to *Necropolis* and complete the UNITED list by finding the exact location of a grave, retrieving information on a particular case, and paying due homage. For Despret (2023), while a protocol is "indeed a political gesture," it is "above all an artistic gesture … because it is *about* transforming something in the world … through the work and beyond" (p. 13,

my translation). The protocol in *Necropolis* is attached to this aim. In my view, the protocol also becomes a pedagogical tool built into the artwork, insofar as it is implicating those who "listen" and "remember," enabling a transformation: doing politics and collectivity differently, on behalf of those who can no longer do so, yet "starting from them" (ibid., p. 21, my translation). This pedagogical process widens solicitude for the dead to repair what could not be achieved (identification, burial, ritual) and brings into being, and makes present, a world generally reduced to silence. This gesture of collective intention is one possible response to the difficult task of ethico-political subjectivity formation as itself embedded and implicated in the very things one rejects and wishes to change. Rather than seeing implication as a disinvestment from a situation, it can be seen as genuinely generative, in the sense that it allows something different to emerge (Rotherberg, 2019). By realizing that subjects are always and necessarily implicated in the power structures that fuel the issue we are attempting to resolve, this allows for the possibility of endless change, but one that presupposes making oneself open and therefore vulnerable to atrocities rather than resilient. As already implied, I understand vulnerability in pedagogical terms not as a projection of oneself and one's affective reactions onto the "other," but rather as that which enables an encounter with the other and heralds potential ethical transformation. The invitation to research puts this pedagogical orientation into practice in a brilliant way.

Despite the tensions this performance piece is bound to have (such as issues of representation, and the aesthethization of death), the passage it opens is an encouragement *not* to forget and to honour the memory owed to the dead by ensuring "the right of the disappeared to be sought for and identified, and to uphold the rights of their families during such search processes" (Zaides, 2022, para. 2). In this sense, the artwork is not a strategy of consolation, or a way of reducing the dead to a didactic unit that would bolster individual resilience in the face of harm done to others and simply allow people to move on. Rather, it tries to shift the educational terrain toward an openness to the difficult and ongoing task of questioning what it means to live lives in the shadow of mass death and to seriously consider the creation of ethico-political means of honouring and remembering the dead, including (and this is an important gesture) preventive recognition of the destructive consequences of violence on those directly affected. As the voice-over pleads:

> They are the forgotten ones. They are the ones that you cannot forget. The ones whose dwelling is
>
> never built, whose arrival is forever postponed—they are the ones who are silently speaking to you
>
> now. They are speaking from a locus of absence, of erasure, of justice never delivered. They speak in
>
> memory.

Here it becomes manifest that the thoughtful arrangement of the piece to forge a *common* "counter-memory" is of pedagogical importance, not only because it brings the unspoken to the surface (in Derridean mode), but also because, in line with Despret's methodology, it enables us to understand what needs to be done in practice for every other singular, vulnerable individual and community, (human and others). Following Despret, this is precisely what the artwork allows for: The violence of death does not cancel out the possibility of the metamorphosis that follows. This non-prescriptive, unpredictable metamorphosis becomes the subject of creative work. Ultimately, what she conceptually helps us to see, and which Zaides materialises, is the potentiality of the artwork to form more just and inclusive modes of relationality and becoming that take the dead out of their spectral dimension and make them more common, literally, by giving them a "place" and making them "*in* common." That itself is a pedagogy, because it is literally teaching us to live with the dead as opposed to casting it as a giant, haunting unknown—which, in these times, often creates affective modes of powerlessness and disengagement.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to illustrate that any pedagogy oriented toward a "justice-to-come" (Carstens, 2021), aiming to contribute to a transformative paradigm for and in a posthuman world, cannot ignore death and must attend to those whose lives have been violently curtailed. In staging an encounter with the dead, *Necropolis*' pedagogy opens up non-normative possibilities for thinking, perceiving, and relating with death in a way that is more expansive and ethically in tune with the many harrowing realities of the entangled crises of the Anthropocene that are overwhelming but in which we nonetheless live. As a teaching deeply rooted in the artwork, the ethical necessity of re-subjectifying the dead is manifest (Despret, 2021) and parallels the idea that death solicits some form of response, with death itself becoming an exhortation to

remembrance. Thinking with this artwork thus makes apparent that learning *from* and *with* the dead does not merely account for the destruction of bodies, but also for their *construction* as part of fabricating an ethico-political and educational space constitutive of the present. Without erasing contested pasts and ongoing systemic structures of violence, *Necropolis* extends possibilities to bring the past into the present, giving it a "chance" to transform the future (Despret, 2023, p. 16).

Necropolis, being more than purely an artistic project, seeks to replace what European states and policies neglect, thereby enacting what is not being done but can—should— be. In so doing, it paradoxically reveals the pedagogical limits of art: ethical interactions between the living and the dead cannot simply be immortalised within the artwork itself, and left at that (hence the warning that it is not a standard performance). Nevertheless, it also opens up avenues for overcoming this limitation. The practices and tools included in the model created by Zaides (counter-forensics, counter-cartography, and other small death rites) are examples of this. This is why I think this type of ethico-political modeldeserve to be considered in pedagogical thinking concerned with posthuman, hauntological, and decolonial issues, because without them, the temptation to label the dead too easily as lost or forsaken causes will persist. Moreover, while these are not easy relations—particularly because they run counter to dominant subject-object dynamics that foreclose encounters with the radically other—they nonetheless disrupt established boundaries of time, space, subjectivity, and memory, inviting a posture of vulnerability and openness in the face of death. By seeking to actively mend broken connections through the process of creating "memory *with*," Zaides shows the creative and critical possibilities (and limitations) of constructing two worlds in dialogue, enabling "us," as living people who hold the unearned privilege of political citizenship, to recognize our entanglement with those subjected to otherness rather than positioning ourselves as detached observers of necropolitical conditions and lives. In my mind, this is pedagogically encouraging, for the piece invites us to consider the power of art to fabricate and fabulate in ways that galvanize new modes of relating to premature and unjust death affirmatively, rather than denial or contempt. In that, it opens space for new aesthetic imaginaries of death, that can be educational for envisioning different worlds that might establish the conditions for transformative action. *Necropolis* has opened a passage that draws attention to the significance of migrants'

lives in the face of extermination, not in disavowal of the negative, but precisely by working at its heart, as part of a process that holds potential for the creation of more just and liveable futures.

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