NECROPOLIS
Walking through a List of Deaths
Arkadi Zaides

Arkadi Zaides is a choreographer and performer who was born in the Soviet Union in 1979. He immigrated to Israel at an early age and in recent years has been based in France. As an artist, he deals with the ways in which political and social contexts affect bodily movements and gestures, and his work is a manifestation of how the term "choreography" has been expanded in recent years: it is no longer necessarily tied to subjectivist bodily expression, and accordingly its tools are no longer predetermined by or limited to dance, but rather may be used for analysis as well as activism. Zaides is specifically interested in the notion of the border, which he explores both literally (focusing on specific geographical border areas, and identifying a particular choreography that emerges in these spaces) and metaphorically (exposing different types of discourse and apparatus at work in relation to the figure of "the other"). In his stage and video works, Zaides focuses on documentary choreography. While documentary theater is usually text-based, reiterating verbatim the reality from which it is taken, Zaides, through the use of documentary footage, focuses on movement, highlighting the choreography that occurs in the social sphere, while observing, analyzing, and intervening in it as part of his artistic work. The "application of the verbatim to the sphere of movement demands substantial modifications to the theatrical model from which it stems," writes Frédéric Pouillaude.[1] As in documentary theater, Zaides's choreography also contains evidence, be it documents, existing archives, or documentary or archival footage. These materials are not points of departure or inspiration: they remain present in the final work, but they are also tampered and interfered with, altered, and modified in order to highlight their physical and choreographic qualities. The artistic research is conceptualized and realized through a collective process, including experts from various related domains.

It is usually extended over a long period of time and includes an analysis of the chosen document(s), interviews with those involved in their production and documentation, and the establishment of an archive for the project itself, as well as dramaturgy and aesthetics derived from these documents. The performance is then a culmination of all these aspects, placing the body and choreography (in its most expansive sense) as key attention points.

The following essay is the result of an intensive series of discussions conducted between Arkadi Zaides, dramaturge Igor Dobričić, and choreographer and researcher Emma Gioia during the working process for a stage project entitled *Necropolis*.[2]

OPENING THE ARCHIVES
Means for Locating Missing Persons

In Europe after World War II, there were massive efforts to search for missing soldiers and citizens, many of which remained unresolved for decades. Only in the early 1990s, after Gorbachev's perestroika, were the Russian archives opened, finally allowing access to information about millions of German prisoners of war who had been previously untraceable. Since 2004, the German Red Cross has digitized two million prisoner files belonging to missing German soldiers and civilians from Russian military archives to create a database with personal information and details about their fates.[3] Germany has not been the only country to conduct such efforts. Approximately thirteen thousand Finnish soldiers went missing on Soviet territory during World War II. Following an agreement between Finland and the Russian Federation, in 1992 there began a search funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and the Association for the Memorialization of Casualties of War. This search led to the location and repatriation of the remains of about a thousand soldiers. The forensic investigation included anthropological and mitochondrial DNA analyses of bone samples collected from soldiers and reference samples from putative maternal relatives.[4]

In the same vein, the Spanish Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory was founded in 2000 following a meeting of a small group of people at the site of one of the Spanish Civil War's bloodiest civilian massacres. More than two hundred thousand men and women were killed in extrajudicial executions as well as in prisons and concentration camps during and after the war. This organization's goal is to collect verbal and written testimonies and to excavate and identify bodies, which were often dumped in mass graves during Franco's dictatorship. Since its foundation, volunteers have dug up over 150 mass graves throughout Spain, establishing the identity of more than 1,400 exhumed bodies.[5]

More recently, following the end of the civil war in Yugoslavia (1991–2001), about forty thousand persons were reported missing as a result of the fighting. This led to the establishment of organizations such as the United Nations War Crimes Tribunal (2002), as well as legislation such as the Law on Missing Persons

(2004),[6] all in an effort to ensure the right of the missing to be sought for and identified, and to uphold the rights of the deceased's families during such search processes.[7] Mass-scale forensic investigations were conducted, including DNA sampling from relatives of missing persons, and matching to thousands of bodies retrieved from mass graves. Following this evidence, twenty-four years of investigations and prosecutions delivered 161 high-profile indictments. Ninety individuals have been sentenced for genocide, crimes against humanity, and additional crimes.

All the aforementioned serve to demonstrate the increasing progress made in recent decades regarding the proper handling of casualties of armed conflicts, forced disappearances, and other forms of violence in Europe. These processes are the result of years of labor on the part of human rights and humanitarian organizations, state institutions, activists, and families of the deceased. However, in recent years, this progress has been challenged by the flawed handling of deaths that take place on the shores of and inside the European Union. These are the deaths of "noncitizens" that occur outside of the protection of the nation as a result of the "refugee crisis" (or "crisis for refugees," as Gurminder K. Bhambra more aptly calls it to remove any doubt as to who is actually suffering).[8] These fleeing individuals find themselves devoid of rights, not only during their lives, but also after death. Forensic procedures essential to the future identification of these dead and missing persons are carried out improperly, and many bodies are buried without any documentation.

NATIONLESS AND NAMELESS, EVEN AFTER DEATH

In her discussion of "the right to have rights" in her 1951 book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt was concerned with the direct link between the formulation of human rights and the fact that these rights were to be preserved in the context of the nation-state. According to Arendt, as long as these two concepts are linked, there will always be people who are left stateless and thus lacking rights: "We became aware of the existence of a right to have rights […] and a right to belong to some kind of organized community, only when millions of people emerged who had lost and could not regain these rights because of the new global political

situation."[9] By contrast with forced disappearances in Yugoslavia or Spain, there are many diverse reasons for the current mass migration into Europe, ranging from war and conflict to poverty, climate change, and persecution based on one's political beliefs or sexual orientation. The fact that some of these missing persons are classified as "voluntary" refugees—in contrast with those forced to disappear by military or totalitarian regimes—makes it harder to address them as victims of crime and therefore as demanding that necessary measures be taken. The structural reasons leading to these migrations (civil war, authoritarian regimes, etc.) fall less easily within the existing international treaties that hold European states accountable for such losses. These ambiguous circumstances make it very convenient for European countries to avoid ethical responsibility. As a result, the motivation to establish the identities of these deceased migrants—the very same migrants that Europe tries so desperately to keep out of its territory—as well as any sense of responsibility is diminished. Even upon death, one cannot escape the paradox at the heart of the territorially based sovereign-state system that Arendt addressed. She argued that "only with a completely organized humanity could the loss of home and political status become identical with expulsion from humanity altogether."[10]

For over a quarter of a century, UNITED for Intercultural Action, a network of hundreds of anti-racist organizations from all around Europe, has been compiling a list of refugees and migrants who lost their lives on their way to Europe. As of June 2020, the list contains information on 40,555 deaths, spanning sixty-nine pages densely filled with a long table, each row registering one death or group of related deaths—sometimes hundreds. The table breaks each death down into six columns: the date of the reported death(s); the number of bodies found in that specific case (from one person to 1,050 persons in the deadliest case reported); the deceased's name, gender, and age; their origin; the cause of death (drowning, suicide, police violence, poor access to medical care, etc.); and the source(s) that reported the case. Although the list dates back to 1993, over 90 percent of the deaths listed occurred after 2013. And it contains only those whose deaths have been reported. The toll in all is certainly much higher.[11] When scrolling through the many pages of the list, one cannot ignore the fact

that row by row, under the "name" column, the entry "N.N." is repeated, standing for "*nomen nescio*," which is Latin for "name unknown.'' Consequently, the age, gender, and origins of these deceased are also absent from the list. A closer look reveals that only a very small percent of the dead are mentioned by name, leaving the vast majority without identifying details.

THE RIGHT TO BE ANALYZED AND INSTITUTIONALIZED IS NOT A GIVEN

In modern-day European countries, when a dead body is found, a standardized institutional procedure is launched. Pathologists and forensic experts are deployed to collect medical and biological data from bodies and from living relatives in order to enable identification. However, this procedure has not been followed for most of the victims of the current crisis for refugees at the gates of Europe. "The humanitarian community recognizes that proper handling of the dead is a key component in disaster response,"[12] nevertheless, the majority of migrants' bodies are insufficiently processed, rendering their future identification impossible. As more deaths occur and the list continues to grow, Europe's extreme neglect of this reality becomes clear, as it denies victims the most basic of human dignities. As the area of science able to establish the identity of a person, forensics also plays an important role in claiming a person's humanity. The right to legality, to inclusion and protection under the law, and one's ability to become a subject of forensic investigation and subsequently to be properly registered and buried, are linked to the ways in which bodies are represented, and also to how they are aestheticized, imagined, and given agency. This dynamic between visibility and invisibility, anonymity and identity, or affirmation and disempowerment has implications that are highly political.

When active withdrawal, neglect, and invisibilization become official procedure with regard to the community of dead migrants, any proper forensic registration of these bodies becomes a form of *counter-forensics*—as Thomas Keenan calls it—that proposes a mode of resistance to the status quo. "To dig," Keenan writes, "is to climb into the grave with the dead, 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."[13] The attempts at counter-forensics applied to those documented in UNITED's list are made partly by isolated initiatives on the part of scientists and humanitarian organizations. Among them is Dr. Pavlos Pavlidis from Democritus University Hospital in Alexandroupoli. After being retrieved from the nearby Evros River, which is one of the main inland routes between Turkey and Greece, bodies in varying states of decomposition arrive in plastic bags at Pavlidis's laboratory. Sometimes the corpses are stored, refrigerated for months until all other avenues of investigation are exhausted. If the deceased's name and origin are impossible to determine, the numbered bodies are buried after the collection of DNA. In his office, Pavlidis keeps hundreds of items found on the bodies. These are often the only leads in the investigation. Yet another important figure who has committed herself to the proper and dignified documentation of the community of dead migrants is Cristina Cattaneo. In her laboratory at the University of Milan, this forensic pathologist and anthropologist investigates some of the most lethal cases that have occurred in the Mediterranean. Along with a team of researchers and volunteers, Cattaneo set out to collect postmortem evidence from and complete genetic profiles for hundreds of dead migrants. One case investigated by Cattaneo took place on April 19, 2015, when an overcrowded boat carrying over a thousand migrants from Libya to Europe sank to the bottom of the sea as a result of a collision with a Portuguese ship that was trying to help. A year later, the Italian navy used a complicated pulley system to raise the wreck to the surface. The hundreds of decomposed bodies were so tightly compressed under the deck that it took Cattaneo and her team several years to separate them.

Yet the aforementioned examples are like needles in a haystack. The vast majority of dead bodies are not retrieved from the sea, and most that are, are buried witout proper documentation. It seems almost as if proper forensic investigation is for the fortunate, while those who are not so lucky are left unaccounted for, their corpses buried without any investigation of where they came from or who they were. This mass grave scenario resonates with other moments in history and other geopolitical realities. A profoundly

morbid reality related to injustice is thus overlooked, and a mass crime is not thoroughly investigated. Moreover, thousands of family members of these dead migrants are kept in a cruel limbo, as their missing relatives are officially neither dead nor alive. Until they are proven, with no grave site for relatives to attend and no death certificate to show to the authorities, thousands of stories of disappearance cannot achieve closure.

ARTISTS' RESPONSES
Formulating Civilian Responsibility toward the Nameless Dead

In *Return to the Postcolony: Specters of Colonialism in Contemporary Art* (2013), T. J. Demos follows the work of five contemporary artists who embark on a kind of "reverse migration" and "return to the postcolony to seek answers to urgent questions regarding the causes and histories behind the desires of multitudes to travel northwards."[14] Demos acknowledges a "fundamental spectro-ontology—or birthplace of ghosts—of the postcolony," claiming that "the colonial past still haunts us because it is a past that has not really past."[15] In order to "acknowledge the ghosts, to open up the repressed histories, to admit the colonial present, and to commence this politics of memory in partnership with the dead in struggle,"[16] it seems one need not travel far. By attempting to document all the people who lose their lives on their way to Europe, UNITED's list points to the deadly outcomes of the migration movement northward to which Demos refers. The mass of decomposed bodies and body parts at the bottom of the Mediterranean, inside Europe or on its shores, tells the story of a collective whose ghost hovers over the territory.

Several artists have already engaged with UNITED's list. Turkish artist Banu Cennetoğlu, for example, has been working with the list since 2007. Collaborating with curators, artists, and institutions, she has distributed updated versions of the list to newspapers as well as in public spaces such as billboards and transportation networks in cities including Berlin, Istanbul, Basel, and Athens. In mid-July 2018, as a result of a collaboration between Cennetoğlu and the Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art, the list was installed on a 280-meter blackboard on a central city street.

Two weeks after the opening of the biennial, the list was torn down by unknown vandals. The list was then reinstalled by the organizers but was repeatedly damaged until guards were hired to secure the site. The vandals were never found. In his 2019 lecture "Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion," Paul Bloom argues that we should abandon empathy and acknowledge that our emotions "can lead us astray" when we relate to the suffering of others.[17] For him, empathy is like "a spotlight, it zooms you in on people you are then more likely to help. But like a spotlight we can point it at the wrong places and like a spotlight it is insensitive to numbers."[18] Paul Slovic, an expert on the effect of numbers and statistics on empathy (or the lack thereof), similarly argues that the response to two people in danger is not twice the response to one, because with the mere addition of one person we already begin to lose empathy.[19] One can only speculate that even if those who vandalized Cennetoğlu's installation might have shown empathy in the presence of a single "other," perhaps the way the list was displayed, handled, and presented to the larger public played a role in the set of emotions it produced.

When we discovered it in June 2018, the list and the community of the dead it documents became our obsession. We asked ourselves: How do we as artists, as citizens, respond to the mass deaths taking place around us? How are we to position ourselves and take responsibility? Thinking about all these bodies as a mostly unidentified collective scattered throughout Europe and in the surrounding sea, we began to wonder: What kind of gesture, even symbolic, could acknowledge this vast community of people? How could we collect, archive, and use evidence? Inspired by strategies of counter-forensics, we wondered how the list could be further investigated as a body of data, and what practice could be articulated that would resonate with this process of dealing with the remains, with the evidence—in this case, relating directly to dead bodies.

Members of the research group Forensic Architecture apply different forensic practices and produce documents that counter official state narratives. Its members—architects, software developers, filmmakers, investigative journalists, artists, scientists, and lawyers—not only investigate various state and corporate acts of violence, human rights violations, and environmental destruction,

but are also constantly occupied with how to communicate their findings to a wider audience. They use public forums such as international courtrooms, parliamentary inquiries, United Nations (UN) assemblies, citizens' tribunals, truth commissions as well as seminars, publications, and exhibitions in art and cultural institutions to share their findings and to make their research processes transparent to viewers.[20] Through various multidisciplinary mediums such as participatory workshops, exhibitions, and installations, Forensic Architecture invites audiences to become acquainted with the process of counter-forensic research. This sharing of various investigation strategies as well as their findings democratizes the field of forensics.

Influenced by this, we returned to that mass grave that is the list of deaths, with the question of how we could conduct an investigation that would give a body to this highly abstracted database while simultaneously constructing a performance event that would not only provide the spectator with information but also question their own implication in this catastrophe. What mediums could be used to confront ourselves with the excluded, the undocumented, those who are not alive in all extreme senses of the word—physically and bureaucratically? How could we make the theatrical stage a place where the invisible (or those rendered invisible) become visible? By confronting the dichotomy between the dead and the living through a documentary approach to the contemporary geopolitical reality of migration, we began to imagine an immersive theatrical and choreographic experience that would allow spectators to feel literally implicated, and hopefully to recover their own sense of accountability. We thought of an experience that would allow spectators to "get closer" to individual deaths as well as to reveal a more complex structure, a place, a territory: an architecture of death we began to call *Necropolis*.

IMAGINING NECROPOLIS
Rationale and Methodology

The title of the project ostensibly refers to an ancient term for a burial ground: *necropolis*, the city of the dead. On a symbolic level, it strives to reactivate the archetype of an invisible, suppressed "community of the dead" that challenges and obligates us as a

community of the living. Furthermore, it appropriates the literal effectiveness of the mythological imagination that Necropolis conjures up as a topos—a concrete metaphysical space. As a city, it is not a specific location but a meta-structure—the cemetery of cemeteries—that casts its shadow over the contemporary history and geography of Europe. Like the corpses buried in it, the city of the dead obviously has no body other than the body of data, an ever-expanding archive of what is meticulously extracted from the rotting remains of its dead. This growing database defines the layout of Necropolis, stretching in all directions across the space-time continuum, interconnecting the mythologies, histories, geographies, and anatomies of thousands of people. Without giving it much attention, Europe's citizens are slowly surrounded by all those who were not admitted, who are physical corpses of people, who are ghosts that are not taken into account. These dead also evoke the concept of "the other," that part by which one is haunted and which one excludes. During the artistic process, we strived to get closer to individual deaths mentioned on the list and to find more information regarding their whereabouts. We were asked to lead a series of short workshops in Stockholm, each with a different group of participants. We spent several hours with each group collectively investigating one specific case of death that had occurred in Stockholm and its surroundings, which we extracted from the list. Using personal computers and cell phones, participants collected information from the Internet related to these individual deaths. Several cases were thus somehow reopened, revealing in more detail the stories and narratives of the deceased. The physical proximity of the cases to the actual location of the workshop brought the list and the phenomenon it documents closer to the participants, who were unaware that such deaths took place in their city. The search through fragmented and unorganized scraps of information (newspaper articles, official police reports, human rights organization reports) unearthed the structural violence leading to those deaths.

But a question continued to haunt us, the same question we believe also weighs on the minds of thousands of relatives of the deceased on UNITED's list: Where is the body? Where are the actual remains of all these bodies? In what physical space may these individuals, this entire community of dead migrants, be

grieved, mourned, and paid their last respects? In her lecture "Bodies That Still Matter," Judith Butler questions why some populations are regarded as more "grievable" than others. "To grieve another is to stand in relation to that other. It is a social relation, one between people, but," she points out, "it is also one that is mediated by cultural and political modes of representation." For her, "depending on the public sphere in which the loss takes place it can be registered with great lamentation, great sorrow or, it can be dismissed or covered over as if it were no loss." Butler argues that when populations are eradicated in war or other forms of violence, when these deaths could have been avoided, "the public acknowledgment of loss is crucial to the act of protest."[21] In addition to this acknowledgment, the space of personal and collective grieving requires a geographical location—a physical space where one can visit and perform rituals in accordance with cultural norms.

At a later residency, at Pact Zollverein Artists' Center in Essen, Germany, we further focused our search to resonate with the aforementioned necessity for a physical location of mourning. After an extensive online investigation regarding several deaths that occurred in the Ruhr area near the location of our residency, we focused on one article that specifically pointed out a cemetery where a twenty-three-year-old refugee from Sudan named Emanuel Thomas Tout was buried. Tout died in 1993 from injuries as a result of attempted suicide at a detention center in the small town of Herne. The article mentioned a memorial ceremony that had taken place in a cemetery ten years after his death. Upon discovering the name of the cemetery in which Tout was buried, we decided to visit his grave. The journey to the cemetery took several hours. When we arrived, we asked local personnel, who helped us to find the exact location of the grave by looking at hand-drawn plans pulled from their archives. One of the workers could remember Tout's funeral about twenty-five years previously, as well as the small memorial service of which we had read, which took place ten years later. "This was a famous case, the first of its kind in the region," he noted. "It stirred a lot of public debate, something that would not happen today," he added.

BUILDING NECROPOLIS
The Procedure

Visiting a cemetery always evokes a particular set of emotions. Visiting the grave of someone one is investigating but does not know personally is even more peculiar. Walking toward the actual place where the body was buried is a very disturbing experience. A person who until that moment has been just a name on a list, sometimes only a data entry or a statistic in a long list of over thirty-six thousand, now gradually gains a physical location. Arriving at the grave of Emanuel Thomas Tout, we each made a gesture of respect. We also decided to register the coordinates of the grave's location by measuring its longitude and latitude on our cell phones. We then made a short video documenting the walk from the cemetery gate to the grave, holding the smartphone in front of us as we walked. Since then, we have been continuously documenting the locations of graves in the vicinity of any place where we arrive, gradually mapping our Necropolis.

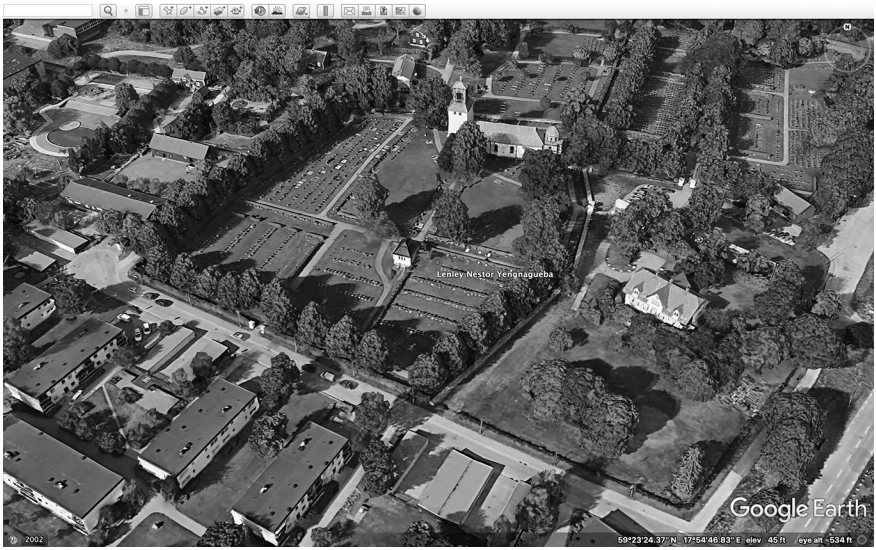
Deeper inside Europe, most of the graves of migrants and asylum seekers who have lost their lives are identified, as in the case of Emanuel Thomas Tout's grave. These individuals have already been registered and processed through border systems that determine their names and identities. But the vast majority of the casualties mentioned on UNITED's list died at sea, and the graves of the retrieved ones are usually unidentified. Most are located in the three main gateways into Europe: southern Spain, Italy, and Greece. Our first encounter with this aspect of the catastrophe was made possible due to a connection with Giorgia Mirto, a researcher and activist based in Sicily. Since 2011, Mirto has devoted herself to the issue of missing migrants and deaths at the borders, and she currently holds an updated archive of "border death" casualties buried in Italy. Most of the cemeteries in Sicily have graves of dead migrants, often hundreds at the same location. On our first visit to Sicily, we visited seven cemeteries in a week, and identified almost six hundred graves out of what Mirto estimates are approximately three thousand on the island.

After collecting data in different cemeteries, we return to our workspace and enter the coordinates taken at the graves into Google Earth. From the image of planet Earth floating in space, we

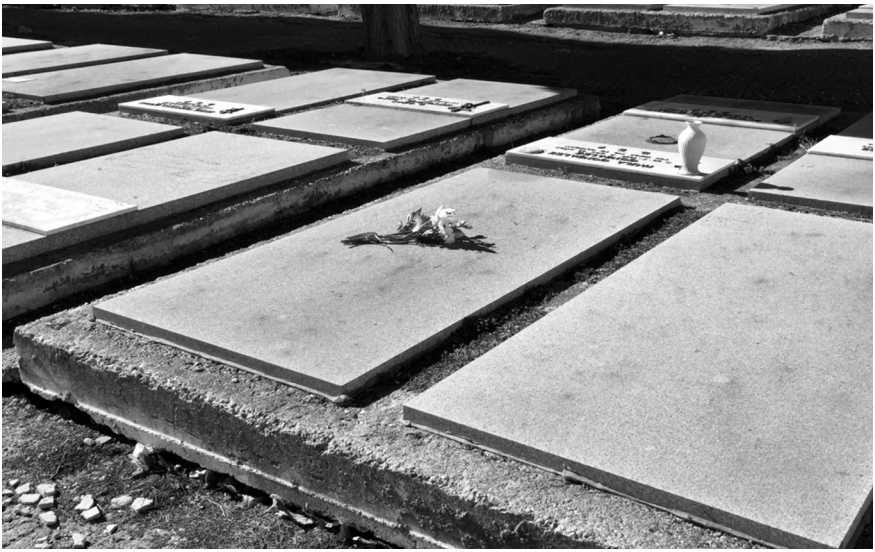
can gradually zoom into this virtual representation of geography until we recognize the cemeteries we have visited, and then into the paths we have walked while searching for the graves, to discover the particular architecture of the graveyard from above. We can zoom further into the exact points where the graves are located, and hover above them. We also have the video documentation of our walks toward the graves, allowing us to get even closer to them from an eye-level perspective.

Google Earth and Google Maps are technologies primarily associated with the acceleration of mobility. Using them allows us to orient ourselves and find our way almost anywhere on the globe. Many migrants and asylum seekers also use these platforms to orient themselves during their journeys. But platforms such as Google Earth and Google Maps are also the direct successors of maps, aerial photography, and other surveillance devices developed to support military operations and territorial control. They originated at the time of European colonial projects—the same projects whose contemporary victims are documented on UNITED's list. These platforms carry within them the history of racialization and dehumanization. Our intention when inserting the coordinates of the migrants' and asylum seekers' graves is to hijack those platforms with information about the ultimate immobility—the deaths of those whose patterns of movement are both marked and produced as a disruption, a danger, delinquency.

Donna Haraway calls "for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives; the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity."[22] Our visit to the cemetery and our walk toward the grave, as well as being a respectful gesture to each grave identified, which was just part of a big and abstracted database mere moments before, strives to articulate an embodied investigation as Haraway proposes. Moreover, the entanglement and confrontation of these two perspectives—the "gaze from above" with its colonial roots, and the embodied knowledge proposed by Haraway—are crucial, and pave the way toward a liminal space that interrelates the geographies, mythologies, histories, movements, and anatomies of individuals who lost their lives on the way to Europe.



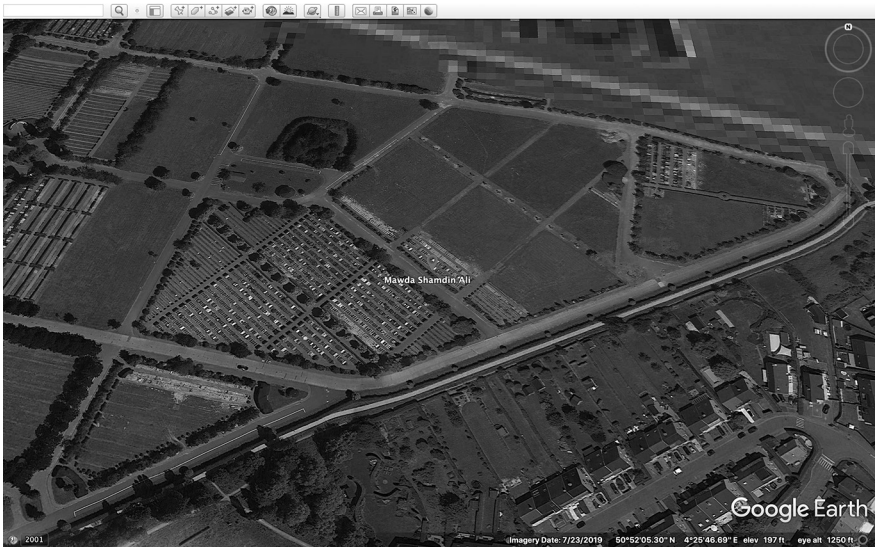
Found dead **06/08/1996**
Name, gender, age **Lenley Nestor Yengnagueba (M, 25)**
Region of origin **Togo**
Cause of death **Jumped out of a window of his home in Stockholm (SE) after immigration police rang the doorbell**
Source **Svenska Dagbladet/Dagens Nyheter/FARR**
Grave location search **Sunniva Vikor Egenes, Benjamin Pohlig, Arkadi Zaides**
Grave localization **Gabriel Smeets, Arkadi Zaides**



Found dead **14/06/1995**
Name, gender, age **Suppiah Selvarajah (M, 31)**
Region of origin **Sri Lanka**
Cause of death **Suffocated during a fire at his shanty in Madrid (ES)**
Source **Egin/DiarioVasco**
Grave location search **Simge Gücük, Julia Asperska**
Grave localization **Arkadi Zaides**

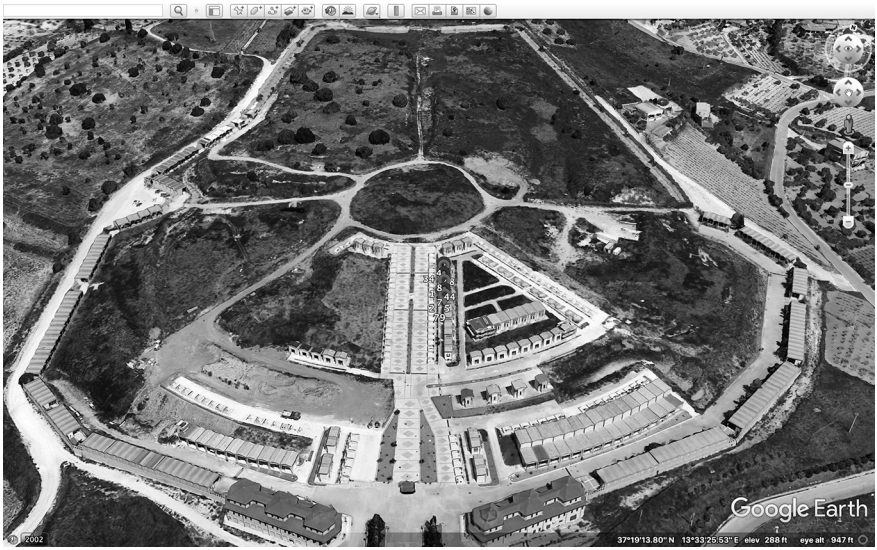
Found dead **29/01/2018**
Name, gender, age **Mohamed Ahmed (M, 39/40)**
Region of origin **Ethiopia**
Cause of death **Killed by a passing vehicle while escaping from the police next to Jabbeke (BE)**
Source **KW**
Grave location search **Myriam Van Imschoot**
Grave localization **Myriam Van Imschoot, Joris Van Imschoot, Doreen Kutzke, Arkadi Zaides**

Found dead **19/12/2015**
Name, gender, age **Roger Kalemba (M, 50)**
Region of origin **Congo**
Cause of death **Commited suicide in a detention center Vottem (BE) the evening before his second deportation attempt**
Source **JRS - B News**
Grave location search **Emma Gioia**
Grave localization **Emma Gioia, Igor Dobričić, Arkadi Zaides**



Found dead **17/05/2018**
Name, gender, age **Mawda Shamdin Ali (F, 2)**
Region of origin **Iraq**
Cause of death **Kurd, killed by runaway police bullet near Mons (BE) in wild pursuit of a migrant vehicle headed for the UK**
Source **AD/RTBF/RTLbe/DH/Sputnik/IOMZambia/EastAfrican**
Grave location search **Arkadi Zaides**
Grave localization **Myriam Van Imschoot, Sarah Leo, Arkadi Zaides**

Found dead **07/05/2018**
Name, gender, age **Blessing Matthew Obie (F, 21)**
Region of origin **Nigeria**
Cause of death **Drowned in Durance river near Briançon (Alps, French/ Italian border) while fleeing the police**
Source **Vivre/CDS/Francetvinfo/20MFR/IOM/DICI/Liberation**
Grave location search **Yari Stilo**
Grave localization **Yari Stilo**



Found dead **03/10/2013**
Name, gender, age **N.N.**
Region of origin **Africa**
Cause of death **365 drowned after a boat from Libya caught fire and sank off the coast of Lampedusa (IT); 155 rescued**
Source **VK/NRC/ANP/AiN/Presse/NYTimes/BBC/Guardian**
Grave location search **Giorgia Mirto**
Grave localization **Arkadi Zaides**

Found dead **Two hundred and twenty-two bodies located at Cimitero Monumentale di Catania, Sicily, Italy. Up to six bodies are buried in each tomb.**
Name, gender, age **N.N.**
Region of origin **Various**
Cause of death **Various**
Grave location search **Giorgia Mirto**
Grave localization **Arkadi Zaides**

NECROPOLIS AS PERFORMANCE
Activating the Virtual Space

The performance to come uses a rather monastic setup. A huge projection screen covers the back of the stage. A long table is placed at the front of the stage, as if to cut the space in two, creating a border between the audience and the large void of the stage, which is left empty. The table is full of technical equipment including computers as well as sound, light, and video-operating devices. An audio introduction accompanied by text on the screen invites the audience to enter the city of the dead: Necropolis. Two operators enter the stage and silently sit at the table, their backs to the audience. Using Google Earth projected onto the large screen, they first zoom into the location of the theater. The operators then zoom out to reveal a mark similar to those that indicate one's destination when one uses Google Maps. The operators zoom in toward the mark, which turns out to be a grave at a cemetery. They zoom out to reveal many more red marks, which form a complex architecture. Some of the marks are accompanied by names; others only have numbers. The operators continue to zoom in and out, to and from cemeteries and tombs, creating a virtual visual journey, until they reach the shores of Europe where the land meets the Mediterranean, and they hover over hundreds of graves marked on the shores.

The two performers are seated, facing the same direction as the audience—all gaze at the screens. The action of scrolling through data and geographical terrain via a digital platform, and the repetitive action of zooming in and out, is reminiscent of actions that often take place in surveillance control rooms, thus resonating with surveillance practices to which the deceased may have been subjected while still alive. It emphasizes and replicates the divide between those who research and study and those who are studied, perhaps against their will. "How things are ordered racially by way of surveillance," writes Simone Browne, "most often upholds negating strategies that first accompanied European colonial expansion and transatlantic slavery that sought to structure social relations and institutions in ways that privilege whiteness."[23] Browne uses the term "dark surveillance" in order to "situate the tactics employed to render one's self out of sight" and as an

"imaginative place from which to mobilize a critique of racializing surveillance."[24] The ethical implications of the performed/watched procedure is thus brought forward, highlighting the unbridgeable gap between the collective that have the privilege to watch from a distance, to analyze and investigate, and the collective that lost their lives on the way toward the very territory from within which they are watched.

Whenever the application zooms in on a grave, additional information appears on the screen, revealing the exact coordinates of that location, the name (if known) of the person buried there, and the date and cause of death. At times there is a video capturing the walk from the cemetery gate toward that grave. The camera is held in front of the body at chest level, making it impossible to determine who holds it. It is a simple, silent walk toward a grave, toward many different graves at many different locations, always at the same pace, performed as if attempting to connect all these individual cases through one single repetitive gesture. While UNITED's list links all the cases by embedding them in one abstract document, these walks attempt to connect them through a gesture—a choreographic one. A series of such walks conveys an embodied practice to the spectators, and also alludes to the thousands of graves that are yet to be located—to the thousands of walks that are still to be performed.

THE FUTURE OF NECROPOLIS
The Invitation

We are mapping the invisible city of the dead—Necropolis—that consists of the marked and unmarked graves of the refugees who did not manage to reach their final destinations in Europe alive. To this end we use a list compiled by the UNITED network, containing tens of thousands of migrant deaths. We scan the list to identify the places where deaths occurred in proximity to our current location. Using the names and any other information available and relevant to the particular local case, we begin online research in an attempt to identify the exact burial location. If online research is not enough, we contact local institutions (city hall archives, detention centers, nongovernmental organizations, local cemeteries, etc.) that might help us to obtain information about a specific case. If our research yields results, we visit the location where the body is buried. Once at the exact location of the grave in question, we identify its geographical coordinates by using Google Maps on our smartphones. If several graves are found at the same location, we measure the coordinates of each grave. We then take a photo of the grave and register all its information. Using the video camera on a smartphone, we also document the walk from the gate of the cemetery to the grave. Finally, when back at our workspace, we enter the graves' coordinates into Google Earth and mark the grave on the map, linking all traces of our research to it (articles, URLs, photos, videos, and maps). This process has resulted in the gradual construction of Necropolis. The cornerstones of this city are the graves of thousands of migrants still to be found and located.

We strive to locate the graves of all those on the list. As we are a very small team, we invite friends and colleagues to carry out the same procedure and expand the architecture of the city of the dead. This is our invitation to you.

How can you join our search?

- Contact us, mentioning your interest in partaking in the search and specifying the location(s) where you would like to conduct it.

- You receive information related to the death cases that occurred in the area, taken from the UNITED list.

- You launch online research in an effort to identify the exact location(s) where one or several deceased are buried. If online research is not sufficient, you contact local institutions (city halls, archives, NGOs, detention centers, local cemeteries) that might provide information about the specific case(s).

- If your research yields results, you visit the location(s) where the body(ies) has (have) been disposed of.

- Once at the exact location of the grave, you identify its geographical coordinates with your smartphone. If several graves are found, you register the coordinates of each grave.

- Holding your smartphone horizontally at chest level, you film your way while walking from the entrance of the cemetery to the identified grave(s).

- You send us all the gathered information. After adding it to our database a new location in the city of the dead will be established.

The Necropolis team
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1. Frédéric Pouillaude, "Dance as Documentary: Conflictual Images in the Choreographic Mirror (On *Archive* by Arkadi Zaides)," *Dance Research Journal* 48 (2016): 19.

2. Thanks to Solveig Gade, Daniela Agostinho, Sandra Noeth, Alix de Morant, and Frédéric Pouillaude for their feedback and guidance during the writing process of this essay.

3. "Files from Moscow," Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, https://www.drk-suchdienst.de/en/services/second-world-war/projects/files-former-ussr.

4. "Repatriation and Identification of Finnish World War II Soldiers," NCBI The National Center for Biotechnology Information, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2080560/.

5. "What Is the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARMH)," La Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH), https://memoriahistorica.org.es/who-are-we/.

6. The Law on Missing Persons created in 2004 "establishes the principles for improving the tracing process, the definition of a missing person, the method of managing the central records, realization of social and other rights of family members of missing persons, and other issues related to tracing missing persons from/in Bosnia and Herzegovina" or the Missing Persons Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina (MPI) that has an obligation to find missing persons without discrimination and establish the Central Record of the Missing Persons (CEN), thereby restoring dignity to victims and responding to their families, and contributing to the satisfaction of justice and the implementation of the reconciliation process.

7. The ICRC (The International Committee of the Red Cross) Policy Paper with recommendations to policy-makers in cases of missing migrants acknowledges the specific needs of families of missing migrants including the need to "lift any specific administrative and legal barriers that families of missing migrants may face in the exercise of their rights, or in accessing existing services and benefits, including clarifying the legal status of a "missing person" in the national legal framework, or ensuring that the existing legal framework on missing persons covers the situation of families of missing migrants."

8. Gurminder K. Bhambra, "The Current Crisis of Europe: Refugees, Colonialism, and the Limits of Cosmopolitanism," *European Law Journal* 23, no. 5 (2017): 399.

9. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004), 376.

10. Ibid., 377.

11. According to an estimate by a spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross in an interview with our team, the number of victims would probably double if one were to take into account everyone whose body has not been found and who is therefore not included on the current list.

12. *Management of Dead Bodies after Disasters: A Field Manual for First Responders* (Washington, DC: PAHO, 2016), 3.

13. Thomas Keenan, "Counter-Forensics and Photography," *Grey Room*, no. 55 (2014): 73.

14. T. J. Demos, *Return to the Postcolony: Spectres of Colonialism in Contemporary Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 10.

15. Ibid., 12.

16. Ibid., 10.

17. Paul Bloom, "Against Empathy: The Case of Rational Compassion" (lecture, December 19, 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhCGmDJQRpc&t=18s.

18. Ibid.

19. Thanks to Mushon Zer-Aviv for referring me to Bloom's and Slovic's work.

20. "About Agency," Forensic Architecture, https://forensic-architecture.org/about/agency.

21. Judith Butler, "Bodies That Still Matter" (lecture, University of Tokyo, December 8, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiG0w1nfOsU&feature=emb_title.

22. Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 589.

23. Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 17.

24. Ibid., 21.