Crossing Borders

Migration, Tourism, and Liminality in Crialese's *Terraferma*

Lisa Dolasinski

This essay examines the representation of Linosa in Emanuele Crialese's *Terraferma* (2011) as a dialectic site that engages with competing ideas about sovereignty, stability, and mobility. The theoretical framework incorporates studies on tourism, migration, borders, and neocolonial practices of globalization, in order to show that Linosa's configuration as an island creates multiple conditions of liminality for the diverse actors that assemble here. Drawing on multiple conceptions of liminality, including my own analysis of the framing of film protagonists in «spaces on the margins», I assert that *Terraferma* ultimately succeeds in drawing unexpected parallels between the citizens of Linosa and clandestine migrants.

Keywords: Crialese, Liminality, Migration Studies, Tourism Studies, Border Performativity

Emanuele Crialese's 2011 feature film, *Terraferma*[1], opens with an underwater sequence. Simulating the ebb and flow of waves, the camera bobs up and down, immersing the spectator in the dynamic liquid presence of the Mediterranean Sea[2]. Brass intonations accompany the maritime acoustics, creating an oneiric viewing experience that is characteristic of Crialese's cinema. This peaceful, dreamlike montage is disrupted by an Italian family's fishing vessel crashing

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[1] *Terraferma* is the third film in Crialese's «Trilogy of the Sea» (*Respiro*, 2002; *Nuovomondo*, 2006; *Terraferma*, 2011). The main narrative of this film chronicles the lives of a family of fishermen who reside on Linosa.

[2] For more on the sea as a place of «contamination» and «entanglement» in Crialese's films, see Gasperini 2011; and for an ecocritical reading see Past 2013.

Lisa Dolasinski, Department of French and Italian, Global & International Studies Building, 355 N. Jordan Ave, Bloomington, IN 47405-1105, ldolasin@indiana.edu

against the wreckage of a boat. The camera slowly pans over scattered pieces of driftwood covered in Arabic script: the splintered remains of a watercraft that capsized while attempting to transport «illegal»[3] migrants from Libya to Linosa, a small Italian island off the coast of Sicily.

In this opening scene the citizen literally collides with the «Other», an event that repeats the trope of the conflictive citizen/migrant encounter and exposes the permeability of Linosa's aquatic borders. Following the abrupt collision, the camera performs a jump cut to the family's now damaged fishing vessel being lifted ashore. In contrast to the kinetic blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea, the rocky formations of Linosa stand fixed. The juxtaposition of these elements, one dynamic, the other static, plays on the multiple interpretations of the film's title (in the Italian language, *terraferma* can be translated as «stable ground» as well as «mainland»), and thus on the recursive theme of doubling that punctuates the film. For the migrants who wash ashore, Linosa is a *terraferma* where they can anchor their footing. Conversely, for the local fishermen who struggle to obtain financial security on the southern island – a theme previously explored in *La terra trema* (L. Visconti, 1948) – Linosa's status is anything but stable, and the real *terraferma* is the more prosperous mainland Italy.

The image of Linosa put forth by Crialese is also steeped in political content, including ongoing debates surrounding immigration legislation and public security in Italy (Leone 2011, 28; Past 2013, 56; O'Healy 2016, 155). In the director's notes, Crialese writes that for years he listened to the stories of survivors who managed to cross the Mediterranean Sea and arrive on Italian shores. African migrant Timnit T.'s story of survival particularly resonated with him, inspiring the director to advocate for displaced migrants. Timnit, along with four companions, is one of few survivors from Eritrea whose boat sunk just short of Lampedusa in 2009. During her 21 days at sea, Timnit endured several acts of violence: she witnessed the rape of friends, drank urine to survive, and observed the deaths of 72 passengers (Cugini 2011). Inspired by Timnit's story, Crialese convinced her to portray the role of Sara, the migrant protagonist in *Terraferma* (Pignatta 2011).

In addition to being loosely based on Timnit's story, *Terraferma* is a «social drama» (Weissberg 2011, 20). The film recounts current controversies in the province of Agrigento, namely citizens' debates regarding how to rejuvenate the local economy. Locals are divided about whether to support the struggling fishing trade or to invest in the lucrative tourism industry. Those who wish to promote Linosa as a feminized «paradise»[4], to be enjoyed by affluent tourists, face the additional challenge of managing the steady influx of migrants who survive the

[3] My use of inverted commas around the term «illegal» draws on Luibhéid's (2013) argument that the classification «illegal» does not reveal an actual measure of criminality, and moreover that no person is really «illegal».

[4] Here I accentuate the term «paradise» so as to invoke Gonzalez's work on the conversion of manifest destinies into «eroticized commodities for the tourism industry» (2013, 24).

dangerous crossing from North Africa to the island. Although Linosa is too small to appear on a world map (as one of the characters in the film observes), migration, tourism, and sovereignty clash and interact in complex ways on the island.

This article situates itself within studies on tourism, migration, borders, and neocolonial practices of global capitalism. Building on Crialese's description of *Terraferma* as «un dramma simbolico, sul conflitto tra turismo e integrazione»[5] (Blonna 2011), I study the film's paradoxical representation of Linosa, i.e. as an idealized tourist destination and a hellish landing place for migrants abandoned in the Mediterranean Sea. Highlighting the links between colonialism and global capitalism, I understand Linosa's tourism industry (in the image projected by Crialese) as a neocolonial site of subordination and exploitation[6]. Next, drawing on Nancy Wonders' concept of «border performativity» – a performative act during which the border crosser (migrant) and the border protector (State representative) adopt prescriptive roles – this paper illustrates that the repeated dissemination of racialized, gendered, and class-based rhetoric can be mobilized into an effective tool for sovereignty. Island locals repeatedly perform State policies that simultaneously open up Linosa's borders to tourists and close them to migrants. At the same time, following Franco Cassano's (1996 [2015])[7] and Piero Zanini's (1997) work on the plural meanings and dialectical functions of border spaces – what they term «il confine» – I argue that the conclusion of Crialese's film undoes the rigid binary that distinguishes migrants from other kinds of border crossers. Umberto Curi's (2010) keen insights on the ambiguous semantic heritage of «xenos», Rob Shields' (1991) definition of liminality, and my own analysis of the framing of cinematic protagonists in «spaces on the margins» support my proposal that *Terraferma* ultimately succeeds in drawing parallels between citizens of Linosa and clandestine migrants, and exposing that everyone's status is tenuous – even (supposedly) sovereign subjects.

[5] «A symbolic drama on the conflict between tourism and integration». All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

[6] I use the term «colonial» in a broad sense. Drawing on Lombardi-Diop and Romeo's concept of the «postcolonial paradigm» (2012), in this article, «colonial» is not invariably linked to the study of the relationship between former colonizers and the colonized. Rather, following O'Healy and Wright, I consider how the «neoliberal/neocolonial regime» of global capitalism and tourism (O'Healy 2012, 205) «disrupt[s] the geography and cultural landscape of the colonized native» (Wright 2015, 100). Lastly, borrowing from recent work in Tourism Studies (d'Hauteserre 2004; Pratt 2007; Pritchard and Morgan 2007; Gonzalez 2013), I maintain that the tourism industry reproduces hierarchies of domination/subordination that are rooted in colonial ideology.

[7] The 2015 Nook edition follows the 2005 print edition.

Terraferma? Linosa as a Liminal Space

The concept of liminality refers to an affective state of being at the threshold, or «in between». According to Rob Shields (1991), places come to be categorized as liminal or marginal for geographical and conceptual reasons. Like Linosa – within and beyond the diegesis of the film – they may be situated in «hard-to-reach geographical locations», host «unlawful social activities», be positioned on the «periphery of cultural systems of space», and/or they may «carry an image and stigma of their marginality» (Shields 1991, 3). First, Linosa is part of Agrigento, an archipelago spread across liquid borders. This configuration creates a striking dialectic, since, as geophilosopher Massimo Cacciari surmises, an archipelago is simultaneously an assemblage of definitively bound landmasses divided by the sea, and a unified *logos* united by that same sea (1997, 16). Secondly, the constant visibility of the Mediterranean Sea in coastal lands like Linosa creates the necessary conditions for «l'apertura […] ai discorsi in contrasto, ai *dissoì logoi*»[8] (Cassano 1996 [2015], 42). Linosa is part of the Pelagie islands, making it geographically nearer to Africa – the island is situated less than 600 miles from Tunis, the capital of Tunisia – than mainland Italy («Pelagie»). Lastly, regarding southern Italy's cultural heritage, Linosa shares a greater proximity to African and Arabic culture(s) than European culture(s) (Pugliese 2010, 107; Pitrè 1889 [1978]; Pitrè 1892 [1992]); artifacts linked to the Romans, Greeks, and Saracens have been discovered here (Calcara 1851, 29-30). Thus it would be more accurate to claim that Linosa bears a Pan-Euro-Mediterranean heritage, rather than a purely Italian one[9].

In *Terraferma*, Linosa's condition of liminality, in addition to the island's Mediterranean setting, determines and mirrors the occupants' repeated fluxes between conflict and cohabitation[10]. Here, at «the confine» between land and sea, what Cassano (1996 [2015], 21) defines as a line of *division* and *contact*, frequent comings and goings of migrants and tourists require the island of Linosa and its permanent residents to adapt and evolve continually. Members of the Pucillo family in particular represent competing perspectives concerning the management of

[8] «An openness to contrastive discourses, to contrasting arguments».

[9] There is a large and growing body of scholarship on filmic representations of Italy as a site of hybrid culture. See: Andall and Duncan 2010 (select chapters); Bullaro 2010 (select chapters); Cincinelli 2012; Parati 2011 (select chapters); Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012 (select chapters); Schrader and Winkler 2013 (select chapters). Likewise, the first issue of the *California Italian Studies Journal* includes a section on «Italian Cinema About and Across the Mediterranean».

[10] In an interview, Crialese explains the significance of setting the film on Linosa: «[L]a sua fisionomia si avvicinava ai personaggi. È il cuore del titolo: assomiglia a una terra ferma se osservata dal mare ma al suo interno ribolle, è solo addormentata» [Linosa's physiognomy resembled that of the characters. It's the heart of the title: it resembles a stable ground if observed from the sea but inside it boils over; it's only sleeping] (Gasperini 2011, 20-21).

clandestine migrants and the solution to Linosa's struggling maritime economy. They also provide an exemplary illustration of the contrastive dynamic occupying «il confine» engenders: following Zanini (1997), for some «contact» creates separation; for others forced separation places different people, cultures, and identities «in contact» (xiii-xiv). Ernesto Pucillo (Mimmo Cuticchio) plays the role of the aging fisherman, a recursive figure in contemporary Italian cinema of migration[11]. Rather than accept his declining health, and the bleak state of the fishing industry, Ernesto passes his days in the privileged space of the Mediterranean Sea, where he reels in the catch of the day and rescues shipwrecked migrants. In contrast, Ernesto's son and Filippo's uncle, Nino Pucillo (Beppe Fiorello), transitions from catching fish to capturing tourists. From renting umbrellas to chartering boat tours around the island, this capitalist-oriented entrepreneur actively participates in branding Linosa as an idyllic retreat. However, as I will show, Nino's relationship with Linosa's burgeoning tourism industry is complicated; he is both imbricated in, and exploited by, the capitalist system that he sustains. Then, like so many teen and preteen male protagonists (Italian and migrant) featured in recent Italian films of migration[12], the character of the twenty-year old Filippo Pucillo (Filippo Pucillo) is a borderline character who comes-of-age onscreen. At the onset, Filippo is suspended between the conservative ideals of his grandfather and those of his «modern» uncle. However, Filippo's experiences «at the margins» eventually compel him to re-evaluate his opinion of migrants, and undergo what Cassano would describe as an «apertura all'altro»[13] (1996 [2015], 23). Finally, Filippo's recently widowed mother, Giulietta (Donatella Finocchiaro), begrudges life on Linosa. Similar to the female protagonists in *Isole* (S. Chiantini, 2011), *Respiro* (E. Crialese, 2002), and *Stromboli* (R. Rossellini, 1950), for Giulietta, inhabiting a southern Italian island creates conditions of isolation and imprisonment. She feels trapped in a precarious (financial) state – one that is hardly superior to that of the migrants who wash ashore.

Selling «Paradise»: Neocolonial Practices of Tourism

Borrowing from Philip Temple (2002), Anne-Marie d'Hauteserre writes, «Tourism […] has its roots in colonialism, both as a theoretical construct and as a per-

[11] The fishermen (Italian and migrant) that populate these films partake in cross-cultural (positive and negative) exchanges while at sea. See: *Tornando a casa* (V. Marra, 2001); *Io, l'altro* (M. Melliti, 2006); *Io sono Lì* (A. Segre, 2011).

[12] Some key examples include: Gino (*Lamerica*, G. Amelio, 1994); Gino (*Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti*, M. T. Giordana, 2003); Saimir (*Saimir*, F. Munzi, 2004); Ioan (*Cover Boy: L'ultima rivoluzione*, C. Amoroso, 2006); Nadir (*Alì ha gli occhi azzurri*, C. Giovannesi, 2012).

[13] «An opening to the 'other'».

ceptual mechanism» (2004, 237). Throughout *Terraferma*, connections between colonialism's legacy of subordination and Linosa's capitalist-oriented tourism industry become apparent in the episodes that feature Nino Pucillo. More than any character, Nino participates in, and is exploited by, neocolonial practices of tourism. The camera repeatedly films him clearing the shoreline of garbage (to eradicate the traces of migrant presence), serving tourists drinks, and offering boat tours around Linosa. Nino's actions support Claudia Bell and John Lyall's (2002) findings that those employed in the tourism industry are concerned with enhancing tourist experiences, and they allude to Agrigento's actual dependence on tourism revenue[14]. Nino's expedient service also connects neoliberal processes of production to (neo)colonial practices of superficially «consuming» native culture. Put simply, tourists only experience the filtered, pristine image of Linosa that Nino constructs for them. Drawing further links between tourism, capitalism, and neocolonialism, during an excursion around Linosa, Nino's commodification of the island as an unspoiled «paradise» escalates into an eroticized bodily performance – an image imbued with colonial conventions of (corporeal) exploitation. As his boat traces the geography of Linosa, Nino tantalizes his tourist passengers with a hypersexualized dance (see fig. 1). His body, a kind of synecdoche of the eroticized island, gyrates to up-tempo Maracaibo music, while the camera focuses on his swimsuit, which is suggestively adorned with a cock. These visual and acoustic stratagems shore up colonial paradigms of subordination. They present Nino as docile and sexually available «object» who performs for a more affluent social class and is thus subjected to its gaze[15]. Moreover, since Nino's body functions as an extension of the island here, his sensual movements concomitantly characterize Linosa as a utopia of pleasure.

The tourists aboard Nino's boat enthusiastically participate in a colonialist, phallocentric gendering of space that transforms the topography of Linosa into a vendible commodity. Filming from the tourists' perspective, the camera pans the beaches and shoreline. This camerawork transforms the tourists into voyeurs, who are engaged in scopophilia – the pleasure of looking – and it feminizes and

[14] Multiple travel services facilitate tourism to Linosa and Lampedusa: currently, a ferry service links the islands with Porto Empedocle in Sicily; there are round trip flights from Lampedusa's airport to international airports on mainland Italy; and technologies, primarily travel websites, advertise Agrigento's islands as vacation destinations.

[15] Nino's dance evokes the nightclub scenes in *Anna* (A. Lattuada, 1952), *Le notti di Cabiria* (F. Fellini, 1957), and *La notte* (M. Antonioni, 1961). With the exception of *Anna*, these films put forth hypersexualized, scantily clad black *female* performers, which O'Healy (2009, 181-182) interprets in the key of colonialism. Nino is not a reformulation of the «black Venus» archetype, nor does he experience race difference to the same degree as the aforementioned black performers (like the tourists, Nino is Italian). Yet, during the dance sequence, Nino subjects himself to a degrading representational economy based on class difference – another factor that was used to enforce hierarchies of subordination/domination during colonialism – and his body is marked as the «racialized other».

Nino Pucillo performing for tourists. **Fig. 1.**

fetishizes Linosa as the object of their gaze. Furthermore, the act of touring the island itself represents the physical violation and penetration that is romanticized in colonial travel narratives. In their writings, explorers frequently deploy the language of adventure, discovery, and seduction, and they routinely describe islands with feminized imagery (Gonzalez 2013, 40-47; 159-70; Pritchard and Morgan 2007, 166). Remarkably, these same colonial discourses are deeply embedded in the language of tourism (Pritchard and Morgan 2000a, 2000b, 2007). The writing genre of the global travel industry echoes that of colonizers' imperialist, patriarchal, and androcentric associations of femininity with natural landscapes, and destination getaways (in Pritchard and Morgan's study it is Tahiti, 2007, 166-177) are advertised as «fertile, sexually permissive, pleasurable, seductive and sensuous» (177).

At the same time, Nino Pucillo's affiliation with Western hegemony – namely capitalism – complicates the interpretation of this scene through a colonizing lens. Significantly, it is Nino who leads the tourists in a sing-along to Lu Colombo's «Maracaibo»[16]. The lyrics of this 1980 pop single intertwine sensuality («balla nuda»), violence («quattro colpi di pistola le sparò»), and erotic exploitation («tre mulatte/danzan come matte/casa di piaceri per stranieri»[17]) that touches upon a colonial imagery. Moreover, adopting the language of colonial travel narratives, and practicing what Cassano (1996 [2015], 99) would classify as the «*prostiuzione* della cultura subalterna»[18], Nino describes the sensual topography

[16] This song recounts the failed love affair between Zazà, a Cuban dancer, and Fidel Castro (Miguel). Mirroring Zazà, who uses dance as a tactic of diversion, Nino gyrates to distract tourists from the arrival of clandestine migrants.

[17] «She dances naked»; «with four pistol bullets he shot her»; «Three mulattos/ dance like crazy/ a house of pleasures for foreigners».

[18] «Prostitution of subaltern culture».

(«fondali meravigliosi»[19]) of Linosa. Worth noting, however, is that Nino makes this remark to assuage tourists' concerns about the purported sighting of «illegal» migrants on Linosa. Nino is an entrepreneur, and he perceives his investment in the tourism industry to be threatened by clandestine migrants.

Border Performances: Securing «Paradise»?

Commenting on the correlation between heightened concerns about national security and increases in global migration, Nancy Wonders (2006) claims that in addition to disseminating racist discourse against migrants, actors of state power engage in repetitive acts of sovereignty – what she terms «border performances». According to Wonders, during a «border performance», powerful racialized, gendered, and classed rhetoric transforms into militaristic practices of sovereignty: both the border crosser (migrant) and the border protector assume roles that reinforce positive discourse on protection (even if it leads to violence) and negative discourse on migration (Wonders 2006, 75). Migrants are regularly accused of contaminating «paradise»; they are perceived as freeloading criminals, who are constantly mobile so that they may continue to «abuse the system» (Wonders 2006, 69).

In contrast, tourists are characterized as border crossers with ample resources who move in search of leisure or pleasure. Often, as is the case in *Terraferma*, vacationers are credited with financing the development of the host country (Wonders 2006, 69). To illustrate this, during a key moment in the film narrative Nino Pucillo co-opts a meeting of local fishermen to articulate this distinction between tourists and clandestine migrants:

> Scusate, ma noi altri qui possiamo fare del turismo? Ai turisti dà fastidio vedere questi mezzi morti clandestini mentre si gode la vacanza. Questi qui pagano per stare in pace. […] E poi questi sbarchi prendiamoci brutta pubblicità. Lo sappiamo questo, no[20]?

Nino is a businessman, singularly concerned with conserving Linosa's most lucrative commodity, i.e. the experience of «paradise». The fishermen are divided. The older generation (from which Ernesto hails) remain unwavering in its allegiance to the «law of the sea»[21] – which holds men morally accountable for the

[19] «Fabulous sea beds» All translations of the dialogue in *Terraferma* are from the 2014 English subtitled (Cohen Media Group) edition.

[20] «Sorry men, but we also live on tourism here, right? And tourists don't like seeing these half-dead illegals as they enjoy their vacations. These people pay and want peace and quiet. Let's talk straight. All these illegals and these landings are bad publicity for us. We know this, don't we?».

[21] This intradiegetic debate on the «law of the sea» references *Mare Nostrum*, the Italian military operation that rescued migrants abandoned in the Mediterranean Sea, which has since been replaced with the EU-funded Operation Triton.

rescue of people stranded in the Mediterranean, regardless of their status, race, or national origin. The younger generation tends to side with Nino, noting that this law is not just antiquated, but it is also illegal.

Many scenes that feature Maura (Martina Codecasa), a northern Italian who rents out the Pucillo's home during her sojourn to Linosa, also convey this disparate perception of migrants and tourists. These episodes moreover suggest that the semantic ambivalence of the term «xenos» described by Curi (2010)[22] remains pertinent in understanding the divergent treatment of different border crossers in today's global landscape. To be sure, whereas many locals perceive migrants as a nuisance, they not only permit Maura's unbridled revelry, but they also endearingly refer to her as the «bionda carina»[23]. One evening, for example, an enchanted Filippo lusts after the fair-haired vixen, who unabashedly declares her plans for the evening: «stasera ci ubriachiamo»[24]. As the hours pass, Maura continues to drink beer, and her coquettish behavior evolves into licentious conduct; she eventually jokes about going topless in front of Filippo and his grandfather. Later that evening Maura's suggestive comments are realized; she smokes marijuana, strips down to her underwear, and jumps into the sea to enjoy a late night dip.

Unlike Maura, who is treated with dignity and respect, migrant characters are repeatedly subjected to mistreatment. For example, on the occasion Ernesto requests assistance with the rescue of shipwrecked migrants, the Coast Guard instructs him to remain close to their threadbare raft, but not to allow any passengers on board his fishing vessel. The Coast Guard's directive to contain the migrants illustrates Curi's (2010, 80) point that in cases where «foreigners» are perceived as «barbari» – «'specie' biologica differente, […] figura radicalmente antitetica rispetto agli 'uomini' che compongono la società»[25] – the conventional rules of hospitality do not apply[26]. His instructions also convey the militaristic dynamics of performances of State power that Weber and Pickering describe as essential to understanding contemporary borders (2011, 73). In brief, places that

[22] Beyond the standard definition of «xenos», i.e. «stranger», this term takes on different meanings according to the particular context in which it is used. Interpretative connotations of the word «xenos» range from hostile («enemy»; «invader») to amicable («guest-friend»).

[23] «Cute blonde». Maura is a less odious character than the (female) tourists who populate *L'avventura* (M. Antonioni, 1960); *Travolti da un insolito destino nell'azzurro mare d'agosto* (L. Wertmüller, 1974); and the «Isole» segment of *Caro Diario* (N. Moretti, 1993). Yet, similar to the aforementioned films, in *Terraferma*, the bourgeois tourist who vacations in southern Italy is an emblem of the corrupting, neo-colonial practices of capitalism.

[24] «Tonight we're getting drunk».

[25] «A biologically distinct 'species' […] a radically antithetical figure with respect to the 'men' who make up society».

[26] For a different analysis of conditional «hospitality» in three recent Italian films of migration see Faleschini Lerner 2010.

are separated from the mainland (like Linosa) mollify citizens' concerns about sovereign protection by mobilizing tactics of «detection, selection, deference, expulsion, and pre-emption [of] specifically targeted groups», (Weber and Pickering 2011, 12)[27]. As the scene unfolds, it becomes apparent that surveillance is preferred to rescue, because migrants are considered a destructive force, rather than defenseless victims[28]. Nonetheless, loyal to the «law of the sea», Ernesto disregards the Coast Guard's orders. With the assistance of Filippo, the fisherman secretly stows a handful of African migrants on his boat, including a very pregnant Sara (who will give birth in the Pucillo's garage that evening) and her adolescent son, in a move that will affect the entire Pucillo family.

Shortly after having witnessed the public humiliation of his grandfather (who was essentially punished for aiding migrants), Filippo finds himself in a similar predicament. Late one evening, when Filippo and Maura sneak out to the sea to finally act upon their mutual attraction, their romantic rendezvous quickly transforms into a violent nightmare. The would-be lovers flirt to the sound of waves crashing against the boat, enhancing the sexual tension between them. Filippo turns on a fishing light with the intention of illuminating sea life. Rather than reveal dolphins and a reef, however, the light exposes a group of African swimmers whose boat has capsized, flailing their arms.

Fig. 2. African migrants abandoned at sea.

[27] This scene also underscores Wonders' (2006, 66; 75) claim that «border performances» are seldom gender neutral, i.e. in most developed countries, typically male bodies enforce borders, and female bodies are subjected to border enforcement. In *Terraferma*, masculine figures (the Carabinieri, Coast Guard, and fishermen) are responsible for detecting and containing migrants.

[28] In another episode, state agents dressed in gloves and surgical masks round up migrants and physically distance them from tourists, in visual and performative cues that Molinari (2011, 38) approximates to the sanitary cleansing of those afflicted with the plague. This association of corporeal contact (with migrants) and contamination – a theme previously explored in Amelio's *Lamerica* (see Welch 2016) – is further dramatized when the agents surround the migrants to prevent them from advancing inland.

Tourists dancing aboard Nino's boat. **Fig. 3.**

The migrants' frenzied gestures recall those of the movements performed by tourists aboard Nino's boat. While these motions share mimetic features, the same gesture evokes very different affective responses across the two contexts. The first captures a raft of African migrants raising their arms in panic (see Fig. 2). In the second, a group of tourists performs «pose analoghe a quelle dei disperati clandestini»[29] (Molinari 2011, 38), while dancing to the Maracaibo (see Fig. 3). Crialese's choice to utilize the same visual cue to display disparate emotions – desperation and pleasure – draws stark contrasts between the free movement of tourists and the forced mobility of migrants[30]. Furthermore, as Leone astutely notes (2011, 29), the juxtaposition of these images can be interpreted as a tacit criticism of Italian television. Nino, who initiates the dance, is portrayed by former television star Giuseppe Fiorello. Moreover, the tourists «che salutano […] come per attirare l'attenzione»[31] recall the absence of ethics in television production («sempre a caccia di sconosciuti da far emergere»[32], Leone 2011, 29), whereas the wave of the shipwrecked migrants is totally ignored.

Returning to the nighttime boat scene, the desperate situation of the stranded migrants quickly escalates. In a striking departure from projection of the Mediterranean seascape as a picturesque utopia of harmonious cross-cultural interactions by Gabriele Salvatores (*Mediterraneo*, 1991) and Michael Radford (*Il postino*, 1994), here the sea is a site of conflict and violence. From the dark seawater, scores of migrants begin to materialize, and their muffled screams grow louder. Aware of the consequences of rescuing migrants, Filippo aggressively beats the refugees away from the boat. Cinematographer Fabio Cianchetti's camera

[29] «Poses that are analogous to those of the desperate, clandestine migrants».

[30] For more on the topic of differential mobilities in Italy, see Ben-Ghiat and Hom 2016.

[31] «That wave […] as if to attract attention».

[32] «Always scouting unknown faces to make them into stars».

continues to shift angles – one of the many stylistic clichés Crialese relies upon here to compensate for the actors' unconvincing emotional performances (Leone 2011, 29) – ultimately creating what O'Healy describes as the «most memorable and effective [scene] in the film» (2016, 158). Eventually, Filippo's arms are the focus of the frame. Filmed from a low angle, the teen's slim body is aggrandized, signaling his physical dominance over the migrants, and drawing visual parallels between him and the *Guardia di finanza*. Between animalistic grunts Filippo repeatedly strikes the migrants, while a traumatized Maura cowers in a fetal-like position. The scene closes with the couple speeding off, abandoning the vulnerable migrants in its wake.

This episode can be further unpacked. One can argue that the scene takes place in yet another liminal setting: under the dark cover of night, in the Mediterranean Sea, and on a boat that is property of neither Filippo nor Maura. Furthermore, both Filippo and Maura are cast as liminal characters here. Filippo is suspended between the ideals of his altruistic grandfather and those of his avaricious uncle. Maura is a tourist, thus by nature in a transient position. Lastly, neither Filippo nor Maura appears to be a willing participant in State violence. Maura is visibly shaken by the experience, and, in a future act of contrition, Filippo will atone for his violent actions by aiding migrants at great personal risk.

Conclusion: Crossing Borders

In the following scene, a counter-hegemonic form of consciousness is awakened. While tourists sunbathe along the coastline of Linosa, the morning tide washes up the frail bodies of the migrants that Maura and Filippo encountered a few hours earlier. In this borderline setting, which Molinari (2001, 38) describes as a «*barriera e cerniera*»[33] between two disparate worlds, the tourists instinctively provide aide. They gently lift the migrants out of the water, delicately cleanse their faces, and help Linosa's newest arrivals transgress physical and symbolic boundaries. This intimate contact illustrates Cassano's (1996 [2015], 20) assertion about the value of the Mediterranean's «statuto di confine, di interfaccia, di mediazione fra [diversi] popoli»[34]. Moreover, the decision to slow down the pace of this scene dramatically, to pan over listless migrant bodies languidly, breaks from the frenetic pace of Western modernity and capitalism. Privileging the «andare lenti»[35] philosophy that Cassano (1996 [2015], 47-51) describes as a tenet of Southern thought, here the tourists are invited to embrace conviviality rather than competition or conflict.

[33] «Barrier and connection».

[34] «Border status, a site of interface, mediation between different peoples».

[35] «Go slowly».

Other scenes in the film, which are set in yet another liminal, border space (the Pucillo's garage) capture transformative citizen-migrant interactions[36]. They also elucidate Curi's (2010) point that every identity is integrated (149), and more precisely, that «lo straniero» (here, the migrant) is our intrinsic double, whose presence is necessary for defining our own identity (81). Giulietta, who has been forced to rent out her home to tourists, takes refuge in the garage, in a space that exists at the periphery of the permanent Pucillo residence, and a positionality that represents her (financial) marginality within the broader Italian landscape. In addition to sharing experiences of physical displacement, financial instability, and social marginalization, Giulietta and Sara are both mothers, expressly concerned with the welfare of their children. Moreover, like Sara, the Italian matriarch views mobility as *the* solution to securing a stable future for her family. Therefore, when Sara reveals that her newborn is the result of multiple rapes she suffered while imprisoned in Libya («Noi tanto tempo in prigione in Libia. Tutte donne e bambini insieme. A notte polizia viene. Bambini vedere. […] Io non dire a mio marito di bambino»[37]), Giulietta's maternal instincts are activated. Gazing upon Sara's newborn, whom she is cradling, Giulietta realizes that she could have suffered the same brutalities inflicted on the African migrant, were she a «*homo sacer*», stripped of the protections guaranteed by her Italian citizenship (see Fig. 4).

Giulietta cradling Sara's newborn child. **Fig. 4.**

[36] Many recent films draw parallels, while also accentuating distinctions, between Italian citizens and migrants, but *Terraferma* is exceptional because it mobilizes the experience of motherhood – a condition that traverses race, class, and cultural boundaries – to create a sense of intimacy and understanding between Giulietta and Sara.

[37] «We long time in jail in Libya. All women and children together. At night, police would come. Children see. […] I not tell my husband about the baby».

Terraferma concludes in a circular fashion, with a final citizen/migrant interaction aboard the Pucillo family boat. Eager to atone for his violent actions against shipwrecked migrants, Filippo steers the vessel, with Sara and children in tow, towards mainland Italy. Rather than end his film with a scene of resolution, Crialese opts for an open ending; the boat eventually disappears into the evening dusk, becoming a tiny image swallowed up by the expansive Mediterranean Sea. The disappearance of the boat, as Molinari (2011, 38) surmises, is the ultimate metaphor of uncertainty, for the Italian sailor and his African passengers. Likewise, as stated in the film's press book, *Terraferma* is not centered exclusively on issues of immigration. Instead, the film offers a meditation on the travails of all in search of solid ground (*Terraferma* Press Book 2011, 4). In the end, the experiences of the Pucillo family and its extended interactions with the «Other» reveal that all subjects, sovereign and stateless, share in the precariousness of living in today's globalized world.

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