

Migrant multiplicities

Martina Tazzioli, *The Making of Migration: The Biopolitics of Mobility at Europe's Borders* (London: Sage, 2019). 184pp., £79.00 hb., £25.99 pb., 978 1 52646 403 3 hb., 978 1 52646 404 0 pb.

It has been five years since the peak of what European states labelled a 'refugee crisis'. The idea that this was an exceptional time, a spectacle of suffering, or a moment of reckoning in the EU's border regime gained centre stage in public imagination in 2015 and has not really disappeared since. Punctuated by smaller 'crises' off the Libyan coast, in Greek island camps, or more recently in the English channel, such grammars of political and humanitarian 'crisis' and 'emergency' lend themselves to both an unhelpful presentism and essentialisation of 'migrants' in hegemonic discourse. The 'migrants' in question are known in advance, the time is always now. The questions asked are often narrow, even within so-called critical scholarship. Spatial analyses remain central and the imperative to 'undo' methodological nationalism remains a key concern, as explored in the recent work of Bridget Anderson.

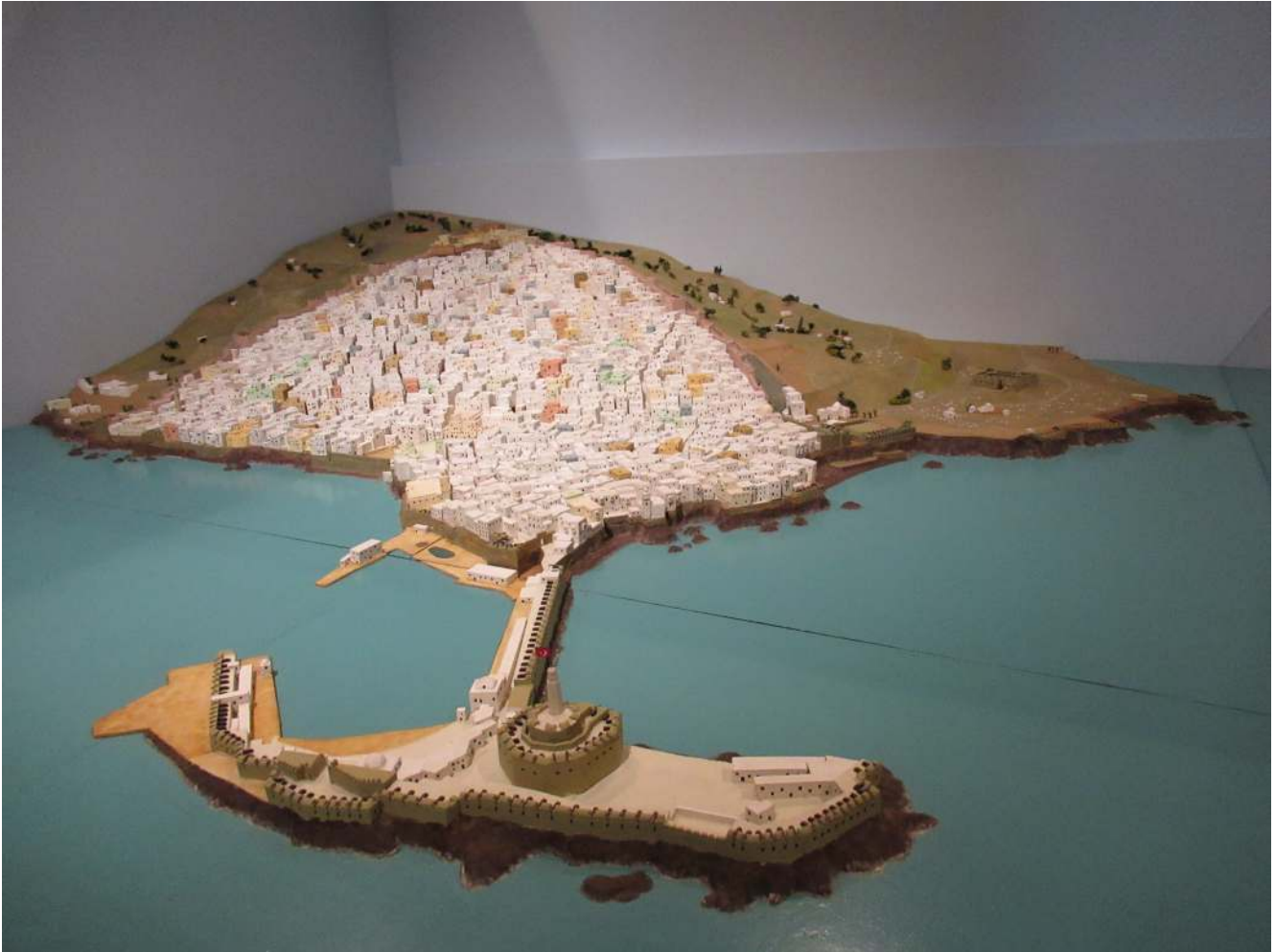
But who is a migrant today in Europe? And how are they 'made'? With these deceptively simple questions, Martina Tazzioli troubles the canonical scholarship on migration and mobility, collapsing the many binaries which animate the literature: crisis vs. routine, the migrant victim vs. the migrant activist, freedom vs., control, mobility vs. immobility. Moving away from thinking of 'migrants' as individuals with a fixed identity or as already constituted groups, Tazzioli instead probes the many ways migrants are brought into being by technologies of governance, and racialised as such. Using a broad, biopolitical lens, the author points to the duplicity of this process of 'making' – the myriad political, legal and material practices through which migrants are governed, but also, following Ian Hacking, the way that migrants both 'live in', appropriate and exceed these categories.

Tazzioli's motivation in making this move is clear: 'migration' is not a phenomenon that should be seen through the lens of how to 'govern' it, even how to 'govern' it more fairly, or humanely. Instead, we should resist the imperative to 'see like a state' and try to disentangle the phenomenon of migration from the state gaze. Thinking in terms of processes of subjectification and subjectification

on one hand, and objectification-subjectification on the other, Tazzioli takes a step back and pays attention instead to the types of knowledge produced around migration. Following Janet Roitman in her book *Anti-crisis*, and Joan Scott's 'History Writing as Critique', Tazzioli aims to reopen spaces of political action and knowledge production away from the restraining punctual moment of 'crisis'. She is tremendously careful not to inadvertently reproduce the object or discursive framing upon which her critique intervenes.

What is exceptional about *The Making of Migration* is the way it brings together different strands of scholarship on mobility, collectives and critique, literatures which are usually kept separate. Instead, Tazzioli ricochets between these approaches at high speed, weaving in ethnographies of border enforcement and migrants' struggles and movements with oral histories of citizen-allies of migrants in Alpine villages and European capitals. With such a radical relational approach, Tazzioli effortlessly dismantles and rethinks the taken-for-granted categories of political theory used to talk about migration, mobility and borders. In short, the book not only takes migration simply as its object of study, but also mobilises lived experiences of migration as an analytical lens to shatter so many of the frames we think through and with, building new categories of subjectivity from radical heterogeneity and the traces. The author's aim, to 'de-fetishise migration', to view migration with a more lateral gaze, and in relation to intertwined struggles and transversal alliances, is perfectly executed. Instead of reified, neatly demarcated groups and people, we get fluid, highly entangled sets of actors and relations which are constantly in flux.

The refusal to superimpose an analytical grid and pre-fabricated political and epistemological boundaries sees Tazzioli instead ask how we can think about the 'politicalness of collective subjects that are temporary and on the move.' Through the language of (migrant) multiplicities and singularities, the author pokes at the ambivalences which subjectify and objectify migrants,



both as individuals and as part of ‘temporary collective formations’. Not simply a spatial analysis, this framing also depends on capturing the importance of temporality in these processes – the transient and fleeting spaces, the enduring memories of solidarity practices, but also the ‘stolen time’ – to use Shahram Khosravi’s term – frittered away from migrants’ lives leaving them unable to think about possible futures. The concepts of ‘multiplicities’ and ‘singularities’ also encapsulate paradoxes around political visibility and invisibility – the tactics used by migrants to become or be (in)visible without perhaps identifying with this status or actively striving for it.

How to begin thinking in terms of migrant multiplicities? What Bernd Kasparek and Marc Speer referred to as the ‘long summer of migration’ in 2015 brought into being so many new ways of conceiving migrants as a collective group. No longer described as much as intangible flows and channels to be managed and manipulated, migrants began to be increasingly referred to as a ‘swarm’ or infestation of undesirable bodies to be

chased away, or a crowd or mass congregating on the border. Tazzioli reminds the reader of Katie Hopkins’ hateful UK tabloid column at the time, likening migrants in Calais to ‘cockroaches’, a register which quickly became normalised when the UK Prime Minister referred to the same migrants as ‘swarms of people’.

In using ‘multiplicities’ as a conceptual framing, the author not only deconstructs these deeply problematic framings, but also departs from standard collective terms such as community or assembly to capture the non-homogenous and highly precarious nature of collective formations. This endeavour is not without peril: in discarding so many standard political categories, the author opens herself up to being accused of losing some of the critical purchase that these labels provided in the first place. However, Tazzioli’s onto-methodological move, placing primacy on migrants’ grounded experiences of political subjectivity, means that this critique can never really take hold. The empirical for Tazzioli is never purified or flattened to fit an existing concept of political col-

lectivity or way of 'doing' politics. The rich, ethnographic grounding of unmaking and making migrant multiplicities is always paramount. The author skilfully retraces the ambivalences of the term 'mob' to further this very point, an idea that captures the ephemeral and heterogenous nature of migrant collective subjects which are brought into being through governmental techniques though exceed these mechanisms of control nonetheless.

In this vein, so much attention around the subject of migration has been paid to death and dead bodies, to those who have drowned or are conceived solely in terms of bare life in what Nicholas De Genova has called the 'border spectacle'. The other side of this coin sees migrant agency and resistance celebrated, the migrant 'activist' who claims citizen rights in a disruptive, punctual 'moment'. What to make then of all the other modes of governance and modes of struggle that do not fit into these frameworks? It is through a rethinking of biopolitics beyond the making live/letting die couplet, Tazzioli proposes, where so much of the manifoldness of biopolitical technologies can be empirically captured: the 'cramping, choking, hindering, chasing away, constricting, confining, dismantling' of migrants' mobility and presence and the incessant exposure to violence and vulnerability leaving migrants 'de-socialised' and prevented from forming solid networks.

To 'singularities' then, where Tazzioli captures the ways migrants are individualised, subjectified and objectified. Like her mobilisation of multiplicity to get away from standard categories through which to think of migrant collectivities, singularity seeks to escape the methodological individualism which permeates so much of migration scholarship and political theory. Focusing on the ways migrants are targeted by specific technical and political actions, as well as the ways they are coerced to speak (whilst nonetheless treated as deceitful subjects, unable to tell the truth), thinking in terms of singularities also brings to light that individual migrants are digitally scattered across databases into discombobulated pieces of 'data'.

For this reason, there are no accounts of migrants' narratives or trajectories in Tazzioli's conception of singularities. Instead, the author speaks of 'hit without interpellation'; drawing attention to the many ways that data is extracted and circulates without the migrant being asked to respond, which shapes their subjectivity

nonetheless, albeit from a distance. In this respect, one of the most powerful parts of the book presents two fictional geographies, that of S. and M., migrants who land in Italy and Greece respectively. Drawing on what has been captured, physically and digitally by national authorities, NGOs or European agencies, Tazzioli retraces the steps of what happens to migrants who land by sea and then try to move on. The use of fiction in this way, albeit a fiction written from the archives, forms an intriguing rupture here in its pushing of social sciences towards the humanities and creation of a disparate truth regime within the book. The medium manages to capture the human experience of migration, its contingencies and possibilities, whilst avoiding reifying the individual migrant or fetishising migrants' stories. It is through the geographies of S. and M. where Tazzioli's overall thesis is perhaps also encapsulated in its fullest form: migrant singularities are not some sort of antithesis to multiplicities and the two can only ever be seen as mutually constitutive and interactive.

Tazzioli's style presents a powerful way of writing social science, avoiding the imperative to write in a linear way, to have one 'main' argument and to clearly state two or three interventions into a specific literature. Indeed, the author's skipping and rebounding between different dynamics of migratory governance and resistance, taking into account their historicity and complexity is as non-compliant as the 'migrant spatial disobedience' she describes in her final chapter. The book operates through multiple vectors, across many different layers.

This refusal to enclose must be applauded in the way it rejects so many arbitrary conventions or being bound by discipline or methodology. We are not really told much about the author's 'fieldwork', how many weeks or months were spent in various camps or zones of transit. We do not know the exact number of interviews that took place. Style and form are as much part of Tazzioli's political intervention in de-reifying migration as the content itself. The many different frontiers of Europe in which the author spent time – the French-Italian and Swiss-Italian borders, Calais, Paris, Sicily and on several Greek islands – are not reduced to 'case studies', nor are they subsumed under a single overarching analysis of Europe's border regime. Instead, these different sites are analysed in terms of their resonances: 'showing patterns of similarity among them in light of the political technologies

deployed for containing unruly mobility and highlighting what each of them reveals about *the making of migration*' (author's emphasis).

To be sure, though these migrant multiplicities and singularities are characterised by fragmentation, heterogeneity and disjuncture, Tazzioli succeeds in piecing them together to form a strong, political intervention. Readers are pushed to understand the European social,

political and historical present in different ways, a provocation which though somewhat exhausting in its constant impulse to put things on the move, is also highly original and galvanising. *The Making of Migration* mobilises radical relationality and transversal connections to study emerging political formations and the subjects that inhabit them.

Emma Mc Cluskey

Homo desiderans

Miguel de Beistegui, *The Government of Desire: A Genealogy of the Liberal Subject* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2018). ix+295pp., £34.00 hb., 978 0 22654 737 4

Miguel de Beistegui's new book is one of the most important contributions to the study of desire since the publication of René Girard's *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (1987). The central argument of the work is that the creation – through specific rationalities of knowledge and technologies of power – of a type of subjectivity (*homo desiderans*) is the mechanism that allowed modern capitalism to transform into neoliberalism and power to translate into its biopolitical double. For, if neoliberalism is essentially characterised by a form of governance that privileges the management of productive subjects over their repressive control (the carrot instead of the stick), then it is crucial to understand the mechanisms that push individuals to move relentlessly according to the models and the new economic geography created by neoliberal capitalism. Desire is precisely one of these mechanisms in that it is constituted as a *structural negativity* (i.e., as an infinity of always different carrots, or, to speak more directly, as an 'ontological lack' construed by the various *epistemai* of power) – which generates *hyper-positivity* at the subjective level through the incessant individual search for pleasures and products that the 'free market' constantly manufactures.

Drawing on the late Foucault's work on sexuality, de Beistegui traces a convincing genealogy of this transcendental-historical *dispositif* by examining three fundamental assemblages or regimes of desire: the economic, the sexual and the symbolic. As he demonstrates, these three regimes are interdependent and

self-reinforcing because they are born out of the same paradigm, i.e. the disciplinary rationality that characterises modern bio-power. Thus, for example, starting from the eighteenth century, the emergence of liberal political economy (i.e. Physiocracy) established a new discourse on negative freedom that, on the one hand, seemed to free individuals from the control of the state, but, on the other, subjected them to the new rules set by the market. Self-interest and utility thus become the watchwords of a libidinal economic system based on the 'free maximisation' of desires, which can now be purchased for money. In this way, desire 'is naturalised, and seen as a form of positive energy, that is, as a spontaneous mechanism generating its own norms'.

This new paradigm of governance allows, in turn, the birth of a science of sexuality, which is no longer repressive but normative. Indeed, the problem of 'natural' interest creates the need for further rationalisations and normalisations: if individuals are maximisers of pleasure and utility, how to explain the motives behind 'aberrant' crimes and, so the narrative goes, sexual acts 'against nature'? It is precisely at this historical juncture that, according to de Beistegui, new concepts such as 'sexual perversion' and 'abnormality' appear in the psychiatric literature in order to create further barriers of exclusion between 'good' (i.e. natural and economic) and 'bad' (i.e. perverted and criminal) desires. In short, the discursive occupation of 'desire' generates a new totalising system of norms, which branches out into different fields