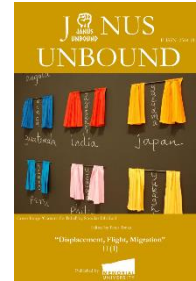


Title: Displacing Displacement: Letter from the Editor-in-Chief
Author(s): Peter Trnka
Source: *Janus Unbound: Journal of Critical Studies*, vol. II, no. 1
(Winter 2022), pp. 1-8
Published by: *Memorial University of Newfoundland*



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*Janus Unbound: Journal
of Critical Studies*
E-ISSN: 2564-2154
2(1) 1-8
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2022

Displacing Displacement: Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Peter Trnka

Avoiding

Let's start by being clear (and then muddying the waters): displacing in one sense sucks, it means getting kicked out, conquered, seized, dispossessed, made homeless, stateless, nomadic by force. Yet everything returns, repeats with a difference, ironically it happens (even): affirmative displacement, transvalued statelessness, generalized migrancy, a dialectic of accidents.

Avoiding is one way of displacing. If placing is setting into place, settling, marking territory, territorializing. Forgetting, forgetting avoiding and just forgetting, and masking: Nietzschean powers of the negative, Deleuzian becomings and lines of flight.

Setting nets of paradox, setting paradoxes as traps, cocking or loading them. Repressing, denying, rephrasing, spinning, shifting.

Displacing, Fleeing, Migrating

Negation. And negation of negation. In this case two wrongs do make a right, or a positive, a difference; at least, two negatives, in some sense, acts of negating, cutting-off, or destroying something. Hegel's method of dialectic of negativity that Marx sticks with: positing or placing a thesis, its negation, its negation's negation, and so on, and so on, and so on. Negative infinity, or positive eternity?

The dialectic is a method but also an ontology. Criticism is the negative in pure formal mode. The text and its critical shadow a matter of a minor difference or detail. Repetition/exegesis *plus*. Plus at least a question, but the question, the doubt, is enough to throw the whole thing out. Criticism as close reading, the reading that reads against itself is also immanent critique. Deconstruction as double reading, as displacing displacement in practice. Analysis.

Bigger, richer, fuller. Another beautiful cover and package, thank you art editor Deborah Root, designer Abigail Broughton-Janes, and cover artist Sarindar Dhaliwal. Multimediac. Visual art: cover and statement, Sarindar Dhaliwal's *Curtains for Babel*. Thank you, Shani Mootoo, *It is a Crime*.

Sarindar's artist statement, a short essay on language and violence, violence and metaphysics, and artistic method as remedy. Basic existential displacement: where are you, what is real, this is the world. Where does one, they, start? "[I]he idea just comes from maybe a small line" (Dhaliwal 9), but note one starts with an idea and the idea has a genesis, however humble, accidental; "in this case,"

she continues, “I think I read that 600 languages were dying daily, and I found that intriguing (even though the number might not be accurate)” (9). And there we have it, the dialectic of real-imaginary-symbolic, or at least the combat of desire and truth. There is a location also: “I had a studio in Delhi and then because the wall wasn’t that big, I decided to do something with just 28 curtains” (9). So scale is established. Then some kind of rule (constructing the abstract machine of art): “I was researching different languages and because there were so many, I decided they should all begin with X, Y, and Z” (9). And an interpretation of the meaning and force of (such) rules: “But whenever I give myself rules like that, I just break them, if my brain goes somewhere else” (9). A mini-manifest on the radical, to the roots, power of the imagination as the fundamental displacement operator, difference maker, differentiator, deconstructor, etceterator-disassociator: “The way I work is sometimes I just have an image in my head of how the work will end up looking—and then I don’t really care about the truth. I care more about my imagination” (10). Truth can be a subset of the imagination, the skeptical Pyrrho and Hume doubting and negating, so upsetting and unsettling (along with the *Pantheismusstreit* of Spinoza) to the philosophers of the normal royal science, the ruling class ideas of the idealist state apologists and status quo illusionists. For Marx-Sartre-Castoriadis, not so much Kant.

For creative writing we feature four strong poets, thank you poetry editor Andreae Callanan. Sally Khader’s “Complexities of Morning Coffee,” wherein displacement is figured in families forcibly separated—“The soldiers tear us apart from each other and set us on different ships/Thousands of miles away from the home we once had”—and then internalized, introjected into the fragmentation of the imaginary: “I could be anything, build anything./No fears./When my dreams hadn’t been ripped apart and shattered.” “Memorial/Immemorial” by V. Varsam thinks of an ecological or Gaia-like displacement, wherein “we give to the earth/.../and she is indifferent to it all,/animate, inanimate, organic, inorganic.” At the end of which “we will all be gone/a clean sweep.” In “I Know a Place Where No Cars Go” Angela Tan tells of a “senselessness in a sullen hole marked onto the spot of utopia on a map. A map of blank locations, ready to be filled with only my imagination.” We close our poetry section with “DITW” by Tanatswa Mushonga, in which the human, human flesh, is displaced by the pressure of the sea, such that “The sea refuted my form,/The sea demanded I be reborn.”

We feature two scholarly articles both on literature and Palestine: Hania Nashef’s “Suppressed Narrator, Silenced Victim in Adania Shibli’s *Minor Detail*,” Shibli’s most recent novel, and Anna-Esther Younes’ “Palestinian Zombie,” a critical reading of select zombie movies and the literary work of Primo Levi and Yishai Sarid. Nashef, a member of our Editorial Board, author of *Palestinian Culture and the Nakba: Bearing Witness* and *The Politics of Humiliation in the Novels of J.M. Coetzee*, examines absolute victimization and abjection as the eradication of crime and victim, the annihilation of the place and space of and for complaint, for the acknowledgement of the cry of suffering, the wound, or the corpse. Shibli’s novel is based on a real event of a horrible continuous rape,

violation, and murder of a Bedouin girl that takes place in what is later called Canada Park: “Shibli’s novel traces the story of a Bedouin girl in 1949 and her brutal slaying by Zionist gangs through a narrative of another silenced and young West Bank woman from Ramallah, who becomes obsessed with uncovering the burial site of the slain girl” (14). The figure traces the shadow to find its own figure: “Defining the land as empty entails the claim that the land is devoid of people; however, in the event that some may populate it, they are considered mere shadows and not fully human. They have been classified as *homo sacer*” (18). (Meanwhile, as we shall see, the zombie abstraction from the living worker chases its creator as its creator seeks to destroy her own image.) The fact that the scene of the crime is named Canada Park is not insignificant. In fact, no detail is insignificant, to follow one ethical and political connotation of Nashef’s reading of Shibli’s novel. The story of the Bedouin girl in Canada Park, and the imaginary resistance constructed around it, takes place in the seam between the name and the thing, exactly in that netherworld of free possibility where territory is undesignated. As yet unmapped. Not yet pinned down by a name. For good or ill. Mapping is a power and traversing unmapped territory adeptly is a power.

Unmapped territory is not the same as uninhabited, empty, or null territory, though the colonial doctrine of *terra nullius* (with which Nashef begins her analysis) is the global legal brand name for the denial of that simple truth, simple as it is the life of the nomads and migrants, the mobile ancient multitudes; the legal fiction made to displace the simple truth of the no fixed place of abode, no state, no nation:

Although the systematic eviction of Palestinians from their homeland has been recorded at length since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, documentation of the latter practices has for the most part concerned itself with urban centres and villages. Thus, expulsion and removal of marginalized communities, namely those of the Bedouins, from their ancestral encampments or homes have been given scant coverage by mainstream media or even academia. (12)

To understand the full, explosive, transgressive value and significance of a minor detail, Nashef brings into her analysis a giddy arsenal of theorists of the marginalized, subaltern, silenced, displaced, and expelled and expunged, though without ever blurring the focus away from Shibli, her narrator, and the Bedouin girl. Nashef draws selectively and quickly from the works of Homi Bhabha, Judith Butler, Henri Lefebvre, and Edward W. Said, among others. It is through Hannah Arendt’s work on Aristotle that Nashef introduces the idea of the *anēu logon*, or the being without word or language. The one-outside-of-discourse is the one who is beyond words, they bear no speaking to, it is not even worth trying. They are ex-political in the sense—here Nashef follows the French philosopher Jacques Rancière—of the *ex-polis*, what is outside of the political unit, the city, or the nation.

The mobile outsider is maligned: “a nomadic life is often stigmatized by the notion of constant movement, impermanence, and rootlessness. Such a life is

Displacing Displacement

rarely considered valuable when compared with other lives, its customary practices and laws rarely recognized” (12). The unmapped and remapped territory makes Shibli’s narrator’s quest a perilous one. “Armed with maps from different epochs, the silent narrator,” Nashef writes,

embarks on a journey to locate the murder site As the land composition has much changed, she can only rely on flashes from her memory of the place from earlier times and the descriptions afforded to her by colleagues in Ramallah who were exiled from these villages and towns, many of which have been eradicated. (19)

Becoming animal, becoming insect more so, is one way of putting the zombified adaptation to violence. Dehumanization is always an objectification, a reification or turning into thing, be it supposed animal-thing, or other piece of stuff: “The Bedouin girl, who was discarded as rubbish, may have been buried in the two-meter sandy shallow grave, but given the nature of the sand, the unmarked site would be difficult to locate” (17). From thing we go to animal-thing as it is hard to deny movement and something like agency: “The Bedouins’ lives are not worthy. The Arabs . . . are presented as faceless entities whose existence is often juxtaposed against the presence of insects; when the surviving girl was found, she is described [by Shibli as] ‘curled up inside her black clothes like a beetle’ ” (18).

Silencing is the part of rendering powerless that troubles recognition of that powerlessness and of the domination at its source. As becoming insect expresses the general degradation of the zombified, exiled creature, so silencing is the tactic of choice that specifies the isolation and alienation of the victim from all others, including the others of the grand halls of historical truth and justice (as the suffering, the cries and complaints, the events themselves in fact are wiped out): “During the rape scenes, we learn how the officer’s right hand would seal the mouth of the Bedouin girl to subdue her cries and screams” (22).¹

A thing is closer to nothing than a person, it is “just” a thing, a minor detail. As Nashef explains the matter of the minor detail in Shibli’s novel, “[t]he obsession of the Ramallah woman with minor details manifests itself in her fixation to uncover the location of the burial site. Before she embarks on her journey, she describes”—and what is to come explains the pathological synecdoche figured in the novel’s title, the irony of the minor detail that is everything and the everything that is shown in the minor detail—“how she is more concerned with dust particles landing on her desk than with the bombing of a building nearby” (21). To think and feel bodies burning is too much to bear, it is too real. The narrator’s “compulsion with detail may appear insignificant” Nashef argues, “but it is through the detail that she tries to locate her own presence and feel less ashamed of her affliction. The woman is constantly resorting to chewing gum when she is nervous . . .” (21).² What is at stake for the narrator is everything: “if she is successful in locating the unmarked grave, this

minor event could grant her own existence some meaning, enabling her to enunciate in order to assume a place in the world” (22).

Anna-Esther Younes, “Palestinian Zombie.” Remember Ilan Pappé’s point from *JU I.I*: “Palestinian? Zombie!”, to transpose, “Palestinian now stands for all the colonized and forgotten.” Palestinian is the paradigm, the zombie mold. Younes here follows Fanon and also Lewis Gordon shadowing Fanon in seeing the displacement of the colonized by the colonizer as a cultural zombification. As Younes puts it: “Zombies are the first embodiment of modernity’s settler-colonial need to up-root and thingify people for its racial and economic projects. They are colonial capitalism’s horror, the Janus-faced other of white modernity” (31). Capitalism’s but not only capitalism’s, as if occluding anything but capital was not an obvious extension of capital’s subsumption: “Pop culture representations depict the zombie as deracialized and uprooted from its original Indigenous African and Indigenous Caribbean geopolitical landscapes. Consequently, the zombie is seen as yet another fantastic monster of capitalist modernity, representing labouring masses” (32). The zombie is capitalist dead labour but that is the zombie truth, the abstracted reified truth of dead labour. The living part of the zombie is the remaining concrete human individual, the as yet not completely dead or not completely subsumed by capital. The as yet outside of capital death. As Mark Fisher puts it, “[t]he most Gothic description of Capital is also the most accurate,” and that means the description of dead labour as dead because the living concrete has been made abstract: “Capital is an abstract parasite, an insatiable vampire and zombie-maker . . . [and] the living flesh it converts into dead labour is ours, and the zombies it makes are us” (Fisher 2009, 21). Marx is super Goth: vampires, zombies, and so many ghosts, all real in a material world. Real but virtual. The abstraction of labour is the possibility for the reality of its zombification and for the abstract power of capital and commodities to appear alien, untouchable, and divine. For Younes the zombie is not originally or truthfully the zombie of capital, as the body of labour really subsumed by capital is an abstract limit, an ideological obfuscation of the enslaved and indigenous zombie, a concrete living person. How does the full death in full abstraction of complete real subsumption by capital take place? As Marx (1971) and following him Antonio Negri (1991) argue, by the extension and intensification of formal and so then real transformation of all and every aspect of living into commodity exchange by purchase-sale transaction; “Must there be something apocalyptic that announces the world of the non-human, the descent into Fanon’s hell? Or is the idea of a spectacular break not a fallacy to begin with?” asks Younes (37). The microbiopolitical forces of control work in minute details on the ground and in cellular life, while abstract sovereign capital appears to hover weightless above the ground:

What would happen if we started to think “repair,” “labour,” and “civilization” from the perspective of the zombie, those drowned and saved and written out? And what does it mean to start thinking from a world of the living dead, from death worlds? (39)

We feature a new section in this issue: Critical Notes. Short, opinionated pieces. Perspectives on migration, lines of flight. On global warming, ecological catastrophe, and musical activism, Scott Stoneman's "Songs of Prescience" affirms the power of Tamara Lindeman and the Weather Station, and other like-minded musical activists. According to the Weather Station's lead singer Lindeman, music has the power to displace in a positive way, it has "the power to push through them enough to act." On drugs as liberatory, deterritorializing lines of flight, see Mohammed Hamdan's "The Gift of Drugs: Oriental Geographies and Decolonizing Space in Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*." Drugs are like art, for some: "Through the use of opium as a point of access into a wild, imaginative, or oriental space, De Quincey invites us ... to rethink the colonial hermeneutics of spatial otherness by means of non-referential arabesque-ness" (63). Let us trip out in the freedoms of the abstraction of language, the abstraction of non-referential form. The revaluation of the margin, the abyss, the displaced, by way of movement and transience over settlement and stability: "the oriental arabesque in De Quincey's narrative adds other dimensions of space in which objects become fluid and relational ... the arabesque characteristics in De Quincey's *Confessions* create what Maurice Blanchot calls the 'imaginary space' " (64). By drugs, or art, settled physical location is perturbed: "Locating London in its real or physical geographic sense on De Quincey's hyperactive, virtual, and psychological map seems to be an impossible mission because he frequently witnesses a drastic transformation of its material structures or a sudden change of his chartered tour" (64). A pox on all charter tours. What applies to fixity or lack of fixity in place holds *ceteris paribus* for stability of identity: "Geographic barriers signify nothing in a globe where Arabs, Persians, and Chinese may emerge as Spaniards, Frenchmen, and Oriental English subjects, respectively, in De Quincey's opium dreams" (66).

Lastly, we have two book reviews. Liam Ó Ruairc on *Anois ar theacht an tSamhraidh: Ireland, Colonialism and the Unfinished Revolution* by Robbie McVeigh and Bill Rolston, that might be said to displace any logic from the idea that one can fight imperialism in only one country. Ó Ruairc examines the intertwining of colonialism and imperialism and provides valuable caution that: "There is the danger of projecting onto the past (say 12th or 16th centuries) the concept of imperialism as it was understood in the 19th or 20th century" (79). Louis Brehony, our illustrious book review editor, reviews an edited volume by Diana Allan, *Voices of the Nakba: A Living History of Palestine*: "Published during a period of intensifying resistance in colonized Palestine, *Voices of the Nakba* presents an essential collection of stories told by a cross-section of first-generation refugees expelled during the 'catastrophe' or the 1948 Zionist conquest of their land" (83). For Brehony, part of the work's value is the way it "restate[s] the validity of resistance as a category of analysis" (85).

JU also criticizes itself, so check out our erratum list for I.II, twice as long as last time but does that mean we made more errors or made fewer errors finding errors? Check out also our subject and name indexes for the past issue. We are still working on aggregating indexes—any ideas?

Calling (Twice)

Coming out bold, two barrels blazing. CFP Four, *Marginalized Global South*: poverty, natural resource depletion, starvation, migration, refugees, extractivism, extreme weather, and biopolitical laboratories.

CFP Five, *Feminist Resistance*. We are thrilled to announce that our first ever SPECIAL GUEST EDITOR will be our very own Associate Editor Danine Farquharson for *JU III.I Feminist Resistance: Roe v. Wade, #SayHerName, Masha Amini, Cis-Trans, Feminist Praxis, and Intersectionality*. To begin with. Send us your ideas or finished work as soon as you want.

Leveraging Attrition

Welcome to new people, quite a multitude. Welcome to new positions/divisions of labour/responsibility portfolios/areas of expertise (new forms and scales of collective operation). Era of rapid growth, one could say cancerous (the administrative body is out of whack). Welcome to a dozen or so new paid part-time staff positions. Welcome to the many new talented young scholars and editors from around the world: Mariana Ramirez becomes Assistant Editor; three new assistant copyeditors: Amy Schneider, Yining Zhou, and Ericka Larkin; web designer Alexa Nicolle; assistant media editors Rishabh Mishra and Manan Verma; and two new JETS (junior editorial trainees) Colm McGivern and Inanç Kurtuldu. Welcome Fahrid Ahmed to our Editorial Board. Thank you Deans for funding now and for funding for the future (marketing merch even).

Magical collective powers not even shadow glimpsed yet—we are still on training wheels.

Concluding Unsettling Nomadic Postscript

Kierkegaard's ethical call or political action? What would double displacing be, or, how to displace the negative displacement? No forced refugee and immigration "problem." Valuing migration and nomadism. Rather, recognizing the long marginalized, occluded, mystified and maligned value of migratory nomadism.

Circulation of collective global intelligence, modes of feeling, with their safe spaces and times (a comfortable habitus so to say). A global citizenship, a neocosmopolitanism.

Biography

Peter Trnka is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Memorial University. He has taught at Karlova University, Prague as well as Toronto and York. He has published scholarly philosophical and transdisciplinary articles in various international journals, most recently the chapter "Disjoint and Multiply: Deleuze and Negri on Time" in the edited volume *Deleuze and Time*, as well as poetry and a cookbook. He also edits *Codgito: Student Journal of Philosophy and Theory* with Maxim Sizov.

Notes

1. Listen to the best album of the year, Ashenspire's *Hostile Architecture*: "I had grown silent before I could talk" and "when you can't see the stars, you stop dreaming of space," as the lived constructed feel of embodied, disciplined ideology ("Béton Brut"); to be thought with the "This is not a house of amateurs, this is done with full intent" of "Law of Asbestos."
2. An author has brought in chewing gum as a minor detail of geopolitical significance. I consider this an invitation to bring into print in the future a work of mine on the political and philosophical significance of chewing gum. This is a warning.

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