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Bits and Pieces—Of Humanity

Peter Trnka

And holes. We start off with holes—the holes torn into flesh: of people, animals, plants, houses, hospitals, museums, schools. Holes in airports, roads, boats, and communication towers. Holes in entire infrastructures, in energy and communication grids, in environments and populations. In the dreams and lives of the imaginations of multitudes.

The bits and pieces: the *ashlaa'*, Arabic for destroyed remains and traces. Detritus, fragments, separated parts. Often without any chance to collect, preserve, or archive. In our last issue (5.1) Tahrir Hamdi, in the “Nuclear Futures: from Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Palestine and Beyond” roundtable, described the Israeli genocide in Gaza in terms of the remaining rubble, the detritus—being reduced to bits and pieces. Writing from the West Bank, Bilal Hamamra, Aya Al-Asi, and Hiba Daraghmeah now analyze *ashlaa'*—in our lead article: “The Aesthetics of *Ashlaa'*: To Remember the Dismembered in Gaza.”

What is left of humanity? What has humanity come to? To persevere doggedly, in minute, calculated and programmed detail, to erase millions of human beings, entire cultures and populations, without a trace if possible.

Hamamra *et al* “read *ashlaa'* as a palimpsestic concept: a layered site of inscription where violence attempts to overwrite Palestinian presence, yet where traces of the erased remain legible” (15). The double nature of the bit, as a destroyed part but also a memory, trace, witness, shows an overlay of resistance over atrocity, a crossing of the axis of violence and the axis of love. The significance of *ashlaa'* is shown, for example, in the death practice on the ground: “Gazans have started writing their names on their hands so others may recognize their identity after their death” (22). Reducing human being and human structures to bits and pieces is not enough. Those bits and pieces are themselves targeted for further reduction: “Israel’s attempted erasure of Palestine and Palestinians extends to the intentional destruction and erasure of *ashlaa'*, destroyed pieces” (22-3). Means for such include internationally prohibited weapons such as white phosphorus. Making it extremely difficult to count the dead (see the discussion of the Sri Lankan option below).

Hamamra *et al* identify the dual nature of *ashlaa'*: “Fragmentation itself is not resistance; it is the wound imposed by colonial power. Resistance begins when the fragment is refused as final, when the torn body is named, gathered, mourned, narrated, and restored to the collective memory of a people” (23).

Resisting attempted erasure of the being of a population or a people includes fighting against the attempted erasure of the consciousness, documenta-

tion, archival memory, narrative authority and capacity, and knowledge and recognition of that being.

Loay Abu Alsaud, also writing from the West Bank, in his “Letter from Palestine: The Governance of the Past: Archaeology, War, and Colonial Heritage Regimes in the West Bank, Palestine,” addresses exactly this strategic attempted erasure of archival memory in the current Israeli attempts to control archeology in Palestine:

recent approval, on 20 May, 2026, by the Israeli government of a plan allocating 250 million shekels (approximately 118 million Canadian dollars) for the development and control of archaeological and heritage sites in the occupied West Bank, the Jordan Valley, and the Hebron Desert represents a deeply alarming escalation in the politicization of archaeology and cultural heritage. The announced measures, which include the construction of new heritage centers, tourism infrastructure, and the expansion of Israeli administrative authority over archaeological sites, must not be viewed merely as cultural or touristic initiatives. Rather, they form part of a broader political and colonial project aimed at reshaping the historical landscape of the occupied Palestinian territories and consolidating Israeli territorial claims through the selective governance of the past. (6)

The issue is focused in Palestine but is globally significant and cuts to the core of the meaning and practice of the discipline of archaeology, according to Alsaud: “The selective use of archaeology to support contemporary political agendas undermines the credibility of the discipline itself and risks turning cultural heritage into an instrument of domination rather than preservation” (8). Alsaud clearly defines the need and urgency for a global response together with an elegant definition of his discipline:

Archaeology should contribute to dialogue, coexistence, and the protection of human history in all its diversity—not to exclusion, dispossession, or colonial expansion. The safeguarding of Palestinian cultural heritage is therefore not solely a Palestinian issue; it is a global responsibility tied to the protection of humanity’s shared past and the defense of international cultural and legal norms. (8)

In a similar vein, see the critical note in this issue from Kaori Hatsumi, “‘End is Near’ in Mullivaikkal, April 2009 in Sri Lanka” where she recounts her experience and her conversations with others in Sri Lanka in 2009 regarding the government’s operation of what has now been termed the Sri Lankan option, a state military strategy to eliminate witnesses by allowing no media, isolating and eliminating opponents, and segregating and terrifying survivors (61).

The Hole by Jihad Jarbou graces our cover. “Why can’t we fly over our sky except only at death?” she asks in this “synthesis work ... photographed in Gaza Airport, where the occupation was destroyed in 2000” (13).

Holes in our knowledge of Islam are addressed doubly by Mohamad Mahdi Davar, first in his and Mohammad Fakih’s new translation of al-Fārābī’s *Book of Religion* and second in his review of the now 20 year old but largely unrecognized *Reformation of Islamic Thought: A Critical Historical Analysis*, by Nasr Abu Zayd. As Davar states of the Abu Zayd work: “[It] was published twenty years ago. However, over that period Islamic societies have undergone many changes, and Islamic thought has been affected by these changes. The work is important for religious thinkers and reformists in Islamic societies. Furthermore, it seems there are no reviews of the book” (89). With regard to the work by al-Fārābī, Davar and Fakih write that in the past, “key concepts have been rendered into terms that carry predominantly modern, and even Christian, semantic connotations, while the Iranian and Islamic context embedded in al-Fārābī’s vocabulary ought to be taken into account” (37).

Holes in union legislation and collective bargaining (as well as research methods) are the focus of Gary Genosko’s critical note on “The Wildcat Strike Today”, following the work of

Italian Romano Alquati (b. 1935 - d. 2010), founder of the co-research (*conricerca*) method, in his land-mark studies of labour relations in the automobile and high-tech sectors, at FIAT and Olivetti specifically, in Italy during the 1960s... New information-based technologies in both plants gave rise to worker-organized strikes directly against managerial and union controls. Wildcat walk-outs were not, Alquati insisted, chaotic events, but displayed a cohesiveness that could be performed outside of official union organizations. The “spontaneous” walk-out doubly rejected managerial and union controls over working class determination of its mode of struggle. (55)

Genosko outlines how “[w]ildcat strikes are today being regained as tools for workers’ resistance against the platform capitalism of the gig economy” (57) and argues that, in line with our double-articulation thesis (bits and pieces, good and bad at the same time), “the creativity of today’s youth underground is how it imagines that new technologies provide points of entry for acts of refusal and the liberation of time” (59). (See also our anonymous letter on the institutional ambiguities and silences related to graduate student work).

Holes in the traditional academic colonial and colonizing forms of education and knowledge production are the center of Brent Saccucci’s creative intervention, “Anti-Essay: The Politics of Knowledge and Queering Colonial Academic Form.” Against the look, feel, and read of a traditional essay; for as much design freedom in this institutional boxwork. Box anti-box; “queer literacy decolonizing academic form” (76). Perhaps research could be practised and presented in ways that are joyful and fun, including many media for many literacies: transdisciplinary, transmedic. Perhaps young people might even study it. Saccucci’s is a notebook: eclectic, multimediac, transdisciplinary; an anarchic anti-method. Hence his inquiry into Paul Feyerabend, author of *Against Method*,

anarchist, and critic of traditional accounts of hegemonic, western science and rationality, in the spirit of whom Saccucci calls Canadian research into account: “In a multicultural, diverse Canada it is time we take uncomfortable, awkward, and risky steps toward decolonizing academic form” (84). Hence various deviations from this journal’s style, typeset, and layout design books (akin, for some similar research and pedagogical reasons, to some deviations in Dominique Ciavattone’s “Thinking and Feeling with Ocean(s)” in *Janus Unbound* 4.2). Doodles, drawings, thought in action, process. For what? Against colonial and other hegemonic control of knowledge production. Against epistemic violence. For epistemic equity, in Saccucci’s words, or epistemic justice. “Why can’t we perform research in new ways that disrupt?” (81) Saccucci asks, challenging any complacent conformities that might still insist that the current corrupt status quo is doing fine, and that power imbalances in the gate-keeping functions, performed and largely monopolized by the institutionalized broker agencies of the knowledge industries (media, schools, universities, research consortia, data-banks, search engines, apps, AI motors, etc).

Perform research (and dissemination) differently, queerly, that is, by way of putting performance, theatre, dress, into drag, hyperspeed, transvaluation fuckaround. Saccucci is also drag persona Sarah-Tonin. See the photographs, poetry, performance documentation, notebook entries, drawings, doodles, cartoons, and writings, and other forms of thought therein.

Multimedica is our poetry as well, with thoughts on resistance in nature and beauty, and love of the land, in Erin Wilson’s “Five Dreams, Tehkummah, Ontario, to Haysi, Virginia”.

Much future work for this journal is in production and process, following streams of thought outlined here and throughout our first ten issues. 6.1, scheduled for later this year, will be a special issue on the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, Japan in 2011, guest edited by Fazil Moradi. We are accepting submissions for our 12th issue, unthemed, until October of this year. We are also scheduled to publish the proceedings of an upcoming Academic Action Network for Palestine global webinar on epistemic violence (see the ad at the end of this issue), as well as a special issue on Rwanda edited by Stefanie Bognitz.

Biography

Peter Trnka, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Memorial University, and editor-in-chief of *Janus Unbound*, has published on figures such as Canguilhem, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Gramsci, and Marx, and on topics such as rights, communism, criticism, revolution, justice, and time. A recent publication: “Dis-joint and Multiply: Deleuze and Negri on time” (in *Deleuze and Time*, ed. D. Smith & R. Luzecky, 2023). He also has creative works, poetry, and a cookbook. Employment as a teaching assistant at a National Institutes of Mental Health institute for youth in Virginia, as well as his work as a grievance officer, financial officer, president, and chief negotiator (twice during two strikes) at the Canadian Union for Educational Workers, Local 2 in Toronto were formative of his intellectual habits. He has three children, Alexandra, Nicolas, and

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Lily; lives in Holyrood, Newfoundland; and manages a bar in St. John's called Spirit.