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Peter Trnka



Cover Image *The Hole* by Jehad Jarbou



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Janus Unbound acknowledges that the lands on which Memorial University's campuses are situated are in the traditional territories of diverse Indigenous groups, and we acknowledge, with respect and veneration, the diverse histories and cultures of the Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, Innu, and Inuit of this province.



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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

Peter Trnka

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



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The Governance of the Past: Archaeology, War, and Colonial Heritage Regimes in the West Bank, Palestine

Loay Abu Alsaud

The 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.

Archaeology should remain a scientific and humanitarian discipline dedicated to the preservation, study, and interpretation of shared human history. Across the world, archaeological heritage belongs not only to individual nations but also to humanity as a whole. However, in situations of prolonged military occupation and settler colonial expansion, archaeology is frequently transformed into a political instrument. In the occupied Palestinian territories, archaeological narratives have increasingly been mobilized to justify territorial annexation, alter historical memory, and legitimize the expansion of settlements considered illegal under international law.

Particularly alarming are recent legislative efforts to establish an “Israeli Antiquities Authority” with jurisdiction over archaeological sites in the occupied West Bank. Such initiatives directly undermine international legal frameworks governing the protection of cultural heritage in occupied territories. They stand in contradiction to the principles of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, as well as UNESCO conventions that prohibit the appropriation or unilateral transformation of cultural heritage under occupation. Cultural heritage in occupied territories must, accordingly, be protected, preserved, and managed in cooperation with the oc-

cupied population, not appropriated as an extension of military and political control.

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has strongly condemned Israel's recent decision to classify 63 archaeological sites in the occupied West Bank as "Israeli heritage." According to the Applied Research Institute–Jerusalem (ARIJ), 58 of these sites are in the Nablus Governorate, one in Salfit, and two in Ramallah. ARIJ further reports that Israel has already classified more than 2,400 Palestinian archaeological and heritage sites across the West Bank as part of Israeli heritage infrastructure. These figures reflect not isolated incidents, but rather a systematic policy aimed at the appropriation, reinterpretation, and administrative control of Palestinian cultural landscapes.

The implications of these actions extend far beyond archaeology itself. Heritage is inseparable from identity, collective memory, and the cultural continuity of communities. Palestinian archaeological sites, historic villages, sacred landscapes, and cultural monuments form an essential component of Palestinian historical identity and cultural existence. Any unilateral attempt to reframe or absorb these sites into an exclusively Israeli national narrative threatens the integrity, authenticity, and historical context of the heritage itself. Such practices contribute to the erasure of Palestinian historical presence and risk transforming archaeology into a mechanism of exclusion rather than a bridge between cultures.

The governance of archaeology under conditions of military occupation raises urgent ethical questions for the international academic and heritage community. Archaeology cannot be separated from the political realities in which it operates. Excavations, conservation projects, tourism infrastructure, naming practices, and heritage classifications all carry political implications when undertaken in occupied territories without the participation and consent of the indigenous population. In this context, the creation of archaeological parks, heritage trails, and tourism projects linked to settlements contributes not only to the physical fragmentation of Palestinian land but also to the symbolic colonization of historical narratives.

These developments are taking place amid unprecedented violence and instability in the occupied Palestinian territories. Since October 2023, more than 1,000 Palestinians in the West Bank have reportedly been killed and over 7,000 injured. At the same time, settlement expansion, land confiscation, and restrictions on Palestinian movement have intensified significantly. Against this backdrop, the expansion of Israeli control over archaeological sites cannot be understood in isolation from the broader mechanisms of occupation and territorial consolidation.

Furthermore, these actions directly contradict the July 2024 advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice, which declared Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories illegal and called for the evacuation of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Continued efforts to institutionalize Israeli control over Palestinian archaeological sites therefore not only violate international cultural heritage conventions but also challenge the broader

international legal consensus concerning the occupied status of these territories.

The international community must recognize that the struggle over archaeology in Palestine is not simply a debate about stones, ruins, or ancient history. It is fundamentally a struggle over narrative, sovereignty, memory, and the right of peoples to preserve and interpret their own cultural heritage. 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.



Figure 1: Israeli forces raid the archaeological site in the town of Sebastia (W/FA Archive, 02/12/ 2025).

UNESCO, international archaeological associations, universities, museums, and heritage organizations must therefore take immediate and responsible action. Silence in the face of such developments risks normalizing the politicization and colonial appropriation of archaeology in occupied territories. International institutions should actively support the protection of Palestinian cultural heritage, promote independent monitoring of endangered archaeological sites, and reject unilateral measures that violate international law and professional ethical standards.

Academic institutions and archaeologists worldwide also bear a moral responsibility to defend the principles of ethical archaeology and heritage justice. 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.

The Governance of the Past

The governance of the past in Palestine has become inseparable from the politics of the present. Unless the international community acts decisively, archaeology risks becoming yet another arena through which occupation, territorial control, and historical erasure are institutionalized under the language of heritage preservation.

Biography

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That Role Ends

A Canadian University Graduate Student

Graduate degree university supervision is an unusually intimate institutional arrangement, involving years of mentorship, intellectual formation, evaluation, and often true personal investment. Graduate school encourages, relies on, and profits from these relationships, yet is not accountable when they fail in ways that do not meet any formal threshold of misconduct, producing a category of harm that is real but not institutionally recognizable.

To the student, the supervisor is effectively the institution—the gatekeeper of their academic trajectory, professional networks, publication opportunities, funding, and, ultimately, of whether the student graduates, and on what note. Supervisors criticize, praise, and advise. They are expected to be formative, not just academically. And they are unregulated. “There are all kinds of relationships between students and professors,” mine said over beer, shortly before wielding institutional authority like a shield.

In “Eros, Eroticism, and the Pedagogical Process,” bell hooks argues that the transmission of knowledge is as much an erotic as a cognitive task. Distinct from sexual attraction, eros exists in the classroom as a vital, animating force (195) that propels toward learning and self-actualization. Institutions, hooks argues, tend to deny this dimension and operate as if education is neutral and uniformly administered. This suppression does a disservice to the role of the professor, as it causes the fear of losing control—conflating eros with the sexual—to override the desire to teach (199). In her own account as a young teacher, hooks doesn't realize she has been mistreating a student until acknowledging that she was erotically drawn to him: “Overly conscious then about ways such repression and denial could lead to the ‘wounding’ of students, I was determined to face whatever passions were aroused in the classroom setting and deal with them” (192). The problem is not eros in the classroom, but the inability to take responsibility for it.

Managing eros is nowhere in the supervisor's job description. Nor are they immune to the psychological responses that arise from suppressed emotions in a pseudo-intimate relationship. Under these charged and ambiguous conditions, the supervisory relationship can become about fulfilling needs that are more human than institutional. From the student's perspective, the relationship can feel uniquely meaningful precisely because it is difficult to understand. Its ambiguity reads as depth. But when the needs of the supervisor are no longer met, or their self-image has been threatened, the dynamic abruptly shifts. The student may feel betrayed but does not know by whom or what, or even if she

should. Fundamentally, she is confused about whether the injury is personal or professional.

Institutional betrayal is the concept born of Jennifer Freyd's earlier work on betrayal trauma theory to describe the harm done by an institution one depends on, not just in failing to protect, but in responding in ways that compound the harm. Research on institutional betrayal shows worse psychological outcomes than the original harm alone (Smith & Freyd, 2014), in part because the damage it does is epistemological: it attacks the ability to trust external systems of protection as well as one's own perception.

Because the student depends on her supervisor, she is motivated to preserve trust and to tolerate ambiguity when the erotic dimension of the relationship begins to operate against her academic interests. When the dynamic becomes unsustainable and the conflict feels personal, the supervisor can reassert themselves as the institution and retreat into professional language, while the student loses the ability to contest the relational aspect of the relationship.

'Hermeneutical justice' is Miranda Fricker's term for the type of harm that occurs when there are no shared interpretive resources to make sense of an experience, even to oneself. Fricker argues hermeneutical gaps are not incidental but reflect the experiences that the dominant power structure has historically deemed worth interpreting. The gaps are usually from the student's perspective, as nothing seems to fit: a workplace grievance requires documentable misconduct; a romantic betrayal presumes something mutually acknowledged; a toxic friendship ignores the power differential. Because there is no language, no narrative, for this kind of emotional fallout, it becomes hard to process and communicate to others, let alone to one's self.

This absence of form is precisely what makes institutional emails so effective: they assert a sort of genre—of “professional boundary-setting communication.” Within this form, the student is positioned as having misunderstood, and the supervisor's behavior is justified as course correction. Sara Ahmed describes such language as non-performative: naming a problem without bringing about the conditions that would resolve it (Complaint!, 2021). The language of professionalism acknowledges tension while avoiding the relational dynamics at hand, and leaves little room for pushback without either adopting the language—and accepting the terms of the genre—or else appearing unprofessional in turn.

But what was never officially named cannot be officially denied. In “Around the Performative,” Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that utterances and dynamics operating outside the official register are not without force. She describes “periperformative utterances” as those that cluster around the explicit performative, shaped by its prestige and charged with its proximity, without being governed by its constraints (75). The erotic charge in the supervisory relationship is periperformative because it forms the student without ever having to be named. To name it would invite regulation; to regulate it would dismantle the very conditions that make graduate supervision formative.

Whether intended or not, the university is protected by and benefits from the incommunicability of these pseudo-professional relationships. After extracting value in the form of output and retention, it responds with procedure when it should be with humanity. The ending is controlled by the person with institutional power. The injury remains private, the status of the supervisor is preserved, and the student is left with a loss that is difficult to process because it wasn't named—what Pauline Boss calls 'ambiguous loss' (1999).

What would it mean to communicate this harm—not as a grievance, which belongs to the institution, but as a genre that makes the experience recognizable and posits an alternate ending? This letter is my answer. “Thank you for emailing during regular work hours” was the supervisor's.

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The Hole

Jehad Jarbou

Preparation work consisting of different materials. Measurement of labour, with a spherical shape, 100 CM in circle.

The name of the work. How does it talk about the siege imposed on the residents of the city and their relationship to the sky? Why is there no airport in Gaza? Why can't we fly over our sky except only at death? It is a synthesis work that was photographed in Gaza Airport, where the occupation was destroyed in 2000.

I walk alone in a city surrounded by a feeling of the sea, the sky and the earth. My senses are restricted. I dream of life and I can't feel safe. What does a safe life look like? Is safety an angel who can't reach us, in the city that is only surrounded by death?

I walk alone in a city wrapped by the breath of sea, sky, and earth.

My senses are bound; I dream of life yet safety never comes near.

What does a safe life look like? Is safety an angel who cannot descend to us, in a city encircled only by death?

Biography

Jehad Jarbou is a visual artist based in Gaza. She works in the fields of video art, photography, texts, and artistic installations. Jehad narrates the social and political life in Gaza through poetic narratives and visual imagery.

Her art engages with concepts of land, identity, and siege, translating lived experiences into stories that reflect on the reality of the blockade imposed on Gaza.

She has produced:

- *Here Is My Life* (2024)
- *On Their Hearts They Walked* (2025)
- *Perhaps the Night* (2026)

Her work speaks about the reality of genocide



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The Aesthetics of *Ashlaa*: To Remember the Dismembered in Gaza

Bilal Hamamra, Aya Al-Asi, Hiba Daragmhah

Abstract

Drawing on, most notably, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian's writings on *ashlaa*' and Jacques Derrida's theory of trace, we analyze the aesthetics of *ashlaa*' in Gaza found in Palestinian literature. Beginning in 1948 and intensifying with the genocide that commenced in Gaza after October 7, 2023, dismembered body parts (*ashlaa*') have constituted a powerful motif in the works of Mahmoud Darwish, Edward Said, Ghassan Kanafani, Fadwa Tuqan, and many other contemporary Palestinian writers. We examine *ashlaa*' from both literal and metaphorical perspectives, as it offers both a critical register for reflecting the livability of this word in Palestinians' lives and a micropolitical and necropolitical regime of control of Gazans; it signals impending death, and renders human bodies and human artifacts torn and fragmented, what Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian has termed "necropolitical debris." The concept of *ashlaa*' extends to include architecture, ecology, land, and Palestinian identity, all of which Israeli occupation attempts to tear and even erase through the implementation of the biblical concept *Yemach Shemo*: 'may his name and memory be erased.' Thus, as Palestinians both within and outside Gaza attempt to reconstruct the bodies of the martyrs and bury them in a full form, they engage in resistance aimed at restoring Palestinian identity, sometimes physically by collecting the body parts, sometimes morally through gathering different pieces of writing to form one united text, such as this in our hand.

Keywords: *ashlaa*', death, dismemberment, genocide, identity, literature, micropolitics, necropolitics.

Introduction

Since the *Nakba* that launched Israeli settler-colonialism of Palestine in 1948, Palestinians have been subject to Israeli massacres, torture, arrests, displacement and genocide. However, the Gazacide, the Israeli genocide against Gazans that began on the 7th of October 2023, in response to Hamas' military attacks, has reached a death toll and a level of destruction of conditions of life that are of staggering disproportion to anything that has come before. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS 2025), Israel killed more than 53,339 Palestinians, 18,000 children, 12,400 women, 3,853 el-

derly, 214 journalists, 113 civil defense workers, in addition to the medical staff and paramedics, of whom 1,411 have been killed as of 20 May 2025. However, this figure is not fully accurate, since many Gazans are still missing: “[a]n additional 11,000 people remain unaccounted for—likely either missing or not yet found under rubble, according to the Palestinian health ministry” (Warnes *et al* 2025). According to PCBS, “11,200 individuals are missed.” While many Gazans remain under the rubble, many others have been transformed into *ashblaa'* (body parts): “A number of victims are still under the rubble and on the streets, and cannot be accessed” (Shurafa & Debre 2025). Also, there are 1.9 million people in Gaza who have been displaced from their houses multiple times, according to a UN official (2024).

We have collected and analyzed both fiction and non-fiction work, including many poems, elegies, personal stories, news, and articles written about the dismembered body parts of the Gazan people. We pay particular attention to works composed amid genocide, some written by Gazans and other Palestinians, others by non-Palestinian writers. Most of the works selected include specific use of the Arabic word “*ashblaa'*,” all include specific reference to the concept or general theme. We made these selections to show the suffering imposed upon the Palestinians in Gaza, who are cold-bloodedly bombed and turned into body parts, and to give mouth to the Gazans—those martyred, those who suffer bodily injury and dismemberment, and those denied the opportunity to express themselves before being turned into *ashblaa'*.

Our research explores the meaning of the word *ashblaa'* in Arabic, “dismembered body parts” in English. We have shaped our approach in a way that reflects the nature of the term, which signifies something scattered and incomplete: *ashblaa'* echoes the pain of being torn apart. To understand its full significance, we are tracking its occurrences across an extensive variety of literary works, searching for it in different contexts. These parts may seem unrelated, but together, they have the potential to form a more meaningful and complete image.

This article draws on Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian’s article, “*Ashblaa'* and the Genocide in Gaza, Livability against Fragmented Flesh,” that examines the politically charged term, *ashblaa'*, analytically from the point of view of Palestinians. However, our research engages with the aesthetics of *ashblaa'* from a literary point of view. The concept of *ashblaa'* requires a philosophical vocabulary capable of holding together bodily destruction, spatial fragmentation, and the persistence of memory after attempted erasure. We read *ashblaa'* as a palimpsestic concept: a layered site of inscription where violence attempts to overwrite Palestinian presence, yet where traces of the erased remain legible. A palimpsest does not simply replace one text with another; it preserves the pressure of what has been effaced beneath what has been newly imposed. Jacques Derrida’s (1976) thinking of the trace is useful here because the trace names what survives within erasure, what remains legible even after an attempt to efface presence. In the Palestinian context, Israeli colonial violence writes itself upon bodies, houses, villages, landscapes, archives, and names by tearing them apart, dispersing them, or rendering them unrecognizable. Yet this inscription never fully

succeeds in producing disappearance. The fragment remains a trace. Michel Foucault's (1972; 1977/1995) account of power as something exercised upon bodies, spaces, and discourses further illuminates how colonial authority inscribes itself materially upon Palestinian life. Judith Butler's (2004; 2009) reflections on vulnerability and grievability also clarify how violence operates not only by killing, but by determining whose bodies can be recognized, mourned, counted, and remembered. Read through these theoretical coordinates, *ashlaa*' names both the violent fragmentation of Palestinian bodies and land and the counter-practice through which Palestinians gather fragments into memory, literature, and resistance. The impetus of this research lies in the fact that this word has received much media coverage during the Israeli genocide against the Gaza Strip, a genocide that has transformed the strip into *ashlaa*'. Israeli military forces have destroyed 79% of the mosques, 3 churches (Anadolu Agency 2025), and at least 36 hospitals (ALJAZEERA 2025) in the Gaza strip. *Ashlaa*', in Palestinian literature, refers not only to dismembered body parts but also to parts of what was architecture: "After more than 15 months of Israel's war on Gaza nearly 70 percent of all structures in the Strip have been destroyed or damaged, along with 92 percent of all housing units" (Doctors without Borders 2025). Israel targets houses. The Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish points to the house in his prose poem "The House as Causality": "the house as casualty is also mass murder, even if it is empty of its inhabitants" and "houses are killed just like their inhabitants" (2024). The house here is rendered as a someone who witnesses the destruction and is murdered.

Palestinian poet Omar Zayadeh points to the destruction of animals in his poem "I Do not Know my *Ashlaa*"; nor Anyone Knows His":

Horses... the *ashlaa*' of horses

birds... the *ashlaa*' of birds

cats... the *ashlaa*' of cats

and carts drawn by donkeys

nothing of which survived.

(2023, lines 18-22)

خيول... أشلاء خيول،

طيور... أشلاء طيور،

قطط... أشلاء قطط،

وعربات تجرها الحمير

- ما نجا منها -

The repetition of “*ashblaa*’” emphasizes the fact that each type of animal has been fragmented, with no exception. The lines are laid out in a fragmented form, leaving spaces for ... bodies disappeared that nothing is known about. As Al-Gherbawi (2024) states:

Gaza's animals have also not been spared. Animals in captivity, on farms, in shelters and in homes have been killed or wounded in the Israeli strikes or displaced, according to several local and international organizations. Others have gone missing. Like Gaza's population, the animals that survive are suffering from the lack of food and medicine due to the Israeli blockade of the enclave.

Animals in Gaza witness *ashblaa*': killed and torn to pieces, starved, suffering from diseases, no access to care. The shortage of medical tools and doctors means Gazan people can barely be treated: “[T]here were at least 136 strikes on at least 27 hospitals and 12 other medical facilities, claiming significant casualties among doctors, nurses, medics and other civilians and causing significant damage” (UN 2024).

The aesthetics of *ashblaa*’ in Palestinian literature includes playing the role of the moral witness to the brutal Israeli practices and the massacres of the Palestinians. So Palestinian poet Hanna Abu-Hanaa’s poem “The Cry of the Wounds” (1969, lines 12-15), written two years after the Kafr Qasim massacre:

The evening still trembles at the horror of that massacre
Scenes of tragedies, engraved in my eyes by bullets
Heaps of torn limbs, gaping with blood, dust-covered
Quivering like birds, slaughtered, stumbling.

ما زال يرتعد المساء لهول ذكرى المجزرة
صور المآسي بالرصاص بمقتليه مصوره
كتل من الأشلاء فاغرة الدماء معفّره
متوّنّبات كالطيور ذبيحة متعثره

The poet offers witness to massacres by way of fragmented experiences, things that cannot be fully seen with the eye. A dark evening atmosphere. Bullets interrupting his field of vision for the events unfolding. Scenes here become incomplete, disrupted, like Palestinian bodies.

Palestinian author and politician Ghassan Kanafani's body was rendered *ashlaa*' in 1972, when Israeli agents put a grenade in Kanafani's car, exploding it, killing him instantly and distributing his *ashlaa*' on the trees:

The dismembered body of a 36-year-old man, scattered across the trees, and the charred body of a child lying 20 meters away from a car that had just exploded... This was the final scene of the life of the Palestinian writer and activist, Ghassan Kanafani, who was assassinated by the Israeli Mossad on July 8, 1972, in a car bomb explosion in Beirut, Lebanon. He was accompanied by his niece, Lamis Najm. (Al-Abdallah 2013)

Um Maron, one of the witnesses to the tragic incident, explains that people gathered Kanafani's *ashlaa*' from the trees, and they found his arm on a roof of a building, with a wristwatch still ticking (Nostalgia 2020). The trees held Kanafani's *ashlaa*'. The poet valued trees, symbols for rootedness and endurance in his work: "I shall go on fighting to reclaim my homeland, for it is my right, my memory, and the only future I dream of. There awaits me a tree and a drifting cloud, a tender shade, a sun ablaze, clouds that pour forth life, and roots too ancient, too defiant to be torn from the earth" (Kanafani 1992, 45).

Darwish, in response to the Israeli assault on Kanafani, comments: "O Palestinians. Beware of natural death! This is the only language we found among Ghassan Kanafani's flesh" (2015). Darwish articulates killing, turning the body into pieces (necropolitical language, the kind Palestinians are forced to speak in the conditions of violence wrought by settler colonialism). Darwish compares Kanafani's body with the Palestinian national body in his lamentation: "we carried you in a bag and put you in a funeral accompanied by bad songs, just as we carried the homeland in a bag and put it in a funeral that has not yet ended, accompanied by bad songs. How much the homeland resembles you! And how much you resemble the homeland!" (2015). Kanafani's fragmentation is a continuation of Palestine's:

the differences between bodies and homelands disappear—and everyone is in one bag ...; your remains are not pieces of scattered, burning flesh. They are Acre, Haifa, Jerusalem, Tiberias, and Jaffa. Blessed is the body that scatters into cities. And no Palestinian will be Palestinian if he does not gather his flesh from the wind, the roofs of neighbors' houses, and the investigation files to heal the remains. (Darwish 2015)

Every part of Kanafani's body and of the body of Palestine, represents a city separated from the other by occupation. Darwish stresses in his lamentation over the scattering of Kanafani's identity, scattered by the scattering of his body: "what's your name now? Nothing... nothing. My name is scattered among my remains. When you find my remains, you will find my name" (2015). Kanafani's targeting and assassination aimed at removing his identity as a Palestinian and a writer; Kanafani's demand to be collected reflects his insistence on maintaining his identity and his never-ending resistance against brutal occupation.

Darwish refers to *ashblaa'* in many of his literary works. In "The House as Casualty," Darwish describes the dismembering of objects under the bombardment of war:

And the memory of objects is killed: stone, wood, glass, iron, cement are **scattered in broken fragments** like living beings. And cotton, silk, linen, papers, books are torn to pieces like proscribed words. Plates, spoons, toys, records, taps, pipes, door handles, fridges, washing machines, flower vases, jars of olives and pickles, tinned food all break just like their owners. Salt, sugar, spices, boxes of matches, pills, contraceptives, antidepressants, strings of garlic, onions, tomatoes, dried okra, rice and lentils are crushed to pieces just like their owners. Rent agreements, marriage documents, birth certificates, water and electricity bills, identity cards, passports, love letters are torn to shreds like their owners' hearts. Photographs, toothbrushes, combs, cosmetics, shoes, underwear, sheets, towels fly in every direction like family secrets broadcast aloud in the devastation. (2024)

The phrase 'scattered in broken fragments' is originally written as *ashblaa'* in the source text, 'تنتثر أشلاء'. The devastation extends to inanimate objects.

The concept of *ashblaa'* has been a motif in Palestinian writings since 1948. Consider the speech by Gazan poet and writer Mosab Abu Toha: "a writer must speak on behalf of the unheard, those who cannot articulate well what they feel or see, and most importantly to me, those who lost their lives under the rubble of vicious wars" (2022). *Ashblaa'* refer to dismembered body parts but also the fragmentation of the Palestinian people, their land, and their collective identity. The Jordanian scholar Tahrir Hamdi states that imagining Palestine is a nonstop process of "constructing/reconstructing a collective, inclusive, national, and cultural identity" (2022, 14). Palestinian identity is kept alive by the continuous process of imagining; without it, the Palestinian identity would collapse. As'ad, a researcher at the Institute for Palestine Studies (2023), reports that the "blood and the dismembered bodies of children" have become "the most dominant image in Gaza." Such catastrophic scenes happen daily and frequently, until they become the norm. "Do not get used to the scene" (Nour 2024) is one of the most prevalent sayings in social media during this Gazan genocide.

The concept of *ashblaa'* has been employed metaphorically in Palestinian literature to depict the fragmentation, scattering, and pain of Palestinian people. A Palestinian child from Gaza, Abdullah Abu Sultan, titled his first novel *Ashblaa'* and claimed such would not end until the ongoing war of Gaza ends. The name *Ashblaa'* here does not indicate dismembered body parts in the literal sense but "the situation of a mother who lost her child, whose heart was shattered and turned into *ashblaa'*, and the [Palestinian] society that was displaced by the Israeli aggression and became *ashblaa'*" (Arabi 21, 2023). The living Gazans, not the dead, are torn into pieces by sadness following the loss of their loved ones. One of the famous sayings during the genocide is that "the one who died survived and those who are alive are the ones dying."

Ashlaa' also stands for Palestinian society divided and displaced. The Palestinian-American critic Edward Said explained the fragmentation Palestinian society suffers in his book *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*:

Its style and method—the interplay of text and images, the mixture of genres, modes, and styles—do not tell a consecutive story, nor do they constitute a political essay. Since the main features of our present existence are dispossession, dispersion, and yet also a kind of power income-mensurate with our stateless exile, I believe that essentially unconventional, hybrid, and fragmentary forms of expression should be used to represent us. (1999, 6)

Fragmentary forms of expression represent the Palestinians since Palestinian existence is scattered, diasporic. Gaza is itself today scattered and fragmented into parts: Beit Hanoun, Deir al Balah, Gaza City, Jabalia, Khan Younis, and Rafah. Atif Abu Bakir (2019, lines 20-23), a Palestinian poet, writes in his “Rafah city” about the fragmentation of Rafah:

Rafah — a heart split in two,

divided between two lands.

Its blood runs through a single vein and arteries,

making people brothers in both halves.

Rafah is divided between two nations: Palestine and Egypt. Rafah constitutes one place with the same blood running through it; however, it is divided, scattered.

Palestine itself is divided into *ashlaa*', fragmented between the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the 1948 territories: "Palestinians are a single, united people. Yet Israel's actions aim to fragment and divide them across Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the rest of historic Palestine" (The Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy 2025). The apartheid wall Israelis built that separates 1948 occupied lands from the West Bank has turned Palestine into *ashlaa*': "Erecting the barrier within this framework is one more tool for Israel's 'divide and rule' policy, as a result of which Palestinian Jerusalem has been shattered to pieces" (Ir Amim, n.d.). This wall is a physical entity causing fragmentation, but a psychological one at the same time, causing social fragmentation between Palestinians. Relations among Palestinians have become weaker: "Socially, the checkpoints have deprived families and relatives of the ability to connect with one another, creating a gap in social relationships that cannot be bridged by phone calls or electronic communication" (Asa'd 2023). In the West Bank, Zionists imposed many checkpoints among the Palestinian cities to hinder Palestinians' movement from one place to another: "The Israeli occupation has established a total of 849 checkpoints across the occupied West Bank, with gates blocking roads constituting a third of these obstacles, most of them are frequently closed" (Middle East Monitor 2025).

Under the weight of the physical barriers the Israeli occupation is increasingly erecting, Palestinian social norms are reshaping; some Palestinians now avoid marrying someone from another town just for the fear of the checkpoints. One Jerusalemite mother expressed her feelings as follows:

I prefer that my daughter's groom holds a Jerusalem ID, because it's difficult to apply for family unification if he has a West Bank ID. It's also hard for my daughter to live in the West Bank after marriage, as she could lose her residency in Jerusalem. The consequences are severe, it would become hard for her to visit us or even her own children in the future. (Saadah 2018)

It takes hours to travel a short distance that, without checkpoints, takes 20 minutes. Abdullah Fauzi, a banker from the northern West Bank city of Nablus, "used to take an hour" to get to work, "until Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7, 2023" when Israeli military "diverted its residents through seven new checkpoints, doubling Fauzi's time on the road" and since the ceasefire in Gaza, "it's gotten worse" (Debre 2025) as Fauzi's drive takes at least four hours now. A route that usually took no more than 20 minutes has become 4 hours. And the passage through checkpoints is often torturous and absurd.¹ As if Palestinians are awaiting their death at these checkpoints. These obstacles and separations turn Palestine and Palestinians into living *ashlaa*'.

The checkpoint permit system, in conjunction with the division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, has a profound impact, not only on physically carving up the territory but also on dividing Palestinian families, as evidenced in Israeli policy regarding residency permits for West Bank Palestinian residents for the Gaza Strip (Arel 2024). These physical barriers are deliberate colonial tactics and systematic political tools: "The destruction of cities like Jenin and Tulkarem, the suffocation of Gaza, and the increasing settler violence all serve to dismantle Palestinian political, social, and territorial continuity. By depopulating these areas, Israel seeks to make Palestinian self-determination impossible" (The Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy 2025). Through such strategies, Zionist occupation works to weaken the unity of social, familial, and political ties and turn a once-cohesive society into a map of isolated *ashlaa*'.

Displacement itself is an act of dismemberment—rendering of *ashlaa*'—as Palestinians are scattered in different places. The Palestinian poet Fadwa Tuqan (2019, lines 61-62), in "Across the Distance, I Wish I Could Fly," describes the situation of diaspora in which Palestinians live: "don't ask when and how/ the tale of diaspora and loss will end," as this dilemma of Palestinians' displacement will never end as long as the Israeli occupation continues. In *Palestinians Worldwide: A Demographic Study*, Courgobe and Nofal (2020) describe how Palestinians are scattered across almost 200 countries, including Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Gulf countries, and many other Arab and non-Arab countries. Said, introducing the Chilean writer Lina Meruane's book, *Volverse palestina* (Becoming Palestine): "it's somehow the fate of Palestinians not to end where they started but somewhere unexpected and far away" (2013, 10).

Palestinians have started using *ashlaa*' in their songs, since they have begun to believe that *ashlaa*' are a symbol for resistance: "even the intestines there re-

sist, even the *ashlaa'*, and even the fetus” “حتى الأمعاء هناك تقاوم، حتى الأشلاء حتى” (Azar 2025, 1:36). The motif of *ashlaa'* has become a motif of resistance.

The Palestinian poet Ibtisam Sadeh (2019, lines 61-62) stresses the notion of identity in her poem “Similar *Ashlaa'*”:

Collect the letters of your name
that you engraved on a place on your body
so, you won't be buried anonymously
without an identity.

Palestinians recognize the *ashlaa'* of their beloved ones from various signs: for example, “a young woman identified her mother’s *ashlaa'* from the ring on the hand; a child’s *ashlaa'* were identified from his pajamas; a brother’s *ashlaa'* were identified by the car keys in his hand; and an uncle’s *ashlaa'* were identified by the kidney dialysis tube still in his arm” (Shaloub-Kevorkian 2024).



Figures 1-4: Palestinians searching for the *ashlaa'* of their families (Palestinechannel, 2025)

Gazans have started writing their names on their hands so others may recognize their identity after their death. Ahmed Abu Sab'h, a father of children in Al-Shifa Hospital, told Aljazeera Net that, “we write our names and the names of our children on our wrists, so that our corpses may be identified if we are hit by Israeli warplanes” (Palestine Chronicle Staff 2023). Israel’s attempted erasure of Palestine and Palestinians extends to the intentional destruction and

erasure of *ashblaa'*, destroyed pieces. Israel uses internationally prohibited weapons against Palestinians in Gaza, as “based on verified video and witness accounts that Israeli forces used white phosphorus in military operations in Lebanon and Gaza” (Human Rights Watch (HRW) 2023). According to Madsen (2024), white phosphorus, which is internationally prohibited, causes significant damage to the human body: it burns the skin and internal tissues. One report states: “At least 7,820 bodies were not registered by the Ministry of Health because they never reached hospitals, having either vaporized or melted as a result of the occupation’s deadly missiles and bombs” (Saleh 2025).

The palimpsestic force of *ashblaa'* lies in this double inscription. The first inscription is colonial: the body is torn, the house is demolished, the village is renamed, the archive is damaged, the grave is disturbed, movement is obstructed, and the land is divided into isolated zones. This is the writing of violence upon Palestinian bodies and upon the body of Palestine itself. Such writing is not metaphorical only; it recalls Foucault’s (1977/1995) insistence that power acts directly upon bodies, organizes space, produces visibility, and regulates the conditions under which bodies appear as governable objects. The second inscription is Palestinian: families collect the remains of their loved ones, identify them through rings, clothes, scars, keys, or bodily signs, write names on wrists, preserve testimonies, and transform scattered remains into literary and political memory. 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. In this sense, *ashblaa'* become a counter-palimpsest: the colonial inscription of erasure is overwritten by practices of naming, witnessing, mourning, and remembrance (Derrida 1976; Butler 2004; 2009).

Micropolitics in the Palestinian context refers to Israel’s attempts to control Palestinians’ behavior, of the living and the dead. According to Foucault (1972, 223): “The production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures.” The body functions as a medium between power and discourse (Manaa 2025). The body carries the discourse produced by the power system. Discourse articulated through the power system of Israel is inscribed on Palestinian bodies, imposing control over them and transforming them into pieces of flesh. Israel’s decomposition of the Palestinians facilitates further their domination through the writing of colonial discourse on their bodies. Israel employs ‘divide and conquer’ techniques that “involve causing division among individuals to weaken them, making them easier to manipulate or control, or possibly giving the manipulator a leg up on competition” (O’Connor 2023). Lyford further supports this notion by emphasizing that there is “a grammar of the human body that parsed the human form into pieces that could be manipulated for aesthetic purpose just as words and parts of speech were mobilized in the process of poetic construction” (2000, 51). Palestinian bodies become text, deconstructed and transformed into parts (words). A Palestinian Civil Defense Worker named Rami Dababesh states that “[w]e’ve extracted martyrs, many of whom are decomposed and completely unidentifiable *ashblaa'*... We’ve found corpses of women,

children and individuals without heads as well as torn body parts" (quoted in Knell & Abu Alouf 2024).

Micropolitics, in the Gazans' dictionary, is defined differently from what's seen in other societies: social surveillance, gender expectations, and favoritism. In Gaza, micropolitics means brutal, oppressive, invasive, and systemic control over Gazans' bodies and lives. The situation is more than the bombing of Gazans' bodies, turning them into *ashlaa*'; it is the continual and slow bombing and disintegration of lives and souls. Gazans suffer from lack of water, medicine, food, and electricity. Gazans cannot move freely; there are checkpoints everywhere. Speaking your language or showing your identity is punishable. Khalil Al-Halabi, a water desalination station owner in Gaza City, states:

Electricity is a basic source of life. With electricity, everything is available for human beings. Today, after returning from the south, I began repairing my water station from some of the destruction it suffered. It is possible to operate it and provide potable water, but the major problem is the lack of electricity to run the desalination devices. (Quoted in Abdelhadi 2025)

These details are forms of daily micropolitical violence that strip the body and render it feeble, vulnerable and fragile long before death arrives. Gazans are targeted by weapons, but they are also dismantled through manipulation of ordinary basics and needs, until they begin to be fractured, thin, and at risk of vanishing: "Israel is implementing starvation policies against Palestinian civilians as a method of warfare" (FRANCE 24, 2024). The hunger of Palestinians is imposed by Israel but becomes a weapon Palestinians use to resist and prove their existence, especially when implemented by the detainees in Israeli prisons "to protest the harsh measures implemented by the Israeli authorities" (Mushtaha 2023).

Gazans' *ashlaa*' demonstrate a calculated embodiment of the political control imposed by the Israeli occupation. The occupation exerts power over life and death; it prevents access to hospitals, the entry of medicine and medical tools, and regulates which corpses are retrieved and buried. For example,

On October 13, 2023, Al-Durra Children's Hospital was targeted by Israeli forces with white phosphorus shells, prompting doctors to evacuate the hospital of wounded and sick patients; ...the Jordanian field hospital was damaged due to Israeli shelling, disrupting the delivery of healthcare to those affected; [and an] Israeli airstrike targeted Al-Quds Hospital, which was sheltering hundreds of displaced families. (Mwa-tana for Human Rights 2023)

Bureaucratic decisions function micropolitically to dismantle Gazans' bodies, physically and symbolically. Most of the time in Gaza, martyrs are buried in fragments:

Some of the bodies are severely mutilated, and only the relatives of those who have been identified or reported missing are able to claim them for burial and have them included in the death toll announced by the Ministry of Health in

Gaza during the war. However, the remaining bodies often remain stacked in the morgue's refrigerator for weeks at a time. (Sky News Arabia 2023)

The result could be termed “fragmented memory”: where a Gazan mother may recall the hand or the leg of her child that was found, or a Gazan father recognizes his daughter/son through a disfigured face. In this context, the *ashblaa'* are a metaphor for the fractured nation: a body without hands reflects a resistance suppressed, a headless corpse suggests leadership, and a corpse without a heart becomes a nation devoid of emotions; “surreality will be in any case a function of our willingness to completely defamiliarize everything... right up to the point of defamiliarizing a hand by isolating it from an arm” (Breton 1956, 3). Palestinians' identities are reconfigured into and through their *'ashblaa'*, yielding “fragmented Pain,” a form of continuous suffering, intimate and deeply embedded in the minutiae of daily violence.

Israel controls Palestinians' lives and deaths. Israel forces Palestinians to exist in a state between life and death, where they are neither alive nor fully dead. Necropolitics: how bodies are treated like the walking dead (Gržinić & Tasić 2023). Necropolitics is about controlling people's deaths. In the case of Gazans, the Israeli occupation has used necropolitics meticulously, starting from general control and moving step by step to specific control. The first and the most general control is the occupation itself. Then, the catastrophic war of October 7 comes, representing an aggressive method of controlling death in besieging Gaza and blocking water, food, medicine and healthcare from entering. The former Minister of Israel Defense Yoav Gallant says: “we are imposing a complete siege on the Gaza Strip—no electricity, no food, no water, no gas... everything is closed” (FRANCE 24, 2023). The Israeli occupation is a genocide against Gaza.

The politics of death dictates who lives and who must die, according to Cameroonian historian Achille Mbembe. However, in the Gazan context of bombing, killing, and constant dehumanization, the politics of death has shifted from the matter of who lives and who dies to the issue of who is lucky enough to be granted a normal death and who is not so lucky and dies inhumanly. Villar, in “Death as Policy: Understanding Necropolitics in Gaza and Beyond,” states that “Palestinians are not even considered human enough to die” (2024). Israel treats Palestinians as animals, stripping them of their humanity. The same Gallant stated, during the genocide: “[w]e are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly” (FRANCE 24 2023). This animal imagery is shown when Palestinians are “hastily buried without proper funeral rites, often in mass graves. Even the buried are not spared, as Israeli forces have destroyed cemeteries, dug up graves, and confiscated bodies. Similar incidents have occurred in hospitals, where the bodies of deceased patients have been seized” (Villar 2024). Palestinians are not safe even after death as their bodies are vulnerable to being destroyed and turned into *ashblaa'*. Bodies are seized and confiscated by Israel for other, future purposes. For instance, “the body of Hamas Leader Yahya Sinwar could be used as a ‘bargaining chip’ to secure the release of hostages from Gaza captivity, Israeli sources told CNN on Saturday” (*The Jerusalem Post*

2024). Some bodies, when torn into scattered pieces of flesh, are collected in bags: "they [Gazans] were collected and placed in bags, ... the amount of remains was very large ... seventy kilograms for an adult, and eighteen for a child" (Abdel Fattah 2024). Such behaviour shows again the animal-like treatment Palestinians receive from Israel, their flesh treated like meat.

Gazans fear being torn into *ashlaa*', vanishing without a trace, without a burial, and without being recognized. This fear clarifies the dual position of *ashlaa*' in Palestinian experience and literature. In its first meaning, *ashlaa*' names the violence inflicted by Israel: the tearing of bodies, the scattering of remains, the destruction of homes, the breaking of land into isolated zones, and the attempted erasure of names, graves, and memories. In this sense, *ashlaa*' are not resistance; they are the material result of colonial and necropolitical violence (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2024). Yet the term acquires a second meaning when Palestinians refuse to leave the fragments as fragments. When families search for remains, identify them, write names on wrists, bury the dead, preserve testimonies, and turn scattered bodies into poems, elegies, narratives, and archives, *ashlaa*' become a site of resistance against disappearance, since mourning and public recognition are political acts in contexts where certain lives are denied grievability (Butler 2004; 2009). Resistance, therefore, does not reside in dismemberment itself, but in the Palestinian acts of gathering, naming, mourning, narrating, and remembering that contest the erasure produced by dismemberment.

The same dual meaning applies to land and to the collective body of the Palestinian people. Israel fragments Palestine, through siege, checkpoints, walls, borders, bombardment, displacement, settlement expansion, the destruction of homes, and the separation of Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, the 1948 territories, refugee camps, prisons, and exile, producing geographic, political, and social discontinuities that have long shaped Palestinian collective life (Said 1999; Hamdi 2022; Amnesty International 2023). These are not only geographic divisions; they are forms of collective dismemberment. The Palestinian people are made to appear as scattered parts rather than as one political and historical body, even though Palestinian cultural production has repeatedly worked to reconstruct collective identity across exile, occupation, and territorial division (Said 1999; Hamdi 2022). Palestinian literature resists this fragmentation by gathering these dispersed parts into relation, insisting that Gaza is not separate from Jerusalem, that the body is not separate from the land, and that the dead are not separate from the living memory of the people. *Ashlaa*' therefore name both the fragmentation of individual bodies and the attempted fragmentation of the collective body of Palestine.

Ibrahim Al Ghoula, a young Gazan active on social media, draws his humble wish saying:

I don't want to end up in a bag. I can give up everything, except my death. I want a full shroud, 192 cm long. I won't give up my body; I want it whole. I want my arms, my legs, my heart, my head, my twenty fingers, and my eyes too. I want to return to the womb of the earth, just as I was created from it, this same earth, here in this land. I don't mind being buried in a mass grave, but I

want my name on a marker, and my age too, and to be known as someone from this slaughtered homeland. I deeply wish, with all the bitterness in my heart, that my grave be in an actual cemetery, not on a street, not on a sidewalk, or anywhere else. That is my final wish. It is my right. (Jamal 2024)

This Gazan boy is missing being treated as a human being, missing being hugged by someone, even if it is the womb of the earth. This missing can be attributed to the loss he is suffering, which left no one beside him apart from his mother earth. The Gazan poet and author Maryam Qawash describes such a fate during the Gazan genocide in one of her masterpieces:

Under the dim, stingy lamp, the three of us sat talking. "If you could choose the missile that would hit you to pass to the afterlife," one of us asked, "which one would you choose?" The first laughed for a long time, waving his hands and saying: "I want it small, just my size... I don't want it to tear me into scattered continents and islands. I want it — just a quick collision..." Then he raised his hands—mockingly—"and just like that, I'll fly faster to the sky." We laughed long and hard. Then the second said, "As for me! I want it heavy! So that the heaps of rubble would bury me, and at least I'd have a grave, even if made of rubble. I don't want stray dogs to gnaw at my body, nor do I want my corpse to swell at the edge of the roads, offending passersby..." I said, half-joking and half-serious: "I want that new missile... I heard they've invented missiles that vaporize people. As bold as I am in life, I'm too shy for my body to be scattered in death. I want my body to evaporate—un-seen, unfound. (2024)

The dim light reflects the state of Palestinians being unseen by Arab nations. Their speech about death and missiles is marginalized, not even listened or paid attention to. Death imposes its presence and is absorbed by each Palestinian. Inescapable, yet with the illusion of choosing the missile that would mark the end. These lines show the strong, unconscious desire to be buried respectfully and have a grave: "For many Palestinians trying to grieve and bury their slain loved ones, a complete body, if any at all, is a luxury many are not afforded" (Abu-Sittah 2024). The pieces of flesh are the only evidence of the existence of their beloved ones. For 1948 Palestinians the 'return key' is similar: often the only piece of evidence of their existence in Palestine.

The idea of nonhuman or inhuman death is shown in the story of Lena, a Gazan girl, who addresses her cat during the genocide as if it were a human being: "I beg you not to eat us when we die... please... if you stay alive after we die... don't eat us"(Al Jazeera 2024). The Palestinian girl here is not concerned about whether she will die or stay alive as she takes 'being dead' for granted, but she is concerned about whether her cat will give her the opportunity to die normally, or if it will turn her into *ashlaa*'.

Identity is not spared in Israel's drive to turn Palestine into *ashlaa*'. Israelis use their religious biblical term *yemach shemo* (which means "[e]rased shall be his name and his memory" (Spitz 2012)) as a symbolic method of identity purification, erasing the unworthy from collective memory. This curse is considered the worst one in Judaism and was used against Jews and non-Jews as the highest

level of condemnation. However, today it is only applied to Palestinians: “This phrase can be linked to the process of killing Palestinians and dismembering their bodies using Israeli killing machines, which results in their being rendered faceless and buried without identification” (Manna 2025). The history of this curse is biblical. It traces back to the old Persian Empire when Haman, a proud man who worked under king Ahasuerus, ordered the execution of all Jews in the empire. This curse has been employed against Palestinians since 1948. Ghānim states that “after the Zionists expelled the inhabitants from their villages and homes, they usually demolished the houses, razed them to the ground, and erased the names of the villages from the maps and records” (2013, 119).

Hamdi emphasizes that the loss Palestinians encounter is not only about “loss of space, but also the loss of its name [Palestine] on the map and the names of its villages and towns in 1948” (2017, 249). The name is the signifier that stands for the signified, which is in this case the names of the villages. Ghānim points out that “a person without a name is indefinite but with neither name nor memory is not there anymore” (2013, 119). The erasure of both name and memory is what Israel has done and continues to do in Palestine. It is not enough to erase the names of the villages, it seems, as they also attempt to erase the memories of those names by completely altering them. Turning human beings into *ashlaa*’ means erasing the names. Erasing names is intensified by erasing memories. The concept of ‘memoricide’ covers Israel’s massacring of Palestinian bodies and their cutting into *ashlaa*’. Memoricide is a technique Israel uses to remove Palestinian identity. Literally, it means ‘the killing of memories.’ This concept “is more than the destruction of world-famous archives, monuments and World Heritage sites during times of war and violent conflict. Memoricide has social and discursive dimensions ... [since it] may also target the memory of a person, a place, a group or event” (Webster 2023, 409, 413). The dismemberment of Palestinians’ bodies makes it difficult for their relatives to recognize them; “the spokesperson for forensic services in the Gaza Strip, Mahmoud Ashour, on Saturday called for serious international pressure on the Israeli enemy to allow the immediate entry of essential technical and forensic equipment,” so it becomes possible to “identify the remains of hundreds of martyrs who are still unidentified” (Saba News Agency 2026).

One way Palestinians retrieve their stolen humanity is by collecting, organizing, and reconstructing their torn bodies and pieces (*ashlaa*’) into a full form: “The process of reconstructing and recognizing these remains represents a process of reviving names and identities, as the Palestinian presence is re-acknowledged, and the memory of the martyrs is immortalized by reclaiming their identity and rejecting their erasure” (Manna 2025). Spitz describes “erasure” as “nothing less than the cutting off of a soul. Every human has a soul. That soul is a divine spark, the eternal part of his being, his personality, that will survive long after his body has turned to dust” (2012).

This essay has examined the aesthetics of *ashlaa*’ in Palestinian literature by collecting, analyzing, and connecting literary works that represent dismembered body parts, fragmented land, shattered homes, displaced communities, and wounded memory. To the best of our knowledge, no previous study has

brought together such works through a sustained analysis of the word *ashblaa'* and its literary, political, and philosophical implications. The essay has shown that, in Palestinian literature, to speak of *ashblaa'* is to speak not only of death, but also of the endurance of meaning beyond extermination and annihilation. *Ashblaa'* attain a spectral ontology: they linger, return, and refuse finality. They are more than bodily fragments; they are traces of lives, names, places, and histories that colonial violence attempts to erase but cannot fully extinguish. In this sense, *ashblaa'* should be understood not only as the outcome of violent fragmentation, but also as a palimpsestic site where the struggle between erasure and remembrance is continually inscribed.

Palestinian *ashblaa'* speak forcefully because they reject obliteration from within the very condition of fragmentation. Rather than fading, they proliferate and become uncontainable through collective memory, mourning, testimony, and literature. A palimpsest is “a manuscript or piece of writing material on which later writing has been superimposed on effaced earlier writing” (Oxford n.d.). Palestinian *ashblaa'* can be read as a living palimpsest, a layered archive in which violence, pain, memory, and resistance are inscribed upon the body and upon the land. This does not mean that fragmentation itself is resistant. The distinction is crucial: Israel produces *ashblaa'* through the violent dismemberment of bodies, homes, land, graves, archives, and collective life; Palestinians transform *ashblaa'* into sites of resistance when they gather, name, mourn, narrate, bury, and preserve the fragments against disappearance. The first inscription is colonial: bodies are torn, homes are demolished, villages are renamed, archives are damaged, graves are disturbed, and the land is divided into isolated fragments. The second inscription is Palestinian: the fragments are collected, named, mourned, narrated, buried, and restored to collective memory. Fragmentation itself is not resistance; it is the wound imposed by colonial power. Resistance begins when the fragment is refused as final. The *ashblaa'* will therefore never be just torn body parts; they are continuous memories that resist the complete erasure promised by Zionism.

This palimpsestic reading is supported by Derrida's thinking of trace and erasure. As one study explains, “the concepts of ‘erasure’ and ‘trace’ in Derrida's writing set up the notion of the palimpsest” (University of Pretoria n.d., 24). The palimpsest “provide[s] a model for the function of writing” because it shows that writing always takes place in the presence of other writings and that meaning is deferred through layered traces rather than fixed in a single origin (Ferreira-Meyers 2008, 204–14). Derrida's (1976) notion of the trace helps clarify why *ashblaa'* continue to signify beyond destruction: the fragment bears the mark of what violence seeks to remove, and the attempt at erasure leaves behind the very trace it tries to abolish.

Foucault's (1972; 1977/1995) understanding of power further clarifies how bodies and spaces become surfaces of political inscription, since power works not only through killing but also through organizing visibility, movement, discipline, and discourse. Butler's (2004; 2009) work on vulnerability and grievability also illuminates the struggle over whose bodies are recognized, counted, mourned, and remembered. Through these theoretical coordinates, Palestinian *ash-*

laa' act as a palimpsest that holds living memories of resistance and historical bodies.

What is ultimately at stake is not only the fragmentation of individual bodies, but also the fragmentation of the collective body of Palestine. Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, the 1948 territories, refugee camps, prisons, checkpoints, borders, and exile are made to function as scattered parts of a wounded national body. **This is the collective dimension of *ashlaa'*: the Palestinian people are targeted not only as separate bodies, but as a political, historical, territorial, and mnemonic body whose continuity is subjected to fragmentation.** Yet Palestinian literature gathers these dispersed parts into relation. It reassembles what colonial violence attempts to scatter. It gives form to what is meant to remain anonymous. It restores names where erasure seeks namelessness. In other words, *ashlaa'* can be reconstructed into verses, testimonies, elegies, memories, and archives, turning pain into symbolic and political power. The reconstruction of *ashlaa'* becomes an act of dignity and defiance, whether this reconstruction is physical, narrative, symbolic, or political. To remember the dismembered is therefore to resist the transformation of a people into anonymous remains. The political activism called for by *ashlaa'* is an activism of naming, witnessing, archiving, mourning, and reconstructing: it defends the right of the dead to be identified, the right of the living to remember, and the right of a people to remain legible against the colonial attempt to erase both name and memory. Such activism does not treat the fragment as a passive remainder of violence, but as a demand for public recognition, legal accountability, archival preservation, and collective reconstruction.

Biography

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Notes

1. “[In] addition to roadblocks and the 700 kilometer-long fence/wall, which Israel is still extending in and around the West Bank, mostly within the OPT, isolating Palestinian communities inside ‘military zones,’ Palestinians in these zones must obtain multiple special permits any time they enter or leave their homes or land” (Amnesty International 2023, 6).

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Book of Religion (*Kitāb al-Milla*)

Abu Nasr al-Fārābī

Translated by Mohamad Mahdi Davar and Mohammad Fakih

Translators' Introduction

Before starting Abu Nasr al-Fārābī's text, we would like to say that Charles Butterworth, in *The Political Writings*, published his English translation of this treatise by al-Fārābī in 2001. We have examined that translation, and, in several places, refer in the notes to certain lexical differences. However, producing a new translation of this Farabian work remains important: the treatise is one of al-Fārābī's most foundational works on politics, civil science, and practical philosophy, a work that his later political writings are built upon as it presents his doctrines in a concise form, while the other treatises elaborate upon the concise principles set forth here. Moreover, retranslating this work enables a renewed engagement with the text and a fresh philosophical reading grounded in careful lexical precision, something that can mark a further step in the advancement of Farabian studies. At the same time, we have several criticisms of the previous translation.

Butterworth's translation, with its linguistic accuracy and stylistic fluency, is an acceptable one that conveys to the reader most of the meanings employed by al-Fārābī. However, from the perspective of Farabian scholarship, several conceptual criticisms may be raised. Some 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. For example, Butterworth renders *umma* as "nation." However, the meaning of *umma* is broader than that of nation and typically refers to a religious community. This is precisely why *milla* in al-Fārābī's terminology, and even in the language of other early Muslim thinkers, means religion rather than nation. Therefore, it is preferable to translate *umma* as "big community" or "religious big community." This choice also allows us to grasp more clearly the distinction between pre-modern forms of community and the modern nation-state. Furthermore, in some passages, the neutral tone of the translation fails to convey the Neoplatonic and metaphysical weight of this Farabian text, written within the context of the Iranian and Islamic tradition. For these reasons, another translation of this text is needed.

Abstract

Kitāb al-Milla is the title of one of Abu Nasr al-Fārābī's short essays on politics and civil science. Nonetheless, in this treatise, as in his other treatises on politics such as *al-Siyāsāt al-Madaniyya* (*The Political Regime*) and *Ārā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* (*On the Perfect State*), al-Fārābī discusses theoretical philosophy before beginning the civil and political discussions. In *The Book of Religion*, also, al-Fārābī sets out the subjects of theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy first, in brief; these theoretical discussions serve as the foundation of practical, civil, and political discussions. The significance of this essay: it may be regarded as the basis of al-Fārābī's civil philosophy, and his other civil and political treatises are shaped in accordance with it; in other words, al-Fārābī's other political works are the elaborated form of this one. We have added section titles to help orient the reader.

(I) Rulers

Religion (*Milla*)¹ is considered to be the doctrines and actions governed by specific rules set by the First Ruler (*al-Ra'īs al-Aḥmal*)² for a community. His goal in establishing such rules is to achieve a particular purpose or desire by way of the community or the people under rule. This community could be a city, a region, a tribe, a big community (*al-ummah*), or a group of big communities.³ The First Ruler is virtuous, and his leadership (*al-rī'āsa*)⁴ is directed towards virtue.⁵ In this case, the ruler's goal in restricting doctrines is that he and everyone under his leadership achieve everlasting and ultimate happiness, which is the only true happiness. Therefore, this religion is considered a virtuous one.

However, suppose the leader's rule is ignorance (*Jahiliyyah*). In that case, his doctrine's goal is to fulfill the pursuits of ignorance, material desires, including essentials such as health, as well as hedonistic pleasure, glory, power, and domination. Moreover, only the ruler's happiness counts, while subjects are seen as tools to accomplish such. The ruler's intention may be to attain certain goods for himself and for the people; such a ruler is the most virtuous character among the ignorant. However, when leadership arises from misguidance, he enters an illusory domain and is perceived as both wise and virtuous. His subjects form this error, believing he aims for ultimate happiness, which is not the case. If the ruler's leadership is considered deliberate deception, intentional deception, his subjects may remain unaware; people will still assume him to be just and wise. He professes to rule them and himself with the aim of ultimate happiness, though, in actuality, he seeks to achieve worldly benefits for himself through his subjects.

The noble ruler who is virtuous governs based on divine revelation.⁶ However, the doctrines and actions shaping the virtuous religion are rooted in two ways, either in one alone or in both together: revealed formulated doctrine and the power of the revealer and revelation. At the same time, parts of religion are received directly, while others are divinely dictated. The process by which humans receive divine revelation has already been established and clarified within

theoretical philosophy, including the way this process awakens in the individual the capacity that flows from both the revealer and his act of revelation.

(2) Opinion

Theories and principles that exist in the virtuous community are either theoretical or voluntary opinions. What we call theoretical opinions concern:

- * God, angels, spiritual beings, and beings near to God, and their acts;
- * existence of the world and the parts of being, and the ranks of those parts;
- * the manner in which the first parts of being come into being;
- * explanation of how those bodies become the principles for other bodies, and for the ranks of bodies;
- * connection of the things of the world with one another;
- * explanation of justice;
- * explanation of how beings are connected with the truth, and with spiritual beings;
- * explanation of the existence of the human being and the acquiring of the human soul;
- * explanation of the intellect and its place in being, and its relation to God, and to spiritual beings;
- * explanation of what pertains to prophethood;
- * discussion of how revelation occurs; and
- * death, the life of the hereafter, the felicity of the righteous, and the wretchedness of vile individuals.

The second part, i.e., what we call voluntary opinions, consists of accounts of the good qualities and actions of the prophets, kings, leaders, and *imams* of the past, and the description of their lives and their communities. Likewise, the stories of ignorant kings and leaders of the past who dominated their communities are presented, and their evil actions are also described, including in what qualities they shared and toward what [worldly] and otherworldly end their own fate and the fate of their communities proceeded. The qualities of the good rulers of the present are also described, and in what respects they share with their predecessors and which good actions are specific to them. Similarly, it discusses the qualities of the rulers of misguidance who exist now, and in which qualities and in what things they share with those before them, and which actions are specific to them, and toward what end their fate will proceed. The qualities that exist in communities, including kings, rulers, servants, and all ranks, are examined in this part. The relations of individuals and the subordination of some to others are also counted among the opinions of the community.

(3) Regulation of Thoughts and Actions

Regarding actions, the most common are those deeds through which God is exalted. Next are those involving spiritual beings and angels that are revered, along with prophets, virtuous kings, *imams*,⁷ and leaders who are honored. Con-

versely, ignoble kings, wicked leaders, and *imams* of misguidance are vilified. On this basis, we may anticipate the ideas by which virtuous kings, rulers, and guiding *imams* are praised today, while others are dishonored. Accordingly, the regulation of thoughts and actions is set, by which the interconnection among the society's inhabitants is designed: whether concerning a person's desire to act or what to do in cooperation with others, or the virtuous aspects of fairness and justice throughout all parts of our actions. Hence, this forms the comprehensive structure that shapes the virtuous religion.

(4) Law and Doctrine

Religion and faith (*al-Dīn*)⁸ are represented as synonymous terms, as law (*Shari'ah*) and tradition (*Sunnah*)⁹ are often interconnected with one another.¹⁰ These latter terms, however, particularly refer to thoughts and actions forming religion. It is, still, possible to apply *Shari'ah* to specified doctrines and principles, including that of *Shari'ah* (law, especially religious law), *Millah* (religion), and *Dīn* (religion and faith), which all form synonymous designations. The religious structure, therefore, consists of two main components: beliefs and the regulation of actions. The first, known as doctrinal content, consists of two main streams. Doctrine can refer to the actual thing itself, where it is expressed by its exact name, or it can be expressed by an image representing the concept, which is identified by the name of likeness. Doctrines identified within a virtuous religion are either expressed as the truth itself or they indirectly represent it. In addition, truth forms the basis of human beings' ability to attain certainty, either immediately through our first knowledge or through demonstrative proof. Fundamentally, any religion whose followers cannot attain its doctrines, neither by themselves nor through demonstration, and which does not represent things symbolically that can be known by certainty, is a misguided religion (*Millah Ḍallāh*).¹¹

(5) Virtuous Religion and Philosophy

Virtuous religion is similar to philosophy. And philosophy is either theoretical or practical. Theoretical philosophy is the kind of philosophy that a human being comes to know but is not able to act upon, whereas practical philosophy is that in which action is possible. This is exactly like religion, which possesses two parts: beliefs and actions. The principles of the practical part of religion are established and outlined in practical philosophy. What is established in practical philosophy consists of principles that possess restricted conditions. Thus, those restricted matters are more specific than the absolute matters that lack conditions. For example, "a writing human" is more specific than "a human". Therefore, all virtuous laws and statutes belong to practical philosophy, while the demonstrative proofs of the theoretical opinions of the religion lie within theoretical philosophy and are counted among the presupposed principles of religion. On this basis, the parts of religion are counted as parts of philosophy. If something is a part of, or subordinate to, a science, it is so in one of two ways: either its demonstrations have been established in another science, or a higher science has set down the principles and has entrusted the branches to the lower science.

Practical philosophy, which is part of philosophy, provides the causes and the universal conditions that determine and specify actions, i.e., the cause and the goal of the action. Demonstrative questions are also part of the philosophy that undertakes the establishment of demonstrations, and on this basis, the proofs of the virtuous religion are established within the theoretical part of philosophy. For this reason, the task of governance in the virtuous religion is counted as part of philosophy.

(6) Argument and Persuasion

Since dialectic or topics (*al-Jadal*) creates a strong opinion (*Zann Qawī*) as demonstration (*Burbān*) provides certainty, and as rhetoric (*Khiṭābah*) yields persuasion in areas where demonstrative reasoning cannot be either appropriate or feasible, and dialectic cannot be entirely applicable; and as virtuous religion is not exclusively structured for scholars or those capable of apprehending discourse delivered purely in a philosophical manner, where it is directed toward broader social communities, many that are naturally, or, as a result of occupation, do not possess the capacity for analyzing philosophical arguments, this justifies how both dialectic and rhetoric play a significant role in the establishment of virtuous religion. However, those who are raised by religious doctrines and principles and are required to abstract their practices are not classified in the intellectual category for understanding philosophical reasoning. On the other hand, they are still capable of understanding commonly accepted opinions (*Mashburāt*) and persuasive arguments (*Muqni'āt*). In doing so, both dialectic and rhetorical forms are significant instruments for justifying religious doctrines and principles within our social community. The religious beliefs, hence, are considered credible and rationalized in the citizens' souls. Moreover, these instruments work to protect the religious doctrines from social threats, especially from those directed to undermine them through sophistic and subtle means, or those seeking to mislead the believers. Hence, both dialectic and rhetoric seek to protect and defend religious convictions from oppositions and argumentations, rather than being purely directed toward reinforcing them.

(7) Scope of Legislation

The First Ruler may not always be capable of devising and comprehensively determining all the necessary conditions. He may work on achieving most of them. However, in certain cases, some actions that he justifies may be incomplete, lacking fundamental and necessary conditions. This may justify necessary actions without prior determination. These omissions may occur for multiple reasons, where, e.g., the First Ruler may be overtaken before being able to complete the objective, which could be by death or warfare, or other obligations, that may not allow him to apprehend possible scenarios. Furthermore, it is still possible that the First Ruler does not consider legislative actions unless directed and informed by sudden events. In such cases, he legislates the actions performed in these situations. On the other hand, it is significant to consider that not all the contingencies take place during his lifetime, or within his city's restrictions. Further, many possible situations could arise in the future, where they

occur distinctly from his time and his country, requiring well-defined and interpreted actions, which he would not have legislated. Thus, the lawmaker focuses only on actions that he knows to be significant: those actions that will allow others to perform certain regulations, based on reason and analogy. By doing so, he establishes an example and leaves the rest, believing that those who follow his path will be able to legislate what is coming. Intentionally, and uniquely, he may begin legislating those actions holding certain significance and capacity to structure the city and the surrounding community. Following this way, he works exclusively on the foundational laws and defers the others, reasoning that he may have the chance to address them, or that others, whether in the present or future, can apprehend them following his model.

(8) Change in Law

The ruler who assumes authority after the First Ruler's death may also, like the First Ruler, determine actions and establish laws and statutes, i.e., he may determine what is most fitting in his own time; and, indeed, were the earlier ruler present, he would enact the very same measures. The new ruler may also alter certain laws, not because a law was in error or because the First Ruler was mistaken, but because such an alteration is beneficial in the present time. Were the First Ruler present at that same time, and were he to observe the circumstances, he would implement these changes. The same applies to the ruler who comes after the second ruler, i.e., the third and the fourth. They, too, may determine certain actions in such a way that, were the earlier ruler present, he would make the same determination.

(9) Jurisprudence

If one of those rulers, who is distinguished as a truth king, dies and is not followed by someone sharing his qualities in all respects, then it becomes indispensable to follow the authoritative beliefs of that predecessor without applying alterations or modifications. Everything that the ruler attained must not change. Regarding matters that require resolution but are not yet addressed by the predecessor, such ought to be inferred from the provisions explicitly attained by the First Ruler. Regarding these situations, it becomes significant to practice jurisprudence (*fiqh*), to enable an individual to infer the proper judgment for issues that remain undefined by the lawgiver, relying on the foundational ruling matters. Hence, the aim is to prove that any derivatives align with the lawgiver's purposes in instituting the religion for the legislated community. Moreover, this interpretation cannot be attained where the principles and beliefs of religion must be maintained, except by the virtuous person who embodies the virtues expressed by that religion, and this person is known as the jurist (*faqih*).

(10) Division of Jurisprudence

Just as religion is divided into opinions and actions, so the formulation of these opinions and actions is divided into these two parts. Therefore, one part of this discipline deals with opinions, and another part deals with actions. The jurist, with respect to actions, must be knowledgeable of everything that has been ex-

plicitly stated concerning actions by the one who instituted the *sharī'ah*. This explicit indication is either by his speech or by the act of the institutor of the *sharī'ah*. And the act of the institutor of the *sharī'ah* carries the same force as his speech. He should also know the statutes that existed at one time and were altered at another. He must be familiar with the language addressed to the First Ruler and should also know the linguistic usages of the people of his time. He must know indications and metaphors to attain true meanings. He must know what has been designated for what, and what is intended by the expression of any given matter. He should possess sufficient acuity to distinguish well between homonymous terms, and to recognize particular and universal, restricted and absolute, expressions. He must also recognize what is outwardly particular, though universality is intended, and when the purpose of an expression of a particular term is universal or absolute, in accordance with what appears from its outward form. He must also know the habits and well-known conventions of the people, what is ambiguous and what is divergent. And he must possess the faculty to distinguish what is essential to a thing from what is not essential to it.

These matters can only be attained through acuity and mastery of the discipline of jurisprudence. What pertains to speech is understood only through speech. And what has entered the *sharī'ah* through action is discovered through observing or hearing that matter. Such discovery occurs for the jurist either because he lived in the time of the institutor, belonged to his companions, and personally observed or heard the act, or because he attained it through reports. These reports are either well-known and accepted opinion (*mashhūr*) or persuasive (*muqni'ah*), and each of these is either written or unwritten. On the other hand, the jurist, regarding opinions, must also master everything that the jurist knows concerning actions. Jurisprudence regarding the practical matters of religion consists of those particulars whose universals have been established in civil science or politics (*al-'ilm al-madani*) and is counted among the branches of civil and practical wisdom. Jurisprudence concerning the domain of beliefs also consists of particulars whose universals have been established in theoretical philosophy, therefore, that part belongs to theoretical philosophy.

(II) Civil Science and Happiness

Civil science¹² starts by explaining the concept of happiness (*Sa'ādah*). It states that happiness is classified into two main kinds: one is considered to be such without truly being so, and the other is a genuine one. True happiness is that which occurs for its own sake, not as a means for another thing. All other things, however, act as a way of reaching this ultimate aim, which, once it is attained, ends the quest. This true happiness is realized in the other life, or the existence following this one; it is known as the ultimate happiness (*al-Sa'ādah al-Quswā*).¹³ By contrast, things that are commonly related to happiness, which in reality are not, include wealth, material pleasures, honor, and other desires that ordinary people (*al-Jumhūr*)¹⁴ mistakenly classify as goods.

(12) Civil Science Continued

Then, [civil science, after discussing happiness,] discusses human actions (*al-af'āl*),¹⁵ courses of life (*al-siyar*),¹⁶ morality (*al-akhlāq*),¹⁷ natural dispositions (*al-shiyam*),¹⁸ and voluntary habits (*al-malakāt al-irādīyya*)¹⁹ comprehensively.

(13) Cooperative Community

According to [civil science] these human actions cannot exist within a single person; nor can a single person employ all of them. Rather, they can only be used and manifested in actuality when they are distributed among a group of people. When these actions are distributed across a community, it is not possible for the one to whom a certain type of task has been assigned to perform or exercise it without being assisted by another person, to whom another type of task has been entrusted; nor can that second person carry out what has been assigned to him or her without the cooperation of a third person entrusted with another type of task. Moreover, it is not impossible that among them there may be someone who cannot perform the task assigned to him or her without being assisted by several others, each of whom helps with the type of task assigned to him or her. For example, the one who is entrusted with the task of farming cannot complete his or her work without: the help of the carpenter, who prepares for him or her the wooden part of the plow; the blacksmith, who forges the iron part of the plow; and the ox-driver, who provides the oxen for plowing. Human actions and habits cannot achieve their intended purpose unless their various kinds are distributed among a large community, each individual possessing one or another [action or habit] in such a way that, through their collective actions and habits, the overall goal is completed by the community as a whole, just as the organs of a human being cooperate through their respective faculties to complete the function of the body as a whole. Therefore, such a community should live together in proximity, in a single dwelling place. There are several types of communities that live together in one habitation, some being civic communities (*jama' a madaniyya*),²⁰ non-civil communities (*jama' a ummiyya*),²¹ and others.

(14) Flourishing Life

[Civil science] then distinguishes the courses of life, morality, and habits, which, when practiced in cities or big communities, make their dwellings flourish and enable their inhabitants to attain good things in this worldly life, and ultimate happiness in the afterlife, separating them from those that are not so. The actions, courses of life, morality, natural dispositions, and habits through which ultimate happiness is attained are the only virtuous ones, the only truly good ones, and the only truly beautiful ones. All others among the actions and habits, though presumed to be goods, virtues, or beautiful things, are, in reality, evils.

(14A) Rulership and Politics

And [civil science] clarifies that what is meant to be distributed in the city, or in the cities, or in a big community, or among big communities, so that it may

be used in common, can only be achieved through rulership that secures those actions and habits in the city or the big community, and strives to preserve them among the people, so that they do not vanish or perish. And that rulership, through which those courses of life and habits are secured and preserved among them, cannot exist except by a profession and craft, and a habit and power, from which arise the actions by which [the courses of life and habits] are secured and preserved among the people. And this profession is the profession of kingship, the royal profession (*al-miḥan al-malikīyya*), or whatever one wishes to call it in place of the name “kingship.” And politics is the activity of this profession, i.e., the performing of the actions through which those courses of life and those habits are established in the city and big community and preserved for them. This profession is made coherent only through knowledge of all the actions by which the establishment is first achieved and preserved thereafter. And the rulership through which, in the city or big community, the courses of life and the habits by which ultimate happiness is attained are established and preserved for them, is the virtuous rulership. And the royal profession by which this rulership comes to be is the virtuous royal profession. And the politics that issues from this profession is the virtuous politics. And the city or big community that follows this politics is the virtuous city and the virtuous community. And the human being who is a part of this city or big community is a virtuous human being.

As for the rulership, the royal profession,²² and the politics²³ whose aim is not the attainment of ultimate happiness, which is happiness in truth, but rather the attainment of some good among the goods of this worldly life alone, i.e., those things that the multitude imagines to be goods: it is not virtuous. Rather, it is called ignorant rulership,²⁴ ignorant politics, and an ignorant profession. Indeed, it is not even called kingship, for kingship, according to the ancient [sages], is only that which is based on a virtuous royal profession. And the city or big community that follows the actions and dispositions established in it by the ignorant rulership is called the ignorant city or the ignorant community. And the human being who is a part of this city is called an ignorant human being. These forms of rulership, cities, and big communities are divided into many classes, and each one is named according to the aim it seeks among the supposed goods. These goals are either pleasures, or honors, or wealth, or something of that sort. And no one who is a part of the virtuous city may reside, whether willingly or unwillingly, in an ignorant city. Such a person would be, within that city, a foreign element, as an animal has, for example, a leg belonging to another species inferior to it. The condition of someone who is a part of an ignorant city, when he resides in a virtuous city, is similar: they are not, for example, like an animal whose head is that of a superior species. This is why the virtuous, who were compelled to dwell in ignorant cities due to the absence of a virtuous city, have needed to emigrate to the virtuous city, whenever it happened to exist at some time.

(I4B) Virtuous Rule

Virtuous rulership (*al-ri'āsa al-fāḍila*) is of two kinds: a primary rulership (*ri'āsa ulā*)²⁵ and a subordinate rulership (*ri'āsa tābi'a lil-ulā*).²⁶ The primary governs the city or big community through virtuous courses of life (*al-siyar al-fāḍila*) and virtuous habits (*al-malakāt al-fāḍila*). The other follows it and imitates it, yet differs from it in that it is separated from the virtuous courses of life and follows the ignorant ones (*al-siyar al-jāhiliyya*). The one who governs by means of the former rulership is the First Ruler, and the one who governs by means of the subordinate rulership, which suffices with preserving the first rulership and the one who governs by it, is called the ruler of the tradition (*ra'īs al-sunna*) and the king of the tradition (*malik al-sunna*), and his rulership is the rulership of the tradition (*al-ri'āsa al-sunniyya*).²⁷ The royal profession of the primary virtuous rulership (*al-mihna al-malakiyya al-fāḍila al-ulā*) consists in knowing all the actions by which the virtuous courses of life and virtuous habits (*al-malakāt al-fāḍila*) are established and preserved in cities and big communities, maintaining and guarding them from anything of the ignorant courses of life that may enter among them. For all of that endangers the virtuous cities, just as, for example, in the medical profession (*mihnat al-ṭibb*), health (*al-ṣiḥḥa*) is maintained in the human being and preserved from diseases by knowing all the actions that sustain and protect it and guard it from whatever may expose it to illness.

(I4C) Physician's Individual Attention

And the physician should make clear that opposites must be resisted by their opposites. They should also know that heat is resisted by cold, and that bilious fevers ought to be treated with barley water or tamarind water. And these three are of varying degrees of generality. The most general is that opposites ought to be resisted by their opposites. The most specific is that bilious fevers ought to be treated with barley water. Our statement that heat is resisted by cold is intermediate between the general and the specific. Except that when the physician treats, he treats only the bodies of individual persons, such as the body of *Zayd* or the body of 'Amr. It does not suffice, in treating *Zayd's* bilious fever,²⁸ to know of the principle that opposites ought to be resisted by their opposites, nor the rule that bilious fevers ought to be treated with barley water, without knowing, in *Zayd's* fever, something more specific than those things he knows from the craft. He examines whether this bilious fever ought to be resisted with barley water due to an abundance in his body of cold, moist things, or whether the barley water corrects the humoral mixture so that it should not be left to drain, and similar things. And if barley water ought to be administered, it is not sufficient to know this as an absolute knowledge, without knowing how much of it ought to be administered in quantity, the consistency, its thickness and thinness, at what time of the day it ought to be administered, and in what condition *Zayd*, the fevered person, ought to be in for it to be administered. Thus, the physician has estimated quantity, quality, and time, and they cannot estimate such without observing the patient. Their estimation is according to what they observe of the condition of this patient, who is *Zayd*. And this estimation can-

not be derived from the medical books they studied and trained with, nor from their ability to know the generalities and universal things established in medical books, but rather by another power that arises from practicing the acts of medicine on individual bodies one by one, and through prolonged observation of the conditions of patients and the experience they gain over time from engagement in treating and attending to persons.

Therefore, the perfect physician's craft is only completed when they can bring forth the acts arising from that craft by two powers: one is the ability to know the universals, which are the parts of their craft in the absolute, and to exhaust them so that nothing escapes them; and then the power that arises to them from the prolonged acts of the craft on individual persons.

(14D) Intellect

And so it is with the case of the primary royal profession, for it encompasses universal things. Yet it does not suffice to perform its acts merely by having comprehended the knowledge of the universals and by one's capacity for them, without having another power through prolonged experience and observation, by which one can determine the acts in their quantities, qualities, times, and all other conditions by which acts can be measured. These conditions may pertain either to a city, a community, or an individual, or according to a circumstance that arises at a given time. For the acts of the royal profession pertain to particular cities, i.e., this city and that city, or this community and that community, or this individual and that individual. The power by which a person can deduce the conditions by which acts are determined, based on what he observes in assemblies, city by city, group by group, or individual by individual, and according to circumstances arising in a city, a community, or an individual, is what the ancients called intellect. And this power is not attained merely by knowing all the universals of the profession and exhausting them, but rather through prolonged experience with individuals.

(15) Science of Particulars

Civil science is that part of philosophy which is confined to examining actions, courses of life, and habits, while the rest of philosophy examines universals and gives their definitions. It also investigates how, by what means, and to what extent particulars should be determined, and by what means they should not be determined, since estimation by actuality (*bi'l-fi'l*) pertains to another faculty beyond philosophy. Perhaps the conditions and accidents of this faculty are such that estimation by actuality is infinite, unbounded. This science consists of two parts. One part includes: the definition of happiness; what true happiness is; what things are thought to be happiness; the enumeration of actions, courses of life, natural dispositions, and habits whose nature it is to exist in cities and communities; and it distinguishes the virtuous from the non-virtuous among them. The second part includes the definition of those actions which render the cities and their people virtuous and preserve the virtuous habits and actions that maintain what has been established among them.

(16) Diseases of Cities

[Civil science] then investigates the kinds of royal professions that are non-virtuous and the number of their [rulerships], and it provides the descriptions of the actions performed by each of those royal professions through which they attain their purpose among the people of the cities under their authority. It shows that those actions, courses of life, and habits which are non-virtuous are the diseases of the virtuous cities, and that their courses of life and policies are the diseases of the virtuous royal profession. As for the actions, courses of life, and habits in the non-virtuous cities, they are the diseases of the virtuous cities.

(17) Corruption

[Civil science] then investigates the causes and factors by which, in most cases, the virtuous rulerships and the courses of life of the virtuous cities are liable to be transformed into non-virtuous ones, and it explains how these transformations into the non-virtuous occur. It also investigates and defines the actions by which the virtuous cities and their policies are preserved from corruption and prevented from turning into the non-virtuous, as well as the means by which, if they have been transformed and have fallen ill, they may be restored to their soundness.

(18) Intellection and Experience

The primary virtuous royal craft cannot have its actions accomplished perfectly unless the universal principles of this art are known, by conjoining it with theoretical philosophy, and by adding to it intellection (*al-ta'addul*), the faculty attained through experience that comes from long engagement with the actions of craft in the individual cities, and big communities, and in each particular group. This faculty is the capacity for accurately deriving the conditions by which actions, courses of life, and habits are determined for each group, or each city, or each big community, whether according to some short period of time or some long, but limited, period, or, if possible, according to the general temporal span. Determining them according to each state that occurs and each circumstance that arises, in the city, or in the big community, or in the group. This is what completes the primary virtuous royal craft.

As for the secondary one, whose rulership is traditional (*sunniyah*), it does not by nature require philosophy. The best and most excellent condition in the virtuous cities and big communities is that their rulers, who succeed one another through time, conform to the conditions of the First Ruler. [Civil science] explains how one ought to act so that the kings who succeed one another be in identical states of virtue, and what conditions must be examined in the children of the kings of the city so that, if these conditions are found in one of them, there may be hope that he will become a king in the same condition as the First Ruler. It explains how [a new ruler] ought to be educated and brought up, and through what discipline he ought to be trained until he becomes a king, completely.

[Civil science] also explains that the kings whose rule is ignorant do not need the universals of this craft nor philosophy; rather, each one of them may

attain his purpose in the city through experience acquired in the kinds of actions through which he reaches his intended aim among the supposed goods. If he has an evil disposition, and is strong in achieving what he needs, determining the actions he performs and the actions through which he employs the people of the city, his craft (which makes him a ruler) is thus composed of things acquired by experience, whether by his own experience or by the experience of someone else who shares his aim among the kings, whose aim is the same as his, and whom he imitates in this, or takes instruction from him; and he adds to it what he himself has experienced, together with what he has derived through his own natural disposition and cunning from the foundational principles he attained through experience.

(19) Rank

[Civil science] then defines the ranks of the things that are in the world. In general, the ranks of existents. It begins with the things that are most posterior in relation to the parts of the world; those that have no rulership over anything at all, and from which there issue only actions by which they serve, not actions by which they exercise rulership. And from these it ascends to the things that rule over them without any intermediary, which are the nearest of the things that rule over them. And it recognizes their ranks with respect to rulership, i.e., what those ranks are and the extent of their rulership. They do not yet possess complete rulership, and the natural dispositions and powers they have are not sufficient for them to hold rulership by themselves, and to dispense with being ruled by something else; rather, there must exist higher rulerships above them that govern them. [Civil science] then ascends from [these dependent things] to the nearest things that hold rulership over them, and it identifies their ranks in rulership, what those ranks are, and the extent of their rulership. They also do not yet possess complete rulership, and the natural dispositions and powers they possess are not sufficient for them to hold rulership by themselves, and to dispense with being ruled by something else; rather, there must exist higher rulerships above them that govern them. Then [civil science] ascends from these [intermediary things] to the nearest things that rule over them, and it identifies their ranks in rulership, what those ranks are, and the measures of their rulership; they also are not complete, although they are more complete than the rulerships below them; and their natural powers and dispositions are still not sufficient for their rulership to be by themselves so that they would have no ruler at all; rather, it is necessary that above them exist other rulerships that govern them. Then [civil science] ascends again to the nearest things that rule over these as well, and it identifies concerning them what it identified concerning the first ones.

[Civil science] continues ascending in this way from the things in lower ranks to the things in higher ranks, that possess rulership more complete than those below them; and thus, it ascends from the more perfect to the still more perfect among existents. It identifies that whenever it ascends to a higher rank and to an existent that is more perfect in-itself and more perfect in rulership, it follows necessarily that the number of existents in that rank is fewer, and that

each existent within it is more unified in-itself and less multiple. It also explains that multiplicity in a thing and the unity by which it is one proceed accordingly. [Civil science] continues ascending along the completion of this order from a rank of rulership to a rank of rulership more complete than it until it arrives at a rank in which there can be only a single existent, one in number and one with respect to every mode of unity, and above which no rulership can exist. Rather, the ruler that occupies that rank governs everything beneath it, and it is impossible for anything else whatsoever to govern it or to be superior to it, and it rules everything below it. It cannot possess deficiency in any respect whatsoever, and there cannot be a perfection more complete than its perfection, nor an existence better than its existence; whereas everything beneath it has, in some respect, deficiency, and the rank nearest to it is the most perfect of the ranks beneath its own.

(20) Service

And whenever things decline, the beings in each rank increase in number and decrease in perfection, until they reach the lowest of beings, whose actions are acts of service. And these lower beings are nothing more than remote in existence, and it is impossible for their actions to be acts of rulership at all. Also, the First One, the One Most Primordial, of whom nothing can be more prior, cannot have its action be an act of service at all. And each one of the intermediates, which occupy the ranks below the First Ruler, has actions that, in relation to those below them, are acts of rulership by which they serve the First Ruler.

[Civil science] also explains the concord and connection between things: their order, the order of their actions, and their mutual support, such that, despite their multiplicity, they form a single entity through the power of the governance of that One and His influence upon all of them; according to His rank and according to what is necessary for the being of that rank in existence, in accordance with its natural capacity and what it is required to entrust to it in terms of actions, whether serving, ruling, or both.

(21) Analogy to the Soul

Then [civil science] adopts the counterparts of this [hierarchy of the cosmos] within the faculties of the human soul (*al-quwā al-nafsāniyya al-insāniyya*).

(22) Analogy to Organs

Then it also adopts these analogues in the human body's organs.

(23) Adoption of Analogies

Then it adopts these analogies in the Virtuous City and considers the rank of the First Ruler [in society] like the rank of God toward all beings in the cosmos.

(24) Service of Intermediary Ranks

Then [civil science] continues to descend through the ranks until it reaches the classes of the inhabitants of the city whose actions are such that they cannot

rule through them but only serve, and whose habits are such that they cannot rule through them but only serve. The classes in the intermediate ranks perform actions by which they rule those below them and serve those above them. The closer a group is to the rank of the king, the more complete are their dispositions and actions. Therefore, their leadership is more perfect, until the order reaches the royal profession. This profession cannot be one through which a person serves at all, but rather it is a profession and a disposition through which one only rules.

(25) Rule without Service

[Civil science] then begins thereafter to ascend from the lowest ranks, which are the ranks of service (*marātib al-khidma*), to the next higher ranks of leadership. It continues to ascend, in discourse and description, from a lower rank to a higher one until one reaches the rank of the ruler of the city (*malik al-madina*), who rules but does not serve.

(26) The Faithful and the Exalted

Then [civil science] ascends from that rank to the rank of the ruler of the Virtuous City and the First Ruler of spiritual beings, who is designated as the Faithful Spirit (Gabriel). It is through him that God (the Exalted) communicates with the First Ruler of the city, so that he may contemplate his own rank and determine which rank it is among the ranks of the spiritual beings.

(27) World Governance

[Civil science] then continues thus to ascend in its definition until it arrives at God (exalted be His praise). And it sets out how revelation descends from Him, rank by rank, to the First Ruler; and how the First Ruler governs the city, or the big community, and the big communities, by means of the revelation from God (the Exalted). Governance likewise proceeds from the First Ruler to every division of the city, also in ordered sequence, until it reaches the final divisions. And [civil science] explains this by showing that God (the Exalted) is also the governor of the Virtuous City just as He is the governor of the world; and that His governance of the world is in one manner, while His governance of the Virtuous City is in another manner, yet there is a proportion between the two kinds of governance, and a proportion between the parts of the world and the parts of the Virtuous City or the virtuous community. And it further shows that there must also be concord, connection, order, and mutual support in actions among the parts of the virtuous community; and that just as the concord, connection, order, and mutual support in actions found in the parts of the world arise from the natural dispositions they possess, so too there must be their corresponding counterparts in the divisions of the virtuous community arising from the voluntary dispositions and virtues they possess. And just as the Governor of the world has placed within the parts of the world natural dispositions through which they come to be in concord, order, connection, and mutual support in actions, so that, despite their multiplicity and the multiplicity of their actions, they become a single thing performing a single act for a single

end, so too must the Governor of the big community establish and imprint within the souls of the divisions of the community and the city, voluntary dispositions and qualities that impel them toward that mutual concord, connection, and mutual support in actions, until the community, and the communities, despite the multiplicity of their divisions, the differences of their ranks, and the multiplicity of their actions, become a single thing performing a single act, by which it attains a single end. And something analogous to this becomes clear to one who reflects on the members of the human body.

And just as the Governor of the world has given to the world and its parts, along with the natures and innate dispositions He has implanted in them, other things by which the existence of the world and its divisions is preserved and maintained in accordance with the way He originally fashioned them for a very long duration, so too must the Governor of the virtuous nation act. For he must not restrict himself to the virtuous dispositions and voluntary qualities that he imprints in their souls, so that they may come to concord, connection, and mutual support in actions, without also providing, together with these, other things through which their preservation and continued steadfastness in the virtues and goods he implanted in them from the outset may be sought. And in sum, he ought to take God (the Exalted) as his model and follow the traces of the governance of the Governor of the world in what He has given to the various kinds of beings, and in what He has ordered for them, the innate dispositions, natural constitutions, and natural qualities He has placed and implanted in them, so that natural goods may be perfected for each class of beings, according to its rank, and for the totality of beings as well. Thus, he must likewise establish in the cities and nations their counterparts, of crafts and voluntary dispositions and voluntary qualities, so that voluntary goods may, in turn, be completed for each of the cities and communities, according to its rank and its worthiness, so that by means of this the groups of communities and cities may attain happiness in this life and in the life to come (other worldly life). And for this reason, it is also necessary that the First Ruler of the Virtuous City should have fully comprehended theoretical philosophy, for it is not possible to grasp anything of what is in the world of God's (the Exalted's) governance and to model oneself upon it except through that. And it becomes clear, in conjunction with this, that all of this can only be realized in cities that form a common community, in which their views, beliefs, and actions are shared, and in which their divisions come to concord, are connected, and ordered; and in that case, their actions mutually reinforce and cooperate until they achieve the intended end, which is ultimate happiness.

Biography

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Notes

1. “Milla” (المِلَّة), or religion, in this sense, is more than just “faith,” as it refers to a comprehensive system of doctrines, laws, beliefs, and practices for ordering a community or communities. Furthermore, it reflects a fusion of political rule and religious guidance in al-Fārābī’s political philosophy and theology (regarding the term “political theology” see Belo (2021)). In addition, it seems that “Milla” in al-Fārābī’s philosophy refers to a religious community having divine law based on revelation.
2. In al-Fārābī’s view, the Prophet is the First Ruler (*‘Aql al-Fa‘āl*), because the Prophet is able to receive revelation from the Active Intellect as a main source of law (see al-Fārābī 2001, 69).
3. In Butterworth’s (2001) translation, “ummah” is translated as “nation”. Although “nation” is not an inappropriate rendering, it should be noted that the term “nation”, in the modern period, signifies a “nation-state”. “Millah” in Arabic and even in the contemporary Persian was used in the pre-modern Islamic context to mean “religion,” referring to a religious community. In this text of al-Fārābī, “ummah” designates the large religious community. For this reason, we have used “big community” in our translation.
4. The use of masculine pronouns for the First Ruler in al-Fārābī’s texts is because by the First Ruler is meant the Prophet, and the Prophet is male. Nevertheless, most of the attributes al-Fārābī’s assigns to the successors of the First Ruler are not gender-specific, and therefore it appears that the rulers of the Virtuous City after the First Ruler are not restricted to any particular gender.
5. Virtue here is connected to wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and knowledge of ultimate ends (i.e., happiness), and we can see some Platonic roots in this discussion, i.e., “the philosopher-king model”, in al-Fārābī’s view.
6. “Revelation” plays an important role in not only al-Fārābī’s philosophy, but also in Islamic thought in general; al-Fārābī uses Aristotelian and Neoplatonic ideas regarding the intellect together with Islamic prophet-hood, and revelation can inspire not only knowledge but a legislative faculty.
7. “Imams” in Butterworth’s (2001) translation, are “the righteous rulers”.
8. Butterworth (2001) translates “al-Dīn” as “creed”.

9. Butterworth (2001) also translates “Sharī‘ah” as “law” and “Sunnah” as “tradition”.
10. *Sunnah* or traditions mostly refers to Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) traditions, namely, his sayings, actions, and tactical approvals as the way of life for Muslims and all humankind. However, *Shari‘ah*, i.e., Islamic law, or law in general, refers to laws adopted from the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah*. *Shari‘ah* also can govern both legal and ethical dimensions of life.
11. Butterworth (2001) translates “Millah Ḍāllah” as “errant religion”.
12. Butterworth (2001) translates as “political science”, whereas al-Fārābī himself identifies civil science with politics or political science.
13. Butterworth (2001) also translates “ultimate happiness”.
14. Butterworth (2001) translates “multitude”.
15. Butterworth (2001) translates “voluntary actions”.
16. Butterworth (2001) translates “ways of life”.
17. Butterworth (2001) translates “moral habits”.
18. Butterworth (2001) translates “states of character”.
19. Butterworth (2001) translates “dispositions”.
20. Butterworth (2001) translates “civic association”.
21. Butterworth (2001) translates “natural association”.
22. Butterworth (2001) translates “kingly craft”.
23. Butterworth (2001) translates “regime”.
24. Butterworth (2001) also translates “ignorant rulership”.
25. Butterworth (2001) translates “first rulership”.
26. Butterworth (2001) translates “rulership dependent on it”.
27. The ruler of the tradition and the king of the tradition is the same, and because the ruler of tradition’s government is based on the First Ruler’s manners and traditions, al-Fārābī uses “tradition”.
28. Butterworth (2001) translates “jaundice”.

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The Wildcat Strike Today

Gary Genosko

The frustrations with technological exploitation experienced by mass industrial labour gave rise to a new form of struggle: the wildcat strike. The study of wildcat actions was pioneered by Italian Romano Alquati (b. 1935 - d. 2010), founder of the co-research (*conricerca*) method,¹ in his landmark studies of labour relations in the automobile and high-tech sectors, at FIAT and Olivetti specifically, in Italy during the 1960s (Alquati 1961 and 1964). 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.

As an unmediated act of struggle managed by and for workers, the wildcat in its historical context was a force that furthered labour’s continuous recomposition of itself against capital. In this respect, labour moved beyond specific demand-based struggles, subject to periodic negotiation, inked in contracts, and defended through processes such as grievance procedures, and thus called into question the role of the contractual relation and its settlement that, as far as technology was concerned, basically put into writing the crushing of workers under the alibi of capital’s drive to ‘modernize’—often a euphemism for the reduction of labour costs. In the case of family run Olivetti, famous for its calculators and typewriters, the myth of a happy factory was propagated as part of an integrated company town, yet the pressures of transistorization ran up against more artisanal modes of unit assembly, as workers became less skilled and automated production lines eventually reduced the workforce. Alquati taught us how to decode the rhetoric of the company town and to analyze how new information technologies changed the work environment.

The character of the wildcat strike emerged in its relative unpredictability; often in demand-less aims; advanced forms of non-collaboration and the invisibility of its organization; its fulsome refusal and scandalous spoilage of so-called existing workplace cooperation; and in workers’ attempts to reduce the working day as a means of controlling their own struggles through demands that neither management nor unions could possibly get behind. This diffuse malcontent took many creative shapes. The use of irony, ridicule, sarcasm, anti-political actions—mocking chants, street theatre, artistic nihilism, pirate radio, zines, memes, blogs, all popular among countercultural urban youth in particular—

gave to the wildcat the performative air of an affective politics: ambivalent, contentious, self-legitimizing, answerless.

Same decade, different country. In the late 1960s in the US, automotive assembly lines were also rocked by unauthorized wildcats, but not exactly for the same reasons. The race politics that troubled many plants where Black workers were in the majority (for instance, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement or DRUM at Chrysler in the late 60s and early 70s) and refused to follow white union bosses as a component of a revolutionary cultural ethos, affectively heightened the impact of the technological changes on the assembly lines.

In Canada, wildcat strikes are not authorized by unions because they violate most provincial labour laws. Yet Canada saw a wildcat strike in 2012 by Air Canada employees, during the back-to-work legislation promoted by the federal Conservative government; baggage handlers, ground crews and even pilots participated. Wildcats are treated by the courts and provincial labour boards as illegal actions and those considered leaders may be either jailed or fined. These outcomes have turned stoppages into struggles more in line with work-to-rule campaigns, although these are typically union sanctioned and thus diverge from the classical Alquati characterization. The question is whether a union would act against wildcatting members. Recent history in the province of Alberta, when the Union of Public Employees in health services walked off the job for one day in 2020, led the provincial labour board to fine the union by preventing it from collecting dues for one month for failing to prevent the strike action. Essentially, the union subsidized the wildcat action with its payment of a fine.

The apparent illegality and stigmatization of wildcat strikes produces aberrant outcomes. No other than the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), with support from affiliates, sponsored walkouts in support of the lowest paid education workers in the fall of 2022 in Toronto, Ontario. In both the previous cases we see that the wildcat is traditionally without union control; yet such control is vital to grasping the contemporary meaning of the wildcat, because unions tend to shoulder responsibility for them. This can go in two different directions: either heightening tensions between union leaders and members; or enhancing and deepening an understanding by union leaders of the independent collective actions of workers. Whether the latter amounts to an admission by big industrial unions that they have lost control of the working class, or that the big unions henceforth cloak their actions in a wildcat-coat, is an ongoing question. Beside the large organized labour supported strikes of 'Striketober' in 2021, there was a blend of labour militancy by unorganized gig economy workers at the same moment.

Now, a future-facing consideration. We need the wildcat more than ever in Canada as labour is rocked by pandemic-conditioned technological invasions of workplaces that heighten surveillance and break contractual protections pertaining to work processes, taking away worker decision-making in the spirit of adaptation, resilience and innovation. Labour standards defining when and how work takes place have been thrown out the window by the digital dogmas of permanent availability, mobile work, and the blurring of life and work. As the sites of production have become more and more diffuse, the wildcat

becomes less and less focused on the factory as such. The wildcat must adapt to the decentralization of production and the tertiarization of the economy. It needs to operate at large and respond to precarity, mobility, hyper-exploitation, and the collapse of the work/leisure distinction in the era of immaterial labour (Lazzarato 1996).

The wildcat promotes workers' solidarity as it passes through the barriers of its estrangement from the production process itself, by means of the temporary and unpredictable refusal of work. This refusal has no pre-set resolution and remains diffuse and marked by indifference.

Further, wildcats traditionally break the insistence upon communication and networking that falls upon workers, especially today in the era of digital labour—participants might simply refuse to be reached by their representatives for the briefest of moments by closing an app, and turn toward one another, staying off or jumping onto another in smaller communities for chats, using equally powerful connective applications of social media, but to different ends.

Wildcat strikes are today being regained as tools for workers' resistance against the platform capitalism of the gig economy. International examples of wildcats by delivery drivers gained traction during the COVID pandemic; in the US, in many sectors wildcats erupted as health and safety issues became acute. Wildcat strikes can be effective tools for worker disruption of global supply chains, as seen with apparel workers across the planet from southeast Asia, to Central America, and across the US as well; this is especially so in nations where official unions must sometimes be circumvented.

But the other side of the story is that it has been difficult to unionize in the gig economy. Nevertheless, the United Food and Commercial Workers in Canada have helped Uber drivers to gain representation, although the provincial labour landscape is uneven when it comes to legislatively correcting the misclassification of workers as self-employed contractors, a key factor in the ongoing exploitation of gig workers. The recent *Digital Platform Workers Rights Act* in Ontario (2022) failed miserably to address and correct this key issue, and so the struggle against wage theft structured around only "engaged time" (set at minimum wage) but not for all other working time during the day.

The Worldwide Black Friday one-day wildcats by Amazon warehouse workers against inhumane working conditions—five years in a row—may be short-lived but are important markers on the calendar, from Black Friday to Cyber Monday, following the US Thanksgiving holiday. The predictability of these protests in more than 20 countries changes the tenor of the wildcat event considerably. And the passage through the refusal of work for a short time and entry into an autonomous field of untried and undefined relations, looks to build solidarity globally against low wages (the campaign known as "Make Amazon Pay," <https://makeamazonpay.com/>). The timestamped, annual strikes and protests have enormous symbolic resonance for workers and their unions, especially the Teamsters, although Amazon does not recognize the affiliation in many US states, and its Labor Board challenges are mostly unresolved. On a day devoted to consumption, the economic reasons for the action appear in stark contrast to the employer's wealth, anti-union stance, and pioneering role

in digital wage theft techniques (such as asymmetrical quarter-hour rounding rules and refusal of early and late entry to employees).



Figure 1. “Make Amazon Pay,” <https://makeamazonpay.com/>

Although current wildcatting is beginning to take on quite a different look from the mass industrial labour actions of the 1960s, its vitality is not diminished and remains a valuable, and successful action for workers’ resistance against the gig economy and oppressive labour controls. Indeed, the novel temporalities of the wildcat have metamorphosed into multi-sectoral national “flash strikes” by workers across platforms, for example, last year during December, 2025 in India. And in Montréal, the Sex Workers Autonomous Committee

(SWAC - <https://cats-swac-mtl.org/en/about-us-anglo/>) announced a day of protest on May 23, 2026 in support of gigified dancers and masseuses.

While these short-term acts of collective resistance relinquish the spontaneity of classic wildcat walkouts, not to mention the invisibility of worker self-organization, they retain elements of unpredictable, tactical non-collaboration, and re-center cultural resistance. Indeed, use of the digital foundations of the gig economy for organizing against capital is leading to new lines of alliance with social movements and other counter-publics using social media and instant messaging. Even if the rawer elements of workerism, such as the importance of sabotage, or the wilder elements of Situationist Raoul Vaneigem's (1974/2001) vision of the wildcat as entailing factory occupation and the re-adaptation of its production by workers, cannot be satisfactorily accommodated by the newest forms of wildcatting, many novel forms of public protest, temporary occupations, log-outs and *generalized disconnections* are vital to current manifestations.

Thus, let's not fetishize what has been lost, but recognize the positive contributions of a variety of acts of collective resistance within the creeping gig economy. As computer hackers used to proclaim: 'Freedom, downtime'! On the one hand, the crafting and carving of downtime events, the modulation of unexpected periods of productive unavailability, brings digital capital into a collision course with militancy: even minimal readiness for downtime contingency can be exploited and foil efforts to handle and adapt to it. On the other hand, accidental downtime events can be fortuitous opportunities for work stoppages. Under such conditions, intermittent actions can be leveraged without union authorization, and without tripping the wire of unlawfulness. Perhaps this takes us all-too nostalgically into the territory of Youth International Party (YIP) pranks and performances. However, 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.

Biography

Gary Genosko is a long-time unionist in the university sector and professor of communication and digital media at Ontario Tech in Oshawa, Ontario.

Notes

1. Coresearch utilizes non-neutral methods that break down typical social science imbalances between researcher and subject. In traditional social science, method (i.e., surveys) is a tool wielded, and often monopolized, by trained experts in order to extract knowledge from workers. By contrast, Coresearch is an overtly political use of research as a way of mobilizing workers' self-understanding of their everyday struggles, transforming them into reflective researchers, leading to their greater autonomy. Workers engaged in co-research do not treat fellow workers as objects. They are subject-researchers in their own right and share in collective mutual interests. See Roggero (2014).

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“End is Near” in Mullivaikkal, April 2009 in Sri Lanka

Kaori Hatsumi

In his 2011 *The New Yorker* magazine article, Jon Lee Anderson wrote with irony, “[i]n military circles around the world, the ‘Sri Lanka option’ for counterinsurgency was discussed with admiration. Its basic tenets: *deny access to the media, the United Nations, and human-rights groups*; isolate your opponents, and kill them as quickly as possible; and segregate and terrify the survivors—or, ideally, *leave no witnesses at all*” (Anderson 2011; italics added). Drawing on local newspaper articles from April 2009, a series of interviews with Father J., a local Catholic priest, and my own experience of *being there*, albeit outside the Vanni battlefield in the Mannar District, where I was conducting my dissertation fieldwork in anthropology, I aim to recount how this military option unfolded.

The front page of the *Daily Mirror* newspaper on 23 April read, “End is Near. No-Fire Zone Less Than 12 Sq. km., Hunt For Prabha[karan] Gathers Pace” (*Daily Mirror* 2009c., 1). By 22 April 2009, the Government Forces had captured two-thirds of what was then called the “no-fire zone” in the Mullaitivu District in northeastern Sri Lanka—a narrow coastal stretch between the sea and a lagoon in and around Mullivaikkal, where numerous civilians remained with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The civil war ended with the death of Velupillai Prabhakaran, the LTTE leader on 18 May, 2009.

The number of civilians in the no-fire zone

Along the Mullaitivu coast, the no-fire zone consists of Palayamaththalan, Puthumaththalan, Ampalavanpokkanai, Valaingermadam, Mullivaikkal West, and Mullivaikkal East.

The Sri Lankan government is encouraging civilians trapped in the fighting between the two warring parties to flee to the no-fire zone, or “safe zone.” Yet, the safe zone is far from safe, as members of the LTTE, hiding amidst civilians, continue to fight and, even, forcibly recruit those fleeing. The Tamil civilians in the no-fire zone desperately wait for the government’s shelling to stop and to be evacuated from the battlefield. The government, however, prefers to *take its time* in its “rescue” operation. “The troops are in no hurry to proceed to the no-fire zone,” Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa states in a press interview on 3 April, 2009; “[s]oldiers will not be in a hurry, especially when intelligence reports show dissension against the LTTE brewing in the area” (*Daily Mirror* 2009b).

At the Parliament in Colombo, Sinhalese politicians heatedly refuted the number of civilians killed in the no-fire zone, a number provided by a Tamil member of parliament (MP):

Some of the government MPs jointly shouted to disturb the speech of Sri Kantha MP, saying that Sri Kantha MP must withdraw the statement he made on the number of people killed in the safety zone area. The proceedings of the House were disturbed for ten minutes. When Sri Kantha MP pointed out the large number of deaths that took place owing to the shelling by the forces, the ruling group MPs shouted at him, calling him a Tiger [LTTE], and threatened and demeaned him as giving false data supplied by the Tigers. (*Virakesari* 2009b)

The Sri Lankan government is not counting the number of civilians left with the LTTE in Vanni. As early as January 2009, the government was saying that there were only 80,000 civilians in Vanni. That was a deliberate understatement because today—as of 1 April 2009—the United Nations estimates the number of civilians trapped in the no-fire zone in Vanni to be “100,000 to 250,000” (Daily Mirror 2009a). The United Nation’s number is based on the local government’s official statistics. The Department of Census and Statistics show that, in 2008, the population of the Kilinochchi District was 147,000 and that of the Mullaitivu District was 135,000, making the total number of people in these two districts 282,000 (Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics, n.d.) before even considering people living in the other districts that partially fall within the rebel held Vanni area. The government is understating the number mainly for two reasons: first, to reduce the amount of food and medicine to be supplied and distributed to the people in Vanni and, second, to avoid responsibility for civilian deaths.

The ICRC Ship

Transport of food, medicine, and the wounded by land is no longer possible. Amidst the fighting, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ship continues to sail, carrying food and medicine and evacuating the wounded.

Since 10 February, the ICRC ship has been making repeated trips to and from Puthumaththalan in Mullaitivu for two months and counting—roughly 2.5 ships per week and 442 people per ship (ICRC Resource Centre 2009b). The ICRC ship is large enough to carry as much as one hundred lorries-full of food; however, it carries as little as two lorries-full because the number of remaining civilians has been greatly understated by the government. For every evacuee, one attendant is permitted to exit this terrible battlefield: a family member, a neighbor’s daughter, a stranger, whoever is still alive. After the wounded board, the ICRC ship sails back to Pulmoddai in the Trincomalee District—government territory. Patients on board the ICRC ship suffer from shrapnel injuries. At Trincomalee Hospital, Dr. Martin Herman, an ICRC surgeon, attends to these patients with an ICRC anesthetist and nurse and a group of Sri Lanka Health Ministry staff. Since February, in a span of 50 days, Dr. Herman’s team has treated over 1,900 Vanni victims, removing shrapnel from

their bodies and, in many cases, performing amputations. Many patients suffer heavily infected wounds—severe infections that occur in situations where antibiotics and clean dressings are unobtainable. In place of sterile dressings, the doctor has seen “strips of sarong or T-shirts” on the patients (ICRC Resource Center 2009a; War Without Witness n.d.).

Even medical professionals are now seemingly being targeted for helping Vanni victims. Dr. Meera Mohideen, a Muslim gynecologist attending to Vanni victims at Vavuniya Hospital, was shot dead by a group of armed men yesterday evening (20 April 2009). “He has been providing a remarkable service to a large number of expectant mothers arriving from the conflict zone,” the hospital staff told *Thinakkural* (2009) newspaper: “The doctor received a bullet injury to the chest and was rushed to Vavuniya Hospital, and an emergency operation was performed. However, he died at around 8:00 p.m.” This brazen killing of a doctor in Vavuniya Town, an area heavily guarded by Army soldiers and other intelligence personnel, could only be possible with the backing of the government intelligence authority, sending a clear message to medical professionals who are now in northern Sri Lanka: your service to the Vanni victims is not necessarily appreciated by the higher authorities in Colombo. The following day, the doctors and staff in Vavuniya, as well as doctors at hospitals in Trincomalee and Mannar, protested and “threatened to withdraw from their posts and return to Colombo if the Health Ministry fails to provide adequate security to the hospital and make arrangements for their protection following the killing of Dr. M. Mohideen on Monday night” (*The Island* 2009).



Figure 1. Reminiscence XV (2021), charcoal, tea dye, and watercolours on thick board, 102 × 64 cm. Susiman Nirmalavasan: A mother holds four members of her family in Batticaloa, known as மீன் பாடும் தேன் நாடு (a honey-flowing land where fish sing), where the dead turn to fish to console the living in the artist's imagination.

At Padaviya Hospital, 22 April 2009

“The Tigers are now cornered within an eight kilometer land area” (*Sudar Oli* 2009), says Minister Keheliya Rambukwella, the Government Spokesman for security issues. Surrounded by the Government Forces, on one side, and the open sea, on the other, numerous civilians are trapped, along with the LTTE. Despite the military commander’s proclamation that “Prabhakaran, the LTTE leader, and his remaining cadres would meet their own fate within hours if they failed to surrender,” the LTTE leadership refuses to fold, announcing that they “would not surrender under any circumstance” (*Sudar Oli* 2009). Given the dire situation, Pierre Krahenbuhl, the ICRC Director of Operations, warns, “There is a possibility of 99% for an impending final battle in the Government designated safety zone. Immense human disaster and unfortunate consequences would be expected if such an intense battle takes place” (*Sudar Oli* 2009).

Father J., a senior Catholic clergy member, is one of a dozen priests who chose to remain in Vanni to attend to “[h]is sheep” as a shepherd. Father J. was evacuated today (22 April, 2009) by the ICRC ship after being injured by government shelling. Another six to seven hundred patients were on board the ICRC ship with him. When the ship reached Pulmoddai, the hospital was already full. So, he was transported farther to a hospital in a place called Padaviya—only to find that Padaviya Hospital was also overcrowded with Vanni patients.

Now, Padaviya is a town where three districts shared their borders—Mullaitivu District (a Tamil district), Trincomalee District (a mixed district with an all Tamil, Muslim and Sinhalese population), and Anuradhapura District (a Sinhalese district). At Padaviya Hospital, Father J. is lying on the floor in pain, as there is no bed available. Two gentlemen come to visit him: Anuradhapura Government Agent (GA) and a high-ranking army officer. Father sits on the floor to welcome them. “Father, how many civilians are still remaining in Vanni?”, the GA is asking. Father J. is astonished by this question. Doesn’t the GA know the number? Isn’t he in charge? The government did not choose Kili-nochchi GA or Vavuniya GA, who must know the ground situation better, to be in charge of the humanitarian assistance for the internally displaced from Vanni; instead, it appointed Anuradhapura GA, a Sinhalese:

GA: Father, how many, do you think, are still left in Vanni?

FR: At least 275,000 people are still left in Mullaitivu.

GA: No way, it cannot be true!

(The GA cannot believe the number because he was given a drastically lower count by the government in Colombo.)

GA: What about the 75,000 civilians who were rescued from Puthumath-thalan area yesterday?

FR: *(Father J. does not know about this, as he has been in the hospital.)* Then, you subtract that number 75,000. There are still 200,000 people left in Vanni.

GA: So many people left in Vanni!? It cannot be true! I can hardly believe what you are saying.

FR: If I am sharing with you false information, you could very well bring me to a court and try me there. But I am telling you the truth. At the mo-

ment, there are 200,000 people left in Vanni. Since you are in charge of the government's humanitarian assistance to these displaced people, I urge that you immediately prepare provisions of water, food and medicine, sanitation facilities and shelter for these 200,000 people. If you fail to do so, an even greater tragedy might unfold.

The Anuradhapura GA says to Fr. J that he will discuss the matter in a meeting in the afternoon (Father J., personal communication 5 August 2009).

According to the Media Center for National Defense, "between 15 and 18 May 2009—in the last 84 hours of war—65,647 persons were saved" (*Vira-kesari* 2009a). The UNHCR states, "265,000 people had fled the conflict zone in north-eastern Sri Lanka in the last several months" (*Daily Mirror* 2009d). Where are the rest of the civilians? How many are still left unaccounted for?

Biography

Kaori Hatsumi is an anthropologist whose research encompasses colonialism and neoliberalism within Japanese academia. She currently leads a research project, entitled "Sri Lanka's civil war and Japan's development-craze: An ethnography of illness and environment, response and regeneration" (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B) 24K00192). Email: hatsumi-k@seinan-gu.ac.jp.

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Untitled

Jehad Jarbou



Installation work consisting of electricity extension pipes, plastic mounts, paper balls, and woollen threads. A circle inside a group of white balls of different sizes. The project expresses the relationship of mass, emptiness, and what is related to them: a metaphor for feelings that bring together the past, present and future. All of them at the same time. The present is a very accurate point, approaching zero. The past is protected in a way such that no one is allowed to see it. Not to mention trying to tamper with it, or pushing things favourably, or kicking them and bringing them back to zero.



Make a synthetic tool. I embody the life of bees when they leave their home. How can you know the way of return? How is it for all Palestinians after their displacement? It is mandatory to know the way to the country and to return to the land. It is an internal question. We ask why we walk with the key necklace? A house was stolen. Can my key open my destroyed house?



Biography

Jehad Jarbou is a visual artist based in Gaza. She works in the fields of video art, photography, texts, and artistic installations. Jehad narrates the social and political life in Gaza through poetic narratives and visual imagery.

Untitled

Her art engages with concepts of land, identity, and siege, translating lived experiences into stories that reflect on the reality of the blockade imposed on Gaza.

She has produced:

- *Here Is My Life* (2024)
- *On Their Hearts They Walked* (2025)
- *Perhaps the Night* (2026)

Her work speaks about the reality of genocide

Five Dreams, Tehkummah, Ontario, to Haysi, Virginia

Erin Wilson

E: *How has this happened, that I should be dreaming of being you, with your tongue?*

C: *How you ever think hit was you dreamed yourself?*

i.

My first night in Appalachia, seamlessly I awaken into my dream. My hands are hers. Our legs are ours. I speak. I am Charlotte.

C: *Hit not right! They take bar breastses.*

C: *I telled them thar Rock-weiler come on my property 'n I will SHOOT hit!*

C: *Ohhh! Look at hit (the gnat, the sun, the grandchild, the plum tree)! Clapping, It done had bay-bee~zzz!*

C: *This plant bure, this land, chil'uns, hits my body...*



ii.

My second night, I dream I am me. Although I'm silent, I know if I did speak, my tongue would again be full of Appalachian colour.

I unfold a batch of papers I've brought with me. These are diagrams of someone doing recuperative exercises, *bridge*, *spinal roll*, *crab*. There's even an image of an adult crawling. I must learn how to be in this new body. My physiotherapist has written across the images, "**Pain does not equal damage!**"

Charlotte watches me unfold, then refold the papers. Her eyes are all over me in the way a scholar might study a text or a haiku poet might study a white chrysanthemum. She opens the Andrew Wyeth book I gave her for Christmas that she keeps near the glass jar of flossy milkweed pods she likes to study in light. She flips through the book until she finds *Christina's World*. Then she looks at me and speaks.

C: *Honey, Hit won't serve nobody to keep no pride.*

She crawls out of her own crumpled body, into the image of Christina, and claws her way up the side of the mountain, pulling the not-quite-dead-weight of her legs behind her, until I can't see her anymore. I can only make out the grasses slightly swaying. From this distance it sounds like they are saying, *this, this, this...*

iii.

Not E exactly, but from E: *If you want to learn the truth, dream more absurd.*

My third night, I dream a great sycamore, spectral and spotted, comes to me. (What is the division between maculate and immaculate, I wonder.) Silently, the sycamore undoes every button on what I'm wearing, then silently undoes every button on what it's wearing. We stand and stare into one another until we are nearly erased. The more we are erased, the truer we are. The tears that steadily fall from our eyes do not mean that we are sad, nor do the tears mean that we are *not* sad. There are simply tears.

When I am naked, I look down to see a thorn protrudes from my side. When the sycamore is naked, I see a thorn protrudes from its side. Our tears cause the tender red skin around our thorns to shine and appear blistered.

E (breathlessly, while staring into the sycamore): Are you *miraculous*?

S (murmuring, while staring into Erin): Are *you* miraculous?

Charlotte, a bird now, flies overhead. Lowly, she coos, *Thar will always be sacrifices, chil'uns.*



iv.

The fourth night, I sleep in a dated, no-frills motel, in Indiana. I am headed north, back home. It takes a long time to get to sleep because my old life is pouring back over me like icy water. When I finally close my eyes, I see Charlotte just like she was when I was in Virginia. She lets go of the garden fence for a moment and steadies herself. Then, not knowing how this will go, carefully lowers herself on joints and muscles that barely work anymore. Down on all fours, she separates the garden's decay from the otherwise hidden fresh green growth.

She tests me.

C: *What's this, honey?*

E: *Oregano, peppermint, wild garlic, onion...*

C: *I'm so proud a-you!*



In the earth, behind the cinder block shed she built by herself, are perfectly round, palm-sized holes.

C: 'N what made them holes thar, you think?

For the rest of the night, while I linger on borrowed pillows, her gnarled but able hands strike quick as snakes, grabbing one copperhead after another. She squeezes them with all her strength, forcing their mouths open. All along their gums and fangs, she rubs poison.

C: You won't git me! Take this, she rubs. You'ns just take thisss...



v.

E: *Are these dreams about the body or dreams about language?*

The fifth night, I am home again. All night long, I keep crossing and recrossing the U.S./Canada border. In my absence, all the trees that I had known before have grown shorter. The treeline, an oily black-green rag of cursive, is so distant it's hard to read. I open my mouth to ear-popping aphasia. Dead dogs spill out silently to paint the night.



Biography

Erin Wilson is from an island community of a couple hundred people. Her poems have appeared in *The Fiddlehead*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *Prairie Fire*, *TNQ*, *EVENT Magazine*, *Freefall*, *TAR*, *Dalhousie Review*, *Queen's Quarterly*, *The Ex-Puritan*, *Nashwaak Review*, *Vallum*, and elsewhere internationally. She has won a Pushcart and a Silver Medal with the National Magazine Awards in Canada. Her work appears in *Best Canadian Poetry 2026*. She lives in a small town on Robinson-Huron Treaty Territory, in Northern Ontario, Canada, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe. She is most at home amongst trees. She refuses to carry a cell phone.

The Anti-Essay

The Politics of epistemology
AND queering
colonial academic form

★ All of my edits + revisions are found in RED - to celebrate the role of unending/in-process MESS, or as Jack Halberstam calls it "the queer art of failure"... Halberstam reminds us that even as academics - "FAILING IS SOMETHING QUEERS do + have done exceptionally well... FAILURE is a style" (3).

what citation style should rebellious art be in?

How has capitalism, logic, and Western thought contributed to how we know the academic form today?
• Further to this aim, how are academics staying complicit in colonial education practices by teaching / assessing knowledge in the same way it's always been done?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• What are the implications for doing knowledge differently? and (de)representing academic form?

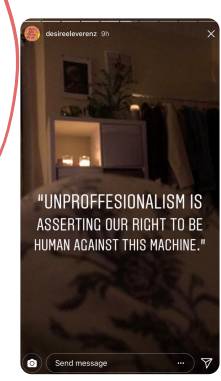
I am not trying to villainize academia or research, but rather, trying to bring about an

EPISTEMIC EQUITY

across underrepresented knowledges to open up space in research + pedagogy for diverse, new, and decolonial literacies

F

Of course, it is at ONCE "innappropriate" and "unprofessional" [AS MUCH AS IT IS necessary and disruptive] to hand in a paper proposal out of traditional academic form.



HOWEVER, In thinking creating through research differently I open doorways into the theory in new ways



Reading Corner / Story Time

P. 76
THE ANTI-ESSAY

I think of this movie (I forget) where this student handed in a paper (10 pages, double spaced was required)
To his philosophy professor in response to the question "What is reality?"
To which he responded in one sentence:

"Whatever you make of it"

And he got an F for not writing the paper.

He thought he would get an A for being ballsy.

I am not trying to be ballsy. The discomfort I am getting now, in attempting to hold every ounce of imposterism I have down in order to do this without writing a formal paper at the risk of ruining my academic career, is almost discomfoting as you are in reading this piece of — what is this? Poetry, comics-creation, digital and mixed media art? As of recent, I've been calling it

2 so dramatic

"Notebooking" a process I am inheriting by way of other theorist-Writers, two of whom I am particularly drawn to, Marion Milner (in Particular her work *A Life of One's Own* in which she draws on Her notebook as a research site to get curious around happiness, and Anne Carson's *Short Talks* where she uses the short non-fiction creative Narrative discuss ramblings and musings.

These ramblings, musing, doodles, lines, are gravitational orbits that Are surrounding by other synapses, memories, and stories.

Taking Michael Taussig's idea that "a line drawn is important not → what it (p.22) leads to" seriously, I hope that this paper showcases the way that Notebooking can act as a generative, multi-media tool in Research-creation. (A epistemic disruption in academic 'super' form!). A hybrid genre in many forms but true to one pursuit: a pursuit

records - but what it leads to

cc

We explained that in a threshold, things enter and meet, flow (or pass) into one another, and break open (or exit) into something else.

gg

(721)

AS
Jackson & Mazzei (2017)
State:

P. 76
THE ANTI-ESSAY

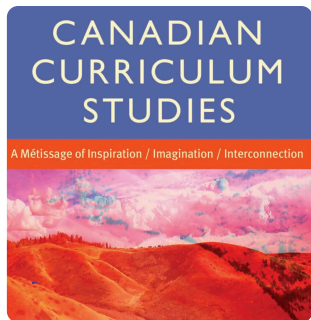
It's here, in this THRESHOLD of uncomfortable feelings BETWEEN THE ACADEMIC COLONIAL FORMAL ...

... AND THE CREATIVE MADNESS of the ARTFUL THAT A BRAIDING...

A "METISSAGE" of knowledge forms comes together to create openings / fractures / entries / exits

More of me is felt through

of both
Resistance to academic and epistemic assimilation,
and a revolutionary
Artifact to re-define the academic genre as we know it.



is taking Research-creation approaches in so many ways. Especially poetic inquiry, because Leggo was such an influence. But not all of these poems are good. Some are grad students trying art for the first time. Is that okay? If I am to call upon a new research model and new way of knowing, how are we going to assess it? In imagining new knowledges might we also have to imagine different aesthetic values? Is this axiology?

Understanding "queer" as anti-normative and disruptive, and "literacy" as meaning-making, I argue a queer literacy is research-creation; and, this contributes to decolonizing academic form through, in the case of RC, by moving from analysis → creativity, technical → playful, productive → generative.

Than through my typing.

How might ART act as a curricular & pedagogical disruption in CAPITALISM? ONTOLOGY??

"Sounds spooky but we must ask SCARY QUESTIONS if we are to break this haunting cycle of curriculum's 'ghosts'"

DO I MEAN
A) DECOLONIZING or
B) DECAPITALIZING?
C) DEMOCRATIZING?

what do you think? y.

Snazza

PROVOCATION

Space for inappropriate understanding

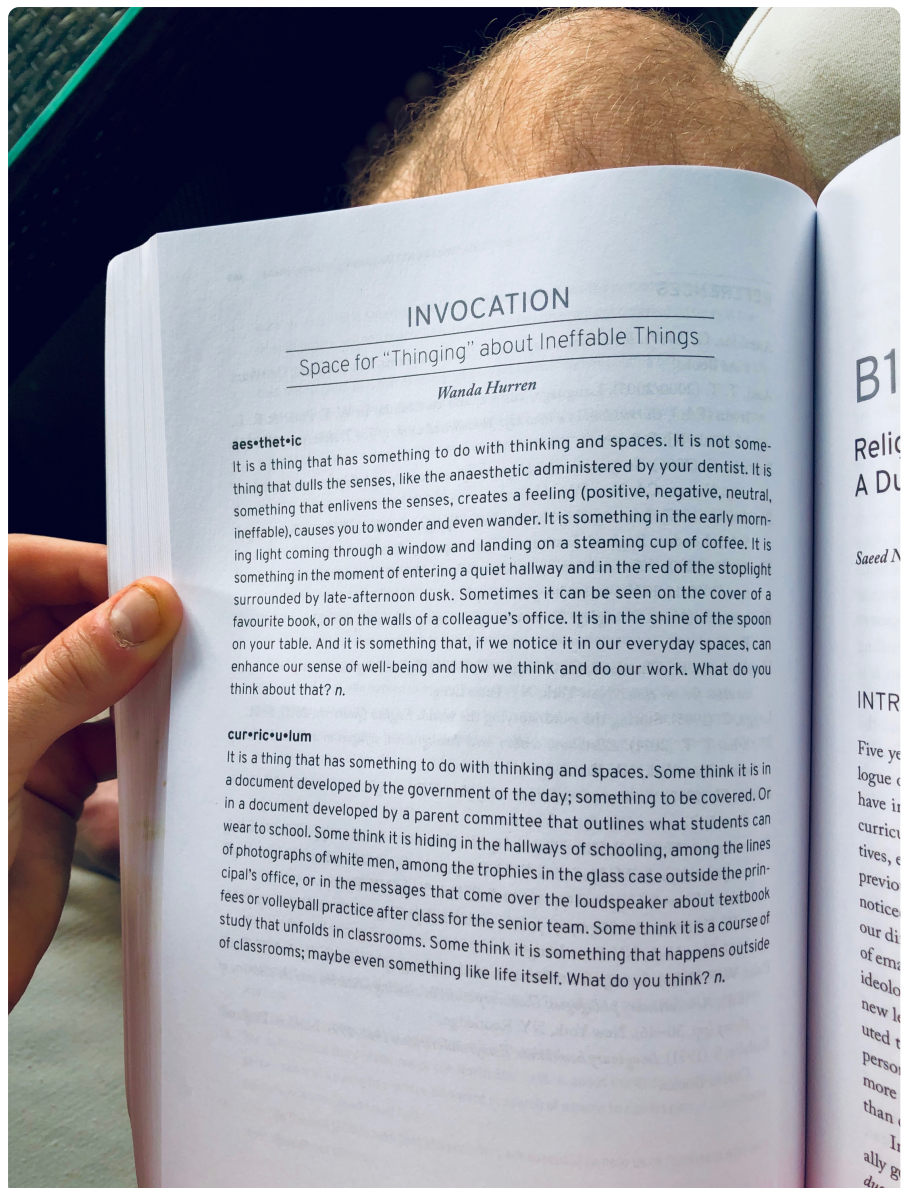
Brent Saccucci

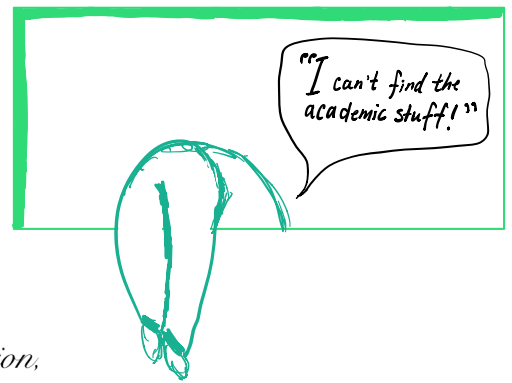
qu → eer

Against the norm. Against the gradient.
Revolution sparking. Out of bounds.
Deviant.
What do you feel? n., v.

lit eracy, n.

Making meaning, meaning making.
(Re)mixing signs and symbols to create understanding. Knowledge of something.
A reading. Reading the world. Creating the world. Lens. Quilting experiences, texts, and images into a blanket sewn by your grandma when you were a kid.
What do you know?





Since intellectual periods such as *The Enlightenment* and *The Scientific Revolution*, Academic knowledge has, on a global scale, been concerned with the colonial characteristics Of intellectualism that were found in these periods, namely the scientific method and its subsequent pillars of logic and reason, while academic literacy as a whole became a practice of technical and analytical reading and writing. With colonialism came a specific schooling and knowledge practice that reinforced these characteristics, and, practiced diligently, Diligently, led to strict forms of what was deemed “intellectual” and “academic” by colonial standards and the educational institutions that upheld these standards. Therefore, as it currently stands, education values the “essay” or “article” as the gold standard for intellectual argument, leaving to the margins certain ways of knowing, in particularly queer, Indigenous, and arts-based. This paper will take flight from the starting point that colonialism has a particular

Particular

Particular academic practice, and a “queering” of that

Practice is necessary for what I name “epistemic equity”. Through a research-creation framework, this paper will bring into conversation Not only research-creation scholars (Loveless, 2018) but educational researchers in higher education anarchism (Spinosa, 2018) and curriculum theory (Hasebe-Ludt & Leggo, 2018) to showcase how epistemic equity, and the “metisage” (mixing) of multiple forms of knowledges, can be argued as a “queer literacy” — and in our colonial times, such a *reorienting* may offer up more accessible and creative openings

Openings

Openings in research, writing, reading, and pedagogy.

Keywords: research-creation, queer epistemology, curriculum, colonialism

Keyimages: Braids (particularly “friendship”), knots, salmon swimming upstream

p. 78

THE ANTI-ESSAY

The Coloniality of Knowledge

“ The production of “legitimate” knowledge has been closely related to the context, class affiliation, and the social identity of the producers... European colonizer have defined legitimate knowledge as Western knowledge, essentially European colonizers’ ways of knowing, often taken as objective and universal knowledge. ”

-Francis Adyanga Akena, ~~Critical Analysis of the Production of Western Knowledge and Its Implications for Indigenous Knowledge and Decolonization~~ (2012) *Critical Analysis of the Production of Western Knowledge and Its Implications for Indigenous Knowledge and Decolonization*.

Knowledge is relational, and therefore social, and therefore cultural, and like any culture, is tempted by the predatory forces of dominating “the other”.

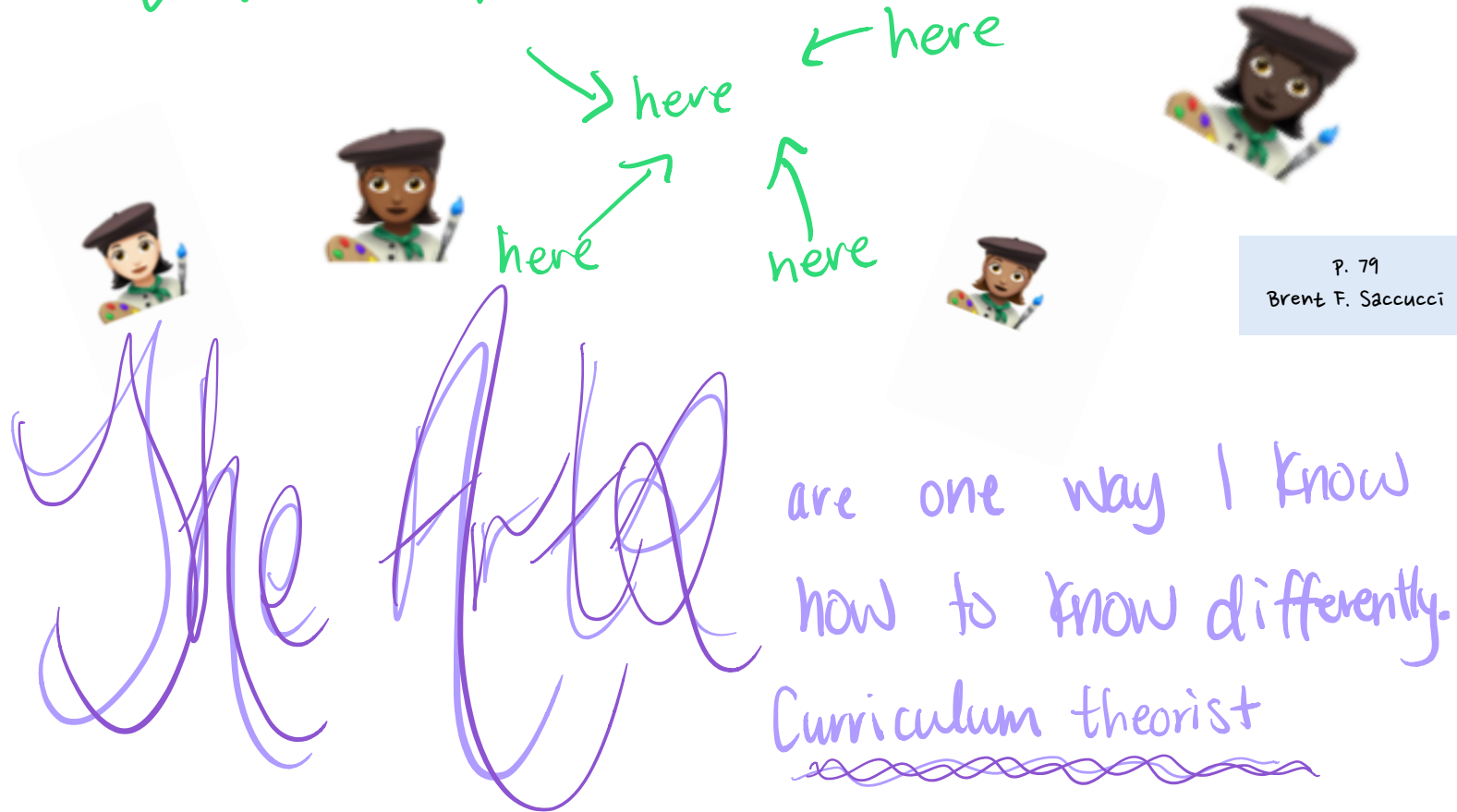
Knowledge-for-emancipation should include the ways of knowing, language, and mediums of understanding that the community of the subjugated can understand so that they can use that knowledge in ways that are agentful. Academic literacy and access to academic language, including the essay, is deeply influenced by ability, race, status, and class. Academicese is... inaccessible. It’s time to do something about it for those of us that call ourselves critical educators.

In my research, why would I use academic language to describe the experience of madness to a mentally-ill person? How do practices of reading and writing, however meditative they may be, reinforce neurotypicality? Those ~~who~~ ^{being} deeply affected by mental illness, namely Queer and Indigenous people, have impacted effects of literacy. Types of neurodiversity fully inhibit academic research from being remotely digestible by certain types of people. We rarely see people ^{living} with neurodiversity in the academy. We rarely see poor people in the academy. We even get scared to say "poor people". So, how might decolonizing academic form also contribute to intersectional work in *how we know* ability, sexuality, and class? Knowing colonialism is BFF with ableism, homo/transphobia, and capitalism, how might decolonizing academic form also contribute to destabilizing *a sociology of knowledge we've come to privilege so much?*

This anti-essay is less a project of content ("we should know more about queer history or residential schools") and more of a project of critiquing, jamming, and queering academic *form*. As a provocation to curriculum studies' central question "What knowledge is of most worth?" I may add that since knowledge is shaped by it's form, we may also ask "What ways of knowing such knowledge are of most worth?"

What are these types of knowledges? Well, *I don't know* because I only know what I know, but I can know differently if authorities (like teachers and instructors) allow me to know differently. Of course, like Adyanga Akena reminds us, knowledge is informed by it's producers. So then, let us bring more artists, women, QTIBPOC, and mad people to the role of the teacher and see how that influences our classrooms and marginalized learners! Excuse my informal and inappropriate use of an exclamation mark ;)

⇒ INSERT ARTS-BASED RESEARCH



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Brent F. Saccucci

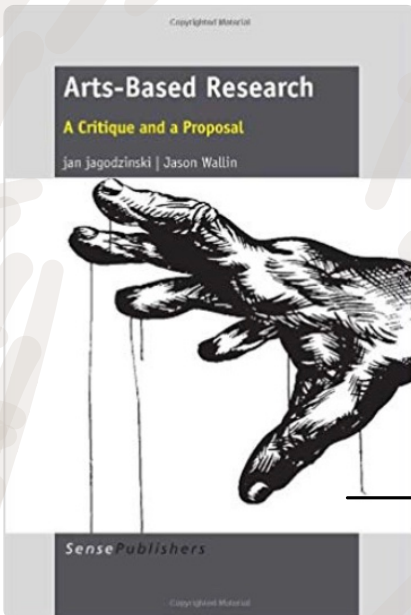
MAXINE GREENE was one proponent ^(oops)
of creativity in educational research. Then, in the
early 2000's, **RITA IRWIN** introduced us
to **A/R/T/OGRAPHY**



artist
researcher
teacher

YAY!
Finally! A
methodology for
artist-scholars!

BUT EVEN THAT WASN'T SEEN
AS RIGOROUS ENOUGH BY
SOME SCHOLARS IN THE FIELD, specifically
POSTHUMANISTS (Wallin & Jagodzinski, 2013).



CRIMINAL TEXT

A/R/TOGRAPHY ALSO
"LACKED A CRITICALITY and REFLEXIVITY"
(Springganz, 2007).

Stage Direction: Enter Research-Creation stage left.

A paradigm, an approach, a methodology — foregrounding the art-making process as the research. Not as an appendix, not as something that needs an explanation.

~~Total~~ Academic Anarchy?

(Doesn't your lil internal Marxist just love it?) [Upon reflection years l8r this is a BIT dramatic, but it's a solid pic].

Just ART. Shitty ART. Gray ART. Fat ART. Happy ART. Cixterany ART. Good ART. Sad ART.   



All of academic knowledge and culture was just a performance of colonial and capitalist logics anyways, so why can't we perform research in new ways that disrupt?

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Figure 6.9. Sarah-Tonin' delivers an academic talk on a new phenomenon researchers are calling "wet dreams"



Drag became a particularly important tool in my arsenal of academic anarchist weapons to disrupt what arts-based researcher Gail Crimmins names as “the masculinization of thought and research” (Research in Action Podcast, Ep. 141) which is a process whereby “masculine” traits (often schooled to boys) such as logic, neutrality, reason, and the pillars of positivism become the gold standard in research.

Feminization of knowledge (and what I name earlier as “queer literacy”) is what many critical scholar’s of emotion would argue is the place that affect theory holds. Emotion, often seen as a feminine quality, is not represented or trained as a value in research. Topics such as “vulnerability in the interview” sometimes come out in an interpretivist article, but all through the lens of academic talk (academese) which saturates feeling, colour, temporality, emotion — into one font, one size, for ~13 pages. How are we to have honest, awkward, and upsetting conversations around knowledge (and what counts) if we are only doing it in one tone? On one plane? In one way? Artistic knowledges help approach the issues from new vantage points in the room. A shifting perspective. A queer orientation to the knowledge that enters in small cracks only it could see from its orbital track.

~~Write~~ I am such a Posthumanist and am in full denial about it.

And my research-creation is a hybrid. It’s at once creative nonfiction, and also fictitious. It’s man and woman. It’s dark and sad and about madness, and also hilarious.

Stop taking yourself so seriously! ^{scholarship-as-artistry} Embrace **scholartistry**, and see the application of artistry to bring “imaginative powers” to scientific inquiry... *Dave I say HAVE FUN WITH IT EVEN!*

~~-Nielsen, L., 2002. Learning from the Liminal: Fiction as Knowledge, Alberta Journal of Educational Research, (48)3, p. 206-14.~~ *Nielsen 2002, p.212-13.*

Imagination, playing with risk, unknown experimentation — it has always been, and will always be what has ever gotten us anywhere.

OMG I'm so

stupid
forgetful
amazing
disorganized
overcompensating

I just have I MORE THOUGHT!

The Anti-Essay: A queer literacy for the neurodiverse

How might literacy meaning-making contribute to the neurodiverse making through DSM, ADHD, OCD how does art help learning in these lies?

trauma
learning disability
anxiety

thought.

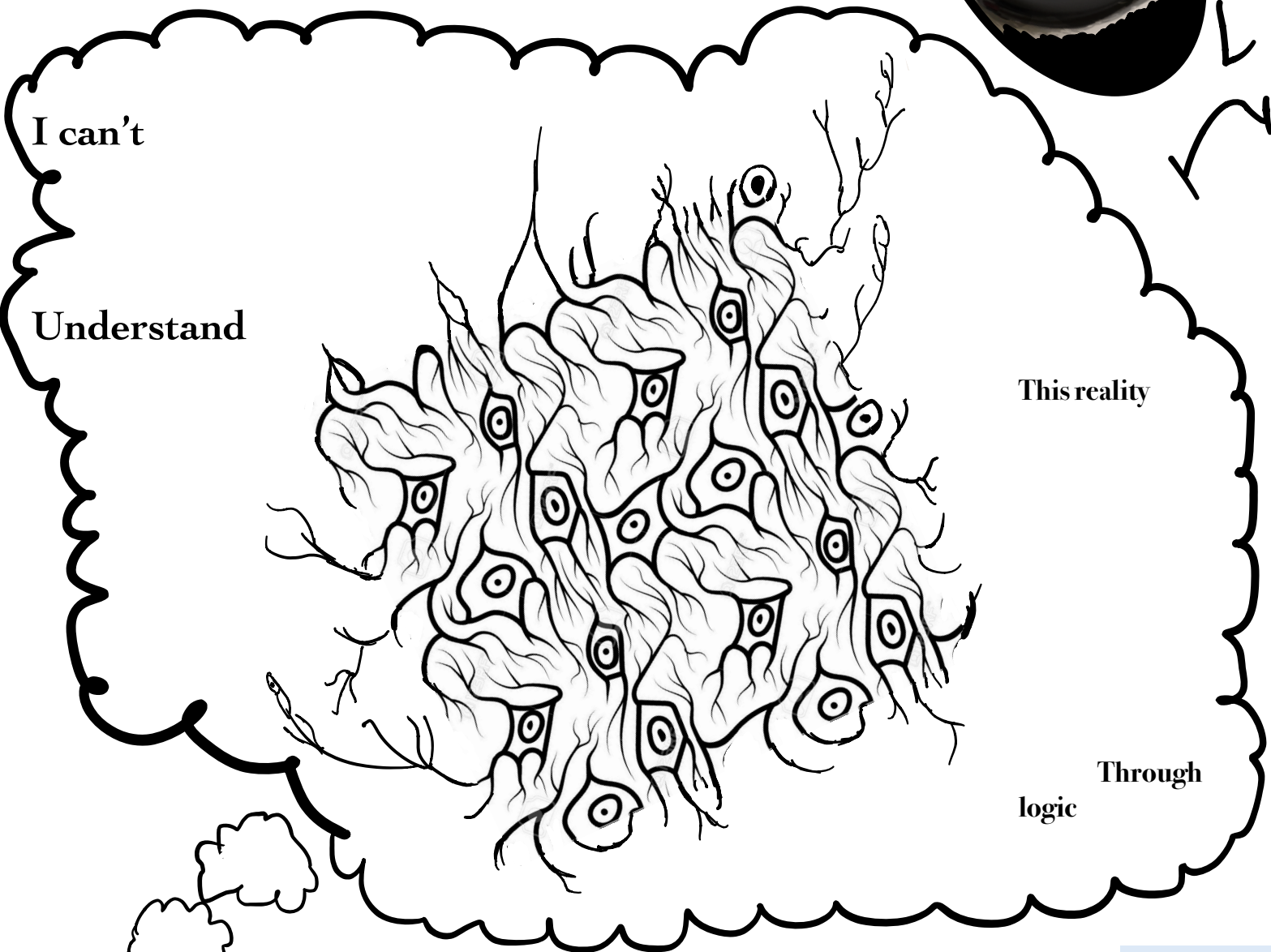
+ thought?

the queer
anti-normative
of research-creation in
to understandings in
learners??!!
do not read as
manic episode.

thin
autistic
the
leo
bad



thought...
thought...
thought...
thought!!
thought!!
thought!!
I can't write this
essay!! I keep thinking
about everything, my
mind won't shut off
and I can't focus. I am
so dumb. I'll never get
into university.



I can't

Understand

This reality

Through
logic



Science is much closer to myth than a scientific philosophy is prepared to admit. It is one of the many forms of thought that have been developed by man, and not necessarily the best. It is conspicuous, noisy, and impudent, but it is inherently superior only for those who have already decided in favour of a certain ideology, or who have accepted it without every having examined its advantages and its limits.”

-Paul Feyerabend, *Science as Myth, The Theory of Knowledge: Classical & Contemporary Readings*

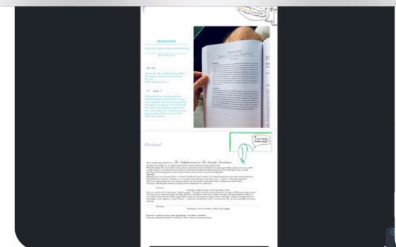
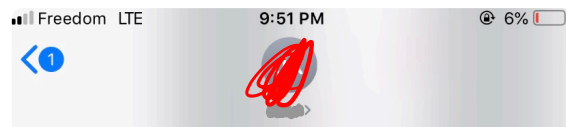
As much as I am showing artistic work in this anti-essay, I'd like to take a close read of Feyerabend's arguments here. JUST A SMALL CLOSE READ, DON'T WORRY I WILL GET BACK TO MY SCIENCE-ART SOON.

The second sentence starts with “It is one of the *many forms*” and that's what initially drew me to this quote — many forms. There are real social and cultural factors ~~however~~ that have ~~lead to~~ only *some forms* of knowledge to flourish. Ableist assessment, colonial pedagogy, and Cartesian theories of mind have ~~lead~~ *society* to glorifying the scientific method and its logics. Like I said on the first page, I don't want to villainize science or academia! I think criticality is great. But with the average peer-reviewed academic article in the social sciences and humanities with an average of 3-8 readers, we've got to acknowledge we have a problem with form and dissemination. There are ways to combine this academic, scientific, and scholarly rigour with creative means of knowledge production (like research-creation) that ultimately open up accessibility and contribute to a wider literacy in society of scholarly work.

Later on Feyerabend goes on to argue that “The rise of modern science coincides with the suppression of non-Western tribes by Western invaders” (502). In a multicultural, diverse Canada, it is time we take uncomfortable, awkward, and risky steps toward decolonizing academic form. This essay is one such risk. When our mothers, friends, lovers, and communities we research can't even read our work, we must reevaluate form and bring about a *reorientation* to how we approach the essay and the research article.

University of Victoria

I wrote this piece, *the scholar dances*, in relation to a piece of work Dr. Monica Prendergast, Arts Based Curriculum researcher at UVic wrote about how scholarship in the arts might seem silly, frivolous, and risky — but many great ideas did at the start. I wrote a response to that work and the inspiration it gave me about the tension of arts based researchers working in *quantitative times*.



AN

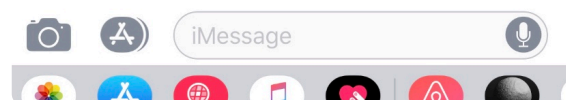
Amazing. You're so busy and smart this could work out lol 😊

I love the little doodles here and there haha

What do u think in comparison to a normal essay? Honest!

Delivered

There's so much more character to it. It's like a mind map- essay hybrid. The day has come for the unconventional to take it's place in this world. Society has reached a wall by following the same patterns over and over.



GUY FROM GRINDR TRYING TO WHEEL ME BY SAYING RESEARCH-CREATION IS HOT? I'LL TAKE WHAT I CAN GET.

The Scholar Dances

Laugh

It's okay! You can laugh

It might seem kind of funny, what I do

I look at the event of buying a coffee and say wait- how, what, and who?

Poststructural puzzle pieces of the planet make up my mind,

and none of them fit

Nothing ever fits.

and so I go back time and time

Time, and time,

Again and again,

Sorry before I go on – do you have any answers?

I find myself here in front of you again,

As if I'm going backwards.

My vision here is imperfectly precise

I have this dream, where I exist in a quantum slice

Perfectly precise. Sometimes I near it,

I come close

Do I have an answer?

You love the numbers, the surveys, and the digits of my body

The interviews, the diagnosis, an erasure of the holy

Here I dance – researching, rehearsing, and relearning

Here I dance

where you left off – the finites of your digitized conclusions

Is where I start — The infinity of my artistic confusions

My database is my body, and my methods are souls, my heart is still hopeful, though sinking in science's cold.

So I dance another dance,

And you know I'm just another risky chance. Some arts-based 20 something calling research a dance.

Start treading water, and you'll remember it all.

Remember the questions that brought you here,

Held deep in your body, ignited by fear.

So dance with me and let's forget to remember, and we will find answers here in the grey, unknowingly together

In this ivory tower, in a lie of safer space,

We can lay here belonging, feeling erased.

Remember me, when your numbers kill, and your data doesn't quite fulfil.

Because as you tilt your head back, and start to laugh

The scholar dances,

and never looks back.



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↳ This needs to be re-done
'cuz I've never done a
Chicago ref list



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(low key
can we
bring back
a/r/tography?)

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EVER wondered...
WHY PINK
+ purple hearts +
flowers aren't seen
as academic?

(I feel like I had
to gay it up here
somehow b/c otherwise
this is the most
norm-core page in
the whole article).

HUGE shoutout to Dr. Peter Trnka & Dylan Delikta in the
Philosophy Dept. Memorial University of Newfoundland for letting me
publish this queer, messy, funny, odd piece of epistemology.



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Davar

Review of *Reformation of Islamic Thought: A Critical Historical Analysis*, by Nasr Abu Zayd

Mohamad Mahdi Davar

Nasr Abu Zayd, *Reformation of Islamic Thought: A Critical Historical Analysis*. (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 112 pages.

First, I should address the reasons for reviewing Nasr Abu Zayd's *Reformation of Islamic Thought*. The work 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. The Islamic reform movement is growing, especially in Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, and Iran. Studying Nasr Abu Zayd's work is useful in this context.

Reformation of Islamic Thought by Nasr Abu Zayd, in addition to analyzing the reform movement in Islam from the 18th century onwards, points out key concepts related to this movement that have the potential to influence other thinkers. One such concept is 'liberal theology.'¹ In my view, liberal theology is a type of theology that holds that the essence of God is freedom and that God created free human beings. For this reason, Islam and other religions, must vouchsafe such freedom. Anything that, in the name of religion, undermines human freedom is open to doubt, and according to liberal theology, those things that violate human freedom cannot be regarded as religious. Zayd's own view is in line with liberal theology. The views he describes of other Muslim reformers show direct or indirect influence from 'liberal theology.' The spread of Western civilization brought serious disturbance to Islam. The confrontations with Western civilization were diverse and different positions were formed in response, including the creation of new concepts, some with Western roots, e.g., 'human rights,' 'women's rights,' 'democracy,' and 'secularism.'² Some radical and even conservative Muslims felt antagonism between Islam and all Western societies and considered Western concepts as anti-Islamic. In contrast, others saw these concepts as useful to people regardless of their religion. Accordingly, philosophy, culture, science, and technology are not limited to a specific time and place.

Differing Muslim views of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (the Prophetic tradition) also contribute to the formation of divergent perspectives on the West. The reform movement in Islam is a change in how the *Qur'an*, the *Sunnah*, and other

civilizations are treated. Muslims do not need to consider the *Qur'an* an obstacle to adopting the principles of other cultures, especially Western ones, in the present era. For Abu Zayd, the reform movement began in the pre-colonial era in Islamic societies, and with the onset of the colonial era, the reform movement became more necessary. Abu Zayd divides his discussion into four parts: the pre-colonial era (especially the 18th century), the 19th century, the 20th century, and the views of some thinkers on Islam, Sharia, democracy, and human rights. The peak of reformist theory and liberal theology is manifested in the opinions of the thinkers in the fourth section.

In the first part, Abu Zayd points out two different ways of thinking in the Islamic world and shows that although both approaches are considered a form of reform in Islamic thinking, one leads to progressivism and the other to fundamentalism. He refers to the ideology of Shah Wali Allah Dehlawi (1703-1762) and Dynamic Islam, which exists in India and Indonesia, and to Wahhabism, a kind of return to previous values. The first shows that the religion of Islam and Islamic civilization are receptive to various intellectual and cognitive sources, such as philosophy, Sufism, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). However, the second shows Islam reduced to *fiqh*. During the golden age of Islamic civilization, a period of cultural diversity, Islamic philosophy and theology played an important role, alongside other intellectual and epistemological sources. However, afterwards, as many theologians began to criticize philosophers and Greek ideas introduced into the Islamic world, this diversity diminished. Eventually, instead of Islamic theology (*kalām*) being central, extremist jurisprudence took its place. In consequence, we see the persecution of some Sufis, such as al-Hallaj, and some philosophers, such as Suhrawardī (15). Wahhabism was founded in Arabia by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792) and was heavily influenced by Ibn Taymiya (1263-1328). Abu Zayd sees this movement as “Ibn Taymiya’s approach without Ibn Arabi” (18). Ibn Taymiya and Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) are both prominent scholars of the Islamic world. Ibn Taymiya became a source of fundamentalism and literalism, while Ibn Arabi became a source of moderation and esotericism. “Ibn Taymiya’s approach without Ibn Arabi” means attention to the outward without the inward, the result of which is dogmatism and fundamentalism. Regarding Shah Wali Allah, what I call the open example of Islam, Abu Zayd points out that Shah Wali Allah criticizes the spread of imitation (*taqlid*) and says that, in place of imitation, independent reasoning (*ijtihad*), i.e., personal effort in deciding a point of law, should be substituted. Abu Zayd also emphasizes the distinction between *haqiqa* and *sharia* that is found in Sufism. In other words, *ijtihad* is, to some extent, a sign of rationalism, and the spread of *ijtihad*, instead of *taqlid*, means that, instead of the number of mujtahids being few at any given time and the number of imitators being high, we should turn to the path where everyone can do their own independent reasoning (16). Abu Zayd makes the key point that Shah Wali Allah was influenced by Ibn Arabi, one of the most famous mystics in the Islamic world (17). Shah Wali Allah’s way of thinking Islam is not limited to Sharia law as it has a mystical dimension.

The next section of the book deals with the 19th century, when the Islamic modernist and reformist movement emerged in a tangible way. The concept of reform in the modern sense emerged in this century. Although the roots of reformism can be traced to rationalist philosophers, the Mu'tazilites, and even to Shah Wali Allah, these are not true reformists in the modern sense. During the 19th century, many Islamic thinkers reinterpreted tradition in the light of modernity (21). Three challenges that faced Islamic thinkers, and perhaps all Muslims, in the 19th century, i.e., science and technology, rationalism, and political change (22), led to the formation of modernity among Islamic revivalists. Abu Zayd also addresses the key concept of 'rethinking tradition' in relation to the influential Islamic scholar Shaykh Refaa Rafi al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), who emphasized the development of independent reasoning rather than imitation. Tahtawi also believed that there was little difference between *Sharia* and natural law. Islamic law, accordingly, should be reinterpreted based on the direction of modern needs. In this view, independent reasoning replaces consensus (*ijmā'*) among the four sources of jurisprudential knowledge, i.e., the *Qur'an*, tradition (*Sunnah*), consensus, and rational analogy (*qiyās*) (24-5).

Abu Zayd points to Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) also known as Jamal al-Din Asad Abadi, as the most significant reformist figure in the Islamic world. I mentioned three groups at the beginning and said that the third group, while wanting to preserve their values and not be inferior to other societies, also uses the intellectual, cultural, and scientific capacities of other civilizations. Afghani can be placed in this group. However, he may also be considered one of the pioneers of liberal theology. Abu Zayd considered Afghani to be a figure influenced by Islamic philosophy, especially Avicennian philosophy. In my view, if someone is influenced by Ibn Sina, also known as Avicenna (980-1037), it means that aspects of rationalism, or, more precisely, intellectualism are dominant. In other words, Avicenna and Avicennian philosophy are symbols of intellectualism.

Abu Zayd holds that Afghani is a rationalist figure in the reform movement (26). Afghani's rationalism lies in his view that Islam is a religion with rational aspects, while Christianity opposes some scientific and rational principles (26). Afghani's influence on other reform movements, such as the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, is also evident. Due to his importance in the reform movement and his inspiration for other reform movements, Afghani has been called the Martin Luther of Islam (26). However, as I said, he falls into the third group, and it seems that he wanted to return to the greatness of Islam, but while maintaining modern Western elements. However, he did not accept the political superiority of the West over Muslim societies in any way, and for this reason, he was influential in the anti-colonial national and Islamic movements. In this regard, Abu Zayd writes:

He felt that Muslims must act in unison to have a chance of making a stand against Western hegemony. He believed that Sunnis and Shiites had to overcome their difference in the face of this danger, and that even Muslims and

non-Muslims should be able to stand together in a common fight based on a reform Islam. (26)

Several things should be noted. First, Afghani considered Western domination of Muslim societies to be a threat. Second, he believed in tolerance between Shiites and Sunnis. Third, he also believed in religious tolerance between Muslims and non-Muslims. Nevertheless, he wanted to fight against Western domination, and for this reason, he could perhaps be considered aggressive. However, because he believed in tolerance, he is considered an important figure in liberal theology. In other words, in his thinking and that of some Muslim reformers who both wanted to embrace modern Western concepts and resist their domination, Europe was an enemy to be confronted and a master to be used (37). Afghani saw the solution in uniting Muslim communities, which, I believe, includes both political and cultural unity. Although Afghani seems to believe in an Islamic state, it is also possible that by uniting Muslim communities, he means creating a unity by statesmen, and not simply creating a theocracy. In fact, statesmen, since they govern Muslims and Muslim communities, must be able to maintain Islamic identity as opposed to cultural identity. Also, if Afghani believes in creating an Islamic state, he should be seen as someone who establishes tolerance between Muslims and members of other religions.

Afghani's thought welcomes rethinking the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, which is also why he is an influence on reformists. The role he gives to independent reasoning is high, so much so that it even replaces consensus, on occasion. In this way, independent and personal reasoning replaces the reasoning of a group of jurists, and the ability to understand rulings from religious texts becomes common among individuals, instead of their imitating the opinions of other jurists. The reformist movement emphasizes rationalism, much like the golden age of Islam, when rationalism held a central place. The view of the *Sunnah* has changed for the reformist movement. Forgery of *hadith* had been high in the *Sunnah*, and that is why the *Qur'an* plays a key role. During the time of the Prophet of Islam, people heard his words directly with their own ears or through close intermediaries, but several years after the Prophet's death, the possibility of alteration in the *hadith* increased. However, the *Qur'an* has always remained unchanged, and this is why the reformist and rethinking movement relies more on the *Qur'an* than on *hadith* and the *Sunnah*. The rethinking movement, of which Afghani was a pioneer, values rationalism; it rereads the *Sunnah* from the perspective of modernity, as well as rationalistic *ijtihad*, i.e., independent reasoning. The rethinking approach significantly changes the way the *Qur'an* is interpreted in the century after Afghani. For the interpretation of the *Qur'an*, on the one hand, the context of the period in which revelation was sent down to the Prophet is examined, and, on the other hand, the context of the present period is also considered. In some verses of the *Qur'an*, it is understood that the context pertains only to a particular period, such as the wars that took place during the time of the Prophet. In other verses, it is understood that the audience is not limited to only one group of people in a specific time and place, but rather includes all people in all times and all places.

In addition to Afghani, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), an Indian Muslim scholar, also played an important role in the development of the rethinking approach. Abu Zayd points out that Ahmad Khan believed in the role of reason and nature in presenting an account of Islam. He also reconsiders the second classical source of jurisprudential knowledge, i.e., the *Sunnah* (28), and thus the role of the *Qur'an* and reason, as sources of knowledge, becomes more prominent. Furthermore, Muhammad Abduh (1848-1905) also adopted this approach in Egypt; his belief that "Islam is the Qur'an alone" became a slogan, which led to the spread of the Qur'anic movement,³ opposed to the *Ahl al-Hadith*,⁴ in India and Egypt (29).

The reinterpretation approach, one of the most important approaches adopted by the reformers in the 19th century, shows that the fundamental principles of Islam, based on the *Qur'an*, do not contradict the laws of nature and that many of the matters raised in the *Qur'an* are metaphorical. The fact that earlier Islamic thinkers viewed the *Qur'an* only in a literal sense was due to the lack of development of natural science (30). Abu Zayd refers to Ahmad Khan's view that the *Qur'an* should be interpreted using the *Qur'an* itself and pre-Islamic literature. This view, I believe, paved the way for some Islamic thinkers in the following century to accept a hermeneutic interpretation of the *Qur'an* (31), including an understanding of language, history, culture, and the circumstances of revelation at the time it was revealed, rather than solely on focusing on the textual analysis of the *Qur'an*. In addition, Abu Zayd enters into a discussion of various readings of the *Qur'an*, stating that some understand its meanings literally, while others regard many of its terms as metaphorical. Likewise, some maintain that many Qur'anic passages pertain to a specific historical period, whereas others argue that certain elements constitute fixed principles and that a distinction must be made between them. Furthermore, some consider the *Qur'an* not as a scientific or political text, but as a spiritual and ethical one (58). Against this broader hermeneutical background, Abu Zayd turns to thinkers whose interpretations move in a more ideological and political direction. He discusses Abu Ala Mawdudi (1903–1979), the Pakistani author, and acknowledges that Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) was among those influenced by him. According to Mawdudi, the world is divided into two parts: the West and Islam, or *jāhiliyya* and Islam (52). In this regard, Abu Zayd has presented two dichotomies: that between a modern, cultural, and rational Islam and a literalist Islam, and that between different approaches to interpreting the *Qur'an*. Abu Zayd, to support his dichotomies, provides some cases in his book and examines them like Islam in Indonesia and Iran in the twentieth century.

Abu Zayd, in the discussion of Islam and Rationalism, claims that Muhammad Abduh always praised Afghani's knowledge, philosophical and mystical. Abduh continued the rationalist approach adopted by Afghani (31). Abduh was a follower of independent reasoning and believed that religion was an essential aspect of human existence. He believed that independent reasoning should be broad, so that it could reach all social and intellectual branches of humanity. He also believed that true reform could not occur except through reform of Islamic thought. Like Ahmad Khan, who believed that in order to understand

the *Qur'an*, one must be aware of pre-Islamic literature, i.e., the context in which the *Qur'an* was revealed, Abduh also believed that much of the *Qur'an* was in line with Arab thought of the time (32). Unlike Ahmad Khan, who viewed the *Qur'an* from a scientific perspective, Abduh held the *Qur'an* to be a book of guidance, not a book of history. If it contains historical material, it is because it expresses historical and ethical lessons (32). Abduh's discourse, like Afghani's discourse, which influenced the Iranian Constitutional Revolution and aimed to modernize Iran, was influential in the thinking of Muhammad Ali (1760-1849), one of the leaders of Egyptian modernization (33). Abduh's liberal discourse included the imperative to return to a pure and accurate understanding of Islam, the same understanding that had enabled the ancient Muslims to achieve world leadership (33). This is why Abduh distinguishes between 'Islam' and 'Muslims' (33): the fundamental values of Islam have always been constant, but Muslims' understanding of Islam has often varied. Like Afghani, Abduh believed in a return to Islamic values and the revival of Islamic civilization. It is important to note, however, that unlike the fundamentalists, he did not see the solution simply in aggression against Western societies. The Afghani and Abduh movement was political, but it was first a cultural and reformist movement, as the Reformation emerged in Christianity, and then the Enlightenment in Europe. The difference is that, in the European Enlightenment, Christianity was key, while the case in Islam is different. Abduh believed that we can have European science and technology, and we can also borrow European rationalism and modern enlightenment, and he justified it with classical Islamic theology and philosophy, especially with the beliefs of the Mu'tazilites and Averroës (34). Free discourse, the reform movement, and the context of Islam's interaction with modernity are created by people like Afghani, Ahmad Khan, and Abduh.

Abu Zayd also refers to the reform movement in the twentieth century. Based on his discussions, the reform movement is, on the one hand, a way of confronting Western modernism, and on the other hand, a desire to return to original Islamic values and, even, to revive the glory of Islamic civilization. However, in reformist thinking, we come to the conclusion that conservatism and fundamentalism are not possible without understanding Western modernism, as many new concepts have emerged in Western civilization and have become popular. However, the confrontation with the West led some to think that the solution was the creation of an Islamic state opposed to Western governments. Abu Zayd begins this chapter by discussing two opposing views. On the one hand, Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) was in favor of the caliphate, deeming it necessary to prevent people from entering the age of ignorance. The idea of the Brotherhood was formed here (37). It was based on a return to original Islam through the revival of the practice of the pious ancestors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) and the establishment of an Islamic social and political order. The concept of political Islam in the modern sense was formed in this century. On the other hand, Ali Abd al-Raziq (1888-1966), an Egyptian scholar, who held that there is no political system that can be called Islamic, and, therefore, advocated for the abolition of the caliphate. For example, he believed that the caliphate

has no basis in the *Qur'an* (45), and others like Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq (1804-1878) believed that religion was an individual matter, rather than a social obligation, and thus, the only way to preserve religion was to separate it from politics. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1848-1902) also thought that religious authority should not have political power, because the combination of the two would be dangerous (38). These scholars, contrary to Rida, were reformers who adapted their principles to secularism. Rida, however, supported the caliphate. As editor of *al-Manār*, although influenced by Muhammad Abduh, Rida also held Salafi views⁶ and weakened the reform movement in some ways. The Muslim Brotherhood crystallized from Rida's teachings. The Brotherhood upheld Salafi doctrines and emphasized a return to the practices and actions of the pious ancestors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). They called for a return to authentic Islam, free from the influence of Greek philosophy and devoid of modern European elements. They also accepted the idea of the caliphate (45-6), precisely in contrast to the approach of modernist thinkers, who pursued rationalism and adaptation to modern foundations.

In addition to Egypt, Abu Zayd points to the examples of Iran and Iraq, where, in the 20th century, the question arose: should the law be based on Sharia or should a constitution be codified? Abu Zayd refers to Muhammad Husayn Naini (1860-1936), a Shi'ite cleric in Iran who was considered an advocate of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. Naini held that the absolute ruler is God, and that if someone assumes rulership, he may deviate into imitation of God and fall into *shirk* (associating partners with God),⁵ and consequently into despotism. Therefore, during the occultation of the Infallible, power must be limited through the representatives of parliament, who supervise political authority and prevent the concentration of absolute power in the hands of one ruler. Naini was in favor of a limited government (40). He reckons that the right to absolute rule belongs only to the Prophet and his family (*Ahl al-Bayt*), and in their absence government should not be held absolutely in the hands of any one person. This view is comparable to that of Abu Nasr al-Fārābī (870-950), who likewise believed that the ruler of the city is similar to God in the sense of governing the world and society toward order and perfection (Al-Fārābī 1991, 64). However, al-Fārābī's First Ruler was a prophet. He also held that after him, and regarding subsequent rulers, governance could take a consultative form. What I mean by the similarity between al-Fārābī's view and that of some Shi'i clerics during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution is that al-Fārābī considers absolute authority to be confined only to the First Ruler of the Virtuous City, the Prophet, and that, after him, government can take a consultative form.

In Iran, the establishment of the Islamic Republic after the 1979 Revolution led to a rethinking of the relationship between religion and the state. Following the overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy, Shi'i clerics, most notably Ayatollah Khomeini (1902-1989), succeeded in bringing an Islamic political order to power. Reformist figures in Iran, such as Abdolkarim Soroush (b. 1945) and Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari (b. 1936), continued the reform movement. For example, Soroush may be regarded as a kind of modernist. He held that, in addition to Western technology, we should also make use of Western social sci-

ences and philosophy (65). His view was that just as Muslim philosophers made use of Greek philosophers, and others later benefited from Muslim philosophers, so reformists too can draw upon Western thinkers. He rejects Ali Shariati's (1933-1977) idea of returning to the self, arguing that if we were to reject external elements, we would also have to reject Islam, since it does not have Iranian roots (66). The discourse of liberal theology regarding the understanding of the *Qur'an* was also continued in the Islamic world by Iranian thinkers. Shabestari regarded the *Qur'an* as a hermeneutical text, with various possible interpretations. Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (1935-1980), for example, derived Islamic economics from the *Qur'an* (67). This means that the *Qur'an* is an interpretable text, and, therefore, not subject to dogmatic or doctrinal control. Soroush maintained that religious understanding changes over time, that it is conditioned by time and place (71). Abu Zayd treats the *Qur'an* as hermeneutical: it is interpreted in communist, fundamentalist, and feminist ways (91).

Abu Zayd also considers the case of Indonesia. The reform movement entered Indonesia through the journal *al-Manār*. Subsequently, the education of Indonesian students in Cairo, as well as the travel of Indonesian scholars to Mecca and Medina, and thereafter to other Islamic countries, and their engagement in dialogue, contributed to the expansion of the reform movement in Indonesia (42). In this context, we encounter a strong belief in Indonesia in independent reasoning, one that maintained that, in order to understand various issues, one should turn to different schools of *fiqh*. At the same time, an approach to rethinking the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* emerged in Indonesia (43). A number of journals and Islamic institutions in Indonesia contributed to the dissemination of this reformist perspective.

The reform movement in Indonesia led to the emergence of the idea of cultural Islam, which sought to guarantee freethinking, democracy, and human rights. It also adopted secularism. Abu Zayd acknowledges that some Indonesian thinkers did not regard secularism as a worldview, but rather considered it an approach (59). Some Indonesian Muslim thinkers also maintained that pluralism in society must be accepted and that one should adopt tolerance. For this group of thinkers, Islam is compatible with pluralism, tolerance, freethinking, human rights, and democracy. Abu Zayd refers to the view of Ahmad Wahib (1942–1974), who states that God is dynamic rather than static. For this reason, freethinking is not merely a right but also a duty. Wahib also argues that enlightenment and freethinking are among the characteristics of the Prophet of Islam (61-2). Other figures, like Munawir Sadzali (1925-2004), held that the *Qur'an* does not obligate us to establish a state, and that the Islamic state in its modern sense is merely a reaction to colonialism (63).

In the final chapter of his book, titled 'Selected Thinkers on Islam, *Sharia*, Democracy and Human Rights,' Abu Zayd treats of his own and others' views, which can be considered the culmination of earlier reformist ideas. He refers to Abdullah An-Naim's (b. 1946) view that we should follow the message of the Meccan *suras* of the *Qur'an*, which contain universal and enduring messages. According to this view, the messages of the Meccan *suras* override those of the Medinan *suras*, which were related to specific historical times and contexts (85).

The key view here is that the essential rulings and values of Islam, like monotheism, superior moral ethics, justice, and equality, are unchangeable, whereas its accidental rulings are subject to change (90). Abu Zayd argues that many rulings are not explicitly stated in the *Qur'an* itself, but have been articulated through the five objectives of Islamic law (*maqāsid al-sharī'a*) as formulated by figures such as al-Ghazālī (1058-1111). The five objectives of the *sharia* are: preservation of the soul; protection of progeny; protection of property; preservation of sanity (intellect); preservation of religion (94). The first objective is deduced from the Islamic penal code⁷ related to illegal killing, since the prohibition and punishment of murder aim at protecting human life. The prohibition of alcohol consumption is deduced from the fourth objective, i.e., the preservation of sanity (94-95). The *Qur'an* in itself is a book of guidance rather than a book of law. Abu Zayd claims that the formation of a dictatorship results from viewing all the rulings of the *Qur'an* as timeless and placeless (95). He also states that some of the concepts mentioned in the *Qur'an* had meanings appropriate to the time of its revelation. For example, it is not necessary to understand the *shura* (consultation) mentioned in the *Qur'an* as democracy in its modern sense (96). Islam operates within context. Just as it adopted the form of *shura* in its own time, Muslims today can also adopt Western models. Therefore, it is not Islam that stands against democracy, modernity, and development; rather, it is the resistance of some Muslims and Islamic societies to modernity.

In conclusion, from the discussion Abu Zayd presents in this book, it can be understood that the reform movement in Islam is grounded in the encounter between Islam and Muslims and other civilizations, especially Western civilization in the modern period, as well as in the way human beings view the *Qur'an*. For this reason, alongside social transformations and the reformers' perspectives on social phenomena, Abu Zayd also addresses the views of Islamic thinkers regarding the interpretation of the *Qur'an*. If I were to summarize the reform movement in a few key terms, it would be that Islam is compatible with rationalism, independent reasoning, freedom, human rights, democracy, and all the concepts that guarantee human well-being.

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Biography

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Notes

1. The term “liberal theology” is more commonly used in the Christian context and is a concept associated with rationalism, the Enlightenment, modern science, society, and religious experience. According to Gary Dorrien, “[l]iberal theology conceives the meaning of Christianity in the light of modern knowledge and ethical values. It is reformist in spirit and substance; it is deeply shaped by modern science, humanism, and historical criticism; and it is committed to making Christianity credible and socially relevant” (2009, 3); and according to Olli-Pekka Moisio, “[t]he term Liberal Theology denotes various philosophically, theologically, and biblically informed religious movements and ideas that emerged within Christianity during the so-called Age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. These movements and ideas can in large part be seen as reactions to Enlightenment philosophy and rationalism” (Moisio 2013, 1161). I believe that this concept can be applicable in Islam as well, and that it is for this reason that Abu Zayd also employs this concept in his book. The definition that I have provided in the text concerns the freedom of God and the human being, and I have defined liberal theology on the basis of the concept of freedom. My definition is not in conflict with the definition of liberal theology in Christianity, because in the Christian context, as well, liberal theology is connected with humanism, and within humanism the freedom of the human being is also a necessary condition.
2. Although the concept of something like human rights may have been seen in pre-modern Western and even non-Western societies, as in Cyrus the Great Cylinder, the ancient Persian king, or in the teachings of many religions, these concepts emerged as organized concepts in the modern West.
3. The Qur’anic movement is, in fact, an approach that focuses solely on the verses of the *Qur’an*, rather than on *hadith*, for deriving legal rulings and religious matters; in this approach, even if there is a need to make use of *hadith* or the *Sunnah*, such use is highly limited.
4. *Ahl al-Hadith* refers to a group whose approach is based solely on focusing on *hadith* and the *Sunnah*, i.e., the prophetic tradition. They regard the role of reason and rational argument in understanding theological and legal matters as highly limited, because they consider the *Sunnah* to be complete and as having taken the place of reason. They also use the *Sunnah* for understanding the *Qur’an*, since they consider human reason to be insufficient for understanding the *Qur’an*.
5. *Shirk* means ascribing a partner to God; this can take the form of placing another being on an equal level with God, or even attributing other forms of divinity to other things.

6. Salafi doctrine refers to an intellectual and religious movement within the Islamic world that seeks to follow the views and practices of the pious ancestors and predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*), especially the first generations of Muslims, including the companions of the Prophet, the Successors, and their followers. This movement regards the return to the views of these early generations as the path to the well-being of Muslims and Islamic societies.
7. Islamic penal code or Islamic punishment law is a part of Islamic law that concerns the prevention and punishment of crimes such as murder, theft, bodily harm, and adultery; within the framework of objectives of Islamic law, this part of the law should be directed toward the preservation of the soul, protection of progeny, and protection of property.

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Errata *Janus Unbound: Journal of Critical Studies* 5.1

- p. 1 Change “Narrative Awareness Group” to “Awareness and Narrative Shaping Group”
- p. 2 Change “dated xx, June 2025” to “21 September 2025”
- p. 3 Change “har-dly breathe” to “hardly breathe”
- p. 13 Change “*it’s contrversial*” to “*it’s controversial*”
- p. 25 Change “po-pulation” to “population”
- p. 28 Change “Op-tion” to “option”
- p. 32 Change “the hu-manity that” to “the humanity that”
- p. 32 Change “Tim Wal-berg” to “Tim Walberg”
- p. 35 Change “hegemonc” to “hegemonic”
- p. 45 Change “in line nationalist” to “in line with nationalist”
- p. 68 Change “Pales-tinian survival” to “Palestinian survival”
- p. 72 Change “re-fuge in Iraq” to “refuge in Iraq”
- p. 73 Change “Nakao Maika” to “Maika Nakao”
- p. 80 Change “Qandeel Mais and Topak Özgün Erdener” to “Mais Qandeel and Özgün Erdener Topak”
- p. 99 Change “Arch-itecture is” to “Architecture is”
- p. 99 Change “photo-graphic documentation” to “photographic documentation”
- p. 99 Change “mul-ti-temporal” to “multitemporal”
- p. 99 Change “urb-an spaces” to “urban spaces”
- p. 99 Change “remaining tra-ces” to “remaining traces”

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