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DOSSIÊ ESPECIAL

DWELLING IN BABYLON: NOTES TOWARD A CRITICAL GENEALOGY OF EXILE

HABITAR EN BABILONIA: APUNTES PARA UNA GENEALOGÍA CRÍTICA DEL EXILIO

HABITANDO A BABILÔNIA: NOTAS PARA UMA GENEALOGIA CRÍTICA DO EXÍLIO

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Abstract
Jeremiah, the ancient critic of Israel and early propagator of exilic politics, advised the Hebrew peoples to accept the Babylonian lands in which they had been displaced as their own, and to "build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce." (29-4) Over the years, Jeremiah's exilic wisdom has been circulated in an array of theologies—not without critical engagement. In his 1998 essay "Between Two Worlds," Edward Said confronts the exilic calling to "cultivate a new garden," or the "looking for some other association to join" after "having lost my country with no immediate hope of regaining it"[.] Yet having learned from Adorno that "reconciliation under duress is both cowardly and inauthentic," Said concludes: "better a lost cause than a triumphant one, more satisfying a sense of the provisional and contingent…than the proprietary solidity of permanent ownership." In the follow essay, you will find notes toward a critical genealogy of exile. If Babylon is an allegory for dwelling in exile, I contend that a critical genealogy of exilic politics would center the problematic of justice. What does justice mean for those that dwell on a ground that is not recognized as their own? And what can we learn from tracing a genealogy of the exilic for a politics of the present that would advance a notion of justice, through dwelling, on a planetary scale?

Keywords
Exile; dwelling; sovereignty; Palestine.

Resumen
Jeremías, el antiguo crítico de Israel y uno de los primeros promotores de la política del exilio, aconsejó a los Hebreos que aceptaran como propias las tierras Babilónicas a las que habían sido desplazados y que "construyeran casas y se establecieran; plantaran huertos y comieran de sus frutos" (29-4). A lo largo de los años, la sabiduría de Jeremías sobre el exilio se ha difundido en diversas teologías, no sin un análisis crítico. En su ensayo de 1998, "Entre dos mundos", Edward Said aborda el llamado del exilio a "cultivar un nuevo jardín" o la búsqueda de "alguna otra asociación a la que unirse" tras "haber perdido mi país sin esperanza inmediata de recuperarlo". Sin embargo, habiendo aprendido de Adorno que "la reconciliación bajo coacción es cobarde e inauténtica", Said concluye: "mejor una causa perdida que una triunfante, más satisfactoria una sensación de lo provisional y contingente… que la solidez de la propiedad permanente". En el siguiente ensayo, encontrará notas para una genealogía crítica del exilio. Si Babilonia es una alegoría de la vida en el exilio, sostengo que una genealogía crítica de la política del exilio se centraría en la problemática de la justicia. Qué significa la justicia para quienes habitan en un territorio que no se reconoce como propio? Y qué podemos aprender al trazar una genealogía del exilio para una política del presente que promueva una noción de justicia, a través de la experiencia de habitar, a escala planetaria?

Palabras clave
Exilio; vivienda; soberanía; Palestina.

Resumo
Jeremias, o antigo crítico de Israel e um dos primeiros propagadores da política do exílio, aconselhou o povo Hebreu a aceitar as terras Babilônicas para as quais haviam sido deslocados como suas, e a "construir casas e estabelecer-se; plantar jardins e comer o que eles produzirem" (29-4). Ao longo dos anos, a sabedoria de Jeremias sobre o exílio tem circulado em diversas teologias — não sem uma análise crítica. Em seu ensaio de 1998, "Entre Dois Mundos", Edward Said confronta o chamado do exílio para "cultivar um novo jardim", ou a "busca por alguma outra associação à qual se unir" após "ter perdido meu país sem esperança imediata de recuperá-lo". Contudo, tendo aprendido com Adorno que "a reconciliação sob coação é covarde e inautêntica", Said conclui: "melhor uma causa perdida do que uma triunfante, mais satisfatória uma sensação do provisório e contingente… do que a solidez proprietária da posse permanente". No ensaio a seguir, você encontrará notas para uma genealogia crítica do exílio. Se a Babilônia é uma alegoria para a vida no exílio, defendo que uma genealogia crítica da política do exílio centraria a problemática da justiça. O que significa justiça para aqueles que habitam um território que não é reconhecido como seu? E o que podemos aprender ao traçar uma genealogia do exílio para uma política do presente que avance uma noção de justiça, através da vivência, em escala planetária?

Palavras-chave
Exílio; moradia; soberania; Palestina.

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His current research dwells within the planetary exigencies of the Palestinian resistance. Mending the fractured genealogy between regional anti-zionist and anti-capitalist traditions of the 19-20th century with those of the present, his thinking revolves around the concepts of exile, non-belonging, hereness and groundlessness. Recent published works include: The Dialectics of Exile (Alienocene Journal, 2025); We Do Not Belong Here: From the Diaspora to Jalūt (Der Spekter, 2025); A Nomos of the Stateless (Blind Field Journal, 2024); As if this World No Longer Existed: Three Theses on the Crisis of Political Belonging (ed. Neda Genova, Institute for Network Cultures, 2025) and The Living Communism of Friendship (Contradictions Journal, 2023).

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Dwelling Within and Against Soverignty

To mark the opening of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashana, we (the Vilne Bund) assembled outside the last standing synagogue in Vilnius, and unfolded a banner that declared "justice for all who dwell on earth"—in Arabic, Yiddish, English, Lithuanian. Clashing with the synagogue's own banners, adorned over its double tier security fences, which read "bring them home"; we came together to mourn those exterminated and displaced in the ongoing Nakba. Our slogan was adapted from the final passage of the Jewish mourners kaddish which moves from the memory of Jewish loss only to finally acknowledge loss at the level of the earth. We simply specified the Kaddish's universalist closing by replacing what is commonly phrased as peace with justice—for we all know their can be no peace for all who dwell on earth without justice.

If exile could be defined, for now at least, as a loss of one's place of dwelling, I'm wondering what justice is for those that dwell? Is it a matter of the return of alienated humanity to an originary site or sites of dwelling on earth? Or, can justice be achieved in groundlessness—on alien ground, or on a ground one inhabits but which is not recognized as one's own through sovereign title? It also begs the question of why justice as dwelling in the first place? Is justice thinkable without dwelled space? And what in turn are the consequences generally of thinking justice, as dwelling, through and as space?

Well, we could begin by noting that laws, and by way of them rights, don't seem to do their job very well without definite territories. Arendt seemed to believe in universal human rights up to the point when she saw how de-nationalized citizens, stripped of everything but their raw humanity, were transformed into vegative, animal, life forms. The world, Arendt, grimly remarked: "found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human."[1]

At least in the case of our modern nation-states, which Arendt confronted here, we clearly see how law and justice are subordinated to the spatial paradigm of the sovereign territory. And in a world fully enveloped by such a paradigm, Arendt confers, placelessness merges with homelessness—rendering the stateless at a complete loss; "even a slave," Arendt suggests, "belonged to some sort of human community", "their labor was needed, used and exploited and this kept them within the pale of humanity."[2] Having lost not only their place of dwelling but their ontological vocation in the world as such, Arendt observed that the only practical substitute the world had to offer the stateless, was the camp.

Now if the right to have rights is categorically subordinate to the nation-state, we arrive at a notion of justice as: the restoration of a state to the stateless… this was for all extents and purposes the post-war trajectory we have come to inherit. Indeed, Arendt concludes her chapter *The decline of nation-states and the end of the right of man*, with the establishment of the state of Israel, and comments: the "final solution for the Jewish question" was thought to be resolved in Europe by "means of a colonized and then conquered territory [i.e. Palestine] – but this solved neither the problem of the minorities nor the stateless. On the contrary, like virtually

[1] Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, p. 229.
[2] Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, p. 299.

all other events of our century, the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs."[3]

Notably, despite Arendt's encounters with the political potentials of statelessness, which she in part recognized through the International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War—finding in them a new form of community made up of subjects who simultaneously renounced their former places of citizenship while principally rejecting legal assimilation in the land they trans-nationally dwelled in struggle[4]—her post-war philosophy was vastly an effort to recover the tradition of European democracy, through something like a sovereign territory.

Confronting the inherent contradictions of post-war justice, while turning away from the noted potentials of communist internationalism as a "contagious disease", Arendt turned to the wise old Greeks as a remedy. Her studies that followed could be seen as an attempt to center the virtue of practices and the community of shared deeds and living words over the catastrophic temptations to base the law on the physical securities of the city walls. Arendt attempted to enforce the notion that it is not Athens but the Athenians who make the polis.[5] Yet, in Arendt's efforts to set new foundations for the political, the spatial paradigm of sovereignty is not abolished but subordinated to acting—as she defines it: the polis is "an organization of actings remembrance."[6] While the idea of law as a spatial organization of virtue sounds alright on paper, over the course the last century we have only seen the progressive failure of law to reflect these virtues or even recognize what a virtuous act or subject is or could be, in its bio-politically managed spaces of plurality. In other words, the dictation of virtue, of avowed and disavowed forms of acting and being, in the political domains "web of human relations" remains a matter of the sovereign decision and its necessary presupposition in a territorial dominion.

Could the exilic, beyond a marginalized, deathly, pathological exception to rights and sovereignty, be perversely affirmed as this otherworldly imperative for a new modality of dwelling beyond the spatial paradigm of the nation-state? What would be at stake today in formulating a politics of dwelling against the spatial paradigm of sovereignty? What would be at stake in conceiving of justice as a dwelling in exile—i.e. a dwelling in space without a claim to its sovereign dominion? A politics of dwelling that propagates a new groundwork for the very idea of political community, through a destitution of the relation between self and other: an aterritoriality that folds an outside within and an inside without; co-indetermining the place of the exile and the citizen.

The following essay will address the problematic of dwelling in Babylon—in exile—through a critical genealogy of exilic politics that begins with what we could call the Abrahamic turn in ancient Mesopotamia. In opening my study with Abrahamic political theology, I address the emergence of exilic politics as an ontological and temporal over merely spatial-historical problematic of estrangement and return; as well as offering critical insights on the ancient groundworks by which an occidental politics of dwelling has been inherited over

[3] Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, p. 297.
[4] Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, pp. 282–283.
[5] Arendt, *The human condition*, p. 194.
[6] Arendt, *The human condition*, p. 198.

time in the historical-anthropological plane. The three Abrahamic confessions are, variously, characterized through a conflict between a theocratic politics that views all terrestrial claims to authority as illegitimate and a theonomic imperative to territorialize divine power in the providential dominion of kings and dwelling-peoples. Babylon, as you will see, was adopted by Abrahamic political-theology as less an isolatable case-study—much less an empirical fact—than an allegory, with universalist connotations, on the impossibility of achieving justice for those that dwell on this fallen world. The Abrahamic turn, thus welcomes a messianic, eschatological, orientation toward the problematic of just dwelling—i.e. only by ending the world in its current form, and the coming of a paradisiacal kingdom of god, shall we dwell fully.

Yet, rather than proceeding from this so-called genealogical origin story as a golden key that will unlock the door to the knowledge of liberation in the present, you will see my genealogical method is critical. A critical, historical materialist, genealogy that demonstrates the limits of traditions as much as their lasting potentials; placing emphasis on how strategies are redefined and reflectively shaped by the particular agencies and worlds of the subjects who have differentially inherited the gift and the curse, which is exile.

From these ancient groundworks of the political I open section two Exiles of the Flesh, where an encounter transpires between the Abrahamic community of exile and an emerging abolitionist and anti-colonialist political-theologies of the 17th century's trans-atlantic. Through figures like Robert Wedderburn, I address how exilic theology is critically reinterpreted through the standpoint of the modern slave, and go on to offer a broader landscape on black exilic politics through errantry (Glissant), black nothingness (Moten) and social death (Wilderson).

From there we arrive at section three Neighbors in Babylon, wherein I open a study of contemporary confluences between Black and Jewish exilic politics. Here I address the potentialities of these crossings for the preset while also confronting critical issues with exile as an onto-politics through a brief study of the complementary issues of Shaul Magid's concept of Judeopessimism and Frank Wilderson's take on Afropessimism. Pushing against both of these streams, I return to Glissant, introducing his ethico-poetic grounding of the human community's ontological homelessness.

My notes toward a genealogy of exile conclude with A World Not Ours: Palestinian Reappraisals of Exilic Politics. It is here I return to where I began: Said's rejection of Jeremiah's proposal to settle down and cultivate a garden in Babylon. This brings me to Abdaljawad Omar's critical rethinking of negativity, formlessness and the exilic through the Palestinian resistance's particular mode of dwelling under settler-colonial occupation. Only to conclude by introducing Nasser Abourahme's analysis of the refuge camp as a site of exilic consciousness and messianic counter-temporal insurgency—a possible groundwork for thinking the exilic beyond the teleological orientation to history, that tendencies within the Abrahamic eschatological tradition, are at risk of capitulating to.

Through the study, I set out to broadly explore a groundwork for imagining a politics of dwelled placelessness that could contribute to the exigencies of the Palestinian resistance and to all other rightless, unsovereign, forms of life that variously challenge the dominion of empire and its genocidal futurities, today.

Abrahamic Temporality: Exile, Apocalypse, Salvation

Exile is the foundation of Abrahamic theology. For it is only through the exilic that an outside to the great cycles of nature and the intransigent laws of fate held by the cosmos, can emerge. The Abrahamic god is an alien, chaotic, and purely negative force, that stands in absolute alterity to the earth—its creation. The *anthropos*, "Adam and Eve", as the children of the alien one, are not earth dwellers *as such*—our inhabitation can only be regarded as a measure of our apostasy. Rather, our exile on earth is what brings us closer to the divine—only through exile from the kingdoms of earth do we achieve salvation. Our salvation, I.e. the coming age of plentitude, or the return of paradisaical dwelling, is hence set in a *future* horizon fully torn from the historical-natural events of terrestrial time. The time of salvation, itself exiled from the earth, belongs wholly to this new invention called the *future*. And this is what sets Abrahamic temporality apart from the Greek, Assyrian, pagan cosmos—as Michael Lowith's thesis will have it. While this exilic futurity emerged at the cross-roads of historical-anthropological-theological events that unfolded around 1600bc in Mesopotamia, my attention here will be limited to an exegesis on the emergence of exilic theology as a "meta-physical technology" for dwelling in placelessness.

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Our story begins with Abraham's flight from the Mesopotamian city of Ur. It is only as a wanderer, a stranger in the wilderness, as an exile to any proprietary claim of dwelling, that he is able to hear the promise of god and form a community of belief around it. Abraham's covenantal community of the desert did not consist of an *ethne*[7], but was rather made up of a motley assortment of wanderers, outlaws, and robbers who were called the *Khabiru* (vagrants) by the dwellers of Arkadian city-states.[8] "And *Khabiru* softened in the desert air, becomes Hebrew."[9]

As Jacob Taubes imaginatively narrates, referring to the Babylonian prophet of exile Ezekiel, the founding scene of this new form of collective life begins with the scene of a monstrous inversion (*ungeheurer umkehrug*) of sedentary cosmologies: the tree of the *ethne* is uprooted and replanted with its roots facing upward. Ezekiel himself writes on this divorce of roots from the land as territory in *The Great Eagle and the Transplanted Vine*, where he confers that the prosperity of the plant (the community) is not out of the soil it grows but out of the blessing of God. And concludes: "All the trees of the forest will know that I the Lord bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish."[10] In radical contrast to tribal cosmologies that would place god as the totem of a particular place, the God Abraham encounters is entirely separated from land and blood.[11]

[7] I will refer dwelling people and nations as ethne as to specify the distinction between a people of a territory and a political community that forms despite not having one.

[8] For a genealogy of the Hebrew as Khabiru see my essay, *Dialectics of Exile*.

[9] Jaynes, *The origin of consciousness in the breakdown of the bicameral mind*, p. 294.

[10] *The books of Ezekiel*, 17:24.

[11] Taubes, *Occidental eschatology*, p. 25.

Another foundational scene for Abrahamic theologies of exile, is the parable of the two sons. Sarah is infertile, which leads them to use the slave Hagar as a surrogate to birth their first son Ishmael. Yet, Sarah later encounters God, who promises her a son of her own, who we know as Issac. Ishmael and Hagar are subsequently banished to the desert, to protect Isaac's inheritance of the estate, as the first born son. The parable places Sarah's belief in the promise of God over the flesh—it is not the law of the flesh but the law of the divine that stands at the center of belonging to the community of exile. Agamben interprets the parable as a narrative for two forms of law: the law of the promise is embodied in Sara and Issac whereas the Mosaic law of the commandments, of work and obligation, is embodied in Hagar and Ishmael.[12]

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For the Khabiru prophets of exile, dwelling is transformed into a divine providence of a universal future geography. In the present there is only Babylon, an allegorized city that stands as a planetary warning for those who may attempt to dwell fully in a world without grace, justice, and the plentitudes of the divine.

The apocalypse emerges at this point as a force of deliverance, which takes us from the fallen cities of Cain to the sacred future geography of god's promised kingdom. For the apocalypse is the end, the end of the world in it current form, and the beginning of the future. Exile cannot be fulfilled without its mirroring in the world, as its negation. For instance, in the Apocalyptic Book of Isaiah it all begins with the Israelites' infidelity to the covenantal agreement with god, which grants them the exceptional status of divine dwelling within the world of the exiled. Destined for failure, the promised land is employed by god as an allegoric demonstration, for all *ethne*, of the future possibility of their salvation—given they are righteous in the present. The fall of Jerusalem, in Isaiah's prophecy, is hence followed in suit by every other kingdom: Jerusalem is Babylon, Babylon is Assyria, and Assyria will be Rome, etc.

Only those that *hear* the calling of the divine: exiling themselves from the corrupt ambitions of dwelling that prosper in the glutinous city; who wage a war against its inherent inequities; who embrace the Sabbath as their injunction to "abolish all forms of subjection" (58.6); shall inherit the earth, and be called the rebuilders of the fallen city whose walls are salvation(61.3); whose gates homage; and whose houses of prayer no foreigner shall be excluded.

For the early prophets of exile (Isaiah, Jermiah, Ezekiel) there is hence no return to a promised land without the planetary apocalypse—any attempt to re-found the kingdom of Israel before this event, *is doomed*. With the fall of Judah and Israel, Isaiah remarks that a remnant of the promised land will survive, now scattered throughout the world. The exilic remnant transforms Israel as part into Israel as a whole. The calling of exile is therefore now a part that regards the whole. Wherever the remnant, the sacred geography, as the promise of a just dwelling is now possible.[13] In this sense, we should consider apocalyptic prophecy as foundational

[12] Agamben, *The time that remains*, p. 122.
[13] As developed by Agamben in *The time that remains*.

to a theocratic politics of anarchic vagrancy. A politics, as developed by Susan and Jacob Taubes, which would categorically condemn all claims to terrestrial authority.

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Exilic politics came to clash with Israelite and than Roman royalist tendencies, which sought to reconquer Jerusalem, or envision Rome as a new promised land, before the apocalyptic collapse, gave clearance for the rebuilding of the universal city of god. Whereas the Abrahamic community of exile established no earthly dynasty, remaining exilic, it was Moses who initiated this reactionary effort to re-found an earthly kingdom through conquest and dominion over a territory—the promise land—establishing a *ethne* and with it terrestrial laws of obligation and work—the lineage of Ishmael. Moses thus inverses the inversion of the tree of dwelling—re-territoralizing the roots, inaugurating a *theonomic* (theology + nomos) imperative to negate the Khabiru's exilic form of life, legitimizing terrestrial claims to divine power.

Moses was a royalist who emerged within and against the theocratic anarchy of exilic vagrancy. In the Mosaic Israelite monarchy, as Spinoza will observe, there was no greater punishment than exile, for the worship of God "could be practiced, all agreed, only on their native soil, as it was held to be the only holy land, all others being unclean and polluted," and for this reason, as Spinoza follows, "no citizen was condemned to exile: for a transgressor deserves punishment [and this includes death] but not disgrace."[14] The postulation of a redeemed, "full existence," that was established in the aftermath of the era of exilic vagrancy, hence foregrounded a "radical demand for total self-obligation to the collective" – as Raz-Krakotzkin observes about the contemporary kingdom of the third millennium.[15]

The royalist desire for return, through an exile negating exodus to Eretz Israel, is thus opposed by a politics of exilic redemption. It is no longer the jews as part that *return* to their part but the exilic Khabiru as whole that return to the fullness and abundance of divine dwelling on a redeemed earth. Israel, the promise of redemption, is initially heard by one people, but eventually offered as a dwelling for all peoples of the earth—Israel is thereby referred to as *pas* Israel i.e. Israel as all. "If there is no tikun, no redemption for mankind, then there is no redemption for the Jews"—as one Bundist reminded us in the aftermath of WWII.[16] Simply, there is no dwelling on earth without justice for all. If Israel is anything to us, it is the horizon of a just earth—the kingdom come.

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Spinoza will place Jesus within this tradition of exilic prophecy—a thesis that very much reflects Taubes' own. Spinoza begins by referring to the prophet Jeremiah who after condemning the Israelites many injustices, calls for the Kahbiru to embrace exile and: "build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce." Spinoza sees Christ as a follower of Jeremiah's calling, who in

[14] Spinoza, *Theological-political treatise*, p. 223.
[15] Raz-Krakotzkin, *Exile within sovereignty*, p. 122.
[16] Hodes, *Facing the future*, p. 283.

accepting that Isralites would be exiled "throughout the whole world" without the hope of return, "taught them to cultivate piety towards all men without distinction."[17]

Turning to Christianity's particular engagement with exile, we should begin by noting that Christ only accepted such a politics in the aftermath of his failed effort of delivering his own Mosaic exodus. As Taubes lucidly accounts:

> The Promise Land is under Roman rule and has been changed into a house of slavery. This is a view which Jesus shared with John and the Zealots. Contrary to the Zealots, however, Jesus teaches that one should not resist evil. Therefore, he is unable to demand and plan resistance to Rome in the way the Zealots did. He demands, rather, *secessio plebis*, the exodus of the people into the wilderness. The whole community has become subject to the Romans that means enslaved to the "lord of this world." The free nation of Israel, who wishes to serve God alone, has no alternative but exodus into the wilderness, to the aoiketos. The time of the wilderness is the honeymoon of Israel, when the bride followed God, her divine bridegroom. The tribes of Israel went into the wilderness from the house of bondage to serve God. A new exodus into the wilderness can give Israel the freedom to prepare to make herself worthy to receive the Promise Land [...] The wilderness is the way to escape the domination of this world.[18]

Taking on the old Mosaic strategy, Christ traveled throughout the empire calling upon both the rich and the poor to leave behind their current dwellings and follow him to the desert. The people did not follow him. And it is the failure of secession, that defines what would become the early christian movement as a movement of exile from within. Failing to plant a new tree, constituting a new *ethne* in the desert wilderness, the early Christians now attempt to monstrously invert the re-inverted mosaic tree: re-establishing the exilic community of belief over and against the Roman-Mosaic nomos of obligations and commands.

Embracing exile on earth and waging it against the spatial paradigm of Rome, the early Christian's like Paul inherited the tradition of seeing Israel as the scattered remainder, as *pas* Israel. In turn, prophecy was no longer a matter of the future state to be returned to, but as Paul would see it, a concern of the messianic now's orientation toward a future salvation that was already in the making. Under such conditions, to dwell in Babylon for Paul is to not-not-dwell in Babylon. As Agamben unpacks, the messianic vocation works from within every factical vocation, "it does not entail substituting a less authentic vocation with a truer vocation." The messianic "as not" rather nullifies vocation in the very gesture of maintaining and dwelling in it." As Paul will advise his community of believers:

> But this I say, brethren, time contracted itself, the rest is, that even those having wives may be as not having, and those weeping as not weeping, and those rejoicing as not rejoicing, and those buying as not possessing, and those using the world as not using it up. For passing away is the figure of this world. But I wish you to be without care.[19]

Exilic dwelling, through Paul's messianic as not, is then neither a speculative horizon of a future return, nor a constitution of a new subject that overcomes exile—

[17] Spinoza, *Theological-political treatise*, p. 243.
[18] Taubes, *Occidental eschatology*, p. 55.
[19] As cited in Agamben, *The time that remains*, p. 23.

as would be in Mosaic exodus—but a bearing of negativity, as a sojourner in this world, as to help it pass away.

This non-non vocation is beautifully conceptualized in the idea of *parousia:* an existence beside itself; a seeing of oneself as a foreigner, a sojourner on earth, instead of as a citizen or any other title of full inhabitation.[20] Augustine would later develop this concept through his city of god. Whereas the terrestrial city, *civitas terrena*, is dwelled and established by the carnal, slavish, descendants of Caine, the decedents of Abel, as Augustine narrated, remain on a pilgrimage toward nonearthly goals. In other words, they look upon the terrestrial city and their very existence, beside itself.[21]

To restate, the community of exile is not a new figuration of law, but the dwelling of a force of negation within the laws and subjects that are; a use of this negativity as a tool for revolution—what Marx would later formulate as the proletariat's historical vocation: "the dissolution of society as a particular estate."[22] Indeed, following this citation of Marx, Agamben aptly summates messianic politics in the wager that "the complete loss of man coincides with his complete redemption."[23] Exilic theology takes up the task of carrying out this loss, traversing the abysmal distance between the subjects complete exile within this world, to redemptions complete abundance beyond it—in the city of god.

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It should be taken as no surprise that Islam, inheriting and responding to the two prior Abrahamic tendencies, was not established at home, in the holy capital of Mecca, but by a community that formed while in exile from it in the city of Medina. The *'umma,* the community of believers, the social fundaments of Islamic theology, is built on the historical foundations of al-ghurib (the stranger). For it was only after principled flight from oppression in Mecca that the *muhajirun* (those that took flight), having given up all earthly possessions and attachments to *thingness*, could open themselves to belonging in the community of otherness that the *ansar,* their hosts, would cultivate with them. The *ansar* practiced a radical fidelity to this otherness, even offering the ghurba rights to their family inheritances. As Mohamed summates: "Islam began as something strange (gharīb) and will return strange as it began, so glad tidings to the strangers (ghurabā')"

The Umma, exceeding a merely clerical body of the faithful, is aptly noted by Boyarin as "the same word that Judeo-Arab writers use to describe their people/peoplehood."[24] The ceaselessly dialogic folding of strangeness within, thrusts community into a sub-ontological and trans-confessional inter-nomality (between nomos). In accordance with this vision, the medieval scholar Pifer concludes: "To be gharīb—and to recognize the gharībness of others—is in part to occupy a dialogic position: it is so often a navigation, sometimes a concession, of what is other, foreign, and non-native in one's midst."[25]

[20] The concept is given this particular consequence by Agamben, *The time that remains*, p. 69.
[21] For a take on "pilgrim temporality", see Löwith, *Meaning and History*, p. 169.
[22] Marx; Engels, *Collected works*, p. 186.
[23] Agamben, *The time that remains*, p. 31.
[24] Boyarin, *The no-state solution*, p. 94.
[25] Pifer, *The age of the gharib*, p. 17.

Finally, the *Umma*, as a universal community of believers, adapts theocratic anarchism through *Tawḥīd,* which*:*

> [I]s the fundamental 'aqīdah or tenet within Islām that relies on the conceptualization of God as the sole sovereign and protector of rights for all life. Tawḥīd is the acknowledgment that the singular authority one pledges allegiance to is Allāh, with the deification of any other referred to as širk (polytheism), including the rampant worship of materialism, power, prestige, money.[26]

Following Tawḥīd, when Mohamed returned to Mecca from Medina, he did not negate the Umma of strangers by instituting a new nomos, a new order of ownership, but rather declared the generalization of estrangement: "every claim of privilege or blood or property is abolished by me except the custody of the temple and the watering of the pilgrims."

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Finally, just as the Jewish tradition is split between the exilic Khabiru vagrancy of Abraham and the Israelite royalism of Moses, so will be the case with the Christians and Muslims. It is generally agreed that Eusebius of Caesarea (265–339AC) consummates the end of early Christianity's community of exile by establishing the doctrine that the church and the kingdom merge within the person of the Emperor.[27] As Taubes will spell out: "[...] Christians eventually pray for the end to be delayed, "for we do not wish to live it and by praying for the delay of these things, we are promoting the continuation of Rome." [...] and referring to the late letter of Paul, Taubes comments that "far from representing a revolutionary faction, the Christian Church is overtly placatory to the empire well before its recognition by the Imperium." And continues, "The Church no longer feels it is a community in exile, and for Eusebius the empire and the congregation of believers are synonymous. Once Christianity has been raised to the states of the religion of the empire any hope for God's Kingdom is snuffed out."[28]

The theonomic Church, as Lowith specifies, is not so much driven by the imperative to negate exilic temporality's messianic apocalyptism, but to administrate salvation "on clear foundations" of the calendar, which replaces the anarchic event of the already coming apocalypse with a distinctly modern notion of the future as a progression toward an end directed by the providential authority of the ruler.[29]

In this sense, pas Israel after the Roman imperial integration of Christianity, becomes more than the limited, providential, absolutism of Isralite monarchy, but an absolutist claim to imperial dominion over the entire earth. And whereas Rome sees itself as harmonizing the world, those made other and deracinated from their otherness by its voracious appetites will contend: "They make a desert and call it peace."

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[26] Abdou, *Islam and Anarchism*, p. 101.
[27] Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, p. 23.
[28] Pifer, *The age of the gharib*, p. 77.
[29] Löwith, *Meaning and History*, p. 156.

Exiles of the Flesh

> *Beware, and offend not your God, like the jews of old, in choosing a king; aggrandize no man by forms of law... A black king is capable of wickedness, as well as a white one.*
> *–Robert Wedderburn, The axe laid to the root, 1817.*[30]

Black theology, a theology that appears amidst the horrors of chattel slavery and the beginnings of capitalism, marks an insurgency within the topology of Abrahamic eschatology charted above. Amaryah Armstrong's research on black encounters with the parable of Sara and Hagar, exposes us to a radical upending of the two covenants.[31] Taking the standpoint of the slave Hagar as not only a passive bearer of the law of the flesh for Ishmael, but also as a fugitive agent that threatens to usurp the very ordering of the terrestrial and divine planes; black theology utters a politics of exile within and against the flesh.

Hagar, a slave-surrogate, a god appointed tool for the reproduction of the Abrahmic family line, rebels against the violence and jealousy of the infertile Sara, and runs away to the wilderness. As a fugitive, dwelling in an exile that mirrors Abraham's own, Hagar enacts a dislocation of the law that would make her a mere object of the flesh. The law she threatens, as Armstrong does well in conveying, is the "law that imposes motherhood onto her body—the same imposition that enables the transference of inheritance to continue unbroken."[32]

And it is as a fugitive that Hagar encounters god and radically transforms the law of the Abrahmic covenant: renaming god "El Roi," (God of seeing); the one who recognizes the slave, the flesh, as a bearer of the spirit. The fugitive slaves renaming of the divine, is the event of a pure revolution: the object becomes subject, the absolute subject an object—the flesh names the word without itself becoming the higher spirit. And although Hagar eventually retreats from this radically ascephalic dwelling in a world without law, the black abolitionist tradition will summon the potentialities of Hagar's fugitive encounter—deploying it as a universalist insurgency against the law of fathers—centuries to come.

It is vastly through the encounter with Hagar that black abolitionist theology inherits the Abrahmic tradition of exile, while monstrously contorting the tree; or as Joseph Albernaz brilliantly specifies through the 19th century mixed-raced abolitionist Wedderburn, takes an axe to its roots. Wedderburn, Albernaz begins, "does not wish to be included in the white line of inheritance but instead to inaugurate a general strike against all inheritance and possession: a generalization of disinheritance."[33] For it is from those that have nothing and are nothing, that Wedderburn deduces the possibility of inhabiting the earth as that which is in common.[34] In cutting the tree of inheritance, the earth is given to the "children of the fatherless [...] the disinherited and dispossessed, who enroll the fractured elemental

[30] Wedderburn, *The axe laid to the root*.
[31] Armstrong, *Of flesh and spirit*.
[32] Armstrong, *Of flesh and spirit*, p. 137.
[33] Albernaz, *Common Measures*, p. 258.
[34] Albernaz, *Common Measures*, p. 262.

forces of Arie's ecology against the productivist and monocultural enclosure of the plantation."[35]

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Black abolitionist theology is closely echoed in Negritude's politics of affirmative nihilism that tasks itself with claiming one's dispossession: being at home in homelessness; dwelling in the trans-Atlantic slave trades categorical dislocations of heritage, language, and time. If blackness, as Fred Moten reasons, "is the place that has no-place" inhabiting this nothingness is to positively re-identify abysmal loss, as the "freedom of not being a single being."[36] A refusal, as Moten formulates citing Frank Wilderson, to leave the hold of the ship "despite my fantasies of flight". A refusal, in other words that maintains the exilic, that inhabits its relegation from the civil butchery, the social enmity, that constitutes the relation between the subjected and subjective, in capital's socio-political domain.

Black negativity thus has a deeply eschatological disposition. The eschaton, the end of this world, everywhere permeates its political vocabularies. The affirmation of negritude turns the slaves social death, into a revolutionary force of negation of a world whose somethingness is founded on the use, extraction, and maintenance of black nothingness. Negritudes eschatological inversion then turns this nothingness, this abyss of subjectivity, into a burial ground for the world in its present form. This is where hope and optimism appear in a political ontology that up to this point strictly identifies with loss—"I bear the hope," Moten reflects, "that blackness bears or is the potential to end the world." And continues, "the promise of another world, a place to inhabit, is only given in the general critique of the world. "In the meantime," Moten affirms, "what remains to be inhabited is nothing itself in its fullness."[37]

There is no return to the world *as it was*, but there is also no belonging to the world *as it is*, in its fullness.

Blackness as negritude, is an inheritor of exilic theologies messianic vocation: *to dwell in this world but not of this world*. The exile dwells in the ruins, in the shards of a remainder of the self that was, which in refusing a politics of return to an autochthonous language, land, or heritage; cuts through every claim to one in whatever land it arrives. To bear blackness is to bear the messianic remainders transformation of the Mosaic nomos into an aterritorial, universalist, politics of redemption—'we are all Israel' is reconceptualized as: 'we are all black.'[38]

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The passage from absolute *loss-of* and *poverty-in* world to redemption through a otherworld one is given access to by the very horror of *unworlding*, is not without critical obstacles—obstacles that are ever present in exilic politics, but

[35] Albernaz, *Common Measures*, p. 255.
[36] Moten, *Blackness and Nothingness*, p. 738.
[37] Moten, *Blackness and Nothingness*, p. 739.
[38] For instance, the 1805 constitution of Haiti "declared all citizens, regardless of color, as universally 'Black'", See: Albernaz, *Common measure*, p. 263.

which are uniquely elaborated in its inheritance by the modern politics of negritude—as Jared Sexton lucidly frames them:

> How do those whose ground is taken from them, who are taken from their ground, who are taken away from themselves as ground—how do they embrace that groundlessness as possibility when it is likewise marked by the scandal of an unaddressed crime? If I truly have nothing to lose but my chains, then why would I want to lose those and have nothing? If my psyche is assaulted so relentlessly that I cannot form a coherent self, then why would I want to subject that shattered ego to "a complete lysis" (Fanon, 2008a: 3) and risk losing my mind altogether? That's the challenge.[39]

In answering the question of how to dwell in groundlessness, It should come as no surprise that thinkers of negritude tend to turn toward the linguistic domain: a domain seen to boast a unique affordance for the anoriginal, exilic, foundations of their sub-or-para-ontological projects.

Moten, for instance, closely engages with pigen languages, which he see's as embodying the fleshly nothingness of the hold. Citing Linebaugh, pigen is introduced as a new form of speech that emerges under chattle slavery, combining nautical english, the hermetic cant of the underworld, West African grammatical constructions and the Sabirs of the Mediterranean. Digging into Fanon's deep unease with the phenomenon of black pigen in France and the colonies, Moten asks:

> Does black speech [pigen], does the little Negro, assume a culture or bear a civilization? If not, then how could it be speech? What does it mean to consider that black speech is the sound of natal alienation, the sound of being without a heritage, without a patrimony? It means, first of all, that all these terms must be revalued, precisely from the already exhausted perspective of the ones who are both (de)valued and invaluable." 770 And continues: The dispossessive force of black speech confirms, in one sense, and obliterates, in another, the "monolingualism of the Other". My language is not mine, also, because its undercommonness cuts me and mine.[40]

Whereas Fanon at this point retreats from the abysmal depths of pigens logos, turning to Cesaire's poetry as an example of someone who plunged into the underworld only to turn its nothingness into a recognizable poetry back on land, Moten rallies us further down into its depths—claiming the non-non-language of a non-non-people as a dwelling.[41]

Edouard Glissant turned to the concept of errantry to give some definition to the deeply refractory quality of the para-political domain Moten accesses through pigen and those that speak it. In *Errantry and Exile*, Glissant begins by historisizing the very idea of roots; making conditional the notion of an originary ground of identity.[42] Rome as an expansive power operated through what Glissant calls "a transient root": nomadically exporting itself across geographies through an "intransigent language". Glissant in turn sees the historical phenomenon of rootlessness, emerging *not as a theft or destruction of indigenous roots,* but as an imposition of colonialisms intransigent ontology of language, on peoples who are

[39] Jared Sexton, *On black Negativity*.
[40] Moten, *Blackness and Nothingness*, p. 759.
[41] Moten, *Blackness and Nothingness*, p. 760.
[42] Glissant, *The poetics of relation*.

not recognized as speaking, dwelling, subjects. Glissant is in turn able to recognize the emergence of an oppositional root, by the colonized, as a tragic imposition of the root itself, despite that imposition being nominally against this very violence—"a limitation," Glissant will conclude, "from the beginning". "Decolonization," Glissant assures the reader, "will have done its real work when it goes beyond this limit."[43]

Errantry, and The Errant, appear as a mode of speaking and form of being, as a way out of this tragedy, this limit. Deposing the instransigence of both minor and major language systems, errantry dwells in the relation between the ontologically dual self and other. Errantry is a dialectical, relational, language that degenerates and multiplies each and every imposition of a root, a people, and their territory.

In this sense, Errant life, could be seen simultaneously as a horizon of decolonization—i.e. the abolition of the predatory transient root—and as a tradition that came before (indigenous, pre-modern modes of belonging) while at the same time a force that messianically manifests in the present (through pigen and other jargons) of the nation-state and its spatial paradigm.

Neighbors in Babylon: Contemporary Black and Jewish Confluences

In 1995 the Jewish Socialist—an anti-zionist magazine edited by the Jewish Socialist Group in the UK—published their 10th anniversary issue with a cover story: "Neighbors in Babylon". The article opens with a scene of tension—or "open warfare"—in Stamford Hill, between a rapidly growing chassidic community and their black neighbors. Remarking, "our communities have collaborated and coexisted for many years", the authors ask: "are we now failing to unite to fight a common oppression, or is it easier to pick on someone our own size?" Advocating against a "fundamentalist identity politics," the authors continue their article with a line of argument that places the concept of diaspora as a "meeting place for Blacks and Jews", which could "challenge Anglo-Saxon Protestant notion of race and culture which assumes its supremacy and regards anyone else's ethnicity as static, immutable, and most definitely not universal."[44]

The idea hinted at in the article of a post-identitarian diasporic political community, definitely has a deep presence in both Black and Jewish modern political history. For instance, Black revolutionary nationalists in the United States confronted the limits of sovereign politics by the early 70s. Not unlike Palestinians, Black nationalists in North America viewed themselves as a nation without a state who were fighting against, *what they called,* a genocide by a nation with a state. Yet in the absence of a sovereign territory, or a real prospect of attaining one, they found themselves at odds with an internationalist movement that was vastly organized as a "block" of socialist or non-aligned *states*. As Newton concluded, revolutionary nationalism: "is an endless circle, you see: to achieve nationhood, we needed to become a dominant force; but to become a dominant force, we needed to be a

[43] Glissant, *The poetics of relation*, p. 17.
[44] Merkel; Blackman, *Neighbors in Babylon.*

nation."[45] Newton therefore arrived at the need to reconceptualize the very idea of inter-*nationalism* through the concept of inter-*communalism*—a planetary politics based on a confederated network of revolutionary communities. Further, Newton saw this post-national grammar of the political extending out of the exilic condition of Blacks, who surived the trans-atlantic slave trade—and goes on to state: "We are internationalists because we have been internationally dispersed by slavery, and we can easily identify with other people in other cultures. Because of slavery, we never really felt attached to the nation in the same way that the peasant was attached to the soil in Russia. We are always a long way from home."[46] And as accounted in William C. Anderson's *The Nation on No Map,* Newton's turn toward this post-identitarian politics of community is set against Marcus Garvey's "return-to-Africa" movement, which Anderson has more recently placed in direct proximity to the Zionist discourse of return.[47]

I see intercommunalism as sharing a deep political connection with the autonomist confederalism of modern Jewish anti-zionist socialist, anarchist, and communist movements. Playing on the slogan: "workers of all nations unite", Jewish Bundist's answered in 1905: "workers of all peoples unite." From the Polish Bundist leader Medem's theory of a state of nations, onto the broader revolutionary socialist movements strategy of dwelling in a trans-territory topos of struggle; modern exilic Judaism answered the radically violent process of European nation-state formation, with a vision of a deterritorialized planetary movement of resistance—a nomos of the stateless.

And following Newton, Jewish revolutionaries fought against a reactionary movement of nation-statism (zionism) as well as resisting calls by some communists to dissolve their particular traditions of resistance and modes of dwelling here and now where they reside, into a bourgeoisie revolution against a single territory—the Tsarist Empire.

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Another contemporary confluence has transpired in dual efforts to make Black and Jewish exile into an onto-political project. For Frank Wilderson, black exclusion is ontologized into a new figuration of the "chosen ones". For it is only through this abysmal exclusion that blackness is purified from complicity in the civic order of property; a sociality he accuses Jews of—but also Palestinians and other indigenous peoples. For instance, responding to a Palestinian statement of solidarity with black uprisings in the US: 'Ferguson is an example of what is happening in Palestine', Wilderson smugly contends:

> That's just bullshit. First, there's no time period in which Black police and slave domination have ever ended. Second, the Arabs and the Jews are as much a part of the Black slave trade—the creation of Blackness as social death—as anyone else. As I told a friend of mine, 'yeah we're going to help you get rid of Israel, but the moment that you set up your shit we're going

[45] Newton, *Intercommunalism.*
[46] Newton, *Intercommunalism.*
[47] Anderson, *The Lingering Threat of Black Zionism.*

> to be right there to jack you up, because anti-Blackness is as important and necessary to the formation of Arab psychic life as it is to the formation of Jewish psychic life.[48]

Wilderson's heavy handed dismissal of the Palestinian resistance, as Zahi Zalloua has recently accounted in "Against Exceptionalism", clearly derives from his ontologization of blackness as an absolute, exceptional, subject of exclusion from world history.[49] Every other subject formation— from communism's proletariat, to the indigenous of the Americas—goes through a sort of character assassination as a perpetrator of anti-blackness; as having stakes in the recovery and perpetuation of political sovereignty.

And this is precisely where black ontologies of exile problematically collude with recent efforts to ontologically re-constitute a ground for Judaic exile. The rabbinical scholar Shaul Magid's article "Judeopessimism: Antisemitism, History, and Critical Race Theory" is a case and point example of the dangers here. Magid imports Wilderson's ontological premise, to provocatively argue, citing Arthur Hertzberg: "The only thing more dangerous to Jews than antisemitism, is no antisemitism." Connecting the ultra-nationalist Israeli politician Meir Kahane, to the 19th century proto-zionist rabbinical tradition via Naftali Zvi Berlin, Magid insinuates ontological oppression "has a divine teleology all its own"[50] in that hatred by the gentile nations purifies the Jewish soul, preparing it for redemption. And continues: "In short, antisemitism purges [and elsewhere "erases"] the Semites who have left Torah. Or, alternatively, it wakes them up to return to reside under the wings of divine protection."[51]

While Magid's thinking, as I've explicated here, is clearly zionist his public profile amidst the genocide in Gaza, has been cast in a strategically ambiguous light—his 2023 book Necessity of Exile, not to mention his upcoming collection "Jewish anti-Zionism as Political Theology"; insinuates ontological exile as way out of Zionism's imminent collapse, while maintaining the core claims of jewish supremacy.... now repackaged in a palatable diasporist grammar.

While Zalloua's critique of Afro-Pessimism follows Zizek's own—resolving the issue through a historisization of social death as a dynamic, historical, space composed of ever shifting conditions of exclusion and compositions of revolutionary negativity—as I see it, the issues in Wilderson and Magid's formulations may be symptomatic of deeper problems in exilic politics eschatological futurity.

Is the Afro-Judeo-pessimist critique of the Palestinian resistance reflected in the proletariat's critique of the artisan laborer or landed peasant? On one side we have a subject who has gone through or is in a more advanced consciousness of their destitution; where on the other side we find a subject who remains attached to their loss or worse hasn't even encountered the event of exile from their land, their heritage, their properties, which would deliver them to a movement that bears the end of a world constituted by such properties. Does exilic politic's eschatological orientation bind it to a teleological temporality? And could we find this temporality

[48] Wilderson, *We're trying to destroy the world*, p. 13.
[49] Zalloua, *Against exceptionalism.*
[50] Magid, *Judeopessimism*, p. 386.
[51] Magid, *Judeopessimism*, p. 387.

as not only evident in Abrahamic political-theology and modern black thought, but also at the very core of the communist tradition in Europe?

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Pushing against these crude, ahistorical, ontologizations of exile, Glissant see's our exilic Khabiru as an errant people whose form of life, cultivated over centuries across myriad lands, was undermined by the conquest of a territory [modern Israel].[52] Errantry, by contrast to this territorial assertion of self, with all the ontological grandiosity of its claims of *orignation;* is a language community that delineates "the territory of the inexistent."[53] Neither as minority nor majority but a para-language, of a para-people. Agamben closely follows this line of thought when asserting that the language of exile is a language at the very core of *Jewish* being rather than a marker of its ontological privation:

> There is nothing more genuinely Jewish than to inhabit a language of exile and to labor it from within, up to the point of confounding its very identity and turning it into more than just a grammatical language: making it a minor language, a jargon. And yet in each case it is also a mother tongue."[54]

Glissant finally seeks to push beyond exile, viewing it as subordinate to the event of a prior loss of dwelling. Errantry, by contrast, is seen to make a home out of this loss, "it gives-on-and-with the negation of every pole and every metropolis."[55] Yet, I like that as Glissant discovers the overlaps between Jewish and Black errantry, he is also able to recognize some of the traps that the former has fallen into. For instance, while Glissant certainly incorporates aspects of eschatology's loss and redemption structure, he asserts that the peoples who entered the great abyss of chattel slavery "do not brag about being chosen."[56] And that "peoples do not live on exception. Relation is not made up of things that are foreign but of shared knowledge."[57] Otherness is grounded in a poetics of relation bound to the here and now's furitive embodiments of exilic life over any meta-physical guarantees of an ontological outside.

A World Not Ours: Palestinian Reappraisals of Exilic Politics

As we have encountered through Magid and Wilderson, the messianic vocation risks becoming an exceptionalist politics of the excluded part. Rather than othering otherness through the propagation of a new relation to and mode of dwelling within world, exile as an onto-politics may enact its own enclosures—reifying nothingness; finally negating its negativity.

[52] Glissant, *Poetics of space*, p. 20.
[53] Moten, *Blackness and Nothingness*, p. 765.
[54] Agamben, *The time that remains*, p. 4.
[55] Glissant, *The poetics of relation*, p. 19.
[56] Glissant, *The poetics of relation*, p. 8.
[57] Glissant, *The poetics of relation*, p. 8.

Let me begin to answer this problematic by turning to the thinking of Abdaljawad Omar who completely refutes Wilderson's accusation that the Palestinian resistance is reducible to a subject of oppositional sovereignty. And after recovering the particular qualities of Palestinian negativity and exilic belonging, address the problematic of exilic temporality through its reappraisal by the Palestinian resistances' refusal of the future.

Connecting Ghassan Kanafani's reflections on dwelling in Palestine as a dwelling in "a world not ours" to Battaile's vision of "brining down into the world" the rigid, transcendent, forms of life reproduced by sovereignty; Omar advances the position that the resistance is an "overflowing [of] the very order it seeks to undermine, instigating a process of decomposition in the colonial order, and bringing things down in the world, while resisting any stable meaning or form."[58] Al-Aqsa Flood, Omar continues: "was no Schmittian decision to suspend the law or institute a state of exception in an effort to preserve the order against an external threat. Quite to the contrary, stemming from a position of vulnerability and weakness, this non-sovereign decision aimed to deform the current order, not to preserve it, and to instigate a process of decomposition."[59]

And closely following the sensibility of our theorists from the traditions of Negritude and Afro-Pessimism, Omar conceptualizes this force of decomposition through Fanon's concept of decolonization as a tabula rasa: a blank-slate that allows for the recreation of the subject and which one encounters through exposure to the "zone of non-being" colonial violence exposes the wretched of the earth to. And rather than looking toward the zone opportunistically, i.e., as a springboard for the recreation of the subject from nothingness back into the theonomic human community of sovereignty, as Fanon finally will, Omar affirms the domain of formlessness, drawing from Bataille, as bearing its own inherent political ground.[60] Opposing the movement of formelessness to the pseudo-oppositional *forms* articulated by the Palestinian Authority, Omar embraces what I'm calling exilic politics; seeing the resistance's primary task as a bearer of decomposition; as a militant caretaker who brings the monstrous citadel of forms of separation, governance, accumulation, and sacrifice, back down to the earth; to its groundless grounding in immanence, multiplicity, and errantry.[61]

Confronting the radical distance between the post-war spectacle of reparations offered to the Jewish people, which would afford them the opportunity and assurances of full participation in the democratic order of the state; the Palestinian pariah, as Omar observes in a quite rage, is left only with the groundless grounds of their worldless inscription in the suffocating folds of capitalist-imperialism. Writing today from the narrowing streets of Ramallah, Omar's positionality as a pariah stands at a notable distance from both Edward Saids' reflections on exile and much of the genealogy of exilic politics I have sketched above:

[58] Omar, *Bleeding forms*, p. 19.
[59] Omar, *Bleeding forms*, p. 19.
[60] Omar, *Bleeding forms*, p. 6.
[61] Omar, *Bleeding forms*, p. 14.

> To be pariah is not only to be cast out, it is also to be held in, immobilized, crushed by the impossibility of movement. Not wandering, but sinking. Not dislocated, but over-located—so pinned to a place that it begins to rot inside you. You do not leave the world; the world embeds itself in you, until every wall and checkpoint becomes internal, psychic, metabolic.
> You can inhabit a place too much—so much that it implodes within you. Not in the clarity of exile, but in the blur of estrangement that comes from overfamiliarity. You know the cracks in the wall, the scent of the soil, the tilt of the sun—and still it feels foreign. Not because it is no longer yours, but because it is so painfully, exhaustingly yours. Because you have had to defend it with every breath, until even the breath feels suspect.
> This is not the exile of elegance. This is the exile of overstay. Of being too long in a world that no longer recognizes you, nor one that you are able to truly recognize. A pariah not because you have wandered, but because you have stayed. And in staying, have refused the gift of anonymity, of disappearance, of the world out there.
> A conscious, non-nomadic pariah.[62]

Exilic dwelling is transfigured here from a critical figure of distance and negativity, to a submerged force, smothered in its isolation, made groundless by the encroachments of a ground annihilating ground, and yet persistent in the memory and messianic actuality of a desire for *a life in common on earth*.

Entering the problematic of eschatology, Palestinian exile and negativity could be seen, in light of Omar's critique, as a resistance to what others may see as a politics that only begins in the aftermaths of history's displacements and privations of dwelling—a critical revaluation of exile within yet against the imposed politics of what it means to dwell in the world today.

In a recent gathering called *The conference of butterflies: apropos genocidal peace*, Samera Esmeir read "Before the Future" an excerpt from an upcoming book, which cogently delivers a critique of the teleological orientation of exilic politics under question. Let me quote her from my transcription of this reading:

> Before the Future.
>
> Palestine is tenacious.
> Its tenacities are many.
> Key among them is the refusal, active or a matter of disposition, as suggested by the Arabic word iba, to be pulled by the magnet of the future. Or to lean into the future, understood in its modern sense, as a point in the progression of historical time, which humans make. And to which they orient their actions and are expected to be principally disposed. The future that Palestinians refuse it's that which opens upon severing the relations with the land. A suffering accomplished through their colonial international expulsion to scattered, non-discontiguous territories that neither touch nor encounter each other.
> In other words, the future that the Palestinians refuse is the one achieved by scattering and displacing land and bodies.
> The colonial international aspiration to obliterate Palestine, materializing most brutally since October 2023, in the genocidal war on Gaza serves as punishment for refusing the magnet of the future and daring to persist with a loss that has not yet been destroyed. Or daring to remain in the shadow of the land as Earth. Daring to go fugitive in its tunnels and caves. Feel its scars disappear in its elements. Harvest its olive trees. Riots in its alleys. Decay in its soil, joy in its waters, inhabit its edges.
> Circulate its names, elate in untangling its secrets.
> Lean in its direction. March and return.
> And breach its territorial enclosure.

[62] Abdaljawad Omar, *The Meaning of Love In Politics*.

> The war of obliteration is also the cruel inculcation of the magnet of the future among the Palestinians. Bombardment, massacres, starvation, disease, and a systematic attempt to destroy everything, including historicity itself.
> It seeks not only to exterminate and destroy, but also to propel a particular kind of movement, psychic and bodily, into the future and away from the land as earth and the Palestinian socialites intertwined with the land.
> The destruction of the land is the means of propelling this movement to the future. It is an injunction delivered by the aircraft and fire of the settler colony in the East.
> Lose the loss. Go on. Leave on. Leave. And do not look back.[63]

To inhabit its edges, to go fugitive in its tunnels, is to refuse a future that includes you in a historical time defined by the necessity of your own dispossession. For the Palestinian resistance exile is than both a consciousness of loss and a communal practice of dwelling on the ground that remains. Responding to Sexton's problematic on the embrace of groundlessness, the Palestinian resistance may reformulate the question as follows: how to embrace the ground that *hasn't been taken*, but which hasn't been recognized, and which we don't identify as *a ground* or *the ground*, of soverignty?

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If the bulldozer, as Nasser Abourahme observes, "is not simply a device for the clearance of built structures" but, "also an instrument of temporal reordering, a device of negation that seeks the clearance of the very 'consciousness of exile,'"[64] the camp is an extra-territorial-extra-temporal zone, that unsettles the colonial erasure of exile—i.e. the consciousness of not-not-dwelling.

Through the camp, the tunnels, and other zones of confinement and fugitivity inside and outside the occupied territories, a contra-spatial dwelling persists. Through the communal memory, ritual, and rebellion kept alive in these spatial practices a contratemporal continuity. As one Zionist spatial planner recounts in frustration:

> A "beggar," who also happens to be a refugee, in Gaza City ordered by an Israeli officer to abide by a curfew and go home. Where is your home, the officer asks, "and in perfect innocence and sincerity the man replies, 'My house is in Majdal.'"—the office responds "Majdal is now the Israeli town of Ashkelon. It hasn't existed for over forty years.[65]

It is telling that ever since the 1967 land agreement, the settler state has fixated on the Sinai desert as an ideal zone, set beyond the colonial frontier, for the mass relocation of camp dwellers. For the settler apparatus, the desert is a topology of forced, permanent, relocation.[66] In this sense, Sinai should not be considered in isolation, but as a symbol for a much more general imperative to remove, erase, and permanently reabsorb the camp dweller into an otherness that no longer plagues the psyche of the Jewish settler. And it is this offer, command, and compulsion, that

[63] Esmeir, *Before the future*.
[64] Abourahme, *The time beneath the concrete*, p. 156.
[65] As cited in, Abourahme, *The time beneath the concrete*, p. 131.
[66] Abourahme, *The time beneath the concrete*, p. 138.

Edward Said responds to when offered a garden, a little piece of land to quietly disappear within.

The choice to continue living in the camp of the occupied territories, or in Said's case in a deliberate condition of exile on foreign lands, are both choices to inhabit the messianic vocation. More than an aestheticized politics of the "as if"—to live, that is, as if you weren't under a genocidal occupation or as if exile offered justice—the consciousness of the camp is an immanent force of negation that pivots in a sense between the as not and the as if: elaborating what we could call the as if not. The camp ontologizes, gives materiality, to exilic consciousness; exilic consciousness in turn ontologizes the camp as a living site of otherness, conjured from the past, that lacerates the present and its erasures—a calling for justice, for all those who dwell on earth.

Conclusion

By sketching a genealogy of the exilic I hope to have contributed strategic insights on both the potentials and limitations of a politics that affirms the loss of grounds as tool of negativity for dwelling in a world no longer plagued by the claims of the earth's many sovereign nomi. Yet, the critical limitation of the Abrahamic tradition—which I show is genealogically inherited by afro-pessimism—is in propensity toward an unreflective affirmation of loss, which in turn cultivates a feeling of exceptionalism and at worst a blindness toward the "suffering of other dispossessed human beings—the uprooted, dislocated, and disinherited in search of refuge across the planet." As Michael Krimper continues, while aptly criticizing Blanchot's politics of non-belonging—an exemplary philosopher of exile who was also a zionist. Authenticity, Krimper holds, can not be fulfilled within the community of exile, because the exigencies of justice upon which this community rests, "must also assume the ethical responsibility of going out towards the other."[67]

Rather than closing these initial notes toward a critical genealogy of exile by opposing the pariah of exile to the non-nomadic pariah of walls, ruins, and emplacements, a discussion should be further cultivated on how these two temporalities, these two relations toward dwelling in Babylon, may intertwine through a multi-temporal coalition of exilic struggles for justice. At stake is more than a question of locating a common standpoint between the struggles of those who stay and those who leave, but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, it a question of uniting the movement for justice of those who dwell on earth and those who have lost their dwellings because they have lost their lives.

[67] Krimper, *The Authenticity of Exile*.

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