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Image/Sky Control—Forms of Resistance: From Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Palestine and Iran: Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Peter Trnka

Japan, Palestine, and Iran. Brute power and the status quo are the only real grounds for the possession of nuclear weapons; there are no non-voluntary policies to govern or regulate their possession or use. The *de facto* policies shown in practice, salient in extreme existential situations, indicate and exploit racist worldviews, putatively definitive of national identities.

This issue was born on the way from Palestine to Hiroshima, or perhaps the other way around. An intersection of the two, and others. Let me explain.

Fazil Moradi, who joined the *Janus Unbound* editorial board, together with Stefanie Bognitz, after they had co-edited the special issue on Anton Wilhelm Amo, invited me to Japan as he was working at Hiroshima University and wanted to introduce me to potential contributors to potential future journal issues, on the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, on the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, and related matters. At the same time, I was working in the Narrative Awareness Group of Academics Act for Palestine (see my previous letter), with, among others, Tahrir Hamdi, associate editor of this journal and multiple contributor to this issue. The Narrative Awareness Group was planning a new series of global educational webinars. After discussion of various excellent ideas, Hamdi put me on the spot and asked for my suggestion. The idea: what was to become a global webinar, on ‘Nuclear Futures: From Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Palestine and Beyond,’ hosted virtually by the Academics Act for Palestine and locally at a campus of Hiroshima City University, and published by *Janus Unbound*, as this issue. International connections of critique and resistance; intersections of struggle; common settler, colonial, imperial histories of suffering and genocide. Creating counter-memories, with counter-archives, and counter-narratives, with the voices of the victimized, the survivors—in the case of Japan, *hibakusha*—and of the fighters, resistance soldiers, and revolutionaries.

My work in Japan, over two weeks or so in October 2025, started—started officially, or, rather, explicitly and publicly, that is, ignoring the necessary and often forgotten prerequisites for such, namely, the many informal, private conversations, letters, thoughts, etc.—with a talk I gave at Hiroshima University, titled ‘Settler-colonialism, residential schools, and negotiations with ghosts: perspectives from the north of Big Turtle Island.’ This was followed by an address, given to the Network for Education and Research on Peace and Sustain-

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nability (NERPS), also at Hiroshima University, that prepared the ground, in a way, for the ‘Nuclear Futures’ roundtable at Hiroshima City University, and globally, by way of Academics Act for Palestine, a few days later.

The abstract for the Academics Act for Palestine global webinar on ‘Nuclear Futures’ begins as follows:

The world faces an intensifying existential tension brought on by spreading planetary racism and the proliferation of biopolitical warfare of genocidal proportions and with the imminent danger of nuclear war. The at-the-limit character of nuclear bombing latches onto the shape of racialized thinking, also existentially extreme and intense (putatively defining/separating the human from the nonhuman or more-than-human). The politics of race-making and racist thinking loves the idea of an annihilating, people-erasing bomb (to the point of pathological suicidal ideation). Following the inauguration of the nuclear racism series at Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the hands of the US in 1945, new forms are developing in the colonial 21st century, most clearly in Gaza at the hands of Israel, backed by the US.

The whole Abstract is published at the start of the ‘Nuclear Futures ... Roundtable Abstract’ in this issue. The Abstract ends by posing this question, to which all contributors were asked to respond in their addresses and conversation: “What is the face of nuclear futures today, at Hiroshima, at Nagasaki, in Palestine, and beyond? And how can it be confronted?”

The Roundtable is published in a digested form, here, in this issue, as the ‘Nuclear Futures: From Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Palestine and Beyond, Roundtable Abstract.’ A recording of the real-time global event is available on YouTube (see link below). The Roundtable Abstract has significant deviations from the actual event and the virtual recording, in part due to regular features of the recording/reporting process, but also because each contributor responded to the potential work following the roundtable live event in a different way. Some, Tanami Aoe and Ilan Pappé, left it at that, trusting me to transcribe their spoken remarks and reviewing my transcripts. Others, Nakamura Taira and Kaori Hatsumi, produced written variations in close parallel to their oral addresses. Tahrir Hamdi elaborated her argument. Fazil Moradi wrote a response and continuation of the inquiry piece, rather than a representation of his oral address, and substituted, for the transcription of his address in the Roundtable Abstract, a similar deviation, or resistance to reproduce in the standard way (a creation, a monstrosity, a differential with a difference, or a *différance*). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak had been invited to the event but could not attend, yet, as she wrote to me, wanted to be counted and sent a letter in support, which I quoted in part in my opening remarks at the roundtable and published in full in this issue as the lead letter. Spivak calls in that letter to remember history, specifically: “the Sykes-Picot documents ... whereby on January 3, 1916, the Holy Land was the only area allowed to bear arms, by the very European nations [England and France] ... involved in today’s recognition [of Palestine, the letter is dated xx, June 2025]. We must place this within a broad geopolitical rhythm that has existed millennially” (8). Much of what follows is an attempt

to think about what is happening today in the broad and long historical rhythms of colonial and imperial history.

I will hazard to say the Palestine-Japan intersection that was the global webinar succeeded in terms of the consolidation and multiplication of associations, friendships, and networks of resistance. In part due to revealing unacknowledged or unknown common experiences and notions. The work and address by Tanami Aoe, who hosted the local site of the roundtable through Hiroshima City University, perhaps best exemplifies the intersectional, open spirit of the whole event. Aoe, a Japanese academic who has worked extensively in Palestine, emphasizes the common, shared character of suffering and human resistance, the intersectionality of struggle. As she states, simply, “I am working in Hiroshima right now, but I believe I work in the same way wherever I am” (25). She gives an inspired, accessible description of what needs to be done: “The attitude that we need now is not cynicism. The attitude we need now is to find the intersection between people like me, who have focused on Palestine, especially its daily registers of local society, and those who have been involved in the anti-nuclear movement in places like Hiroshima. I have come to realize this is very important” (25).

Ilan Pappé apologized for an upcoming power outage, hoping that, if he disappeared, he might reappear. Pappé engaged, explicitly with Gayatri Spivak, to locate our question and issue in a broad historical context, specifically, “the dehumanization that allows eventually the use of lethal weapons, such as nuclear weapons, but also other means of weaponry ... to massively destroy nations, communities, people’s lives, people’s infrastructure” (26). He describes his personal experience of seeing Gaza covered in smoke:

I don’t know if any of you were near the Gaza Strip recently but I was. I couldn’t get in but I was able to see a cloud, a huge cloud of dust made of whatever came out of the destruction, above, that could be seen for kilometers ... It was very clear that if you were under that cloud you could hardly breathe and you could hardly concentrate on building your life even if the bombing had stopped. And as we know from this morning, the bombing has not stopped. (25-6)

And bombing has now started, a week or more in, on Iran. Pappé echoed Spivak’s call to hold England and France accountable:

[D]efinitely for the governments of the West and, particularly, in Europe, ... what they are called upon, really, to do, historically and given their accountability for what happened in Palestine and in the Arab world, and in many cases their complicity with what happened in Gaza in the last two years, that their historical role now is not to mediate between Israel and Palestine, or to push forward for a two state solution: their historical role is to protect the state of Palestine, to protect the Palestians from further elimination. And there is a clear list of actions that they could and should take in order to defend the Palestinians from the continued attempt to eliminate them, as a nation, a people, and a country. (26)

The cross-cuts, intersections, intelligent creations by way of honest discussion, that is, genuine, rare dialogue, continued in multiple, rhizomatic ways, during and after the roundtable event. Nakamura Taira, several weeks after we had met, worked and socialized together in Hiroshima, wrote, in his ‘reworking,’ or variation and change, of his roundtable address, that his:

reflections on racism and colonialism in Japan resonate with Elaine Scarry’s (2020) analysis of the genealogy of racism in the United States. Scarry traces a continuum between the atomic bombings of Japan, an act she situates within a framework of US ‘white supremacy,’ and the 2020 murder of George Floyd. In her account, racism functions by rendering certain human lives disposable or expendable. (54)

I believe, following conversation with Moradi, that this line of thought was in part a response to my presentation of Scarry’s work at the NERPS talk, at which Taira had been present (as he had been, also, in a challenging and friendly way, at my initial talk on settler-colonialism—thank you, Nakamura Taira). Kaori Hatsumi’s work, as she presented it at the roundtable, intensified the concrete sense of overlapping, international work, weaving together Hiroshima with Palestine through the intermediary of Sri Lanka:

It was Isaac, a survivor of Sri Lanka’s thirty-year civil war (1983–2009), who told me about Hisashi Inoue’s play “*Chichi to Kuraseba*,” or “Living with Father/Face of Jizo.” Hisashi Inoue (1934–2010), a leading post-war Japanese playwright, wrote this play in 1994 to tell the story of Hiroshima. Isaac declared to me that this play was a masterpiece, and that he wished a play like this could be written on Sri Lanka’s experience—a prolonged, slow-death of a civilization in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka since 1956, the worst nightmare of which occurred in 2009 in Mullivaikkal: tens of thousands of Tamil civilians were trapped in the final battle between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and perished.

Isaac condenses, crystallizes, and expresses in a perfect subjective-objective manner the near-universal character of the nuclear bomb victims: “*The bomb victims of that time who were burned by the infernal flames represent people throughout the modern world who cannot escape from the existence of nuclear weapons.*”

In his complete digression, or diverted, inspired response to the situation of the intellectual encounter of the roundtable and its surrounding events, Moradi writes of “an archived interview from 16 October 1970” between “ABC News journalist Richard Carleton meeting with Ghassan Kanafani . . . at his office in Beirut” (28). Moradi zooms in on the conversational impasses, the blocs in communication (easily imaginable given long histories of imperial/state renegeing on contracts, promises, and agreements):

Carleton asks Kanafani: “Why won’t your organization [the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine] engage in peace talks with the Israelis?” Kanafani responds: “You don’t mean exactly peace talks; you mean capitulation, surrendering.” When Carleton asks, “Why not just talk?” Kanafani replies: “*Talk to*

whom?” Carleton answers: “Talk to the Israeli leaders.” Kanafani responds: “That is the kind of conversation between the *sword* and the *neck*. . . . No, I haven’t been, I have never seen any talk between a colonialist case and a national liberation movement. (29)

Moradi continues:

What haunts Kanafani and Frantz Fanon, and, indeed, all struggles for human dignity, or hospitality, or love, that persist in the world, as earthly, ethical responsibilities under conditions of domination? Sa‘dī Shirāzī gives this question its most critical articulation in *The Rose Garden*, where he insists that when the suffering of others no longer moves us, it is not their suffering that evaporates, but our own humanity. Hospitality, love, or ethical responsibility toward the lives of others, is thus not an added political or moral posture but the very condition of *being human* . . . To think from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, from the ruined streets of Gaza, is to confront the murder of hospitality, love, or ethical responsibility, or the haunting lesson: *empire is heartless and can’t be addressed as a dialogical human partner*. (30)

The love or hospitality Moradi calls for is not possible with the brute racism fuelling the current, extreme, annihilatory theologico-political imaginary. Hamdi begins her article in the most direct, brutal, honest way:

In the Western (colonial) consciousness, it was necessary that Hiroshima and Nagasaki be atomically bombed, thus instantly killing hundreds of thousands of Japanese people (246,000...) . . . Thus, we are immediately confronted by the question of who exactly is worthy of saving. According to this racialized thinking, nuclear power, then, should/must be concentrated in the hands of those who must always be saved—the human, or, if you like, the more than human, those who are always morally justified in exterminating/annihilating hundreds of thousands of useless brown, black or yellow people—those who are not worth being saved, the obviously less than human. . . (82)

The remainder, or the wrap, of this issue, in this case, intimately narratively connected to its inside, begins with Bilal Hamamra’s Letter from Palestine: “Rebranding Gazacide,” in which he writes that:

The “Gaza Riviera” project, circulated through meetings and policy conversations associated with Donald Trump, Jared Kushner, and Tony Blair, represents a colonial program that seeks to finish, by finance and spectacle, what the Zionist military devastation began, namely, the eradication and uprooting of Palestinians from Gaza, so that this Palestinian territory can be repackaged as an investment frontier. (10)

Hamamra goes on to analyze Tantura as a paradigmatic case of such rewriting of history and reality:

Tantura exposes leisure as an instrument of concealment and profit built upon atrocity: after Israel depopulated the Palestinian village of al-Tantura, its coast-

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line was reconfigured into a beach leisure zone (Dor/Hof Dor and the adjacent Nahsholim resort landscape). Massacre is followed by engineered suppression of memory and the installation of recreational infrastructures that normalize the theft of land through pleasure. (11)

The artwork of Shereen Abed wraps or covers the whole, in a way that brings one and many, myself and all others, individual and collectivity, into blurred, reconfigured intimate tension, and all by way of bringing I and all together in the face of a bomb, or its mushroom explosion: our cover, *I am All of Them*. As Abed writes:

This work does not present a single face, but a gathering of faces—layered, crowded, and inseparable. *I Am All of Them* emerges from the idea that identity is no longer singular, and that the self can become a vessel carrying the weight, memory, and presence of many others. The head in the drawing is not a portrait in the traditional sense. It is a container. ... What appears as multiplicity is, in fact, a collective experience condensed into one body. The aggressive, restless black lines are intentional. They mirror an inner state of tension and overload, where thoughts cannot settle and memories refuse to stay still. (21)

The other artist we feature, also Palestinian, is Ayman AlAzraq, with several images from *The Lost Tapes from the People's Court—1982*, discussed in his piece “Archiving the Absent Nation,” in which he defines archive, not as “a cabinet of documents, but a mechanism of survival that quietly resists oblivion” (91). As he goes on to speculate, “[p]erhaps this is the new meaning of solidarity—to create together a space that endures even when institutions close their doors, to carry memory on our shoulders, rather than in their files, to rebuild the relationship between art and humanity, rather than art and bureaucracy” (94). AlAzraq’s intersectional forms of resistance include the Palestine–Norway Archive Unit and the *Artist to Artist* initiative, which:

is one such space, where art begins from the living body, not the white cube. It is not a grand institutional project, but a living initiative grounded in direct human connection—in the bond that forms when one artist reaches out to another, from Palestine to Norway, from Gaza to Oslo, without administrative mediation or curated rhetoric. At a time when major institutions excuse their absence with “closed programs” and “exhausted budgets,” *Artist to Artist* stands as an antidote to this cold bureaucracy, creating its own conditions for collaboration—outside the politics of selection and neutrality that treat Palestinian artists as “difficult cases.” (94)

We also have other letters, a book review, and poetry from our new Poetry Editor, Rachel Waddleton. Thank you so much Andreae Callanan for your excellent work and years of dedicated service.

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

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