Transitioning Arab-Palestinian Dwelling Landscapes:

From Pre-Modern Immanent Practices to Self-Sufficient Façades

Yehotal Shapira

Abstract: This paper portrays the vernacular Arab-Palestinian architectural and landscape configuration as performative utterances of the peasant subject and community that produced them. The study draws on several case study villages and ruins in the Jerusalem hinterland, examining key periods under Ottoman rule, and their developmental trajectory under British colonial rule until the initial decade of the twentieth century. The paper considers how non-philosophy raises important questions not addressed by existing literature. Through a non-philosophical approach, this paper divides Arab-Palestinian architectural culture into two phases. The first phase refers to this architecture as an immanent performative form of thought that utilized fractality and non-Euclidean geometry in creative expressions, living through and with nature. This thinking/building of house architecture and cultivated plots intertwined, forming an inseparable agricultural production system. The second phase encapsulates the distinction of the individual house from its surroundings, and the emergence of the façade with well-chiseled stones. This change symbolized the house as a self-affirmation of its owner's wealth and social status within the village public sphere. This transformation occurred under the influence of modernization and colonization processes. The third period of non-philosophy is used as a framework in this study to differentiate between architecture as an immanent performative form of thought and architecture as self-affirmation, aiming to grasp the unique experimental thinking/building of pre-modern Arab-Palestinian architecture. The study considers how these modes of thinking/building may contribute both to architectural and landscape architecture knowledge and to a better comprehension of the non-philosophical approach.

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Keywords: Arab-Palestinian architecture, landscape architecture, non-philosophy, non-Euclidean geometry, fractality, immanence, self-affirmation, façade, pre-modern, modernization

This article employs François Laruelle's non-philosophy, or non-standard philosophy, which is not a negation of philosophy but its expansion into new realms of thought. It is a "style of thought" that mutates with its object.[1] It can be considered not as a new theory, but a new experience, or use, of theory or thinking as part of the Real, that is, as a material, immanent part of reality.[2] This approach is utilized here to experiment with architectural performatives while studying the approach of pre-modern Arab-Palestinian architecture and environmental culture.

The article portrays the vernacular Arab-Palestinian agricultural landscape, water resources, and architectural configuration as performative utterances expressive of the peasant subject and community positions and beliefs that produced them. The study draws on several test case villages and ruins in the Jerusalem hinterland, where the pre-modern landscape is almost erased but still palpable. It examines key periods in Palestine from the late sixteenth century under Ottoman Empire rule, before and after the Egyptian occupation (1830-1839), and the architectural developmental trajectory under British colonial rule during the initial decades of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, traces of this pre-modern culture and its transition from pre-modern to modern persist throughout the twentieth century, including the establishment of Israel until today. Employing non-philosophy, the research probes the affiliation between architectural performances and the environment, touching on folklore, ethnographic studies, ecology, religion, and politics.

Contrary to the common reference to the development of Palestinian architecture and environmental culture, I propose, through a non-philosophical approach, and notably Philosophy III, a division into two phases. The first phase refers to an immanent performative architecture that utilized fractality and non-Euclidean geometry in creative expression. The second phase encapsulates the emergence of the façade as an architecture of self-affirmation under the influence of modernization and colonialization processes.

In what can be considered Laruelle's allusion to architecture in a broad sense, he posits that

[1] François Laruelle, "Non-Philosophy as Heresy," in *From Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-Standard Thought*, ed. Robin Mackay (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic and Sequence Press, 2012), 259.
[2] Anthony Paul Smith and John Ó Maoilearca suggested that "there is the option to see his approach as what it hypothesizes itself to be a thought that is part of the Real." John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith, "Introduction: The Non-Philosophical Inversion. Laruelle's Knowledge without Domination," in *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, eds. John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 8.

"thought, in its turn, becomes a form of art." This denotes "an art of thought rather than a thought about art...," not conceptual art but a concept modeled by the art, a generic extension of art.[3] Regarding building, Laruelle writes, "Prisons or ramparts, those where graffiti covers every surface or those where it is prohibited, walls are at stakes, not just of freedom but of writing and of thought."[4]

In this context, this article delves into the performative immanent nature of thought articulated by pre-modern Arab Palestinian architecture and considers how these modes of thinking may contribute both to architectural knowledge and a better understanding of the non-philosophical approach. It also asks, in what ways does the non-philosophical approach enhance our understanding of pre-modern Palestinian Arab architecture that existing literature does not address, and what novel aspects of this architecture can emerge through such an approach?

Throughout the article, tensions manifest across various levels, resonating with one another. There is tension between both non-philosophy and Arab-Palestinian building immanence performative practices that may extend our modes of thinking and experiencing, and between writing about them in order to elucidate their eccentric uses through the standard academic form of writing. Additionally, tension arises between non-philosophy, a Western perspective, and Arab-Palestinian pre-modern architecture, emblematic of indigenous heritage. Furthermore, tension emerges between myself, the author situated in Israel that is perceived as a conqueror with colonialist traits, and the Arab-Palestinian pre-modern culture intrinsic to the Palestinian people.

The article delves into non-philosophy's potential contribution to understanding the history of architecture, particularly pre-modern Arab-Palestinian architecture, and its significance for Jerusalem. This research reveals a clash between traditional architectural configurations, depicted as philosophy-without-symbols (PwS, denoting a philosophy without standard symbols), and symbol-laden architecture embodying self-sufficiency. In this context, these phases perform a schism between two forms of thought: one biocentric and fractal, where man was part of nature, and the other anthropocentric, where a self-assured representation emerged, asserting human control over nature. Furthermore, this article integrates the concept

[3] François Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction, a Non-Standard Aesthetics / Photo-Fiction, une esthétique non-standard*, trans. Drew S. Burk, bilingual edition (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2012), 2.

[4] François Laruelle, *The Concept of Non-Photography / Le concept de non-photographie*, trans. Robin Mackay, bilingual edition (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic and Sequence Press, 2011), 125.

of philo-fiction from Philosophy III to clarify the traumatic encounter between the traditional non-representational built environment and subsequent phases.

In contemporary Palestinian society, preservation efforts for architectural heritage primarily focus on built structures,[5] with significantly less attention given to landscape and water resources.[6] These elements are often considered peripheral to architectural conservation, lacking proper consideration as they are typically perceived as exterior and marginal to architectural conservation. Despite the imaginative role of peasant culture in shaping the Palestinian national narrative of *Nakba*, agricultural practices have faced criticism for perceived "backwardness" and associations with metaphysical and patriarchal values.[7]

These vernacular rural environments are frequently excluded from mainstream discussions on landscape and gardens. Andrew Walter highlights that these discussions often prioritize "artifacts, monuments produced by and for social elites," assuming they "form the basis of a cultural imaginary in which all levels of society participate in varying ways."[8] Nevertheless, in Palestine from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, the agricultural and rural landscape played a crucial role.

The remnants of this culture receive insufficient protection under the Israeli Antiquities Law, which applies to remains dated until 1700 and any associated elements. In recent years, certain Israeli religious leaders and politicians have contended that there is no Palestinian people and, consequently, no such distinct culture. However, the remains of Arab-Palestinian culture form a tangible background in the Israeli environment. Contrary to this assertion, the article assesses the contribution of Arab-Palestinian rural communities amidst landscape changes over more than 200 years of development and Western influences. Haim Yacobi and Hadas Shadar argue that an ongoing campaign seeks to obliterate the remnants of this

[5] Suad Amiry, *Peasant Architecture in Palestine: Space, Kinship, and Gender* (Ramallah: RIWAQ, 2017).
[6] For exceptions, see the two conferences in Birzeit University on the matter: "The Landscape of Palestine: Equivocal Poetry" (1999), as well as the conference volume: Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Roger Heacock, and Khaled Nashef, eds., *The Landscape of Palestine: Equivocal Poetry* (Birzeit: Birzeit University Publications, 1999), and "Palestinian Landscapes: New Perspectives since 1999" (2019), https://www.birzeit.edu/en/events/Landscapes-of-Palestine-New-Perspectives-since-1999.
[7] Honaida Ghanim, "Poetics of Disaster: Nationalism, Gender, and Social Change Among Palestinian Poets in Israel after Nakba," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2009): 23-39, DOI: 10.1007/s10767-009-9049-9.
[8] Michel Conan, "Learning from Middle East Traditions," *Middle East Garden Traditions: Unity and Diversity. Questions, Methods, and Resources in a Multicultural Perspective*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington and Cambridge: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection and Spacemaker Press, 2008), 1-21.

culture to establish Israeli sovereignty over the land.[9] In the present political climate, where traditional Arab-Palestinian culture is often unfamiliar, and most of its remnants lie in ruins, it is primarily discussed in terms of loss. This article, however, focuses on historical achievements with the aim of generating a seminal reevaluation of this scenic and architectural cultural heritage in defiance of its denial.

Theory

In this special issue, in his "Octonary of Philosophical Sufficiency," François Laruelle critically employs an architectural example, utilizing the construction of a bridge to illustrate the Principle of Sufficient Reason in Western thought. This invokes Martin Heidegger's post-World War II context, where he idealized traditional peasant building as authentic architecture.[10] Yet, as part of "back to the land" movement, this idealization is criticized as fascist.[11]

In contrast to Heidegger, Theodor W. Adorno contends that the impossibility of true dwelling stems mainly from an ethical sensibility, asserting that "Morality involves not feeling at home in one's home... Wrong life cannot be lived rightly."[12] Massimo Cacciari further posits that within the inherent injustice of the social system, wherein participation is universal, only an architecture of empty signs can genuinely express dwelling's impossibility.[13] Daniel A. Barber asserts that architecture serves as a medium for expressing a cultural approach to the environment, functioning as both a canvas projecting socio-environmental transformations and a practical system facilitating realization.[14] This duality underscores architecture's role in shaping physical structures and the identities of individuals, collectives, and societies. The current study explores aspects pertaining to the characteristics of Arab-Palestinian architecture, encompassing themes of exclusion and inclusion derived from the theories embodied in Laruelle's example.

[9] Haim Yacobi and Hadas Shadar, "The Arab Village: A Genealogy of (Post)colonial Imagination," *Journal of Architecture*, Vol. 19, No. 6 (2014): 975-97, DOI: 10.1080/13602365.2014.987155. See also Shai Aron, "The Fate of Abandoned Arab Villages in Israel on the Eve of the Six-Day War and Its Immediate Aftermath," *Ḳatedrah be-toldot Erets-Yiśra'el ṿe-yishuvah*, Vol. 105 (2002): 151-70. Furthermore, academic studies on decolonialism often overlook the distinctive characteristics of pre-modern Arab-Palestinian culture. See, for example, Steven Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

[10] Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," trans. Albert Hofstadter, in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 156.
[11] Murray Bookchin, *The Modern Crisis*, second revised edition (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1987).
[12] Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. Edmund F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), 39.
[13] Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).
[14] Daniel A. Barber, *Modern Architecture and Climate: Design before Air Conditioning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

Laruelle's example may prompt associations with Albert Camus's *The Fall*. Shoshana Felman interprets *The Fall* as a text guiding readers to Amsterdam's Jewish Quarter, posing the question, "What does it mean to inhabit history as a crime, as the annihilation of the Other?"[15] Felman views *The Fall* as a narrative on silence, mirroring the quietude linked to the bridge in the novel. She contends that it delves into not just silence but also the interplay of one silence masking another, where one contracting universe delineates another. The bridge suicide scene symbolizes historical moments when silence reasserts itself—a metaphor for the cyclical nature of history, before and after displacement and annihilation.[16] Felman overlooked the symbolic environmental relevance of choosing suicide by the bridge in connection with nature. Consequently, *The Fall* can be construed as a narrative of opting for a voiceless death in nature, rather than succumbing to or engaging in man's spurious "authenticity" or attempting to control natural forces—two conflicting attitudes that could not be bridged in Camus's tale.

Events in Amsterdam's Jewish Quarter draw on European culture, which, by the same logic, mutes the cultural expressions and significant achievements of pre-modern Arab-Palestinian rural landscapes through the involvement of entities such as European bodies, European Jews, and skills including modern agricultural techniques and methods of establishing settlements.

Laruelle utilizes Dis-Junction in his example, possibly alluding to Bernard Tschumi's assertion that a gap persists between ideal space (a mental construct) and real space (shaped by social praxis). While acknowledging the ideological weight of Tschumi's distinction, it becomes evident that it is intrinsic to architecture's nature according to him.[17] This implies that the bridge signifies the unbridgeable gap between ideal and real space. This inability to bridge gaps aligns with Camus's critique of the pursuit of authenticity in Heidegger's thought. The philosophical frameworks discussed here endorse the use of the third period of non-philosophy in this study which is a performative philo-fiction and a thought gesture deflating authority.[18] In this context, the uniqueness of

[15] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 189.
[16] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*.
[17] Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 3.
[18] Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, "Thinking Alongside *The Last Humanity*: Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca in Conversation with Katerina Kolozova, Anthony Paul Smith, and John Ó Maoilearca," *Oraxiom: A Journal of Non-Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2020): 169-80, http://oraxiom.org/no1/12_Kolozova_Smith_OMaoilearca.pdf.

Arab-Palestinian heritage lies in its capacity to spur methods of experimental thinking about architectural performances in its affiliation with nature.

Non-Methodologies and Research Materials

The research utilizes a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. On the one hand, it delves into the actual structure, while, on the other hand, it explores thinking and beliefs underpinning its establishment. John Ó Maoilearca elucidates that "non-philosophy can encompass both quantitative and qualitative differences simultaneously" in a "democratic" exchange that avoids diminishing either, and it is "divested of their pretense of absolute authority over reality."[19] This framework conceives architecture as spatial action, considering aspects such as inherent meaning, construction patterns, and their relation to nature. The study draws on insights from, remains analysis in field research, in various abandoned villages in the Jerusalem hinterland, and verbal accounts of contemporaries. Additionally, it incorporates pictorial descriptions, photographic images, maps, and aerial photos sourced from archives and books.

Arab-Palestinian architecture has frequently been characterized as a reflection of technological changes, including hewing and the shape of windows. Ruth Kark and Michal Oren-Nordheim,[20] for instance, delineated construction development stages based on window characteristics, building decoration, and the level of chiseling and finishing. Ron Fuchs[21] argued that literature on Arab-Palestinian houses lacks the technical knowledge needed for discussing architectural form, including design, space, and typology. Michal Moshe analyzed architectural structural patterns in the development of Arab-Palestinian villages in the Jerusalem area.[22] In contrast, this article explores local beliefs perceived as superstitions, along with customs, traditional rituals, and religious meanings of the physical surroundings as part of an archaic and mystical culture. The aim is to consider the social and theoretical significance of environmental changes.

[19] John Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline* (London: Continuum, 2006), 129.
[20] Ruth Kark and Michal Oren-Nordheim, *Jerusalem and Its Environs: Quarters, Neighborhoods, Villages, 1800-1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001); Ruth Kark, *Ge'ulat hakarka be'Eretz Yisrael: Ra'ayon uma'ase* [*The Redemption of the Soil in the Land of Israel: Theory and Action*] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1990), 574.
[21] Ron Fuchs, "The Palestinian Arab House and the Islamic 'Primitive Hut,'" *Muqarnas Online: An Annual on the Visual Cultures of the Islamic World*, Vol. 15 (1998): 157-77, DOI: 10.1163/22118993-90000413.
[22] Michal Moshe, *Adrichalot Nishkahat: Bikvot giloya shel shafa adrichalit mekomit nisteret* [*Forgotten Architecture: In Search of Local Architectural Language*] (Ariel: University of Ariel, 2020).

Since the late 1990s, architecture has shifted from post-structural criticism to a "post-critical" era, advocating an end to the importation of external ideas. Michael Speaks, a proponent of this shift, advocates for "design intelligence," emphasizing an interactive relationship between thinking and doing, fostering innovative, digitally-driven experimental design.[23] Stan Allen associates Gilles Deleuze's "pure immanence" with the idea that every discipline can generate its own theoretical concepts.[24] Laruelle criticizes Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "pure immanence," proposing "radical immanence" for disciplines to legislate independently without philosophical authority. Laruelle underscores the importance of democracy between philosophies and disciplines. This perspective challenges distinctions between "Architecture" (professional) and "architecture" (vernacular),[25] as well as questioning traditional disciplinary boundaries like landscape architecture and architecture. The separation of these disciplines was not observed in pre-modern environmental production, created according to an integrated logic.

Laruelle's non-standard thought, notably Philosophy III, experimentally employs an uncertain and probable apparatus that obviates the risk of self-defense or sufficiency supporting knowledge derived from habitual disciplinary inclinations. This approach is crucial for comprehending the non-residential thoughts and beliefs shaped by Arab-Palestinian culture as a spatial performance.

Research Findings

This section delineates two phases that encapsulate the changing attitudes of Arab-Palestinian architecture toward the landscape. Based on non-philosophy, these phases phrase the discourse differently from existing literature on Arab-Palestinian building and environmental culture. In the initial phase, nomadic tribes and families settled, and a sedentary process began, centered around an agricultural way of life. Accordingly, there was a reduction and expansion of the desert and cultivated areas.[26]

Shimon Gibson asserted that, in the late sixteenth century, settlements originated near water sources, evolving from caves to four-walled

[23] Michael Speaks, "After Theory," *Architecture Record* Vol. 193, No. 6 (June 2005): 72-75.
[24] Stan Allen, "Field Condition," in *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999); Stan Allen and Michael Meredith. "Interview 1," in *Matter: Material Processes in Architectural Production*, eds. Gail Peter Bordon and Michael Meredith (New York: Routledge, 2012), 9-16.
[25] Dell Upton, "Architecture in Everyday Life," *New Literary History*, Vol. 33, no. 4 (Autumn 2002): 707-72, DOI: 10.1353/nlh.2002.0046.
[26] Adolf Reifenberg, *The Struggle Between the Desert and the Sown: Rise and Fall of Agriculture in the Levant* (Jerusalem: Publishing Department of the Jewish Agency, 1955).

houses.[27] A new house was built directly on the bedrock. Its walls followed the terraces' structure, and the natural division of mountains into plateaus. Terraces prevented alluvium, preparing the land for cultivation.

The village's growth followed an open-ended, non-Euclidean approach,[28] responding to actual needs correlated with local resources, rather than a predetermined vision for the village. The architecture of the villages reflected a fractal construction,[29] maintaining parallel fidelity to the environment. The construction embodied a code derived from nature and the agricultural context, exemplifying co-existence between the house and the landscape.[30]

Ron Fuchs and others have claimed that the elevated plateau, known as a *mastaba*, serves as a fundamental architectural element—an underlying substratum that implies the idiosyncrasies of both the single-space, all-purpose village house and the Islamic domestic architecture of the Levant.[31] However, Fuchs did not attribute environmental significance to the elevated plateau, which imitates the agricultural plot and mountain terraces from which the sedentism process originated. In other words, this article suggests that the elevated plateau, known as the *mastaba*, mimicked the exterior cultivating plot structure by transforming it into raised living and sleeping spaces. That is to say, the *mastaba* originated from agricultural practices and a broader tendency to expand the mountainous terrain within the house and village form.

The present article also indicates that landscape outside was divided into numerous plateau

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[27] Shimon Gibson, Bridget Ibbs, and Amos Kloner, "The Sataf Project of Landscape Archaeology in the Judaean Hills: A Preliminary Report on Four Seasons of Survey and Excavation (1987-1989)," *Levant: The Journal of the Council for British Research in the Levant*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1991): 29-54, DOI: doi.org/10.1179/lev.1991.23.1.29.

[28] John Friedmann, "Toward a Non-Euclidian Mode of Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (1993): 482-85, DOI: 10.1080/01944369308975902. See also Ernest R. Alexander, "The Non-Euclidean Mode of Planning: *What Is It to Be?*," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (1994): 372-76, DOI: 10.1080/01944369408975594.

[29] Ron Eglash, *African Fractals: Modern Computing and Indigenous Design* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

[30] Some terms used in describing planning and traditional architecture resemble non-philosophical terms. This article introduces these concepts in the context of Arab-Palestinian environmental culture. In the subsequent section, which examines the research findings, these concepts will be explored in relation to non-philosophy and Arab-Palestinian environmental culture.

[31] Fuchs, "The Palestinian Arab House"; Gustaf Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina: Das Haus, Hühnerzucht, Taubenzucht, Bienenzucht*, Band 7 (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1942); Richard Lodoïs Thoumin, *La maison syrienne dans la plaine hauranaise, le bassin du Baradā et sur les plateaux du Qalamūn* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1932); G. Robinson Lees, *Village Life in Palestine: A Description of the Religion, Home Life, Manners, Customs, Characteristics, and Superstitions of the Peasants of the Holy Land, with Reference to the Bible* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905).

terraces, a division mirrored by the inside houses into plateau segments, forming a mediation between earth and sky, marked by a centrally crossed vault or dome as the ceiling. It considered both the interior and exterior as part of a holistic fertilization system while simultaneously reflecting a social order. The intertwined nature of house architecture and cultivated plots formed an inseparable agricultural production system. The attachment to the land through agriculture created an epistemological conception of time and space, living through and with nature.

In peasant (*fallāḥ*) dwellings, agricultural produce and animals shared the same house, segmented by various plateaus for their respective uses (*Qa'-al-beit*—lower space for entrance or/and stabling animals, *rawyeh*—lower space for stabling animals or/and working space, and *mastaba*—elevated platform)[32]. Ethnographic accounts, such as Hilma Granqvist's,[33] emphasized the connection between land ownership, marriage considerations, and everyday agricultural practices within extended families. Agriculture, from sowing to harvesting, was based on family self-employment, reinforcing the use of the house and landscape as one agricultural system. Subsequently, the extended family and the entire community participated in constructing the foundation and roof of the house (*il 'aqdeh*).

In the early stages, the village's definition encompassed various structures, evolving over time amidst destruction and construction processes.[34] Félix Bovet's observations highlighted the villages' inconspicuous blending with the mountains' color, making them appear as landscape without the human sounds.[35]

Villages on mountain slopes developed as fortress constructions, resisting external threats. David Grossman proposed a social structure based on kinship, with clan quarters forming neighborhoods and multiple neighborhoods constituting a village.[36] The buildings that served communal and religious functions, such as the school (*khotab*) and the guest house

[32] These definitions vary slightly across different villages; see Taufik Canaan, *The Palestinian Arab House, Its Architecture and Folklore* (Jerusalem: Syrian Orphanage Press, 1933), 59-61.
[33] Hilma Natalia Granqvist, *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village*, Vol. I, trans. Agnes Dawson (Helsinki: Helsingfors centraltryckeri och bokbinderi, 1931).
[34] Such a house is described in the literature: see Canaan, *The Palestinian Arab House*, 53.
[35] Félix Bovet, *Egypt, Palestine, and Phoenicia: A Visit to Sacred Lands* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1883).
[36] David Grossman, *Ha-Kefar ha-'Arvi u-venotav: Tahalikhim ba-yishuv ha-'Arvi be-Erets-Yiśra'el ba-teḳufah ha-'Otmanit* [*Rural and Desertion: The Arab Village and Its Offshoots in Ottoman Palestine.*] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1994).

(*madafa*), were intentionally located at the meeting point between clan quarters.

The Arab-Palestinian landscape embraced all regional beliefs and religions, showing respect for their remnants. In 1877, Claude R. Conder elucidated the pagan roots of local Arab-Palestinian culture, suggesting that the peasants' (*fallāḥīn*) beliefs were rooted in a pre-Israelite polytheistic faith, blending seamlessly with local religions. According to him, "The so-called Muslim is found worshiping at shrines consecrated to Jewish, Samarian, Christian, and often pagan memories." Conder proposed that the *Mukam*,[37] the peasants' sacred place on the hilltop, along with the sacred tree, would evoke the words of Scripture denouncing the Canaanite idol altars on mountain tops.[38] These local superstitions, along with customs, traditional ritual culture, and folklore, were also evident in the house construction.[39]

The Arab-Palestinian peasant resisted analyzing his agricultural work in terms of profit and economic feasibility, viewing agriculture as a crucial aspect of mundane, everyday life.

In an illustrative conversation, Philipe J. Baldensperger explained to an Arab-Palestinian peasant the economic benefits of buying seeds for time and cost savings. However, the peasant, content with his situation, expressed happiness in not possessing a pencil for such calculations.[40]

In Arab-Palestinian culture, superstitions permeated various aspects, including the construction of residences, agricultural practices, as well as beliefs related to springs and vegetation. While some regarded these superstitions as indicative of the backwardness of rural society, they reflected a profound connection between the indigenous people and the natural environment that surrounded them.[41]

Arabian tribes were historically divided into camps with pre-Islamic belligerent tendencies. These affiliations, though fictitious, served as a basis for legitimacy in coalition formations during violent conflicts, unrelated to kinship or

[37] Written also as *maqum*; see Tawfik Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (London: Luzac and Co., 1927)
[38] Claude R. Conder, "The Moslem Mukams," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1877): 89-103, DOI: 10.1179/peq.1877.9.3.89.
[39] Tawfiq Canaan, "Folklore of the House," in *The Palestinian Arab House*, 82-96.
[40] Philipe J. Baldensperger, "The Immovable East," *Palestine Exploration Fund* (1907), 270.
[41] Tawfiq Canaan, "Haunted Springs and Water Demons in Palestine," *The Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, Vols. 1-2 (1920–1921): 153-70; Tawfiq Canaan, "Plant-lore in Palestinian Superstition," *The Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, Vol. 8 (1928): 129-68.

religious ties. According to Miriam Hoexter,[42] these struggles led to widespread destruction, including crops, orchards, and entire villages, driven by competition for status, resources, and control power in an entire region, a village, or a part of a village. However, by the 1930s, these alliances lost influence, proving ineffective for landlords, authorities, or Zionist land acquisitions. Hoexter documented battles between Judean Mountains and Nablus area families based on Yaman-Qays affiliations, involving deportation, assault, kidnapping, murder, forced marriages, and also building of houses for resettlement in new settings. The social structure centered on extended family (*hamula*) and a "honor and shame" value system among party supporters.

The second phase, contextualized within the house's connection to nature and the landscape, resulted from the Ottoman Empire regaining control after the Egyptian occupation (1931-1941). Ottoman modernization reforms,[43] coupled with changes in land laws (Ottoman Land Code of 1958 and the 1873 land emancipation act),[44] reshaped landholdings and eliminated the tax farming system to boost agricultural production and state revenues.[45] This transformation affected land tenure and agricultural labor organization. Land tenure changes led to absentee landlords, depriving smaller peasants of their land. Communal land holdings (*mushaa*) diminished in favor of private ownership, whether by landlords or peasants.

Master building emerged as a profession during this phase, marked by a specialization in building practices that underscored the importance of teamwork. Locally sourced building materials gave way to market-purchased alternatives. For example, field stone was replaced by hewn

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[42] Miriam Hoexter, "The Role of the Qays and Yaman Factions in Local Political Divisions: Jabal Nablus Compared with the Judean Hills in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1973): 249. See also Salim Tamari, "Factionalism and Class Formation in Recent Palestinian History," in *Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Roger Owen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982), 177-202, and Jacob Norris, *Land of Progress: Palestine in the Age of Colonial Development, 1905-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[43] Ruth Kark and Noam Levin, "The Environment in Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period, 1798-1918," in *Between Ruin and Restoration: An Environmental History of Israel*, eds. Daniel E. Orenstein, Alon Tal, and Char Miller (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 1-28.

[44] According to Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, villages in the Jerusalem area in 1870 before the beginning of Zionist settlement under Ottoman rule were considered part of a district called *Mutasarrifate* of Jerusalem or *Sanjak* Jerusalem. The Sanjak was divided into sub-units (*Nahiya* and *Kada* units) and included an extensive area around Jerusalem, including Bethlehem, Hebron, and Jericho. The total number of people in the Sanjak in the 1870s was 25,000. The population of the whole Sanjak was 100,464. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, "The Sanjak of Jerusalem in the 1870s," *Ḳatedrah be-toldot Erets-Yiśra'el ṿe-yishuvah*, Vol. 36 (1985): 73-122.

[45] Amiry, *Peasant Architecture in Palestine.*

stone. The introduction of new construction materials, such as iron and concrete,[46] was accompanied by construction techniques that utilized chiseled stone. The village economy, initially focused on subsistence agriculture, underwent a transformation into a monetized economy with the integration of non-agricultural activities such as urban commerce and various professions.[47]

Modernization has led to a class-based division in construction types, with high socio-economic status houses present in both urban and rural areas, in stark contrast to lower-status houses primarily situated in villages or urban outskirts.[48] Commencing in the mid-nineteenth century, a process of diffusion unfolded between urban and rural settings, later accompanied by migration from rural areas to Jerusalem. The impact of modernization processes is further manifested in the heightened European influence and the establishment of foreign religious administrations and consulates. This, in turn, has contributed to enhanced sanitation, improved traffic methods and security in villages surrounding Jerusalem, facilitating the introduction of Eurocentric culture and capitalist influences.

The spatial organization of communal clan enclaves, centered on blood relationships surrounding a courtyard, underwent a transformation as individual houses were constructed anywhere on the plot of land. This shift marked the initiation of the nuclearization of the extended family.[49] The house, situated on the plot, became distinct from its surroundings. New constructions emerged, either replacing older structures or being erected on available ground or in the spaces between houses (*ḥawākīr*).[50] Courtyard areas diminished, and gardens were relocated towards the village periphery. Houses evolved from communal, introverted structures into individual units featuring façades adorned with well-chiseled stones, symbolizing wealth and individual status within the public social sphere. This detachment from rural culture and nature served as a prominent manifestation of the significant change characterizing the second stage.

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[46] Ruth Kark, "The Introduction of Modern Technology into the Holy Land, 1800-1914," in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Thomas Evan Levy (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1995), 524-41. See also Norris, *Land of Progress*, 2-25.

[47] Grossman, *Ha-Kefar ha-'Arvi u-venotav*.

[48] Baldensperger, "The Immovable East," 57; Canaan, "Folklore of the House," 82-96.

[49] Amiry, *Peasant Architecture in Palestine*. See also David Kroyanker, *Adrichalut birushalyim: Hbniya Haravit Mhotz Lahomot* [*Jerusalem Architecture: Periods and Styles of Arab Building Outside the Old City Walls*] (Jerusalem: Mekhon Yerushalayim le-ḥeḳer Yiśra'el, 1991).

[50] Nisreen Mazzawi and Amalia Sa'ar, "The *Ḥawākīr* of Nazareth: The History and Contemporary Face of a Cultural Ecological Institution," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (2018): 537-56, DOI: 10.1017/S0020743818000764.

Salim Tamari emphasized a societal rupture within Arab-Palestinian communities during that period. This division was delineated between the urban sector, comprising individuals employed in administrative and religious roles, along with the landed elite, and the rural areas surrounding Jerusalem, inhabited by dispossessed local peasants primarily engaged in agriculture. Tamari argued that Islam served as a unifying force, bridging gaps among these various social strata and paving the way for the adoption of a new, "modern" national collective identity.[51]

Non-Philosophy and Discussion of Research Findings

The proposal in this article to divide Arab-Palestinian architecture and environmental culture into the first and second phases was derived from non-philosophical thinking. In the first phase, architecture was imminently integrated with the landscape, reflecting self-expression that evolved through fractal and non-Euclidean utterances, while the second phase emphasized visibility and self-affirmation, influenced by Western notions of wealth and success.

Few studies have highlighted the unique characteristics of this building culture. Sylvaine Bulle characterizes Arab-Palestinian architecture as a *bricolage*, employing vital, accumulative, and subversive tactics.[52] According to Bulle, this approach circumvents standard rules and challenges the foundational mythology of the absolute architectural plan. The spatial quality she poetically described is viewed in her writing through an anthropocentric prism. This research findings reveal that this heritage establishes connections between architecture and the environment, anchored in nature, and adopting an autochthonous biocentric approach. This approach serves as the epistemological foundation for both Arab-Palestinian village and urban architectural traditions.

It is not merely that the concepts Bulle employs are unrelated to the environment or nature; they are delineated in terms of the negation of order and form (e.g., shapeless, non-signifying, non-submissive, disqualification) or inherent opposition (e.g., entropic, absurdity, and grotesque). The Arab-Palestinian architectural heritage adopts an uncertain positive attitude

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[51] Salim Tamari, "Factionalism and Class Formation." See also Norris, *Land of Progress*.

[52] Sylvaine Bulle, "Ai masmaot vehitkomemot barchtectura" ["Indiscipline et Insurrection en Architecture"], trans. Yael Bergstein, *Resling*, Vol. 4 (1998) 14-22, archived at: https://web.archive.org/web/20051124093923/http://readingmachine.co.il/home/articles/article_327. Bulle based her idea on Bataille. See Georges Bataille, "Architecture," in "Critical Dictionary" of *Documents*, No. 2 (May 1929): 17.

rooted in faith and holistic observation, entailing a creative subjective position. This is why non-philosophy can better reflect its uniqueness through an approach that is established not in negation or dialectics but in expanding our standard way of thinking.

The forgotten affinity of Arab-Palestinian pre-modern architecture with the landscape represents a local architectural innovation that once coexisted harmoniously with nature in a complex ecosystem. This traditional heritage, although evident in some present-day customs, has become unfamiliar even to its inheritors. The non-residential pre-modern architecture, as an approach, has the potential to challenge longstanding anthropocentric urban and architectural accounts.

The creative act of building and design served as a means of contemplating existence for a society based on an autarkic economy, dependent on the unpredictable grace of nature for agricultural production. It was an act of establishing a sense of place in an environment where the panoramic view of the mountains on the horizon defined the perception of home.

This process represents a "unique" amalgamation of vitality, akin to a traditional act of Design Research.[53] This denotes a form of design that draws inspiration from the intrinsic facets of architecture, as Speaks suggests, but transcends the conventional boundaries between architecture and landscapes.[54]

The Arab-Palestinian landscape in the first phase was a wondering for meaning in accordance with the Universe. The uniqueness of the landscape lay in its ability to follow a thread of immanence (as non-philosophy calls us to consider). It was a performative act of building in nature that materialized through immanence. This building culture consecrated and cloned the natural and agricultural environment while being a part of it. The visible mountain terraces on the horizon beneath the sky were replicated in the house, which was segmented into several plateaus under a dome or a crossed vault symbolizing the celestial realm.

In an interview, Hassan Abu Aslah,[55] the former head of the Sur Bahir &Umm Tuba Development Committee, and a former planner in the Jerusalem municipality under both Jordanian and Israeli regimes, cited Yonatan Shilony

[53] Which could relate to the notion Design Research. See Murray Fraser, ed., *Design Research in Architecture: An Overview* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).
[54] Speaks, "After Theory."

[55] Yehotal Shapira, "Reflection of Spatial Presentation in Sur Bahir: A Study in Use," in *City of Collision: Jerusalem and the Principles of Conflict Urbanism*, eds. Philip Misselwitz and Tim Rieniets with Zvi Efrat, Rassem Khamaisi, and Rami Nasrallah (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006), 130-52.

et al.,[56] who analyzed and provided guidelines for further "organic" development of Silwan. Abu Aslah contended that adhering to such instructions would prove unsuccessful, asserting that Palestinian traditional expertise, characterized by intuitive aleatory improvisation in construction, adapts to circumstances, creating fitting architecture for the given situation. Abu Aslah's suggestion implies a social dimension in the creation of subject positions through building, extending concepts such as fractality and non-Euclidean geometry.

Understanding the central values of this building culture poses challenges, as evident in regionally conducted in-depth surveys. Notably, the Israeli Antiquities Authority conducted a comprehensive study in response to a 2011 court petition by the Save Lifta Coalition. This petition emerged within the context of plans (no. 6036),[57] to develop a new affluent neighborhood at the entrance of the Jerusalem in the abandoned village of Lifta.[58] The objection asserted that the village embodies a unique example of a complex "frozen in time."[59] This survey meticulously documented and photographed each house in the village, offering details on various archaeological layers of construction and destruction.

The survey's findings were exposed through a virtual simulation of the village development. The simulation expressed assumptions that distinguished architecture, agriculture, and landscape. In contrast, the present research findings indicate an inseparable agricultural production system that combined cultivated plots and house architecture. The pre-modern system, integrated into a broader fertilized environment, demonstrates an "abyssal irregularity" in relation to notions of "progress" based on a separating logic.[60] The Arab-Palestinian environment exhibits unique relationships among Man, Animal, and Plant (referred to as MAP in non-philosophy). In peasant (*fallāḥ*) dwellings, agricultural produce and animals shared the same house, segmented by various plateaus for their respective uses, and also employed for storing and processing agricultural produce. The boundaries between humanity and non-human in inhabiting the earth exemplify, according to Laruelle, an ecology that

[56] Yonatan Shilony, Yael Shilony, Nehemiah Bikson, and Yoel Bar-Dor, *Jerusalem Surveys Conducted in Preparation for a City Plan in the South of the Old City Wall* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Municipality, 1988).
[57] The plan including 259 villas also disregards the former Palestinian residents of the village's historical rights, and will destroy the landscape, spring, and village.
[58] Jonathan Boyarin, "Ruins, Mounting toward Jerusalem," in *Palestine and Jewish History: Criticism at the Borders of Ethnography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 238-53.
[59] UNESCO has included the village of Lifta in its tentative list of World Heritage Sites.
[60] Laruelle, *The Concept of Non-Photography*, 126.

questions community relationships with strangers, signifying those within and outside the community. Sylvia Wynter has traced how religion, philosophy, and scisence contribute to the "overrepresentation" of the human as "Man," with race being part of this overrepresentation.[61] Laruelle, as noted by Anthony Paul Smith,[62] is useful for understanding the link between race, justice, ethics, and ecology.

The residence of animals was part of the Arab-Palestinian pre-modern household. This habitation was considered part of the "backwardness" of these rural villages in the Palestinian society. It is essential to note that Heidegger's concept of pre-modernity, and the values associated with pre-modern German culture, differ from those of pre-modern Arab-Palestinian culture. In contrast to the "back to the land" movement, Arab-Palestinian architectural heritage was constructed using *in-situ* ruins, with great care taken to preserve and sanctify previous cultures and religious sacred remains,[63] including the ancient names of places. This suggests an inclusive approach within Arab-Palestinian pre-modern culture.

The second phase marks the integration of the region's economy into the European capitalist market and the unequal distribution of wealth, goods, privileges, and rights. The alteration of the mansion in the second phase, marked by the emergence of the façade, illustrates the "overrepresentation" of the human as "Man" in architecture during the modernization process.[64] This signifies a shift from a transcendental positioning to a narcissistic self-sufficiency in relation to the Real, influenced by capitalism.[65]

The history of construction and architecture is widely acknowledged. Nevertheless, what sets apart the comprehension through non-philosophy is the focal point of transformation in the landscape that deviates from conventional classifications.

[61] A notion defined by Sylvia Wynter. See Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for our Species?," in *On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 9-90.
[62] Anthony Paul Smith, "Translator's Introduction: Why Ecology at the End?," in François Laruelle, *The Last Humanity: The New Ecological Science*, trans. Anthony Paul Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), vii-xv.
[63] Conder, "The Moslem Mukams."
[64] Smith, "Translator's Introduction," xiv. Smith interacts with the work of Sylvia Wynter. See Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Fall 2003): 257–337, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2004.0015.
[65] Katerina Kolozova, *Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

This article, employing a non-philosophical approach, highlights the façade's emergence as a key element altering the vernacular aboriginal typology. This marks the inception of visibility and ostensive attitudes in modern capitalist approaches. The decomposition of the courtyard house typology has resulted in a modern-vernacular built environment, challenging the dichotomy between "modern" and "vernacular" as rigid frameworks. It illustrates the initial effects of capitalism and modernism within Arab-Palestinian indigenous vernacular architecture in the Jerusalem area.

The proposed shift is grounded in a transformation of thought, self-perception, and societal configurations, as elucidated in the relationship between architecture and the environment in its broadest sense. The article did not adhere to disciplinary boundaries between architecture and landscape architecture when describing the Arab-Palestinian landscape. Instead, it underscored the seminal aspect of landscape from which architecture derives, thereby allowing for the expansion of related disciplinary boundaries. The article scrutinized the construction of walls in relation to nature, exploring themes of over-representation versus immanence, as well as the dichotomy between separation and connection among human and non-human elements. The current situation, in which the unique contribution of Arab-Palestinian construction culture is neither discussed nor valued, signifies a loss. The immanence of the subject's creation, through the connection between architecture, landscape, and agriculture—via a non-Euclidean fractal construction—plays a role in fostering an inclusive culture that respects other traditions and creatures, while allowing for rethinking the deficiencies of modernization within the context of capitalism and colonialism.

Non-Philosophy, Pre-Modern Arab-Palestinian Dwelling Landscapes, and October 7

It has been a while since the conclusion of the article evolved due to unpredictable events on and after October 7, 2023. These local terrorist and war events have also taken on a global dimension, embodying the uncertainty and danger of a potential apocalyptic Armageddon war with a theological-political background spanning hundreds of years. I find myself questioning how an understanding, through a non-philosophical lens, of the research findings can contribute to a better understanding of the current situation.

It is necessary to emphasize that the Arab-Palestinian pre-modern rural culture remains under imminent threat of extinction, facing challenges from both the West, as represented by colonialism and Zionism, and institutional

Islam. The latter has actively sought to eliminate remnants of its sacred places perceived as Mugrabi, considering them un-Islamic and pagan.[66] Consequently, the objectives and motives of institutional Islam diverge significantly from the struggle of indigenous populations against colonialism in their homeland.

The pre-modern Arab-Palestinian environmental culture bears a sense of muteness, a form of non-verbal expression, which could be interpreted as indicative of what Jean-François Lyotard identified as an inability to articulate oneself in conflicts. Lyotard elucidated that in situations where a dispute arises due to the imposition of a specific idiom or discourse, the opposing party may be impacted in a way that "the wrong suffered by the other is not significant in that [particular] idiom." He referred to this as a "*differend*."[67] The distinctiveness of the Palestinian pre-modern tradition remains subdued, struggling to find expression in a modern world firmly rooted in representation. For instance, this research relies on photographic images of historical architecture. Nonetheless, the unique connection between architecture and landscape eludes the logic of representation, evading convenient photographic documentation.

The moment of change outlined in this article, specifically the transition from pre-modernity to modernity, holds significance for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad described the challenges faced by Algerian Kabyle peasants in adapting to the modern world, positioned "between two worlds."[68] They proposed that this liminal state, straddling traditional and modern habitus, gives rise to *habitus clivé* ("split habitus"). Within this framework, two attitudes are identified: the "*de-peasanted peasant*," (*paysan dé-paysanisé*) a tragic figure self-destructive and unable to adapt to urbanization or modern influences, and the "*em-peasanted peasant*" (*paysan empaysanné*), fully embodying capitalist modernity habitus.[69]

In a manner distinct from that described by Bourdieu and Sayad, transitions are also

[66] Interview with Mr. Abu Aslah, July 2005, cited in Shapira, "Reflection of Spatial Presentation in Sur Bahir," 132. See also Rochelle Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 103.
[67] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 9-10.
[68] Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad, *Uprooting: The Crisis of Traditional Agriculture in Algeria*, ed Paul A. Silverstein, trans. Susan Emanuel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020).
[69] Jane E. Goodman and Paul A. Silverstein, "Introduction: Bourdieu in Algeria," in *Bourdieu in Algeria: Colonial Politics, Ethnographic Practices, Theoretical Developments*, eds. Jane E. Goodman and Paul A. Silverstein (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 1-63.

currently occurring in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These transitions are manifest in both directions—from pre-modern to modern and from modern to pre-modern. An in-depth study is warranted to understand their impact on both societies.[70]

The experience of these transitioning, as revealed in the rupture within the subject's experience, is anchored through interconnected representational relationships between the signifier and signified. These relationships are discussed at the foundation of non-philosophy and can be deciphered using a non-philosophical lens. It seems that "overrepresentation" of the human as "Man" does not enable articulations of non-representation approach,[71] which is "intended to multiply and embed representation within immanence, allowing it to belong to the Real rather than stand outside it."[72] This situation creates an impossible reality that is "unrepresentable," such as psychological ineffable experiences that are too painful to represent. These encounters, characterized by traumatic transitions between the pre-modern and modern, play crucial roles in the relationships between architecture and the environment within the societal context, as reflected in the contemporary Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Acknowledgements

I owe a debt of gratitude to the late Prof. Ronnie Ellenblum for his encouragement throughout, and for shaping the direction and depth of the research on which part of this paper is based. I would like to thank Dumbarton Oaks Library for the research award and for the generous and hospitable stay that allowed me to advance and draft parts of this essay. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Prof. John Ó Maoilearca and Prof. Jonathan Fardy for graciously taking the time to read the article and providing valuable comments. I would liske to thank my friend and colleague Deborah Margolis for her reading and comments. It is important to note that the responsibility for this essay falls entirely on me.

[70] I refer here to the scale of bombings in Gaza, influenced by Jewish-Israeli fear of pre-modern pogroms and the characteristics of the October 7 massacre influenced by pre-modern Palestinian inter-rival raids.

[71] Smith, "Translator's Introduction," xiv; Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality."

[72] John Ó Maoilearca differentiates between modernist "unrepresentability" and "non-representation." See John Ó Maoilearca, "'For We Will Have Shown It Nothing': Bergson as Non-Philosopher (of) Art," in *Bergson and the Art of Immanence: Painting, Photography, Film*, eds. John Ó Maoilearca and Charlotte de Mille (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 206-31, at 223.