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"EPISTEMICIDE" AND "MEMORICIDE", LEGALIZED DESTRUCTION IN THE ARAB/MUSLIM WORLD

"EPISTEMICÍDIO" E "MEMORICÍDIO", DESTRUIÇÃO LEGALIZADA NO MUNDO ÁRABE/MUÇULMANO

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Abstract: This article is a contribution to Postcolonial Trauma Studies. It aims to examine the ways in which Arab cultures bear the lasting aftereffects of the loss of al-Andalus that took place in 1492. Its focus is especially on the ramifications of such a key juncture in history that has enduringly contributed to the legitimation of the destruction of the Arab/Muslim cultures' heritage. Western-centric knowledge came to license violence based on the demonization of the Other's ways of knowing. Based on a postcolonial rethinking of trauma, the Arab cultures bear witness to the existence of the same discursive frameworks that made the destruction of the cultural heritage of al-Andalus possible.

Keywords: Postcolonial. Trauma. Epistemicide. Memoricide. Modernity.

Resumo: Este artigo é uma contribuição aos Estudos de Trauma Pós-Colonial. Seu objetivo é examinar as maneiras pelas quais as culturas árabes suportam os efeitos colaterais duradouros da perda de al-Andalus, ocorrida em 1492. Seu foco está especialmente nas ramificações de um momento tão importante da história que contribuiu de forma duradoura para a legitimação da destruição do patrimônio das culturas árabe/muçulmana. O conhecimento centrado no Ocidente passou a permitir a violência com base na demonização das formas de conhecimento do Outro. Com base em um repensar pós-colonial do trauma, as culturas árabes testemunham a existência das mesmas estruturas discursivas que tornaram possível a destruição do patrimônio cultural de al-Andalus.

Palavras-chave: Pós-colonial. Trauma. Epistemicídio. Memoricídio. Modernidade.

Introduction

Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

In exploring the enduring effects of a *single* history of modernity, Benjamin reveals the way in which the victor continues to jeopardize the historical dignity of both the living and the dead. His thoughts have been described as being of close pertinence to Postcolonial Studies as they hold promises for those who wrestle with the issues of excavating the memories of a painful past (Durrant 2014). One is thus compelled to muse over the philosophy of a history that is marred by the barbarism of civilizations, bearing witness to the angel of history's movement that is violently thrust into the future by the piled-up debris of a corrosive modernity. Any attempt to awaken, or else mourn, the dead has been rendered futile (1970 257-258).

Given the dominance of the rhetoric of progress, Postcolonial Arab cultures are no exception as they continue to grapple with the enduring aftereffects of colonial drama ever since the loss of al-Andalus (cf. Gana 2008). Gil Anidjar delineates such rhetoric by exploring the limitations of Western systems of thought in which disciplinary boundaries have been erected to thwart Arab/Muslim potentialities. He sheds light on the existence of a scholarship that has "repeatedly underscored this apparent evidence: al-Andalus has ended — it had no future. More precisely, perhaps, the Arabs (or Islam) have been incapable of maintaining the shining, and exceptional, achievement which al-Andalus was" (228-229)

Both Benjamin and Anidjar are implicated in questioning the mainstream histories of violence by journeying the oft-untrodden path that recasts the loss of cultures like that of al-Andalus as essentially historical and duly *traumatic*. Building on such insightful remarks, I aim to bring to the foreground the Arab cultures' attempt at coming to grips with the history of colonial modernity in order to question the Eurocentrism that marks Cultural Trauma Studies (Craps and Buelens 2008). A rerouting of Postcolonial Trauma Studies is also the focus of this article since emphasis is primarily laid on the supposedly modern colonial history, or what Enrique Dussel refers to as "the second phase of colonial modernity" (1993). I thus relate the dystopian depiction of post-1492 history to the dilemmas bearing on issues of violence, cultural heritage and epistemology and the cutting short of the possibility of another Andalusian encore for the subjects of Arab and Islamic descent today.

Besides the cultural repercussions of "memoricide", the destruction of the Other's cultural memory, I draw on the notion of "epistemicide" acting as its midwife; it is a term coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos to stand for the ways in which Western-centered epistemologies "have resulted in a massive waste of social experience […] in the massive *destruction* of ways of knowing that did not fit the dominant epistemological canon" (2014 238; emphasis added). Further survey of such violence will first be initiated by a discussion that links world sovereignty to Western supremacy over "true knowledge," leading as such to the "Hellenization of Christianity" that lends political power to the religious doctrine of "Gnosticism". It will be argued that the unprecedented domination of the political/religious scene in the first century was to initiate the violence endemic in the globality of sovereign Western knowledge as we know it today. Dehumanizing configurations have ever since promulgated the binaries of "here/there", "Self/Other", "good/evil" in the public sphere. They divide the globe based on the Western knowing subject and the Other whose life and knowledge are considered as deserving of annihilation.

Trauma and the Biopolitics of Ruin

Since the 1990s, the notion of "traumatic places" has been pushed to the foreground of human consciousness (Mason 2019 159). Delineating the correlation between traumatic memory and the *conservation* of cultural heritage is driven by the moral prerogative to venture into new terrains in trauma studies. Even though such a link may place such studies on surer ground, it has often been undertheorized in the field as life has occupied center stage (Mason 2019). The conventional definition of "cultural trauma" is that it "occurs when members of a collectivity have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves *inedible marks* upon their group consciousness" (Alexander 2012 1; emphasis added). An extension of the notion attests however to the fact that trauma for the collective self might be associated with memorial sites and artifacts. They act as *material remains that leave "inedible marks"* and duly engage victimized collectivities in *memorializing* extreme events as a way of preserving their ways of knowing. Ruins thus "materially bear witness and serve as literal texts representing the past" (Mason 2019 159). In most cases, it is not only buildings, for example, that are receptacles "of meanings about the larger trauma"; rather, it is also their *loss* that triggers a narrative that "*becomes* the trauma" (Debs 2012 480; emphasis original).

As such, *remembering* a painful past is what constitutes trauma in such cultures as those of the postcolonies (Visser 2011). The representation of the past in the collective

consciousness constructs the ethics and politics of pain through resorting to the remains of what has been lost. Sites are amenable to processes of appropriation and expropriation, attesting to the textual relevance of physical destruction. By means of constantly assigning new significances to the lost sites, victim cultures resort to traumatic memory in counter-discursive terms that question the ideologies of perpetuated and legitimized ruin.

My wager therefore is that the significance of cultural heritage in postcolonial cultures lies in the fact that destruction visited on the sites of memory of colonial alterity lays bare the underpinnings of a Western-centric *long* history of colonial modernity. On that account, "genocide, racial injustice […] mass incarceration […] or other cultural traumas" (Mason 2019 158) related to sites attest to the enduring aftereffects of both "memoricide" and "epistemicide". Unfounded fear and the need to protect the cultural heritage of "the civilized world" have urged the powers that be to inflict destruction on any totemic sites or artifacts able to revive the Other's cultural memory. Iconoclasm is thus legitimized by means of recasting alterity's ways of knowing as ill-intentioned and evil (Voegelin 1958). If the plan of the perpetrator is to expunge the memory of the victim, a destruction that is not necessarily site-specific, then it is the annihilation of the Other's ways of knowing that lies at the backdrop of such erasure.

As a holdover of a long history of concealment, such genocide that targets the colonial Other's epistemologies rests on spatial coordinates that unequally distribute grievability in the public sphere (Butler 2004). It constitutes the driving force behind the biopolitics of preservability that motivate the civilizing mission of the West to protect the cultural heritage of the allegedly well-meaning "civilized". On the receiving end, alterity's cultural milieu is deemed infernal and deserving of devastation because of the latter's cultivation of evil-meaning epistemologies that might inflict harm (Voegelin 1958; Mignolo & Tlostanova 2006).

Gnosticism, Biopolitics and Global Sovereignty

In biopolitical terms, the dogmas that have reinforced the sovereignty of Western thought warrant that we bring into focus a key moment in history. During the reign of "Gnosticism" as a doctrine, a paradigm shift in Western epistemological and existential power maintained "radical *dualism* of being—God and the world, spirit and matter, soul and body, light and darkness, good and evil, life and death" (Jonas 1958 31; emphasis original). Such Manicheanism testifies to a process whereby practicality and salvation came to be associated

with epistemology. Instead of the reader's pointing to "*rational* objects, and accordingly to natural reason as the organ for acquiring and possessing knowledge […] the gnostic context" turned "knowledge" into "an emphatically religious supranatural meaning" (Jonas 1958 34; emphasis original). An extra-rational framework then initiated the mediation of a discourse of deliverance in the first century between the object of study and its representation, thereby marking the embryonic stages of the Western civilizing mission. Claim was then laid to the universality of its epistemological configurations wherein Christianity took on the garb of salvational knowledge (Jonas 34).

Rising cognition beyond the rational thus locates the knowing subject in a much higher status than that of the object of knowledge. It is a condition of self-idealization and *centrality* given the acquired privilege of visual clarity, perfection and divinity that grant the subject dominance over any entity presumed as known. Seeing that the knower has access to information that is highly ranked and belonging to the "unmundane" world, then mundane knowledge and existence are associated with a significant otherness that is living in a state of *nature*. As a sign of the lasting effects of such ideology that would later shape Western thought, "the rationalization of the supranatural—was typical of the higher forms of *Gnosticism* and gave rise to a kind of speculation previously unknown *but never afterwards to disappear from religious thought*" (Jonas 1958 36; emphasis added).

The secret lore of such knowledge is thus only possessed by those who follow the path of Christianity tinged with Greek wisdom, an ideology that will shape the Manicheanism of the philosophy of Enlightenment with Descartes, Kant and Husserl (Mignolo 2000). It is generally believed that the knowers, or "*pneumatics* as the possessors of gnosis," who own both human and divine aspects, are thought to be "set apart from the great mass of mankind" out of "hostility" and "contempt" for "the mundane" (Jonas 1958 45). Cultural as well as social ramifications are thus at work based on divisionary imaginaries that are deemed necessary in epistemological terms to guarantee the sovereignty and superiority of the hegemon. As a result, "modern Western thinking" is construed as "an abyssal thinking" since

> it consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of "this side of the line" and the realm of 'the other side of the line.' The division is such that 'the other side of the line' vanishes as reality, becomes nonexistent, and is indeed produced as nonexistent. Nonexistent means not existing in any *relevant* or *comprehensible* way of being. (Santos 2007 45; emphasis added)

Supremacist knowledge would therefore not guarantee its hypervisibility without the existence of its concealed counterpart. The argument of Santos resonates well with Walter Mignolo's notion of "Occidentalism," a critical direction that brings to the foreground the sixteenth century when coloniality/modernity was in its unfolding. Like Santos, he reads the history of modernity in terms that recognize the contribution of the non-European Other to its progress when colonial violence was inflicted on the cultures in al-Andalus, the Americas and Africa (2000 51). Western superiority has then been based on a history of "violence" and "concealment" since 1492 based on a discourse of a "redemptive sacrifice" of the civilizing mission that aims to free the barbarian Other from guilt (Dussel 1993 75). It could be concluded that "in the field of knowledge, abyssal thinking consists in granting to modern science the monopoly of the universal distinction between true and false" as in the domain of modern law, the visible side of the line is overdetermined by what may be referred to as "legal" or "illegal" (Santos 2007 48). While such frameworks strip the Other of justice and thus license violence, they ground their justifications of cruelty upon the incrimination of alterity's ways of knowing. As a result, "border thinking or theorizing" as a counter-discourse

> emerged from and as a response to the violence (frontiers) of imperial/territorial epistemology and the rhetoric of modernity (and globalization) of salvation that continues to be implemented on the assumption of the inferiority or *devilish* intentions of the Other and, therefore, continues to justify oppression and exploitation as well as *eradication* of the difference. (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006 206; emphasis added)

It is then not only the Other who is legally condemned to violence, but also his cultural space. As his territories are kept out of any legal rights, he has had to bear the brunt of the colonialist policies that condemn "other" ways of knowing as endangering the advance of their progress. Abyssal lines were therefore drawn to "mark out supposedly empty space from ordered, civilized space," since such polarized spatial dimensions that produce new subjectivities attest to the fact that "the other side of the line is not only defined by ontological negation and emptiness, but the production of a whole regime of order, connected to disciplinary practices of shaping spiritual, gendered, and economic habitus of indigenous" Others (Deere 2019 26). It then bears referring to the geopolitics of cruelty that have created a state of war instead of peace with regard to the universality of a peaceful, common world, especially that the term "global" has come to be redefined as a violence-laden lexicon. Since the mid-sixteenth century amity, or cartographic, lines of the 1559 Cateau-Cambresis Treaty between Spain and France, abyssal lines sprang up. A new global

order that rested on violence came into existence and something like a common global order was dropped and, "on this side of the line, truce, peace, and friendship apply; on the other side of the line, the law of the strongest, violence, and plunder" (Santos 2007 49).

It is therefore worth tracing the notion of the apocalypse in Western gnosis as it stands at the backdrop of the allegedly manifest destiny that justifies the "moral responsibility" held by the Western-centric sovereign knower. Despite Hans Jonas's way of touching upon the major tenets of Gnosticism, his reading would still seem scant in critical terms compared to Eric Voegelin who often crossed him to get answers about the doctrine. The depth and breadth of Voegelin's knack for provocative interpretations may lay the groundwork for a rethinking of Gnosticism in apocalyptic terms. His explanation of the supremacist Western gnosis brings into light the superiority attributed to the Christian man. The latter is in constant intellectual activity of the mind and thus is self-sufficiently in need of no other "outside means" since "he becomes most like God" (Veogelin 2000 49). Based on the righteousness underlying such schism initiating the binarism of good and evil, knowledge has been hierarchized as it conflates truth with good and other epistemologies with evil. His review of Hannah Arendt's "Origins of Totalitarianism" traces the thread that connects ancient Gnosis to modern Gnosticism when the Western civilizing mission has inflicted suffering through colonial "expansion" (1953 68)

As such, the mission of Western knowledge is thought to "bless" the globe of which the knower is in possession (68). The first fundamental historical-philosophical interpretation in that regard was initiated by Saint Augustine who instigated the discussion of the "world history" in terms that bring to the fore "the enormous struggle between the heavenly and the earthly *civitas*, the kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of *evil*" (1958 Voegelin 47; emphasis original). To attest to how the tenets of such doctrine have caught on since then, it bears referring to the significant notion of "the Christian apocalypse" pertaining to the late Middle Ages that "form the historical basis for the apocalyptic dynamics in *modern* political religions" (51; emphasis added).

It seems that the second phase of colonial modernity, especially at the time of the renaissance, was under the enduring influence of the first phase. What has remained of such configurations is the image of the sovereign in the national or global arenas, thereby inventing "the mechanical means of killing in order to transform the personal form of courage into the impersonal form: The intention to kill is directed against an abstract enemy, not against an actual person" (Voegelin 2000 29).

In trauma-centered terms, and as will be discussed below, such frameworks blend the biopolitical with the epistemological and put pressure on alterity to navigate the space between the extreme and the everyday. Other ways of knowing mainly pertain to the artifacts that preserve the everyday rituals of one's cultural heritage. Cutting short such practices induces "insidious trauma" (Craps & Buelens 2008) and affects the quotidian of the oppressed irretrievably. It attests to the ways in which the powers that be ramify across the most ordinary arenas of the life of the oppressed and preserve the enduring posttraumatic effects by piling up "wreckage upon wreckage" for him (Benjamin 1970).

It is therefore in this sense that epistemicide has given birth to memoricide. Ironically enough, Western civilization's conception of its superior and advanced self is bolstered by the kind of violence that draws a void in the other's sites of remembrance as punishment. Cultivated amnesia is bound up with the fragmentation inflicted on the continuity of one's cultural memory, thereby contributing to "memoricide" which constitutes the oppressor's attempt at "erasing" the physical traces of the Other's possibility for remembrance. Violence on cultural memory then takes place especially "when libraries, as monuments of cultural heritage" become targets. Besides such monuments,

> there are also cases of destroying books […] because of the fact that their topics, or authors, make a contribution to the group's collective memory and identity. A term "book" will be used for all moveable property in libraries and archives– books, collections, archive materials, manuscripts, pictures, phonographic collections, etc. Destruction of books can be considered a suitable way to commit memoricide, because they are always chosen as targets for a specific reason of hatred. (Haračić 2012 245)

It bears positing that the destruction of cultural repository has existed for centuries and become one of the most common and oldest examples of memoricide. Anything that can be referred to as "a monument of cultural heritage" reflects the physical revitalization of memory. Its constitution of commonality in terms of significance for the collective self of a people "depends on the concrete culture and national, ethnic or religious values" represented by cultural institutions. For instance, "monuments, houses of worship, cemeteries or historic sites" are "movable" sites of cultural and historical value and so become amenable to devastation (238). Their concreteness as physically visible loci imbued with meaning gears their cultural import towards the daily *ritualization* of memory that closely reflects the members' objective reality especially that actions of the quotidian are undertaken in such sites.

Hence, whereas the cultural heritage of the Other preserves the survival of their values through daily rituals, its being under the threat of oblivion triggers existential questions. The sense of *living and being is* thus lost as their hope for cultural continuity through memory has undergone violent rupture. Guaranteed continuity could have qualified the culture to decide on its direction towards a future that is the very product of its sense-making process. Those who follow an "Other" gnosis will however be "committed to the hell of social oblivion" (Voegelin 2000 194). The mission of the globally dominant Western-centric memory is to thrust its "Others" into its unrelenting march of progress. They are coerced to give in to the forces of forgetting or else face annihilation, a condition that submits their memory under to a constant state of exception. Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Parker have argued in their seminal work *Saving Paradise* (2008) that the sense of the apocalypse that especially emerged in the 14th century after Europe's plagues and devastating wars, pushed the Europeans to inflict violence on the non-Christian dwellers of the territories on the other side of the globe. The Africans, the Jews, the Muslims and the Native Americans endured violence as "a *distant* non-Christian world deserved the extremities of the wrath of God" (2008 314; emphasis added).

Frontiers, Epistemologies and Annihilation

As a contribution to Postcolonial Trauma Studies, this study therefore seeks to delineate the post-1492 period as a major juncture that has proven to reach a traumatic scale for Europe's Others. What will be brought to the foreground is the existence of similar discursive frames that have set al-Andalus at the heart of our examination of the dire consequences for the Arab world. It bears pointing out that by surveying the discourse that thrived in the Middle Ages, we come to the realization that thrusting "the march of civilization" forward is predicated on "the idea of the frontiers". Ensuing epistemological configurations "classified and assigned a given place on the planet" to the colonial Other's bodies through "a geographic and body-graphic divide" (Mignolo & Tlostanova 2006 205). Hence, "state racism is not a post-18th century phenomenon, but a phenomenon that emerged following the conquest of the Americas in the 16th century" (Grosfoguel 2013 82). Since then, there has been a constant threat to the life of the Other on the grounds that they do not fit within the framework of the second phase of modernity that occludes other ways of being and thinking:

> The classification of the world by region, and the link established between regions and people inhabiting them, was parallel to the march of civilization and companions of it: on the other side of the epistemic frontiers, people do not think or theorize; hence, one of the reasons they were considered barbarians. (Mignolo & Tlostanova 2006 205)

Such a spatial configuration is what Gilroy refers to as "camp mentality," a discriminatory perspective that divides bodies in terms of camps (1999). Given the context where the Western gatekeeping industry contributes to the state of dispossession of its Others, and/or controls their allegedly suspect bodies across frontiers, the body comes to occupy center stage. Colonialism assumes global sovereignty through the dislodgment of those bodies, whether human or material, from their state of preservability. The danger to memory lies in consolidating the everydayness of trauma as the epistemologies of the colonial enterprise rest heavily on violently discrediting the Other's sense-making processes (cf. Lloyd 2008). At stake is the way in which sovereign power's franticness to accomplish its mission determines the apocalyptic drive to commit violence by immediately uprooting the very physical existence of alterity's *movable* memorial landmarks and human capital. Violence inflicted on other cultures by the Spanish Inquisition is a case in point. By pinpointing the missing link between "I think therefore I am" and "I conquer therefore I am," Ramon Grosfoguel proposes "I exterminate therefore I am" as the mediating mantra that characterizes Spanish settler colonialism. In fact, the Jews and Muslims who stayed in the Spanish territory either underwent "physical genocide" or "cultural genocide/epistemicide":

> The forced expulsion of Muslims and Jews from their land (genocide) led to the repopulation of the territory with Christian populations from the North of the Iberian Peninsula). This is what in the literature is called today "settler colonialism." The massive destruction of Islamic and Judaic spirituality and knowledge through genocide, led to the forced conversion (cultural genocide) of those Jews and Muslims who decided to stay in the territory. By turning Muslims into Moriscos (converted Muslims) and Jews into Marranos (converted Jews), their memory, knowledge and spirituality were destroyed (cultural genocide). The latter was a guarantee that future descendants of Marranos and Moros will be born fully Christians without any memory trace to their ancestors. (2013 78)

Thinking in terms of post-generational trauma, loss of the possibility to commemorate such events could well be referred in melancholic terms as the "remains" of the loss of mourning al-Andalus. The latter constitutes an object of melancholia and a signifier of "multiple losses" since it condenses the meanings of social, political and textual significances (Eng & Kazanjian 4-5). The labor of remembrance is thus to lay bare the conceptual foundations of Western knowledge that is based on the notion of virtual frontiers.

It is a process whereby separating the knowing subject from the Other as the one incapable of well-meaning epistemological productivity is based on dehumanizing ideologies. In that sense, "colonial subjectivities are the consequences of racialized bodies, the inferiority that imperial classification assigned to every body that does not comply with the criteria of knowledge established by white, European, Christian and secular men" (Mignolo & Tlostanova 2006 210).

It then bears pointing out that the cognitive underpinnings of the discourse of scientific racism questioned the humanity of the Other. Institutionalized discrimination in the public sphere gave birth to epistemic violence that morphed into an academic exercise. The appropriation of the Other's culture was further strengthened and perpetuated by long intellectual debates that legitimized violence in the post-Inquisition period. Christopher Columbus's colonization of America and his remarks after October 12, 1492 made him turn the discourse of religion from the "theological realm" dominated by the ideology of Christendom to that of "modern philosophical anthropology". A longstanding intellectual debate in the first five decades of the 16th century turned the meaning of "purity of blood" into that which discriminated against Muslims and Jews and altered the fact of "practicing the wrong religion" into "having no soul" (Grosfoguel 2013 80-82). The concept was borrowed from a fledgling globalism after the colonization of the Americas. Epistemic violence was in its unfolding as racism has since then become an intellectual enterprise. The role of the globalized and canonized Western thought thus embarks on creating the kind of knowledge that mobilizes all the technologies that take *preemptive* action in order to save the civilized from those who *might* inflict harm. Their acting as a potential threat and as "bearers of cultural memory" makes their cultural artifacts amenable to constant violence. Grosfoguel makes such a connection possible,

> In addition to the genocide of people, the conquest of Al-Andalus was accompanied by epistemicide […] the burning of libraries was a fundamental method used in the conquest of Al-Andalus. The library of Cordoba, that had around 500,000 books at a time when the largest library of Christian Europe did not have more than 1000 books, was burned in the 13th century. Many other libraries had the same destiny during the conquest of Al-Andalus until the final burning of more than 250,000 books of the Granada library by Cardenal Cisneros in the early 16th century. These methods were extrapolated to the Americas. (2013 79-80)

Epistemicide, which also included the public executions of those whose knowledge production was thought of as witchcraft in al-Andalus, constitutes a subtler and advanced form of genocide. The life of the Other is thus located in a continual state of vulnerability.

A new logic ensues when the function of biopower is to decide on the lives that must be preserved and those that need to be obliterated, a state Achille Mbembe refers to as "the state of exception and the state of siege"; it is a condition which grants those in power the right to kill through continuous reference and appeal to "exception, emergency and a fictionalized notion of enmity" (2003 16-17). The economy of death thus becomes a holdover of the colonial past. Annihilation of the Other's ability to produce thought first and foremost represents the primary attempt at obliterating any future possibility since the advance of the world's history already denies "Other" potentialities and thus contrives the axiom that refutes the validity of the de-canonized cultural memories.

Annihilation of Arab/Muslim Cultural Heritage

Embarking on a rethinking of the way in which the violent rhetoric of progress guarantees its advance depends primarily on laying bare its constant attempt at inflicting ruin. The state of emergency that mars the Arab cultures thus bears witness to constant brutality as an enterprise. A series of catastrophes have compounded the crises of the Arab world since the 1948 "Nakba" (the disaster), followed by its slightly distinct relative notion of Naksa (the defeat), which stands for the devastating setback taking place in 1967. It is then no stretch to say that the Arab post-colonial world has become irretrievably crisis-stricken. Together with a traumatic past, a foreclosed future is the hallmark of the postcolonial condition as any attempt to articulate the crisis is overwhelmed by shock. The foresaid complex state, especially as it is primarily linked in every Arab state to the Zionist colonization of Palestine brings to mind the histories that are overvalued by the Eurocentric frame of grieving destruction. The right to lay claim to the devastated Palestinian heritage is then upstaged by the "Holocaust memorials […] regarded as sui generis" and "models […] for sites of traumatic heritage" (Mason 2019 162; see also Craps &Buelens 2008)

By invoking the enduring aftereffects of the painful past of Medieval Spain in Postcolonial Trauma Studies, we become convinced that "a non-therapeutic relation to the past, structured around the notion of survival or living on rather than recovery, is what should guide our critique of modernity and ground a different mode of historicization" (Lloyd 2000 212). Speaking about Nakba in his seminal work *Reflections on Exile*, Edward Said affirms that "no Arab could say that in 1948 he was in any serious way detached or apart from the events in Palestine" (2003 46). Continually inflicted violence thus indicates that the demise of the Arab cultures does not only reveal an aura of history as a traumatic event, but

also bears the seeds of the specters that have jeopardized and will continue to jeopardize potentialities. The task of the intellectuals has thus been to resist from the debris of a corrosive modernity by claiming the right to be out of kilter with its rhetoric of progress by

> grasping how the relation to damage as *loss* is counterpointed always by the persistence of damage as a mode of *memory*. Precisely because it is not a form of erasure or supersession, because it is not subject to even assimilation into the *Aufhebung* of development, damage itself becomes the locus of survival, the pained trajectory of what lives on and, moreover, continues to resist incorporation. The intricate relation between violence and living on structures the peculiar recalcitrance not only of the colonized but also of a postcolonial culture to the continuing project of modernization. (Lloyd 2003 216; emphasis original)

Writing in the throes of a climate overwhelmed by wreckage situates the postcolonial Arab critique of modernity between melancholia and mourning, between the subjects' fixation on the gripping, traumatic event, and recovery in order to guarantee one's disputedly viable future. Speaking about the enduring aftereffects of al-Andalus as a past that should not be romanticized, Gil Anidjar points to the critical intricateness of remembrance since the "complex attitude required to bear witness to the future […] must give room to the past in its catastrophic dimensions" (2006 225)

The importance of "the paradise lost" therefore lies in its representation of both loss and possibility. A focus on the traumatic past and an ominous future that has been under constant threat is in fact reminiscent of the history of al-Andalus which, as mentioned before, is at the heart of the Arab world's wish to retrieve its glorious past marked by cultural feats. Echoing Robert Young's view on Postcolonial theory's Iberian provenance, Ella Shohat traces the ways in which links between myriad histories of violence in the Arab world reflect "the cataclysmic moment summoned up by the various 1492s" (2012 373).

In his article "Trauma Ties," Gana refers to the contemporaneity of a compellingly pervasive violence and the increasing institutionalization of warfare in such countries as Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, insisting that we rigorously peer into the particularity of the Arab world. By identifying with each other as a collectivity facing a looming threat, Arabs build the kind of consciousness that post-generationally and spatiotemporally shifts from individual to cultural trauma. Gana is thus critical of the attempts at making sense of the "meaninglessness" of war and "the engagement with the cruelties of memory and traumatic loss via the consolatory vistas of mourning, memorials, and artistic expressions" (2014 77-78). The persistence of the networks of leverage since imperialism warrants that we expose the enduring effects of the Western patterns that have unleased mayhem.

Self-making thus heavily rests upon the ability of one's culture to express its own specificity in order to "survive" an ensuing sense of being under the dominance of an outside force. With its being the latest rampart of Europe's colonialist ambitions, and in its attempt to follow the footsteps of the march of progress, Israel has since 1948 dubbed itself the agent of the civilizing mission in a "backward" East (Khoury 2019). Not to mention that it has espoused a race politics of establishing a frontier state fortified by high walls of separation. The Jewish state has thus trodden a Eurocentric path as a past victim who rationalizes violence against the constantly convicted Other. Besides the fact that Zionism espouses the telos of the rhetoric of modernity, its subscription to a Judeo-Christian alliance has also attempted at purging its roots of the "contagion" of Arabness (Shohat 2012 139-40)

As a holdover of the ideology of Christendom that took place in Medieval times, such spatial dynamics of bifurcation persist well in the Jewish state's propaganda machine, thereby confirming such divisionary frameworks in the *epistemological* field. A rising systematic destruction and epistemological annihilation of Palestinian heritage seems to be the order of the day especially after 1948. The Jewish state has become an extensive rampart of the European expansionist project of creating frontiers when it embarks on the geopolitics of both division and denial since it embraces the ethos of *one* long history of colonial modernity.

In fact, the occupation of Palestinian lands typifies the enduring aftereffects of such a discourse given that settler colonialism coincided with the erasure of any sign of their cultural memory by attempting to "wipe out the Arab heritage of the country" (Perry 2010 57). By endorsing the European colonial project, Zionism's fundamental mission is less about immediate appropriation of territory than it is about engineering the forces of forgetting that obscure the significance of a distant past that calls for a future of recognition and coexistence. A salient example that holds critical import is the appropriation of the shrines of Medieval Muslims "reconsecrated as tombs of Old Testament figures" (Perry 2010 57). It seems that in the denial that inheres within the Zionist state's "whitened" surface, there lies a tortured landscape that stands for the unavoidable truth that Israel is still trying to upstage, and that is the history of coexistence with the Muslims of al-Andalus. Destroying the shrines of Medieval Muslims denotes the glaring contradictions of colonialism whose misappropriation of such embattled landscapes is only a few steps from digging into the archives of Moorish Spain whose history is able to restore dignity to the allegedly "backward" Arab. As the "strata of memory" are inseparably linked to "layers of rock", they forge new forms of traumatized consciousness whose experience is shaped by "dichotomous

environments" (Benvenisti 1996 X) that feed on structures of bigotry and division in the public sphere.

It is therefore under the aegis of contrived spatial coordinates that Arab-Muslim potentialities have been foreclosed in terms that unfairly distribute legality as, according to Santos's view referred to earlier, they are considered to be outside the visible lines. Besides the shrines, few discernible cemeteries were among so many that were destroyed by the oppressor's bulldozers in order to make way for the roads and new homes. Such disdain for the dead is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's barbed critique of the atrocities of undefeatable military technologies belonging to the long history of Western modernity marked by creating a state of emergency (1970 84). A frenzy of denial and destruction thus mark the Zionist ideology whose claim to the *mission civilisatrice* uncovers the unfair distribution of mournability in terms of those who deserve to be grieved and those who do not based on the spatial dynamics that determine their memorial preservability.

The monumental dilemma that has therefore overwhelmed the Arab intellectuals is that it is not only mourning the dead that should constitute their central critique of the aftereffects of colonial violence, but also the (looming) death of their fellow academics whose loss is far more perilous to the future possibilities of their cultures. Speaking about the iconoclasm inflicted on the Iraqi and Syrian cultures' artifacts, Vanessa Quirk investigates the existence of global designs whose "conscientious strategy [is] to target and destroy the collective memory, history, and identity of a people" (2016 np). As subtler plans are well underway to guarantee the relentless advance of Western-centric epistemologies, a closer scrutiny of Iraq's recent history bears witness to "the physical liquidation of the intellectual class," the fact which creates a perilous climate turning such a crime into "one of the most horrifying episodes of epistemicide", since the pretext behind the de-Baathification of Iraq is to establish a new Western field of knowledge that claims to bring freedom to the country (Kabel 2014 69). However, "the systematic assassination and terror campaign targeting academics and scientists were meant to obliterate an intellectual and academic culture and establish a new one on its ruins" (69). Nabil al-Tikriti as well refers to the notion of "memoricide," the massacre of cultural memory in Iraq which represents a salient instance of such a violation. In the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the country's national patrimony was ruthlessly and intentionally damaged, a destruction that has raised hackles as the international law turned a blind eye on the event. A zero-sum logic thus governed such injustice given that "when […] efforts to protect equivalent facilities of cultural patrimony in Europe during World War II […] a lack of common cultural sympathy was at play" (al-Tikriti 2010 97).

Considering the biopolitics of epistemology in the Iraqi political landscape, it could be said that the libraries that have been burned, the monuments and the museums that have been looted and destroyed, need to be mourned in the same fashion as the human capital. Of critical significance are the ramifications of memoricide that has as well devalued "individuals who are the bearers of cultural memory" (108).

Conclusion

It bears highlighting, therefore, that those who have been lost to the structures of colonialism have had their contribution cut short, especially that their way of envisioning a better future is violently foreclosed. In a context where the global powers that be and the postcolonial intelligentsia reign over the cultures of the postcolonies, the emergence of Arab states has always been a contestation of sorts since their societies have been "over-stated" by oppressive political practices writ large (Ayubi 1995 3). The post-colonial quintessentially bears on the posttraumatic and lasting effects of colonialism given that the loss of futurity is closely bound up with the shared fate of a violence-laden quotidian. As Lloyd posits about the pervasiveness of colonial brutality, 'unlike western states where, for the majority, the violence of the state remains largely unspoken, in most colonized societies coercive violence is a constant presence" (Lloyd 2000 218). A realignment between the extreme and the everyday, past and present, thus showcases the constant state of a lost futurity that aborts the Other's persistent modes of memorialization. In terms that underscore insidious trauma to which subjects in the post-colonial world bear witness, breaching the boundaries between the extreme and the everyday attests to the mourning processes that underscore the importance of structural violence as those who suffer the legacies of colonialism need to set melancholia and mourning, trauma and recovery, on a continuum. Lloyd treads a new path that rhymes with such a realignment given that colonial violence has not ceased to afflict the cultures of the post-colonies,

> If we allow commemoration of the dead to become a means to enter more lightly into the new world order, are we not in fact reproducing the attitudes of the colonialism that destroyed them, as well as reproducing those attitudes in the present with regard to other postcolonial peoples that are undergoing the catastrophes of development? If the function of therapeutic modernity is to have us lose our loss in order to become good subjects, then the very process of mourning the dead is at once their condemnation, their devaluation – perhaps not explicitly but effectively a judgement of their inadequacy as subjects and the inadequacy of their *cultural formations to modernity*. For if it is true that these formations held them from entering the modernity that their erasure permitted to develop,

> it is no less true now that our mourning is meant to release us from the embarrassment of their weight upon our psyches. (Lloyd 2008 222; emphasis added)

Lloyd's conclusion thus proposes what in trauma-related terms constitutes the role of those who are implicated directly or indirectly in the act of mourning the dead since we are "interested not in the question of reference and knowledge of the event, but rather in the question of the proper stance to take in relation to the past" (Rothberg 2000 24). His position reveals the risk of "losing our loss" which has to do with how the past "weighs upon our psyches" by losing sight of the devaluation attendant upon the myopic pursuit of the "new world order". As it overlooks the possibilities the cultural significance of the colonized may offer as regards the construction of a promising modernity based on cultural difference, the new world order forges a future at odds with the ways the colonized can articulate their adequacy as humans able of productive thinking.

The possible acquiescence of the ex-colonized, however, implicates them in the perpetuation of the same frameworks that allowed the violence committed in the name of the colonizer's *mission civilisatrice*. Questioning such frameworks calls on our ethical, political and, most importantly, epistemological engagement with the structures of violence that condemn potentialities to frozenness. The most relevant instance of such loss and possibility is the invocation of al-Andalus in that it is both a persistent past that induces melancholia when it brings us now and again to the site of violence, and a possibility because it questions the racialized discourses that refer to the Muslim/Arab Other as unable to guarantee a similarly viable future for humanity.

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