

Awry²: Experimental writing on genocidal times

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This editorial note to the second special issue Awry2, the Awry section devoted to experimental writing and form, introduces the three articles in the issue by two gestures. The first one is to create the political frame for these special issue as one centered on the current genocide suffered by the people of Palestine. The argument is that experimental writing unsettles the rigidity of the forms and that these forms, in academia, Palestine and the rest of the world, at all levels, are established by colonization, power, capital, whiteness. Thus, writing otherwise becomes a political responsibility. Our second framing gesture is to point to the common ground of our three contributions, they all seem to be expanding the experimentation from the writing to the doing, thinking, dreaming, and other aesthetic domains of revolution. The experimentation expands through the proposition of solid busviscus adventures with concepts, methods, and political reflections commented also in this intro. So, we act in aro ki te tanga - in collective memory and healing—a practice that refuses erasure, insists on testimony, and nurtures futures beyond violence. In genocidal times, we write to digest and carry our experiential - the pain, resilience and resistance of those targeted by colonial and state violence.

Here we are again. Still writing and righting the space for those unable and unwilling to write our knowledge as academia dictates. Still aware and still warning of the importance of subverting the forms, established as mainstreams by power, thus capital, thus colonization, thus whiteness. As all that is still here, so are we! With reverence and admiration, we present the second special issue of *Awry2*, the section of *Awry: Journal for Critical Psychology* devoted to experimental writing and form. After our inaugural issue (Liebert, Lara & Carlson 2021), comrades and thinkers showed interest in our project and along with authors and reviewers we worked on three amazing pieces to curate this issue featuring Priya Rajalakshmi, Sonia A. Sánchez and Amit Rai, each authoring their own piece, cared with love by reviewers Naomi Simmonds, Manolo Callahan, Hypatia Vourloumis, Teah Carlson, Rachel Liebert, and Ali Lara. Using a range of their own experimental writing resources, these contributions point to the forms in which the colonial chains continue to reshape cognitive and consequently behavioural capacities. What we can think and do is still committed to colonial forms, and Sonia has been talking to activists self-identified as women, gender expansive, and/or queer about their wildest liberation dreams, daydreams and nightmares to reflect on the possibilities of imagination on the resisting path; Amit has put his mind on our very capacity to attend, transformed in an on-and-off mechanism seduced by the interest of racial capital; and Priya's work is pointing to our capacity for connecting and producing knowledge with the land going beyond experimental writing towards an experimental method and thus experimental thinking. As these and other issues entangle with multiple populations throughout the world, a variety of brown skins fill with colour these pages from the subcontinent to the new world to shape our brownest issue so far.

We will not take long on this editorial note, but we want to take the opportunity to comment on two details. Firstly, to call attention to the pertinence of an experimental writing project under the current genocidal times, we want to insist on the political and ontological transformative capacity of subverting form and its implication when it becomes a regular practice on the production of knowledge. Secondly, we want to offer some thoughts linking our three articles together, we find them to independently offer a sort of invitation to move from experimental writing to experimental thinking, which is the tendency shared by the pieces composing this issue.

That said, first things first. It's been months and months now, enough to go mad, enough to lose all hope, enough to feel burnt, to then to realize this is how it is: hopeless madness slowly burning brown bodies. And it keeps going: enough to wonder how it was before? enough to feel a nasty familiarity, enough to finally realize there hasn't been anything else in a long, loong, loooooong while but occupation, killing, theft. More than 500 years. It's been centuries and centuries now. So, this isn't new. This is the same they did to my (Ali) ancestors in 1521, also displaced, killed and colonized, is the same they do to the Zapatistas today, or to Rajinjas in Myanmar, or too many other peoples through colonial history to the point that it appears **uneventful**...

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And yet, once again, like interrupting a sigh from , we feel someone else's blood moistening our skin, trying to clear it makes us look down to "suddenly" realize, to witness now what we swore to never let happen again: genocide. Palestinian brothers and sisters are assassinated by war crimes every day, be it intentional attacks on civilians, chemical weapons, torture, execution, bombing of schools and hospitals, starvation

under the terrorist regime of Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli Zionist project, enthusiastically sponsored by ex-US President Joe Biden. The empires rejoice among corpses. They have been carefully curating this pile of corpses since the first Intifada, but they can't take credit for it. Can't be seen celebrating. They have to pretend (un)common sense, or at least try to. So, the first tactic of power is to justify their actions. Despite efforts from nations like South Africa, Algeria, or Brazil the International Court of Justice has found it "very hard" to prove genocide because, according to their guidelines, this requires the identification of a genocidal intention. After more than a hundred thousand deaths and several war crimes, all Israel received was a soft recommendation to try not to commit genocide. So all the killers have to do is to say that it wasn't their intention and voila! Genocide disappears! Or at least that is the game the international organisms have been playing so far. But let's not get mad at them, this is their actual job, to protect the interest of imperial forces, capital and whiteness by helping them arrange the logistics of their pile of corpses. The rhetoric of intentionality is at the bottom of the claiming of white innocence, according to this logic it is the intention that gives the proper dimension to the actions, thus lack of intentionality changes the nature of the actions, just like in the way some scholars understand racist unconscious bias, as something they can't help, and henceforth are not responsible for. White mythology requires the fantasy of a place in the human mind where actions and intentions could be disconnected and only willingness, understood as expressed explicitly and verbally, can constitute responsibility. Same logic for the pile, you can't blame them for killing Palestinians, they can't help it, plus it wasn't their intention, it just happened. And thus the world continues to witness it because it can't be established that it is genocide. But even if it was, clearly and officially, the International Court of Justice or the United Nations show no interest in stopping the US and Israel. They don't even have the infrastructure or procedures established to do it, which just proves it has never existed in the spectrum of the possibilities they would consider. As we can see, once justification can't be sustained, the second tactic doesn't exist, is just cynicism. Why would they stop genocide if it represents only financial and geopolitical improvement for them? And shit keeps going...

And going...

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Atrocities caravan before our eyes. Whether we look at Palestine, Myanmar, or Sudan, the possibilities seem reduced to holding our own bodies in disbelief and despair. Facing this rigid reality is paralyzing. Unsure what to do, one thing becomes clear: rules can't help. Rules seem to be working to perpetuate the current model and prevent it from changing. Thus, International organisms can't help. What should we do when the mechanisms set to protect us are telling us they can't protect us? The events of the world are presented to us contained in a rigid form, and hopelessness and helplessness become second nature, the air we breathe, the stink from the pile of corpses. Rigidity has made us unable to even imagine the way out. All this seems well beyond the ways we write, so at least we must wonder: what's the relevance of experimenting with form in academic writing during genocidal times?

In the introduction of our first issue, we explained that colonization relies on the production of knowledge as one of the neocolonial mechanisms that allow the reproduction and perpetuation of the colonial order animated by capitalism (Liebert, Lara & Carlson 2021). In the same issue, I (Lara 2021) pointed to the specific writing technologies used within psychology to guarantee a production of knowledge at the service of colonization and in charge of establishing the 'fleshless writing' as the legit writing. If colonial power makes rigid the structures we live under, if knowledge is the legitimate voice to challenge the priorities of such order, then the rigidity of the form of that knowledge is the very trench in which we happen to be, from where we can do something, by writing something.

Fascist regimes colonizing and taking the territory by their settlers originate a terror that paralyzes. They

create structures of form that restrict movement and change, this applies in all levels of power, from the border in Gaza operating as apartheid limit, to France still monopolizing the economy of several African countries, to the institutional regulations that allow gender and race gaps as normalized in western world, and all the other inconvenient regulations all the way to guidelines for 'proper' writing in academic knowledge production - still carrying its archaic epistemological commitments performed through violence and exclusion of voices. When we play with ideas, with the words we use to tell these ideas, we are not engaging in frivolous playfulness or the peruse of coolness. Experimental writing is not cool, it is necessary for theoretical, political, and ontological reasons. Morton (2012), one of the proponents of Object-Oriented -Ontology (OOO) has explained the relations among objects that are established in poetry open the possibilities of causality through aesthetic manifestations. This means that ontological relations are only modifiable on their sensual qualities, the ones that we - and other objects - perceive or relate to. Ontology opens by the aesthetic side. Reality changes first in the form, in what is manifested to us. Reality itself can be rewritten and explored in all its possibilities through the aesthetic realm. When events are addressed in the realm of the aesthetic, a type of negotiation of reality that can escape the rigidity of the mechanisms of power is possible. What do the pile of corpses tell us after Refaat Alareer (2004) wrote, "If I must die"? What's its smell after dropping flowers? How does it look? Big enough? For those of us concerned with the writing of the production of knowledge, the practice of subverting forms established as mainstream by the interests of power - thus capital, thus whiteness - is a politically powerful resource that can lead to a production of knowledge that puts at the forefront the political commitment of the transformation of reality. That is why experimenting with form in the production of knowledge is politically relevant on an ontological level. It transforms the forms of the production of knowledge by breaking the leash of the political agenda on our praxis.

We need experimental writing to feel, embody the possibilities of imagination, to inaugurate other paths of thinking, unlikely ones, to make academia a place not only for the production of thoughts, but for the production of new and validation of ancient systems of thinking and (k)new gestures in thought, and overall a new aesthetics of thinking. Experimental writing is the denial of a straightforward relation between material conditions in the world and ideal elaborations to explain it. Experimental writing is the rebellion on the signifying side of the signified. It is turning Oxford into Babel and setting it on fire. Is the strong political claim that we won't take this reality without reshaping it, without opening it up to its ultimate alternative implications. We won't take the given forms of knowledge production without pointing to its relations with the colonial project. This world will always be ours and the wisdom of it will always be written by us, even if signing from your pile of corpses. From Palestine to Maynmar, to Sudan we write otherwise for you, we play with form to reshape the form the world is told, to make implications clearer, to reshape the reality through reclaiming and rewriting it. Experimenting with one line at a time. Playing a tune to word by word. Until this looks and vibes otherwise. Until their rules, their bombs, their allies, their whiteness, their capital, their cynicism pile together to replace our corpses.

Can you imagine?

To imagine is a gift of space existing beyond the focus of meeting a basic need for safe water, safe shelter, safe food, safe being but it is also haunting too, because it brings us face-to-face with the unknown, just like experimental writing. How am I gonna write this? What's with the method? And the legitimacy of the knowledge? Uff... It is a limp into the void, or better a limp into darkness... away from clarity, light and the human. It is precisely by disrupting the certainties underlying our knowledge production that we keep it away from uncritically protecting such certainties and the interests they serve. Moving to the unknown and into the dark is a political responsibility here. Glissant knew

the rhetoric of the enlightenment, clarity, shedding light upon is meant to dazzle -immobile-, and offered the logic of the "opaque" to contra rest, or as he calls it, the right to opacity, as the right to ambiguity, to not come across clearly and well defined into the terms of the world that are the terms of colonial violence and terror. Opacity is a way of writing that Glissant created as a form of liberation of the structures. Liberation is precedent, but the forms around current violence, the words, the tones, the talking pressures in such a way that these precedents seem unrelated to this reality, so f a r away that seems another world, unprecedented, but it isn't, it just looks like that, until we play with it. So, let's unpack the toys our authors brought to play with us:

As we've said, at the center of the current tragedies is the need to imagine alternatives. Sonia knows this. Her composition uses a collage technique to offer a glimpse of dreams, daydreams and nightmares shared by activists self-identified as women, gender expansive, and/or queer of colour in relation to their liberation fantasies. Of special interest are Sonia's remarks on the power and potential of the "unknowns" presented within these liberation dreams, representing simultaneously the defeat of hope and the presentification of the future leading to action, as an "I don't know" comes always followed by a "yet". What is left for us when we have lost the capacity to imagine anything outside capitalism? Can imagination still help when, as Sonia finds out, "the imagined worlds still had settler nations and this US government in their wildest dreams!". This brilliant journey through the fantasies of activists that belong to a long line of fighters, abolitionists, anticolonial souls are the testimony that "action finds and builds new realms for the imaginable", we just need a quick look to history to remember that liberation is not an otherworldly abstraction, but the actual precedent of our current conditions. For imagination of the future to be so screwed means that our minds are being entertained by something else in the present that keeps them busy enough to turn the possibilities into unknowns. That's attention and Amit knows that. His notion of diagrammatic attention is a shoot at the core of the mechanisms of colonization that modulate our most intimate functions, on proposing the hacking of a cognitive function that has been tamed by racial capitalism, Amit targets the very possibility of liberating thinking from its ties while theorizing mediation and (im)mediacy as the role of the subject in art consumption under racial capitalism. At the center of his thinking is the question of 'how attention relates (im)mediately to the value form of racial capital?' Amit explores the mechanisms through which our very cognitive capacity is contained and redirected by demands of capital, "Attention ecologies are targets and instruments totalize by maximizing the heterogeneity of complex ecologies through command (be creative!), duty (be productive!), judgment (you lack!), and debt (be guilty for what you owe!)." Of main concern here is the role of Art and its complicities and articulation with attention, its role as mediator that ameliorates and legitimizes racial capital and redirects desiring flows. Amit ultimately proposes "Diagrammatic attention as an awry method of emancipation and revolutionary becoming." How rad is that?! The colonization of attention is certainly a drive in the production of knowledge and a main anchor to keep our procedures rigid. Rigid thinking, rigid methods, rigid knowledge. Priya knows there is a huge need to start moving things around, and so she does on explaining finger millet ecologies, playing with images, Priya moves an image from her collage, from the top-left corner down to the bottom-center of the whole image, just to see what happens with the image now, what new ideas do the reconfiguration of material reality suggests, until new connections between the sides and everything around them begin to show themselves. The graphic experimentation is an outstanding gesture of this piece because it articulates the movement from experimental writing to experimental thinking with an experimental method. A derivative game that turns images into theoretical arguments is a very appealing contribution to methodology in decolonial thinking that should at least be recognized. We also find the insights on the opposition between expressing oneself and the production of knowledge a very powerful argument to push experimental writing and righting as a political tool in the production of knowledge. Moving around and playing with the images accomplished Priya's task to "dislocate cognitive routes" and "unstitch ways of thinking". Together, our three pieces begin to expand and locate

with precision the current implications of colonization in our capacities to think, to do and to know. In this issue there is a discussion and doing of the altering of cognitive capacities – imagination, attention, thinking – to redirect the type of information they collect of the world; practices such as dreaming or art consumption or planting seeds turn narrow by the impoverishment of cognitive possibilities, and by the rigidity of information processing and sense making. All that rigidity, to be smashed.

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