

# When the World Collapses in Palestine

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## Abstract

Engaging with the ongoing collapse of lifeworlds experienced in Palestine, this article reinforces the urgent need to eliminate colonial grammars of differentiation in order to reinscribe life and place in a rapidly warming world. By throwing the violent material and discursive productions that have attempted to engender the social and material death of Palestinians and Palestine into crisis, this intertextual reading of Palestinian literature aims to transgress the system of representations that have long rendered Palestine, as with other “zones of nonbeing,” the materiality upon which colonial and imperial accumulation take shape. The article first delves into critiques of the Anthropocene, a concept traditionally centered on a proverbial undifferentiated humanity’s global environmental impact. These discussions can aid our understanding of the catastrophic colonial present. Attention is then drawn to the vital question of who is even considered human in the Anthropocene, drawing on the poetics and politics of Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmud Darwish, Edward Said, and others to reassert the humanity that prevails in the collapse. Finally, the essay turns to recent conversations among climate thinkers to consider the interlocking architectures of Palestinian liberation and climate futures. The aim is to challenge conventional definitions of humanism, demonstrating how the Palestinian experience can both serve as a material allegory for broader crises like planetary climatic collapse and scrutinize the universality of narratives that homogenize ongoing genocide and ruination.

## Keywords:

Palestine; humanism; Anthropocene; climate change; ecocide.

The world is watching with horror as the people of Gaza and greater Palestine endure a relentless genocide that will reverberate in life, body, and land for generations.<sup>1</sup> As the sky falls with a torrential “rain of rockets” and the world’s attention is drawn to this small strip of land, there lies an undercurrent of themes intricately tied to forms of planetary collapse experienced by many across the world.<sup>2</sup> The plight of Palestinians, especially in Gaza, is increasingly positioned as not just a localized conflict, but a vivid representation of the enduring struggles against wider waves of colonization and imperialism. Palestinian liberation has long transcended resistance to the Israeli state alone. Indeed, Palestinian liberation predates the Israeli state itself.<sup>3</sup>

For generations, the question of who gets to define the human experience and who is relegated to the margins has become manifestly present in both the tangible, catastrophic violence in Palestine and the now existential threats of planetary climatic changes. In our present moment, while genocide rages with no end in sight, large climate summits like the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change’s (UNFCCC) COP28 (Conference of the Parties 28) have met in Dubai and the Summit of the Future in New York, severely limiting freedom of assembly amid normalization of Israeli crimes against humanity. An organization like the UNFCCC that simultaneously fails to institutionally report military emissions is but one colossal gap in planetary justice.<sup>4</sup> To engage in discussions of climate change during a dark colonial present means to rethink the proverbial “species marching in unison toward biospheric mastery.”<sup>5</sup> Recent debates on humanism and universality in a time of differentiated planetary warming, in conversation with decades of allegorical Palestinian literature, can indeed aid our understanding of the catastrophic colonial present and serve as a “political cartography” and a “tool of direct national mobilization” in a warming world.<sup>6</sup> By throwing into crisis the violent historicity and discursive productions that have attempted to engender the (social and material) death of Palestinians and Palestine, this intertextual reading aims to transgress the system of representations that have long rendered Palestine, as with other “zones of nonbeing,” the materiality upon which colonial accumulation takes shape.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 1. Civil society gathering at COP28 calling for climate decolonization, Gaza ceasefire, and an end to environmental apartheid. Dubai, UAE, 3 December 2023. Photo by author.



Figure 2. Gaza ceasefire gathering at COP28. Dubai, UAE, 3 December 2023. Photo by author.

## Colonial Echoes in a Warming World

In a polemical 2015 essay, Roy Scranton proposes that it is time to learn to die in the Anthropocene.<sup>8</sup> The Anthropocene is the name of a proposed geological epoch, in response to planetary climatic changes, in which humans writ large are said to be a geological force “so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature.”<sup>9</sup> Emphasizing that the dominant way of life, and the structures of capitalist militarism, are unsustainable in the face of climatic changes, Scranton argues that we must “learn how to die” to confront the reality that our civilization – its systems, values, and ways of living – need to undergo radical transformation or even collapse in order to adapt effectively to the Anthropocene.

Yet if we interpret the differentiated experiences of planetary changes through the viewpoint of colonial differentiation, the universality of the “Anthropos” – denoting culpability of the entire human species – invokes profound critique, as has been discussed at length for over a decade.<sup>10</sup> The slip into an undifferentiated monolithic humanity erases forms of socialized differentiation as the human subject is constituted as universal and planetary. Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg object to the notion that climate change is inherently “anthropogenic” in nature – all humans do not instinctively alter the climate on a planetary scale.<sup>11</sup> Rather, they argue that industrialized and late capitalist actors of the Global North, particularly those invested in petrocapiatalism and its enduring imperial geographies, are historically responsible for nearly two-thirds of carbon emissions and a majority of contemporary planetary warming.

The move away from “humanity as an undifferentiated whole” similarly prompts Jason Moore to propose the term “Capitalocene,” imputing the global capitalist

economic regimes, and Donna Haraway to suggest “Plantationocene,” to impute forms of intensive, extractive, and exploitative agricultural and labor practices.<sup>12</sup> Yet still the Anthropocene is not a collateral externality of modernity, but rather the very telos of colonial projects: to render the earth and its subsurface under the domain of man. But not just any man.

Engaging with a broad context of Arab anticolonial struggles for justice, decolonization, and resistance to the imperial status quo, we can tie recent debates around who is considered human in the Anthropocene to the end of worlds experienced by Palestinians. Climate thinkers like Andreas Malm help us consider the numerous connections forged between the crises of planetary collapse and the colonization of Palestine, or as Malm likes to refer to the destruction of the climate, the “planetary version of the Nakba.”<sup>13</sup> Palestine, as an idea and “material allegory,” represents more in the imaginary of liberation movements than the sum of its land.<sup>14</sup> Step foot into a Palestine protest around the world and you will often hear the chant, “We are all Palestinians.” For climate thinkers and representatives, like Greta Thunberg, to center the question of Palestine in a moment of planetary collapse is perhaps a precise intention of Palestinian literature that works to excavate those rendered beyond the normative frames of the human. Yet beyond simply unsettling these norms, Palestinian literature denounces the sort of fatalism promoted by Scranton’s essay, teaching us instead how to live in the end-times, how to resist continuous colonial extraction and dispossession, and how to create more just futures.

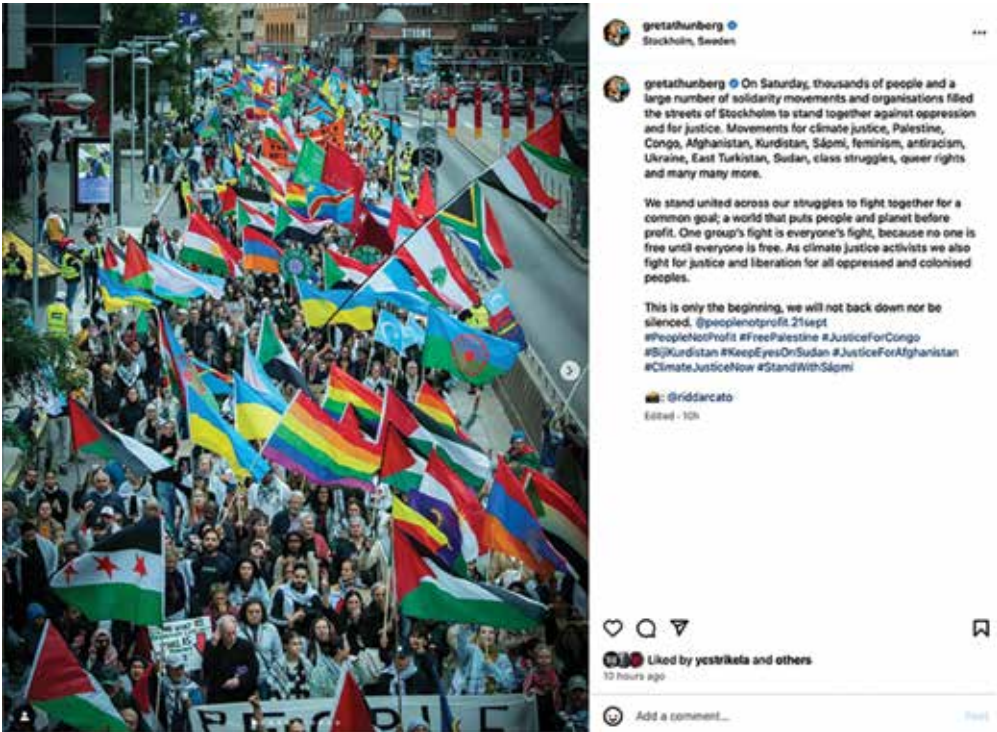


Figure 3. Social media post by Greta Thunberg. Instagram, 23 September 2024. Screenshot by author.

## Who is Human in the Anthropocene?

Taken-for-granted understandings of the human have been dominated by exclusionary forms of thought that ordered “Man” into subcategories of human, subhuman, and inhuman, or what Paul Gilroy terms “infrahuman.”<sup>15</sup> As Sylvia Wynter formulates this division, “Man1” was set to represent a rational political subject, emerging out of the Renaissance as *homo politicus* and remade in response to the colonial encounter with the already inhabited geographies of the Americas.<sup>16</sup> “Man2” is a revision of humanness that later gave rise to the liberal *homo oeconomicus*, predicated on Darwin’s colonial episteme dividing the naturally selected and the racialized “deselected.” Both Men have come to serve as overrepresentations of the human, “producing racialized/non-European/nonwhite/New World/Indigenous/African peoples as, first, fallen untrue Christians (in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) and, later, as biologically defective and damned (most markedly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries).”<sup>17</sup> Put another way, the normative sphere of European humanism was defined against those classified as natural resources: fossilized nature (the Indigenous) and fossilized energy (the enslaved).<sup>18</sup> Race is materialized via inhuman material property (Indigenous land, chattel salary, personhood, labor) as the colonized body politic is positioned at a physical, “biological minimum,” lacking the “qualified life” afforded to others.<sup>19</sup>

Racial grammars, as we see in Palestine, are severely materially consequential. With this recognition, many have traced the profound material implications of the development of European humanism. The exclusionary and racialized form of humanism proffered in colonial thought is predicated upon a “politics of nonlife” or “zone of nonbeing” where imperial geographies map on to the division of the human into subcategories.<sup>20</sup> These forms of material differentiation render certain geographies human and inhuman, the latter of which feature anti-Blackness and anti-Brownness as the ground – the materiality upon which colonial accumulation, often via extraction, takes shape.<sup>21</sup> In other words, “metaphysical designations [the imposition of racial subjectivities on colonial subjects] have geophysical effects, establishing anti-Black and Brown gravities as the affective architecture of extraction.”<sup>22</sup> For Katherine McKittrick, the mine and the plantation serve as two central social institutions of extraction. These material geographies “reified global segregations through ‘damming’ the spaces long occupied by man’s human others.”<sup>23</sup> In this formulation, occupants of geographies marked as uninhabitable are cast as irrational and “designated as incongruous with humanness.”

Anticolonial thinkers like Wynter, McKittrick, and Kathryn Yusoff, as well as Palestinian thinkers like Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmud Darwish, and Edward Said, thereby foreground the Columbian encounter and final collapse of Andalusia of 1492, crystallizing the delivery of Europe’s colonial projects, as a key moment in the development of humanism, or the overrepresentation of the Western bourgeois conception of what it means to be human. Many of these contemporary thinkers build on Frantz Fanon’s stretching of Western modes of analysis and his searing critique of humanism to unsettle the coloniality of humanism, reckon with the materialities

of the humanist liberal subject, and recover colonial subjects (and their geographies) racialized as inferior, subhuman, and inhuman. For Yusoff, “only by unsettling the normative frames of the human as an episteme of universality (that thereby continues to claim an expansionist [colonial] geography and refuses to acknowledge its history of inhumane acts through which such a figure was constituted) can the inhuman be encountered in the full sense of its existence.”<sup>24</sup> In this manner, the current crises of climatic changes can be understood as an “intensification of environmental change imposed on Indigenous peoples by colonialism.”<sup>25</sup>

Zoe Todd ponders, in the context of Indigenous genocide in North America:

What does it mean to have a reciprocal discourse on catastrophic end times and apocalyptic environmental change in a place where, over the last five hundred years, Indigenous peoples faced (and face) the end of worlds with the violent incursion of colonial ideologies and actions? What does it mean to hold, in simultaneous tension, stories of the Anthropocene in the past, present, and future?<sup>26</sup>

Todd and Heather Davis further consider what it was like for these Indigenous peoples to face the end of their respective lifeworlds and encounter contemporary apocalyptic discourses about climatic change.<sup>27</sup> But just as importantly, many survived the end of lifeworlds and their resistance in the face of world-ending violence can teach others about living in a period of genocide and colonial-induced violence.

## How to Live in the Post-Apocalypse

Everywhere that the inhumane is imposed, it is resisted by a humanness that highlights the dark contours of the humanist subject in its partiality.

The Inhumanities - Kathryn Yusoff<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps within the question of Palestine lies an answer to the plight of subaltern people trapped within the proverbial tankers heating up under the searing sun. In the pages of Palestinian literature, and for the over forty, and the likely more than one hundred thousand Palestinians murdered in Gaza this past year, the end of the world has already proceeded. If the question is how to survive the end of the world, surely Palestinians have a thing or two to say about living in the end-times. For nearly a century, Western imperialism and Zionist colonization, reaching their most recent apotheosis in Gaza, have marked the beginning of the end of Palestinian lifeworlds.

Palestinian steadfastness (*sumud*), then, is not about learning to die in the afterworld but surviving and resisting the post-apocalypse, a continuous reality that has not abated since 1948 and previous colonial instantiations. As Yusoff’s epigraph above denotes, Palestinians, simply by existing, always already resist the partial humanist subject that rendered them and their land the material ground upon which Zionist colonization was constructed.<sup>29</sup> In this sense, the connection between the Palestinian plight and other

crises of exceptional or slow violence becomes not an allegorical stretch but indeed a “material allegory” rooted in the ongoing colonial encounter.<sup>30</sup> Some, often of the Zionist bent, may wish to provincialize the question of Palestine and bracket it off as a religious or ethnic conflict, or even render it a canonical or proverbial chapter of anti-Jewish history to legitimize the replacement of one collective continuance with that of another in the name of the divine.<sup>31</sup> Liberationist thinkers, however, have long drawn inspiration from the ways Palestinians, as with other Indigenous groups, have confronted colonial invasion by adapting to and resisting shared tenants of colonial projects: displacement, genocide, and ecocide.<sup>32</sup>

Leading Palestinian thinkers have, through conspicuous effort, placed Palestine at the heart of world history, beyond a biblical cartography, as an allegory of oppression and suffering.<sup>33</sup> Plotted at the axis of colonialism, empire, and capitalism, or what Amitav Ghosh has deemed the “great derangement,”<sup>34</sup> the Palestinian catastrophe and calls for liberation now feature prominently in movements for climate justice, racial justice, and the socialist project writ large. This is precisely because of the efforts of Palestinian writers like Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmud Darwish, and Edward Said to render Palestine a symbol of humanity. “It became apparent to me that I saw in Palestine a complete human symbol,” Kanafani explains in an interview published posthumously.<sup>35</sup> “So when I write about a Palestinian family, I am in reality writing about a human experience.

There is not an event in the world that is not represented in the Palestinian tragedy. And when I depict the suffering of the Palestinians, I am in fact exploring the Palestinian as a symbol of misery in the entire world.” Kanafani’s explicit acknowledgment here furnishes his writings as a tool of resistance for all those denuded of humanity and struggling against greater structures of domination.



Figure 4. Gen Zayin, *Heaven Cannot Be Bought with Blood*, poster, Haifa, 5 March 2023. Photo by author.

In his poem “The ‘Red Indian’s’ Penultimate Speech to the White Man,” Darwish makes a parallel move toward solidarity with the millions of Indigenous peoples of “Turtle Earth” (North America), beginning with an epigraph from the Duwamish Chief Seattle: “Did I say, The Dead? There is no death here, there is only a change of worlds.”<sup>36</sup> Lyrically affirming the linkage of colonially dominated peoples via the adopted voice of the “Red Indian,” Darwish instantiates how the violent ecological ruination experienced by Indigenous peoples of the Americas is inextricably entangled with the colonially induced transformation of lifeworlds endured in Palestine. The incursion of a structure of elimination and demographic replacement of precursory peoples is inherently an environmental injustice through its ecological forms of domination.<sup>37</sup>

Edward Said’s insistence on the inseparability of the Palestinian cause from the broader framework of colonial and imperial designs highlights its centrality in global discourses on justice, rights, and self-determination. Said’s *The Question of Palestine* renders the Palestinian experience of deracination part of a larger mechanism of Orientalism, with the Zionist project predicated upon, not divorced from, European colonial discourses and practices of domination.<sup>38</sup> As Elias Khoury writes:

*The Question of Palestine* is a concrete political application of his Orientalism. Putting the idea of Palestine in the heart of world history gives it a universal dimension and makes it a reference point for justice and freedom. The Zionist conquest, according to Said, is part of a global European colonial project, in which the Zionist movement adopted the colonial discourses and practices.<sup>39</sup>

Palestine is not just a regional issue; it represents a microcosm of struggles against domination, dispossession, and misrepresentation. John Collins therefore ponders, echoing the common activist call: “Are we all becoming Palestinians?”<sup>40</sup>

This collective, Palestinian-led move toward allegorizing is key to understanding why Palestine remains central to today’s planetary crises and liberation movements. This is why Collins envisions *Global Palestine* and Eyal Weizman visualizes the *Hollow Land* as a site and laboratory where the ongoing forces of colonial domination crystalize, experiment on the Indigenous population, and boomerang back to other locales.<sup>41</sup> The case of Israeli carceral technologies and state surveillance practices deployed beyond Palestine in Ferguson, Missouri, marks just one example.<sup>42</sup> Yet these practices are not simply met by passivity but renew calls for revolutionary thinking and praxis.<sup>43</sup>

## **Planetary Collapse and Palestinian Literature**

In a time of rapid planetary collapse and intensifying climatic shocks, the very reading of literature changes as we search for compelling stories about adapting to violent ecological change.<sup>44</sup> As Saidiya Hartman poignantly asks of the archive of Atlantic slavery, “How does one rewrite the chronicle of a death foretold and anticipated, as a collective biography of dead subjects, as a counter-history of the human, as the practice of freedom?”<sup>45</sup> Palestinian literature has attempted to reclaim life from the violent



chronicles that stripped Palestinians of humanity. For climate thinkers to draw upon the case of Palestine and read between the lines of its literature stories about ecological change is not beyond the intent of Palestinian authors but perhaps their precise telos.

Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* figures prominently in the imaginaries of climate thinkers.<sup>46</sup> Detailing the harrowing journey of three Palestinian refugees as they traverse the scorching desert in an empty water tank of a truck to find a better life in Kuwait, Kanafani's novella reveals the traumas of displacement as the refugees confront physical and symbolic suffocation. Ultimately, their quest for freedom and opportunity ends in tragedy, underscoring the human costs of political conflict and exile. Andreas Malm reads this story as a "material allegory" of warming, writing that "there is no more famous scene in Palestinian literature than the three men perishing in *Men in the Sun*. Can there likewise be a more powerful image of the fate of subaltern people in a warming world?"<sup>47</sup> Kanafani's refugees in *Men in the Sun* highlight a universal plight as they bring the question of what it means to be human to the table.<sup>48</sup>

Concerned less with the actors that caused their misery and more about how they navigate the end of their world, Kanafani constructs these men under the sun as a warning to others. These wandering individuals have left the homeland only to find themselves locked inside a cellar of death constricted from all sides. The geophysical forces shaping their journey – the infrastructures of oil, including the imperial borders of Iraq and Kuwait, and at its core colonial dispossession and displacement – are plights that refugees the world over face. What defines the human then, for Kanafani, is precarity and vulnerability, especially when the individual is disjointed from a greater collective. Those living at the margins of society and featuring prominently in Kanafani's oeuvre – refugees, the infirm, the maimed – refuse to be the inhuman ground upon which colonial extraction and accumulation take place, lest they end up like the characters Abu Qais, 'Asad, and Marwan on a garbage heap in the middle of the warming desert. While these men perish without even a knock on the side of the tanker, Kanafani's pessimistic call for resistance here alludes, for Malm, to a "logical, as yet unrealized possibility: that of resistance, of breaking out of the confines before it is too late, or, with Benjamin, of snatching 'humanity at the last moment from the catastrophe looming at every turn'."<sup>49</sup> The novella itself performs the knocking, enlisting the reader into the witnessing. The possibility of breaking out exists and Kanafani repudiates the passivity and fatalism of the disjointed individual. Drawing on the threat of extinction, "the possibility of their own erasure from history," Kanafani compels the reader to avert this fate.<sup>50</sup>

In his later works, Kanafani develops a clearer vision for an internationalist struggle. As Bashir Abu-Manneh explains, "A new set of values is introduced to undermine this suffocating status quo: actively humanist, hopeful, and searching for solutions. The 'why' of *Men in the Sun* and the 'when and where' of *All That's Left* change to 'how' in *Returning to Haifa*."<sup>51</sup> For Kanafani's protagonist Sa'id in *Returning to Haifa*, visiting his dispossessed home in Haifa forces the reader to recognize a shared understanding of being human.<sup>52</sup> The story follows a Palestinian couple, Sa'id and Safiyya, as they return to their former home in Haifa two decades after fleeing during the Nakba of 1948. Upon their return, they discover that their son, Khaldun, whom

they were forced to leave behind as a baby during their escape, has been raised by a Jewish woman, Miriam, who lost her own son in the Holocaust. Renamed Dov by Miriam, their son was socialized as a Zionist and enlisted in the Israeli military. The novella delves into themes of identity and loss as both families grapple with painful histories and the question of rightful belonging.

Speaking to his son Khaldun, Sa'id explains:

I'm decreeing that in the final analysis you're a human being, Jewish or whatever you want. You must come to understand things as they should be understood. I know that one day you'll realize these things, and that you'll realize that the greatest crime any human being can commit, whoever he may be, is to believe even for one moment that the weakness and mistakes of others give him the right to exist at their expense and justify his own mistakes and crimes.<sup>53</sup>

Turning to his wife, Sa'id adds,

Do you know what the homeland is, Safiyya? The homeland is where none of this can happen ... I'm looking for the true Palestine, the Palestine that's more than memories, more than peacock feathers, more than a son, more than scars written by bullets on the stairs.

For Kanafani, humanity starts with those most vulnerable, most precarious, most defeated and disenchanting. It is precisely in the moment of weakness that humanity comes forth – that the titular character in *Umm Sa'd* nurtures the masses and 'Ad, Shaddad, and Murthid in *al-Bab*, confronting death, plant the seeds of life for the next generation.<sup>54</sup> The homeland then is a place where human weakness is not exploited, where no human is dominated. The idea of Palestine, the homeland, the paradise, al-Andalus – despite ongoing epistemic erasure and violent displacement from the land – continues to persist through the generations.<sup>55</sup>

## **Toward a Poetics and Politics of Living Through Planetary Collapse**

While the present moment begins with the acknowledgment that the end of worlds has always already arrived, it is not to suggest that heroic poetics and politics have not enabled those rendered other-than-human or *homines sacri* to resist colonial enclosure.<sup>56</sup> Climate thinkers thereby seek out the revolutionary thinking embedded in Palestinian literature toward a “sense of the positive transformability of the present” and its emancipatory possibilities.<sup>57</sup>

For example, in her Edward Said Memorial Lecture, Naomi Klein reads within the violence of othering and the denuding of humanity captured by Edward Said and other Palestinian writers, a lesson for today's warming world:

The state of longing for a radically altered homeland – a home that may not even exist any longer – is something that is being rapidly,

and tragically, globalized .... If we don't demand radical change we are headed for a whole world of people searching for a home that no longer exists. Said helps us imagine what that might look like as well. He helped to popularize the Arabic word *sumud* ("to stay put, to hold on"): that steadfast refusal to leave one's land despite the most desperate eviction attempts and even when surrounded by continuous danger. It's a word most associated with places like Hebron and Gaza, but it could be applied equally today to residents of coastal Louisiana who have raised their homes up on stilts so that they don't have to evacuate, or to Pacific Islanders whose slogan is "We are not drowning. We are fighting."<sup>58</sup>

Klein's optimism, then, surfaces through "climate *sumud*" – a steadfastness inherent in grassroots resistance toward the interconnected forces of colonially-induced violence, from petrochemical extraction to militarization. While some may charge Klein with appropriation of Palestine's unique mode of survivance – and surely *sumud* means something more for Gazans and Palestinians writ large under genocidal siege than for residents of coastal Louisiana facing a slower form of violence – she is quick to acknowledge that although "Edward Said was no tree hugger," Palestine's colonial occupation is deeply imbricated with other forms of exceptional and slow violence and at the very least has much to teach those searching for better worlds.

Max Ajl's world-systemic call for a People's Green New Deal similarly takes stimulus from the Palestinian resistance for land, liberation, and return, "the most widely supported struggle for justice."<sup>59</sup> Appealing for a renewed defense of national sovereignty, Ajl turns to Palestine, and Kanafani's history of the 1936–39 revolt in Palestine, to underscore how the nation's role as a central political-social vehicle, only via class analysis and revolutionary strategy, can carry resistance to oppression.<sup>60</sup> As Franz Fanon writes: "National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is alone capable of giving us an international dimension ... It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness establishes itself and thrives."<sup>61</sup> The nation here is conceived as the foundation of politics in internationalist terms.<sup>62</sup> The resistance of an oppressed people is justified because the nation for colonized peoples is not an inherently oppressive (that is, nationalist) entity but a "democratically constituted collective struggling against social and political structures of domination."<sup>63</sup>

This distinction is made clear in *Men in the Sun*. The struggle of the refugees to transcend the colonially imposed borders of Iraq and Kuwait, a partition predicated no less on the oil interests of imperial powers, represents the imperative for Palestinians to develop a political strategy that comes to terms with, exploits, and subverts the state system they incarnate. As opposed to the anti-humanist Zionist model of self-determination, isolating itself with militarized walls and fences, the Palestinian form of national consciousness that Kanafani begins to develop through the stark death of the three refugees is a humanist call for universal freedom and justice. Their final act of death under the sun enlists the reader into a rallying call to "break out of the confines before it is too late."<sup>64</sup> The national question and right to sovereignty, maintained

in the global imaginary by the case of Palestine, remains central to revolutionary transformations. The prescription for decolonization then serves as the reappropriation of land and life – the recovery of humanity for those rendered inhuman.

Andreas Malm’s recent polemic *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, urging climate movements to sabotage fossil fuel infrastructure, also turns to Kanafani’s history of the 1936–39 revolt in Palestine to gain insight from “the pioneer of pipeline sabotage ... the Palestinian resistance.”<sup>65</sup> Many symbolic acts of the anti-imperial revolt in Palestine were oriented around the British oil pipeline running from the oil fields of Kirkuk, Iraq, to the Haifa refineries. Documenting each instance of Palestinian rebels blowing up the oil pipeline, Kanafani explains: “The British were unable to defend this vital pipeline, and admitted as much, that the ‘pipe’ as the Palestinian Arab peasants called it, was enshrined in the folklore which glorified acts of popular heroism.”<sup>66</sup> These early attacks on pipelines would not be the last for Palestinian militants. In 1972, a Palestinian group set oil tankers in the Netherlands on fire, while in Italy PFLP members blew up an oil tank. In 1974, members of the PFLP also attacked a Shell oil refinery in Pulau Bukom, Singapore, serving as a warning to monopolistic oil companies and imperialism writ large. The group noted in a statement dropped from the boat they seized that the explosion was set off “for the solidarity with Vietnam revolutionary [sic] people, and for making revolutionary [sic] situation after considering the situation of today’s oil crisis.”<sup>67</sup>



Figure 5. “Disrupt Fossil Fuels for Gaza” protest in El Segundo, California, 11 August 2024. Photo by author.

More recently, climate movements across the world have aligned with Palestinian liberation movements to target fossil fuel infrastructure, among other infrastructures contributing to weapons manufacturing or direct land exploitation. Outside of Los Angeles, for instance, dozens of climate activists recently encircled Chevron's El Segundo Refinery to protest the company's investments in Israeli oil and gas production and consumption, and its subsequent use in weapons manufacturing, especially amid energy apartheid. Climate movements and thinkers like Malm therefore draw on the "material allegory" of the Palestinian resistance movement, keeping works like Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* in mind, to denounce fatalism and accept civil disobedience, property destruction, and sabotage as a mode of mass social change.

## When the World Collapses in Palestine

Is there a country that will accept me? All you find are detailed reports of wars, earthquakes, and floods in the newspapers. Perhaps God is angry because of what humans are doing to Earth. Perhaps Earth is pregnant with Apocalypse!

Mahmud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*<sup>68</sup>

The interlocking architectures of Palestinian liberation and climate futures is robust and revolutionary. Against fatalism, the notably existentialist poetics and politics of Palestine have much to offer contemporary movements surviving amid planetary collapse. First, learning to live, and not die, in the Anthropocene must be predicated upon a cessation to genocide and a problematization of the human. Second, we must delineate and unsettle the ongoing material ascriptions of colonial grammars of differentiation – especially if we are to understand how the colonial geographies that materially enforced exclusionary humanism persist in a world facing the reverberated consequences of accumulation on classed and racialized grounds. Finally, we must endeavor to redeem fragments of the past from the triumphalist "bulldozers" of history that long claimed sole voice, illuminating the revolutionary commitments embedded in a practice of dynamic remembrance.<sup>69</sup> Ultimately, what Kanafani, Darwish, and other anticolonial thinkers offer is a vision for a decolonized humanist subject rooted in place.

And yet, it bears an explicit proclamation that just as we mark Palestine as a figurative, universal allegory to stand in for collapse and resistance, it is a place with a people who are living and dying and whose current and historical catastrophic status necessitates immediate, urgent collective action to cease the forces of genocidal ruination before our often bourgeois concerns with wider planetary collapse can proceed.

To all those keeping afloat despite the heaviness of your worlds: May your memories form collective survival. May your grievors be comforted among all the mourners. May your worlds be free from drought to flood.<sup>70</sup>

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## Endnotes

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- 70 The author thanks Sinan Antoon, Nouri Ghana, and Dudu Zaslavsky for orchestrating the worlds to engage such literature amid relentless disintegration and enduring violence. Your commitments reaffirm the power of poetics as a weapon that resists erasure and sustains hope, nurturing the collective memory that guides us through collapse. The views and interpretations in this article are solely my own and do not represent those mentioned above.