

Exploring a European tradition of allyship with sovereign struggles against colonial violence: a critique of Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida through the heretical Jewish Anarchism of Gustav Landauer (1870-1919)

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Abstract

Recently, indigenous struggles against ongoing colonial violence have become prominent in the context of growing environmental destruction and the ascendancy of the far right in the United States and parts of South America. This article suggests that European radical theory is not always equipped to provide normative frameworks of allyship with such struggles. Exploring the ‘messianic tone’ (Bradley and Fletcher, 2010: 3) in European radical theory, and in particular the works of Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben, the article argues that the analytical tendency to render the subject entirely dissolute acts against indigenous demands for justice built around the latter’s sovereignty. In an effort to excavate a ‘European’ tradition that might enable relations of allyship between those in relatively privileged positions and indigenous peoples, the article foregrounds the life and thought of Gustav Landauer (1870-1919), a German, Jewish, Anarchist revolutionary who lost his life during the 1919 German revolution. Landauer’s Anarchism was suffused with his reading of his Jewishness, and as such although he prefigures Derrida and Agamben in many ways, he ultimately refused to completely reject the sovereignty of the subject, providing a means by which to engage European political theory with indigenous struggles in the world today.

‘Settler society entreated the Oceti Sakowin for the 1851 and 1868 agreements, not the other way around. We entered these relationships with the understanding that both parties respected a

when it violated the treaties. Every act on our part to recover and reclaim our lives and land and to resist elimination is *an attempt to recuperate that lost humanity*’ (Estes, nd. *Emphasis added*)

Introduction

To what degree is radical European political philosophy able to engage and ally with the claims in the quote above? Written in the context of an historical explanation of first peoples' attempts to resist the building of the Dakota XL pipeline during the years of the Obama administration in the United States, indigenous scholar Nick Estes clearly illustrates the memories that informed the struggle, as well as the radical nature of what was being struggled for. In this reading, the struggle was not one based on a teleological understanding of history, looking forward to a new social arrangement or new forms of (re)subjectification, however radical. Rather, it was one based on a recuperation of a long-denied humanity and sets of sovereign social and political relationships that have been subjected to violent erasure. This article suggests that prevailing European radical political philosophy struggles to engage with the claims in the quote above, and more broadly with those who struggle against ongoing colonial violence. Specifically, this is a tradition that struggles to engage with indigenous and first nations claims to sovereignty, claims that are often erased by radical European scholarship that foregrounds categories of race, class or universal humanism over indigeneity (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Kauanui and Wolfe, 2012: 238-9). In particular, the article engages with the messianic turn taken in the works of Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben. The article argues that this messianic turn promotes a form of non-essentialist singularity that, whilst sharing aspects of some indigenous relational cosmologies (Bignall, 2012: 279), nonetheless risks acting against the kinds of sovereign claims that are central to various indigenous struggles against colonial violence. As a rejoinder to Agamben and Derrida, and in an attempt to develop a normative framework that can ally with these struggles from within a European context, the article engages with a different European tradition, exemplified in the life and thought of a non-canonical revolutionary and social theorist, the German mystical and heretical Jewish Anarchist Gustav Landauer (1870-1919).

Bradley and Fletcher call Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben the greatest exponents of a 'newly arisen messianic tone' (2010: 3). In appraising this 'messianic tone', some scholars have suggested

that Derrida and Agamben fail to present a robust enough firewall against centralising tendencies within their schematics (Simoes da Silva, 2005; Moazzam-Doulat, 2008; Beardsworth, 2010). They are also accused of a retreat from praxis into philosophy that thus abdicates responsibility for social transformation (Simoes da Silva, 2005; Sharpe, 2009; Beardsworth, 2010: 16). This article suggests that underlying these criticisms of Derrida's and Agamben's deployment of the messianic is a less commented upon problem; namely, that even when they do stray into praxis, their analytical appraisals of subjectivity struggle to translate into normative visions that would overlap with the demands of indigenous struggles against ongoing colonial violence. As such, these messianic frameworks find it hard to provide platforms for allyship with indigenous anti-colonial struggles. This is in part because these are struggles that seek to repair historical colonial and slavery-related 'wounds of segregation' (Shilliam, 2015: 22) and that foreground sovereign claims to land, environment and selfhood. In this context, the analytical content of Derrida's and Agamben's works, that see messianic retrieval in the dissolution of sovereign conceptions of the subject, make it difficult for either scholar to fully engage with recuperative anti-colonial struggles such as the one cited above concerning the history of indigenous dispossession in North America. The intervention that this article thus seeks to make involves

- i) Illustrating the normative limitations of Agamben's and Derrida's analytical messianism as this relates to allying with anti-colonial struggles for recuperative and reparative justice, and the sovereign claims that underpin them.
- ii) Building on Derrida's and Agamben's analytical framework, seeking to develop a normative framework from within the European milieu that can engage sovereign claims for recuperative and reparative justice. This takes place via an appraisal of the mystical and heretical German Jewish Anarchist Gustav Landauer (1870-1919).

There is certainly a tension in mounting an anti-colonial critique of a European or Western political traditionⁱⁱ with recourse to another European figure. The utility of such a move might well be questioned in terms of simply recentring Europe in a debate where the opposite needs to take place. That said, a European Anarchist Jew of the late 19th/early 20th Century would only have been ambivalently European, subject of Europe's own 'internal colonial wound' (Mignolo, 2007: 486), and racialised as a Jew in a context where their Anarchism would also have been Othered as somehow not really European, more 'Eastern' than of the West (Adams, 2000: 3). More substantively, and following scholars who have called for Europe to be 'provincialised' (Chakrabarty, 2000), this article seeks to provide a genealogy of an ambivalently European tradition that might assist in this. This is precisely because the article contributes to an effort to recover tendencies and figures that challenge European political traditions from within the European milieu, in order to illustrate the baselessness with which the latter might be considered to be an ontological or historically stable category. This will be shown to have real political effects, not least in taking the sovereign claims of struggles against colonial violence seriously. In this spirit, the article also responds to Simone Bignall's provocation with reference to Agamben, concerning how Western forms of knowledge 'in which sociality is reconceived by moving beyond essence and identity' can understand indigenous forms of knowledge 'in which identity is the transformative basis of political community' without the former expressing a teleological condescension towards the latter (2012: 281).

Another tension might be derived from critiquing two figures whose works contain significant anarchistic tendencies through the figure of another Anarchist. However, the article will suggest that Landauer's reading of his Jewishness inflects his Anarchism in ways that distinguish it from the anarchistic tendencies of Derrida and Agamben, especially when it comes to their respective attitudes to the dissolution of the sovereign subject. Ultimately, the interventions this article make are important if the normativity that radical European traditions bequeath are able to engage and ally with sovereign struggles against colonial violence.

The article opens by briefly engaging with Derrida's and Agamben's variants of messianism. In particular it highlights the singularity that emerges via the analytical recognition that the sovereign subject is a fantasy. This is a trope that runs through their work and that disables their analytical messianism of engaging with normative recuperative and reparative justice claims, especially in settler colonial contexts where a conception of sovereignty is central (Bruyneel, 2007; Coulthard, 2014). The article will then continue with an introduction to Landauer, and an exposition of how Landauer's heretical messianic Jewish Anarchism provides a resource with which to bridge the total dissolution of Derrida's and Agamben's messianism to sovereign recuperative and reparative justice claims.

The Messianic Turn in Agamben and Derrida

Whilst it is true that neither Agamben nor Derrida write extensively, if at all, about colonialism, settler-colonialism or colonial violence, nor explicitly or extensively draw upon post-colonial or indigenous scholarship, this does not invalidate them from an analysis that places them in conversation with struggles against colonial violence (for an example of the latter concerning Agamben see Bignall, 2012; On Derrida, see Sajed, 2013). Furthermore, the fact that the messianic emerges in their writings as a singularity (albeit a non-essentialist one), renders both Agamben and Derrida open to question from all and any perspective that might be consumed as such by this form of categorisation.

This section will argue that the messianism inherent to both Agamben and Derrida ultimately fails to offer a tradition of European radical political philosophy that can seriously engage with the demands of communities struggling against colonial violence. This is because in both cases they explicitly offer up a vision of subjectivity and political community that, in its non-essentialist singularity, cannot

recognise the differences that are so central to ongoing struggles against colonial violence, such as those expressed in the opening quote of this article. Such struggles may assert subjective difference in many forms. Gayatri Spivak for instance has suggested that such struggles express a form of 'strategic essentialism', whereby colonised peoples might deploy essentialist tropes as a necessary component of their struggles by which they achieve 'a renewed sense of the value and dignity of their pre-colonial cultures' (Spivak, 1984-5: 184). For Spivak however, the subject remains one in a constant process of dissolution whereby 'I think it's absolutely on target... to stand against the discourses of essentialism'. It's just that 'strategically we cannot' (Spivak, 1984-5: 184). As such, this kind of 'strategic' approach risks a form of condescension (i.e. that deeply expressed identifications simply represent a transitory condition) when applied to certain forms of political struggle. Stuart Hall can be usefully considered here. Hall wrote about the importance of recognising the 'imaginative rediscovery' of historical or ethnic essentialisms, that could serve as 'a very powerful and creative force in emergent forms of representation amongst hitherto marginalized peoples...we should not underestimate or neglect...the importance of the act of imaginative rediscovery which conceptions of a rediscovered essential identity entails' (Hall, 1994: 393). Indeed, such forms of 'imaginative rediscovery' may also result from/in different ontological engagements with the world (see for instance de la Cadena, 2010), whereby the condescension of a 'whatever singularity' (Agamben, 1993: I) or the 'justice-to-come' (Derrida, 2005: 88) that simultaneously recognises but demands the dissolution of such subject positions seems insufficient in engaging and allying with the demands of those who seek recuperative and reparative justice under conditions of ongoing coloniality.

Agamben's messianism exemplifies this tendency whereby that which is represented by the dissolution of all categories and identities, is simultaneously apolitical (because of this dissolution) *and* singular (because *all* will be dissolved) (1993/2001: I). In *The Coming Community* (TCC) Agamben sets out the terms of his post-political sensibility when drawing an analogous structure between the

Jewish abstention from *Melakha* (productive work) on the Sabbath, and the 'inoperativity or decreation' that 'is the paradigm of the coming politics'. This is 'a particular kind of sabbatical vacation' that rests on a fundamental distinction between 'what' and 'how' where 'the how integrally replaces the what' (1993/2001: postface). However, unlike for instance Hannah Arendt, whose 'making/action' distinction Agamben's own formulation resembles, Agamben does not seek to reify plurality as a first order political principle (Arendt, 1958/1998: 220; 228). Plurality for Agamben becomes a second-order principle, in service to the true messianic principle of the post-political and singular multitude. Importantly, this is a singularity devoid of particular essence (1993/2001: postface), and as such the messianic singularity constructed here is non-essentialist.

As such, Agamben's messianic 'coming community' is 'freed from the false dilemma that obliges knowledge to choose between the ineffability of the individual and the intelligibility of the universal...such-and-such being is reclaimed from its having this or that property, which identifies it as belonging to this or that set, to this or that class' (1993/2001: 1). Similarly, in *The Time that Remains*, Agamben writes that 'the messianic vocation is the revocation of every vocation. In this way, it defines what to me seems to be the only acceptable vocation' (Agamben, 2005: 22), going on to suggest that messianism and liberation involves the 'autosuppression' of all subjectivities (Ibid: 30-31). In this sense then, Agamben's singularity remains exclusive, precisely because it cannot engage fully with 'diverse peoples with ontological and epistemological traditions of their own' (Bignall, 2012: 280).

The inoperativity of the messianic, where the 'how *integrally* replaces the what' (Agamben, 2001: Postface. *Emphasis added*), is not inoperativity as rupture, as a means by which to critique all existing identities, but permanent, *integral* dissolution. If the multitude thus can have no programme(s), no identity(ies), no difference(s), then the politics required to activate the messianic becomes impossible, and the repair due to the victims of colonial violence becomes unobtainable.

This is because the latter's struggles are often predicated precisely on an affirmation of forms of collective and sovereign subjectivity, ontology and consciousness (Rojas, 2015) that is decoupled from the Modern categories associated with conceptions of the sovereign individual that Agamben seeks to dissolve. This places these two messianic visions at risk of incommensurability.

This is because the universal dissolution of the sovereign subject into a non-essentialist singularity invoked by Agamben is deeply political, and overlooks how different subjects come into being in the first place. Svirsky and Bignall suggest that this is in keeping with Agamben's tendency in general to overlook how imperialism and slavery serves as the conditions of existence for the categories he seeks to dissolve, from the 'camp' to the 'polis', and how the subjects produced under these conditions are not merely *homo sacer*, '...utterly debilitated ... [but articulate] a range of critical subject positions defined in active response to imperial Europe's exclusionary politics' (2012: 3). Such critical subject positions may of course also defy the dissolution of all categories that Agamben signifies with his normative vision of the non-essentialist messianic subject.

Jacques Derrida is another exemplary scholar who foregrounded a messianic tendency. Although Agamben and Derrida differ on their approach to Otherness (Fiorovanti, 2010: 05.9) and messianic temporality (Liska, 2012: 44), from a position of anti-colonial critique there are important parallels between Agamben's *homo sacer* (1998) and Derrida's deployment of the 'Other'. Where Derrida is accused of producing a category that fails to 'transcend notions of mystery, unambiguous victimhood, and irretrievability' in a process of Western self-affirmation that is embedded in Imperial metropolitan sensibilities (Sajed, 2012: 163), Hutchings (2008: 161) suggests that Agamben positions *homo sacer* in similar terms.

It is therefore perfectly plausible to consider Derrida alongside Agamben in an analysis of each theorist's 'messianic tone' (Bradley and Fletcher, 2010: 3), and its limitations for allying with

struggles against colonial violence. With Derrida, for an approach embedded in radical openness, the contours of his messianic politics often risk two enclosures. As with Agamben these involve an inability to firewall a non-essentialist singularity against an exclusivity that acts against the kinds of reparative and recuperative claims made in the quote that opens this article; and a resultant enclosure of privileged theorising that is unable to transcend its own ontological moorings and engage with the messy political realities of those struggling against the oppressive erasure of their cultures, memories and social forms.

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida writes of a messianic politics that is an

absolutely undetermined messianic hope... an opening which renounces any right to property, any right in general, messianic opening to what is coming...to the event as the foreigner itself, to her or to him for whom one must leave an empty place (1994: 65)ⁱⁱⁱ

Derrida seems conscious of the risks involved in this, when he writes of the messianic that:

This is indeed about the Messiah as...hospitality, the messianic that introduces deconstructive disruption or madness in the concept of hospitality, the madness of hospitality, even the madness of the concept of hospitality (2010a: 362)

Hägglund suggests that 'Derrida's notion of alterity is inextricable from a notion of constitutive violence' (2008: 76); the 'madness' that Derrida refers to in relation to hospitality can thus perhaps be read as Derrida's recognition of the harm that can result from radical openness (see also Derrida, 1995). Indeed, it is the recognition of the harm, and the risk involved, which makes such a politics so radical, but also so closed. This is because in centring the messianic event as that which is already foreign within us, Derrida rules out the recuperation of that which might have been stolen from us,

and a reaffirmation of who we *were* (rather than who we might be), both central features of struggles against ongoing colonial erasure (Shilliam, 2015: 22).

However, unlike Agamben, Derrida does seem to provide more fertile ground for connecting radical European traditions of messianism with struggles against colonial violence. For instance, even though Derrida writes that his oft-invoked formulation of the 'to-come' of democracy and justice (for instance: Derrida, 1994: 65; Derrida, 2005: 88-91; Derrida, 2010: 83) is one that does indeed seek to await messianism without the wait (the 'patient *perhaps* of messianicity' [2005: p.88, *emphasis added by author*]), he goes on to suggest that the 'to' in 'to-come' might have a dual function. One of these seeks terminal deferral; the other entails an 'imperative injunction' as performance or call (Ibid: p.91). 'Wavering' between the two 'to's', Derrida suggests that both functions can be heard (Ibid). In this way, Derrida briefly works the imperative function back into the messianic, and provides a means by which we might consider struggles for reparative and recuperative justice within a Derridian frame. This is because an imperative function might be necessarily subjective and thus speak to distinctive claims concerning identity and history. This is precisely what Derrida goes on to disavow however; where a democracy-to-come goes hand-in-hand with a justice-to-come, it is to cohere around a similar set of themes, of '...unbinding', and 'the infinite secret of the other', the basis of which, rather than allowing for any and all claims, including sovereign ones of the kind made by some indigenous peoples struggling against colonial violence and erasure, would instead be threatening to 'a community-oriented or communitarian concept of democratic justice' (Ibid: 88). This disables Derridian messianism from any demand for restorative justice based on sovereign conceptions of the subject, as this would represent an explicit enclosure on the unbinding and Other-oriented subject of the democracy and justice-to-come.

Indeed, like Agamben, and for all that the imperative function of the 'to' might seem otherwise, for Derrida the messianic age of the 'democracy to-come' will nonetheless transcend all distinctions, 'a

universal beyond all relativism, culturalism, ethnocentrism, and especially nationalism' (2005: 149). In this sense, like Agamben, Derrida's messianism can only struggle to speak to those who have been historically (and continue to be) dispossessed by colonial and state violence, for it precisely asks such people to give up any reparative claims in the name of a singular messianic politics. To take just one example, as much as analytically we might view the post-colonial state form as a violent and chauvinistic form of sovereignty reproductive of colonial technologies of power (Appiah, 1988), normatively it continues to function as a signifier of anti-colonial reparative and recuperative justice for many of those (although by no means all) who live in those states (Nandy, 2003: xi; Mkandawire, 2011).

This is not to somehow fall back on a defence of the Modern state, not least because an opposition to the Modern state animates many indigenous struggles against colonial violence (although this importantly does not equate with a rejection of sovereignty). What this point does raise however is the difficulty with which European radicalism's most prominent revolutionary analytical traditions can translate into normative forms of allyship with ongoing struggles against colonial violence. As we have seen, this is not because Derrida and Agamben avoid normative statements or visions, but because these statements and visions are informed by an analytical approach to the subject that struggles to translate into such meaningful allyship.

As the following section will illustrate, Gustav Landauer also sits in this tension between the terminally deferred horizon and the injunctive call. However, Landauer is able to reach a different conclusion on a justice-to-come that might build bridges from radical European political traditions to struggles against colonial violence predicated on sovereign forms of subjectivity. One may agree or disagree with the outcomes of such journeys into sovereignty; the central point here is that this form of reparative politics is ruled out by Agamben's and Derrida's messianic politics.

Gustav Landauer and Messianism in a World of Many Worlds

Some of Derrida's and Agamben's messianic politics does resonate with ongoing indigenous struggles against colonial violence. The dissolution of the sovereign subject is an integral component of challenging the racist categorisations and reifications that victims of colonial erasure continue to experience. Furthermore, the recognition that the 'sovereign' subject is already and always constituted by that which it denies, has proven a rich standpoint from which to destabilise narratives that seek to reify concepts and categories that further embeds that racism, that holds 'Europe' up as an endogenously endowed quality-mark for the rest of the world to follow, and that ultimately denies the contributions that colonised and enslaved peoples have made to the construction of the modern international system (Bhabra, 2014).

As extensively outlined above however, the dissolution of sovereign conceptions that this is based upon risks simultaneously dissolving the very basis upon which recuperative and reparative justice sought by the victims of colonial violence is formed. As such, the analytical messianism of Derrida and Agamben can't fully translate into a normative politics of allyship with such struggles. It is to Gustav Landauer that this section turns in order to provide one such iteration of a 'European' messianism that may do so.

Gustav Landauer was born into a middle class, non-observant German-Jewish family in Karlsruhe in 1870. He was intellectually and politically active from a young age, becoming the editor of the radical journal *Der Sozialist* when he moved to Berlin as a student at the end of the 1880s.

Sentenced to 11 months in prison for incitement in 1893, he was refused re-entry to university on his release, and so his subsequent intellectual development became rather auto-didactic (Maurer, 1971, 155-157). One of a tiny minority, even among radical circles, to oppose German militarism during World War One from the outset, when the Bavarian Soviet Republic was declared in

November 1918 Landauer was invited to Munich to support the uprising. Clear to him from the outset that the uprising was being questionably politicised, and would most likely fail (Landauer, in Kuhn, 2012, 171-198), he nonetheless became Minister for Public Education during an iteration of the Republic. Shortly after, on 3rd May 1919, nearly 40,000 regular and irregular German State troops marched on Munich, taking the city and killing large numbers of Republicans, variously affiliated. Landauer was arrested, removed to a military camp, and beaten to death by a mob of soldiers.

It is important at this stage to make a brief intervention concerning the methodology of this argument. Given the wide range of activities in which he engaged (translator, author, playwright, editor, propagandist, revolutionary organiser), it is difficult to place Landauer within the singular frame of 'political philosopher'. Furthermore, Landauer's political thought was explicitly interwoven with the revolutionary conditions within which he lived, engaged and died. This means that, in some respects the comparison with Agamben and Derrida is a difficult one to maintain in exactitude. Landauer's political philosophy developed in the heat of revolutionary struggle and reactionary violence in a way that was very different in the development of Derrida's or Agamben's own thinking (although for Derrida's activism on Algeria in the early 1990s, see Derrida and Bennington, 2009: 136). Landauer is also a relatively little-known figure outside of (some) Anarchist circles, and as such a more biographical treatment than either Agamben or Derrida becomes necessary. More substantively, because Landauer's political philosophy speaks very explicitly to the environment in which it developed, it is very difficult and undesirable even to construct a 'political philosopher' Landauer on the one hand, and a 'revolutionary Landauer' on the other. For that reason, the following analysis will be of a different tenor to that which has preceded it, although nonetheless has important implications for the issues raised in that preceding analysis.

For all of these differences of gestation and analysis, among the translations, pamphlets, and other ephemera, Landauer did publish three major works within a ten year period (1901-1911) that does form a coherent and evolving set of ideas. *Through Separation to Community* (1901) is the exemplification of Landauer's mystical anarchism, setting himself apart from both the German Stirnerite tradition of egoism as well as what was in his view the stifling scientific orthodoxy of many contemporaneous Marxists. In this work, Landauer asserted the social and historical dissolution of the individual subject, a realisation that was only possible if 'we...allow ourselves to sink to the depths of our being and to reach the inner core of our most hidden nature'. There, he continued, 'we will find the most ancient and complete community: a community encompassing not only all of humanity but the entire universe' (1901/2010: 96). In his 1907 book, *Revolution*, Landauer developed these ideas in order to think about what they meant for revolutionary praxis. Again, rejecting teleological accounts of historical development, Landauer did much in this book that foreshadowed later scholarship and activism around prefiguration and intentionality (for instance: Day, 2005: 123; 140). The past was not simply an historical artefact, but was 'alive in us, [leaping] towards the future in every moment. It is movement. It is way' (1907/2010: 122). As such, revolutionary activity was not something that needed to await the 'correct' conditions, but was 'always alive, even during times of relatively stable topias. It stays alive underground. It is always old and new...it is not merely a boundary...but a principle transcending all eras' (Ibid: 116). Finally, Landauer's *For Socialism* (1911) represented a direct intervention into the revolutionary politics of his era, attempting to map out how the more abstract ideas set out in *Revolution* might translate into the German context. Even here however, Landauer's mystical reference points^{iv} led to a series of more abstract digressions into the nature of community, subjectivity and time, whilst his Anarchism prevented a direct or prescriptive formulation of what would or should replace contemporaneous conditions in Germany, and beyond:

Socialism is possible at all times, if enough people want it. But it will always look different, start and progress differently... no depiction of an ideal, no description of a Utopia is given here... We know of no development that must bring it. We know of no such necessity as a natural law... Socialism will not necessarily come... Yet socialism can come and should come — if we want it, if we create it (1911: 48-49)

Landauer does prefigure both Derrida and Agamben in some ways, although Landauer ultimately moves beyond these affinities in productive ways for thinking about a messianic politics that resonates beyond the analytical confines pointed to in previous sections. To begin with those affinities however, it should already be clear that Landauer shared with Derrida for instance a conception of temporality that dissolved past, present and future. We can see this from what Landauer wrote about revolutionary temporality in *Revolution*. For Landauer messianic time was always present, even during counter-revolutionary topic time. In opposing these two temporalities, Landauer sought to rearrange history as memory, whereby the latter 'is not strictly sequential and, unlike History, can act as a generative seedbed of relationality' (Shilliam, 2015: 4). As such, even though topic time, the time of oppression, was most often in the ascendant, this was not particularly consequential in the face of the gathering and growing archive of utopic time that would always act as a resource for those who sought it out. As such 'Revolution... becomes a principle that strides across the centuries' (Landauer, 1907/2010: 116). This is why messianic spirit for Landauer was always and necessarily alive. It was present yet, in the face of topic time, always also not-present, in the sense of always failing, always being co-opted, always at an end, having to be renewed in non-prescriptive and unpredictable ways. This is clear in the way in which Landauer distinguished his politics from that of other radicals: 'The difference between us socialists... and the communists is not that we have a different model of a future society. The difference is that we do not have any model. We embrace the future's openness and refuse to determine it' (Landauer, in Kuhn, 2010, 35). In this sense Landauer prefigured Derrida's notion of temporality, where the latter wrote in a similar vein

to Landauer that 'without itinerary or point of arrival...the absence of horizon conditions the future itself' (Derrida, 2002b: 47)

Turning to Agamben, Landauer's unorthodox Anarchist diagnosis of the State and its downfall stands comparison with Agamben's. Writing against the grain of an orthodox Anarchism that reified the State in its depiction of State violence, Landauer argued against regarding 'the state as such a thing or as a fetish that one can smash in order to destroy it'. Instead, the State should be understood as

'a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another... We are the state, and we shall continue to be the state until we have created the institutions that form a real community' (Landauer, in Horrox, 2009: 192).

One can therefore imagine Landauer agreeing with Agamben's diagnosis of state violence during the Tiananmen protests of 1989, where the latter suggests that the violence should be understood not as a response to protestors' demands (of which there were few) nor because the protestors were composed of a singular identifiable group of people (they were not) but because the protestors provided a glimpse into a world where other relationships had been contracted, that could not be incorporated by the Chinese State. Extrapolating from this, Agamben writes that 'what the State cannot tolerate in any way...is that the singularities form a community without affirming an identity... The State... is not founded on a social bond, of which it would be the expression, but rather on the dissolution, the unbinding it prohibits' (1993: XIX).

What is clear here is that for Agamben, this diagnosis of the limitations of State comprehension brings him back to a singularity beyond definition. This once again makes it difficult to extrapolate any normative agenda from this position that would take the sovereign claims of victims of ongoing

colonial erasure seriously or without condescension. However, Landauer too displayed a dissolved notion of subjectivity that prefigured what we have seen in Agamben and Derrida. Where Derrida writes that 'There is no opposition, fundamentally, between "social bond" and "social unravelling"...a certain interruptive unravelling is the condition of the social bond, the very respiration of all "community"' (2002b: 99), Landauer, in *Through Separation to Community*, writes that 'the concrete and isolated individual' is 'as much of a spook as God...there are no individuals, only affinities and communities...individuals are...the electrical sparks of something greater, something *all encompassing*' (Landauer, 1901/2010: 101 *emphasis added*).

Where Derrida and Agamben go then, so it seems does Landauer. However, there are some important caveats around the latter's approach to the subject that need fleshing out. First of all, as singular as this seems, Landauer wrote the above passage in 1901, nearly a decade before he was to meet and befriend the Jewish theologian Martin Buber. As I mentioned earlier, Landauer's intertwined theoretical and political development becomes important here. Like many other Jewish radicals in Germany of the period, Buber acted as a gateway to engage with Jewishness as a resource for radical messianic subjectivity (Lowy, 1992), a resource that ultimately led Landauer to bring an element of 'imaginative rediscovery' (Hall, 1994: 393) concerning sovereign subjectivity back in to his thinking. Landauer developed a close friendship with Buber, who later acted as the executor for the former's estate. Their relationship had a fundamental impact on Landauer's thinking, helping him to draw together the various strands of his messianic approach to revolutionary politics that had initially come to him from heretical Catholic texts, Buddhism, and Spinoza (Breines, 1967: 76).

Secondly, and more substantively, from Landauer's other writings it can be argued that he was talking back to a different conception of the sovereign subject than that constructed by either Agamben or Derrida. For the latter, there is nothing beyond the binary of the dissolved non-essentialised subject on the one hand, and the mythologised sovereign subject on the other. This is

an implicit but consistent feature of both Derrida's and Agamben's writings. For both, they seek to dissolve the sovereign subject because of a transhistorical commitment to something that exists beyond sovereignty. Landauer however is much more concerned with the specific relationship between Modernity and the sovereign subject. For Landauer, it is because the sovereign subject has been captured by Modernity and its instruments (in particular the State) that it needs to be dissolved. For instance, Landauer writes that whilst 'there is no German coal...iron...sewing machines...chemicals', there could be a community based on German language, art, or poetry (Landauer, in Brienens, 1967: 80-81). Here sovereignty is not defined by ownership, but by relation, a similar construction to indigenous and first nations conceptualisations of sovereignty (Bruyneel, 2007: 222).

For Landauer it was Modernity in conjunction with sovereignty, rather than sovereignty per se, that was the problem. Whether writing about the 1910-1920 Mexican revolution or the revolutionary conditions that mass Jewish migration from Eastern to Central Europe might make possible, in both cases a utopic temporality was immanent because of the degree to which the subjects under consideration were 'still beginners in misery' (Landauer, 1911/2010: 263). They were thus held to be more divorced from Modern capitalism and Modern 'unculture' than those more assimilated into Modernity (Landauer, 1916: 437). In all this he was particularly influenced by Buber, who introduced Landauer to *Hassidut*, a Jewish spiritual revivalist movement that emerged and then rapidly spread from Ukraine in the 18th Century. Until then, Rabbinic Judaism had largely been based around a hierarchical structure, whereby access to some of Judaism's most esoteric, erotic and mystical texts were considered accessible only after 40 years of Jewish textual study, and where Jews were banned from proactively seeking to build the messianic age; of 'forcing the end' (Walzer, 2016: 59). This hierarchical approach to knowledge acquisition excluded the mass of Jews in Eastern Europe who were largely peasants and lacked access to and time for this level of study. *Hassidut* emerged as a heretical response to this situation, whose central message was that divinity was present in every

moment and everything. Divinity was thus accessible to anyone at any time if they were devoted enough to uncovering the divine aspect. This represented a clear challenge to conventional rabbinical authority^v, and was a tradition that found echoes in Landauer's messianic normativity^{vi}.

In comparison to his voluminous writings on revolution (1907/2010) and socialism (1911), and his anarchistic translations of Walt Whitman, Shakespeare^{vii}, and others, his comments on Jews, Jewishness and issues of Jewish interest were rare. Yet, although Landauer's relationship with Buber post-dates the former's prodigious output up until that point, this work can nonetheless be read as suffused with mystical and heretical Jewish traditions. For instance, Landauer's central contention in *Through Separation to Community* that, engaged in deep and critical self-reflection, the individual would encounter themselves as intimately intertwined with the rest of humanity and the universe (1901: 96), was a ubiquitous idea across Jewish mysticism, where the notion of self-encounter served as a central technique of prophetic Kabbalah (Boldyrev, 2014: 104). As he became closer to Buber therefore (after 1908) these statements became more frequent. Whether commenting on the Beilis affair (when a Russian Jew stood trial accused of the ritual murder of a 13 year old child) (1913/2010), or his increasingly frequent interventions against Zionist organising in Berlin (Mendes Flohr, 2015: p.1), Buber had given Landauer a workable division between religion and religiosity, Modernity and sovereignty, whereby Landauer could reclaim a sovereign form of Judaism without cohering to the formal, hierarchical and enlightenment-modern religious structures that characterised the institutions of German Jewry in this period (Elon, 2003: pp.259-296). As such, this particular iteration of Jewishness served to furnish Landauer's long and deep commitment to Anarchism; it also provided the backdrop for his critique of Modernity.

In this spirit, Landauer began to write of how he was '...not in the least inclined to forget the joy of my Jewishness, even for a day' (Landauer to Constantin Brunner, 1913, in Kuhn, 2010: p.295).

Furthermore, Landauer began to become convinced of the distinctly revolutionary nature of Jewish subjectivity, writing that

...the war against sin, the war for purity and sanctification has entered the heart of the Jewish people, of the Jewish community, and of each individual Jew. It is a war that is led by no representative, no pioneer, no saviour, no saint, and no priest. It is a war of renouncement, of cleansing one's soul, of going inwards, of praying, of uniting the community in repentance (Landauer, 1913/2010: p.29)

This should probably be interpreted as a normative vision that incorporated selected components of Jewish historical intellectual development and religious practice. It certainly did not reflect the general sensibilities of the majority of German Jews in this period (Elon, 2003: pp.259-296). More centrally, the apparent tension between Landauer's earlier more anti-essentialist approach to radical subjectivity and his later more specific identification as a Jew is a potentially productive one that can be extrapolated from the way in which Landauer conceptualised Jewish messianic politics as Godly work, in turn conceptualising Godly work as service to the world.

Where Landauer departs from Derrida and Agamben then is the degree to which the former became unwilling to think in terms of singularities. Even though Derrida and Agamben do this in non-essentialised terms, Landauer resisted even this degree of universalising the messianic subject, preferring instead to think in terms of multiple messianic *subjects*. Of course, it is difficult not to read singularity in the way Landauer writes about time and subjectivity, and given his auto-didactic intellectual development it is also possible to read Landauer, out of the context of this development, against himself. And yet the tension between the universal and the particular in Landauer is one worth holding on to, and is one that neither Derrida nor Agamben satisfactorily engages with, when the former for instance writes that 'an invincible desire for justice... alone allows the hope, beyond

all messianisms, of a *universalizable culture* of singularities...' (Derrida, 2002b: 56. *Emphasis added*) which mitigates against communal conceptions of justice (Derrida, 2005: 88). In posing the messianic project as such however, Derrida overlooks the messianic potential of sovereign communalities, which in certain contexts may act as vehicles for reparative and recuperative justice. Indeed, in the context of indigenous claims against settler-colonial violence and erasure, such forms of justice could in some cases represent pathways to a radically reconstituted world of reconfigured or dissolved borders, and the abandonment of anthropomorphic epistemology (see for instance Castro, 1998). In the normative frameworks bequeathed by Derrida's and Agamben's analytical messianism however, such struggles could never be legitimate, based on their recuperative, restorative and sovereign emphases.

Where Derrida thus presents social bonds and social dissolution as co-constitutive, and Agamben all the more so cannot countenance a messianic singularity that is anything but universal through being unfixed, Landauer cannot preordain the dissolution of all social bonds. Sociality will be rediscovered via the journey 'through separation to community' (Landauer, 1901/2010), with Landauer writing that 'since the world has disintegrated into pieces and has become alienated from itself, we have to flee into mystic seclusion in order to become one with it again' (Landauer, 1901/2010: 105). Each subject, formed through its eternally present and socially constituted consciousness, had to find its own path to sociality. As a decentralised process however the outcomes of this journey through 'separation to community' (Landauer, 1901/2010) could never be cut out from a universal template, nor have universally similar outcomes. Unlike Derrida's 'universalizable culture of singularities' (2002b: 56) or Agamben's 'whatever singularities' (1993: I), where the identity of the mass of singularities is already beyond identification, for Landauer there was no universal subject, or universal set of subjects that could emerge. This is because the individual could not emerge bereft of any other historically and socially constituted characteristics that might differentiate between varying levels of more or less essentialised individual and communal subjectivities.

Although not always consistent, Landauer's approach can be treated as a means by which to build bridges of allyship from European radical political theory to struggles against ongoing colonial violence. As we have seen, such bridges are difficult to mount through the work of emblematic radical scholars such as Derrida and Agamben, whose analytical approaches fail to be cognisant of the claims of indigenous struggles for sovereignty. In Landauer's schema, a messianic politics of openness is impossible without historically constituted subjective roots. Landauer wrote that 'People of spirit...need the family, the herd...These social forms are the bridges of light that connect our different worlds' (1907/2010: 118). Far from being a conservative move, Landauer viewed this as being central to radically reconnecting with the world as a world of many worlds. Liberation for Landauer would be premised on a radical equality of difference, thus sharing a family relation to indigenous cosmologies (i.e. Cusicanqui, 2012) and prefiguring more contemporary decolonial literatures (i.e. Dunford, 2017).

Landauer's commitment to a world of many worlds as a necessary precondition for messianic politics led him to seek to reclaim national belonging from an automatic framing of the nation as being in necessary relation to the State, or indeed even necessarily territory. Landauer's reclamation of nation was thus in no way a retreat into ethno-nationalism, but was underscored by his attempt to dislodge sovereign forms of belonging from the social hierarchies produced by Modernity. Writing in a posthumously published piece, Landauer argued that 'Folk in today's meaning is a mixture of nationality, political frontiers and economic and cultural unity. The state and its borders are miserable accidental products of the most contemptible forms of so-called history' (Landauer, in Buber, 1924: 7). This did not mean that he had abandoned his older belief in the power of the journey within, 'through separation to community' (1901/2010). Rather, sociality was to be recognised through the particularities of individual communities of cultural affinity. In that sense, when Landauer wrote of the distinction between the artificiality of 'German coal' and the

authenticity of 'German language' or poetry (Landauer, in Brienens, 1967: 80-81), he was articulating a conception of nation that was intended to stand in contrast to the contemporaneous nation state as a political and economic structure. It was 'Nation in amalgamation with the state' that acted as 'an ersatz for spirit', spirit here understood as the rooted but radically open sensibility that would drive solidarity between differently constituted revolutionary subjects (Landauer, 1911: 23)^{viii}.

Of course, after the post-structural critique, it is no longer possible to make easy binary distinctions between objects (coal) and attributes (artistic spirit), but once again, this is an analytical point that does not always and everywhere translate into a normatively desirable or effective politics of allyship and solidarity. When critical approaches to solidarity across difference absorb difference into transcendental singularity, qua Derrida and Agamben (albeit in these cases in analytically useful ways) they fail to account for the ways in which people's identifications with their human and physical surroundings and cultures are historically constituted, and why they retain personal, political and even radically progressive significance. This remains the case even if in an analytical sense we can say that these identities are social constructs that belie their co-constitutionality. For over and above this social construction of sovereign subjectivity, such forms of subjectivity may retain normative importance for redressing historical and ongoing injustices, and in constructing better worlds. This is not to ignore important deconstructionist arguments concerning identity, not least those made by Derrida himself (see for instance: Derrida, 1992), nor to dismiss work that seeks to reconstitute identities based on heretofore forgotten genealogies (see for instance: Isin, 2012). Rather, it is to suggest that such work must go alongside efforts to engage with identities and attachments as they already are, and indeed to underline the politically self-defeating privilege inherent to a position of choosing particular genealogical preferences at will.

To restate an earlier argument, this moves beyond the potentially condescending 'strategic essentialism' of Spivak (something Spivak later repudiated; see Spivak, 2008: ftn 27). In the case of

Lakota and Sioux struggles against the Dakota XL oil pipeline in February 2017 at Standing Rock, Dakota, protestors were not simply standing *against* the pipeline, but were also struggling *for* recognition of a cosmology that collapsed the material/attribute distinction in their everyday lives, imbuing a physical environment with historical, cultural and ontological meaning (See Archambault II, 2017, for an exemplification of this. See also de la Cadena 2010 for other examples of this). A commitment to such a cosmology, and the reparative justice for centuries of colonial dispossession such a cosmology seeks to deliver, rests on sovereign forms of subjectivity, and thus difference from those who are subjectified differently, and do not or cannot remember that experience of dispossession. This is not just strategic, for it informs the ways in which some indigenous cosmologies comprehend the world, and operate on different ontological registers (where in dissolving the human/nature divide, nature takes on sentient agency [de la Cadena, 2010; Rojas, 2015]).

Furthermore, this is not to say that, in this case, *only* Lakota or Sioux peoples can remember dispossession. By divorcing memory from history Landauer opens up opportunities for forms of remembrance that transcend direct experience or inheritance. This was exemplified in the diverse nature of the protest participants at Standing Rock. Nevertheless, this can only ever be a subsidiary relationship. An approach that translates an analysis of subjectivity that dissolves sovereign subjectivity, and thus difference (into even radically open singularities), into a normative project that does the same would have the effect, among others, of denying people in structurally disadvantaged positions the fixed attachments that give them what political strength and meaning they have.

In retaining sovereign claims to land and identity, and simultaneously recognising the revolutionary nature of these claims, Landauer offers a normative, and more workable alternative to the arguably normatively limited approach to allyship that might emerge through Derrida's and Agamben's analytical messianism. In asserting a universal messianic singularity that dissolves all categories and

difference, even when construed in non-essentialist terms, Derrida and Agamben engage in risky territory. Rather than rejecting the European messianic tradition entirely however, Gustav Landauer's messianic, anarchistic Jewishness points to a possibility for a decentralised politics that is based on an at least partially centred, sovereign subject, and that retains the normative possibility of a 'world of many worlds' (Rojas, 2015; Dunford, 2017). Without decentralisation there is a risk of totalisation; without recognising the value of the partially centred and sovereign subject, there is the risk of being unable to constructively ally with the very people whose conditions require recuperative and reparative transformation.

Talmudic Conclusions

There is a story in the *Talmud*, a written compendium of Rabbinic Judaism's oral laws together with various later rabbinic commentaries and elucidations recorded and written between the first and fifth centuries CE, which recounts a meeting between the prophet Elijah and Rabbi Joshua ben Levi (Third Century CE). Meeting in a cave, the Rabbi asked the Prophet where he could find the messiah. Upon receiving direction and setting out to meet the messiah, Rabbi Joshua asks the messiah when they will come. Upon returning to Elijah, Rabbi Joshua states that the messiah told him that they would come today; '[They] spoke falsely to me... stating that [they] would come to-day, but has not'. Elijah responds and tells Rabbi Joshua that the messiah has not spoken falsely, but that 'This is what [they] said to thee; Today, if ye will hear [their] voice' (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 98a, in Sivertsev, 2011: 139. *Emphasis added*).

This Talmudic story represents Gustav Landauer's messianic commitment. The story works in two registers. The first register is one familiar to us from Agamben and Derrida; i.e. namely that the messiah is already here, and doesn't need waiting for, but rather requires hearing, and thus activating. The question of *how* to activate the messianic however (the second register) is one that

Agamben and Derrida cannot properly take into account in contexts of ongoing colonial violence because their approach remains primarily analytical rather than normative (the claim that the messiah is already present is an analytical claim), and normatively embedded in Imperial metropolitan sensibilities (Sajed, 2013). Their normative claims (such as Derrida's democracy and justice 'to-come') betray these roots. They are thus unable to recognise the sovereign claims of those most in need of recuperative and reparative (messianic) justice. But the command that Rabbi Joseph ben Levi must proactively hear the messianic voice is a clear indication that a normative praxis of messianism is necessary in order to enact it. More than this, the command that we must each individually hear the messianic voice is a clear indication that the messianic vocation must be necessarily subjective, where the subject is constituted historically and socially, thus inevitably creating sovereign differences that defy the transcendent messianic singularities characteristic of Derrida and Agamben. I have argued that Derrida's and Agamben's analytical frameworks offer a great deal in deconstructing racist and mythological stereotypes about both Europe and its Others. However, ensuring that a messianic praxis of liberation, recuperation and reparation firewalls itself against forms of exclusivity inimical to allyship with the victims of ongoing colonial violence and erasure is a task that I have suggested Gustav Landauer was particularly attenuated towards. As a committed Anarchist and committed (heretical) Jew, Landauer lived and died working for a messianic principle that saw only totalisation in preordination, and unworkability and the reinforcement of violence in the dissolution of difference. The alternative suggested by Landauer is a politics that is open to the possibility of other worlds, including those worlds that revolve around different ontologies (that, for instance, consider non-human entities as fundamental and sovereign ethical concerns). However, this is a politics simultaneously attenuated to opposing the dissolution of ethics that can occur with moral relativism (Dunford, 2017: 380). Landauer thus helps us to construct a messianic politics, from within a supposedly 'European' tradition, where sovereign subjectivity is maintained as central to the radical realisation of a more just world (of many worlds). Importantly, this is a politics where forms of sovereignty and ensuing differences that create power

inequalities between worlds, or a world where difference is subordinated to a singular construct of sovereign subjectivity that cannot incorporate epistemological and ontological difference, are explicitly ruled out.

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ⁱⁱ I use this heuristically. For how this tradition has never been purely 'European' or 'Western' see: Ahluwalia, 2010; Sajed, 2013

ⁱⁱⁱ For similar see Derrida, 2002b: 56

^{iv} This included Meister Eckhart, who he published translations of, as well as Jewish mystical referents that came to him via his engagement from around 1908 with the Jewish theologian and philosopher Martin Buber.

^v For thorough analyses of the ructions of this period see Nadler, 1999; Frank and Goldberg, 2008

^{vi} See also Walter Benjamin's conception of 'messianic time' (Benjamin, 1999: 255).

^{vii} Landauer 'saw something of himself in Shakespeare, symbolized by the words of Miranda in the Tempest, "How beauteous mankind is"'. (Maurer, 1971: 155)

^{viii} This was distinct from contemporaneous ideas about 'nationism' proposed by AustroMarxists such as Otto Bauer (1881-1938), and which sought to federalise and institutionalise culturally affiliated associations (see Bauer, 1907/2000).