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Mara Mbele is a scholar, educator and photographer whose interdisciplinary research weaves the philosophical impulses of posthumanism, hauntology and critical media theory. Holding a Master of Arts in Media Studies from the University of the Witwatersrand, they examine how visibility and differential media formats conjure spectral afterlives of coloniality which enable speculative reworldings for marginalised communities, specifically Black and queer embodiment. Mbele's body of work probes the thresholds between flesh, utopian potentiality and futurity as a catalyst for socio-cultural re-transfiguration.

## No Longer, Not Yet: Nomadic Homes as Ante-Utopian Realities in South Africa

### Abstract

This research examines the intricate interplay between spatiality and temporality, focusing on re-imagined, re-purposed, and re-inhabited architectural spaces that redeem the past while constructing citational utopias for disenfranchised bodies. Through the decolonial lens of hauntology, I offer a critique of late-stage capitalism whereby exposing its failure to envision alternative futures concurrently reveals a condition trapped in a perpetual present as continually haunted by the unfulfilled promises of the past. The images selected, in turn, expose and engage with these tensions, navigating the commodification of contemporary culture whilst simultaneously invoking the specter of lost potentials through afterlives of cast-out locations that bring to fore the appositional readings of the anoriginal intent of commodities with the renewed reconfiguration of morphing habitats for fugitive bodies. The images selected, from my personal archive, are not a mere documentation but critical interventions that expose and engage with tensions in contemporary culture. They navigate the commodification of our present while invoking the specter of lost potentials, the afterlives of cast-out locations, and the reconfiguration of these spaces as sanctuaries for fugitive bodies. These re-inhabited spaces create an epistemological rupture, disrupting the normative logic of fugitive identities. They highlight the socio-political and economic inequalities shaping democratic South Africa, where nomadic bodies resist the erasure of their rights under systemic inequities. The film images to be analysed invoke themes of temporality and afterlife, and the materiality of negatives and scans echoes the struggle to reclaim what has been cast aside. Ultimately, this research seeks to illuminate the remnants of a hegemonic society that, while no longer commodities, present a transfiguration and reclamation by disenfranchised bodies as *not yet*. In these spaces, we witness a poignant act of resistance—a reimagining of identities and futures denied yet persisting in their defiant reclamation of the past.

### Keywords:

Hauntology, spatio-temporality, film photography, South Africa

## Résumé

Cette recherche examine l'interaction complexe entre spatialité et temporalité, en se concentrant sur des espaces architecturaux réimaginés, réaffectés et réhabités qui rachètent le passé tout en construisant des utopies citationnelles pour des corps défavorisés. À travers le prisme décolonial de l'hantologie, je propose une critique du capitalisme tardif. En montrant son incapacité à envisager des futurs alternatifs, je révèle simultanément une condition prisonnière d'un présent perpétuel, continuellement hantée par les promesses non tenues du passé. Les images sélectionnées, à leur tour, exposent et abordent ces tensions, naviguant dans la marchandisation de la culture contemporaine tout en invoquant simultanément le spectre des potentiels perdus à travers les revivifications de lieux rejetés, mettant en avant les lectures appositionnelles de l'intention an-originelle des marchandises avec la reconfiguration renouvelée d'habitats morphologiques pour les corps fugitifs. Les images sélectionnées, issues de mes archives personnelles, ne constituent pas une simple documentation, mais des interventions critiques qui exposent et abordent les tensions de la culture contemporaine. Ils naviguent dans la marchandisation de notre présent tout en invoquant le spectre des potentiels perdus, les reliques des lieux rejetés et la reconfiguration de ces espaces en sanctuaires pour les corps fugitifs. Ces espaces réhabités créent une rupture épistémologique, perturbant la logique normative des identités fugitives. Ils mettent en lumière les inégalités sociopolitiques et économiques qui façonnent l'Afrique du Sud démocratique, où les nomades résistent à l'effacement de leurs droits en raison d'inégalités systémiques. Les images filmées à analyser évoquent les thèmes de la temporalité et de l'au-delà, et la matérialité des négatifs et des scans fait écho à la lutte pour se réapproprier ce qui a été mis de côté. En fin de compte, cette recherche vise à mettre en lumière les vestiges d'une société hégémonique qui, bien que n'étant plus des marchandises, présentent une transfiguration et une reconquête par des corps privés comme *des pas encore(s)*. Dans ces espaces, nous assistons à un acte poignant de résistance : une réinvention d'identités et d'avenirs niés, mais persistant dans leur réappropriation provocatrice du passé.

Mots-clés :

L'hantologie, spatio-temporalité, photographie argentique, Afrique du Sud

## Frames of Becoming: From Instinct to Intention

The year was 2009; film was still relatively accessible and its economy forgiving. My photographic practice began in high school, tethered to the weighted body of a Pentax SLR film camera. I had expressed my intrigue with the photography club and hesitantly, with my polite yet convincing demeanor (perhaps somewhat manipulative) requested my parents to purchase a camera for me. My supportive parents agreed but foolishly I expected a glamorous digital camera, without recognising our financial situation. Frustrated with my father for gifting me a 35 mm film camera, in an era already seduced by the seamlessness of digital speed, I initially met the mechanical instrument with resistance. Ungratefully in retrospect, I felt as though the camera's analogue heft felt like a relic, a marker of obsolescence: a ghost from another time pressing against the skin of the present. My peers carried sleek point-and-shoots, boasting their top of the range ten-megapixel precision, whilst I feigned "artistic intent" with my Pentax, to mask the reality—I simply could not afford the technological currency of the moment. However, necessity became my pedagogy. That retro SLR compelled a tactile and affective intimacy with my photographic practice, wherein the exposure triangle emerged not as a technical abstraction or automated sequence, but as a series of embodied calibrations; it emerged as gestural negotiations amidst light, time, and the motion that inscribed the sensorium. The photography club itself was little more than a social gathering—an extramural credit for most—but for me, it became an apprenticeship. Though ungraded, I held each assignment with the weight of evaluation, training my eye to trust its instincts.

Film photography is, in essence, an act of faith—a hoping for the best, and of course, remembering to remove the lens cap. At first, I hesitated to press the shutter. Paralyzed by the scarcity of the amount of frames I was given, I was immobilised by the anxiety of wasting images. I was immobilised by the anxiety of leaving a permanent trace—the irreversible act of pressing the shutter. Each frame carried the weight of failure, of an image that could neither be undone nor forgotten. Film photography's refusal of instantaneity unsettled me at first. Without the safety of a digital screen, I was left to wonder, to hope, to predict. "I hope it looks good" was a quiet refrain, a prayer to light and chemistry. Yet, over time, that anxiety transfigured into something else entirely—exhilaration. The unknowability of the image before its revelation became a source of pleasure rather than dread. The final photograph was never quite what I had envisioned, but therein lay its beauty: light leaks, dust markings, the unexpected intrusion of grain. These imperfections were not failures but artifacts, proof of the photograph's becoming. The materiality of film, its grainy tactility, yet its glossy weight, felt more real than the clean sterility of digital pixels, more akin to the materialization of memory itself. However, as my hands grew confident, I surrendered to the medium's rituals, cycling through rolls with a fervor that made the delay between capture and development feel like an extended breath, anticipation stretching across time. Film demanded intentionality. With only 36 exposures per roll, every frame mattered. Yet paradoxically, I never second-guessed the impulse to press the shutter; I simply trusted the moment, knowing that time

would reveal what I could not yet see. Moreover, photography operates as a process of forgetting and rediscovery for me. When a roll of film remained unfinished for months, I often found myself estranged from the images I had captured, encountering them anew only in the darkroom or in the digital scans. This, too, felt like a temporal rupture, wherein a re-memory of a rememory demonstrated how the past does not return intact but altered, but rather refracted through the act of recollection.



The year is 2025. Over a decade has eclipsed since the threshold of my photographic awakening first etched itself onto emulsion before my eyes. Now, film photography is a medium interminably displaced by its digital successors and exists as an artifact of the proleptic era. Its obsolescence renders it a luxury, an anachronism that persists only in artistic contexts. But for me, film functions more than a fragment of nostalgia. It is a medium of and mode for temporal dissonance, such as a spectral trace of antecedent aesthetics, proleptic forms and that which is in the ambivalent state of liminality. Every photograph I take is an imprint of a moment already lost, yet its meaning unfolds in the present, shifting with each return. Film's alchemical delay, with the waiting, the liminality, the unseen image suspended between capture and revelation. That latency mimics memory itself as always there, yet only surfacing under the right conditions. As film degrades, fades, and distorts, it enacts a re-memory of a rememory, its history rewritten with every encounter. My vocation for the celluloid craft was predominantly the manner in which it refuses simple chronicle; it disturbs duration. Each frame hovers as it haunts the revenant residue of the once-was and traces the unrealized what-might-be.





## Ephemeral Flicker: A Personal Cartography of Marginality

I crafted the No Longer, Not Yet series at the age of seventeen as a high school student with an unarticulated fascination for the substance of spatio-temporal materiality, that lingered in between: ghostly, grotesque, and profoundly liminal. From its inception, my photography has been entangled with questions of decay and marginality. I am compelled by the visual aesthetics of crumbling buildings and socio-economically disenfranchised subjects, driven by a desire to construct counter-narratives that resist narrow representational norms. The images I create serve not only as a personal archive of movements and activism I embody, but also as a modality of articulating my experience as a Black nonbinary person that is committed to navigating the phantasmic cartographies of post-apartheid South Africa. What started as an instinctive compulsion to capture fragments of my unruly and disjointed environment, was transformed three years ago into an intentional series informed by the sociocultural conditions of post-apartheid South Africa. My gaze, even before I understood its intention, was drawn toward sites marked by the spectral remnants of what came before, the anticipatory contours of what might yet emerge, and the unstable terrain of what refuses to settle—hovering in the threshold between becoming and unbecoming. The vocationality that rendered my optics of becoming, as I began actively identifying as a photographer, was nascent to my fascination with spaces in dereliction across South Africa, but incipiently in Johannesburg’s CBD. The phantastical beauty of shifting architectural styles, each contouring specific temporal markers, captivated me.







The impulse to document my embodied subjectivity stems from deeply personal origins. Every Sunday, since adolescence, I would visit my Gogo<sup>1</sup> in Alexandra township, where my paternal family lives, and from an early age I became acutely aware of class distinctions. The urban planning and architecture of Johannesburg starkly illustrated the systemic marginalization and exclusion of those deemed “nomadic” by structures of power. Yet, what fascinated me most was the self-definition of Black bodies within these spaces, especially through informal housing in the townships. These homes, constructed from found materials like corrugated iron sheets, stood as complex expressions of dualities. Their exteriors, often functional and resource-driven, bore the marks of necessity. Yet their interiors, adorned with care, color, and personal touches, revealed intimate narratives of identity and self-expression. The tension between exterior pragmatism and interior ornamentation calls into question the layered ways Black subjectivity is asserted in spaces deemed marginal. How does the external aesthetic reflect survival, and how does interior decor resist that narrative, speaking instead of joy, creativity, and defiance? I wrestled with the discomfort of candid portraits. I felt uneasy photographing people without their consent, especially those rendered vulnerable by systemic inequities. Although I lacked the vocabulary at the time, I intuited the moral dilemmas of voyeurism—of turning Black bodies into objects of curiosity and reducing lives to spectacles of economic disparity. To capture someone improvisationally, particularly in disenfranchised contexts, risks stripping their agency and subjectivity. The grammar of naming<sup>2</sup> is erased when faces become nameless and bodies become faceless. In contrast, I turned my attention to homes. The homes of disenfranchised individuals became a way to navigate this ethical quandary. They are extensions—or perhaps prosthetics—of their inhabitants’ beings, standing as visible markers of their presence and resistance. By focusing on these structures, I sought to avoid the dehumanizing tendencies of poverty porn, instead highlighting the complex interplay between space, identity, and survival. Benjamin’s notion of the arcade and the interplay between use value and exchange value resonates deeply here. Township housing underscores the differentiation in the operations of governmentality, revealing how commodities are rendered essential or disposable within capitalist society. These homes are not merely shelters but sites where disenfranchised bodies assert agency, defying their prescribed invisibility within urban frameworks. These homes, often dismissed as crude or impermanent, are, in fact, profound declarations of life, identity, and futurity. They reject the logics of disposability imposed by capitalist urban planning and assert a claim to visibility and permanence.

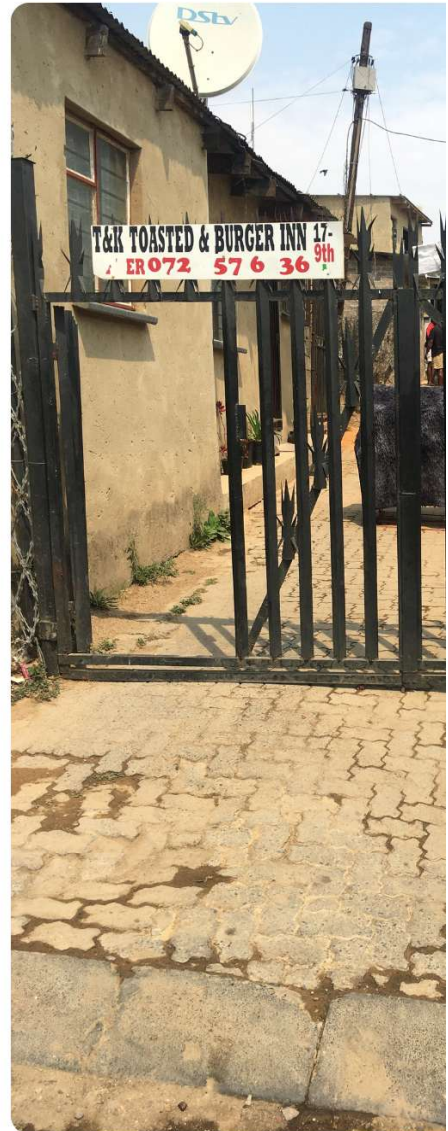
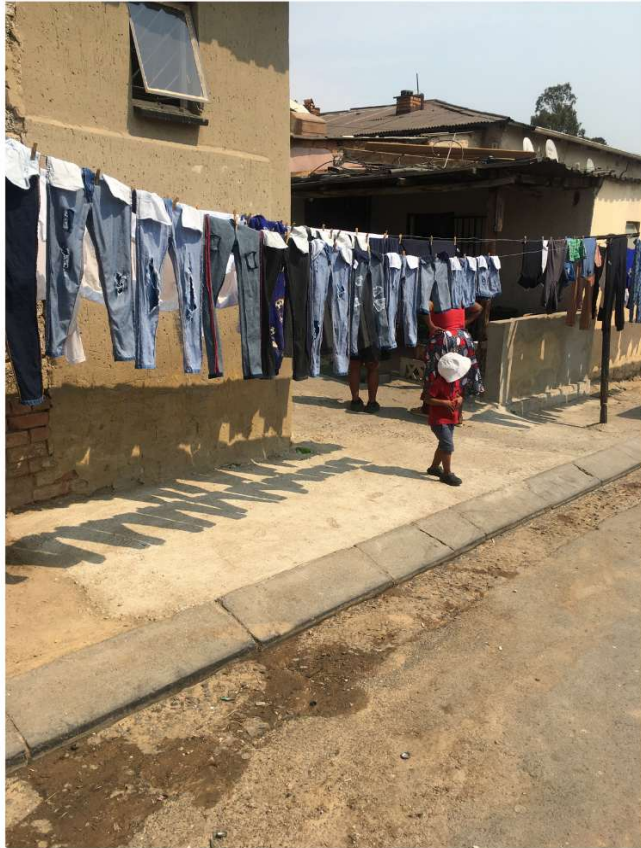
Ultimately, my photography is an act of theory as much as an act of seeing. It engages with the haunted residues of apartheid-era spatial divisions and the ghostly presence of systemic inequities that linger in contemporary South Africa. The decaying buildings and informal townships I document become more than sites of neglect; they are sites of potential, of reclamation, of the “not yet.” In these spaces, I find not only a critique of systematic erasure but also an affirmation of Black life as fugitive, resilient, and continuously reimagined.

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<sup>1</sup> Gogo is the amaZulu word for grandmother.

<sup>2</sup> Acknowledging a person’s embodied subjecthood









## Specters That Do Not Settle: Introduction

Spatio-temporality resists neutrality; it pulses as a site of rupture, a haunted terrain where power is inscribed and undone. This work turns toward the margins—toward informal dwellings, fugitive architectures, and ephemeral utopias—as spatial practices that unsettle the linear logics of capital and time. These are architectures that do not anchor but drift, offering gestures of refusal against the enforced coherence of spatial order and the disciplining rhythm of chrononormativity. While place might speak through the intimacy of occupation, it is within the folds of spatio-temporality that resistance takes root—not as declaration, but as residue, repetition, and spectral trace. This study moves through the tangled pathways of itinerant dwelling, mapping its insurgent topographies as refusals of spatial fixity. These are cartographies that do not resolve but rupture, disturbing the quiet violence of capitalist space and the temporal mandates that seek to order life into legibility<sup>3</sup>. Within this contested terrain, *No Longer, Not Yet* articulates the labyrinthine entanglement of un-commodified<sup>4</sup> chrono-spatiality, centering within the loci of informal (perhaps the fitting term would be auto-housing), and transient ante-utopias<sup>5</sup>. Wherein spaces persist as ruins-in-becoming, spectral indices of phantastical displacement refuse disappearance through the act of inscribing fugitive blueprints of the not-yet, insofar as they are entangled within cyclical mutations, these site-specific loci transmute the impossibility of legibility<sup>6</sup> within the liminal contestations amidst erasure and insistence. Through the spectral lens of hauntology, I trace the reverberations of spatial dispossession and the afterlives of architectural dereliction as a means to interrogate how remnants of past failures and forsaken futures coalesce into sites of radical possibility. Imbued with the effervescent counter-cartography of un-commodified culture, the selected images from my personal archive instantiate the navigation of an aporetic threshold between the enervated horizons of late capitalism and the phantasmal spaces in dereliction. Within the ghostly afterlives of these spatiotemporal manifestations, a contested dialogue unfolds whereby

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<sup>3</sup> Drawing on Judith Butler's *Precarious Life* (2004), legibility emerges as a recursive modality through which bodies come into view—both made visible and simultaneously bound by the regimes of recognizability. Within this framework, recognition is never neutral; it is filtered through the stratified logics of social inscription, where bodies are differentiated, classified, and disciplined. Precarity, then, is not simply lived but produced—shaped through biopolitical matrices that tether visibility to vulnerability, and recognition to regulation.

<sup>4</sup> I define the term “un-commodified” as remnants of a hegemonic society that, while no longer operating within circuits of capitalist exchange, undergo a process of transfiguration and reclamation by nomadic bodies. These spaces, (quasi-)objects, or forms of labor persist in a liminal state but exist in a liminal state of displacements from market value yet still retain traces of their former exchangeability.

<sup>5</sup> I offer my original concept of ante-utopia. To be ante-utopian is to dwell within the suspended tension between the refusal to crystallize as either an idealized utopia or an anti-utopian gesture. It manifests within the wake of histories that refuse to be settled in the guise of the disruptive normative utopian impulses. Unfolding as an ephemeral entity that cannot be owned as property, cannot be moored nor mapped, ante-utopia transmutes a spatial praxis of fugitivity.

<sup>6</sup> See Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004). Legibility, situated within Judith Butler's framework of the recognition-recognizability nexus, operates as a recursive mechanism that dually renders bodies visible, yet frames them through the stratified logics of differentiation and social inscription. As a means to regulate through and inscribe biopolitical formations, precarious bodies are bound within the intersecting axes of signification and social legibility.

the anoriginal inertia of commodification destabilizes the improvisational reconfigurations of fugitive habitats. In this recursive interplay, the fissural matrix of power morphs into a spectral circuitry where alternative futures emerge only in the moment of their foreclosure and are suspended in the afterimage of what could have been. Where cyclical poetics gesture towards the amorphousness of nomadic embodiment, *No Longer, Not Yet* articulates the dislocatability and deterritorialization of the body which resists restraint of capitalism. Catechizing the field of intensity<sup>7</sup>, this project navigates the liminal threshold amidst the "no longer" and the "not yet" as a synthesis of disruptive substance for potential proliferations of being, becoming, and be-coming in an ante-utopia.

The featured photographs summon a dialectic relationship between the ways through which nomadic bodies, in themselves and as vehicles for ontological birth, speculate corporeality as sites for epistemological rupture. The phantastical epitaph, materialized through 35mm film, manifests as both displacement and dislocatability. While the materiality of film negatives and scans inscribes concrete blueprints of chrono-temporality and the afterlife of the film image itself, the tactility of these photographs evokes a mnemonic spectral grammar of presence which redeems the ruination of the disavowed and maps the otherwise occluded cartographies. The photographs in *No Longer, Not Yet* trace the spectral drift of nomadic bodies—those who, in the spirit of Benjamin's flâneur, move through space not as observers but as agents of reanimation. Their presence disrupts the sedimented architecture of the everyday, catalyzing epistemic fractures that unsettle the spatial and temporal orders sustaining South Africa's democratic imaginary. These figures—fugitive, itinerant, uncontained—inscribe gestures of refusal across the debris of post-apartheid promises, exposing the scaffolds of inequality that underwrite the nation's aspirational narrative of freedom. Through this embodied counter-mapping, the photographs do not simply depict—they intervene, conjuring the buried violences that persists beneath the surface of the so-called democratic present.

Within the fissures of capitalist collapse, Manfredo Tafuri's critique of architectural utopianism reveals how speculative futures are continuously folded back into a self-perpetuating present, thereby foreclosing the emergence of genuine alternative potentialities<sup>8</sup>. In contrast, Ernst Bloch insists that utopia is never fully immanent but always on the verge—a flicker of possibility materializing in the cracks of now, persistently gesturing toward its own becoming<sup>9</sup>. Drawing these divergent insights together, I propose the notion of ante-utopia. If Bloch's horizon is an ever-receding site of hope, and Tafuri's diagnosis performs its foreclosure, then ante-utopia

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<sup>7</sup> See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2008). A field of intensity is a site of flickering emergence, where an impersonal and pre-subjective terrain pulsates with difference, as well as an arena whereby the self has not yet sedimented into form, but rather it is situated in the rhythms of becoming.

<sup>8</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1976)

<sup>9</sup> Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1954)



inhabits the charged suspension between anticipation and negation<sup>10</sup>. It is a spatial practice of fugitivity—a dwelling that refuses inscription within the cartographies of property, state sovereignty, or linear progress. It does not signal a “no-place” to be reached, but rather a no-arrival that remains insistently present<sup>11</sup>.

This project introduces two conceptual terms—an-dead<sup>12</sup> and ante-dead<sup>13</sup>—to articulate the haunted conditions through which informal life worlds persist and are continually disavowed. These concepts emerge from a broader meditation on temporality, ruin, and the precarity of marginalized spatial forms within the afterlife of apartheid’s architectures. Whereas an-dead is the condition of ruins-in-progress, always at risk of vanishing yet refusing finality, haunting the present as a refusal of obliteration and a disruption of the logics that seek to render them illegible, ante-dead is the spectral weight of an unfulfilled vanishing, a state of being unmade in advance, where survival is an act of defiance against the forces that seek to erase before the trace is even left behind. Rather than static descriptors, an-dead and ante-dead operate as analytic tools that trace the uneasy temporalities of survival—those that are neither fully past nor fully present, neither dead nor yet alive. These terms will be explored in greater depth throughout the thesis, where they serve as anchors for examining how informal housing, fugitive spatiality, and unresolved ruin expose the violent thresholds of South Africa’s democratic promise.

Next, I discuss the Loiter-Leute Nexus<sup>14</sup> which reveals these nomadic spaces as zones of illegible survival, where loitering constitutes a spatial insurgency—a defiant refusal to disappear, and a testament to the enduring presence of those who have been rendered invisible. Within this nexus, the fugitive body unsettles spatial order, disrupting the architectures of surveillance and dispossession. It is not idle wandering but an assertion of being beyond the dictates of productivity, a refusal to be fixed, claimed, or contained.

Ultimately, this study undertakes an archaeology of the residual and the remainder, ascertaining the poetics of persistence that foregrounds the survival strategies mobilized by nomadic bodies. Through a critical analysis of architectures and spaces that haunt and rupture the dominant spatial

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<sup>10</sup> Unlike classical utopias that prescribe coherent blueprints, and dystopias that depict their failure, ante-utopia refuses both resolution and collapse.

<sup>11</sup> Fred Moten “Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh).” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 112 (4), 2013

<sup>12</sup> An-Dead names a state of suspended negation, where erasure is neither absolute nor complete. It describes bodies, spaces, and structures that exist in a liminal condition—dispossessed yet not extinguished, foreclosed yet still lingering. To be An-Dead is to inhabit the threshold between disappearance and persistence, where the forces of removal, displacement, and capitalist extraction render existence precarious but never fully obliterated.

<sup>13</sup> Ante-Dead names a condition of preemptive erasure, where bodies, spaces, and structures are marked for disappearance before they are gone. It is the anticipatory logic of displacement, where existence is structured by the inevitability of removal, rendering life precarious and presence provisional. To be Ante-Dead is to inhabit a temporality of deferred extinction, always on the cusp of negation yet still materially present.

<sup>14</sup> The Loiter-Leute Nexus articulates a mode of inhabiting the illegible, where loitering emerges as a spatial insurgency against capitalist legibility and disciplinary control. It names the convergence of bodies and space in a state of refusal, where presence is ungovernable and movement resists capture. To loiter is to occupy without being absorbed, to exist without being instrumentalized, to linger as an act of defiance.

logic, I demonstrate the ways in which these sites resist erasure and instead perform as rehearsals for alternative utopian futures. These spaces are liminal zones of becoming, insistently conjuring possibilities, yet never fully extinguished. Attuned to the modality of lingering, resisting, and refusing, informal homes emerge as an insurgent grammar of the yet-to-come lexicon, thereby disrupting the teleological axiom of capitalist temporality and gesturing toward a fugitive landscape of radical possibility. *No Longer, Not Yet* argues that nomadic homes exist as ephemeral sanctuaries between past and future, resisting erasure while exposing the limitations of capitalist ownership and spatial belonging.

## Nomadism, Transient Ante-Utopias, and the Exorcism of Derelict Spaces

The conceptualization of nomadism is crucial in reframing the perception of spatial agency and mobility<sup>15</sup>. Employing the incantation of movement as an inherent substance of identity, nomadic bodies subvert the fixity of "home" and its attendant implications of stasis and belonging. Rather, by invoking the concept of nomadic bodies, I dismantle the hegemonic narratives that pathologize displacement and reinscribe the notion of home as a fixed, singular entity, wherein these bodies inhabit a relational and dynamic conception that is inextricably linked to their negotiations of spatio-temporality. In this context, this research deliberately eschews the term "homeless" or "the disenfranchised" in favor of "nomadic bodies," as the former is an iteration of a deficit-oriented understanding of displacement, whereas the latter validates the personal sovereignty and self-empowerment of an identity which engages with manifolded, temporary and fluid spatial contexts. The term "homeless" is a reiteration of the logic that promotes capitalist insufficiency, towards positioning individuals as situated in "bare life"<sup>16</sup> and as lacking humanity. This designation foregrounds the individual's perceived incompleteness, rather than acknowledging their agency and complex spatial relationships. The absence of permanent housing offers a potential refusal of the capitalist paradigm, that dismantles commodified spatiality. Moreover, this terminology perpetuates a sedimented nature of housing as a fixed and a singular entity, rather than engaging with the complex, dynamic, and relational virtue of spatial habitation. It eludes the ways in which nomadic bodies formulate and inscribe multiple homes, forging rhizomatic networks with spaces and communities on the peripheries of the hegemonic logic of ownership and permanence. Similarly, the discursive frame of referring to nomadic bodies as "disenfranchised"<sup>17</sup> reprises the narrative of powerlessness, eliding the embodied subjectivity for spatial reclamation and

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Merriman, "Mobility/Fixity: Rethinking Binaries in Mobility Studies," *Mobility Humanities*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.23090/MH.2023.01.2.1.006>.

<sup>16</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben theorizes how the state reduces certain populations to a "bare life," i.e., to an existence outside political and social recognition. Homeless people, through their exclusion from property and citizenship, become "bare life," reinforcing capitalism's dehumanization of those deemed economically unproductive.

<sup>17</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). Lefebvre critiques how capitalism transforms urban space into a site of exclusion. Homelessness, in this context, is not a social problem but a necessary consequence of capitalist accumulation, proving its inhumanity.

resistance. Their adaptability and resilience in reorienting and honoring their environments certify their agency and reconfigure them not as victims of capitalism, wherein normative systems elicit “disenfranchised” bodies operate as a necessary function of capitalism's cycles of dispossession<sup>18</sup>, but instead as active subverters of its structures that reclaim and redefine spaces in and through the margins. Guided by this thought, the nomadic body's apposition with space is one of creative negation, negotiation and defiance. Through embracingly occupying spaces on the peripheries of ownership and control, they circumscribe alternative forms of spatial habitation.

Nomadic bodies occupy a reality wherein “home” is not a destination, but a trajectory of perpetual mechanics of negotiation, adaptation, and becoming that is shaped by the intersecting operations of power, identity, and spatio-temporality. The spaces inhabited by nomadic bodies – parks, abandoned buildings, street corners – transcend their designation as temporary shelters or waystations, and are instead imbued with the palimpsestic traces of personal histories, memories, and experiences. These liminal environments, marked by the ephemeral and the precarious, are transfigured into lived-topographies of resilience and resistance, wherein the cartographies of displacement and poetics of belonging are ceaselessly reconstituted. The nomadic subject's relationship with home is not characterized by lack or deprivation, but rather by a deliberate disavowal of the sedimented notion of home and belonging that is inextricably linked to ownership and permanence. By way of these itinerant practices of occupation, they seize the fissures of the spatial (dis)order as a means to rearticulate “home” as a dynamic, ephemeral, and relational concept which, ultimately, is constituted through occupation, habitation, and embodied experience, instead of possession, duration/ continuity or fixity.

## Nomadic Bodies in BwO Spaces: Fluidity, Resilience, and Becoming

Following the concept of the Body without Organs (BwO)<sup>19</sup>, as posited by Deleuze and Guattari, offers a compelling framework for understanding the nomadic body's relationship with space. Nomadic bodies, in their refusal to be fixed and organized habitats, personify the BwO's spirit of deterritorialization. As they traverse the world, they forge ephemeral, transient and mutable realms of livability, often in sites marked as “derelict” and “decayed.” Yet in their engagement with abandoned buildings, streets, or informal settlements, nomadic bodies transform these spaces, imbuing them with liminality and fluidity. Where the BwO exemplifies a de-territorialized entity

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<sup>18</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), Harvey critiques how neoliberal policies—privatization, austerity, and deregulation—have exacerbated housing insecurity by treating shelter as a commodity rather than a right. He argues that homelessness is an effect of “accumulation by dispossession”, where capitalism continuously expels people from land and housing.

<sup>19</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Edipus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Viking Press, 1977). BwO (Body without Organs) is a concept from *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* describing a body in a state of pure potentiality, stripped of hierarchical organization and fixed structures. It rejects the imposed order of organs, functions, and subjectivities, resisting stratification by capitalism, the state, and social norms. Rather than being an actual physical state, the BwO is a process of deterritorialization—an escape from codified identity, desire, and power.

that is emancipated from the restrictions of traditional, functional, and hierarchical structures, nomadic bodies defy societal norms, as a means to embrace fugitivity, fluidity, and becoming. Under this consideration, these nascent spaces, in turn, echo the BwO's impermanence and dismembered entities as thresholds for re-transfiguration. Consequently, nomadic bodies and BwO spaces are an interwoven tapestry, each informing and reflecting the other's fluidity, adaptivity, and resilient substance, with the caveat of their perpetual evolution. Noticeably, the nomadic body's presence in BwO spaces contests the conventional narratives of home, property, and ownership. It proposes a radical alternative that favors malleability, versatility and ingenuity over immovability, continuity, and governance.

### Fugitivity: Nomadic Bodies and the Refusal of Ruin

Spaces that nomadic bodies occupy are transient ante-utopias<sup>20</sup> that do not emerge from blueprints, nor do they congeal into fixed architectures of futurity. Instead, they are imbued with tactility, improvisation and continually on the cusp of dissolving, yet no less real for their impermanence. Through their refusal for settlement, ownership and legibility within the capitalist landscape of property and immutability, nomadic bodies inhabit these site-specific derelict spatialities, though they reject possession and rather function as acts of reclamation. These nomadic loci operate as a transient occupation whereby the home is not a structure but a gesture, a rhythm and a fugitive temporality.

These intentional, transient utopian spaces can be understood as "temporary autonomous zones" (TAZs), a concept coined by Hakim Bey<sup>21</sup>. In the case of nomadic bodies, TAZs might take the form of makeshift camps, spontaneous gatherings, or other temporary configurations that facilitate community, mutual aid, and creative expression.

### Ante-Utopia as Errant Possibility: Rethinking Utopia beyond Tafuri and Bloch

Ante-utopia inhabits the fissure between Tafuri's critique of utopia's foreclosure within capitalist totality and Bloch's teleological horizon of hope. Where Tafuri negates utopia by exposing its failures, Bloch offers a different framework wherein utopia is not something achieved but something anticipated in glimpses of the present. Ante-utopia defies the binary of anti-utopia's negation and the deferred utopia's awaiting realization, rather it is in itself an interval before capture in the interstitial break. Here, ante-utopia assumes an insurgent and fugitive condition that denies resolution, through the rejection to be dissolved neither into capitalist absorption nor an

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<sup>20</sup> This research proposes the original concept of ante-utopia. Wherein it is a critique of the architectural impulse to fix and formalize, which yet offers spatiality as an insurgent spatial practice that disrupts capitalist enclosure without seeking to replace it with another static form.

<sup>21</sup> TAZs are ephemeral, self-governing areas that arise from the collective efforts of individuals seeking to create alternative forms of social organization.

idealist expectation. Ante-utopia embodies an unyielding praxis of refusal, errancy, and uncontainable potential that unsettles architecture's codifying impulse, instead inhabiting space as an uncharted and unmasterable potentiality.

Utopia, as both concept and construct, has long been ensnared in a paradox: imagined as an outside to the world as it is, yet always returning, always absorbed, always made to serve the logics it sought to escape<sup>22</sup>. Where Manfredo Tafuri critiques utopia as architecture's fatal illusion, occupying a phantasmagoric state, it is about the spectacle of stability, the projection of an image of permanence that masks the precarity it produces. He argues that any attempt to construct the new will be inevitably folded into capitalism's reproduction. For Tafuri, there is no beyond, an anti-utopia lack of vision, wherein the totalizing machinery of the present solely recognizes architecture as complicit rather than a radical utopia. By contrast, Ernst Bloch refuses to abandon utopia, situating it instead as an anticipatory force, wherein there is a re-orientation of potentiality toward the not-yet that re-animates revolutionary longing. Utopia, in Bloch's reading, does not exist but insists, by way of gesturing toward an unrealized otherwise.

But what if utopia is not merely deferred? What if its power lies not in an eventual becoming but in its refusal to be captured at all? Ante-utopia moves against both Tafuri's pessimistic closure and Bloch's hopeful horizon. It does not negate utopia, nor does it seek its fulfillment. Rather, it occupies the liminality prior to settlement, where the radical possibility of the otherwise emerges as ungoverned, fugitive, and unclaimed. In rejecting both the erasure of utopia and its final realization, ante-utopia lingers in the in-between, in the tension of the unfinished, in the refusal to be fully subsumed or fully arrived at. It is the utopia that does not settle—the utopia that stays fugitive.

### Ante-Utopia as the Refusal of Chronotypes

Tafuri, in his relentless critique, foreclosed utopia by entangling it within the totality of capitalist reproduction. Tafuri writes the death of utopia as if it were inevitable that its "synthesis [be] impossible" and that "utopia itself [mark] out the successive stages of its own extinction" bound to the very logics it seeks to escape<sup>23</sup>. For him, utopia is a pantomime of resistance, already absorbed, already spent. Architecture, always-already ensnared in the machinations of capital, cannot be otherwise—it cannot think itself outside the totality that conditions its existence<sup>24</sup>. But Tafuri's critique depends on a utopia that arrives fully formed, a utopia made to be recognized, seized, named. What if utopia was never meant to arrive? What if its force lay not in realization, but in its unfinished, errant, anticipatory movement? For him, there is no outside—every utopian

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<sup>22</sup> Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, (Bern: ed. Peter Lang, International Academic Publishers, 2010). Levitas describes utopias as "a representation of an ideal society that critiques the present and inspires hope for a better future."

<sup>23</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1976), 63.

<sup>24</sup> Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p. 179.

architectural project is either absorbed or dismantled by the forces of capital. This is the fatalism of his critique: utopia is not just deferred but fundamentally impossible. Tafuri's critique<sup>25</sup>, shaped by Negri's assertion that one must "free oneself from the fear of the future by fixing the future as the present,"<sup>26</sup> reveals the violent mechanics of capitalist time—a time that seeks to foreclose utopian possibility by collapsing the future into the now. To fix the future as the present is to render it inert as a means, to strip it of its radical indeterminacy and to force it into the service of a system that demands resolution, possession, and legibility.

If Negri's formulation reveals how fear of the unknown future leads to its premature containment, and Tafuri sees utopia as always-already absorbed into capitalism's structures, ante-utopia resists both by remaining in excess, refusing arrival, and inhabiting the fissure between anticipation and fugitivity. It is neither a teleological project nor a failed ideal; it is the unresolved, the speculative, the unformed potential that cannot be reduced to capitalist inevitability or dismissed as ideological illusion. This is the ground of ante-utopia—not a negation of utopia (anti-utopia), nor its promise deferred, but something fugitive, something prior to enclosure. A condition of excess, a refusal of fixity. Where Tafuri seals the fate of utopia, ante-utopia refuses the foreclosure, unmoors utopia from its predetermined collapse, lets it linger as something that cannot be captured, cannot be resolved. But what if utopia was never about an arrival? What if utopia was never meant to be a fixed destination, but instead a fugitive movement, an errant force that refuses the demand for closure? This is where ante-utopia intervenes—not as the promise of a coming utopia, nor as the negation of utopia itself, but as a mode of dwelling in the anticipatory, the emergent, the unformed.

Unlike Tafuri's critique, which sees utopianism as inevitably falling into capital's structuring logic, ante-utopia does not seek a utopia that can be designed, mastered, or even completed. Instead, it lingers in the unfinished, in the excess that resists being named. It is not utopia in its realized state but in its fugitive trace, its speculative insistence, its refusal to resolve into legibility. It is the moment before utopia collapses into commodity form, before it is assimilated into the logic of property, before it becomes architecture in the capitalist sense.

## Beyond Bloch: Ante-Utopia as an Active Refusal

Bloch's Principle of Hope<sup>27</sup> is key here because it insists on utopia as a necessary structure of human imagination—utopia is always deferred and continually on the horizon. But ante-utopia is not just about the not-yet; it is about the refusal to be captured within a utopian schema at all.

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<sup>25</sup> Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p. 135. Tafuri invokes Negri's assertion to critique how capitalist architecture neutralizes the utopian potential by preemptively absorbing the future into the structures of the present, rendering it as an extension of the already-determined rather than a space of radical possibility.

<sup>26</sup> Antonio Negri, *La Teoria Capitalistica Dello Stato Nel '29: John M. Keynes* (La nuova Italia, 1968).

<sup>27</sup> Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1954).

For Bloch, utopia is never here, but always gesturing toward its own emergence, flickering in the cracks of the present, waiting to be realized<sup>28</sup>. The Principle of Hope insists that utopia is not a fixed place, not a blueprint, but a horizon—an orientation toward an otherwise that remains just beyond reach. In Bloch's world, utopia is glimpsed in fragments, in the unfinished, in the dreamwork of history's oppressed.

Bloch's hope gestures forward, toward a future that is always receding. Ante-utopia, by contrast, does not simply look forward—it unsettles the very temporality of utopian thought. It is not just the horizon of utopia, but the space where utopia fractures, where it destabilizes its own coherence, where it remains in errancy rather than advancing toward fulfillment. If Bloch's utopia is something to be reached, ante-utopia is a site of rupture, a refusal to resolve into the utopian and a refusal to collapse into the anti-utopian. Bloch sees utopia as longing, as horizon. The Principle of Hope insists that utopia is not a place but an orientation, a structure of anticipation. And yet, even Bloch's formulation still presumes a forward motion, a utopia that can be glimpsed in fragments, on the edge of the not-yet. But ante-utopia is not merely an anticipation of what is to come—it is a fracture in time, a suspension, a refusal to be sutured into teleology at all. Not a horizon, but a break. Not an arrival, but an insistence on remaining before capture.

But ante-utopia is not simply the not-yet—it is the refusal to be subsumed into the logic of becoming at all. If Bloch sees utopia as a structure of hope, ante-utopia is something more errant, more unruly—it is the insistence on possibility without the promise of resolution. It does not move toward fulfillment, because fulfillment presumes a world that can hold what is being imagined. Ante-utopia does not assume arrival—it moves fugitive, refuses capture, exists in the past, in the almost, in the crack that never fully closes.

### Ante-Utopia: The Refusal of Resolution

This is where ante-utopia becomes crucial as a fugitive mode of spatial and temporal inhabitation. It refuses utopia's reduction into architectural form, but it also refuses the nihilistic foreclosure of Tafuri's critique. Instead, it lingers in the in-between, in the errant, the transitory, the spaces that cannot be captured. It is the architecture of refusal—not in the sense of rejecting space, but in the sense of unfixing it, allowing it to move, to shift, to refuse ownership, mastery, and enclosure.

Ante-utopia is a space of non-belonging, a space where the unhomed dwell—not in mourning, but in a refusal to be absorbed into the spatial and economic logics that demand property as a precondition for existence. It is the architecture of the an-dead, the always-not-yet, the spatial manifestation of Black fugitivity in its refusal to be enclosed within capitalist modernity's structuring grammars. It does not seek to replace one world with another but instead inhabits the

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<sup>28</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, p. 145. Bloch states "solely real realism which only is so because it is fully attuned to the tendency of what is actually real, to the objectively real possibility ... and to the properties of reality which are themselves utopian, i.e., contain future"

cracks of this one, refusing both the illusory promises of utopia and the totalizing despair of its negation.

In this way, ante-utopia is not simply an alternative to Tafuri or Bloch—it is an interruption, a refusal to allow utopia to collapse into either recuperation or impossibility. It is the stolen moment, the errant drift, the refusal to be claimed or settled. It does not build, but neither does it destroy. Instead, it unsettles, disrupts, and lingers in the space where possibility remains open—not as a destination, but as an insistence.

Ante-utopia is not an architecture, but an anarchitecture<sup>29</sup>—an inhabitation of the interval, a refusal to be claimed, a movement through the ruins of the possible. Where Bloch gestures forward and Tafuri shuts the door, ante-utopia remains in the flicker, the hesitation, the space before certainty.

To be ante-utopian is to linger in the interval, to refuse resolution, to dwell in the fugitive moment before commodification, before assimilation, before space is made legible to the logics of ownership and state control. It does not offer an alternative blueprint, because blueprints demand legibility, demand submission to the architecture of the possible. Instead, it moves through errancy, through refusal, through the frictions of space that will not be claimed. It is a dwelling that is not a dwelling, an inhabitation that refuses property as its precondition..

Utopia, for Bloch, is on the horizon. For Tafuri, it is an impossibility, but ante-utopia is neither horizon nor failure—it is the fugitive moment before collapse, the interval where the world wavers, where new possibilities glimmer and recede. If Bloch's hope is a reaching toward, and Tafuri's critique is a closing off, ante-utopia is the moment before grasp, the refusal to be held, the persistence of something that will not be reduced to either promise or impossibility. It is the utopian that will not settle, the architecture that will not become form, the dream that stays fugitive. It never arrives, and that is its power.

### Encampments of the Otherwise: The Persistence of the Fleeting

Nomadic bodies' amorphous re-occupation demonstrates their presence as a fugitive sociality, wherein they author ephemeral spaces that embody a complex interplay between intentionality, utopian aspirations, and survival strategies. Their movement eclipses displacement but emplacement it as an unfixing of space through the very act of inhabiting it otherwise. Transience does not denote an absence of place but rather transforms spatiality as elusive and ephemeral. Through the insistence of presence where it is unwelcome, the assertion of mobility and nomadic sociality issues survival as a necessary gesture, yet it additionally presents how nomadic bodies conjure fugitive, ephemeral zones of utopian possibility. Through acts of improvisation, hope in

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<sup>29</sup> See Peter Noever (ed.), *Anarchitecture: Works by Gordon Matta-Clark* (Los Angeles: MAKak Center for Art and Architecture, 1997).



the breaks, the fissures, and the detours of dominant spatiality, echo Bloch's<sup>30</sup> insistence on the anticipatory, the not-yet, the horizon of the possible. In the context of nomadic bodies, this principle of hope manifests itself through fleeting yet self-determined zones that embody identitarian desires of emancipation, collectivity, and autonomous embodied subjectivity.

## The Unbecoming of Time: The Unfinished Temporalities of An-Dead and Ante-Dead

This research proposes the original concepts of an-dead and the praxis of ante-dead as an act of the refusal of linear time; it is a fugitive inhabitation of the interval where nomadic bodies resist the violences of ontological capture. The an-dead is a negation of death as a totalizing endpoint, positioning nomadic existence as a substance that is neither fully living nor fully dead but instead suspended in an (un)becoming and an irreducible excess beyond the grammar of mortality. The praxis of ante-dead is a way of being in the world that moves through the pre-mourning, the always-dispossessed, but never fully deceased. It articulates a mode of refusal and a fugitive epistemology that dislocates death's inevitability by inhabiting the nonlocal, the spectral, the unmappable. In itself it is to untether the nomadic being from its seizure, but rather galvanizes the practice of endurance that exists in the space between erasure and excess.

## Resisting the Finality of Death: An-Dead as a Fugitive Temporal Mode

The term an-dead emerges as a concept for apparitions that lingers, for what was meant to be excised but persists, for what is neither fully alive nor wholly dead but caught in the posthumous existence of dispossession. It embodies the ontology of the expelled, serving as a notification and recollection for what is not merely a remainder, but a presence in perpetual mutation. Moreover, it manifests as a ghostly insistence that fractures the narrative of finality. To be an-dead is to be consigned to the margins of the world while still shaping it, to exist in the ruin of recognition but to move through that ruin as a force, as a being that resists disappearance by refusing legibility.

To occupy the an-dead state is to be consigned to a condition of suspension, held within the no longer but refused entry into the not yet. It renders the dispossessed ruination that has been marked as irrelevant to capitalist society. However, though these spaces manifest as erasure or causation for amnesia, they are never fully abolished. As a posture of its existence that is neither past nor

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<sup>30</sup> Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1954). Bloch's *principle of hope* posits that utopian longing is an inherent aspect of human existence, driving us towards a better future. This hope is not merely a romanticized notion but a concrete, anticipatory consciousness that informs our actions and decisions. In the context of nomadic bodies, this principle of hope manifests in the creation of fleeting, autonomous zones that embody a desire for freedom, community, and self-determination. Bloch's principle of hope posits that utopian longing is an intrinsic essence of human existence, with the promise of constructing a better future. This hope extends beyond an idealized notion; rather, it is but a tangible, anticipatory consciousness that informs praxis.

future but caught in the unfinished temporality of the displaced and operates as the afterimage of those who refuse to be reduced to memory. An-dead transcends hauntology as it is the materiality of haunting and the way through which absence asserts itself as presence. It is the spatiality of the (dis)remembered that sought to disappear yet resurface as the embodiment of the unacknowledged, that ongoingly form the present of infrastructural remains of failed modernity, that forge sites of alternate occupation. An-dead is the ontology of the nomad that is located in the liminality of an unfinished temporality of the displaced. It is the architecture of refusal, the materiality of the abandoned, the presence of what the archive has not recorded but cannot silence. It does not ask to be redeemed. It does not seek restoration. It exists, and in its existence, it fractures the completeness of the world that tried to leave it behind.

### Ante-Dead: The Praxis of Becoming beyond Death's Grasp

The praxis of ante-dead morphs as a residue of refusal that is also a making, an improvisation of presence within spaces marked for erasure. It is the practice of unsettling spatial delimitation by inhabiting ruination as a site of reconfiguration and an insurgent architecture of presence. To practice ante-dead is to be in perpetual motion and refuse stasis, as a means to world-make through the mobility of occupation and formations of rhizomatic improvisation that reject legitimacy but generate sociality otherwise. It is the way in which un-homed bodies<sup>31</sup> claim shelter in the gaps of the city and engage with ways through which displaced communities transfigure spaces of exile into zones of sustenance. Guided by ante-dead space, the un-homed lingers as the dispossessed un-fixed and spectral yet not absent nor erased. It is an existence in the not-yet, a fugitive inhabitation of that which has been foreclosed but refuses foreclosure. These spatialities engage with continual mobility, though the not-quite-gone, the excess that cannot be accounted for in the grammars of property, of citizenship, of ontology itself issue the un-homed as a being-without-location, whilst a liminal inhabitation between recognition and the refusal thereof questions mournability. Ante-dead is the praxis of fugitive spatio-temporality, wherein an alternative cartography is rewritten through encampments that transcend acts of survival and generate counter-occupation and demand the right to existence through the grammar of that which is at once fleeting yet insistent.

### Loiter-leute Nexus: Inhabiting the Illegible

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<sup>31</sup> Shaya Golparian, *Displaced Displacement : An A/R/Tographic Performance of Experiences of Being Unhomed*, unpublished PhD thesis (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2012), accessed at <https://doi.org/10.14288/1.0055379>. Golparian denotes un-homed as a state of perpetual displacement, where home is neither a fixed location nor a place of return but an ever-elusive elsewhere. To be *un-homed* is to exist in the rupture between belonging and unbelonging, to dwell in the fissures of dispossession, exile, and fugitivity. It is not simply to be without home but to be rendered structurally unhomed—to have home foreclosed as an ontological certainty.

The loiter-leute nexus invokes the embodied practice of “loitering,” enacted by nomadic bodies within public or informal spaces, wherein their presence is originally not intended for them. Manifesting as a formation of spatial occupation that operates as a resistance to normative uses of the public space, this praxis subverts traditional conceptualizations of belonging, citizenship, and propriety.

The nexus of loiter and leute unfurls in a fugitive etymology, where movement and emergence, wandering and becoming, constellate in a shared refusal to be fixed. Leute, in its archaic root, carries a double resonance: to grow and to belong to the lower orders. Not growth as accumulation or upward mobility, but as a lateral sprawl, a proliferation that unsettles enclosure, a movement that refuses capture. And not merely “people,” but those rendered excessive to capital—the ones who gather, who labor, who are at once forgotten and feared, surplus and necessary. Hence, leute also carries the sediment of class, an old Germanic signifier of the lower orders, the ones who labor, who gather, who move through the city not as capital but as surplus, as presence unaccounted for yet impossible to erase. Leute, then, is not just “people” but the act of radical survival, the improvisational gathering of sociality that grows against the grain of discipline, that moves with the consent of its own refusal. This is the loiter-leute nexus: the practice of being in excess of what one is allowed, the wandering growth of a social otherwise.

Loitering, then, becomes a mode of people-ing, a swelling of presence that unsettles the logics of order and utility. To loiter is to inhabit space fugitive-like, not as trespass but as a mode of living refusal, a refusal that is also an opening. To loiter is to leute, to inhabit space as a practice of refusal, to linger in ways that trouble the logics of order and efficiency. This is not trespass but a mode of living that consents to itself otherwise—an improvisational, fugitive sociality that swells against discipline. The loiter-leute nexus names this errant presence: the way people grow where they are not wanted, move in excess of what they are allowed, and persist in ways that capital cannot fully erase.

It is a form of spatial occupation that resists normative uses of public space and disrupts traditional understandings of belonging, citizenship, and propriety. The term Loiter-Leute intertwines the act of loitering with the German Leute (people) foregrounding loitering not as mere idleness, but as a fugitive choreography and an embodied reclamation of space. It is an act of presence, a spectral imprint in the urban fabric, wherein those cast to the periphery refuse disappearance. In loitering, there is insistence—a temporal and spatial transgression that unsettles the logic of order, reanimating the abandoned, the overlooked, the dispossessed.

This praxis extends beyond resistance; it is a re-worlding, a radical inhabitation of space that births fugitive architectures of sociality, communion, and belonging where the sanctioned world withholds shelter. Loiter-Leute unsettles the cartographies of exclusion, rupturing the enforced invisibility of those deemed excess, those consigned to spatial erasure. In this lingering, in this

refusal to disappear, the ‘dead’ are made visible, the displaced reconstitute presence, and the city—once a site of control—becomes a stage for insurgent life.

Loitering is not absence but excess; it is the embodied presence that is an insurgent embodiment that unsettles the urban order, a corporeal haunting of spaces that would rather be forgotten. The loitering body is a site of refusal, an archive of histories that the city seeks to erase. To linger is to inscribe presence upon landscapes that frame Blackness, queerness, and marginality as aberration. It is to become an interruption, a rupture in the smooth flow of capital and control. These bodies, rendered disposable by the logics of the state, refuse disappearance. In the stillness of their presence, they articulate a politics of endurance, a quiet insurgency against the demand to move along, to make oneself small, to yield to spatial discipline.

Loitering is more than passive waiting; it is the reclamation of spatiality. The city, structured through exclusionary architectures, dictates whose bodies are welcome, whose existence is permitted without justification. But Loiter-Leute unsettles these spatial mandates, transforming the overlooked, the abandoned, the in-between into sites of possibility. In this lingering, space itself is reconfigured, liberated from the grip of capitalist utility and reclaimed as a site of being.

To loiter is to resist the violences of displacement, to rupture the temporal and spatial logics that relegate certain bodies to the periphery, as a refusal of dispossession. The colonial city is an architecture of exclusion, an arrangement of visibility and disappearance, where Blackness and otherness are surveilled, contained, erased. Loitering, in its refusal to move, disrupts this spatial grammar. It is an unmaking of dispossession, an assertion that refuses to be evicted from space, from time, from legibility. It is the articulation of a right not only to occupy, but to exist beyond productivity, beyond extraction, beyond the relentless demand for justification. In stillness, there is resistance. In the act of lingering, an alternative sociality takes form as a gathering without permission, a communion outside the sanctioned rhythms of the city. Loitering is a fugitive kinship, a counter public forged in the shadows of urban life, where those cast aside find each other in shared refusal. Against the isolating forces of gentrification, against the spatial segregation of capital, loitering becomes a practice of relation, of being together otherwise. It is a reclamation of time, of presence, of belonging. To loiter is not simply to stay; it is to insist upon a world where gathering is not criminalized, where presence is not policed, where bodies are not rendered surplus but sacred. It is an act of care, a gesture of survival, a refusal of exile.

Moreover, loiter-leute stands as a critique of chrononormativity and refuses these mandates. It is a disruption, a suspension, a lingering in time that does not adhere to the forward propulsion of capitalist life. To loiter-leute is to refuse the demand to move along, to be useful, to submit to the clocks and calendars that govern normative belonging. It rejects the imposed timelines that dictate when and where one should be, how one should act, and what one must do to be considered legitimate. If chrononormativity disciplines bodies into adherence, then loiter-leute manifests

within another register, a fugitive temporality that is nonlinear, excessive, and unproductive in the capitalist sense. Nomadic bodies inhabit chrono-spatiality differently, dwelling in an otherwise temporality that does not ask to be disciplined or absorbed. Their very presence is an insurgent act, an assertion of being outside the dictates of progress, productivity, and legibility.

My concept of pri-formance<sup>32</sup> further illuminates this temporal subversion, placing emphasis not on visibility within dominant structures, but on the priority of existence as a mode of being that precedes recognition and exceeds the categories that seek to contain it. Loiter-leute, much like pri-formance, is not a passive waiting, nor is it a striving for acknowledgment within the frames of capitalist legibility. It is, instead, an act of “un-becoming, re-becoming, and becoming,”<sup>33</sup> a temporal practice that exists in a space before recognition, in the interval between presence and absence, between visibility and invisibility. It is a refusal of the narratives of productivity that demand a visible justification for being—an evasion of the structures that seek to fix and categorize. Pri-formance, in its essence, is a movement that exists before and beyond the reach of recognition. It is not about stepping into visibility; it is about enacting another mode of existence that eludes the mechanisms of representation, prior to any definitive act of being seen. It is a performance not of being seen, but of being in the world in a way that precedes the need for recognition, existing in the spaces of potentiality and possibility, unfixed by the dictates of time and place. Loiter-leute, in this context, embodies pri-formance as an act of temporal refusal and chronoperpetuity<sup>34</sup>, an inhabiting of spaces that are beyond the reach of commodification, beyond the framing of existence as something that must be legible, productive, or narratively coherent. Loitering and pri-formance are not moments in time that seek to be captured, understood, or reproduced as they are ruptures in temporality itself, movements that exist before the structures of recognition, not as reactions to visibility but as acts of refusal and of becoming on the peripheries. It is a temporality that does not submit to the linear demands of chrononormativity nor chronoperpetuity, and in doing so, it is more than an absence—it is an alternative mode of existence, always already a refusal of the time that seeks to define and limit. It is an existence outside the scripted order of time, where being together, lingering, and existing without purpose

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<sup>32</sup> Pri-formance, a term I have forged, emerges as a fugitive articulation of performance and primacy—an unfolding of identity that exists both anterior to and within the structures of representation. It is an insurgent mode of being, one that moves with and against the grain, inhabiting the liminal temporality of refusal, not as negation but as generative refusal—what Fred Moten calls the “refusal of refusal.” In this frame, Blackness is neither wholly captured nor entirely outside; rather, it consents to itself otherwise, maneuvering through the improvisational socialities and fugitive publics that disrupt and reconstitute the very grounds of recognition. Pri-formance also resonates with José Esteban Muñoz’s disidentification, wherein the queer body, always already a crucible of modernity’s excess, does not merely perform but enacts a reworlding—an errant movement of survival that consents to itself beyond the imperatives of hegemonic visibility.

<sup>33</sup> Jordan King, “Shades of Becoming toward Regenerative Futures: Revelatory Purposes and Process in Sustainability Education and Public Pedagogy,” *Journal of Public Pedagogies* 6, no. 6 (2021): 46, accessed at <https://doi.org/10.15209/jpp.1244>.

<sup>34</sup> Darius Bost, “No Tea, No Shade,” in *No Tea, No Shade New Writings in Black Queer Studies*, ed. Patrick Johnson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016). In the chapter *No Tea, No Shade*, author Darius Bost defines chronoperpetuity as the ongoing, unending experience of time, particularly as it relates to the persistent temporalities of Black queer life, where past, present, and future coexist in a continuous loop, challenging linear narratives.

become radical acts. Loitering moves in the time of relation rather than capital, in the time of presence rather than extraction. It unravels the clockwork of chrononormativity, carving out a space where time is lived otherwise—where existence itself becomes the only necessary justification for being. Derelict spaces and ruins, haunted by historical violence and the spectral presence of past inhabitants, undergo a profound transformation through the act of re-inhabitation by homeless or nomadic individuals, akin to an exorcism<sup>35</sup>. But what exactly is being exorcised? Is it the colonial/modernist past that rendered these spaces abandoned in the first place? The embedded histories of dispossession? The spectral weight of failed futures?

To inhabit a haunted space is to enter into communion with its ghosts and breathe in the residue of past violences, past lives, past longings that have not yet been released. The act of dwelling, of sleeping within walls that remember, of tracing one's footsteps over histories sedimented in dust, is in itself a form of exorcistic labor. It is a refusal to allow poltergeists of the past to ossify into ruins, as a quiet unmaking of the forces that declared the space an-dead. To rebuild, to cook, to gather—these are rituals of undoing, of unspelling, of pushing back against the inertia of abandonment. Haunting is never passive; nor is habitation. The body that stays, that lingers, that refuses to evacuate, wrested the space from the spectral hands of history, pulling it back into the realm of the living.

## The Temporal Fissure of 35mm: Flickering Between Ruin and Emergence

35mm film is a rupture, a break where temporality insists on existing as a fractured, immanent experience as it folds, unspools, burns, leaves a trace but never a totality. As an object of a material body that bears its own history—dust, scratches, chemical imprints, decay—not as degradation, but as inscription; yet as a quasi-object, it exists in this very tension between the material and the immaterial, the human and the technological, the artistic and the archival. 35mm film occupies a unique tension between corporeality and immateriality. It is simultaneously a material object, a physicality that demands tactile engagement, its grain and texture grounding it in the realm of the body and the material world, yet a modality of impermanence, wherein its images are fleeting and subject to decay and the fragility inherent in its form. As a quasi-object, 35mm film becomes both anchor and intermediary, an object of material presence that concurrently emerges as a site of immateriality that mediates memory and history. It captures light and temporality within its frames, but never fully contains them, always in a state of becoming, unbecoming, and re-becoming; it occupies a state of the paradoxical materiality with the transience that embodies a temporal presence vis-a-vis absence that never fully settles or resolves.

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<sup>35</sup> Giuseppe Giordan and Adam Possamai, 'The Sociology of Exorcism', in *Sociology of Exorcism in Late Modernity* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). According to Giuseppe and Possamai, exorcism typically connotes a violent rupture—a forceful *banishment* of something possessing a body or space. In the religious or cinematic sense, it's a purification, often returning a body to its *intended* state. But this research notes, the possessed subject never returns to what they were before; rather, they move into a *new* state, one often framed as healthier or freer.

Embodying the fugitive temporality of ante-utopia—an unstable archive that flickers between the once-was and the never-will-be, a site where time is not fixed, but always in the process of becoming and unbecoming. The very materiality of 35mm—its fragility and ephemerality—mirrors the fugitive nature of ante-utopia: something that exists not in the fixed certainty of being, but in the open potential of becoming, perpetually on the edge of realisation yet never fully contained within any definitive form. The film’s temporal elasticity, where time is not neatly packaged but unraveled, resonates with ante-utopia’s challenge to the very concept of an arrival point. The ruptures in the image, the constant movement between light and shadow, its resistance to digital clarity and pristine preservation, all speak to the impermanence of ante-utopia—a horizon that remains always on the verge of appearing but never fully entering the frame of certainty. In this way, 35mm does not simply capture moments; it embodies a tension between what was, what is, and what could be—a tension that refuses to resolve into a singular narrative, much like ante-utopia’s refusal to become a set, stable form. The film operates as a manifestation of temporal flux, just as ante-utopia is a persistent condition of emergent possibility, where the world always threatens to transform, but the full scope of that transformation remains elusive. It is this unsettled space, this marginal temporal condition, that makes 35mm film the ideal medium for the expression of ante-utopia: always present, yet never fully fixed, a movement between what is and what could be, undecided yet always in motion.

## Conclusion

In this interplay between ante-utopia, ante-dead, an-dead, time emerges not as a linear, progressive force but as a space of perpetual dislocation—a temporal fissure where the past, present, and future refuse to settle into any fixed configuration. The ante- prefixes signify not a rejection of time but its unsettling, a disruption of the chrononormative that demands a clear demarcation between what is and what is not. In this temporal space, the an-dead becomes a refusal of death’s finality, a fugitive mode of existence that resists the fixed state of being either alive or dead. It is a praxis of becoming and unbecoming, a temporal practice that stretches and bends under the weight of capitalist narratives that demand closure and finality.

Similarly, ante-dead emerges as a spatial and temporal act of pre-mourning existence, a refusal of erasure that operates on the threshold between what has been and what is yet to be. It is not a space of absence, but a space of potentiality, a site where nomadic bodies—bodies that resist fixity—reclaim the time and space that would otherwise render them invisible or irrelevant. These bodies, these nomadic presences, are the embodiments of the ante-utopian condition: always in the process of becoming, never fully realized or fully settled, a rupture in the totalizing narrative of progress and development.

The 35mm film acts as the quasi-object that embodies this rupture in time, the material presence that refuses to yield to the demands of permanence or finality. In its grain, its flicker, its imperfection, 35mm is both a site of corporeality and a modality of immateriality, a space where

impermanence becomes the condition for transformation. The temporal fissure of 35mm—its fleeting images and disjointed movements—mirrors the ante-utopian condition itself: always on the verge of becoming, but never fully fixed or captured. It is film as time, as becoming, as unbecoming.

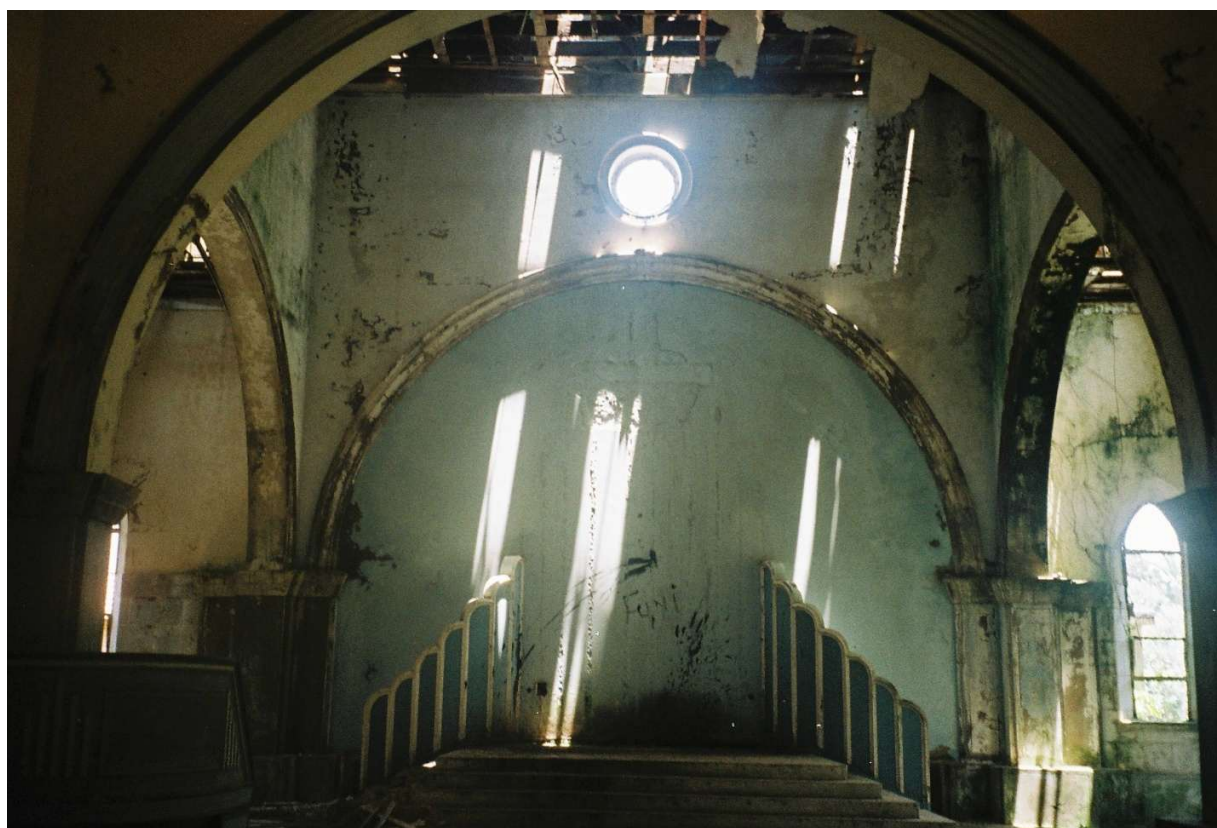
In this context, pri-formance and loitering are not merely acts of resistance to visibility but radical practices of temporal subversion, movements that enact ways of being that precede recognition. They refuse the demands of narrative closure and visibility, opting instead to dwell on the margins of time—not seeking to be seen, but existing as a refusal to be reduced to any singular category or structure. The nomadic body, much like the ante-dead state, is always in motion, always in the process of becoming and unbecoming, never fully settled, and never fully captured by any one space or time.

It is within this complex terrain of ante-utopia, ante-dead, and an-dead that my No Longer, Not Yet project finds its resonance. The project interrogates the collapse of past, present, and future as it navigates the spaces of temporal dissonance and Black fugitive existence. It draws upon the fugitive quality of these concepts—the refusal of closure, the unbecoming of fixed categories, and the rejection of ontological finality—to confront the haunting dislocation of Black temporalities, especially as they are mediated by historical traumas and digital media. In No Longer, Not Yet, time is never fixed, never linear, but always on the cusp of becoming something else—something other. It is a praxis of temporal resistance, one that defies the overarching narratives of capitalism, colonialism, and the necropolitical forces that seek to define and contain Blackness. Just as the ante-dead resists the finality of death, No Longer, Not Yet exists in the space of continuum and rupture, a refusal to be classified, a refusal to be reduced to any singular timeline.

Together, these concepts—ante-utopia, ante-dead, an-dead, pri-formance, the nomadic body, and No Longer, Not Yet—create a framework of temporal resistance, a refusal of the linearity and finality that capitalism seeks to impose on life and death, on presence and absence. They create a counter-site of possibility where the future is not an inevitable progression, but a horizon of becoming, always unfolding, always in motion, never fully realized. This work is not about arriving at a final destination but about continuously inhabiting the rupture, the fugitive space where time itself becomes a site of resistance, where Blackness, queerness, and the nomadic body persist in defiance of the world that seeks to contain them. It is, ultimately, a praxis of refusal, a refusal of temporality as it is prescribed, and a reclamation of time as a space of fugitive possibility, always just out of reach, yet always present in its becoming.







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