

Diary of an Imaginary Egyptian
Brandon LaBelle

for all the floating subjects

Today I thought: *I have to go to Egypt*. To be closer. To something... – to the movements of an event that seem to unsettle what appears unbreakable. And which must be broken. Shaken. This impulse is also what leads me to this text, into this writing: to say something, or to move. To attempt a sort of project. The idea of the project hovers in the writing of the text, in the impulse of this gesture, even if I already sense how writing will obscure the project, the wish. The impulse.

To find a way.

After I thought, *I have to go to Egypt*, I suddenly thought, as a sort of alternative direction, that I have to read Jean Genet's *Prisoner of Love*. To find support. From Egypt to Genet my impulse then hovers – from travel and contact to reading and writing. The project is thus already a form of oscillation, a diary of this duality, a voice whose destination is in question – a body in hesitation.

Can I build from this some sort of connection? Love?
Friendship?

(Where is Jean, I wonder, now?)

In looking through numerous websites reporting on the situation in Egypt – the Revolution – I stop and wonder: what does this mean for me? What can this mean for those around me? Why does it grab hold of these days and this city, so far away? Where so many turn their eyes in anticipation, expectant, to find inspiration from this Arab uprising. It inspires, it stimulates, it registers, it unfolds a sense for desired transformation: of the lines that cross from the Middle East to the West; between all the forces that structure the relation of there to here – all those invisible and powerful forces that fuel the drama of the political.

I write the “political” and at the same time, I wonder if there is another word? Another means – for all these bodies?

I remember being woken up one early morning and hearing of attacks in New York. Like others, I turned on the news to witness this mysterious and terrifying image. We know the name of this image; I know you know the narrative of this – it might be said to lurk throughout our contemporary worldliness, as a central reference to which many languages turn and by which many tongues are enabled. As well as silenced; unsure, angry, despairing.

I remember this moment, and yet, where I stand in

this image is beyond me. It is beyond and yet absolutely inside, integrated. Like a wash behind the force of so many colors, the image is lodged within many others.

Myself. You.

It is already a new language. A secret mission, an absence so deeply present. The missing object that drives an entire global mechanics, to operate as a point by which so many ideologies find expression: to lay claim.

Where is Egypt?

I find it in my mouth and on my tongue, as a vocal conjuring multiple stories, multiple impulses, some visible, many unheard. To search for Egypt is to seek out the making of a narrative in which the terms may splinter, the structures may reform, the tracings of subjectivity may write anew. What I'm searching for is to falter. To falter so as to find a way. And to see these global mechanics falter. To disrupt this language of no speech.

And to prolong this into the making of a new home.

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Egypt is already closer than I realize; it is locked within the histories of a greater global order in which I, as one among many, am fully embedded. It is already next to me. It is already under my tongue.

It is always already closer than I could ever imagine.

At a talk in Berlin a few weeks ago, the cultural theorist and activist Franco Bifo Berardi mapped out the contemporary territory of the social and the political, identifying global capitalism as a determining force against which forms of resistance must be initiated. To locate such forms, he talked through the notion of “rupture” – as breakage, as desiring, as the fragmenting of the system, revolution. For Berardi the necessity of rupture stands out as the very promise and possibility of finding another condition. Another economy. And yet rupture also carries with it a terrible rending: while revolution delivers all the promise of new beginning, of critical mass, of new dreams, it no less breaks the lives of many. In its feverish outpouring it may also overshadow the true banality of daily routine, of small conversations, all of which may contain the slow building of deeper connection. The making of difference.

The rupture. *And empathy.*

A new home.

(I get up, to the early morning, a bit dazed, and immediately go for the coffee maker. Everything is quiet in the apartment. And the day rests like a warm hand

on my shoulder.)

Did I tell you about the deep ocean?

*Did I mention how sometimes the day simply stands still?
How in the midst of so much chaos a certain quiet may suddenly appear?*

I am shy. I shy away: what to do? Here? Now? With you. The thought, *to go to Egypt*. To imagine a connection, and to discover what I am in front of the other. What must be kept back, under or behind? To find out what can also be revealed, at times, over time. To find the conditions for generosity.

For a new politics? As an economy of desire, of secrets, of wishing and of wanting, and also, of not knowing – where to turn, whom to trust, by which language to bring into being that which can only be traced, as a vision of the possible.

Hesitation.

Love and the political.

Egypt and myself.

I take shyness as the basis for this project: to give myself, as Edward Said says, the permission to narrate. Precisely while facing all this, all this which I know and do not know. What I am searching for then is a slow language. To be on the verge of the word, which may allow for a new form of speech to appear. One produced in the moment of discovery: a shying away,

and a shying *toward* what touches us: fear, longing, uncertainty, hope, imagination.

To stay in this position of knowing and not knowing, and to be *unsure*, fully.

I approach this diary then with uncertainty, as shy writing, a diary of the shy subject, trembling with the promise that in the moment of rupture all vocabularies might stumble: those I speak, those we rely upon – to open up to a new domesticity. A new way to dwell, side by side.

Does it get cold in Egypt?

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Is there someone to talk to? Is there something to say, between you and I? To found a meeting somewhere within the difficult milieu of distance, of separation: *here to there*. To search for a politics, that is, the work of the voice, which is precisely a speech aiming for common recognition, between here and there – a speech already at odds with understanding, with the lines defining this particular order.

A speech searching for vocabulary.

This writing is a step *toward*; an opening out toward the making of a new speech, to be available to what is happening *over there* – it says, I am compelled toward speech.

Toward your speech, the speech from over there.

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To make a list:

Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Libya, Algeria, Morocco...

Places I have never been. Places that appear as a mysterious constellation across the front pages, to give poignant reminder of an expanded political geography.

To approach such a list is to wonder aloud: where to begin? How do such names relate to where I am, within this apartment? Where do such transnational intensities take up residence here, alongside me, and on the streets upon which I move? To contour and affect a particular cultural and social landscape: Berlin, Bergen, London, Los Angeles... North. West.

And which is also immediately South. East.

Middle.

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The protests unfolding across North Africa and the Middle East send a signal, a bolt from there to here, today, as a potent instigation: for enacting, collecting, searching for new forms, of social organization, of different structures, to make a space for hesitating and then for insisting – that which might begin to deliver radical transformation, and which triggers something here, also. *Here*. That is, to reform what drives the system forward. The mechanics. Of what feels like continual defeat.

A tremor.

Tahrir Square. Pearl Roundabout.

A beginning. To recognize how the current protests speak out not only against local dictators but also, as a secondary figure, Western intervention and the legacy of American imperialism. That is, we are already involved in a transnational order – a weave of nations – witnessing what may appear to be distant, remote, while sensing that what stands behind these voices, these bodies are Western policies that maintain a steady intrusion onto Middle East life. That dictate from afar.

The situation unfolds already as one of affiliation, alignment. Antagonism.

I cannot look away. It is so close.

To follow the protests from here is to also register what must happen elsewhere; to break the lineage,

the alignment, the politics of no speech. Such revolutionary gestures resound as poignant movements to be carried further, not knowing to where precisely, but at least, inside and on this page: as a mirroring, for now.

To follow.

The vibrating air as it reaches from there to here.

East.

South.

Middle.

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I am reminded of Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins of Latin America*, which I read while visiting Santiago de Chile in 2010 and which brought the city and the ground closer to my body: to feel the distant histories of particular brutalities on my skin, and also from my skin – recognizing how my own North American privileges are founded on so many legacies of imperialistic force, unleashed across frontiers of numerous countries. The recognition is dizzying – it rests on me like the breath of the dead exhaled into my mouth, forcing me to retch.

I try and learn to speak through this putrescence. To inhale it as my own. As a wretched gift.

I swallow the copper of Chile and Peru, the silver and tin of Bolivia; I eat the sugar and iron of Brazil; I consume the electronics of China, and ingest the telecommunication networks of India; the oil of Iraq pours through my veins, and leaks out my ass as a hot breath – to circulate across the globe and join the flow of the market.

Where can one go from here? To which assemblage of meanings can I attach onto, to locate a way through? Where I might over-write all that is on my skin, to figure another body, a new expression. To figure a form of cannibalism onto my own inherited sovereignty, as a route, like Oswaldo de Andrade, through all that binds us to a particular order –

My health is your captivity.
My breath is your emptiness.

*My truth is your disaster.
My language is your anger.
My politics is your religion.
My myth is your geography.
My architecture is your pain.
My food is your economy.
My theory is your prison.*

And to sympathize, to a point of shivering.

History addresses me, on this day. It taps on my shoulder, rivets my dreams, in the form of such resonance, and toward its force my body turns, is propelled; to wonder aloud – might I discover a point of contact with what is possible to say and to do, now?

To ask: how might I meet you, to be together?

As you exist over there. As you emerge as an appearance. As you pry open my mouth.

But I am too far away.

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Writing comes up from under my skin. It creeps into my sleep, to tense my fingers; I am plunged into it, as a space for capturing a new voice, for figuring a new body: to take an empty page and to fill it, with the day to day. Memories. Imagination.

To locate another connection, unrecognizable at first.

How might I undo my voice, its pattern and cadence; to strip it of its certainty, its vocabulary?

If the voice is what brings me into the world, and which I rely upon, as a register of *myself*, then surely given all that surrounds me now, the noise and intensity and urgency and hope, all this that I receive as a sudden wave of pain and joy, must embed itself onto my tongue; within the circulation of self and surrounding; I must learn to speak with this new flood in my throat, and more, to speak *through* it. To be occupied by it.

The body as a public space. Between here and there.

To fashion a new interaction lined with the momentum of bodies and faces that appear from over there – that step out from this territory and by which my own identity is mysteriously defined, in a complex web of connection, economy, and yet which also delivers a new feeling for possible relation. A wish to extend myself and to embody the particular dynamic that also makes this difficult, full of uncertainty, as well as imperative and contemporary.

I read about Khaled Said, about Wael Ghonim.
I search for reports of new languages.

A new politics.

Which book tells me where to go from here? Whose work might act as a lead toward the other side? To locate new models, new narratives? By which to hang onto this *permission to narrate*.

I read about Mubarak and about Saleh; I read about Obama, about Gaddafi. In other words, I read about strangers. Names appear as messages carrying the full weight of entire nations; they carry in their voices the physical breadth of crowds, of historical consciousness, of trade policies and unions, of poverty. I read of things so distant and so close. I read these names that stand in for, that represent, that speak without speaking. A voice whose agency is always already elsewhere, off-screen and yet deeply real. Mobilizing. Monstrous.

A voice that also, actually, distances itself from the political, caught in a sort of dizzying captivity, within itself. For itself. Should not the political be a space to *work through* the movements of power, and the differences of particular orders? Rather than capture and stall such movements, to fix them: to solidify into parties, into structures that resist the push and pull of the equal. What forms of organization might support a constitution of generosity? How shall we be, together?

To multiply and to exceed the current state. To ignite the imagination, and fuel an economy not of hedge funds, but of the distribution of agency.

I make a list of possible models:

Gift giving
Radical transparency
Socialist democracy
The communist idea
Potlatch
Carnival
Radical evil
Love thy neighbor
Soft capitalism
Free market
State control
The tea party
Green
Humanistic anarchy
Tribal affiliation
Shaker communities
Harem
Secular nationalism
Sacred rites
Caravan
Around the fire
Man of the house
Dog eat dog
Every man for himself
Cold war
Walls

In the summer of 1989 my friend and I made a trip to East Germany. We first spent some weeks in Detmold, with my friend's grandmother. His father was German. We had gone to high school together in Los Angeles, and had come to Europe for a few months of traveling. Having borrowed my friend's grandmother's car, we made the drive through East Germany, toward Berlin. I have distinct memories of this drive, that sense of having crossed the frontier of the East-West divide. Coming into Communist East for an American was like voyaging into the deep unknown, into a side of the world that was always so fully present by being absent; like a brother from whom one attempts to hide but which we must continually face. There were people standing on bridges over the highway waving at us; we were identifiable in our Western car, marked as trespassers to which they also must turn. It was as if we were both attending to the other, as the invisible partner in a story or crime whose narrative we do not fully know or control. Two participants in a play whose script locked us together by keeping us at a distance. It was an instant of knowing one's difference without truly knowing how this difference signified, reverberated, into any one specific context.

Today, the difference continues to resound, yet from other perspectives. Now living in Berlin, in 2011, I think back to those days when my friend and I walked through Kreuzberg taking in the mysterious sights, not knowing exactly where we were, what this was all about, who was who: Berlin appeared as an ambiguous city full of ambiguous people. This was

immediately attractive. To enter a space for and of the imagination. Another model, a mysterious diagram.

In following the stories of Egypt, of Syria, of Algeria, I also *imagine* the other – those I might meet if I were to cross the border. The imagination as already a step, toward relating, of empathy. As Bachelard beautifully reminds, the imagination is a primary site from which so many relations, thoughts, and intensities are born. It might be the essential space for supplementing what *is* with what *could be*: in other words, a force to keep us open, as a blossom withstanding all the blackness of that dark frontier called the poverty of thought.

I thought: *I must go to Egypt*. This is my first imagining, my initial impulse. Like a spark that comes from nowhere, and yet knowing, it must come from somewhere, from some place within. A dream? A forgotten life? A wish or desire? And constructed from a greater cultural energy. From a memory of those first days in Berlin? Of that first border... Or of a possible collective future – when we walk the streets of Alexandria, the dust collecting on my pants, with the bleached out sky overhead...

To get to Egypt, I must imagine a possible route.

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Reading today: "Egypt and Tunisia can lead the way to the inception of a creative democratic workshop of benefit to the wider Arab world. To this end, creative synergy, namely, in the form of a joint democratic revolutionary council, may be one way of seizing this uniquely democratic moment."¹

The emergence of a creative democratic workshop in the Middle East starts to suggest the possibility of rethinking the democratic condition also in the West.

Here.

I start to hang onto this story, these pages of reports, and the verve of such political and social transformation, as a catalyst for other revolutions. Where to hold the workshop for rethinking the democratic process *here*? To also begin a process that might meet the Middle East workshop, and its creativity, its challenges and its spirit. To create together. To bring what has been forced so brutally apart into proximity. Closer. Intimacy. Might this revolutionary process turn into an example, a stage for creating a new form of the democratic promise? One made from here *and* there, from West and East. To instigate the procession of another language.

Might the attacks that leveled the NY skyline be turned into a productive meeting point, ten years later, for something that comes after the Bush-system, this particular police order, and that bypasses these great political figures? I lend my breath, my tongue to the possibility that whatever happens there, in

Tripoli, Cairo, Tehran, Tunis, may overflow into the thoughts of all the disillusioned individuals on the streets of Los Angeles, all the frustrated communities in St. Louis, as well in London, Nottingham, and in Rome, or Nantes.

Shall we start a workshop?

To tell stories?

To pay tax on the possibility of reopening, following Gerald Raunig, the force and organizational intensities of “constituent power”?

Art and Revolution.

Raunig's *Art and Revolution* is a poignant book documenting revolutionary instances and movements throughout Western history. In doing so, he delivers an analysis of the dynamics of revolution, seeking to outline deeper understanding as to its more transversal narratives. Revolution is underscored as a process of emergence, over time and across levels of intensity. In addition, Raunig emphasizes the force of revolution as a constellation of resistance, insurrection and constituent power: a set of forces and related forms, desires as well as necessities, leading ultimately to questions of structure and organization. Following Raunig, I wonder as to the organizational outcome of this revolution – how its rupturing flow might spill into new forms of sociality, of constituent speech, of interaction.

Where are its transversal associations?

(To imagine.)

I wait for an Arab friend to come to my door, to enter and to craft for my mouth a new tongue.

Eat my food. Drink my coffee. Use my bed. What forms of generosity might I offer to bypass and circumvent the patronizing smile of Western politics? Kick my door in. Burn my house. Cut my veins, I am a partner in the crime of the global order that has pissed on your father's grave and shat on your child's broken body. I am waiting for this end; I am waiting for this beginning. When we might construct a new home, made from the sharing of each other's histories, longings and disappointments.

When shall I leave for Egypt?

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The days pass. I write, I read; I wonder and imagine, that is, to slip, especially, as a necessary provocation – to utilize the meandering gait of the poetical rhythm for a new metaphor; to grate against words; to find another step, *toward*. And to foster that other voice, the one I do not yet recognize.

Can I meet you on this page? Might I break something in myself, to change the patterning that fills my body with a particular fever? That goes from point A to point B, and then back again, as the pace of a particular order.

Where is Jean Genet now? Where is Mahmoud Darwish, the Arab poet? I wait for you to fill my mouth with this other language.

Mouth to mouth. Tongue to tongue. To find common recognition.

I fear the West is already infiltrating the new open territory, sending convoys and messengers, democratic hounds and capitalist visionaries; I know they are on the plane already, on the streets, stalking the students and the revolutionaries, the militia and the farmers, the mothers and grandmothers, to plant new seeds for the Western project. Yet I hope this sudden opening may remain, ambiguous, uncertain, curious, passionate, and angry, or at least what I perceive, as the rending, the grating, the tearing of this order. I hope for your example, your model which may come to look like no other and that might plant itself here, in this field – is not that the great promise of the force of

the imagination? Of the rupture? To meet the other and generate a future language? Or at least, to begin the making of shared speech.

Empathy.

And to build a new house. A new city.

I come upon the Tunisian poet, Aboul-Qacem Echebbi, whose poetry has found a place within the current uprisings. His *To the Tyrants of the World* comes to operate as a refrain for greater sentiment, across borders and into the squares:

To the Tyrants of the World /
Aboul-Qacem Echebbi

Hark! You tyrannous dictator,
lover of darkness, enemy of life.
You mocked the cries of the weak,
and your palm is stained with their blood.
You set out tarnishing the enchantment of existence,
sowing the thorns of anguish among the hills.

Slow down! Let not the spring deceive you,
nor the serenity of the sky, nor the glow of morning.
For in the vast horizon lurks the power of darkness,
the bombardment of thunder, and the raging of winds.
Beware! Under the ashes burns the flame,
and he who sows the thorns harvests the wounds.

Think! Whenever you reap
the heads of men and the flowers of hope,

wherever you water the heart of the earth with blood
and inebriate it with tears,
the flood will carry you away, the torrent of blood,
and the burning rage will consume you.

Mahmoud Darwish also writes against tyranny, against the terrible interweave of so many conflicts: of place defined by placelessness, of exile and loss. He also writes about coffee. To be caught in multiple discourses whose meeting can only lead to a crash of bodies, books, metals and politicians. And a possible home. For soft pleasures. In this way, the tyrant may certainly represent the pinnacle of a terrible force, yet the narratives that resist such presence must be an elongated process without end. A narrative of perpetual motion. The day to day. As Chantal Mouffe elaborates, democratic states too often obfuscate the heart of their own promise: the integration of those that stand outside; not of the governable, but of continual movement: floating subjects. Majority rule must find liberty in giving access to the minority; in incorporating claims onto the democratic process made by voices previously unheard. So as to foster challenges to the established order as well as new forms of responsibility.

To participate. *And to be outside.*

The democratic *process*.

To care for the stranger.

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He remembers as a teenager, growing up in Los Angeles in the 80s, how he and his friends carried a definite feeling of emptiness. A sense that the country was run from an entirely separate place, something mysteriously absent from their daily lives, but embedded within, to create a resounding vacuum. The political arena. It's not as though they were ignorant of power structures around them, of historical events, of issues at stake and issues ignored. More, that the possibility of entering into a more direct form of participation was beyond their hold. And even, beyond imagining. He could not figure a possible means for understanding how participation might occur, or in what sense his own subjectivity could find new definition through a political act (or what that was, even). He imagines that suburban life generated such feelings – for the stability of such environments guarantees a form of complacency: home-life was built upon normalizing the flows of desire around particular coordinates, of school, work, family and friends; he was a typical teenager in Southern California, full of romantic inclinations, poetical drifts, musical fevers. And boredom. And still: a sort of nagging suggestion, within and around, that something was missing. Something that was both a promise and a threat. An imperative shaped by a distant history and yet withdrawn, eroded: that he had to find a way. In.

He thinks the most his friends ever felt in terms of political action was attending Grateful Dead concerts: to ride the wave of a particular 60s revival that swept the 80s, as a counter-measure to the Reagan years. A counter-measure to the complacency found at this

time, as a new economic energy took shape to fill daily life with shopping zeal. Consumption. The 60s were embraced as a feeling, a texture of revolution, of the earth – his friends found their own memories in 60s counter-culture, as a shadow resuscitated for the purposes of igniting the political imagination. As a lyric to sing along with.

Tariq Ali talks through the idea that the current democratic surge throughout the Middle East should stand as an inspiring wave of energy for the West – to ignite a form of democratic renewal for a system that has seen itself, as Ali put it, “hollowed out”.² The current uprisings can also be seen to bring into relief, not only the hollowness of the US-Western system, but in turn the absence of real generosity, empathy, encouragement: with the recent veto made by the Obama administration on the UN Security Council’s resolution on claiming the Jewish settlements throughout the occupied territories as illegal, the ongoing slant toward the legacy of Zionist policy is made clear.

The hollowness Ali observes has come to ring out over the last month, revealing that the democratic initiative espoused by American leadership is always only given to the benefit of national economy and interest: in masking all sorts of terror, the American example may continue to sabotage the very promise of a democratic global future, for those seeking a form of social rights and a politics of true transformation, of the equal and the common.

To share, this is what occupies him.

Still he questions: *what right do I have to write?* To make a claim onto all this language? Of politics, of history, of you over there? Where might he find an opening, a space of occupation, within the sphere of the political? To bring this language closer, between those there and he here? A social space for truly discovering what we might do, together.

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In a lecture by the artist Tania Bruguera, she makes a distinction between “representing the political” and “creating the political”.³ Her emphasis on the creative possibility of the artist to stage the political, as a process of interaction, differentiation, of mobilizing a set of forces, as a machine for promulgating new relations, new confrontations, highlights the political as a creative project: to manifest. The political is also, of course, a process of stabilizing relations – to maintain a given order. What Bruguera reminds is that representational politics also requires a continual opening up of its own stabilization, to embrace its own futurity as a source of challenge as well as renewal. In this sense, to maintain a given order is to resist, to quell, to sidestep, at times, and more often, the promise of the creative.

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Dear Tania,

I'm writing to ask you about your work, and this question of the political. I wonder, what sense you have of how creativity performs politically? How has your work opened up new perspectives for yourself, and others, as to how to participate? How to locate a sense of political involvement without fixing one's own perspective? That is, without becoming a form of representation only?

I remember receiving an email from you, regarding a project you were staging in Paris, at the Pompidou Center. It was a project based on opening up the Pompidou's media collection (of CDs, books, videos, and other media works) to street vendors who work around the Pompidou. The idea was to copy the collection, and allow the vendors to sell the copies for their own gain. I received your letter asking if I would allow my works found in the collection to be copied and sold in this way.

Your project as I see it attempts to resituate the collection, and its particular cultural capital, onto another cultural context – to move from art institution toward a street culture based on informal economics and trade, as well as related race issues. I immediately appreciated your project, and can see how the work may perform to instigate a process of encounter. It makes me understand that there are many sides to what we call the political, and that the particular issues that stand as key questions in the courts, in the parliament, in the offices of senators, have their counterpart

in the lives that deliver certain meanings to those issues; that is, the practices and projects that envelope us in their resonating and complicated details.

In response to your letter though, I also found myself questioning how I was being called upon, beforehand, to play a role: that is, my part as an artist in the collection was to represent the institutional structure and context: it seemed I was being located in opposition to the vendors' role as those who perform on the street, as a pirating counterpart to forms of cultural production aligned with the Pompidou. In this sense, even while creating the conditions for a possible political meeting, for creativity, representation is put into play, as a force in the making of new narrative. Given this, I also sense that representation, the force of signification, the one standing in for the other, must also be present, as a player in how we come to understand, as well as to problematize a given order. And that part of any creative supplement enacted against the stabilization of forms often includes their own performative indoctrination onto those involved.

The point might be to not only create the conditions, but to include in those conditions an opening for dissent, for sabotage, for anger, as another force of the creative project. I hope next time I may be given the chance to undo my own image: to sell my works on the street?

Yours sincerely,

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It is raining today.

The mountains are drenched in fog; the sea tumbles with movement. The day slowly fades in the midst of so much grey, topples over without much drama. It eases by, as a process of passing into the next.

I know the sun is shining in Egypt. I know it cascades over Tahrir Square. Already this place becomes a representation, a site to which my eyes turn, giving narrative to a historical shift and a mass of movement resounding across the globe. Egypt finds its way into a constellation of poetry and protest, revolution and art, global culture; it spins in my imagination, galvanized by reports and confessions, photographs and downloads. It is there, as a locatable reality, and yet it takes shape as I come to know it, as it comes to me, as I hear of it, and also, as I come to desire it, to imagine it. Or, does it desire me? Does it imagine who I am? Might I in turn be its own reference, in the movements of a revolution that strikes out against what is near, and what is also far: the West, and that hits the empire with its reverberation, to disrupt my own complacency. Do I in turn participate in what it opposes? To represent, for the one that is over there.

I meet you half-way; I need your example, your lead...

Let us go away then. To the other side. To be the echo of the other, to a point of integration, as a new auditory event that might become a new body.

From the echo is generated the promise of mutation,

difference, alteration. The echo turns the instant of sound into a spatial propagation; it supplements the original event with a doubling – to return to the origin yet in another form. The echo then is the ultimate point of entry for the making of a common difference.

My voice comes back to me as if from another.

In short, I become myself as another. The other becomes itself through me. We are paired, coupled, and yet also single: the echo is never stable; it only comes into being through its movement away and then, back towards. The echo might be a strategy for finding the difference *of oneself*.

Let us make a commons of the echo.

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Do you hear all those voices?

Does your ear reverberate with so many mixed identities and generative utterances?

To make a song from all these echoes, fashioning a new lyric for this movement, from here to there, and back again, to nurture the becoming of common recognition.

Can you tell me more?

Can you accompany me? Hold my hand into the city of the echo?

Can you persuade the clouds to break with rain, and shower the territory between here and there with its force?

To resound.

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Such movements of affiliations, of finding points of contact, that resonate through so many entrances and exits onto the scene of culture, come also with great surprise: in forms of unexpected solidarity. The actions occurring across the Middle East spark a flow of exchange, with protests in Madison, Wisconsin, struggling to deliver another form of resistance. Both projects start to parallel the other, however superficially, to enliven the sense of an international drama: the meaningful drive towards transforming the political order.

Antonio Negri, in *The Porcelain Workshop*, charts out the shifts in our contemporary order that reconfigure the operations of the nation-state, and open up the possibility for new affiliations – that is, of a multitude found in the global correspondences between cultures, as well as from new conditions of labor. The contemporary order is seen to strangle the promise of a democratic heritage – the vision of an equality situated at the center of democratic history – while also producing new potentialities for counter-movements: to devise a new political subjectivity, as one aligned with others, from afar. A far always already closer than imagined.

The situation in Madison resonating with the situation in Cairo starts to give suggestion to Negri's ideas, finding articulation here and there, there to here, and what touches me most are the simple yet poignant gestures sent across the globe, from people to people. Whether in images of signs stating solidarity, or in the act of someone ordering pizza from Cairo to be deliv-

ered to protesters in Madison – the sense that social and political support is produced beyond the rhetoric and offices of government is potently expressed.

The democratic workshop, the creativity embedded within the political, the shift in alliances and affiliations... A subjectivity always already elsewhere, an echo of common recognition.

My own ground vibrates with the footsteps pounding out on the streets in Cairo, in Yemen; everything starts to enter into the spaces I inhabit, the rooms I move through – the making of new territories that shudder and breathe as an augmented, diversified city. A city of potentiality.

“The US looks ideologically stagnant and even backwards, filled with irrational people and political and economic elites incapable of conceiving of changes that are so obvious to the rest of the world.”⁴

The center moves, from left to right, back to front, West to East – an ambient circulation that starts to suggest new configurations. Everything falters, hesitates, as it must, as it does.

I try to speak, with this other tongue.

Yet there is money in my mouth; there is death in my education. My body carries traces of Reagan’s blood, an intellect fashioned by the idealism of American freedom and mobility – Thoreau lurks in my shadow, Jeffersonian visions of democratic statehood follow

my steps, all wrapped in counter-cultural tendencies and civil rights, with a splash of Starbucks coffee. These are things I feel even in the writing that tries to escape, or to invite something else, something other.

Where is the Coming Insurrection?

Where is the Porcelain Workshop?

Where are the Thousand Plateaus?

The Arcades, the Folds, the Supplements and the Multitudes? I have heard they are nearby.

Take your iPhone and shove it up your ass; eat your laptop and suck all the marrow from networked pleasure, to leave everyone high and dry, marooned as they already are. Where is Allen Ginsberg? I need his beautiful discourse, his soulful dirtiness; I need his energy in my mouth so as to generate a new word – a word of the age.

My body is hollowed out by the promise and the possibility, this languishing cultural desire, of fixations and fantasies, all those questions and answers batted back and forth, as the coming of the new, and those City Lights that haunt our memories, or is it the future? I'll wait for you on 42nd Street; I'll wait for you on Columbus Avenue. Put your Venice Beach in your pocket, your May 68 in your shoe. Pack your suitcase, we're headed for Beale Street by way of the Dead Sea.

Won't you meet me?

Won't you tell me what to do next?

Where are my references now? The magic wording?
That can take the history of Vietnam – that terrible

nightmare – drag it through the dry dust of Palestine, and on across the deserts, to Tibet, and blow it all out into the sea...

Can you hover on this page, to search for what I am searching for, to linger in so much language, with the hope of finding a route, a breath, a whisper, or a quotation, to draw out and back in, to another page, for another reader?

*What are my words for you?
What are you searching for, here?
A new city? A new tongue?*

The night falls deeper.

Did I tell you I read Ilan Pappé's *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* and almost dropped the book, as the sentences of so much horror cascaded into my eyes...?

What to do with this book? What am I supposed to do, after reading of the absolute brutality when in 1948 the new Israeli nation slaughtered, expelled, stripped, beat and killed thousands and thousands of Palestinians, giving way to a tragic historical irony, of a repetition of the Holocaust only minutes after its ending? And that still never ends.

In Havat Gilad they continue to burn olive trees.

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How are my privileges built from the impoverishment of others? Can I give my privileges away, in acts of responsibility or affiliation? Does writing generate an opening for care, friendship, speech, interruption, or does it perform a further act of appropriation, of colonization at the expense of the other?

Is the voice enough?

-

I think to myself: *No, I should not go to Egypt. Instead, I should travel to the farthest point away from Egypt, as an act of affiliation: to make a symbol.* Would this be somewhere in the Pacific Ocean? A single island amidst all that water, to serve as a point or mark, a sort of imaginary territory for the production of a new relation – the island as an assemblage made from Egypt *and* elsewhere. I might call this island, *New Palestine*, or *This Country is Not For Sale* – or leave it unnamed, as a space of encounter, potentiality. Of resistance, insurrection and constituent power; or as a new porcelain workshop.

Bas Jan Ader might have been searching for a similar island when he set sail in 1975 from England to the US in his sailboat named “Ocean Wave”. Lost at sea, I might read Ader’s tragic, final project as an essential expression of longing, of that particular emotional condition that imbues every breath with romantic melancholy, and that also functions as a primary drive, a primary wish. To search. His “In Search of the Miraculous” may have partially found its destination in the form of tragedy through which we might also recuperate a sense for the other: in ourselves, in each other, in the promise of reaching an imaginary territory.

Love.

North.

West.

Middle.

Here.

There.

-

Fighting in Libya, protesters shot in Yemen, school teachers fired in Providence, earthquakes in Japan, followed by a tsunami and the collapse of a nuclear reactor – the reporting circles the globe, finds its way into my bedroom tucked up in the still, snow-capped mountains of Norway. Images of officials scanning children around Fukushima for possible radiation poisoning are paralleled with images of Ali Hassan Al Jaber, a cameraman from Al Jazeera who was killed in Libya, while financial debts force the Mayor of Providence to let go public workers. A sort of mysterious, cacophonous echo passes between North Africa, the intensities of pro-democracy insurrections, and the US, with markets and social tensions, to force a confrontation of values, of future visions, here and elsewhere: Japan, Germany, Greece, Spain. The globe seems to shudder, break, erupt and splinter with pressure and joy, anger and sorrow, fire and the fists of many.

France's recognition of the rebel leaders in Libya forces a possibility, of generating dialogue in which new affiliations might be gained; as well as new political maneuvers. The mechanics of the global system start to perform, as an assemblage whose inner workings are so minutely connected, as to charge the flows of state struggle with great breadth, emotion, and trauma. Reading the Facebook page of We Are All Khaled Said, updates on the situation in Libya fully locates such local struggle inside deeper questions, exposing us all to the unconditional need for human compassion, human right.

What form might this take?

Edmond Jabès writes: “the unconditional is sayable in what cannot be said, thinkable in what cannot be thought. Unconditionally vibrant. A stranger.”⁵

Protesters in Bahrain state: “we are Sunni and Shia, this country is not for sale”, signaling attempts to bypass sectarian values – *searching for affiliation, searching for a new state of the political, searching for one’s responsibility*. I take these as coordinates for tracing new lines of flight, of echo, of commonality – of the “vibrant clash of democratic political positions” Mouffe claims as integral to fostering a “well-functioning democracy”.⁶ To nurture the multiplicity of positions, to recognize consensus as a temporary meeting point, to prolong the notion of a final harmony as a process in the making.

The rupture; the vibrant clash; the unsettling of the structuralizations that lock power against power.

All this movement toward maintaining a sort of continual process, an enactment without end, in turn makes me wonder as to all that exists *to the side*: to find what threads its way through the space between you and I, the humanness of who we are. That remains.

The production of an alternative. *To also leave democracy behind?*

To think of the stranger. To think of a movement that is not my own, but could be.

To be a stranger; to become strange; to estrange my own limits; to ease the estrangement of the other.

To whom do I perform as a stranger? How many strangers live in my house?

The mystery of the stranger lies in the fact that I never know a possible future outcome – the stranger is a potentiality shifting according to the flows and intensities of so many forces; whose positionality may offer support, at times, and at others, disruption, disjunction. I take the stranger then as the key figure to which Mouffe’s “agonistic pluralism” aims to address: as that processual character whose role is to remain always already elsewhere. Outside. And yet whose forceful promise, of affiliation, of potentiality, of alliance, is the very foundation of a system of inclusion.

The stranger is someone we may love, and that may love us. As Rancière suggests, the necessary remainder to any system of order.

Vibrant.

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What is the history of revolution?

Is it a history of political battle? Of social transformation? Is revolution history in itself, as a never-ending flow of rupture, release, arrest? Can we locate the hidden center of the meaning of revolution? What does revolution dream about at night? To whom does any revolution truly belong?

Jailbreak

Dance party

Rendezvous

Circle of elders

Table conversation

Council

Time bank

Classroom

Free school

Love triangle

Gated community

Pirate ship

Exile

In sickness and in health

When I was in my early twenties I wrote a letter to the band Fugazi. As part of the DC punk scene from the 80s, Fugazi developed a unique position combining punk songs with a critical sense of the production and consumption of their music. Not only were they continually delivering messages aimed at challenging the assumptions and behaviors surrounding punk, they sought to occupy an autonomous zone to the side of the record industry through their related Dischord

label. What struck me was not only their music, but also their understanding of the flows of capital, the means of production and the forces of consumption surrounding the making of music, along with the operations of being a band. It was not only music, but also how that music participates within an overall organizational structure.

My letter to them was essentially a fan letter, saying how much I appreciated their music, and above all, their politics. I thought they stood as an inspiring example. I ended up receiving a letter back from the guitarist/singer, Ian MacKaye. In fact, it was a postcard, with an image of them on the front side and a message typed out on the back, with a signature. It was an extremely thoughtful note, responding to much of what I had written in a sincere and extremely open way. The letter offered a few reflections on how their music had evolved, how they felt compelled to take control of their distribution, and how their politics were often also, in the end, a burden. That is, how taking a particular position, becoming an example, offering a model, started to weigh down on their expression as a band: their political formation in a sense at times stagnated their creative flow, and their ability to continue to explore what they could be. I found this very enlightening, and I have carried these thoughts and reflections around with me ever since.

What might be the stance of a politics that can remain sensitive to the movements of its own ideals, and that can react over time to its own evolution? I take this as Raunig's core proposal, of understanding revolution

as a process of experimental organization that must resist the temptation to settle into new structuralizations that become fixed, static, all encompassing. In this sense, the democratic workshop could function as a constant platform – that is, for the production of exercises in organization, in investigations of the imagination, as a site for openness and solidarity in the making. For *the political*.

I read today that under Mubarak Egypt has been receiving 1.3 billion dollars annually in military aid from the US since 1980, as well as 815 million dollars for economic assistance. Such figures are only part of a general US practice of distributing cash across the globe, as means for securing political clout and valorizing US economic policy. (Coincidentally, military aid distributed to Egypt is spent mostly on US contractors who supply military equipment and training to Egyptian armed forces.) With the Fifth Fleet of the US Navy stationed in Manama, Bahrain also received 19 million dollars in military aid from the US in 2010.⁷ I pause here because there is no route around, no view past this; not that such a fact surprises, or stands out as a radical shift, but more, that such a statement passes across the international field and makes its way from pocket to pocket, from nation to nation, seemingly beyond consideration of the social consequences abroad, within a region so far away, absolutely to the side of the home nation, and also, as a burning shadow, of the millions at home who struggle, to find the means, or the horizon, to see another way, and to find security. To pay the bills, to feed the family, to glimpse the future, to share and to receive,

what may pass between and around, us.

I pause here, because as I said, I am shy: this is a shy writing, that is, a naive writing, full of hesitation and questioning, a writing full of lingering and associative thoughts – because one can no longer imagine the state of things as anywhere near linear, or self-contained; relational geographies, as Irit Rogoff reminds, are at the core of our global culture. What flows from here, to there, produces an entire field of relations with great consequence. What then is economy but a hidden ideology promulgating relational geographies to which we are bound, participant, without knowing. To pause then is to wonder as to the relational geography existing between the US and Bahrain, as a state of agreement, a territory of exchange – as well as a possible route by which to smuggle in other conversations, other messages, other meeting points. It is to glimpse the streets and villages surrounding Manama, and the ordinary lives as they enter the field of visibility.

And to speak back.

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The global economy performs across the geographic, as so many forces and decisions, anticipations and ideologies, to pock the relational with violence and manipulation: of invisible agents defining the flows and movements of those who remain inside, locked in, day to day. The force of free markets alongside the destitution of the local.

Today in Bahrain the military declared a state of emergency, clearing crowds with tear gas and rubber bullets. King Hamad called forward Arab allies, with Saudi troops arriving in tanks, and others waiting in Qatar. The protests continue, demanding social reform, and an end to the monarchy altogether. As the protests stretch on for over a month, the Al-Khalifa ruling family appears to be committed to withstanding the pressure of thousands of citizens' fight for change.

The US hesitates to enter into conflict in Bahrain while stomping across Iraq.

The dynamic between the governed and the governing, the head of state and the bottom rung, appear as relational antagonisms, a sort of flexed territory occluded by denial, electoral behavior, processes of control, access and rhetoric. To balance or to find resonance between what occurs on one side with the other is a challenge, a game of the imagination as well as a knot of physical angst: to find points of recognition, between all the maneuvers in office and in the capital, and all the ones in town, at home and in the flow of personal life – how do these come to be, these instanc-

es of recognition, of mirroring, of reassurance and engagement? The opening up of the political Mouffe outlines in her thoughtful examination, as means for multiplying involvement – to restore the political as a space for participation, of *working through*. A charged force that aims to shatter the separation between the two ends, the two sides, of the ruling order and the means of access; of the police order and the political (Rancière). Between the government head and the head of daily life. To aim for the collapse of their separation, at least for a moment, so as to restore direct connection. Precisely what John Dewey calls “the public”.

To begin saying.

To be a floating subject precisely so as to instigate new movement: to find a way to count as the uncountable.

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There is no news about Egypt today. What's happening on the streets this afternoon? Amidst throngs of people, who is wondering about tomorrow? Who is reading about the upcoming planned protests in London? Or simply running errands, across the square?

"The page that was blank to begin with is now crossed from top to bottom with tiny black characters – letters, words, commas, exclamation marks – and it's because of them the page is said to be legible. But a kind of uneasiness, a feeling close to nausea, an irresolution that stays my hand – these make me wonder: do these black marks add up to reality?"⁸

Everything must start as if in the dark; the impulse to begin signals that one tries to discover, to encircle a nagging ache or tremor, so as to give it over into words, deeds, a motion of the heart or the mind, that may eventually trace out what was always there.

Genet starts his *Prisoner of Love* with unease: an unease that gives way to a flood of words to mark the page. The black against the white, already a vibrating, unsettled terrain that shimmers, trips and falters, while finding moments of direction – all unifying in this movement defining simply that something needs to be outlined, traced and let loose. Or someone. Many. A space defined by all.

On the page and in the desert.

To celebrate.

To find a friend.

To mark that something has happened. And to articulate the uncertainty. To be vulnerable.

An attempt at deep democracy, as Cornel West proposes – love and compassion.

In Manama protesters were cleared of the Pearl Roundabout today as forces killed two people and injured hundreds. At the same time, a small demonstration in Damascus was held by around 50 people chanting “Peace, Peace”, demanding reforms, while in Egypt the new interior minister Major General Mansour el-Essawy announced the complete disbanding of the state security apparatus, understood as the perpetrator of torture and human rights abuses under the former regime. In addition, protests continue to escalate in Yemen, with fighting between government supporters and pro-democracy protesters sweeping across the city of Al-Hudayah.

One must keep going.

To become the other to oneself.

To rehearse the loss of one’s language.

To trespass oneself.

The ongoing movements across the region, the fighting and the struggles, the force of protest and government response, open up new tensions while bringing

forward legacies of US-Arab relations, of policies and actions aimed at supporting a Western worldview, as well as legacies of Arab politics, local tribal conflicts, revolutionary sentiments, the belief in social rights, all knotted together as to make the single glance in its direction a dizzying recognition of transnational politics.

*Did I tell you about when I lived at the edge of the Red Sea?
Did I tell you how I traveled with the pirates of Somalia?
Did I tell you my name is Erik the Red?*

I receive a note from a friend about the situation in Japan: the earthquake, the tsunami, the nuclear crisis. He is distraught, anxious, and saddened by the news, as further reports come in. In a shop today, the owner put out a donation jar, a collection for contributing to relief efforts there. Another friend sends me a photo, sent by a mutual friend, taken in Germany of two flags, side by side, lowered to half-mast: one Japanese, the other German, lowered in an act of sympathy and solidarity. Passing through a café, two people speak of “nuclear energy” – catching a few phrases, I sense that one is overflowing with thoughts, exclaiming how we should all change to green energy.

“Today the search for a new global order is under way. After the international financial crisis, we need to develop an economic order based on justice, and a social order based on respect and dignity. And this region – our region – can contribute to the formation of this emerging new order: a global, political, economic and cultural new order.”⁹

With the air strikes made on Libya this week, Western nations take a step closer, marking an entry into the protests and revolutions taking place in the region. The military activity not only announces a particular stance against Gaddafi, the killing of civilians, and in support of oppositional forces. It also unfolds against the greater historical relation, of Western involvement and the extended tradition of violence enacted in particular by American intervention. As Chomsky chronicles in his *Hopes and Prospects*, US democratic policy is rife with hypocrisy, often based on wielding political power to the sole benefit of its economy. We might wonder, behind the scenes of aiding the overthrow of Gaddafi, which forms of Western business await? Though, even in this rather cynical perspective I remain curious and moved by the possibility of other forms of affiliation, other forms of meeting, across the tense divide between West and East. The recent crash of an American fighter plane in Libya starts to expand the story.¹⁰ The pilot of the aircraft found himself standing in a farmer's field, undercover in the dark night, wondering as to the shadowy figures approaching; would they be hostile to his sudden presence, taking him hostage, or killing him amidst the spring flowers? Instead, the figures approached and offered him friendship, a smile, an embrace even: the instant of contact, as a web of fear, uncertainty, as well as hope, sympathy. What took place in that moment, we will never truly glimpse or know – between the quickened heartbeats, the trembling voices, the smoke and fire, the words that came forward, as sudden attempts at reaching out: these small forces engulfing the night. I hold onto this scene, as an opportunity for

what might appear inside all the drama of global conflict. The embrace between the pilot and the farmer: might we hang onto this as a new emblem, an instant of humanity inside the full beating narrative of military action bringing nations into conflict? Or rather, an image of exchange to the side of those performed on the political stage?

The story, the exchange, this night, does not end here though. While the pilot and the farmer locked into this scene of relating, one to the other, a helicopter suddenly opened fire onto the field, attempting to ward off potential dangers to the fallen pilot. Injuring a number of local people who had gathered to aid the pilot, the sudden break of course reminds of the dangers ever present in moments of contact amongst enemies. Military operations have their history of bringing people together, citizen to soldier, often leading to sudden friendships, love affairs, marriages and deep sharing, across certain divisions – while the bullets splinter the narrative unfolding in the field, they also may give way to deeper appreciation for what is always possible, and what registered for me in the fervor of this last month: to discover new forms of association across radical division.

The rupture. And empathy.

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The night.

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The field.

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The kid runs off, like a wild animal. Into the fields. He thinks, *there is nowhere else to go*. But still, he runs. The cops are behind him. He knows he'll be caught. But still, running aids him in this moment of crisis. Uncertainty. His friend Kevin always told him, running at least gives you a chance. For freedom? For possibility? At this moment he understands. Because the neighborhood is against him, because his parents oppress him, because the officials at school hover over him, already anticipating his guilt, his crime. His other friend Brian escaped into drugs, and music. They would talk about the Beatles, and meditate on the starry sky during nights of wandering. For himself, he wished for another possibility, undefined yet surely somewhere, awaiting discovery – amidst the fog-covered hills, in the fennel bushes lining the paths they walked at night, under the dark skies like silky hair.

What occupied him most at this time were acts of daydreaming, and watching carefully the movements of all things, not only the natural flow of wind in the trees, or the way the ocean smelled after a rain, but also and in particular, the gestures of those in control: the school principal's fingers grasping papers on a desk; his math teacher's habit of rolling his hands together while lecturing; the tapping of pencils, the whistling, the keys at the belt of those who knew which way to turn. An entire choreography of behavior that instilled an ordering effect, and which made him realize that a powerful energy was in place, always preceding him. A fixity of forms. A territory mapped. An economy between the imagination and law.

All such perspectives and reflections seem to ease over his running body, spilling out coolly in the sweat now falling through his hair, collecting at his temples and down his spine. He knows there is no true escape, and yet the field ahead of him is the only way forward. He does not turn back to see the cops following behind. It doesn't matter that they're faster than him; or that he'll soon be caught in their arresting arms. He hears Kevin's words sounding in his thoughts, he feels Brian's hands on his bare shoulder – there is no way back. This is what he realizes: the lines are drawn, the narrative in place, the script already waiting for him: at this moment, he knows the days will deliver him into a particular social form.

I tell this story because there needs to be a break: one needs to step aside from the pull of language, and the pull of the newspapers' telling reports, of killings in Jerusalem, of killings in Syria, of British bombs in Libya, costing 3 million pounds a day, while George Osbourne announces the new budget including huge cuts to public spending; and the Turkish government criticizes the US for ignoring the democratic protests in Yemen and Bahrain while bombing Libya. To break from the great turmoil occurring in nations, all so far from my own small history: to recover a particular language found at the heart of this body – so as to speak of the personal, to craft an agency of the intimate: to bring into contact the falling and clamoring bodies on the streets of Cairo with the fields of Kevin and Brian, as figures within a history of American youth, close to my own.

The kid runs as fast as he can, with the dry dirt under his shoes crunching and breaking, and the summer day drawing to a close against the ocean. What he runs from is more than the two cops on his tail, more than the words of his parents or the regulations he feels closing in on him, from all sides – he runs from the future waiting for him. He runs with the great hope of finding *nothing*: an opening, a new territory, a field of love to break down all that he is.

For now though, all he has is the field in front, the cops behind, his legs carrying him, and the inspiring idea that there could be something else. All he has is a great tumult of feelings that push him here and then there – the weight of others on him, and the ocean on the horizon as a reminder of the power of daydreams, which he already knows has something to do with creativity: this is what he imagines, what he thinks about during those nights, with Brian playing guitar and the sound of the ocean in the darkness, below in the fog. Against the forms already in place – the definition of behavior, the language given to him, the smiles that come and then go – against all this, he wants to dive into the formlessness of the ocean. To swim in all that movement of energy, undefined and yet so clear.

He is soon in the trees, ducking through branches, slipping along the rocks and up into the hills. The darkness is soon around him; the daylight a flicker in the leaves, catching his eye now and again, in small bursts of rushing gold. He has no other way out, he can only keep going, straight ahead, like a wild horse

searching for the open ground. Life becomes a divide, between new and old words, between the structures he can only follow and the touch of new fingers, clasped. He knows there is no reconciliation, no middle ground – at least for now. What lies behind him will remain until he can find an outside, a periphery, an edge to this form and legacy.

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South.

West.

Middle.

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In Syria the demonstrations and protests continue, against the unleashing of security forces, their bullets, and the bodies dropping here and there. I'm not sure how to pick up the empty shells, the dead bodies, the tears and the dark gravity of everything taking place over there and to grind them into this page. All these movements sweep the landscape, the city streets, the neighborhoods and transnational territories with their ricocheting energy, to topple and to instigate, to echo and fill all our global channels with intensity. Is this to be read as the beginning of a new topography of conflict soon to break across borders? A heated statement of a new world passion aimed at resituating the legacies of imperial influence, and to insist on new contemporary exchanges amidst the histories of dominating economies? A generation not of the X but of the H as H el ene Cixous suggests¹¹ – the H as a ladder within writing, within the symbolic order, bringing two I's together, around a vibrating center; the I, as an exhaled breath, that seeks its mirror image, that echoes across a certain distance, toward the other of itself, in the making of the H. As a fuller breath.

I take this H of Cixous and turn it on its side, so as to suggest not only a ladder or a movement upward, but also to the side: to invite all those who are over there, who operate on the fringes of meaning, of symbolic value, to take a step closer; let us meet in the middle, on that rung connecting what is to the left with what is to the right: a central point wholly dependent on all that surrounds. Let us hold both ends, not in an act of tug of war, but in an act of balancing the other: to create a new narrative of the permissible. The H on its

side, as a language by which to share the energy of the other: an economy of social hope.

Aristide recently returned to Haiti on the eve of elections there. Maybe he has been inspired by the recent events in North Africa? To take up his position within the nation's change of order – and to counter the legacy of American influence. His return on March 18th after seven years in exile in South Africa makes a claim onto the scene of Haiti, as a history full of colonial appropriation and abuse.

Haiti: an H whose own particular history may remind of revolution's terrible struggle. And example. To shatter, to rupture, and to struggle upon the sudden horizon of new history.

As Jimmy Carter steps off the plane in Havana today, reaching for the hand of Bruno Rodriguez, the sun catches their smiles: what might such a handshake produce? A hand extending toward another's, to suddenly clasp, interlock, with the small heat of each suddenly as one. To form the beginning of an alternative politics? Or to mask all sorts of ideological terror? The handshake, as the making of an H, the vibrating center by which to lay open the human condition surrounding the rhetoric of statehood. Jimmy, the peanut farmer, Bruno, the Mexican in Cuba.

Might they become actors within the Tahrir Effect? Participants in the newly announced Tahrir Nation, to overcome the legacy of imperialistic dominance enacted by the US onto the small island, with the hand-

shake, the sun on the eyelashes of the American diplomat, and where a procession of slow words might hit the tarmac to inaugurate this site with the resonance of a new commons – what Negri continually pronounces as the making of a new form of resistance, of collectivity always already poised to overflow.

The Tahrir Nation is then our new Porcelain Workshop, it is the Coming Insurrection coming from the other side, magically, from the Middle, out of nowhere, and therefore, precisely what must occur: a becoming searching for points of affiliation, below the surface of politicking. One can do without a passport in this new nation – Tahrir Squared is the making of a promise, to “be a place where the breakdown, when and if it happens, can be discussed and explored in a free and open environment.”¹² A democratic workshop. The new initiative, in the form of a website, attempts to carry forward all that has come forward, as a continuation of a new humanity, found during the Cairo uprising, where another state of state identity surfaced, to suggest a new horizon: the making of an open environment.

Tahrir Squared takes the example of that moment, still in the making, and raises it to a greater power, precisely by inscribing it outside the Square itself: to search for others, out there. Jimmy flies to Cuba, Aristide flies to Haiti, and protests in London last weekend opposing spending cuts in the UK bring half a million people out, some carrying signs that read: “Rise up, Protest Like an Egyptian” – student groups, trade unionists, doctors, parents, pension-

ists, anarchists, journalists and police, as anger and despair over the intensification of the UK's financial crisis embroils the government and the populace. The direct action group, UK Uncut, set up in response to the current crisis, demonstrated outside the Topshop located on Oxford Street, bringing the question of tax evasion on the part of businesses to the fore, as a point of reference to the tensions surrounding middle class life and the gathering of wealth around an elite section of the population. Their march signals a further ambition, another coordinate within global protest, which on a fundamental level moves from normalization of neoliberal policies toward a process of finding participation. *To make a public.*

Might we find it in T2? In the Really Free School? In the Martha Rosler Library? On Radio Alice?

To build a construction out of ideas, and where you and I may finally meet.

To resituate the parameters for sharing.

To generate a platform from which social expression might find new energy.

To create a memory of a future statelessness.

To investigate new structures, as a motion of sudden vocabularies.

To defer the point of arrival. And to arrive nonetheless.

To turn longing into production, collaboration. To trespass, even oneself.

Mouffe's project also attempts to restore vitality to the democratic process, and the intensity, the debate, the clarity, of partisanship. To fill the center with diversity, so as to overcome the emptiness of a democracy of appeasement. A government constructed by the market may appear in support of "freedom" and "individual imagination" but it deeply sabotages the greater democratic conversation, eliminating the sphere of debate and the betterment of the equal: who might speak for social injustices, the poor, and those losing to the culture of financial markets within such a system? Representation? Mouffe reminds that what makes democracy potent, as an intensity that brings forward respect for difference, as a *working through* – for locating bi-partisan conversation – is that positions are built as to allow entry by others: affiliation.

Cornel West's criticism of our current democratic dilemma is that there are no means for bi-partisan conversation, because there is no consistent position made by the left: only a rhetorical display, shifting policies toward the market, and a resulting contradictory, vacuous project.

By making a line toward the I over there, the middle may gain in intensity: as the appearance of a political subjectivity constituted by the near and the distant. A vibrating center held by different sides.

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H

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With the sky turning black, the kid hides in the trees. His breath hot in the cool air, his body a knot of intensity, and the quiet hillside a sudden cavern of secrecy. He does not want to give up. To let go of all that seems to hover in this moment, like a drop of moisture poised on the edge. Ready, waiting. He thinks about how many times he's walked through these hills, how many nights he and his friends laughed under the stars, feeling all the scent of the bushes, and the dry earth. It was like a blanket protecting them from what could only be sensed of the beyond-world: the city out there, on the horizon, and the roads that would take them each, one by one. A blanket, and also a dream-space, full of comfort, and compassion; an area for making bonds, and for discovering and negotiating how each might break, in the tumult of adolescence. He knows that his friends are everything to him. That he is marked by this special feature, of being one within a whole. From here, he learns the significance of friendship, and the loyalty that comes with standing up for the other. If he were to run farther, without pause, he knows he would not be alone – the others would come, to rescue him. They would trespass together. As they have already done. But the hills, they are all he has at this moment, with the cops searching, and the uncertainty following his young body.

Raja Shehadeh also talks about hills. And walks taken upon them, over them and through their particular histories. His walks though occur not in Southern California, but in Palestine. He speaks of the land, all its dust and flowers, its roots and deep soil. From his

stories the earth stands up. It takes shape through his descriptions that come floating through my mind, to bring his hills into the memory of my own. His hills are marked not by cops and kids, youth and the parade of reckless behavior; though they share in a certain desperation of all who try and find themselves, as subjects outside of the main structure – the hills Raja has walked also conjure the power of Israeli politics. And the desire for new hope.

“As long as there were no Israeli settlements nearby, I could pretend that I had the whole of the hills to myself.”¹³

To pretend, and to mask, or to flee what seems to never go away: and to request that one pays witness, and in doing so, lend to new decisions, new momentum.

Deep Democracy.

At this moment, the kid knows he must continue – there is no more hiding to be done. He has to return, to face the challenge, to give himself up. He knows that to take a stand, to find the meaning of oneself, can only be done by entering into the social order; to dialogue with those who seem to gather around him, as forces against. He has kept this with him – this lesson. He does not want to escape, to find autonomy, to live as a self-contained construction. Instead, he wants to participate, in what is around him. As Raja does.

To remain close precisely to what is uncertain, or un-

der threat. And full of potential.

To follow the hills as they lead us back.

Today I am surrounded by other hills, mountains covered in snow and that flow through Hordaland, drop into the sea nearby, bank across the fjords, to split the sky and reflect its spring glow. Walking these hills, the last snow draping its peak, I pretend to be in Raja's shoes: the dust of Palestine collecting across their surface. I put his shoes on, remembering the race through my own hills while admiring the Norwegian nature, its earthy moisture and rugged beauty. I could probably not run as fast as I did back then – no, instead I take a slow walk, pacing myself to the rhythms of Raja's meditations, the trails that took him across the hills outside of Ramallah, where his family has lived for generations.

Syria.

The Lebanese poet Ameen Rihani was honored at the Library of Congress recently.

Raja's book under my arm.

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In 2000 Edward Said threw a stone across the Lebanon-Israel border, as part of a demonstration. The event was captured by a photographer, and was written up in various newspapers. The event led to a call for reprimand on the part of Columbia University, where Said worked. In response, the president of the University issued a statement, supporting Said on the grounds of freedom of speech. In looking at the photograph, there is a man with his arm pulled back, a stone held in the palm, in preparation for the final lunge and ultimate throw, the stone aimed beyond, toward an unseen yet implied target. In the background, there is another man who is caught at the moment of completing his throw, his body fully dropped toward the ground, and the energy let go toward that unseen distance – one can already feel the rock as it is hurled through the air, shooting towards its final destination. There are others too, but at the center, as the main figure, Said is caught: wearing a dark hat and sunglasses, a light colored jacket fastened across his torso, I wonder, what are his thoughts at this moment? With the sun beating down, the dust under his shoes, a wall in the distance – where did his stone finally land? What did he do after letting it go? Is the man behind him a friend, a partner, a stranger? How did he end up here, at this moment, with the rock in hand? What compelled him to make this gesture, this physical act?

I think of Said, and of the rock, and wonder: can the history of protest be told through stones? Those hurled throughout the years, from someone toward another, in acts of anger, resistance, pain. The rock

might be seen as the final resort when language fails, when political representation is taken away, when collectivity is compelled toward disobedience. The rock says: *I stand against you.*

My words are gone, my breath is out, my blood is drained; I have no country, I am without, and also, with so many. Where to find the new tribe, from which to build a new nation? The rock is our shared language – it brings us together, as an opposition to that which must be opposed. It articulates, pointedly and without apology, all that must be said, as the beginning of all that needs to come.

The Suffragettes threw rocks at the Parliament building in London.

The rocks also flew across the barricades in 1871.

Homestead Strike.

The Easter Rising.

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Years later the kid thinks of that run, the chase, and understands: it was the beginning of subjectivity. The point of identification, as separate and therefore, beholden to a particular social structure. To run was to enter into a space of individuality: in other words, to enter the political. There was nowhere else to go. His youthful body propelled by the cool evening air, the smell of fennel, and the neighborhood where he lived, itself all that he knew, swirling around him, to reach a new configuration. Everything conspired, suddenly, in a mysterious assembly whose logic he was only beginning to glimpse, as something that could support as well as arrest his imagination. From this moment onward, he knew he would need to find another way: to escape, not through a peripheral opening, but forward, into a sense of participation. That is, through art making. A new tribe. A new friendship.

His art teacher in high school was always fond of saying, "think with your pencil." He understood: to find another way. To make something: another language.

Art *making*. Production – to multiply.

In Yemen further clashes have broken out in the city of Taiz. Hundreds of pro-democracy protesters have been injured, as the challenge to President Saleh continues to sweep the country, inciting attacks by security forces and further demands from opposition leaders.

Everything tenses from this *force against force*. A force that tries to appear, to make of itself an appearance,

as the gathering of singularities, and a force that attempts to control, to keep the lines in place, as they are.

The force to disrupt, and the force to maintain.

The making of appearance necessarily takes over the city – it searches to site itself, and in doing so, it cuts across lines; it crosses over, to find room for the gathering of singularities. For the making of a common space – *the making of a new crowd. Here to there. You and I.*

A space of sharing to the side of the nation and its rhetoric: a space to support a speech *toward* speech, the beginning of a sound, the first of echoes to come. A fever whose circulation imparts, here and there, a becoming-common, pirating modes of exchange in the pursuit of a new body – *a single body on the way toward the other.*

In running through the hills, the kid was not escaping the cops only; rather, he was searching for a means. To become productive, not as an individual lodged within particular regulations, but as a process in discovering the possible: to come to embody a sense of potentiality, day by day. *A working through.*

Small gestures, toward something greater.

Others. You.

Though, fear, still, under his steps.

Tell me where to go... where the ocean drops off into a black expanse, caught in the starlight as it was before... Tell me where the trees are... where we might run... Together... Tell me... where to wait, for friends, for their laughter. For the stranger that will change everything...

When he turned forty he knew something was changing. A new form of knowledge. A new body, like before. A new figure of desire. It was no longer about running, or about being chased; it was no longer a question of pencils or of finding new contexts. Rather, it was about giving. To articulate new structures, for others. A sharing.

What might this structure be made of, he still wonders.

Wood?

Metal?

Sound?

A collection of raw materials?

Language?

Tell me...

To amplify.

To echo.

To multiply.

Collect and translate.

To make the new home.

To walk the new city.

In the capital of Jordan, a man set himself on fire in front of the prime minister's office today. Mohammed Abdul-Karim is recovering from third-degree burns to his face and body. The action comes after weeks of protests in the country demanding political reform, to allow greater representation. At the same time, the Israeli army rounded up more than 100 women in the village of Awarta in an attempt to track down those who recently killed an Israeli family in the illegal settlement of Itamar. More than 40 people remain in jail, held without charge, by the Israeli forces, while they also destroyed more than 70 Palestinian homes in the West Bank in the month of March.

While protests steadily mount across the Middle East, a wave of protests have been emerging throughout the US, following the tensions in Madison over a legislative bill to limit the power of unions. The cuts to public spending in other States, and attempts to further undermine the power of unions, has sparked protests in Ohio, Mississippi, New Jersey and New Hampshire, where marches on State Houses and Universities have generated a feverish debate over the political process.

"The political process no longer works... The economy is controlled by a handful of economic elites. The necessities of most Americans are no longer being met. The only way to change this is to shift the power to a culture of resistance. This will be the first in a series of events we will organize to help give people control of

their economic and political life.”¹⁴

The event Kevin Zeese speaks of is planned for April 15th, the day Americans are expected to pay their taxes. The tax day protests are planned across the country, including a march in Washington, D.C. The economic situation in the US is radically tied to questions of government, as the balance between private wealth and public spending is subject to the flows of financial capital and the interests of corporate markets. “The national identity of the United States is defined by a set of universal political and economic values... liberty, democracy, equality, private property and markets.”¹⁵ The foundational ideal of liberty, as a good friend in Rio de Janeiro has been keen to remind me, ultimately for the West equates with “the freedom to do business.” As is continually reinforced, the interweaving of freedom *and* business results in a culture not of social equality, but of financial values: to have liberty in the US is to be without reliance on and distant from the public and its civic project.

It is to have equity. To be free of each other.

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He still carries this idea, of going in the opposite direction; of recognizing the established arrangement, and then, to stimulate, to produce, an opposing motion; to run, yes, and along the way, to articulate, in supplemental form, everything to the side.

Pirates.

Clowns.

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The production of an alternative.

South.

West.

Middle.

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In a sit-in at Tahrir Square, the military and security forces unleashed a devastating barrage of gunfire in order to disperse the 2,000 strong crowd and to capture dissenting army officers who sought to escape. Such a show of violence on the part of security forces, police officers and soldiers sends a disheartening message, as to the question of military rule in Egypt.

“I had suggested that the army had basically ‘played’ us in order to get rid of Mubarak, not a unique insight, but now one that seems to have proven itself absolutely. What we’ve had so far has been a joke. A joke played for their benefit. A joke for THEM that has cost US over 800 lives and caused injuries to thousands of peaceful protesters. They have laughed away our losses, and they have obviously chosen to look with ridicule at the Egyptian populations’ real desire for Freedom, Justice, and Democracy.”¹⁶

In Bahrain, security forces have arrested Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, a human rights activist, along with other family members who have spoken out against the ruling government. Storming his home in Manama, and beating him unconscious before taking him away, the government has continued to quell opposition, leading the daughter of Abdulhadi, Zainab Al-Khawaja to begin a hunger strike today. Zainab’s announcement was sent via her blog to President Obama:

“Mr. President,

I write to you from Bahrain, after living through horrible injustice that I would never wish upon anyone

in the world. Security forces attacked my home, broke our doors with sledgehammers, and terrified my family. Without any warning, without an arrest warrant and without giving any reasons; armed, masked men attacked my father. Although they said nothing, we all know that my father's crime is being a human rights activist. My father was grabbed by the neck, dragged down a flight of stairs and then beaten unconscious in front of me. He never raised his hand to resist them, and the only words he said were 'I can't breathe'. Even after he was unconscious the masked men kept kicking and beating him while cursing and saying that they were going to kill him. This is a very real threat considering that in the past two weeks alone three political prisoners have died in custody. The special forces also beat up and arrested my husband and brother-in-law.

Since their arrest, 3 days ago, we have heard nothing. We do not know where they are and whether they are safe or not. In fact, we still have no news of my uncle who was arrested 3 weeks ago, when troops put guns to the heads of his children and beat his wife severely.

Having studied in America, I have seen how strongly your people believe in freedom and democracy. Even through these horrible times many of the people supporting me are Americans who never thought their government would stand by dictators and against freedom-loving people. To the American people I send my love and gratitude.

I chose to write to you and not to my own govern-

ment because the Al-Khalifa regime has already proven that they do not care about our rights or our lives.

When you were sworn in as president of the United States, I had high hopes. I thought: here is a person who would have never become a president if it were not for the African-American fight for civil liberties; he will understand our fight for freedom. Unfortunately, so far my hopes have been shattered. I might have misunderstood. What was it you meant Mr. president? YES WE CAN... support dictators? YES WE CAN... help oppress pro-democracy protesters? YES WE CAN... turn a blind eye to a people's suffering?

Our wonderful memories have all been replaced by horrible ones. Our staircase still has traces of my father's blood. I sit in my living room and can see where my father and husband were thrown face down and beaten. I see their shoes by the door and remember they were taken barefoot. As a daughter and as a wife I refuse to stay silent while my father and husband are probably being tortured in Bahraini prisons. As a mother of a one-year-old who wants her father and grandfather back, I must take a stand. I will not be helpless. **Starting 6pm Bahrain time tonight I will go on a hunger strike. I demand the immediate release of my family members. My father: Abdulhadi Alkhawaja. My husband: Wafi Almajed. My brother-in-law: Hussein Ahmed. My uncle: Salah Alkhawaja.**

I am writing this letter to let you know, that if any-

thing happens to my father, my husband, my uncle, my brother-in-law, or to me, I hold you just as responsible as the Al-Khalifa regime. Your support for this monarchy makes your government a partner in crime. I still have hope that you will realize that freedom and human rights mean as much to a Bahraini person as it does to an American, Syrian or a Libyan and that regional and political considerations should not be prioritized over liberty and human rights.

I ask of you to look into your beautiful daughters' eyes tonight and think to yourself what you are personally willing to sacrifice in order to make sure they can sleep safe at night, that they can grow up with hope rather than fear and heartache, that they can have their father and grandfathers embrace to run to when they are hurt or in need of support. Last night my one-year-old daughter went knocking on our bedroom door calling for her father, the first word she ever learnt. It tore my heart to pieces. How do you explain to a one-year-old that her father is imprisoned? I need to look into my daughter's eyes tomorrow, next week, in the years to come, and tell her I did all that I could to protect her family and future.

For my daughter's sake, for her future, for my father's life, for the life of my husband, to unite my family again, I will begin my hunger strike.

Zainab Alkhawaja
11th April 2011¹⁷

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While in Bahrain security forces arrest opposition leaders, in Syria the army has initiated a bombing raid on the villages of Baida and Beit Jnad, near Baniyas, where protests have been taking place. The attacks were supposedly aimed at arresting Anas al-Shukri, an opposition leader.¹⁸ In addition, Ghiyath Oyun al-Sood, leader of the banned Democratic People's Party was arrested in Southern Damascus, and is being held.

What might I say in relation to such events? Where do they hover, as forms of repercussion, within the streets of Berlin? In the face to face encounters? Or in the correspondences I keep, from day to day, that traverse the globe? Are my friends reading the same news? Are they also secretly writing their own diary, charting out for themselves a form of relationship, a silent meditation? Are they also thinking about Zainab?

To say: "I can't imagine..." which might already open the way for recognition: to sense the hunger. The ache. That is, to be without. Empathy.

But the imagination is also a site for policing. Especially. As seen with the recent dismissal of Jack Persekian, director of the Sharjah Art Foundation. The action was precipitated by the inclusion of the work by writer and artist Mustapha Benfodil, from Algeria, in the recent Sharjah Biennial. The work, an installation incorporating a text recounting the experience of rape perpetrated by Islamic militants, was deemed offensive and an attack on Islam. In an open letter the

artist condemned the hasty action, reflecting in turn on the current “Arab Democratic Spring”:

“It seems to me a good sign of the cultural and political healthiness if Art meets the street and artists listen to the whispering of the real life. Moreover, a bit of imagination in positions of power is rather welcome. I really hope that, in its impetuous course, this cycle of Arab revolutions, which has shaken our tyrannical and medieval political regimes, will challenge our imaginaries, tastes, aesthetic canons and thought processes. May it contribute to refresh our signs and words.”¹⁹

As the artist further proposes, “It is perhaps a fault of mine to have naively believed that life is not polite. And that art is free to be impolite and impertinent.” The notion of art’s inherent right to be impolite resounds poignantly in turn on the other side of the world, with the recent arrest of the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. Taken while boarding a plane for Hong Kong on April 3rd, the artist has not been seen or heard of since. The government of China, in response to dissent inspired by the Arab Spring, has stepped up its security, monitoring dissidents, shutting down Internet links and mobile communications, as well as detaining numerous people. “Mr Ai is the most prominent victim of a wide campaign to silence lawyers, activists and writers in recent weeks, with dozens being ‘disappeared’ or charged with inciting subversion.”²⁰

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A call has been sent out to demonstrate against Ai Weiwei's arrest. Sent through facebook and other social networking platforms, the demonstration is to take place on Easter Sunday, and asks for people to sit in chairs outside of any Chinese embassy. The 1001 Chairs for Ai Weiwei further demonstrates that forms of dictatorship, human rights violations, and violence against freedoms must confront a greater, global audience: that acts of abuse and aggression are perpetrated not only against the specific individual or group, but also the interwoven culture of humanity everywhere. Such a shift no doubt has been produced by the expansiveness of communication technologies, and their absolute integration within daily life, deepening the ways in which forms of exchange, affiliation, discourse and protest may be enacted. A sort of shadowing of the greater global order takes place, giving way to a radical bifurcation of the social to fuel the production of multiple narratives: 1001 Chairs is also immediately 1001 potentialities – an instance of conjoining outside the scope of national identity, community, political representation, or any stable form of club recognition.

How to weave all this together?

To find each other amidst so much information?

My grandfather was fond of telling jokes, of performing pranks, for us kids: to clown around, to make us laugh, turning the everyday into a theater of whimsy. The joy of everything to the side of the status quo. I take his small wisecracks, his jubilant mischief, his blue eyes aglow with

*humor, as a form of education – sentimental, and rebellious.
To say: we might find each other where we least expect.*

Instead, I take a chair and sit outside the US embassy
in Berlin.

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A gathering of protesters took to the streets in Saudi Arabia yesterday, in the city of Qatif, honoring political prisoners and acting for the disappeared. In Iraq protesters burned their identity cards in protest to the government and the ongoing US military presence, continuing with today's protests, dubbed the "Friday of the Free" – while in Yemen around 1 million protesters are calling today the "Friday of Insistence", demanding President Saleh finally step down. In Jordan, a group calling itself the April 15th Movement plans demonstrations today, pushing forward for government reforms, while debates throughout the government attempt to address the question of corruption. Further demonstrations are occurring in Beirut, calling for the establishment of a secular state, with small groups of Muslims and Christians seeking a less segregated system.

While the various movements across the Middle East gather today, finding solidarity across national borders, in the US the Tax Day protests are occurring across the country. A mysterious bond of protest links the US with the Arab world, to form an associative affinity, each making claims toward the function and dynamics of democracy, government, and its inexplicable relation to the financial, the monetary.

To echo. To amplify. Such resonances may form a horizon for another form of the public: an invisible horizon gaining definition beyond military-culture, beyond the divisiveness of "us and them" – to bring together so many individuals, to form a common skin.

A body of multiplicity stitched together from there to here. The unaccountable as a new crowd, precisely.

A protest in the city of Homs, in Syria, continues with around 10,000 anti-government protesters occupying the main square, which they have renamed “Tahrir Square” in reference to Cairo, and the site of its uprisings. Finding links, from country to country, comes to supplement and shadow the global movements by which nations align themselves, or by which global finance circulates, market to market, business to business: a radical deregulation in support of what Jean Baudrillard calls the paradigm of hegemony.²¹ For Baudrillard, the relation between the dominated and the dominating, between master and slave, has shifted to one of hegemony, in which we are “hostage” to a total system: a “liquidation” of reality, of representation, in favor of an endless flow of virtual conditions. In this way, the systems that support the flows of capital, of global markets, are the same systems, the same conditions, that lend to the movements of global affinity, protest to protest, in a flow of communicational exchange, in support of potential solidarity.

Each inside the other.

One searches for new coordinates within these territories marked out by the dynamics of global economy and exchange: a new value, a new friendship, a new formulation – not only for the making of an imaginary protest, the Imaginary Party, but also for the promise of what has always been there: the reassuring touch of your hand, your laughter, your word,

and what such a moment might give way to. *There to here. Shared freedom.*

Youth. Wisdom.

Love, care.

The sharing of the common. Common recognition – the force of disruption with the force of maintenance. What might come to be called Home.

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This is what he thinks; these are the thoughts that pass through the kid's mind, now years later. A chain of impulses that flicker, retreat and reappear; something that shifts, unsettled, and that he knows not how to fully awaken, and yet still, which haunt him. Like a movement that he knows must also become, at times, laughter, and at others, gratitude, generosity. Loneliness.

He's no longer in the trees, racing for what felt like his life, a boy on the edge of criminality. In their place, there are streets, buildings, people that brush by, so full of decisions, delight, and also rancor. He finds support in the softness between friends, the international community that pierces his days like distant love, or the memories that give way to ideas for the future.

The sea waits for him, like Bas. The voyage. With Frankie, the juggler, and Mack, the urban cowboy. Kate, the moon child. On the run, with soda pop in their lungs and the crazy blueness of the California sky in his eyes – *all that brightness*. And Ponyboy on his heels. At the corner of Fountain and Vine he takes a left, looking for something, the pattering of a lazy drum falling from his thoughts: he wonders, where is the rhythm now? The one to follow, as the breaking of a new perspective? A dissolution of any strict formation? The nervous tick of an inner voice? The clowning. Or the Indian planet deep in the bones to which his thoughts turn, now and again: the one before the White Man. The landscape. The forest in his hair, the moss under his fingernails, the sticky moon

dripping over his sleeping brow. With the Dragon of the Apaches setting fire to the desert.

What did Geronimo think of as he lay in the fields of Oklahoma, a prisoner of war? Having surrendered to the United States in 1887, he spent his final twenty years of life held captive by the US cavalry, caught by the empire that slaughtered his tribe and took the earth from under his steps. His bones still reside at Fort Sill, buried on the site of his captivity, far from tribal lands.

He wonders about Geronimo, wonders what he would do now, in the thick of the American condition, today. How would he react to the neoliberal policies that strip all tribal lands of their resonating glow? That wreck the worship of collective care, and that break the all mighty spirit surrounding unquantifiable matter and energy.

To squash the other. To arrest the flow of differentiation. To indoctrinate, to incorporate, to demonize – to control. All actions that counter the dynamic rhythms of cultural vitality as a form of shared skin, a speech that speaks *toward*, and which resides at the very core of a crowd in the making.

The Dragon.

*What is it that drives one against such rhythms?
That creates histories of absolute horror?
That places the imagination within a matrix of fear?
And all forms of organization resistant to change?*

Geronimo may take it all as another war to be fought, another dragon to be killed, in a lineage of battles. The Great Warrior may see it all as part of a larger mythology, brought forward by the Apache god Usen. To do battle on the fields of the great earth, whose future is mapped in the stars.

*In the blue of your mystery.
In the vital force of all things.*

One look at the history of modern Vietnam is enough to diffuse one's sense of the Western democratic project: to dispel the energy that keeps one circling around the idea of freedom, equality. As the Syrian security forces kill hundreds of pro-democracy protesters, I read through the account of the dividing of Vietnam following the Second World War, and how Western nations drew a line on the 17th parallel, decided the fate of the country, and rejected Ho Chi Minh's call for a republic. Resulting in 20 years of unrest, military operations, ideological tension, all to end up with the Vietnam War, and another 10 years of brutal killing, and the flows of trauma. To break the Communist threat. What was perceived in this threat exactly? The Red Scare?

I was born during the Vietnam War.

Osama bin Laden was reported killed today in Pakistan by US forces.

Hamas and Fatah sign an agreement, aiming to establish a Palestinian state.

Soup kitchen
Mission
Parliament
Monarchy
Family
School
Machinic assemblage
Block party
Community building
Communal gardening
Participatory architecture

In reading reports on the death of bin Laden, it was revealed that as part of the secret communications of the National Security office, bin Laden was called by the code name "Geronimo". The enigmatic aura of the terrorist, looming large within global affairs, and in particular, within the United States and its ten year war on terror, finds curious parallel, and homage, to the mysteries that came to surround Geronimo. The Apache's way of eluding capture by the US cavalry, along with the powers he reportedly possessed, lending to his quasi-mystical figuring within the tribe, aptly corresponds to bin Laden – the soft spoken, elusive and rather effeminate No. 1 terrorist, who is everywhere and nowhere. The figure of Geronimo continues to operate within the American psyche, finding reiteration while echoing back to when US paratroopers would yell "Geronimo!" during the Second World War, as a way to calm their nerves when leaping into the sky, and to figure again through instances of game playing when American kids yell "Geronimo!" to assist in acts of heroism. Geronimo lingers then, as a

sign of glowing criminality held close to the center of a particular imaginary, a figure not easily let go but rather fixed within the unconscious as a driving force for an entire psychic order: *the enemy is always already there.*

We might imagine terrorists being given the code name "Osama" as future generations and presidents continue to negotiate their own fears and fantasies, and the seemingly endless chain of warfare shadowing the American global order.

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*Did I tell you about the morning quiet?
Did I tell you about all the metal in the world?
Did you not know of the animate forces that hover just under the skin? And that connect beyond the singular body, to resonate in sympathy with all that surrounds.*

You.

She.

Them.

-

He remembers living in Philadelphia with a friend of his. He had escaped life in Los Angeles during a moment of loss, of rupture, at the age of twenty-two. He didn't really know what to do – the future felt like a large opening without definition. Being in Philadelphia gave him a chance, or at least a new perspective, of what could lie ahead. But it also brought him outside of certain references, into an urban space quite different from the West coast: something that, in the middle of winter, caught his imagination, and also unsettled the familiar. This is what he needed.

One afternoon, he thinks, *I am going to walk North*: to follow the road not toward the center, but away, toward a periphery just there, lurking on the borders of his own neighborhood – a place he had yet to be, but which he had heard much about. The ghetto. Walking, which he knows can condition a sense of place while also giving way to new freedoms, a form of grounded agency readily imbued with transformative potential – here, at this moment, walking might also be said to lead him up against the limits of such imagination. To remind. He remembers the energy, the atmosphere, of finding himself slowly, more closely, arriving into a space where his presence instigated a particular response, of the black neighborhood bearing down on his whiteness: people stopped and stared, others taunted him, one threw something at him. He felt the cold fear grip his legs, as before, when running: where are the trees now he wondered? Another set of forces came to arrest the feelings inside: a sort of dialogue between skin and self, emotional life and social force, emerged, to take hold of his body and align him in-

side a structure beyond his making. The greater flow of history. The war of future gain. The flood of tears. The broken back. To take his breath away. He could not run: something told him so. And yet, he could not go forward. There was no possibility: of continuing. Instead, he turned, and walked back. The blocks beating under his steps. It was as if he had trespassed across a defining line that, while ordered according to deep transgressions, kept things in place. And yet what he sought was such a trespass, he knew, to wash away, however naively, all that had come before. *To make a new skin.* Walking back home, he realized how insignificant he was; how the small steps of such a walk could only ever be consumed by the greater intensity of the world. And how, all such momentum toward participating, toward finding contact, of an imagined hospitality, is never as innocent as it may appear – that even his own imagined project is full of uncertain and problematic demands.

To recognize: that I am not welcome.

That you do not need me.

Such is the moment now, he also realizes; each word written a small murmur that nonetheless already assumes a position; to already perform a set of projections onto the forces encircling the globe: *shall I walk to Egypt*, he wonders?

-

The rush of a moment catches his thoughts: the presence of friends, the smile of others, touches the underside of his skin – like an unimaginable softness, to alight new fear, that no word will ever emerge to figure you and I into another proximity: *You*, as that which instigates, who prods his ribs on the way to school –

You who never writes, and who nonetheless always demands a response –

You who tries to speak –

You waiting in the hills.

I imagine there is much that Jacques Lacan would say, here, about this *You*, as the underside of the I, on the other side of the H: a figure of the unconscious? The missing object that has never been constituted in the flesh? The drive – toward love? A politics of desire?

As Lyotard declares: the flesh of an economy in excess of itself.

You.

He.

May writing enact a form of doubling by which to enfold reader and writer, together, into a language whose performance might overcome, overwhelm, the signifying coordinates of relation? Of the word?

That is to say:

I kiss you

*I give you my longing
I am scraped by you*

You, the soldiers who stormed the Pakistani night.
You, the boys who felt the earth close around their
heart.

You, the deer and the fox that raced for shelter.

You, the pilot and the farmer, embraced.

(The dragon.)

He asks his friends one night: do we need another
project? Everyone for themselves? To perform once
again?

And yet he knows: to continue is already a vital in-
stantiation of a needed potentiality. The small mak-
ing of a new plurality – as Negri suggests, a collective
labor. This is what brought him North, he also knows.
The ghetto. And which brings him East. The figuring
of new community: to widen the circle, in another di-
rection, as an unknown becoming. Production.

To search. For the speech of speech.

North.

East.

Middle.

-

Today, a siren sounded for 63 seconds, to mark the 63 years since the day of catastrophe.

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(February - May 2011)

Notes:

During the writing of this diary my main reference for news and information was Al Jazeera. Their reporting and coverage was an extremely important and fruitful source, and continues to act as a vital media network.

1. Dr Larbi Sadiki, "The Egypt-Tunisia Freedom Council", Al Jazeera, February 27.
2. Tariq Ali, interview with Riz Kahn, Al Jazeera, February 28.
3. From a lecture given at the Creative Time Summit: Revolutions in Public Practice, October 24, 2009.
4. Mark LeVine, "History's shifting sands", Al Jazeera, February 26.
5. Edmond Jabès, *The Book of Margins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 87.
6. Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), p. 104.
7. "Tension as Bahrain awaits protests", Al Jazeera, March 14.
8. Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love* (New York: NYRB, 2003).
9. A speech Ahmet Davutoglu delivered this week at the sixth Al Jazeera forum in Doha. The Guardian, March 15.
10. See "Comrades unite... then the bullets fly", Rob Crilly, The Daily Telegraph, March 23.
11. Hélène Cixous, *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
12. <http://www.tahrirsquared.com>
13. Raja Shehadeh, *Palestinian Walks: Forays into a Vanishing Landscape* (New York: Scribner, 2008), p. 50.
14. Kevin Zeese, the director of Prosperity Agenda and one of the organizers of the April 15 event, quoted in Allison Kilkenny, "The Resistance Has Begun", The Nation, April 4.
15. Samuel Huntington, quoted in Noam Chomsky, *Hopes and Prospects* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 40.

16. "What Happened April 8/9 in Tahrir", Omar Kamel, Tahrir Squared web site, April 9.
17. <http://angryarabiya.blogspot.com/>
18. "Syrian security forces attack villages", Al Jazeera, April 12.
19. Statement made by Mustapha Benfodil, found at <http://middleeast.about.com/od/algeria/qt/Mustafa-Benfodil-censorship.htm>, April 6.
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21. Jean Baudrillard, *The Agony of Power* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011).

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