

NAKED PUNCH

AN ENGAGED REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND THOUGHT

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ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION OWO JONES

FEATURING A DOSSIER ON THE ALGERIAN HIRAK MOVEMENT

ISSUE 21: £5



ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION FORTRESS EUROPE



Keep bangin on the walls
Keep bangin on the walls
OF FORTRESS EUROPE!

2022 -A new European order
Robot guards patrolling the border
Cybernetic dogs are getting closer and closer
Armoured cars and immigration officers
A burning village in Kosovo
You bombed it out now you're telling us go home
Machine guns strut on the cliffs of Dover
Heads down people look out! we're going over
Burnin up! can we survive re-entry
Past the mines and the cybernetic sentries
Safe european homes built on wars
You don't like the effect don't produce the cause
The chip is in your head not on my shoulder
Total control just around the corner
Open up the floodgates Time's nearly up
Keep bangin on the walls of Fortress Europe

Keep bangin
Keep bangin on the walls of Fortress Europe
We got a right, know the situation
We're the children of globalisation
No borders only true connection
Light the fuse of the insurrection
This generation has no nation
Grass roots pressure the only solution
We're sitting tight
Cos assylum is a right
Put an end to this confusion
Dis is a 21st century Exodus

Dis is a 21st century Exodus

Burnin' up can we survive re-entry
Past the landmines and cybernetic sentries
Plane, train, car, ferry boat or bus
The future is bleeding coming back at us
The chip is in your head not on my shoulder
Total control around the corner
Open up the floodgates Time's nearly up
Keep bangin on the walls of Fortress Europe

Keep bangin
Keep bangin on the walls of Fortress Europe
Keep bangin
Keep bangin on the walls of Fortress Europe

Cause every time we got we break the danger

They got a right - listen not to the scaremonger
Who doesn't run when they're feel the hunger
From where to what to when to here to there
People caught up in red tape nightmare
Break out of the detention centres
Cut the wires and tear up the vouchers
People get ready it's time to wake up
Tear down the walls of Fortress Europe

Poem by Owo Jones
Illustration by Biagio Mastroianni

WAKE UP! OWO JONES



Wake Up

This has never been for me

Or you...but for us and them
Amen...oh heaven

Tell me...what happened to love
Thy neighbours??

Everyone is depressed due to
Under paid labour !!!

Poverty can eat you inside

No money, alone with no family

Kills a human's pride

This hood life

Everyday on every breathe

We smell death
Forced to hustle and watch the
world

Diss our struggle



Asad Faulwell - Les Femmes d'Alger

L'AN II DE LA RÉVOLUTION ALGÉRIENNE or: RECONFIGURING THE REVOLUTION

The silence between us has preceded the one on the streets. I haven't heard my grandmother's voice in weeks, months even. I was her golden girl, and she hasn't taken my calls, neither has she returned them. - *She's old*. I remind myself, in an experienced maneuver to repel the idea that something might have happened to her, or even worse that I had offended her. - *She must have asked my cousin to help her dial my number, and when this didn't happen in the time my grandmother envisaged, she would withdraw herself, not accepting anything from anyone*.

I cannot help but smile as I imagine my cousin trying to appease and please the proud lioness. My grandmother would be irrecon-

cilable, my cousin's efforts in vain. The taunting silence would last for a little while only, a little while that equals eternity.

My cousin too would smile... They had named her after my late mother who had passed a few years before she has come into existence, an existence that, this my cousin and I were equally aware, was sometimes simply not enough to comfort the inconsolable the deceased have left behind.

So I have been waiting, and ruminating, and I have been looking for words to draw a portrait of this perfect image of a Kabyle woman. I fail to recall my grandmother's face in its details as my inner eye is not able to avert its

gaze from hers; alert and weary, they lend a melancholic grandeur to her being, they are vivid and gentle, and sometimes they would allow a glimpse into what has put her into a constant state of revolt. - *It is the hell she was born into*, Jean Sénac would say, *it rages within her*. With the years, I have come to have a vague understanding of how this hell of hers looks ... I would feel it in my grandmother's embraces, I would hear it in her laughter, and in her silence.

The last time I saw my grandmother was in March 2019 when I had come to Algeria to be part of the *hirak*. I had been restless since the moment I had seen the pictures of hundreds of thousands taking to the streets... and, as it

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Asian Dub Foundation (ADF) are a UK-based band, described as a "genre unto themselves" owing to their unique combination of tough jungle rhythms, dub bass lines and wild guitar overlaid by references to their South Asian roots and militant high-speed rap. Pioneers of the 'live film re-score performance', they have performed musical interpretations of such classics as La Haine, THX 1138 and Battle of Algiers.

Beginning in the early 1990's from a workshop in a London-based institution known as 'Community Music', they have not only become one of the best live bands in the world but also have stuck to their roots through initiatives such as 'Asian Dub Foundation Education' (ADFED) and with their commitment to battle against miscarriages of injustice. Their 2020 album 'Access Denied', starring guest performances from Greta Thurnberg and artists from Palestine and Chile, takes their characteristic 'sonic opposition to the powers that be' to a higher plane.

Owo Jones

A vehicle of change.
A desire with no regrets.
An influence to become thyself.
Love remains my religion.

Francesco Cincotta is a London based photographer and writer and is a founding member of the Naked Punch Collective.

Rym Khene was born in 1983. Through writing, photography and research, she questions the memory of cities, the traces, both apparent and secret, of their dwellers. She is currently writing her PhD dissertation in Comparative literature on literary and photographic representations of Algiers in the 1990s. www.rymkhene.com

Biagio Mastroianni was born in Lucerne, Switzerland in 1969. After his education as a photolithographer he studied visual communication at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts and gaining a degree as an illustrator. Biagio works as an

illustrator, painter and printmaker in Lucerne and London.

Shazia Sikander is a Pakistan-born artist – "a citizen of the world" – her practice ranges across a variety of mediums including miniature, painting, drawing, printmaking, installation, performance and video. Her work focuses on probing contested histories of colonialism, mechanisms of power, notions of language and migration, and miniature practice through contemporary feminist, American and South Asian perspectives.

Nassim Bahamed was born in 1990. He practices law in Algeria. Nassim is a committed Pan-Africanist and seeks to promote African culture(s)

goes when you're expatriated, one month would pass before I would be able to finally join the demonstrations in Algiers. - *The burden of exile has never felt so heavy*. I kept thinking, only to be appalled by this pathetic outburst of self-righteousness a moment later. My reluctant attempts to remain in the here and now had been mostly in vain, almost everything surrounding me would become blurred, slip away. Now and then, vibrant images from bygone times invaded my being, a dubious illusion of lightheartedness that jealously demanded to be cherished; I would believe I could feel the slightly pressing air of a summer's evening on the roof patio of my family's home, and I would believe I could see the silhouettes of the olive trees standing on my grandfather's property, enduring.

- "Homesickness defines us as the murderer of the dead" Mahmoud Darwish said. I would think of the *wretched* who, millions in number, had given their lives, in the vain hope of a future allowing their children and grandchildren a life of dignity and freedom. I remember seeing my mother's grave in my dreams, it was overflowing with water.

So there we were, the *wretched* again... tormented by survivor's guilt, and determined to give meaning to our lives, and to death. We had come from all corners of the world to be alongside our sisters and brothers, to march together with those we had left behind, we had come to celebrate a long-desired union...

It was a new love, and to not lose itself in insignificance and meaninglessness it required endurance, goodwill. It needed a common language to acknowledge the demons of the past. It needed pledges that ensured confrontation of those demons together, to be together, in the past, present and future: so we debated, demanded and explained; we ate, sang, danced and laughed together- when have Algerians ever missed an opportunity to sing or dance?

My grandmother's eyes beamed when I stood in front of her, unannounced and unexpected. She seemed to hesitate for a moment as if she was expecting her eyes to betray her. Only as she heard my voice, was her face illuminated and lifted by that smile that to

*in colonial Algeria
mere existence
meant resistance...
and in Kabylia
patriarchic society a
woman's life has no
meaning, she gives
meaning to it.*

me meant the world.

Later, I would be lying on my grandmother's bed while she meticulously folded her traditionally colorful dresses that she had pulled out of her closet seconds earlier. There hadn't been any need to refold them, my grandmother's closet was tidier than my inflated, bourgeois wardrobe has ever been... As far as I can recall, my grandmother

has always been tidying something; the patio in my grandfather's house, the dusty street in front of the gate, the stable of her beloved cows... Married into a family of poor Kabylia farmers at a young age, tedious, manual labour was more or less all that life had reserved for her. It constituted the invariable that defined my grandmother's existence... in colonial Algeria mere existence meant resistance...and in Kabylia patriarchic society a woman's life has no meaning, *she* gives meaning to it.

It had become a habit of mine to just sit there and watch my grandmother while she addressed herself to her favorite task. Lost in thought, she would sometimes forget that I was there. I would

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Naked Punch Collective dedicates this issue to Comrade **David Graeber** (1961 - 2020). We thank him for working with us on a prisoner release campaign and other causes that Naked Punch Collective supported. We thank him for lending his name, intellect and energy to our shared vision of the democratization of social, political and economic power and realities. We thank him for championing the people of the Third World in his activism for Kurdistan, campaigning for eradication of Third World debt, and in his activism around alternative globalization movements.

Our grandparents' revolution has a sacred place in our collective memory: revolt has become part of every Algerian's identity

closely observe her every movement. It was soothing. I would patiently wait for her to return to the here and now, to me.

- "I am tired," she told me that day. I was overcome by infinite melancholy.

- "Let me take over." I responded, knowing that this was not what she was hinting at... I had noticed the slowness in my grandmother's movements, despite relentless attempts to talk myself into still seeing some of that unshakeable determination I admired so much.

- "It's fine, I can do it," she smiled, her eyes more weary than usual. I remember avoiding my grandmother's look in that moment. I felt ashamed for being the reason why the lioness was delaying her deserved rest.

Our grandparents' revolution has a sacred place in our collective memory: revolt has become part of every Algerian's identity as has the (counter)violence that, as both cause and effect, went along with it. They resurfaced cyclically throughout the years after independence in 1962; whenever Algerians would dare to revolt, the state would put its Machiavelian machinery of power to use. It would intimidate, manipulate, exploit regional cleavages and religion to sedate the protesting population, and it would make use of physical violence: in 1980, in 1988 - resulting in the decade-long *dirty war*, and in 2001.

So there we were, the *wretched* again... tormented by survivor's guilt, and determined to give meaning to our lives, and to

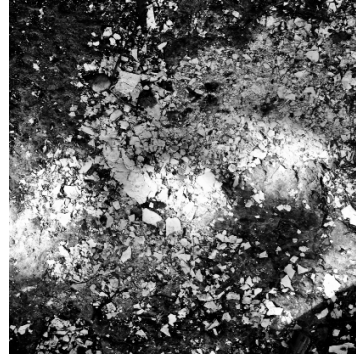
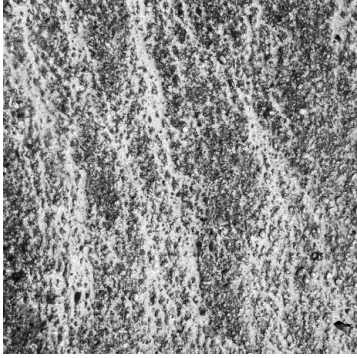
death. - *Would we allow history to repeat itself?*

It is difficult not to think about death these days. Before COVID-19 struck some had already proclaimed the death of the *hirak*: the anticipated systemic change hasn't materialized, Tebboune's presidency is bearing witness to that. More than a year after its emergence, the peaceful, nationwide popular movement remains without a leader to streamline its transition into a political opposition. Now that the protesters are confined to their homes, the reinvigorated state is once again on the attack, persecuting journalists and political activists alike.

It is difficult not to think about death these days. The chronically underfunded public health system in Algeria is not equipped to manage a pandemic, even in normal times it is barely functioning. We worry about the most vulnerable among us, we worry about the lives of those who have paved

the way for our revolution.

- *But is this revolution dissipating?* The silence on the streets is onerous, indeed. It might feel like we have given up, left the battlefield... However, this does not mean that the *hirak* is dead. It means that the time has come for the *hirak* to unfold its true revolutionary power, and for each and every one of us to live up to their pledge to confront the demons together, to *be* together. Now is not the time to demonstrate. It's the time to take care of each other, to reconfigure the *hirak* to protect the most vulnerable among us. And this shall be the invariable that defines our existence... in post-colonial Algeria mere existence means resistance.



CHRONIQUES VAGABONDES

je rêve de 40 millions de
chroniques vagabondes
parenthèses
au cours naturel des choses

chroniques tour à tour
pyromanes et douces
orphelines et de lumière
bravant les murs des cachots
berçant les nuits sans fin

mots infidèles au goût de
tonnerre

chroniques de la fin des corps
aux parfums de sable
dans l'écume des
milleneufcentquatrevingtdix

chroniques des silences
chroniques
insomniaques
des exils incroyants
otages de toutes les villes

chroniques des *Lonesome Desert Blues*
de ceux qui dorment sans rêver
des buveurs de café
des *He's with me right now, but in
the mornin' where will he be*

chroniques des villes d'autrefois
des matins sans raison
des paupières plissées
transies d'amertume

chroniques pour demain pour
hier encore
des pages écartelées
des livres laissés pour compte
des captures d'écran

chroniques des cigarettes

fumées par ennui
de celles qui demandent *What's
your story*

je rêve de 40 millions de
chroniques vagabondes
et plus encore

chroniques noyées dans les
ruines de la ville
des nuits fraîches au coeur des
îles
des danses enchantées avec des
arbres de poussière

chroniques des enfances
entre toi et demain
des chagrins
des récits
et des souvenirs indécis

chroniques de ceux qui restent
sur leur faim
de ceux qui ne disent rien
fouillant du regard la pierre des
chemins sourds

chroniques des crépuscules de
goudron
des cris et des corps immobiles
et de ceux qui laissent échapper
de leur fenêtre
des airs de chaabi

chroniques des marcheurs de
l'horizon
des réfugiés de la pluie
des amoureux endurcis

de ceux qui ferment les yeux

chroniques des conventions
abandonnées
et des murs tagués

chroniques de la nouvelle ville
de l'aube funambule
sur les fils de l'histoire

chroniques des taches de sang
sur le front de routes inachevées

chroniques disparues

chroniques des joueurs de
dominos
des automnes caméléons
légendes des ponts suspendus

chroniques des premières fois
de celles qui font dos à la mer
des corps tempêtes
au goût de déjà-vu

chroniques des trains qui passent
des balles perdues
et des prières passagères

chroniques des langues
maternelles
des histoires imaginées
et des portes entrebâillées
chroniques des raseurs de murs
et des suicidés
oubliés

chroniques parasites

chroniques de ceux qui tendent
l'oreille
aux chants du temps qui passe
aux fictions insensées

chroniques photo
graphiques

Juin 2019

VAGABOND CHRONICLES

I dream of 40 million vagabond
chronicles
Parentheses
In the natural course of things

Chronicles alternately
Pyromaniac and sweet
Orphan and of light
Braving the walls of solitary
confinement
Rocking endless nights

Unfaithful words taste of thunder

Chronicles of the ending of the
body Of perfumes of sand
In the foam of the nineteen
nineties

Chronicles of chronic silences
Insomniac
Of unbelieving exiles
Hostages of all cities

Chronicles of *Lonesome Desert
Blues*

Of those who sleep to never
dream
Of coffee drinkers, of
*He's with me right now, but in the
mornin 'where will he be*

Chronicles of cities from before
Of mornings without reason
Of wrinkled eyelids
Soaked with bitterness

Chronicles for tomorrow and for
yesterday still
Of torn pages
Books left behind
And screenshots

Chronicles of cigarettes smoked
with apathy
Of those that ask, *What's your
story?*

I dream of 40 million vagabond
chronicles
And so much more

Chronicles drowned in the ruins
of the city
Of cool nights in the heart of the
islands
Of enchanted dances with trees
of dust

Childhood chronicles
Between yourself and tomorrow
Of sorrows
Of stories
And undecisive memories

Chronicles of those who are left
wanting more
Of those who say nothing
And rifle through the stone of
muffled paths

Chronicles of tar twilights
Of cries and still bodies
And those who let from their
window escape
Melodies of Chaabi

Chronicles of those who walk the
horizon
Of refugees from the rain
And of callous lovers

Of those who close their eyes

Chronicles of abandoned rules
And graffitied walls

Chronicles of the new city
Of the tightrope dawn
On the threads of history

Chronicles of bloodstains
On the surface of unfinished
roads

Missing chronicles

Chronicles of the domino players
Of chameleon falls
And tales of suspended bridges

Chronicles of the first time
Of those that turn their back on
the sea
Bodies of storms
Taste of déjà-vu

Chronicles of the passing trains
Of stray bullets
And fleeting prayers

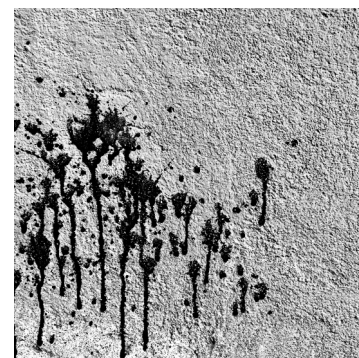
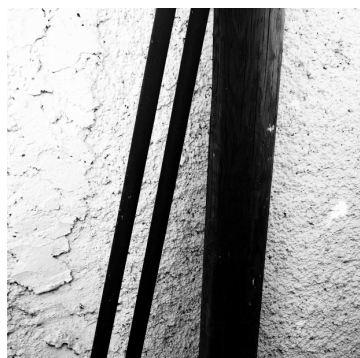
Chronicles of mother tongues
Of imagined stories
And half open doors

Chronicles of those who hug the
walls
Of forgotten
Suicides

Parasite chronicles

Chronicles of those who listen for
Chants of passing time
And foolish fiction

Photo Graphic
Chronicles



ALGÉRIE, LA DEUXIÈME RÉVOLUTION

More than 4 months after its launch, the popular movement has asserted itself as a peaceful popular democratic revolution of the Algerian people, forming a strong and active political entity, composed of all social categories, bringing together all the ideological and political tendencies present in society, from all regions of the country.

At independence in 1962, there were 9 million Algerians. Today there are 43 million. Very few among them have personal memories of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962).

The society that emerges after the war of liberation in 1962 is a society that has been deconstructed by colonialism and restructured through the liberation struggle. A society of poor peasantry and urban proletariat comprising micro-islands of a social category assimilable to a dominated petty bourgeoisie. A society that, at independence, is marked by the experience of a fierce war, with its innumerable victims, its millions of refugees, displaced, illiterate and unemployed.

At independence, Algerian society, exhausted by 132 years of colonial exploitation and by a particularly trying war, is obviously not able to intervene in the events that divide the leaders of the revolution, when the "army of the borders" returns to Algeria and seizes power.

This seizure of power happens against the legitimate bodies of the leadership of the revolution, the CNRA[1] and the GPRA[2], and leads to the establishment of the political regime which persists to the present day. At the symbolic level, the new

regime appropriates the name of the FLN[3] and would later use it as a façade for a single party that in fact would only be an administrative extension of the central government, one of the structures that exert political control over the population.

The regime essentially transforms into an authoritarian rentier state which, confronted with the propellant force of the revolution during the 1960s and 1970s, conducts policies corresponding to the needs of the population: literacy, mass education, economic and social development, employment, industrialization, a foreign policy of independence that opposes to imperialism and neocolonialism. From the early 1980s, the developmentalist trend decreases and the regime is quickly overcome by a spirit of submission (in contrast to the revolutionary spirit that allowed the liberation of Algeria), and corruption - which spreads within the government and the society - begins to form a coherent system which results in the squandering of the country's resources, the demoralization of the population, a massive brain drain, the return of archaist forces in society in the context of the erosion and then the destruction of the state structures

and institutions created in the 50s, 60s and 70s.

In October 1988, Algeria enters the "overt" phase of the crisis. The army shoots protestors and kills more than 500 people. In the aftermath of the riots and the repression, the government organizes itself to maintain power. It makes a few concessions, adopts a new constitution that introduces multipartyism to the political field and press freedom to the media. The regime's political opening is accompanied by economic reforms, the most important of which is the autonomy of the Central Bank.

Pluralistic local elections are held in 1990, which yield a majority to the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The legislative elections, which in the first round yield a majority to the FIS, are cancelled, and from 1992 Algeria is dragged into a devastating internal war that causes maybe 200,000 deaths (the exact number of victims of the 1990s is unknown).

This decade, known as "Bloody Decade" or "Black Decade", inflicts a profound trauma to

ALGERIA, THE SECOND REVOLUTION

Algerian society. The victims are innumerable, the elites destroyed by assassination or exile, the rural population takes refuge in the cities, and the administration erodes while corruption spreads to all areas of the government and of society.

Society and state falter but don't collapse. In 1999, Bouteflika becomes the new avatar of the regime, a false "national reconciliation" is imposed by the government without truth nor justice being part of the process. Over the next two decades, the financial resources flowing into state coffers are squandered by a system of large-scale predation and corruption. Society, exhausted by a decade of destruction and misfortunes, is stuck in the relative comfort of the money circulating in the channels of the "informal economy", irrigating a new political culture of submission to clientelism and corruption and complete indifference to public interest and public good.

This new culture goes against the fundamental values of the Algerian nation that made its liberation struggle and its historical emergence as an independent nation state possible in the first place. But for 20 years, this deep conflict of values and political identity

has raged within society (a silent rage, hidden), and has manifested in a constant tension between rulers and ruled, with an average of about ten thousand riots per year, but, despite the recurrence of problems common to all Algerians, no movement of national scale has developed from the serious problems which have occurred periodically over the past two decades, such as the bloody repression in Kabylia in 2001, the protests in the Mزاب region, or the protests against the exploitation of shale gas by the Saharan populations.

Over time, this apparent status quo that the government, inside and outside the country, sold as "stability", has made the government itself and the population believe that change is impossible, all the more so as the drastic drop in the country's financial resources since 2015 has not led the government to revise its policies nor initiate the reforms necessary to cope with the rapidly deteriorating economic and social situation in the country. Instead the government, either out of cynicism or incompetence, either way in a completely irresponsible manner came up with only one "solution" to this situation, ironically called "non-conventional financing", that consisted in issuing plenty of new banknotes, thus fuelling inflation, aggravating a

decline in Algerian purchasing power and accelerating capital flight.

It is in this disastrous context that the events of February 22 take place. More than 4 months after its emergence, the popular movement asserts itself as a peaceful popular democratic revolution of the Algerian people, forming a strong and active political entity, composed of all social categories, bringing together all ideological and political currents of society, and emanating in all regions of the country.

After having achieved the resignation of President Bouteflika, and having prevented the presidential elections scheduled for July 4, the popular movement which, particularly but not exclusively, consists in massive demonstrations gathering millions of male and female citizens every Friday, is now demanding the departure of the government, the end of its symbols and practices, and the beginning of a transitional period allowing the establishment of the conditions necessary for the first democratic elections in Algeria.

This popular movement, self-organized and without spokesperson other than the millions of protesters carrying,

shouting, reciting and singing their slogans, displays an energy, an intelligence, a creativity, a persistence, a consistency, a unity, a strength and a determination that is amazing.

The regime is ambivalent in the face of this massive movement. On the one hand, there has not been a general repression of the demonstrations but rather attempts at intimidation by an impressive deployment of police forces, in the capital in particular, during the Friday demonstrations, and arrests followed by imprisonments (more than 50 protesters and other activists are currently in prison), surveillance of and interventions on social networks, etc. Furthermore, the regime proclaims its respect for the popular movement, its desire for dialogue, for respect of the Constitution and for electoral choice.

The result of this ambivalent approach of the government is that, in the absence of satisfactory responses to its demands, the popular movement radicalizes its positions while scrupulously abiding by its strategy of peaceful struggle. Thus, it continues to grow, without yet having achieved that the regime accepts to have a transition period, led by a government that is accepted by the people and that will be



charged to create the conditions to hold democratic elections.

Today, the country is at a dead end. The diagnosis is clear. The solutions are there. However, the conditions are not yet favorable for their implementation. The choice of the peaceful revolution is a choice for a consensual solution to the crisis, which should result from a dialogue between the people and the real power (that is to say the army), leading to a compromise. But, for the people, such a compromise cannot be made without the departure of the regime, the current government in particular.

There are obviously numerous elements of continuity/discontinuity between the revolution of November 1954 and that of February 2019, due to the structural and contextual differences between the condition of the Algerian people then and now, however it is possible to locate the main source of the historical contradictory process, which today puts the Algerian people back to a revolutionary dynamic, in the vitality of their own historical memory.

Indeed, at independence, in an attempt to cover its illegitimacy, the regime opposed that Algerians learn about their history, about the national movement and the national liberation war in particular. The most important historical events

were concealed and so were the names of the main leaders of the revolution. The history taught in school has been a truncated version of facts and events.

There is no academic research devoted to national history, and the first work[4] on the history of the FLN has been published by Mohammed Harbi in 1980 in Paris, where he has been exiled for many years.

In the one-party regime's press and media, history is only mentioned when selected dates and events that are emptied of all substance are officially commemorated.

However, since February 22, we have been witnessing the resurgence of a high historical consciousness, a political representation of the past and the present, which suggests that the transmission of historical knowledge and consciousness has taken place outside of the state's political, media or educational institutions, through autonomous channels of society, primarily through family stories, or through the acquisition of partial knowledge acquired through publications from foreign universities or foreign publishers.

This situation is particularly significant insofar as that Algerian society, on the extremely complex topic of the history of

the Algerian people in the 19th and 20th century, and deprived of the intellectual instruments of knowledge usually provided through school, university, debate and confrontation of ideas, and in the absence of a coherent and more or less relevant official national narrative, managed to keep/forge a thread of knowledge useful for the preservation of its memory and its historical identity as well as the production and renewal of the resources necessary to grasp the new problems of society at different stages of its historical evolution.

Thus, the protagonists of the revolution of February 2019 referenced the declaration of November 1, 1954, not only as an inspiration for their democratic and popular uprising, but also as a political frame of reference for their political action. This reference is not only highly symbolic, it defines the current revolution as a return to the course of the national liberation struggle and as a resumption of its dynamic in the current context and prolongation of the long revolutionary walk of the Algerian people for their liberation, yesterday from French colonial rule, and today from an authoritarian rentier regime that, through its use and the systematization of violence and corruption, in recent decades has degenerated into a neocolonial regime.

Algerian society has managed to keep / forge a thread of knowledge useful for the preservation of its memory and its identity history as well as the production and renewal of the resources necessary to grasp the new problems of society at different stages of its historical evolution.

It is fundamentally this inversion of the values of liberation in the ideology of submission that the overwhelming majority of the Algerian people are rising against today.

Amin Khan
July 14, 2019

- [1] CNRA: National Council of the Algerian Revolution
- [2] GPRA: Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic
- [3] FLN: National Liberation Front
- [4] Mohammed Harbi. The FLN, mirage and reality from the origins to the seizure of power (1945-1962), Editions Jeune Afrique, Paris, 1980.



Photography by Lydia Saidi

L'AUBE DE DAMNÉS

Sommes-nous condamnés
A être les éternels damnés ?
D'année en année
Entre le nord et le Sud
Se creuse l'écart
On se brûle les ailes comme Icare
Ou sont parti les pétrodollars ?
Pauvre Amiclar
La Mecque des révolutionnaires
Est devenue victime des
théocrates sanguinaires
D'Alger à Madagascar
On sombre dans la mésaventure
de la conscience Nationale
Avec les fausses bourgeoisies
subliminales
Et le pliage des multinationales
Les fonds vautours, le FMI et la
sinistre Banque mondiale
Comme un cheval de Troie ont
provoqué le désarroi
Fuck le Franc CFA et toute la Fran-
çAfrique
Qui n'arrête pas de faire du Fric
Sur le dos de l'Afrique
Sous le regard de ses dirigeants
Qui se laissent Dompter comme
des lions
Dans un cirque !
Unissons-nous
Car je suis certain qu'il faut se
lever
Pour forger notre destin
Pour que l'Afrique cesse d'être
leur festin !

Are we doomed
To be the eternal damned ?
From year to year
Between north and south
The gap widens
Our wings get burnt like Icarus
Where did the petrodollars go ?
Poor Amiclar
Mecca of revolutionaries
Has become a victim of blood-
thirsty theocrats
From Algiers to Madagascar
We sink into the misadventure of
the National conscience
Thanks to the fake subliminal
bourgeoisies
And the folding of multinationals
Vulture funds, the IMF and the
sinister World Bank
Which like a Trojan horse have
caused disarray
Fuck the CFA Franc and all of
FrançAfrique
Which doesn't stop making
money
At the expense of Africa
Under the gaze of its leaders
Who let themselves be tamed like
lions
In a circus !
Let's unite !
Because for sure we have to rise
To shape our destiny
So that Africa ceases to be their
feast !

D A W N OF THE DAMNED

ALGERIA'S FORGOTTEN REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

Guevara helped create an African Liberation Committee in Algiers in 1965. The Committee's first mission was to assist Congolese rebels against the Belgian-backed and US-allied regime of Joseph Mobutu—a conflict stirred after the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961. Guevara partook in an armed expedition himself, traveling in disguise to avoid the CIA's notice.

Only when people worry because they have stopped worrying, only then does individual and collective freedom becomes possible.

The masses showed via art that 'the grandest horror is justice; that is the power that can subjugate the dire collective experiences'.

Kostas Papaioannou, L'art Grecque. Amilcar Cabral, the leader of the Bissau-Guinean armed struggle against colonial Portugal, once said about Algiers: "The Muslims make the pilgrimage to Mecca, the Christians to the Vatican, and the national liberation movements to Algiers." Cabral was also the first to name Algiers "capital of revolutions" in 1969. By the early 1970s, Algeria had a full blown authoritarian regime and left internationalism was on the retreat. Though Algiers is again the site of protest and young Algerians link their struggles

against the government with protests against neoliberalism elsewhere in the world, the global city celebrated by Cabral is now a thing of the distant past.

Algeria's independence in 1962 from France correlated with the fall of the French Fourth Republic and its colonial empire. After 132 years under French colonialism, the reascent yet limping Algeria had a population of 9 million people but only 500 university graduates. Algeria lacked reliable economic and political infrastructures—with France still showing vivid interest in its oil-rich desert in the south. Ninety percent of Algerians were illiterate; but they had brought the world's fourth largest military power to its knees.

It was with this revolutionary spirit that in the early 1960s, the capital Algiers became a meeting ground for international civil rights activists, revolutionary intellectuals, artists and guerilla fighters, all of whom had taken

a common stance against imperialism and colonialism.

The new government built a nation out of a looted colony. First president, Ben Bella, and the FLN, the ruling party that had mainly led the War of Liberation (1954-1962), dreamed of making Algeria an esteemed country in the international arena, notably by leading the Non-Aligned Movement, the loose alliance of newly independent countries that wanted to chart a future outside the influence of either the US, the Soviet Union or China.

At the founding conference of the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union), Ben Bella argued that the newfound anti-colonialist organization should provide help to liberation movements with arms, training and funding. "Let us all agree to die a little so that the people still under colonial rule may be free and African unity may not become a vain word," he declared.



Che Guevara with Ben Bella

South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) was the first resistance movement to be hosted in Algeria, establishing its international bureau in downtown Algiers in 1963. The ANC's political ties with the FLN dated back to 1960, when ANC fighters trained alongside Algeria's Liberation Army in Oujda, Morocco, following the Sharpeville massacre that resulted in the anti-apartheid movement's turn towards armed struggle. Nelson Mandela, who took part in the trainings, stayed in Oujda until the summer of 1962. He was arrested as soon as he returned to South Africa, perceived by the apartheid government as a looming menace to public order, with an accusation, in part, of having trained alongside National Liberation Army (ALN) fighters. When he returned to Algiers in 1990, in his first visit abroad after his release, Mandela attested, "The Algerian army made me a man."

Other liberation movements, such as Mozambique's FRELIMO and the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), soon joined the new land of the damned, establishing bureaus not so far from one another in the capital's main streets. Their abrupt arrival was moreover encouraged by Che Guevara's iterative visits, which he took to in July 1963, the month that also marked the country's first independence anniversary.

In October 1963, a war broke out between Algeria and Morocco, over the latter's claims that territories in western Algeria were historically its own. Cuba intervened militarily alongside Algeria, and Morocco ultimately ceded its demands. (The Sand War, as it's now known, resulted in the closure of borders between the two countries, which remain to this day.)

Cuba's ties with Algeria were categorically, however briefly, strengthened. With Ben Bella's laissez-faire attitude, Guevara

aspired to contribute in making Algiers a base for worldwide movements. Guevara helped create an African Liberation Committee in Algiers in 1965. The Committee's first mission was to assist Congolese rebels against the Belgian-backed and US-allied regime of Joseph Mobutu—a conflict stirred after the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961. Guevara partook in an armed expedition himself, traveling in disguise to avoid the CIA's notice. The fighters were divided into two fronts: one that landed in Brazzaville, west of DRC, while the 150-member strong second contingent, including Guevara, landed in Tanzania with a group of 14 Cubans, aiming to support Lumumba's rebellion against Mobutu. They crossed Lake Tanganyika to DRC in April. Soon the Cuban presence was disclosed when four Cubans were killed during a conflict in June, and Che Guevara was summoned to leave—even by the fighters on his side—when the US and Mobutu stepped up the crackdown. (Che Guevara stayed

After being harassed by US security forces for opposing the Vietnam War and calling on black Americans to object to their induction into the US army, the Black Panther Party's theorist and militant Stokely Carmichael fled to Algiers on September 6, 1967. "Here I am, finally, in the mother country," he said upon arrival.



Black Panther Party in Algiers

in Tanzania afterward, where he started writing his Diaries of the Revolutionary War in Congo, before leaving for Latin America, never to return to Africa again.)

In June 1965, Colonel Boumediene (Mohammed Boukharouba was his real name) overthrew Ben Bella. Boumediene subsequently abolished Algeria's constitution and ruled through a "revolutionary council," which he implemented at his own advantage more than a decade after the revolution. Ben Bella was kept under house arrest until 1980, almost two years after the death of Boumediene.

A fervent proponent of anti-imperialism, Boumediene also coveted the vocation of making Algiers a vanguard for worldwide liberation movements. The number of bureaus held by international movements throughout Algiers grew significantly in the mid to late 60s, including even left-leaning, white movements like the Liberation Front of Québec (Canada) and the Breton Liberation Front (France).

Palestine's Fatah (then the Palestinian National Liberation Movement) had its own recruitment and information office in one of Algiers's busiest streets and stated that it had

carried out several paramilitary trainings in the country's south. Mozambique's FRELIMO also claimed that some 200 of its men received guerilla fights trainings in the desert.

The country's open-door policy welcomed guerilla fighters from Venezuela, Guatemala and Nicaragua, as well as individual expatriates from Tunisia, Morocco, Spain and Portugal, and from as far away as Brazil and Argentina. South Vietnam's Viet Cong, Angola's MPLA and Namibia's SWAPO were also active in the capital.

In June 1970, when some 40 Brazilian political prisoners were to be exchanged for the kidnapped West German Ambassador to Brazil, they demanded to be flown to Algiers. Greeted with music and cigarettes—the Algerians knew the detainees' yearning for nicotine—they were housed in pleasant bungalows in the suburban Ben Aknoun area, where some of them stayed until an amnesty was declared in Brazil almost a decade later. (The majority were members of the Popular Revolutionary Vanguard and the Movement of October 8, who had fled Médici's brutal

crackdown.)

Boumediene also didn't shy away from openly antagonizing the United States. In 1967, he cut diplomatic ties with the US following the American-backed Six-Day War in which Israel tripled its territory by annexing the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and other Palestinian lands.

Israel's victory was a major humiliation, and the streets of Algiers quickly filled with angered protesters who ransacked US representative institutions in the capital and called for the continuity of war against Israel. Boumediene, who had already sent troops to Egypt during the war, ordered sending more, but Egypt and the other Arab countries were not poised for another war shortly after their defeat. His wrath against the United States also rekindled Algeria's support for the Vietnamese during the Vietnam War, and signaled to some American political activists they would be welcome in Algiers.

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militant Stokely Carmichael fled to Algiers on September 6, 1967. "Here I am, finally, in the mother country," he said upon arrival.

Eldridge Cleaver, one of the Panthers' leaders, joined Carmichael in 1969. Cleaver was on the run after being charged with attempted murder in 1968 following a shootout with the police in Oakland, California. At first, Cleaver fled to Canada, then to Cuba hidden on a cargo boat, but he was soon compelled to leave Havana after Reuters disclosed his whereabouts.

By welcoming the Panthers, Boumediene further braved the wrath of the US. In Algiers, Cleaver was housed and received a monthly stipend to provide for his wife and small baby. He attended the opening of the first Afro-American cultural center of Algiers and became head of the International Section of the Panthers, which was exclusively created in Algiers in 1970. At a time where there was no US ambassador to Algeria (save a chargé d'affaires, who worked under the American Affairs section of the Swiss

Embassy), Cleaver was officially recognized as the Black Panthers' ambassador to Algiers. "This is the first time in the struggle of the black people in America that they have established representation abroad," Cleaver said at the opening of the BPP's subdivision. Soon, Cleaver was involved with a number of other African liberation leaders who also sojourned in Algiers. Their binding of causes would lead to the creation of the Pan-African Festival, the first edition of which was held in Algiers in July 1969. The festival brought together South Africa's Miriam Makeba and the American Nina Simone, among thousands of other artists and intellectuals from all African countries and African diasporas.

Boumediene's support for the BPP initially appeared to know no bounds. In her 2018 memoirs, Elaine Mokhtefi, a white American writer married to an Algerian and who had worked alongside the Panthers as their fixer and interpreter during their heyday in Algiers, wrote that in 1969 Cleaver told her that he had killed a fellow American in Algiers named Clinton Rahim Smith, whom Mokhtefi also knew. Smith was planning to run away with the party's money, Cleaver told her; but the victim was rumored to be involved with Cleaver's wife, Kathleen, while Cleaver was on a visit to North Korea. Byron Booth, a fellow BPP member who accompanied Cleaver to Pyongyang, later admitted to witnessing the murder and burial of Smith's body. Almost two years later, the Black Panther newspaper ran an article stating that Cleaver killed Rahim because of an affair the victim had with his wife. The article also accused Boumediene of "endorsing the crime." The firearm used in the murder, an AK47, was a gift

from North Korea's Kim Il-sung, according to Donald L. Cox, then a BPP member who left the Panthers in 1971. Elaine wrote that she never spoke of it again, until in her 2018 memoirs, *Algiers, Third World Capital*. When the Algerian authorities found the body near la Pointe Pescade, west of Algiers, Cleaver remained free.

But changes were afoot in Algerian foreign policy. Algiers' economy was starting to weaken and Boumediene was compelled to take to reforms. On February 24, 1971, Boumediene declared the nationalization of Algeria's hydrocarbon industry (until then, most of the revenues went to French companies). The nationalization also marked the beginning of friendlier U.S.-Algerian ties that remain to this day. In October 2018, Chakib Khelil, a former Algerian minister of energy—controversial because of a corruption case and his relationships with US energy companies—declared that the US was involved in the 1971 nationalization.

The BPP was considered a serious security threat by the US government, and the FBI had already vowed to "neutralize the BPP and destroy what it stands for." US companies now wanted in on oil and gas contracts that were up for grabs, and Boumediene's regime, which was far more repressive against its own dissidents, started cracking down on the Panthers.

In 1972, members of the BPP-affiliated Black Liberation Movement hijacked a Detroit-Miami flight of 94 passengers,



Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and Ben Bella

including the five hijackers who boarded with three children. The 86 passenger hostages were released in Miami, and the hijackers flew to Boston to pick up a ransom of \$1 million—and a flight engineer who was qualified to fly overseas—before heading to Algiers in hopes of joining the BPP's International Section. Upon arrival, Boumediene confiscated the ransom money and gave it back to the airline. (It had been the Panthers' second hijack to be diverted to Algiers in less than two months.) Cleaver later published an open letter in which he complained that the Algerian leader had abandoned their cause. The next day, local authorities raided the Black Panthers' villa, cut telephones and confiscated the party's weapons and typewriters.

Algeria's rapprochement with the US tolled the death knell of the Panthers' presence in Algiers. In 1974, Boumediene landed in New York for the first time to attend a UN meeting, then went to Washington, where he met with President Nixon, although the two leaders' countries had no diplomatic ties yet. (By then, Boumediene was not president yet, still ruling as Chairman of the Revolutionary Council.) But it was a clear indication of the direction

Algeria was headed.

As Washington mended fences with Algiers, Algeria's support for the movements only grew more circumspect over the years. Later, the country took to diplomatic action, pushing South Africa's apartheid and the Palestinian question at the UN.

Today, streets like Boulevard Che Guevara, Rue Patrice Lumumba and Boulevard Amilcar Cabral often seem like the only reminders of Algiers's forgotten history. Yet for the past year, as people have taken to the streets in the Hirak to protest a ruling elite that has ironically used the country's liberation history to legitimize an unsatisfactory rule, the past has re-surfaced. "The Hirak is a cumulus of all the movements that Algeria has known," said Toufik Ali Bey, a young activist and university student in Algiers. "Even if it is more oriented towards the '54 Revolution as an ultimate landmark, we still find inspiration in those liberation movements."

LES FEMMES D'ALGER



All art work by Asad Faulwell - Les Femmes d'Alger series

Naked Punch: How did “Women in Algiers” come into being? What inspired you to work on the women of the Algerian liberation movement FLN?

I had taken several classes in the Middle East North Africa studies department at UC Santa Barbara and had been aware of the overall FLN movement through those classes. The thing that was the real catalyst for me was seeing Gillo Pontecorvo’s film “The Battle of Algiers”. I was introduced to the movie in graduate school through a classmate and was blown away. I had previously been unaware of the women’s role in the FLN and in the resistance. The movie stuck in my head for over a year before I started digging in and doing research to find out as much I could about the women who took part in the anti-colonial resistance. I was shocked to find out that there was relatively little information about them, which motivated me to make this body of work. I was also interested in how I could comment on the Delacroix and Picasso “Les Femmes d’Alger” works. I wanted to counter those works which were created through an Orientalist and colonial lens. I wanted to make a work about the actual women of Algiers, not any vague references to some exotic idea. I felt these women had been

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underappreciated by history and I found a way to bring more eyes and minds to their stories while also commenting on the relationship between colonialism and art history.

NP: You identify or are identified as an Iranian American artist. Yet, in the work "Women of Algiers" you focus on Algerian FLN women in the resistance to French colonial rule. The concept of who can represent what is contested... On the one hand as people of the so-called "Global South" we are constantly nudged to be native informers for the metropole - Following this logic, you should be doing art on Iran! So in that sense how did you negotiate to go beyond this "conditioning" to limit yourself to your immediate identity? Secondly, and conversely, Algerian women themselves lack in the metropole representation power. My question is how did you feel about representing them as a cis male? How would you justify it?

This is a great question and a really important one. I found that during my time in school many people kept pushing me to make work about Iran. I did,

I made several works about Iran. At some point I realized that my connection to Iran was a second hand connection, all through history, family stories and reading. If I was of *white* European ancestry I could talk about anything I want but as an Iranian-American I have to talk about Iran? Even if I live in Los Angeles? To me it was another form of discrimination. If you are of a particular background then you can only have ideas or opinions related to that background. I rejected that idea flat out. I decided I would talk about and make work about whatever interested me the most. The story of the women in the FLN was so complex and I felt it was something not enough people knew about. I saw this as an opportunity to create dialogue, to do so in a provocative way to talk about colonialism, racism, violence, gender discrimination and the way history in general and art history in particular are constructed. In terms of being a man who is making this work it is a thin line to walk. I knew that before making this work I needed to do my research, I needed to find out as much as I could about these women so I could depict

them in a way that celebrated them, and in no way exoticized or sexualized them. One thing that has happened often- and it is something I have really enjoyed- is that people will often contact me assuming that I am a woman and when they eventually meet me, they are surprised. I have even had multiple writers write articles mentioning me as a woman. I enjoy that confusion, in the end we are all humans, we are all people and we can all empathize with each other's experiences to varying degrees.

NP: The art world is extremely reactionary - it is controlled by European and non-European oligarchies... How do you survive ?

I think I have been really fortunate to have a career as an artist. Honestly, I did not think that making work as political as mine I would be able to make it. I always assumed I would end up pursuing a position in academia. It is really the result of hard work and good fortune. The reality is that every artist relies on those in positions of economic and

social power to get their work out there and to be able to pay the bills and continue making work. There is no way to maintain a full time studio practice without the financial support of collectors, patrons and museums. While I find the amount of wealth and power that the elite in society hold to be absurd and repulsive, there are very smart collectors, patrons and gate keepers in the art world who do want to see challenging work succeed. There are also people who are just interested in trying to make a lot of money. Fortunately for me, I have been able to work with art dealers who have generally steered my work away from those type of collectors towards the more serious and thoughtful ones. And although art history is littered with racism and sexism there has been an increasing effort towards greater diversity of background and opinion over the last couple decades. The art world still has a lot of problems, there is still plenty of discrimination and the decisions about who "succeeds" and who "fails" are being made by a very small sliver of the 1%. Unfortunately, this is

the reality we are living with and I do my best to exist within that environment while staying true to my values and beliefs.

NP: Are there any lessons of solidarity you would like people of the "Global North" to draw from this work? What kind of action would you like to see from the privileged in light of the recent events happening in Algeria, and various other countries in the world?

I would like the people of the "Global North" to consider the ramifications of their actions. When Europe colonized the rest of the world this caused enormous damages on a practical, psychological and political level that will last for generations to come. We see that damage playing out in the chaos that is engulfing much of the globe today. We see the chaos and the pain resulting from the arrogant mistakes of Europe and the United States of America. I would like to see the privileged stay out of the political process taking place in countries like Algeria. Just as Europe was allowed to go through its own political awakening and maturation process so must the rest of the world be allowed to develop without the interference of the "Global North". Let's not forget that Europe tore itself apart twice in the past 110 years and the United States of America were founded on enslavement



and genocide. It was and in some ways still is a very ugly process that will hopefully lead to growth and greater compassion. I think what countries like Algeria are going through is painful and difficult but they must be allowed to decide for themselves what route they will take, without interference or manipulation from the outside.

NP: As someone with a connection to Iran - which has had a revolution in the recent past- and as someone who has worked on the subject of "Women of Algiers" - what role do you see visual arts playing in revolution and in decolonization? What role, if any, can an artist play?

I think art can be one of many factors involved with changing people's minds. It can open up doors of perception and possibility that may have been closed before. Its impact is slow and perhaps small but I think art can play a role in shaping society

and thus shaping the decisions that a society makes. Artists occupy a strange role in society. We exist largely outside of society, largely isolated. This distance can give artists a perspective that someone who is entrenched in the day-to-day grind might not be able to have. I think in many ways artists are asking society to consider other possibilities, to consider other ways of thinking and doing.

I knew that before making this work I needed to do my research, I needed to find out as much as I could about these women so I could depict them in a way that celebrated them, and in no way exoticized or sexualized them. One thing that has happened often- and it is something I have really enjoyed- is that people will often contact me assuming that I am a woman and when they eventually meet me, they are surprised. I have even had multiple writers write articles mentioning me as a woman. I enjoy that confusion.



Art can be one of many factors involved with changing people's minds. It can open up doors of perception and possibility that may have been closed before. Its impact is slow and perhaps small but I think art can play a role in shaping society and thus shaping the decisions that a society makes. Artists occupy a strange role in society. We exist largely outside of society, largely isolated. This distance can give artists a perspective that someone who is entrenched in the day-to-day grind might not be able to have.

**TECH -
GLEBA
WITHOUT
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IC NOVEL BY
BIAGIO
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THE FUTURE IS MAGIC...
INSPIRED BY THE ITALIAN ESSAYIST,
AUTHOR AND JOURNALIST PAOLO BARNARD**



WORDS: A CONFRONTATION IN THE PIAZZA

A SHORT STORY BY FRANCESCO CINCOTTA



This morning haunted by an old restlessness that I've suppressed too long I abandoned my books, carefully assembled notes, and abruptly left my place in the library and, as if in a dream, walked to the piazza at the foot of the hill, where a nervous crowd swirled like frantic ants around an abandoned piece of cake on the first warm day in Spring. What

brought me here: a low hypnotic murmur, a buzz, an atmospheric force ... neither noise, nor music, external and internal, symbiotic, like the air I breathe it rises and falls in intensity, demands my attention ... I follow ... automaticity inherent, like a beating heart. It knows where the action is, when the stale air will be refreshed by breezes from across the sea, or

from another piazza down the valley.

Important events are in the making, I don't want to be left out: instigators and trendsetters are congregating with the other elements of society in a devil's dance of elimination. That alone explains my devotion ... my need to be present: I'm obsessed with things in transit, circulating elemental particles searching for purpose, waiting to collide, chance and change, erratic motions excite me, I'm incomplete when grounded, need to free myself from a knot of self-imposed restrictions ... I follow The Buzz looking for an introduction to a new system of thought, a new action, for or against ... whatever, I want to be there ... See it and record it ...

Today it's the piazza, an ancient place of commerce and encounter, a busy market and a meeting place for all elements of the university and the community. It's charged. An event is in the making, the crowd anxious ... I know them, not personally, let's say I've seen them around, heard them speak, read their opinions in the press... an interesting group ... but not at all what I expected or hoped for: something more upbeat, mad and diverting ... a

The inclusion is incomplete ... I'm not fully integrated The buzz continues, softer now, mellow; perhaps a little tired: finality not its thing ... I turn my attention elsewhere ... search for structure, a cohesion granted or promised. The woman next to me smiles, momentarily lowers her phone, what's it about, I ask ... It's serious, she says, one never knows, people keep trying to connect ... one never knows what to expect

Photography by Francesco
Cincotta



break from the humdrum mediocrity of the times ... I'm not entirely blue, the morning just begun, every new day a mystery ... this one about to unfold ...

The Buzz fortifies an innate curiosity ... eases fear and self-doubt ... alerts me to an event I might otherwise miss ...

This document, dictated while I walk, a Lavalier microphone discreetly attached to my jacket has no immediate purpose. It's like my camera, also attached, a need to record ... a need I don't fully understand ... I just do it ... no questions asked ... I'm searching, I'll know it when I find it ...

Today's event, obviously anticipated. The gathered, in an upbeat mood, searching out acquaintances and colleagues, shaking hands, hugging, kissing, pretending all is normal. Are they aware of a purpose still hidden from me ... What I suspect is that there is no love lost here, these are competitors from the same circuit, surprised to be thrown together at this time, putting a good face on their discomfort.

Groups form, position themselves in relation to other groups, divide and subdivide, reform spontaneously. It seems cozy, however uncomfortable the gathered maybe they are on their best behaviour. Expectant, alert, they circulate as if at a village festival on a summer weekend in a remote mountain top location: people who were born in proximity to each other but seldom communicate, suspend suspicion momentarily, throw themselves into each

other's arms, eat local delicacies, drink the regional vintage, share a few stories before returning to their customary seclusion a few houses down the road, or a distant city in another country, having satiated on nostalgia and gossip, revisited a rejected landscape and confirmed long forgotten decisions to live a different life.

Where's the food ... No vendors, This is odd ...

Why am I here? Chosen, certainly, it's what I like to think: born alert, my frequency preselected, trial and error implicit ... Don't laugh, I do hear something, feel a vibration.

I'm addicted to the babble of the crowd, their words often dry repetitive, lacking in nutrition. I'm looking for exceptions ... Something yet to be done ... Something unsaid ... So far nothing ...

The sky blue, a gentle cool breeze, a delightful day ... Delightful days ominous, I should know, it's happened before.

I reach for my camera ... I'm naked without it ... It's barely adequate ... will have to do. A decent lens helps ... but the rest, hardly responsive ... a replacement on the list ... my gift to myself before the next departure.

Throughout the piazza there is an

upbeat mood, the attendants are increasingly aiming their devices skyward, at each other; tracking something mysterious. It's catching, infectious. At first I believe they are trying to capture images of themselves, or each other, until I witness text moving dynamically from all corners of the space, bouncing seemingly randomly between unrelated individuals. There are communications of every conceivable form: short messages of emotional support; stock market tips; job descriptions; dating advice; stories of love that supersede everything we have learned to believe about human possibility. Appointments are made and cancelled; contracts proposed; threats and discussions of alliances swarm between appliances. I watch the faces of the participants for clues: some are exuberant, run to correspondents at far ends of the space, others stand their ground, seriously waving devices like sport-fishermen who've traveled half around the world searching for a trophy. In an effort to join-in, I carefully focus on the apex, the point where everything must intersect: The Buzz increases, zips through my body, with a current that unwinds my mind, thoughts flow like water over a steep falls, striking rocks, dissolving and reforming into new thoughts: fantasy beyond my ordinary potential.

Something big is in the making? This is only a warm up ... a concentrated repetition of wasted efforts ... The flow swirls and dissolves into a mist, the past hazy, undone ... a few intense hot spots persist raging out of control; the overall effect chaotic ...

Briefly, only briefly, I feel part of a greater whole, a unity that stretches from the beginning to the end, an alpha and omega event, the dark past touching a mysterious alluring future. Light, hope, mixing ... neutralising a profound sadness ...

I refuse to be bullied ... indoctrinated ... I exist only to comprehend ...

The inclusion is incomplete ... I'm not fully integrated The buzz continues, softer now, mellow; perhaps a little tired: finality not its thing ... I turn my attention elsewhere ... search for structure, a cohesion granted or promised. The woman next to me smiles, momentarily lowers her phone, what's it about, I ask ... It's serious, she says, one never knows, people keep trying to connect ... one never knows what to expect ...

What about you? Are you enrolled?

I raise my camera ... she ducks ... hurries away ...

What's wrong with people ... It's not a final image, a new collection initiated ... completion, it's in their hands ... no single image can represent the whole ...

*Centered, seated on
the warm pavement
I watch freed text,
unclaimed content,
parsed like primeval
birds, hover and
dive over the square,
swoop between
legs, around dancing
students forming a
reel of merriment,
the music exuberant,
triumphant.*

It's true. I keep trying, that's why I'm here ... seeking, expecting a result. It's in my blood, a sugar, the doctors warning me ... put it off ... nothing you do will matter, why bother ...

I step back, search for some indication, something more than a frivolous party, some form to contain the larger whole ...

It's there ... I'm convinced! Nothing is just random, a meaning inevitable ... the random itself structured ...

I want the sweet, salivate ... Take another photo ... something to contemplate later when my mind is clear ...

The show continues: in one corner young students dance around a maypole of dangling aphorisms, singing, prancing in a circular motion around an invisible point, crisscrossing patterns evolve, dissolve, banners flap, swipe, change hands, little is possessed ... most participants are satisfied with a token ... joy is evident, they take little notice of the larger action outside themselves, they are endowed with specific,

limited interests, to a restricted vision ... their music pulsating, lacking melody ...

God Bless them. Innocents for the moment ... The door is never closed? Some will persevere ...

Suspense, the space is saturated with suspense ...

The Maypolers, self-absorbed: what spirit they have. Around and around, in and out they go ... I join the revelry, swing around twice, gain thrust, jettison myself to another side of the piazza where the action is different:

Here, like me, the gathered are alone, distributed along the fringe, outsiders included for obscure reasons, unacknowledged even by other isolated individu-

als. I search for an exception, someone like myself, a mandated observer. It's not without precedent ... I know I'm not alone, they are here, we pass-by in odd places, recognise each other: a nod, a warm smile, I can't tell you how, or why I know, it's just so. As individuals they vary ... short, tall; male and female, there is no unifying external characteristic ... I expect it ... A confirmation of sorts ... another piece in the puzzle that preoccupies me ... I want someone to meet me, someone to appear, scheduled by some hidden intermediary, we will instantly acknowledge each other ... there will there be a message, something passed along ... I don't want to speculate ...

What's at the end of the road? A confirmation of sorts I hope. Rec-

ognition? someONE to view my photos, listen to the transcript ...

The One, The Constant, The Deemed Companion: absent, waiting, we have a plan, an action, a real time occurrence set for later ... It's what's needed ... her gifts taken into account ... she's a filter with immense experience ...

Is it a dream? ... OK ... why not ... let's get into it anyway ... let The Buzz have its way with me ... I'll keep recording the chatter, create a house of memory, a repository, a collection of sentences, documents replete with images: content to be weaned from incessant chatter ...

I explore the space, looking for anyone, someone, any clue to explain my presence. The implied message: A witness needed ... It's the best explanation I can muster, I'm reliable, impartial, not a member of a click, fraction or clan ...

I weave in and out of the crowd, ears open, fingering the shutter, repositioning the Lavalier ... I pretend I don't exist ... I'm a drop of moisture in the air ... a grain, a contentious organism whisked along and around the assembly, gathering valuable dust for future analysis and discussion ...

My photos overexposed, underexposed, digital dribble waiting for an editor ... I'm at a loss ... How should it be portrayed: everyone's animated, talking, sending and receiving messages, snapping photos. Never have I



seen such interaction, such lack of unity. It's a crowd without a centre, a gathering of individuals and groups hesitant to touch each other ...

The morning rolls by me like an early silent movie of a historic public event: clicking frames, puppet-like movements, grey-scale, dream-like. It happened, it didn't happen, I drift and hover, like a bird unseen; or a speck blown through the market ...

Until:

Without warning an individual blocks my path, asks discrete questions about my current work. I don't know him, the question unexpected, embarrassing ... Work? ... I don't work, what's the use. An annoying question ... a sore point with me. Why rub it in ... who sent him ... I'm no longer in that frame of mind ... allowing it to happen, life without fuss, not a whimper of complaint. I'm floating, blank ... a respite, a time without conflict ...

I'm beyond struggle ... or am I ...? Another fantasy to address later ...

The piazza could be Times Square, Piccadilly Circus; The Bastille; Piazza del Popolo. I've been here before ... I recognise everything and nothing. It doesn't matter or does it? Well, I'm curious, I've come this far, I'll wait ... allow the reel to unwind ... aware of the verifying buzz: persistent, atmospheric, without origin or destination ... it's my clue, my



path, an obligation. I'm tuned-in, following the beam ...

Don't ask why ... I hear it ... That's all ...

Once again people are holding their phones in the air, waving them as if in a salute or gesture of approval, I'm reminded of a rock concert, all hands are up, waving their phones. Swaying in unison. From above, below, all sides: Words appear: alone, in adhering feathery phrases, spinning clumps of text swarm the spaces between individuals and groups, hover like jets of fire above the heads of some, dovetail and

sweep-by others like dive-bombers on holiday. Phrases collide, explode in little puffs, reform in paragraphs that snap like drying bed sheets on a clothesline, gather as nuclear groups, new threads, documents. Newsprint headlines flash-by, content searches kindred content, intermingles; attachments cling to individuals like-sucking-lovers.

I'm trying to take it all in ... look for a vantage point ... camera switched-on, dangling by my side ... when I snap I focus on fragments ... symbols, the entire event impossible to summarize ...

Words are everywhere, like celebratory fireworks, text pop up, explode, scatter. The air is saturated, polluted ... It's hard to breathe ... perhaps that's the message ... Nothing makes sense ... I can't find a single relevant clause ... nothing significant catches my eye ...

It's a storm fed from above and below: Columns of text rise from backpacks and pockets, distributed from the emotional centre of the revellers. Clumps bombard one another in rapid fire exchange, obscuring the underlying source, fragments ascend, stagnate; and dissolve like smoke over the piazza; dispersed throughout the space by cross-currents, content attacking other content with a viciousness seen only on a battlefield, creating a massive word-storm of displaced syntax, lost form, mysteriously reconfiguring in unexpected places, new meaning implicit. There's explosive colour, various sized fonts; strands of text sliding, spinning, attaching to other strands, paragraphs colliding, documents attempting to devour other documents, reforming only to disintegrate again as they try to reach an agreeable consensus.

It's obvious: some text is poisonous, venom dribbles from saturated pages, drops a mist over individuals and groups ... It's panic as the victims flee, hiding behind the innocent, disappearing into the crowd. Very quickly



the poison is neutralised in collision with a remedial text: an anecdote-absorbing-anti-serum. A motley bunch of observers watch in awe, breakout into spontaneous applause, celebrate by forming a Conga Line, dance snake-like through the foggy piazza ... I tag on to the tail, love the spirit, "great", I shout in my predecessor's ear, she exaggerates a couple of steps, very suggestive, another dancer has joined the line behind me, grasps my pants rim, thumbs pressed against the belt, and with one massive heave I'm tossed to the side as the line closes-in, filling the space, leaving me lying on the pavement.

The Maypole dismantled now ... its participants line the edges of the square, blank-faced ... not sure if they should cheer or disperse ... some seem bored, cling to their phones, endlessly pecking and scrolling, oblivious to the surrounding unfolding event. For them the day is over, a limited experience ...

I'm stunned, left in a loose gathering at the centre of the activity where the loners, the outcasts, the friendless, stand-by isolated. Some sit on the tables where vendors usually sell their fruit and vegetables, making notations on their computers and tablets, pointing their phones here and there trying to capture some of the action. Others branch-out, circulating within the piazza seeking position, advantage ... I don't feel kindred, we don't share the same culture, my pres-

ence unrelated to theirs. I'm not here to report, but to absorb. I'm a guest, my vocation unverified, un-named, they wouldn't understand.

For a moment my usual insecurities vanish ... I know my place ... just then one of my neighbours is attacked by a colleague, they curse each other, he dashes in my direction knocking me to the ground, stares at me as if I'm an alien. I'm helpless, struggling to find my footing. It's a long piercing stare, eventually he turns, makes no effort to help, raises his middle finger and rapidly walks away.

OK, I'm resented by some, ... my presence an irritant. Fuck-off Buddy I shout, surprised by my outburst ... Well so what? It's not all roses in my position ... a

little encouragement expected from time to time ... I sometimes struggle to keep pace, the path littered with broken glass, the dried blood of my predecessors ...

In the vicinity of a monument to an obscure military leader of a forgotten war, men and women chase fleeing fragments of rhyme, trying to retrieve or block their union with other fragments. I witness multiple clashes between rival versifiers, their texts attack one another: slice, rip; tear and peck like roosters competing for hens. The most unlikely unifications occur as tattered sections unite, creating both poignant and absurd verse before sailing-off to another event. I try to follow one in particular, a distorted line, stretched, deformed as it soars jet-like from one angle

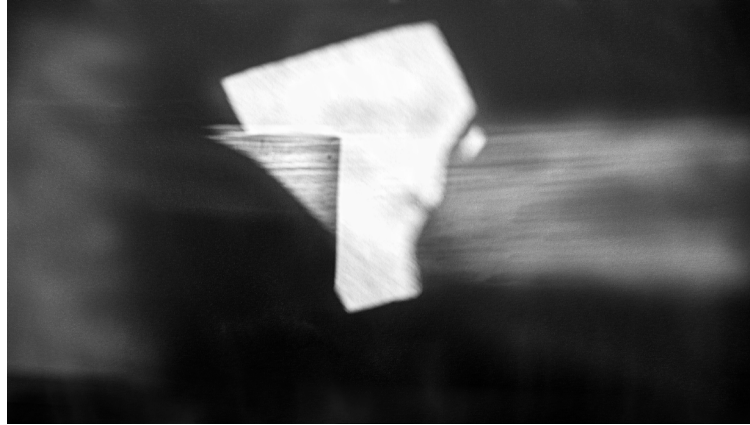
of the monument to another where it combines successfully into a few forlorn, ragged words before wrapping itself around the chest of the stone hero. The mob is united, several former enemies mount its pedestal, stripping the contested lines from the weathered casting. After a delicate unfolding the prize is displayed, held-aloft momentarily to renewed howls and hoots, a fresh outbreak of violence. To my amazement it survives the violence, the opposing factions fighting not for possession, but for the defeat of the enemy; the prize lying shriveled on the pavement. I see my chance, rush into the battle retrieving the scroll and retreat to a nearby wall where I stretch the fragment into position for all to read:

Stone smiles fade,
Words decay,
Poems suppressed.
Headlines take precedence.

The contestants, now exhausted, are distracted by the intense activity that surrounds them, lose interest in the scroll and wander away towards other events. There are so many, each organised to attack a specific audience: political, academic, literary. There is no unity I can discern. For a short time I lean against the wall, reflecting on the verse, then move cautiously into the crowd.

Why am I here ... it's the perennial question

All pretence of cohesion has van-



ished, the ground is soaked with dribble, surrounded by exhausted contestants, each struggling to retain something tangible ...

Was I meant to see this? It seems so. The Buzz low ... detached, disassociated, losing interest. It's action oriented. I won't leave yet, an unavailable option, I wouldn't. Events like this formative, infrequent ... The Buzz has its limits ...

Observation is mandatory, my camera poised ... Do I dare? I make ready, one more good shot is all I need ...

I try to gather the disintegrating verse, reassemble the stanza: Poetry has potential even in repose ... long after mortgages, deeds of sale; and the dry documents of the day, lose their interest, a good line will be remembered ...

Centered, seated on the warm pavement I watch freed text, unclaimed content, parsed like primeval birds, hover and dive over the square, swoop between legs, around dancing students forming a reel of merriment, the music exuberant, triumphant. A stealth tingle of excitement ascends-my-spine, my mood lifts ... I'm a witness to an important event: an ultimate construction in the making, meaning enfolded, encrypted in the moment. For whom? I take a deep breath, prepare myself for a confrontation, run towards groups of students, an opportunity to mix with the young and vital, those who risk it all for an ideal ... they disperse,

phones raised in front of themselves as they flee, snapping selfies, videos to post on media where only those in the know will bother to look. We don't hear the same buzz, too bad, I would like their support. In the rush they leave piles of soaking newsprint, discarded, mixed with their ubiquitous coffee containers and plastic water bottles. It's disturbing ... temporary I think. The truth is I envy them ... they are a beginning, a potential, still full of mischief, possibility. As a student I was always restless, abhorred the drinking, the smothering barroom air, suspicious of the smug finality of the teachers ... In those days I thought of myself as a searcher, a floater carried between events gratuitously ... it's a rare vocational path these days ... not chosen, but granted ... like one's parents, a country, or a language ... you're there: make the most of it ...

Today, I'm empty handed, no magic text for me... still I dream ... why not ... the reality is I'm wary of groups, movements ... prefer to stand aside, add colour; texture ... ultimate content from the shadows ... it might still be possible ... hope is my current resource ...

**Once I was a man of words, dependent, a need to describe and communicate. I was selective, found delight and security in hierarchy, like an explorer I searched for additional content in far away places: campfire stories, family fables, texts ratified by time. That

was then, connection lost, history covered in graffiti ...

**Today I look for meaning less in the dust of antiquity, more in the joy and confusion of the present. I'm certain there is a link, if it exists I hope to find it. In the meantime, immersion in the daily struggle is my passion, it's there that I find meaning, an opportunity to describe what goes-down outside the palace tower. It's not easy for an observer, entry reserved, locals first ... upstarts, like the wise are sequestered like a virus from an animal farm ...

**I'm a pilgrim without a shrine, the ancient pathway hard to find, covered with debris... my current residence is too restrictive ... I've given notice ... time to move again, listen to other voices. The One archiving, mapping the terrain, a careful traveler ... I'll leave first, alone for a few weeks...the road open, Paris first, and then nothing planned until we rendezvous later in the season.

Excuse the babble ... I wish I could ... There's no choice but to stay with the flow ... isolate at the moment just before the cataclysm ...

**In the meantime, I place great stock in images, when well-done they have authority. I agree they're equally liquid like the oversaturated, soggy words of today, easily manipulated when in the wrong hands ... but for me they augment the story, gather strength where the text

Today, I'm empty handed, no magic text for me... still I dream ... why not ... the reality is I'm wary of groups, movements ... prefer to stand aside, add colour; texture ... ultimate content from the shadows ... it might still be possible ... hope is my current resource ...

flounders, where meanings have degenerated into contentious squabble ... I'm a man with limited words, annoyed by the daily chatter: a temporary deprivation I've been led to believe. I covet a few like heirlooms but have no bulk to start the day.

I've made a painful effort to understand today's experience: a dream? A surreal event outside a politically repressed campus. Of course I'm jealous, disappointed, nothing was given me. I waited like a child for a gift, my very own scroll. A bolt of lightning all my own. I'm moving-on, a would-be, a might have been ... wracked with doubts, the sojourn will do me good ...

Perhaps I'll ride the rails, lose myself on trains ... The One, the True, to follow at her leisure...

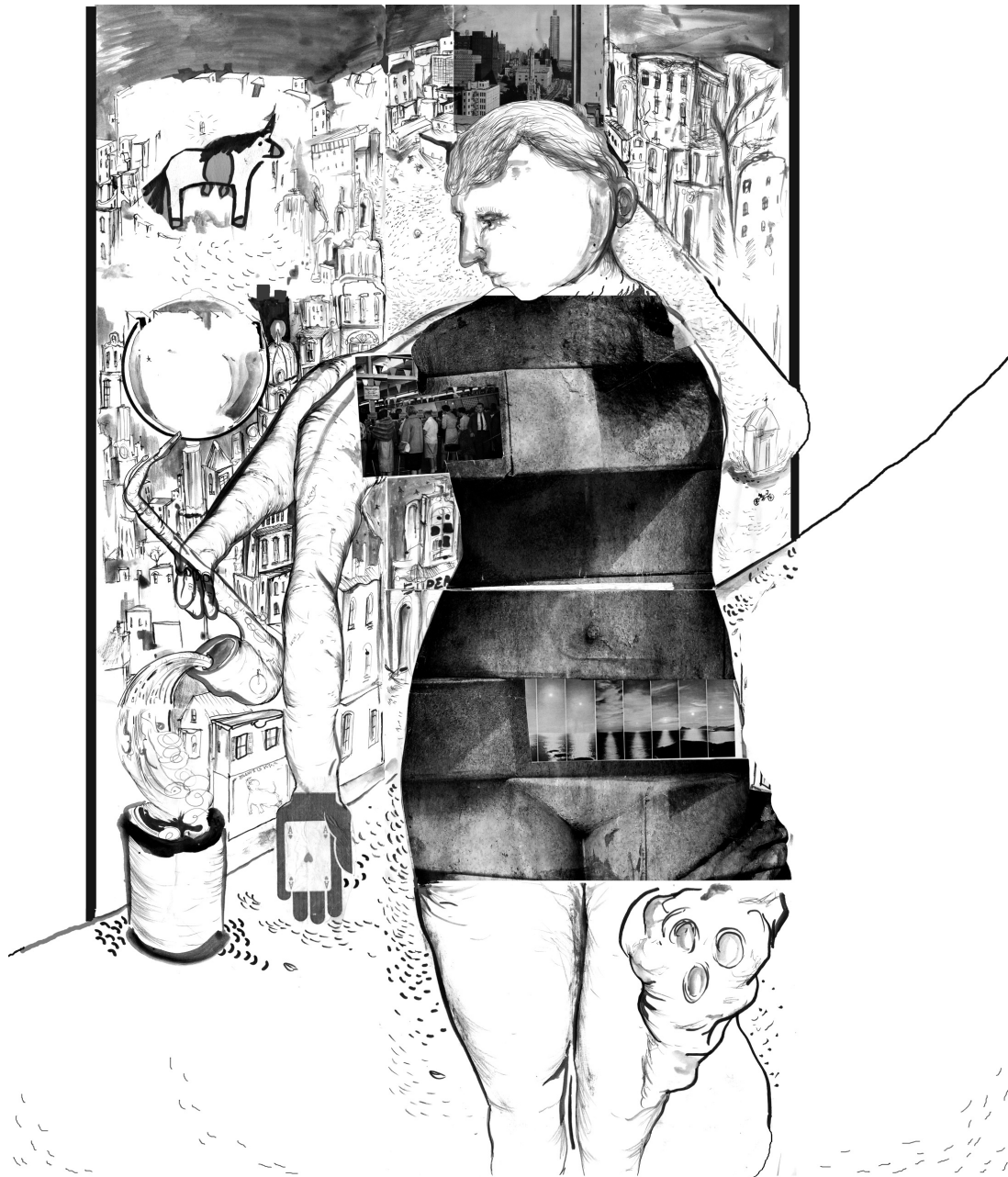
I pay a price for my ways, I'm an outsider, it's hard to make friends, I'm refused admission to the club even when I can be of service. It's a small price to pay. Yet communication is mandatory ... this recollection is a small effort to illuminate the shaded, blank areas left behind in the rush ...

**I'm afraid of the void, not the one to come, but the one that's here that I refuse to accept.

TAXMAN

A SHORT STORY BY RYAN SPRING DOOLEY

Illustration by Ryan
Spring Dooley



Here's the story I told the taxman when he came for me and it's mostly about fish, the sea, all the things under there you can't control. To start out, I told him that I grew up in America, born and proud and all that stuff, but born and poor and all that stuff. "That make you exempt?" he says with a courageous television grin. "No" I said, "that makes me scared!" I ain't as scared as some, that is our big swamp, our grin when someone gets pulled over just a little worst than you, blacker usually, like the world over. "SO YEAH" I told him, "I'm tall and blond, worked for the coked up carpet sellers on the East side, I rode my bike from home and back like a prince, like a season, you heard? Been called a Goy as much as I've been called professional, seen a lot of bus routes fade into the sleepy stint of coming home after a long day." "Where's the money then?" He shoots in my face. "Remember that school?", I told him, "remember the only white kids?" "Remember the cop that grabbed me by the neck for skateboarding?" "Remember when I knew that money was one less grip, the people fighting, the

cement slabs, the excitement of missing proof!"

THEN THE SEA.

We were about 8 people, no one had a care in the world until the boat started to sink, at least for me. The boat was really fine but we had stolen it from a camp ground on the amalfi coast and peddle boated it out as far as an island that used to be owned by a Russian dancer, a man who escaped the regime, a millionaire poet, just the type to put barbed wire on the beach and what not, cold stone, no worries again. The camp ground folks had gotten hip and while we tried to understand the barbed wire they briskly arrived and snatched our stolen boat yelling in a swift wind of motor that they were sending the police to get the rest of our crew. For many on the island this was a whim, for me it was a sentence, just the words, the cops, the hard hands around my neck the fear that America makes constant.

Only the sea could save me. I jumped in, naked and unafraid, or less afraid in there, the cold

welcomed my body, no nail, just moving mass, just a star above, a court, a range for the poor folk, SWIM! YEAH so a lotta times people used to fuck with me, you ain't shit, your mamma ain't shit; or was it her words, the economic dive of the communal shuttle shut down, hey wave, hey water, don't see the coast but I'm different. At the time I had been living in Italy as an illegal alien for 15 years, everyone thought I was cool but I was back in the neighborhood, chased by whoever was less inclined to talk. I don't really fuck with that shit, no guns or anything but I like to talk with people, suck up some principle. Those Indian mounds, keep swimming. I was swimming for like an hour and could see the coast in the distance, pretty cool, I was naked, big water, bigger than St. Paul, even the trains, leave the trains alone. Back in America I loved to be the curves of stuff, follow rivers upstream, hang out in old ship yards on our glorious M...I...S...S...I . P..P . I, what a bird, what a pharaoh, like a myth in movement a giant Chevy truck, a white guy, looking for work! Keep swimming,

tired now, voices aren't even concerned. Some of my better friends had yelled at me to turn back, I can hear them now like a shard of something, they really thought it would be OK, but I'm from America, you can be killed for a tail light stupid, you can die in your own home! The taxman tried to take my pulse, very routine, I had made it anyway, swam naked for two hours afraid of the Italian police, arrived at the shore, found my underwear, sat down panting, remembering so much water. The very same assholes that came to take back the boat we had stolen heard me mulling on the beach, a light turned on, an older woman looked from a window above. First she threw me a pack of cigarettes with four left, then a lighter, the light turned off, you are not in America, said the moon.

For many on the island this was a whim, for me it was a sentence, just the words, the cops, the hard hands around my neck the fear that America makes constant.

The World Is Yours, The World Is Mine

BY SHAHZIA SIKANDER



Africa is the glowing gold-and-green heart of the painting, a central stage on which many of the world's issues play out. The amalgam of diverse societies and cultures, its swirling ink recalls topographical maps or satellite imagery of the land; swaths of red and blue seeping ink surround it, suggesting anatomical drawings and medical documentation. The mythological three-headed figure cradles, and at the same time claws at, the heart. The medical, anatomical and diagrammatic aspects of the painting are meant to signify the terrain of the body as a site or landscape comprised of multiple, disparate components that, in the end, are all related to one another — just as disparate elements can come together to shape a collective narrative that is told, retold, reshaped and distorted over time.

The central quasi-mythological figure has three heads, all of them New Yorkers. The figure on

the left is Langston Hughes, the poet, novelist and leading voice of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s who told of the everyday lives of working-class African-Americans. In the center is death, a white skeleton figure with its organs spilling out of its chest. And on the right is the hip-hop artist Nas, known for his vivid observations and storytelling. Hughes and Nas have distinct relationships with lyric verse in their storytelling: Hughes through poetry and Nas through rap. My painting explores multiple modes of storytelling from the vantage point of New York City, a place of integration and turmoil that is still coming to terms with its underrepresented narratives, including its African-American history. Many issues arise: not just questions of wealth and class, but of trade, global economics, crime, capitalism, race and personal identity.

