

**WITHHOLDING 'US':
IMAGES IN THE SPACE OF APPEARANCE**

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ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL (1)

THE TRIUMPH OF CROWDS

SCRIPT



Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of David*, c.1631-33,
oil on canvas, 118.4 x 148.3 cm, DPG236.
Dulwich Picture Gallery, London

THE TRIUMPH OF CROWDS

A DISTRIBUTED PERFORMANCE LECTURE

SCENARIO

What does it mean to appear politically? What does it mean to usurp power, and to act against triumph?

This distributed performance lecture is written for an empty space. It could be a theatre, it could be a gallery, it could be a public square. It is empty only in that it doesn't already contain an apparatus for viewing. There are no seats, no stage, no clear designations for where I stand, as opposed to where you stand. In a sense it is written for a space that is a pause. Or at least, it aims to take place from the potential of such a pause being created in a space used to being designated.

Into this pause is scattered the performance, which across all its distributions of people, images, actions, activities, silences, speeches, readings, gestures, sounds, reminders, echoes and repetitions, continually asks the question "What does it mean to appear politically?" And then answers, "It means this..." "And this..." "Perhaps this..."

The question, and the performance that pursues it, is prompted by a painting from 1631 by Nicolas Poussin 'The Triumph of David' which seems to be such a scene of appearance. Not because of the scene depicted, which harbours within its triumph an uneasy politics, but because of the manner of its distribution. And *because* it appears as a scene, though in this the question of political appearance becomes ethical, which is where you and I come in.

This distributed performance lecture is delivered by ten actors. Each functions as an equivalence to the others and to all of us present in the pause. They have tasks to perform, things to say, gestures to act out but they are also present as themselves. Alongside them and the things that they do and say, we stand, perhaps also act. Without them, as without us, the question would be a meaningless abstraction.

Some suggestions for staging have been offered in the script, but they are there merely to imagine how a lecture might act when it is distributed across so many bodies, images, objects, voices and sounds in a space that is a pause. How a lecture might become an answer to the question it explores and disappear into a new form of appearance.

ACTORS

I, NOT I
THE SPEECH FACILITATOR
THE GESTURE FACILITATOR
THE PROP FACILITATOR
TRUMPETER A
TRUMPETER B
THE ILLUSTRATOR
THE LIVE-STREAMER
THE READER
THE MAN ESCAPED

STRUCTURE OF ACTION

(interrupted at random by escape attempts)

First Scene of Appearance: *Robert Stephens with a 'ph'.*

Act I: *Naming from of the crowd.*

Act II: *The paintings and heroism's inverse.*

Act III: *But our giant will not die.*

Second Scene of Appearance: *Jyoti Synge Pandey (Nirbhaya)*

Act IV: *'as if as wildflowers grown unplanted'*

Act V: *A scene of echophenomena.*

Act VI: *The dilemma of political appearance*



First Scene of Appearance

We have come into the space that is pausing, together. We stand, or sit, around. Possibly we look at each other, possibly we are alone. Gradually we come to accompany the pause and find ourselves waiting, potentially.

From somewhere a little like elsewhere, we hear the sound of two trumpets, or are they bugles? It is hard to tell as the sound is somewhere between music and the call of an impending attack. Or is it the call of a triumphant march after something has already been won?¹

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR *moves forward, pushes into view and kneels down.*²

THE LIVE-STREAMER *starts filming what THE SPEECH FACILITATOR is doing. And possibly what we are doing.*³

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

Right there! Right there! (*pointing*)

That's the bank that took my parents' home! That's the bank right there! That's the bank!

That's the bank that took my parents' home!

THE PROP FACILITATOR

Ok guys. Back off. Back up please. Thank you. Yup. Thank you maam. [*gently pushing people out of the way*]

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

That's the bank that took my Dad's home. That's the bank, right there. I'm not moving. I'm not moving.

THE GESTURE FACILITATOR

What's your name? What's your name sir?

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

Robert Stephens.

¹ Throughout the performance the trumpeters improvise a score to what is taking place; 'speaking', sounding, narrating and giving tone. Their playing has a restrained but confident musicality and sometimes a diegetic quality that underlines or responds to the action of the play.

² See, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2LmXXvCE_M

³ Constantly throughout the performance THE LIVE STREAMER is doing just that, videoing the actions and activities of people and relaying the images to screens or projections situated in the space. Exactly how this is done can vary but it should feel like the mediation is present as another and equal actor. It should also allow people to see themselves and to see themselves as being continually mediated in ways both good and bad. These mediations could happen simultaneously with the action, or as yet another form of echophenomena.

THE GESTURE FACILITATOR

Robert Stephens.

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

With a 'ph'.

And I'm not moving. I'm a law student at George Washington University and I'm not moving. That's the bank that took my parents' home.

They played by the rules. My Dad has a PhD, two Masters degrees and a college degree. My Mom has a Masters degree and a college degree and what did they do? They took their home!

I will go to jail tonight! Because it's not right!

And I'm not, I'm not, I will not stand by, and just watch. I will not do it. So take me to jail. Right now! Because I will not, after all that my parents gave me. I can't ... Do one thing for them and tell them that I would rather die and be quiet and watch everything that they worked for go away.

I'm not doing it. I'm not going to be quiet. I'm not going to be quiet.

THE TWO TRUMPETERS *(shouting from the side):*

No, you're not!

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

I'm going to look at them, right there, and I'm going to say, "You took it"!

THE TWO TRUMPETERS *(shouting from the side):*

"You took it"!

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

And we're going to take it back!

THE TWO TRUMPETERS *(shouting from the side):*

We're going to take it back!

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

I didn't plan on getting arrested today. I didn't plan on it. But I saw these, I saw these people, I saw these people and I couldn't stop. I couldn't stop.

THE PROP FACILITATOR

... *(mumble)* get arrested.

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

Take me!

THE TWO TRUMPETERS *(shouting from the side, but more quietly than before)*

We're going...

THE PROP FACILITATOR

Clear the street!

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

Take me!

THE PROP FACILITATOR

... *mumble*) get arrested. Come on, go. Go home.

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

Take me! I submit. Take me! I submit.

(THE READER and THE ILLUSTRATOR put THE SPEECH FACILITATOR'S hands behind his/her back and pull THE SPEECH FACILITATOR away.)

THE PROP FACILITATOR *(putting his/her hand up in front of THE LIVE-STREAMER'S CAMERA, pushing people back and moving them away from the location)*

You have to get out of the street now. Ok.

Get out of the street means get out of the street. It doesn't mean ignore me and keep...

You're on a public street alright.

You have to get out of the street.

ALL PERFORMERS

Shame! Shame! Shame! ...



ACT I

The actors are looking and gesturing and seem to know that something is meant to be seen, but what is there to see is simply their gesturing and looking; this scene itself, and all of us in it. Is this it? Is this it all?

*Later we will come to realise that their gestures are echoes of other gestures and that the object of their attention is the severed head of power itself.*⁴

I, NOT I

For some time now and quite intensively of late I have been trying to name 'us'. And trying to see if 'we' can appear. What is this space of appearance that might be deemed political? But naming and appearing are also traps, if separated from the essay of attempt and the artifice of assembly.

What is at issue is the plurality of appearance and naming as an inoperative gesture, in the manifold gestures of speaking hands, and then, knowing what to do with power.

THE ILLUSTRATOR

In the first instance, we stood up.

And still we stand on the ground across which,

THE READER (*interjecting from wherever he/she is*)

"Death, puffing at the doore,
Blows all the dust about the floore:"⁵

THE ILLUSTRATOR

Here, on the square, in the plaza, outside the temple, on the street, in the middle of the road, below the tall buildings, between the columns in the shade of the golden trees, we stand together and raise our arms to gesture at each other from across the distances we have conspired to create, amongst our fervour now blackened with death, death puffing, puffing at the door.

THE LIVE-STREAMER

When we come to the outside of the temple we are a moment expanded into minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years... a moment before the walls are strengthened, a moment of euphoric and articulate remediation and collapse.

⁴ See, 'The Triumph of David', Nicolas Poussin (c1631), Dulwich Picture Gallery, London and 'The Flagellation of Saint Andrew' fresco by Domenichino in the Oratory of Saint Andrew, San Gregorio al Celio, Rome (1608-09)

⁵ T J Clark has written extensively on the paintings of Nicolas Poussin. His reflections on Poussin's ethical distance, his engagement of the horizontal and vertical and human 'standing', all play into this performance lecture. This quote from George Herbert's "The Church-Floore" is taken from his essay *Poussin's Sacrament of Marriage: An Interpretation*, *New Literary History*, Volume 45, Number 2, Spring 2014 (<https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/30461>)

THE ILLUSTRATOR

When we come to the outside we bear a resemblance.

THE MAN ESCAPED

When we stand up, we stand upon.

(The trumpeters dialogue when right aligned on the script is spoken from the side at the same time as any other dialogue is happening)

TRUMPETER A:

In the play of horizontals and verticals that make up the scene of standing within which we gesture, there are inevitably shadows, reminders of an inescapable worldliness beyond ourselves, from where the light comes in.

THE LIVE-STREAMER

Oh what we could build from the ruins!

THE ILLUSTRATOR

When we come to the outside we are as if a picture come to life, to a life that comes.

TRUMPETER B

Reminders of columns as questions... What upholds the world?

THE MAN ESCAPED

When we stand in the staging of our own appearance, we stand for truth's passing, a limit that has become a frontier, a no-man's land towards which we gesture with inarticulate hands and feet that nonetheless say,

THE READER

We are not to be blown away. Try, and like the dust, we will merely settle somewhere else.

TRUMPETER A

Else here.

TRUMPETER B

Else here.

I, NOT I

For some time now and quite intensively of late, I have seen your face, its attentiveness, amongst the standing crowd and I have wondered what it asks of me? Of us?

TRUMPETER A

Jyoti? Is that you Jyoti Synge?

TRUMPETER B

Is that you?

Shared between THE SPEECH FACILITATOR, THE GESTURE FACILITATOR and THE PROP FACILITATOR (*speaking out of sync*)

The Ancient Greeks, it is said, invented Democracy. They also invented the phalanx, a form of line warfare, in which the discipline and submission of line after line of assembled foot soldiers, replaced the tactics and heroism of the individual warrior.

Though highly effective in warfare, the phalanx also foretells a truth about how democracy ensued: becoming an imposition of 'right' dependent upon the passivity of a people; its willing casualties.

If we are to come together powerfully and equally, and democratically, 'we' must be careful never to settle upon an 'us'.

Things begin to be introduced; a chair for THE MAN ESCAPED (he sits down on it and looks in awe at the freedom of his hands), a lectern for THE READER (who spends some time deciding on its best location), some books from which THE READER will read. There is a gathering of THE FACILITATORS around THE READER. We have lost sight of the other actors, they are somewhere in the crowd, watching, listening, recording. We forget, and then occasionally notice THE MAN ESCAPED quietly plotting freedom.



Then, we are introduced.



THE GESTURE FACILITATOR

Hello. I am the gesture facilitator.

To begin with, our gestures.

THE READER

“An accumulation of gestures is not enough to make up a strategy because there is no gesture in the absolute. A gesture is revolutionary not by its own content but by the sequence of effects it engenders. The situation is what determines the meaning of the act, not the intention of its authors.”⁶



THE GESTURE FACILITATOR

The scene is everywhere animated by gesturing hands. In fact they articulate the fundamental contiguity that holds everyone together.

And they communicate.

One hand up, open: “Yes, I see it, I hear it, it is good”

Upward pointing index finger: “I have information to offer”

One hand out to the side, palm open facing downwards: “Wait, slow down, listen”

Two hands up the air outstretched: “Look, over here, come to this spot”

One hand holding the other wrist: “Stay with me, stay here”

Fist held in front of body: “Keep going”

⁶ [The Invisible Committee, ‘To Our Friends’, Semiotext\(e\) Intervention Series, Series 18, 2015](#)

Hand outstretched palm up, to the side: "Look what has happened, or what may happen, or what is about to happen"

Hand with palm facing out front, out in front of the body: "Stop"

Two hands, one up in front of body, fingers splayed, palm open and facing to the side, other hand at stomach height, fingers open, splayed, palm facing downwards: "I am amazed, shocked, in wonder, appalled."

Twinkling fingers up: "I agree"

Twinkling fingers down: "I disagree"

The gestures will help you to follow and respond to what is happening. Their fluency mediates us.

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

Hello. I am the speech facilitator.

To begin with, the voices of others.

THE READER

"This may sound a bit abstract, but for me the conditions for performativity first occur when the long unused, action-oriented word comes out from hiding, when it transcends the private realm, squeezing itself out through the cracks into the open. And when it is first heard, it activates the appearance of a truly public realm" ⁷

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

This performance is a lecture.

For reasons both of insecurity and of risk.

Everything you hear has been said by someone particular and also someone else.

Everything you hear is distributed or called forth into the now of the performance, because someone else is always here.

I am the voice of someone else.

Someones else.

I am populating the plaza with voices and gestures, imbricating, contesting and rallying forth. I am a hubbub out of which you will sometimes hear a single dash of thought. It could be mine. It could be his or hers. It could be yours.

And sometimes when I speak the words they will be repeated through the crowd, so everyone can hear them. I won't shout.

Let's practice.

Here is a phrase, actually a book title, from the poet John Hall, I will speak it and then we will pass it through the crowd.

"Else here". (*repeated by all performers, and passed through the audience*).

And again,

⁷ [Elzbieta Matynia](#) (in conversation with Joanna Warsza), *Future Publics (The Rest Can and Should be done by the People)*, *A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art*, Maria Hlavajova and Ranjit Hoskote (eds), BAK, Utrecht, 2015

“Else Here” ...
And one last time,
“Else Here” ...

THE PROP FACILITATOR

Hello. I am the prop facilitator.
To begin with; the things we need and don't need.

THE READER

“We are seduced by things at a distance and want to possess them. Eventually we get them and then they lose their magic...”⁸

THE PROP FACILITATOR

This lecture is a performance, complete with things, spaces, images and people. Everything thing and everyone and every location involved, is on. At all times.

And that includes you.

And it might include ‘us’, if we’re lucky.

The things we need are two trumpets, David’s pole, nine large pieces of coloured organza, a chair, a lectern, a small selection of books, including the catalogue to an exhibition of paintings by Nicolas Poussin and Cy Twombly at The Dulwich Picture Gallery, London in 2011, recording devices, ten performers, an unknown number of spectators, a specific space and some other spaces inferred, communicated to and through, or imagined.

As this is a lecture and a performance, or a lecture in the form of a performance, or a performance in the form of a lecture, the things are here in the same manner and with the same valency as the words, or the actions, or the pictures and sounds. In the time of the performance, the things are not owned by anyone, nor consumed by anyone, nor are they shared.

They are simply used.

By us.

I wonder who all these people are and if they have come here for the same reasons I have. We are watching in something like anticipation. Are you in the crowd? Have you come to see what will happen? Are you ready?

⁸ Aernaut Mik ‘Communitas’, exhibition catalogue, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 2013.

In August 2013 I made a special visit to see Dutch artist Aernaut Mik’s survey exhibition ‘Communitas’ at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Mik’s video installations had fascinated me since I first saw his work ‘Training Ground’ at the Dutch Pavilion for the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007, and this solo exhibition which featured thirteen of his videos distributed across a network of architectural stagings designed by the artist, only served to further underline the importance and compelling fascination of his work for me. The agency his work gives to the slippage between artifice and reality, viewing and participating, performance and performativity, assembly and tyranny, mediation and representation, ‘us’ and ‘them’ and the manner in which the videos are staged and populated, is a crucial and vital bridge between ‘The Triumph of David’ and ‘The Triumph of Crowds’.

Things are still being handed out. A catalogue to an exhibition, and long swathes of coloured material, organza, I think, in cornflower, magenta, tangerine, mustardy yellow and the yellow of the sun, silver white, sea metal grey, dawn and another I can't quite name. There is I, NOT I coming to speak at the lectern as the others move away and continue to perform the tasks allotted to them. Somewhere in the background I see THE READER disappearing behind you, and you.

I, not I:

Hello. I am 'I, not I'

To begin with, a voice.

A voice that is here to give a lecture on a painting. The painting is by the 17th century French painter, Nicolas Poussin, known for the clarity, order and narrativity of his work. Painted around 1631, it is titled 'The Triumph of David'. It hangs currently in the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London, England.

To begin with the voice will tell you these things and someone else will show you an illustration of the painting, so you can picture it in your mind throughout the performance lecture.

THE ILLUSTRATOR (*showing the illustration of Poussin's painting in the catalogue to people one by one*)

This is a painting from 1631 by the French painter Nicolas Poussin of a celebration of the usurpation of power.

It is a painting of a narrative of victory depicted as a scene of profound equalities.

Why does the painting matter to me, such that I would want to do a 'lecture' on it?

Well, it redraws the heroism of violence and the inconsistent crowd into an articulating plurality, an 'us' that needs no name.

And from when I first saw it, it caught me and would not let go.

TRUMPETER A

It caught me and would not let go.





THE ILLUSTRATOR

One might think that this is merely a response to its formal elegance, which is indeed very striking, but it is more than that, and I have come to feel that if the form is participated in, rather than merely observed, one realises it is quietly incendiary.

TRUMPETER B

It caught me in the play of horizontals and verticals that make up the scene of gestures, and would not let go, of questions and reminders, of an inescapable worldliness.

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR (*sending the phrase (to pass on)*)

“It caught me and would not let go”...

TRUMPETER 1

From where the light comes in. I saw it. Out! Out in the world.

THE ILLUSTRATOR

So this lecture performance, or performance lecture, is of course, not ‘on’ Poussin’s painting, for honestly I know very little about it, nor even if there is very much to know. No, this is a performance lecture, or lecture performance, *with* an illustration of a painting. It, like *with*, is simply one of the things ‘we’ need.

I, NOT I

I am not in the habit of putting words into the mouths of others, yet here they are. And they are here for a reason. Remember this, they are here for a reason greater than expediency.

These words in the mouth of another are here to trouble ‘I’. And to trouble unity or singularity or centrality. They might trouble you too. Fair enough. The more troubled selves the better. But mainly they are here to trouble ‘I’. After all what greater trouble can performance offer than the troubling of ‘I’.

And this troubling is an offering to you so that perhaps you might feel that slight toppling, the hint of groundlessness implied, as a kind of entreaty, a beckoning from deep beneath the limit conditions upon which you stand as the dust gathers about our feet.

THE TWO TRUMPETERS (*together, but from different sides of the space*)

Imagine it (in writing) like this, an 'I' splits into another or many other 'I's, and between them are small commas, like scooping hands that dig holes beneath the ground 'I' stand on. I have borrowed the comma from others, so now they too are speaking here. Though I couldn't tell you exactly what they are saying, I feel sure that they are also digging a way out.⁹

But remember that the comma separates and joins. It is a breathing gap without which nothing could be said. I suppose you could think of it as the offering of a way out accompanied by a gesture (scoop), which if repeated by you might undermine countless foundations.

ALL PERFORMERS IN TURN (*while also saying their own names*)

I

II

I, I, I, I, I, (etc.)

THE TWO TRUMPETERS (*together, but from different sides of the space*)

In writing, of course, the splitting appears as a duplication, followed by further duplication, into which the figure of punctuation is added. It is clear, and abstract, and accretive. At least in the English language. But in the voice it is a shared dispersal, a shared-separation, which I hope you will come to find generative, particularly in those moments of scooping breath, of tunnelling between utterances, of pause and stutter, that might become the grammar our shared assembly.

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR (*sending the phrase (to pass on)*)

"a shared separation, the grammar of our shared assembly"...

I, NOT I

And I recognise that this might incur a little trepidation at first. But remember it's merely a small gesture - temporary of course as this is the nature of the artifice within which this voice speaks to you - a small and temporary fissure, beckoning.

Now, throughout this performance there will be various appearances of splitting, cutting, severing and separation. You have already seen one, in the severed head of Goliath. And there may be times when it will be difficult not to see these forms of fissuring as destructive. And indeed there may be times when they *are*

⁹ The writer Yve Lomax (conversations with whom, in the context of my own research, have informed much of the thinking in this piece) often advocates for the substitution of 'and' with ','. The comma that appears here is hers. We have yet to talk about its full implications but it would seem to speak, as she does, in the manner of its pausing, for a politics of non-division.



destructive. However if you can remember, right from now, from the beginning, that these fissurings are also commas, shared separations, without which nothing could be said and no one could appear. Tiny scoopings-out of the edifices around us and underfoot. Their violence, when it occurs, is a question for, and of 'us'.

TRUMPETER B

It caught me in the play and would not let go.

TRUMPETER A

A hiatus of standing, where the world comes in.

THE ILLUSTRATOR

Some say this is the time of scenes, but I would say that this is the time of the scenes of 'us'. Never before have 'we' been so apparent. Yet never before have 'we' been so resolutely ignored. The scenes that 'we' are, in the situations that cause 'us' to be, exist within a broader time and space of such sophisticated distribution that the challenge of appearance is perhaps greater now than it ever was.

Make no mistake, we live in distributed times. We are distributed. How to appear together within such distribution, as distributed *and* collective *and* connected and constituting? This is our challenge.

I, NOT I

So I am seeking a scene of address in a public realm. A space of 'I' to 'you' that is both a commitment in the present, and all that the present ('I' and 'you') cannot contain.

'Us' intrinsic to the shifter, implacable, but somehow made actual, specific, separated, public. Without division but within space.

It's no mean task. No, indeed, it is a *means* task. The task of *means without end*. What you

have called 'Pure Means'.¹⁰ And what you have called 'meaning', "the bared name of our being-with-one-another."¹¹ What I am calling *prononymity*, in an action of enunciation that recognises and voices in the name of naming, but does not, in the end, name.

At the heart of this action is an egress, to the public realm, to the outside. An indeterminate occupation of the public realm. Its indeterminacy is its motor. At its heart is *egression*, not *aggression*, the compulsion or inclination, or means, to come out, to move towards the outside, which is where I meet you.

TRUMPETER 1

Is that you Jyoti Synge? Is that you?

TRUMPETER 2

And who else, Stephen with a 'ph', who else?

I, NOT I

Maybe in fact, it is the heart itself that egresses, and causes the 'I' to move, to be moved, with a compassion for you. Either way it is a gesture of 'with', not 'from'. Of towards without, not without. With without 'us', incomplete and gesturing.

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR (*sending around the phrase*)

"With without 'us', incomplete and gesturing.



¹⁰ Lomax, Yve 'Pure Means, writing, photographs and an insurrection of being' Copy Press, London, 2013

¹¹ Nancy, Jean Luc 'Being Singular Plural' Stanford University Press, 2000

The quotation continues "We do not "have" meaning anymore, because we ourselves are meaning – entirely, without reserve, infinitely, with no meaning other than 'us'."

ACT II

THE PROP FACILITATOR *is busy rearranging things. Is the lecture over? The lectern has been moved to one side. What is that pole for? There is always so much organising and reorganising to do. Our assembly needs to be constantly administrated, even while it can at times erupt into euphoria.*

Something is happening! All around us there is cheering and clapping and shouting! There you are striding around with the giant's head on that pole! THE FACILITATORS are hugging each other and jumping up and down! I hear that trumpet sound again, or is it bugles, coming from somewhere nearby, not elsewhere. Just over there in fact! Just there! It comes and goes, each time a little more fervent than before.

We might have forgotten in all the excitement but we just notice THE MAN ESCAPED, back in his place, quiet, and still in awe at what freedom could be gained.

ALL PERFORMERS

So, let's begin!

"We are Anonymous.

We are legion

We do not forgive

We do not forget

Expect us."¹²

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR (*excitedly*)

¹² Occupy Wall Street chant

There's David. Look, Striding towards us! Look he's struggling slightly with the weight of Goliath's head. It's on a stick, a pole, see, like a flag on a flag pole!
He's only small himself, David. You can see how he is struggling with the head alone! Yet he killed the giant!

THE GESTURE FACILITATOR (*breathlessly*)

He killed Goliath with his sling shot! A single blow to the head. Right here. [*pointing to forehead*] You can see the gash still in the giant's head.

Some say it was actually a shot to the knee, but you can see the gash in the giant's forehead, right here, exactly in this spot, here. (*pointing to forehead*).

THE PROP FACILITATOR (*fervently*)

This is a moment for celebration! The giant has been toppled! Goliath, and all his power, is ours now, to do with as we like!

We've got his head, look, see it there, impaled on a stick, like a flag on a flagpole! *We* are triumphant!

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

We got him!

TRUMPETER 2

The scenes that 'we' are in, the situations that cause 'us' to be...

TRUMPETER 1

I saw the world go out. Puff!

THE GESTURE FACILITATOR

He was killed right there and then with a single shot to the head! Look, see, there is his head to prove it. He was our enemy and now we've killed him. So now we are the victors!

THE PROP FACILITATOR

Nothing could protect him in the end. Not his high walls or human shields... Not the formidable height and strength of his pedestal, nor the impenetrability of his armour!
David killed him and then took his head! He did it for us! We won! We won!

THE GESTURE FACILITATOR

Now, we got him, we got him!

We are in charge, we have the power! He was our enemy and now he's gone forever!

TRUMPETER 2

Did you name it? Did you name the victory? In whose name did you name it?

TRUMPETER 1

Not in my name.

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

Put that flag over his head!

THE PROP FACILITATOR

Put that flag over his face!



The sound recedes, the scene recedes, everything is becoming quiet.

THE PROP FACILITATOR is busy again, redistributing things, the pole, some fabric. They have made a kind of curtain. The other Facilitators are holding it up. Like daylight, like the outside, like a threshold of indecision, or invitation. It moves among us. Can I pass through it? Are you there? Is it forever, or just for now?

THE READER has returned to the lectern. (Where from?) Along with the catalogue there is also another illustration on it. Another painting. THE PROP FACILITATOR takes it from the lectern and gives it to I, NOT I.

I, NOT I *(with pointing gesture)*

In the catalogue to the exhibition, "Twombly and Poussin, Arcadian Painters" curated and written by Nicholas Cullinan and shown at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London in 2011 (which was where I first saw the painting), Cullinan writes on 'The Triumph of David' that,

THE READER

“Poussin’s general placing of the figures and their classical architectural setting derives mainly from three sources: the engraving of the Triumph of Scipio by Giorgio Ghisi after a design by Giulio Romano (c.1533), and the two frescoes of the Flagellation of Saint Andrew by Domenichino and Saint Andrew led to his martyrdom by Guido Reni in the Oratory of St. Andrew in San Gregorio al Celio in Rome (1608-09).”

I, NOT I (*holding up the illustration*)

In particular, it would seem, the flagellation of St. Andrew is a key source.

A strange, strong light begins to fill around us. It is coming from the side and washing us with substance. Not quite searchlight, not quite morning, more like a floodlight confusing night with day.

At first we don’t notice it, but gradually we find ourselves so alit we are as if seen and seeing for the first time.

I, NOT I

Now I am no scholar, but as someone who likes to look at things with an eye for contingent and sometimes metonymic connections, I think it is interesting (more than interesting maybe, more like *perplexing* in an alluring way) that Poussin should choose to draw from this particular painting of St. Andrew’s torture and death as one of the formal sources for his painting of the Triumph of David over Goliath.

The relationship between the two compositions is so striking that it is as if Poussin has roused to rebellion the very people themselves, who are suppressed and cowering in Domenichino’s fresco, and caught them then at their moment of triumph in the same public plaza. This time it is *they* who are joyous occupants of the temple plaza. It is *they* who are the action that appears. The emperor and his pedestal are gone. Not even the severed head of Goliath outshines them. They are glorious, spectacular, replete.

St. Andrew himself seems to stand awe-struck in the same place where he was previously laid out and whipped, his blue robe that was cast aside during his torture, now dazzling in the intense light that floods in from somewhere beyond the painting.

Everyone is gesturing. Everyone is ‘on’. ‘We’ are here.

THE READER

“...the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore of natality, is inherent in all human activities. Moreover, since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political ... thought.”¹³

I, NOT I

¹³ Arendt, Hannah ‘The Human Condition’ (Second Edition), University of Chicago Press, (1958) 1998

Or to put it another way, how curious it is that Poussin should choose to translate from pictures of the triumph of State and military power, a picture of the triumph of ‘the little man’ over the irrepressible giant.

THE ILLUSTRATOR (*taking the catalogue from the lectern and showing it to the crowd*)

Let me tell you about this painting by Nicolas Poussin!

You are staged against a backdrop: Poussin’s painting, now enlarged and filling the scene that we are. You are singled out and speaking about everyone. We are with you. We are staging you.

The Reader is gone again. (Where?) The lectern too. Do I see you slipping out behind us? And striding back in. Another elsewhere, potent and yet implacable.

THE ILLUSTRATOR

The space is relentlessly interior. Even though there are doorways and recesses, or the hint of a window to the outside. There is a strong light that comes in from the left, but its whiteness is unnatural, like floodlights. The moment is a scene, an artifice, yet resplendent. And somehow the entire world is here. This is everyone and everywhere. Everyone is in but there’s no one at the centre.

TRUMPETER B

The scenes that ‘we’ are in, the appearances that cause the world to be...

TRUMPETER A

Has the dust settled on the public realm? Blow, blow...

THE ILLUSTRATOR

At the heart. The heart keeps moving.

Everyone is doing something even those doing nothing. Everyone is in. And everyone is on. Everyone is gesturing. And everyone is connected. The space is stipulating, the scene contagious. Only the tiniest sliver of an outside can be glimpsed that might suggest any other reality prevails, and even there the sun is setting.

Off-centre, decapitated subject, the colour of columns, of stone and street and temple walls. A chip chipped out of its forehead. Red indent, in the capital, in the column, in the face. Held aloft — a pitch of heroism— driven up into aching severed duty.

It’s the fabric of what will come to fall, and crumble. And we have come to see it. A dead state, on a stick, held by a man who will be King, in a state of the dead and the dying.

Strange heroism, committed to an excess deathliness, and held up.¹⁴

¹⁴ In 2005 the art critic Tom Lubbock wrote a ‘Great Works’ article for the Independent newspaper on Poussin’s ‘The Triumph of David’. In it he draws attention to the strange architectural fragment that lies in the forefront of the painting, separated from everything else, and crucially from the overlapping ‘land mass’ of people. Lubbock identifies a ricocheting structure of wounds, from this fragment, to the giant’s forehead, to a gash in the temple wall and sees in this play of destructions a

He strides into the crowd with his booty. His left foot balancing the weight of his proof. And the crowd is there and everyone is gesturing, and some are looking and many are not. Attention ricochets. The foot, sweeps up the body, to the red tunic, a small head and then a bigger one, the colour of columns, of stone and street, shoots down a diagonal to a trumpeter, whose head an echo of the dead giant, is ochre tanned, ruddy with the strain of forceful and controlled breathing. He holds and blows his trumpet and strides forth. His arms, his tunic, an echo, no, a precognition of the hero, enfolded into his dead proof.

A proof in advance, a copy that signals the arrival of the proof to come. He holds his trumpet which sweeps around him in a beautiful spiral, ending with the trumpet's mouth open to the head of the trumpeter in front. There are two of them. One to sound and one to show sounding as an echo, as well as a declaration.

The trumpeter in front is a figure of reality, emergent of shadows, and stone, and simulacra. His long straight trumpet shoots a diagonal gently upwards, to the base of the first elevated column. And there she is, the inverse of heroism.

There is THE READER disappearing behind you as you speak!

THE ILLUSTRATOR

The heel of her left foot gently pitched, a measure of her calm stride. Her dress billowing in answer to the red tunic. Her head steady, as she disappears behind the column. She is unconcerned with drama. Or death. She stands between the inside and the outside.

TRUMPETER B

Questions and reminders of an inescapable worldliness...

TRUMPETER A

From where the light comes in...

THE ILLUSTRATOR

The figure of an arch beyond which the sun is setting, she walks into and out of the picture, indeed she puts out into it, reminder of daylight's startling nonchalance, of the persistence of time, tomorrow and natality, as if she has seen it all before and she will mark its continuance, however altered, even as the crowd attests, in fraying gestures, to its uniqueness.

Now the light is going. Darkness comes.

message of doom. He writes, "*The picture relates the felling of the enemy to the fall of the state, and locks catastrophe into the hour of triumph*".

ACT III

You're here! You're here! And where? Is this the place of escape or capture? You are alit. But I can't tell if the light is emanating or refracting. Nor if time has caught up with us or if we have caught up with time.

THE MAN ESCAPED (*passionately*)

When we came to the outside we were furious. We were desperate. We were angry. We had had enough.

But we didn't come to fight. We came to be public. And to stage another way of being together.

We staged that way. It was complex, imperfect, highly organised, intelligent, reflexive, slow, cumulative, respectful, dangerous at times, exhausting, beautiful, constructive, resistant, frightening, hopeful.

We read, we talked, we played music.

We listened to everyone. We let everyone speak. We stepped up and stepped back. We accepted gifts of food, money, shelter, clothing, materials. We gave our time, our bodies, our commitment.

We stayed in public for as long as our mental and physical strength allowed us to. And until we were cleared.

We demanded change in specific terms in regard to particular situations. No one demand would name our cause, but each demand was the one.

We used technology to make ourselves heard globally, and to listen to others in public across the world who had inspired us.

We recorded everything. And we were constantly recorded.

We represented ourselves, in shared separation, and we practiced equality.

We didn't assemble in order to celebrate, and yet at times our assembly felt euphoric.

We knew we were neither the beginning nor the end, yet we began over and over.

We made signs and held them like totems. We made many declarations and spoke the truth. We intoned revolution.

We were an example, a model, an experiment. We were an alternative reality. We were real.

We acted, and for a time, we really were political.

We anticipated the moment when we would have Goliath's head on a stick and parade it through the streets of the world.

But our giant will not die.



ACT IV

The Prop Facilitator is busy again rearranging things, seeing to it that everyone has what they need, that everything is in its appropriate place, the pole, the lectern, the books... But look, what colours! Thrown this way and that. Gathered up into balls like heads, flung towards us, fought over, waved around like banners. We have seen those colours before somewhere. We have known their plenitude.

I, NOT I

We wrap ourselves in blues of cornflower, sky, indigo, midnight, and lapis lazuli, and yellows mustardy, ochre, dun like sand and hysteric like the sun. Against the stone and flagstone, where the flagellated once lay, greens burgeon like tiny hillocks of sage and mint, under a mantle of yellow-green, time's season in the place where time is paused. Together we are prairie, alpine meadow, Rampion, Vetch, Monkshood and Arnica, jets of Pasque flower with our plume-like seedheads standing proud.

We wrap ourselves in burnt sienna, the gentlest of tangerines, red ochre, awash in shrewd magenta and cannons of puce, fuschia, violet, violet, violet.

Despite the drenching dye each body is extended capacity trailing unnameable silvers, sheens, glows, penumbras. Each tiny dome, a new world, enwrapped in coloured flow harnessed to a new earth.

As if as wildflowers grown unplanted, we are rightfully distributed in the plaza field, scene of tyrant's fall, of a crowd's fertile palette.

THE ILLUSTRATOR

Hey! You got the wrong man! This is Goliath!! Goliath is here!

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

No, this is Goliath! Over here, over here!

THE GESTURE FACILITATOR

Here he is, I killed the giant! Look!

Look, the giant is dead! Look, he's here!

THE ILLUSTRATOR

No, this is Goliath, this really is the giant!



THE PROP FACILITATOR

I thought this was Goliath.

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

I hunted him down, it took years, and then I killed him. Isn't this Goliath!

THE READER

Over here, over here! The giant is dead! Look, it's him! I killed him!

THE ILLUSTRATOR

Hey, that's not Goliath, this is Goliath!

THE PROP FACILITATOR

Where's he gone?! I thought that was Goliath, I thought he was dead?
I killed him!

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR

No, that's not him... Where is he?
I found him and killed him already, who is that?

THE READER

This is Goliath! I've got him!
I've got him!

THE PROP FACILITATOR

He's over there! Get him!

THE ILLUSTRATOR

Hey, you're going for the wrong man! This is Goliath! He's already dead! I got him!
I got him!

...

TRUMPETER A (*from the side*)

... It is a question of how to live not how to die. But if I am not to avoid the background of persistent and State-sanctioned violence against which we act, then I will have to meet violence if I am to meet life, which is after all why I am here, on this street, in the contemporary, at now, with the past and future pushing at me, as I draw the diagonal from which I might see you better.

Don't assume that I am broken. I am merely inclined, so that my gaze, both technical and

deeply felt, might speak to you.

TRUMPETER B *(from the side)*

And I think that it is true – maybe it is even a truth – that I look to you for my undoing. And for the undoing of ‘us’ as a category of action that strives for stasis.

I am trying to sustain this ‘look’ as an entirely unheroic struggle.

TRUMPETER A

And it is not a declaration.

TRUMPETER B

And it is a declaration.

TRUMPETER A

And it is not a struggle.

TRUMPETER B

And it is a struggle.

TRUMPETER A

And it is not an insurgency.

TRUMPETER B

And it is an insurgency.

TRUMPETER A

And it is not spoken.

TRUMPETER B

And it is spoken.

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR *(simultaneously, from the side, sending around the phrases)*

“And it is not a declaration.”

“And it is a declaration.”

“And it is not a struggle.”

“And it is a struggle.”

“And it is not an insurgency.”

“And it is an insurgency.”

“And it is not spoken.”

“And it is spoken.”

From somewhere a little like elsewhere, we hear the sound of two trumpets, or are they sirens? It is hard to tell as the sound is getting louder and louder. It is urgent and triumphant at the same time. A cry that has been stolen from us and turned into a warning. Everywhere there is frenzy, panic, desperate spinning until at last there is collapse, exhaustion. We lift up our colours, seedheads, mantles, and protect ourselves from the deluge that comes.

THE READER has returned to the lectern. (From where?) (From whom?)

THE READER

“On September 20th, 2011, we were awoken by police bullhorns around seven in the morning, they objected to us protecting ourselves from the rain. They told us that the tarps suspended above us had to be taken down. We held a General Assembly to determine how to respond. We decided that we would hold the tarps over ourselves and our possessions. The police ripped the plastic away from us. We then scrambled to protect our possessions, primarily the media equipment streaming our occupation to the world. The police were also mostly interested in our cameras, it seems they don’t want you watching us.”¹⁵

The Prop Facilitator is gathering up all the coloured fabric. I see it being bundled into a pile, all except for one piece, cornflower blue, like St. Andrew’s tunic.

While busy gathering these things up, The Prop Facilitator gives the blue fabric to the Two Trumpeters. They take it to one side, sit down. Sometimes I look over and it is wrapped around one of them, then a few moments later it is folded up on the others lap. They seem unable to settle on a way for it to be. In use, or not in use?

TRUMPETER A (from the side)

We wrap ourselves in blues of cornflower, sky, indigo, midnight, and lapis lazuli, and yellows mustardy, ochre, dun like sand and hysteric like the sun. Against the stone and flagstone, greens burgeon like tiny hillocks of sage and mint, under a mantle of yellow-green, time’s season in the place where time is on hold. Together we are prairie, alpine meadow, Rampion, Vetch, Monkshood and Arnica, jets of Pasque flower with our plume-like seedheads standing proud.

TRUMPETER B (from the side)

¹⁵ A message from Occupy Wall Street (Day Four), Oral History OWS, p. 28

We wrap ourselves in burnt sienna, the gentlest of tangerines, red ochre, awash in shrewd magenta and cannons of puce, fuschia, violet, violet, violet.

TRUMPETER A (*from the side*)

Despite the drenching dye each body is extended capacity trailing unnameable silvers, sheens, glows, penumbras. Each tiny dome, a new world, enwrapped in coloured flow harnessed to a new earth.

TRUMPETER B (*from the side*)

As if as wildflowers grown unplanted, we are rightfully distributed in the plaza field, scene of tyrants fall, of triumph's fertile palette.

I, NOT I

Hey, I have two questions!
First, who *is* Goliath?

And secondly, what is to be done with power when power is undone?

THE READER

"There were several attempts to burn the Parliament. February 12, 2012, an umpteenth general strike was staged in desperate opposition to the umpteenth austerity plan. That Sunday, all of Greece, its retirees, its anarchists, its civil servants, its workers and its homeless demonstrated in a state of near-insurrection. With downtown Athens again in flames, that evening was a paroxysm of jubilation and weariness: the movement perceived all its power, but also realised it didn't know what to do with it." ¹⁶

THE GESTURE FACILITATOR

And / have a question: must there always be violence?

¹⁶ The Invisible Committee, *'To Our Friends'*, Semiotext(e) Intervention Series, Series 18, 2015 *The Invisible Committee 'To Our Friends'* p. 134

Second Scene of Appearance

The Reader comes forward and beckons to us to gather close and sit. The fabrics like delicate coloured carpets are laid out for us to sit on. They remind me of something, somewhere... We sit together, gathering quietly. Some say that the process is beautiful and therefore we must be wary of such seductions. It is a fine line between process and means. I understand that and it troubles me. But when you beckon, I am drawn to respond. What else should I do?

THE READER (*intimately*)

Please, gather round. Come in closer. Listen.

I want to tell you about a murder. A vile, violent and horrific murder that took place in India in 2012. I learned about this murder from Leslee Udwin's documentary film 'India's Daughter' made in 2015. The Indian government tried to suppress international broadcasting of this documentary, but failed.¹⁷

You may well find parts of this story disturbing and I'm sorry to put you through that. But I tell you this story, in my own words and way, because it is a telling example of political resistance staged against a background of sanctioned violence.

This is a background we have to reckon with.



It is also a story about 'naming' in 'political appearance' – a reckoning at the heart of 'us'.

¹⁷ 'India's Daughter' was screened in the UK on BBC Four on March 4th and 8th, 2015.

TRUMPETER A (*simultaneously, from the side*)

And it is not a declaration.

TRUMPETER B (*simultaneously, from the side*)

And it is a declaration.

TRUMPETER A

And it is not a struggle.

TRUMPETER B

And it is a struggle.

TRUMPETER A

And it is not an insurgency.

TRUMPETER B

And it is an insurgency.

TRUMPETER A

And it is not spoken.

TRUMPETER B

And it is spoken.

The scene is set. A stage cleared and onto this stage is tossed a young woman, whose name is a rupture, a fissure, a *situation*, occasioned by such horror that her name cannot be quelled.

ALL PERFORMERS (*in a kind of choral singing*)

Jyoti Singh. Jyoti Singh. Jyoti Singh Pandey. ... Jyoti Singh. Jyoti Singh. Jyoti Singh Pandey...

THE READER

Jyoti Synge was gang raped, brutally attacked for her lack of submission, an iron bar rammed up inside her so far that her attackers pulled her insides out. When the driver of the bus on which she was so savaged threw her out onto the roadside, along with her male friend, with whom she had committed the shameful crime of going to see a movie in the early evening of December 16th 2012 in the southern part of New Delhi, he also wrapped up her intestines and threw them out beside her. She was still alive. And lived in agony and knowledge for a further thirteen days.

It was through dental matching to the bite marks on her face that the police managed to convict her 6 attackers.

Initially after the attack, in order to protect her anonymity in the context of a culture that sees the shame of rape as the victim's shame, not the perpetrator's, Jyoti was given the name 'Nirbhaya', which means 'fearless' in Hindi. But in defiance of such a culture, one that conscribes many women's everyday lives in the Indian subcontinent, including Pakistan, and in its migrant communities around the world, not to mention in many other countries and communities worldwide, her father said "I want the world to know her real name". Her name is Jyoti Singh, Jyoti Singh Pandey.

ALL PERFORMERS (*in a kind of choral singing*)

Jyoti Singh. Jyoti Singh. Jyoti Singh Pandey. ... Jyoti Singh. Jyoti Singh. Jyoti Singh Pandey...

TRUMPETER A (*from offside*)

When I began the dead lay prone, and twisted and conveyed and I had a hunch that the power of what is rightfully collective devolves upon the alienated 'individual' recuperated as so many singularities in relation.

This might not bring you back to life, but it might bring life back to you.

I had a hunch about life, which I know must be rigorously tested, as an ethos which is not a mask for either transcendence or freedom, for religious piety and abstraction nor neoliberal democracy, but is ethos as a question of how to live against what you describe as "the subjugation of life to the power of death".¹⁸

That is to say, as against the utter and deliberate violence upon which governance thrives.

TRUMPETER B

But I am not dead! Do not assume that I am dead! By that I mean do not assume that I am an absence for which you must, or you can, speak.

Look at me. Hear me.

You *can* act out of time, and perhaps re-imagine my death as a 'statelessness' in becoming.

THE READER

Jyoti Singh Pandey was a medical student. She was training to be a Doctor and had just finished her final exams. In Udwin's documentary Jyoti Singh was revealed to be a young woman succeeding against incredible, yet ubiquitous, odds. Poverty, sexism, patriarchy and the State supported brutalisation and humiliation of women. Her family were poor, so they sold their ancestral lands to fund her and her brother's education. To supplement this, Jyoti worked from 8pm to 4am in a call centre. Slept for three to four hours and then got up to study.

Jyoti Singh lived for capacity, for 'can', as you would say. First her own, and then others, even the boy from the slums who she stopped the police from beating up, after he tried to steal her purse. "I only wanted what you have, new clothes, shoes, a hamburger", he said,

¹⁸ See Achille Mbembe's writing on 'necropolitics' (c2003).

when she asked him why he'd tried to take her purse. She bought him all those things and told him, "I hope now you won't ever do this again". No doubt he did, for what else could he do? But for Jyoti Singh he could do else, be else, just as she could, and did, and was, even as the violent rage of her attackers torn her open.

ALL PERFORMERS *(in a kind of choral singing)*

"else here" "else here" "else here"

THE READER

The day after Jyoti Singh's rape the students of New Delhi — and subsequently of other Indian cities — poured out onto the streets in fury and protest, triggered by the specific horror of her attack, but born of a general and accumulated anger at the lack of governmental and judicial response to the thousands of other rapes and incidents of domestic violence against women that had paved the way for Jyoti Singh to die.

The protesters added to her name, the names of many others. In Udwin's documentary you can see them shouting out these names, calling out for justice for them. It's a naming that must take place and must be heard. But it is not the naming of an 'I', or even 'they', it is the naming of 'us', 'us' as 'I', in a move that occupies, yet also surpasses the emblematic, and becomes the inhabited address of an unnameable and implacable dissensus.¹⁹

It is a naming *in* and *as* the space of appearance, that mitigates against the possible seizure and abstraction of naming. It is her name spoken, made public, renouncing that which would have her unnamed. And once mobilised as 'us', not 'I', Jyoti Singh ceases to be the property of Jyoti Singh. That cessation began at the moment she was first violated, her named self that she fought so hard to protect, eviscerated from her and thrown first onto a public highway and then into the public imaginary. Here it was held aloft, recuperated, and populated. Jyoti Singh became political. Politics rose up.

ALL PERFORMERS *(in a kind of choral singing)*

Jyoti Singh is here. Jyoti Singh is dead. Long live Jyoti Singh.

TRUMPETER A

But the problem of 'I' and 'you' remains if 'I' am a centre, and you are transcendent, or axiomatic 'other'.

But what if 'you' are the force of alterity?

The undoing of 'I' prior to 'I'. What some might call ethics and some might call the figural— forces of anarchy and defiguration.

A kind of 'turning' or 'quaking' that disrupts signification from within.

What if that is what you are? Here, where we speak to one another?

What if you are ethics, ethos, the demand of life, put to me, directly, in the context of an infinitely available violence?

¹⁹ See the political philosophy of Jacques Rancière, in particular *'Dissensus: On politics and Aesthetics'* Continuum, 2010

What if it is your face that is passive, intoning, unending defiguration of power.

THE READER

But how can such politics continue to appear? When instead it is the police who appear, as they did to the Indian protestors (and countless others around the world who have peacefully assembled) with teargas and bullets and excessive brutality. Brutality appears. And appears again, with tidal regularity, and breaks upon each different shore, each select privation, with the (divine) right of another and further sovereign aggressions.

Jyoti Singh worked and fought for a public life, and not just her own public life. In the end she gave that public life a name. Her own name. And from that naming there followed judicial and constitutional review and reform. Some things did change. But the question remains as to whether the public life named by Jyoti Singh can ensue? And if it does, or can, what then happens to naming, to the force of making subject that which is available to all? Is there something about a public life and space of a future politics that must resist naming? Or give to naming mobility, and capacity? Is this anonymity? I'm not sure. Or is there a form of naming, as not naming, that can give capacity to public space and life? I want to say that I think perhaps this naming is in the pro-noun instead of the proper noun. Perhaps it is a matter of 'prononymity' not 'anonymity'.

A space where Jyoti Singh can once again be 'I'.



I, NOT I (*from the lectern*)

"And when a name comes, it immediately says more than the name: the other of the name and quite simply the other, whose irruption the name announces."²⁰

²⁰ Derrida, Jacques 'On the Name', translated by David Wood, John P. Leavey Jr and Ian McLeod, edited by Thomas Dutoit, Stanford University Press, 1995 p. 89

ACT V

We get up, we are standing again. The Prop Facilitator is once again busy, rearranging and gathering things. We are being brought back to the painting, Poussin's painting, that has settled among us by now like a kind of weather. Or maybe 'whether'...?

The scene is full of blowing gestures, and reminders as eager gusts, fresh on the wind, a little like Constable's snow; a truculent means, staggeringly vital.

All the actors are listening, copying, gesturing. Is there a hint of these gestures too even from 'THE MAN ESCAPED'? Are his hands listening? Or preparing yet again for a way out?

THE ILLUSTRATOR

Let's begin!

Let me tell you about this painting by Nicolas Poussin.

Everyone is doing something even those doing nothing. Everyone is in. And everyone is on. Everyone is equal. Even the hero. Even the speaker. Even the man or the woman with the megaphone.

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR *(simultaneously, from the side)*

And I'm not moving.

And I'm not, I'm not, I will not stand by, and just watch, I will not do it.

I'm not doing it! I'm not going to be quiet.

THE ILLUSTRATOR

Everyone is moving, unless they are sleeping or collapsed, in which case their movement is the articulation of sleep, or collapse. Even the dead are articulate.

THE PROP FACILITATOR *(simultaneously, from the side)*

Here, on the square, in the plaza, outside the temple, on the street, in the middle of the road, below the tall buildings, between the columns in the shade of the golden trees, we stand together and raise our arms to gesture at each other from across the distances we have conspired to create, amongst our fervour now blackened with death, death puffing, puffing at the door.

THE LIVE-STREAMER *(simultaneously, from the side)*

When we come to the outside we bear a resemblance.

I, NOT I *(simultaneously, from the side)*

When we come to the outside we are as if a picture come to life, to a life that comes.

THE READER *(simultaneously, from the side)*

We are not to be blown away. Try, and like the dust we will merely settle somewhere else.

THE ILLUSTRATOR

Lots of people are waving their arms above their heads, like this. She is stretching up and closing her eyes. She is swaying with her arms barely lifted. He is looking to the side checking something. He is waving and shouting through the megaphone. He is making a fist in the air. Some people are elevated, they are singing. People are copying what one another

are doing, and then stopping, or copying someone else. Some are putting their arms around one another. Some are sitting quietly. Lots are sitting quietly.

TRUMPETER B (*simultaneously, from the side*)

It caught me in the play of horizontals and verticals that make up the scene of gestures, and would not let go, of questions and reminders, of an inescapable worldliness.

TRUMPETER A:

From where the light comes in. I saw it. Out! Out in the world.

THE GESTURE FACILITATOR (*simultaneously, from the side*)

I am populating the plaza with voices and gestures, imbricating, contesting and rallying forth. I am a hubbub out of which you will sometimes hear a single dash of thought. It could be mine. It could be yours.

TRUMPETER B (*simultaneously, from the side*)

Has death settled on the public realm? Or is it only death's effect?

THE SPEECH FACILITATOR (*simultaneously, from the side*)

And again, "Else here", "Else here"

TRUMPETER A (*simultaneously, from the side*)

No! They are raising their hands. They are raising their hands.

THE ILLUSTRATOR

They are listening intently. Or are they asleep, collapsed, intently? Someone is speaking into a mic. There are cheers. People are waving, clapping. Some people are walking to the back, sitting down, watching. Some are standing up. They are raising their arms. They are raising their hands.

I, NOT I (*simultaneously, from the side*)

I have come to feel that if the form is participated in, rather than merely observed, one realises it is quietly incendiary.

THE READER (*simultaneously, from the side*)

Perhaps you might feel that slight toppling, the hint of groundlessness implied.

THE LIVE-STREAMER (*simultaneously, from the side*)

Tiny scoopings-out of the edifices around us and underfoot.

THE ILLUSTRATOR (*making the gesture - 'look what is happening'*)

I have seen that woman before, the woman who stretches out her hand, like this.

She was kneeling then too. And her gesture was similar, but she used both hands.

Her head looked the other way, and a little more.

She was also looking at the man, this time he was running, his left leg lifted off the ground behind him. His arm outstretched in front of him. 'Stop'. 'Stop now!' Her look was alarmed and quizzical. She couldn't see what he was looking at. (Another death in monstrous form). She could only see his fear.

Here however she sits above and behind the decapitated head. Her arm outstretched as it to unveil it.

This is where she first appeared.

Here where the dead giant pushes into her body, as she holds others back.

Later she is isolated from death, in a landscape of idyllic calm.

She sees only death's affect.

It is enough to trigger recollection.

ACT VI

THE GESTURE FACILITATOR *is calling us in gestures to where the TWO TRUMPETERS still sit debating, talking, questioning. We come close to hear what they are saying, as it is difficult, demanding.*

Sometimes the other actors repeat what is being said, as if to pass it to us once again, to ensure that we are hearing it, receiving it. And other times they take over from the trumpeters, as if to share in the questions being posed, to participate in this discreet yet universal dilemma.

Somewhere, that isn't elsewhere, someone (is it you?) still ponders an escape.

TRUMPETER A

You ask me a question about violence.

TRUMPETER B

And I find myself here, in proximity. You are also here, and thus, so too, is the potential for withholding.

TRUMPETER A

I speak to you, and my response, though asymmetric, is not without expectation.

TRUMPETER B

It comes however without forethought, though it arises nonetheless from the plurality of voices deemed to think.

TRUMPETER A

I speak to you because 'we' have lost our voice in the cacophony of freedoms launched on our behalf. If this is a declaration then it is troubled with the move to constitute.

TRUMPETER B

And if this is an epistle, then it is addressed only to you.

TRUMPETER A

You ask me a question about violence. Its role. And I wonder which violence do you mean?

TRUMPETER B

Are 'we' also a violence, if imposed? Exclusion, then unity, then exclusion again. The cut, then gather, then cut of belonging that consorts with fear?

TRUMPETER A

But this is not the violence of 'us' as we rise up and appear as the political. A violence itself that is only ever a rightful response to the foreclosure of all possible freedoms.

TRUMPETER B

You look at me and I know you're speaking about counter-violence, rightful violence, justified violence, violence as a last resort. And I see you throwing stones at tanks, or stuffing a milk bottle with petrol and a rag and setting it alight, or firing a hand-held rocket launcher at the sky that owns you. But then I also see you turning away from the bedroom, where the man you believed to be your brother's murderer lay dying, a man you had sought to confront for years, but from whom you walked away, because you had been admitted to his house as a guest.

TRUMPETER A (*forcefully*)

If you start with violence you will end with violence! If you start with a capture, you will end with a capture! If you start with the State you will end with the State!

Start somewhere else.

In small purposeful gatherings - conversations in coffee houses and the upstairs rooms in pubs. In discrete, almost domestic, proclamations shared with fervour. In free associations of the stateless becoming organised. In the sense, just that, then articulated, of a wrong to which you might have access. Or on the threshold between the private attuned with care to the world, and the public declaring that world your home.

Turn a capture upon a capture, and end it. Violence is not a question or a subject. It is the substrate within which I meet your face. It is potential withheld. Governing power become inoperative.

Ardour, without cut.





TRUMPETER B

You ask me about the question of violence? And I wonder why is it that politics should consist of a rupture?

It is not that I disagree with you that what currently stands for politics is a system of power and limit exercised for the few, in the name of the many, who remain unnamed and uncounted. But I wonder how might the constituent power of the many, the multitude, 'us' even, be sustained once our appearing has faded into governance.

TRUMPETER A

But, if 'we' appear as a multitude then what will fade away is governance thus assumed.

TRUMPETER B

In that case then, while I'm here with you, in resistance to governance thus assumed, can we talk about capture? And then, ethics.

TRUMPETER A

I know that you resist ethics, and you are not alone in your suspicions. But I have to probe further because through the guise of 'the people' amassing in a public sphere that tremors with its own destabilising momentum, I see you still. And as I can only speak plainly, from this place that does not reason, but thinks nonetheless, I feel called to address your suspicion.

You give to ethics the very sovereignty that for others, the 'other' deposes.

You say, it *reigns*.

And it reigns as a force of indistinction. Instrumentalised by 'necropolitics' it becomes a mask for 'infinite justice', war in the guise of humanitarian actions and politics as a mere tawdry and illusory consensus.

It denies the foundational supplementarity of politics, you say, and encloses everything in an 'arkhè' of absolute rights that can only be exercised by an other, now in the form sovereign power.

The demos, the people, 'democracy' can only appear, you assert more forcefully, as this supplement, which can never and must never be resolved.

It would seem that at the heart of your critique, is the idea that ethics, used in this way, is a totalising force that does away with politics because it can admit no division.

The heterogeneity, the plurality, the otherness that you say is politics' own, no longer belongs to ethics because ethics has become a system of judgement that bows down to the law. Because you say, it is incapable of an-archy, of disrupting the 'self' (the 'I') the circularity of 'arkhè' that only politics 'ungrounded' in division can achieve.

But is there not a self, equally ungrounded, moved by each singular violence reflected in your face, that is undone before the doing of dissensus?

An an-archy of self and subject, that pre-exists the act and the work to do, and remains alert in alterity long after 'politics' has subsided, and long before it has risen up?

Some would call *this* ethics.²¹

And locate in it an unreason peculiar to a life force, a force of the sensible and material world, within which you call me into question, beyond intentionality, beyond instrumentality, beyond consciousness in a proximity inscribed by rupture *and* by joy.

In this ethics I can have power but I cannot wield it. Power and violence is the substrate within which I encounter you. You encounter me. It is not simply that I have a decision before me. It is that I have a demand put upon me, by you, by your face. To withhold. To withhold your face, by means of which I withhold my power to negate you, and 'we' become constitutive power, unconstitutable.

We end with you at the lectern, no more an authority than the wildflowers grown unplanted.

I, NOT I

For some time now and quite intensively of late I have been trying to name 'us'. And trying to see if 'we' can appear. What is this space of appearance that might be deemed political?

But naming and appearing are also traps, if separated from the essay of attempt and the artifice of assembly.

What is at issue is the plurality of appearance and naming as an inoperative gesture, in the manifold gestures of speaking hands, and then, knowing what to do with power.

And from somewhere a little like elsewhere, we hear the sound of two trumpets, or are they bugles? Is it music that they play, a celebration, or a call to arms? Whichever, the sound does not recede, even as we start to drift away.

END

²¹ See the writings of Emmanuel Levinas, in particular '*Totality and Infinity: An essay on Exteriority*' Translated by Alphonso Lingis, Duquesne University Press, Pennsylvania, 1969