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Museum of modern and
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Bozen/Bolzano

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Contributors
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Alexander Schellow
Jalal Toufic

Translations
Henry Martin
Gila Walker

Director
Corinne Diserens

Editorial staff
Brigitte Unterhofer
Silvia Rissbacher
Petra Guidi

Collaboration
Caterina Longo
Simonetta Nardin

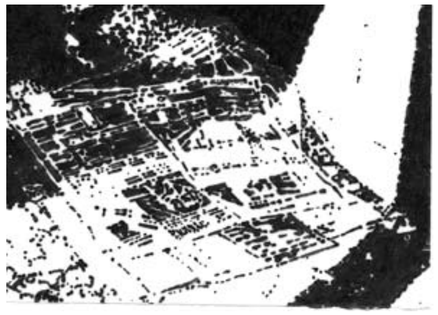
Design
tomato - Londra

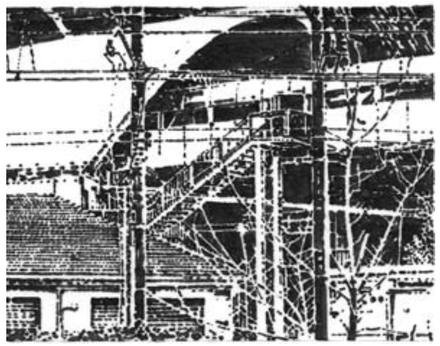
Graphics
typeklang - Bolzano

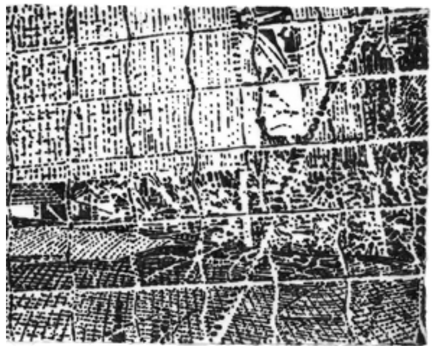
Last page:
Gardar Eide Einarsson
"Untitled (Anxious and Afraid)", 2007
Inkjet print on plywood board
200 x 122 cm
Edition: Unique
Private collection
Courtesy of STANDARD, Oslo

AUTONOME PROVINZ BOZEN SÜDTIROL
PROVINCIA AUTONOMA DI BOLZANO ALTO ADIGE

STIFTUNG SÜDTIROLER SPARKASSE
FONDAZIONE CASSA DI RISPARMIO DI BOLZANO







They were neighbors,

They came here.

I lived there for a long time, until around 1979.

No, we didn't know them very well. A lot of children.

Here.

They built the house, a shackle.

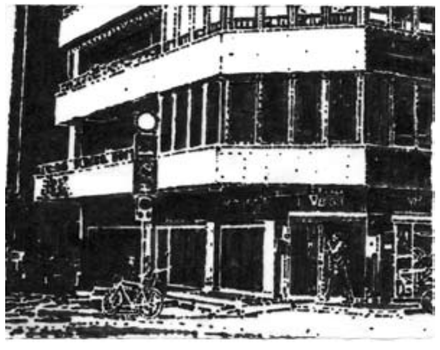
They kept the apartment.

They were constantly being evicted.

But they always stayed there,

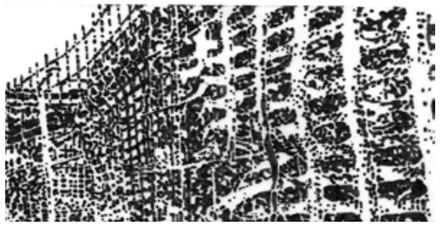
They kept rebuilding.

(Fragments from an interview; Bolzano/Bozen, via Bari)



I wish to share a glance at a part of a work in progress that Alexander Schellow showed me on Wednesday, February 27, 2008.

Corinne Diserens



Graves of the Griquas.
...The Griquas were coloured men and women. They were descendants of early Afrikaner frontiersmen; of the remnants of Khoisan tribes, hunters, gatherers, and pastoralists; of escaped slaves from the wine and wheat farms of the south-west Cape; of Free Blacks from the colony who could find no acceptable place for themselves in it; and of African tribesmen, detached from their tribes by war or by choice. They formed a community which attempted to discover what their role in South Africa was, or if there was none, to create one for themselves. In the end they could not do this ... (*Adam Kok's Griquas: A Study in the Development of Stratification in South Africa*, by Robert John Ross, Cambridge 1976)

David Goldblatt
Philippolis, Free State, 27 August 1986

This monument commemorates the encampment here of Griqua leader, Adam Kok III, and his people who, having abandoned their settlements and capital at Philippolis, in what is now the Free State, trekked for two years across the Maluti and Drakensberg Mountains, arrived here in 1863 and established their new capital, Kokstad. They did this to escape encroaching Boers and annexing British. Their new home, Griqualand East, was annexed by Britain in 1876.

David Goldblatt
Mount Currie, Kokstad, 4 May 2007

ON THE BRIDGE

Maxi Obexer
Berlin

Translated from the German

Wind drove drizzle into the faces of the people who paced along their course. For those on their way from Pest to Buda, it caught them on the right cheek; for those on their way from Buda to Pest, it was the left cheek that took the sting. This was no day for pausing in contemplation on a bridge. The gray skies looked as though they'd never again be anything other than dark and glum. The tourists turned up the collars of their trench coats as they sped across to the other side and into the very next coffee house. The locals faced bravely into the weather and stoically continued toward their destinations. This, for them, was daily life: another day to be lived through. For the tourists, a day to be enjoyed, or at least to be remembered, for recollection at some later date, back again at home.
I myself was in the middle. I'd be living here for the next three months, but still couldn't say that this is where I live. I'd have a daily routine, just like the city's true inhabitants, yet still I'd remain a tourist. I'd make my way by turns across the Elisabeth, Chain, Freedom and Margareten Bridges just for the sake of doing so, and not because some particular route was the shortest way home from work.
That was when I noticed her. She was leaning against the railing of the Margareten Bridge, her shoulders shrugged up high, her neck hugged low, her face turned down, her gaze directed toward the river. She naturally stood out. She was, after all, the only person in silent contemplation. Albeit a somewhat dour contemplation.
It was here that I first caught sight of the island—Margareten Island—that divides the flow of the waters and reaches up to the bridge like the tip of a tongue. The island once had housed a cloister, which later, in the course of some army's occupation, had been turned into a brothel, while always inhabited by the very same women. The island was quite close and I began to walk more quickly. I couldn't find the cloister, since before I got that far my attention was caught by a fountain. The play of its waters was synchronized with the music of Hungarian marches and symphonies. In accord with the music's more dramatic moments—its saddest, most melancholic, joyful, stormy, and uplifted moments—the fountain's waters shot into the air, or whirled and rushed with sounds of apprehension, or whipped themselves into states of bombastic fury, or calmed and settled and finally lay totally still, until once again growing eerie and threatening.
The spouts were arranged like so many ballerinas, in a similarly hierarchic way: two principal figures in the middle were flanked by four subsidiaries, and these in turn by three full rows of brightly spouting smaller fountains. The smaller spouts were never truly tragic: they lacked sufficient water pressure for anything like that. Truly tragic attitudes—with waters spouting high up into the air—could only be achieved by the two central jets.
Tragedy was reserved to the great and noble; the humble had the knowledge of gaiety. But there was something nonetheless that gave an air of involuntary tragedy to the three rows of smaller spouts. These poor small streams of water at the basin's edge—in contrast to the big ones—weren't able to make dynamic preparations for any given situation. They could only remain within a situation, and represent it. They could rustle with unrest, or fire into the air with excitement, but whenever the situation was subject to transition from high-flown tragedy to deep despair, they performed the passage abruptly rather than dynamically, and thus it was often the case that an excited stream of water would continue to shoot into the air in noisy contrast to the sudden appearance of a deeply restrained and restful adagio.
Then suddenly she came back to mind, and I instantly knew that she wanted to kill herself, and I could not understand how I had managed to be so stupid, as only to realize it now!
As I once again approached the Margareten Bridge, she was placing her foot on the railing and stretching to pull herself erect on it. For an instant everything was frozen; everything around her seemed to stand still; the streetcar, even as it kept on moving; the people, even while continuing on their way; the whole world was motionless and frozen, in spite of continuing to turn. She alone was in action. I ran forward, at much the same time that others did, and we pulled her down from the rail. Freeing her grip from it was not hard. An Italian woman caressed her tear-streaked face and pressed her hand against her breast. "Ma tu, che fai?! What are you doing!" she said, speaking Italian and English all at once. "I am Giulia! Sono Giulia! Capisci?!" She placed her hand on that tearful face. "Giulia!, Io sono Giulia! And you?! What's your name?!" The tearful face stared back, speechlessly. Giulia looked around at the crowd: "Excuse me! Are you Hungarian?" "No, sono d'Italia." "And you? Are you Hungarian?" "Sorry. I'm French." "Please, speak with her, she can't understand me!" "Sorry, I'm from Scotland." "You?" "Sorry, sono italiana anch'io." "Madonna! We're all Italians! Nobody is from here!" We scattered in search of a local, but the locals were all in a rush and continued along their ways.
Giulia pulled out her passport and held it up before the young woman's face. "Giulia! Io sono Giulia!" She tapped her index finger against her chest. "And you! Who are you?!" The tearful face ever so slightly brightened. The girl was wearing thick, horn-rimmed glasses; a light down was visible on her upper lip; her face was irregularly spotted with acne; her cheeks bright red. She was dressed in an old gym suit, which perhaps had come from the Caritas organization. Perhaps she was a slightly retarded person who was housed in some sort of institution, or perhaps she lived with her parents at home. She looked starved, in spite of being overweight; exhausted, like someone who never got love and affection, if not by begging for it, or perhaps by subterfuge.
"Tell me your name! Who are you?! What is your name?" Giulia continued to alternate between tapping herself on the breast, and showing the girl her passport. At last! She finally reached down into the pocket of her jumper and pulled out a card, perhaps a monthly pass for the subway. "Edith! Si chiama Edith!! Her name is Edith! Edita! Tu sei Edita! Che bel nome! What a nice name! Edith!" Giulia's joy seemed boundless. Giulia showed Edith's subway pass to all the people—the French, the Scots, the Germans and Italians—who had formed a circle around them. Edith began to laugh. She laughed and stroked the tears from her eye, then tenderly linked her arm with Giulia's, and along with all the rest of us they left the bridge.

TO THINK OR NOT TO THINK

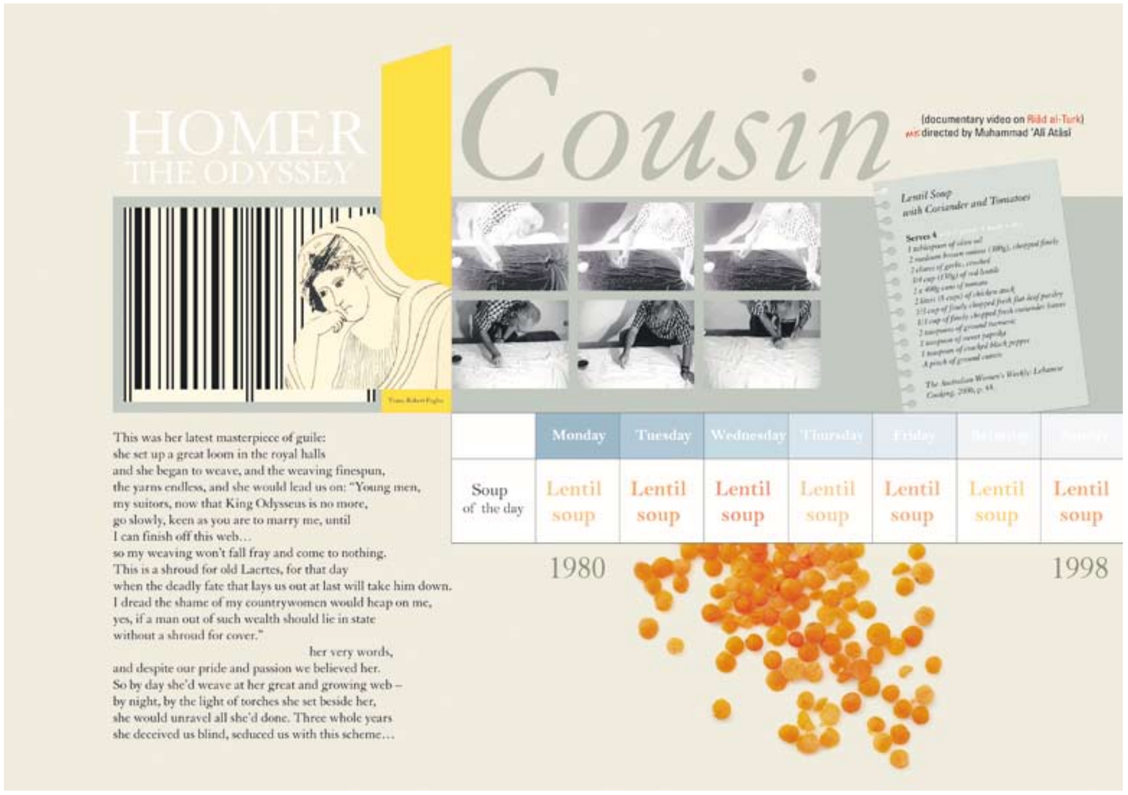
Jalal Toufic
Istanbul
Turkey

Dedicated to Riâd al-Turk and to the Charlie Meadows of Joel and Ethan Coen's
Barton Fink

Artaud: "Whatever way you turn you have not even *started* thinking."[1] Heidegger: "*Most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking*—not even yet, although the state of the world is becoming constantly more thought-provoking."[2] Given that, as both Artaud and Heidegger tell us, we are still not thinking, our task is to think... or to assume fully and deliberatly not thinking. The Syrian Riâd al-Turk (born in 1930) was first arrested in 1952 for belonging to the Communist Party; he was held for several months and tortured. In 1960, he was arrested, tortured and imprisoned for opposing the unity of Syria and the Egypt ruled by Gamâl 'Abd al-Nâsir. In October 1980, he was arrested for his membership of the Communist Party-Political Bureau and his outspoken opposition to Syria's presence in Lebanon; he was tortured and was held for the next 17 years almost constantly in solitary confinement and suffered serious health problems, including diabetes and heart and kidney ailments. He was released in an amnesty in 1998, but he was again detained in September 2001 and subsequently sentenced to two years' imprisonment, of which he served 15 months. Many members of the Lebanese parliament, for example Bahiyya al-Harîrî, the sister of assassinated former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al-Harîrî, referred to member of parliament and former Economy and Trade Minister Marwan Hamadé, who, soon after resigning from the government upon the extension of President Emile Lahoud's mandate, narrowly escaped an attempt on his life, as "the living martyr." If I had to characterize some Arab politician as a "living martyr," it would certainly not be Marwan Hamadé but Riâd al-Turk. In his documentary video *Cousin*, bad journalist turned even worse videomaker Muhammad 'Alî al-Atâsî prods the latter: "In your interview with the newspaper *Le monde*, you talked about three factors that helped you withstand seventeen years in solitary confinement." "I wished to put this on record first as truths concerning me as a prisoner, and [second] as pieces of advice to future prisoners... The first factor is to forget about the outside world. You no longer have the world where you used to live: your family, your party, your neighborhood, or your friends. This world is gone, as if you died. You entered the underworld." Would the ghost of Achilles, who told Odysseus when the latter descended temporarily to Hades, "Say not a word in death's favor; I would rather be a paid servant in a poor man's house and be above ground than king of kings among the dead" (Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book XI), have even said: "Indeed, I would rather be a political prisoner and be in a two square meters dark solitary confinement cell 'above ground' albeit underground, i.e. in a basement, than king of kings among the dead"? Drawing on Proust and others, Deleuze indicated in his rectification of the dogmatic image of thought that we do not think except when we are forced to do so;[3] I would add that we do not *not think* properly, i.e. by fully assuming such a condition, except if we are forced to do so (thus the many Zen examples of this forcing not to "think." A monk told Joshu: "I have just entered the monastery. Please teach me." Joshu asked: "Have you eaten your rice porridge?" The monk replied: "I have eaten." Joshu said: "Then you had better wash your bowl" [from the *Mumonkon* (*The Gateless Gate*)]) (the natural state of humans is neither to think nor not to think in a fully assumed manner, but to not think in a disavowed manner).[4] Al-Turk continues: "I don't recall the second factor—oh, yes: it is time. When you are in prison, cousin, time seems long and that's natural... In prison, you are in a still life, a world where you see daily only two or three movements in your cell. The morning movement: they knock at your door, open it, give you food. The second movement: they take you out to the toilets, and then bring you back [to your cell]. This is what happens in the morning. At noon you have the same two movements and in the evening you have the same two movements. That's life! Calculate it: going to the toilets, taking the food and eating it, washing the plate and going back [to the cell]. All this takes ten minutes... plus ten minutes... plus ten minutes. That's about thirty minutes. This is your life. Besides that, what are you going to do: lie down and daydream? Any daydream amounts to a contact with the outside world.... Any daydream brings back to you your obsession with, and the necessity of, getting out.... I didn't allow myself to daydream—of course as much as I could. I began to search here and there.... I looked in the soup and found tiny stones. I recalled the time in school, when I was inclined to draw. I was lucky to have a double sheet.... I found it in another solitary confinement cell. I used to spread it out and draw on it a natural scenery with these black gravels of soup...."[5] I had thousands of them, whole bags of them... We had lentil soup at least four days a week. A day was not enough to draw this large picture.... At lunch time, I used to hope that they wouldn't bring the lunch, because that meant that I had to ruin everything to have space for food... I had to construct everything again.[6] It's like this guy with the rock—Sisyphus, isn't it?"—the Greek figure that's most affined to his situation is rather Penelope. I was jolted by Riâd al-Turk's deliberately assumed not thinking (though it does not appear to have been a jolt for the journalist who made this documentary video, who continued not to think in an unconscious manner); a clear, conscious attempt of a man not to think is thought-provoking. In Syria there's so little thinking despite the fact that the situation is thought-provoking, calls for thinking (deplorably, when Riâd al-Turk left prison, he resumed, like the majority of the opposition figures, not thinking in an unassumed manner), or for a more thorough, programmatic, less occulted not thinking. I, Jalal Toufic, a thinker, feel the most terrific affinity with the not thinking Riâd al-Turk in solitary confinement (as well as with my untimely collaborators among past and future thinkers). With rare exceptions, the Lebanese in specific and Arabs in general don't even know how to excel in not thinking, how to do this act in a great, fitting manner, but do it in a sloppy way, and under the illusion that they are thinking. Against the general unassumed failure to think in the Arab world, we have two exemplary exceptional attitudes: the one who thinks and the one who deliberately tries and devises strategies not to think. I cannot envision myself doing what the vast majority of people indulge in: a sloppy manner of not thinking; but if one day I feel that I have fully created and elaborated the concepts I am here to create, I can envision myself ascetically trying to accomplish what jailed Riâd al-Turk did in solitary confinement. There are two basic problems with regards to thinking, which is one of the greatest joys and horrors: either one is not able to think; or one starts to think and can no longer stop "thinking" (Darren Aronofsky's *Pi* [1998]...).

Postscript:
Jesus: "It is written [cf. Deuteronomy 8:3]: 'Man does not live on bread alone...'" (Matthew 4:4)—he lives also on *food for thought*... Therefore, it is not by abstaining from bread alone that man can go on a strike. Characteristically, the vast majority of people never consider a thought strike, but, like the thoughtless Saddam Hussein, solely a hunger strike. Only those extremely rare persons who actually think would be in a position to genuinely go on a thought strike—were Riâd al-Turk a thinker, I might consider his attempt in prison to not think as a thought strike. And only those, more common though still a few, who are creative can go on an art strike—one that is not itself to be viewed as a performance and thus as still another artwork. A human being can last only so long without food, while on a hunger strike; how long can a thinker last without thinking, on a thought strike? During the latest Israeli war on Lebanon, I started a thought strike on 24 July 2006 and ended it on 15 August 2006. How many reported this, indeed noticed it at all?

Jalal Toufic, *Undeserving Lebanon* (Forthcoming Books, 2007; available for download as a PDF file at http://www.jalaltoufic.com/publications.htm), pp. 23-27.



Jalal Toufic, *Cousin*, © 2006 (70 x 100 cm; from *Minor Art: Conceptual Posters and Book Covers*)

1 Antonin Artaud, *Collected Works* vol. 1, trans. Victor Corti (London: Calder & Boyars, 1968), p. 89.

2 Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 4.

3 See the chapter "The Image of Thought" in Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), as well as the chapters "Signs and Truth" and "The Image of Thought" in Deleuze's *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Athlone, 2000). "More important than thought is 'what leads to thought [*donne à penser*]'; more important than the philosopher is the poet. Victor Hugo writes philosophy in his first poems because he 'still thinks, instead of being content, like nature, to lead to thought.' But the poet learns that what is essential is outside of thought, in what forces us to think" (*Proust and Signs*, p. 95). As a *poetic thinker* and as a contemporary Arab, I find these Deleuze words problematically thought-provoking. What is the conscious or unconscious expectation of many—*certainly not of Deleuze*—in "Developed" regions of the world regarding its "Underdeveloped" regions? It is for the latter to be thought-provoking but fail to think what is thought-provoking, leaving it to others in the "Developed" regions of the world to think it. Arabs as well as others who belong to "Underdeveloped" regions should undo this division of labor. Set against such a reductive expectation, it is all the more fitting for an Arab as well as for someone who hails from other "underdeveloped" regions of the world to be a *poetic thinker* rather than a poet. But irrespective of such a context, generally: more important than the philosopher, for example Hegel, and the poet, for example Hugo, is the poetic thinker, for example Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Blanchot, one whose thinking about his or her mortality, poems, films (for example Coen Brother's *Barton Fink*), and the abominable historical conditions in which he or she happens to be living, i.e. about what gives food for thought, about what is thought-provoking, is itself thought-provoking, gives food for thought.

4 "Beyond" thinking and not thinking is nonthinking: "Once, when the Great Master Hongdao of Yueshan was sitting [in meditation], a monk asked him, 'What are you thinking of, [sitting there] so fixedly?' The master answered, 'I'm thinking of not thinking.' The monk asked, 'How do you think of not thinking?' The Master answered, 'Nonthinking,'" quoted in *Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma*, Book 12, "Lancet of Zazen" (*Zazen shin*), trans. Carl Bielefeldt. http://scbs.stanford.edu/ sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/zazenshin/zazenshin.translation.html

5 In complement to my interest in Lebanese videos and mixed-media works that have managed to reach a *zone of indiscernibility* (Deleuze) between fiction and documentary (Elias Khoury and Rabih Mroué's *Three Posters*, 2000; Walid Raad's *Miraculous Beginnings*, 1998 and 2001, *The Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs*, 1996-1999, and *Hostage: the Bachar Tapes [English Version]*, 2002), I am interested in series of objects that appear in a number of Lebanese videos and mixed-media works. Part 2 of "Missing Lebanese Wars" in Walid Raad's *The Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs* revolves around the seventeen objects that Zaynab Fakhoury took with her on leaving her husband in 1981, during the civil war, and that had traveled with her from Palestine to Jordan in 1947, from Jordan to Lebanon in 1967, from Lebanon to Sierra Leone in 1969, and back to Lebanon in 1971. Raad shows six of these objects on account of their appearance in photographs produced on the very day Zaynab Fakhoury left or was forced to leave Birzeit, Beirut, Amman, and Freetown. In Lamia Joreige's mixed-media work *Objects of War* (2000; 2003), various people are asked to choose an object that reminds them of the war: theater director Rabih Mroué chose a Jerry can, I chose my video *Credits Included: A Video in Red and Green* (1995). In the last section of Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's documentary *Khiam* (2000), we are soberly shown some of the artifacts that the six interviewed former detainees at Khiam detention center, who were stripped there of all their belongings (including of such elementary things as a comb, a pencil, paper), made with sundry objects that they obtained secretly and manipulated, for example the small piece of lead with which a bread bag is sealed, the aluminum foil wrappers of "Picon" cheese, the screws in "Scholl" slippers, olive pits, an orange's stem, staples from cartons, the papers in cigarette boxes: rosaries whose beads are made of perforated olive pits; a toothbrush; a comb ornamented with a siren with green hair; a miniature Christmas tree; a blue and white cowboy hat; a knit white house with a red chimney surrounded by a green lawn (the three colors of the Lebanese flag); a necklace, etc. One of the main sites to locate the most legitimate artisanal works in the contemporary Arab World is in the work of political prisoners: the provisional work that Riâd at-Turk made in his solitary prison, as seen in Muhammad 'Alî Atâsî's *Cousin*; and the objects that the inmates of the Khiam detention center made, as seen in the last section of Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's *Khiam*. Were I to be offered a carte blanche at some video-screening venue, I would curate a program of the above-mentioned four Arabic works and title it *Arabic Objective Videos and Mixed-Media Works*.

6 I presume that had one asked Riâd al-Turk why he drew, he could have, merely by replacing "make films" by "draw," answered with Marguerite Duras' written response in Godard's *Slow Motion* (*Sauve qui peut [la vie]*): "I make films to occupy my time. If I were strong enough to do nothing, I wouldn't do anything at all."

e-flux journal March 2008

HISTORIAN OF DOUBT 5

Vincent Labaume
Clichy, France

Your search "I haven't the slightest idea of the future" did not match any documents

Google, February 3, 2008

Translated from the French

How is it that I'm still standing on this earth? Where is the brevity of life that poets have written about with such regret? All I've ever seen is a long unending tunnel of perpetually repeating things like cars in traffic despite the threat of gas shortages. Maybe all that changes in this petrified world are the dates of life appearance that recedes as researchers advance in the belly of austral rocks. Dumb pretentious stromatolites! When our own individual trace of life happily disappears once we're crossed the threshold of the house, they pointlessly retain the memory of their birth two billion years ago. They resemble in this regard the vain traffic that is our absurd cosmos. This prospect of memorable stones leaves me cold. What interest is all this nonsense that's supposed to keep us spellbound, if the sequence of our lives is entirely contained in the fossil we'll leave behind? Why do we insist on wanting to be appealing or on wanting to learn?

This morning I heard a voice on the radio that I used to know. It could have issued from a stone or a bone, because its words were addressed as much to me as to researcher thousands of years hence. But the particular tone of the voice reminded me of the aimless conversations that we used to have in the twilight of our adolescence. We didn't have as many words at the time and we could even do without them for certain exchanges when mere murmurings sufficed to nurture our dialogue. By and large, we scarcely used more than a tenth of our vocabulary, and what we did use was basically limited to prepositions and conjunctions, flying and skimming like flat stones across the surface of our deep ignorance, much to our great delight. I remember a whole night spent going from with to in, then from in to to, then from to to of, amongst others, to end with a thunderous with, uttered out of the blue and warbling infinite volumes of air... If I can still faithfully recall the prepositions of those days, on the other hand, I hardly remember any of the objects, verbs, or subject that cluttered my days in later years when my ambition to learn and to appeal, precisely, recklessly propelled my speech and thought.

In those days, I was out to enrich my vocabulary and make my language scintillate like a shimmering pendant, brandished to attract the naive and the lost. My brain thought it was connected to the crowds by words. Between vacancy and clairvoyancy, I bombarded viewers dazzled by my light effects with stanzas of chaos, I slashed riffs bleeding darkness, and I belched out storms in mad pipes... *Scandinavian saga!* After the mayhem, the masters lashed back with the inevitable backlash! And I was hardily beaten! Will the true story of this new century be the story, as always, of hidden masters?

Old words with epileptic overtones now slip though my fingers like sand. There is, not far from me, a language-impoverished being that I keep as a point of reference, a gauge of sorts that serves to calibrate my vague utterings. I envy the narrowness of its indifferent thoughts. When a hounding impulse drives me into the world with words, I pattern myself on its mutilating formulations and borrow its airport announcement-style monotonous delivery. I say a word and right away the gaping world engulfs and absorbs it. And my little self stays outside of all this, out of the grim digestion of my word in this world.

To be continued ...

Jean-Luc Moulène, *Dormir, Paris, July 7, 2007*

From *Eventual Spaces*

Nasrin Tabatabai &
Babak Afrassiabi (Pages)

www.pagesmagazine.net
Rotterdam
Teheran

TRANSLATION PART 2

A conversation with Fatemeh Valiani* by Babak Afrassiabi and Nasrin Tabatabai (Pages)

The first part of this conversation was published in Issue 03 of the Museion Journal.

P: In the last ten years we have witnessed a great increase in the number of new words introduced into Farsi. Certainly translation has had something to do with this. The translation and introduction of new terminologies also brings about the introduction of new concepts. Concepts are not always applicable to new and different contexts, and may undergo re-interpretation when transplanted into other circumstances, and this in itself is another process of translation. How does all of this affect the Farsi language, the intellectual discourse that takes place in it, and the work of the translator in Iran?

F.V.: Creating new words and introducing them into the Persian language has been going on for more than the last decade. Of course, the absence of correct and suitable terminologies is profoundly experienced during the act of translation. And it is the task of translation to reveal this absence and to try to do away with it by coining new terms. I think this is what distinguishes translation, properly speaking, from just reporting the content of a discourse in another language. With respect to scientific and intellectual terminology, the Persian language is in fact quite disadvantaged. And it's clear that the introduction of new terms can offer tools that present themselves as indispensable for the production of intellectual discourse. It also greatly facilitates the work of the translator. But a word is not just a combination of typographical characters: it is a signifier that denotes a perspective, a point of view, a manner of perceiving and understanding the world. In other words, there is always a concept behind a word or syntactic structure. For example, in English or in Persian, you express regret for a person's absence by saying, "I miss you." In French, however, "you" becomes the subject of the phrase, and you have to say: *Tu me manques*. Another example is the word *l'autre* in French, which literally means "the other." In French, you might refer to a friend with the word *l'autre*. In the sentence *L'autre est venu a mon bureau aujourd'hui*, the word *l'autre* would refer to a partner or a lover. But the literal English translation "The other came to my office today" simply makes no sense. This is a problem we find, for example, in the Persian translation of Roland Barthes' *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*.

When we introduce new terms, do we necessarily capture and appropriate the concepts lying behind them? If we look at the example of the translations of early Islamic period, we see that they didn't always insist on coining new words, and concentrated instead on introducing and appropriating the concepts behind them. For example, the Greek word *philosophos* was rendered by *falsafeh* (an Arabic adaptation of the original Greek) and the term was fleshed out by a number of related words such as the verb *falsafa* and the noun *filsouf* (philosopher), and again by the verb *tafalsof* (to philosophize). The Greek *logos* found its equivalent in *notgh*, which in turn became the basis for *mantegh*, as the equivalent to "logic". Another interesting example is the word *jadal* for the Aristotelian notion of *topic*. But the question is if today we can integrate the Persian equivalents of foreign terms into our language? Take the example of terms like "discourse," "subject," or "object" as they appear in the context of so-called post-modern philosophy (and not as they appear in classical usage). If we use a word like *gofteman* (which I do not like at all) for the term "discourse," what will we do for the derivative term "discursive"? It is also funny to note that the lack of equivalents for the post-modern usage of terms like "subject" and "object" has led many young translators to preserve the original foreign word for "object" (considering it to be untranslatable) even in phrases like: "There is an object on the table," where in fact the word "object" means simply a "thing," and has no philosophical connotations at all! So, I feel that the challenge has less to do with coining new terms than with rendering and communicating the concepts that lie behind them.

P: When one appropriates something foreign, one does more than to integrate it into one's own life: one also expands the space of the praxis of one's life. We can say the same thing about translation, that it introduces us into new spaces. In the case of Iran, we have seen that many things that cannot be said openly are said through translated texts, and especially by way of critical or political texts. At this level one can say that translation is a space of criticality and production, through someone else's tongue.

F.V.: Yes, there are ways in which translation is indeed a space of criticality. It is interesting that foreign languages always permit a kind of transgression. You can pronounce words in a foreign language that you would never permit yourself to say in your own language. Perhaps by the same logic, through translation—or through someone else's tongue, as you yourself have put it—you can talk about subjects which your own culture represses. I think we can say that translation is a space of liberation from historical constraints (and history is more than a question of current politics). I believe that in the case of societies like Iran, translation can be positive and productive, paradoxically, by virtue of its negative aspect. More than presenting itself as a space of dialogue, negotiation and understanding, it points out absences, gaps, gulfs and abysses. And this is what makes it—potentially—both subversive and productive.

P: What are you working on at the moment? Maybe you can tell us why you have chosen to translate a particular text, what interests you about it, and why you think it may useful to Iranian readers.

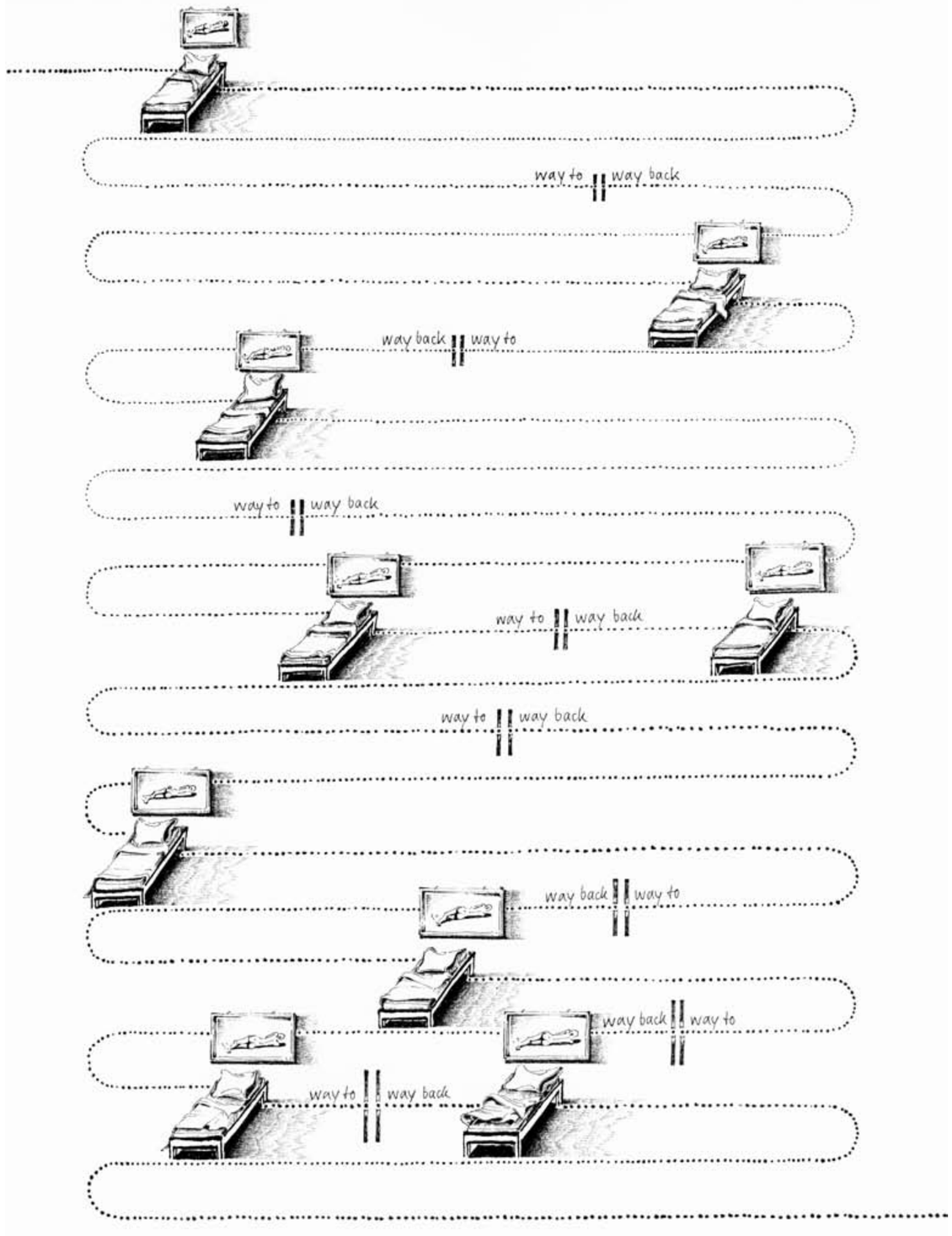
F. V.: I've just finished the translation of Jacques Derrida's long essay, "Cogito et histoire de la folie" which deals, as the title indicates, with the famous work by Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie* (*Madness and Civilization*). This article will appear in a book that also includes the translation of Foucault's reply, which was published some years later as an appendix to his book. As I had already translated *Histoire de la folie*, I found it interesting to see how another French philosopher criticizes it, and how two philosophers who're notorious for their critique of metaphysics and classical Western philosophy at the same time appreciate it, and recognize it as the source of their thought. So, what interests me here is not so much what they say, but how they say it. I think the critical slant of the work, along with its appreciative attitude to the past (which here is the philosophy of Descartes) might be instructive for Iranian readers, and especially for younger people.

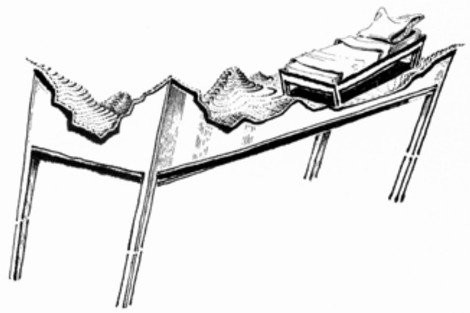
There is also the fact that the work of philosophers such as Derrida can be said somehow to hold a condensation of the *whole modern philosophical movement, and Iranian readers* may be able to use such work as a kind of mirror in which to see the gaps I have already mentioned. Of course, this aspect of such works also makes them extremely difficult to translate, and at times almost untranslatable. But that can be another important motivation for a translator: to experience the limits of his or her work. In any case, you see that my work lies precisely within the field that I criticize so vigorously!

This conversation took place via email in January 2008.

* Fatemeh Valiani is a translator based in Tehran. Her Persian translations of texts in the fields of philosophy and the social sciences include, among others:
La lumiere vient de l'Occident, Daryush Shayegan, 2001
Histoire de la folie, Michel Foucault, 2002, (awarded the "Best Translation in Philosophy" prize, 2003)
Hannah Arendt, David Watson, 2006
Soon to appear:
Cogito et Histoire de la folie, the collected essays of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault
Naissance de la clinique, Michel Foucault

Page 12/13, Sandra Boeschenstein
Left:
way to / way back
Right:
since when have there been ways back / since when there have been ways to all ways back before climax / all snow lines are there ways back in the life of a buck
2008, Indian Ink on Paper





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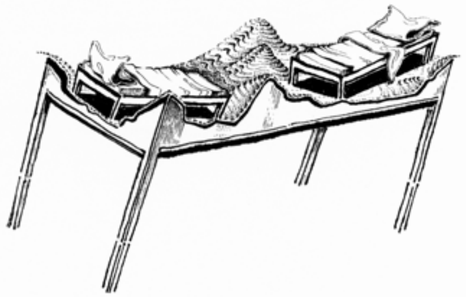

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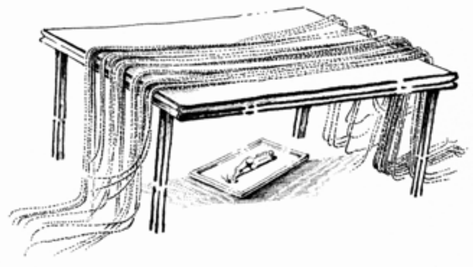

all ways back before climax

all snow lines

are there ways back in the life of a buck

WHITE HOUSE

Fabrizio Gallanti
Milan

Translated from the Italian

Visiting the White House means following a series of procedures that differ according to the visitor's nationality. The rules for entering the building are part of the various security measures which were put into place after September 11, 2001, and which have notably reorganized the urban space of Washington, D. C.
For U. S. citizens, tours must be booked up to six months in advance, and requests must be made by way of a Member of Congress (a Representative or Senator) who acts as intermediary, and it's generally a question of the Representative of the visitor's electoral district.
For those who are not U. S. citizens, requests must be made through their nation's embassy in Washington, and there's no particular requirement on just how far in advance.
Visits can also be obtained through a number of special diplomatic channels, connected to the numerous international organizations that have their headquarters in Washington. Our appointment is only three days away, and our group consists of three foreigners and one U. S. citizen.
We were scheduled to present ourselves at 7:45 in the morning at one of the entrances to the park that surrounds the White House. The instructions were generic, the south-west gate, which has no street number, on no street name.
Walking in the direction of the White House through one of the parking areas, which is circled by portable dividers in cast concrete, similar to traffic dividers, you know you've reached your destination because the area in front of the gate in the iron fence holds a sign that shows a picture of the building, and there is also a series of a mobile barriers that might be used for access control. A guard with a fake leather briefcase in his hand paces back and forth in front of the gate, seeking protection from the bitter cold. The sky is pale, the air holds occasional flakes of snow. The trunks of the slender trees which are planted here and there in the cement of the parking area are visited by a number of gray squirrels, scurrying up and down their trunks. The guard is wearing brown pants and a short jacket made of some synthetic material and covered with various emblems. On his head, a broad-brimmed hat. He might be a forest ranger, or at least he matches my idea of a forest ranger, as based on my childhood memories of Yogi the Bear cartoons.
Perhaps this image has been suggested by the constantly dancing squirrels. The guard is quite polite and informs us that indeed we have come to the right entrance. He asks the time for which our visit is scheduled. 7:45. We're five minutes early. The guard notes that one of the women in our group is carrying a small handbag on a shoulder strap. He tells us that there's no check room, and that it's not allowed carry such things into the building. He advises us to go to a bar or hotel somewhere, and to leave it there. He adds that it's best not to leave the bag in the parking area (hung perhaps from a tree? I think) since there are regular security patrols that check the area and they'll blow it up if they find it. (The very same message that's constantly announced in French airports; and on one occasion I actually watched a squad of experts as they blew up a suitcase full of underwear in an airport in the south of France.)
He also said not to worry about being late for our appointment. While listening to the times announced by other visitors, abundantly late or tremendously early, we had already grasped that that the hour established at the moment of fixing an appointment is only a general indication, since the logic of actual access, as the guard explained, is "first come, first served." The staff at the bar of the Hotel Marriott, not very far away, courteously accepted to check the purse, and seemed quite used to this procedure. But in any case we were asked to empty the bag and show its contents. The hotel, in fact, is not equipped with metal detectors or X-ray machines, such as you find at the entrances to nearly all of the city's public buildings, and especially at the doors of the many federal museums.
We're allowed, however, to carry our cell phones, which in any case receive no signal. There are various areas of town where special electronic devices create a disturbance in radio signals for security reasons. (In the vicinity, for example, of the fenced-off area of town which hosts the residence of the Vice President, and which belongs to the U. S. Navy.)
Once you're past the forest ranger (and he might, in fact, have been on loan from some federal agency responsible for parks, since the patchwork of jurisdictions for the various U. S. public agencies is often byzantine) you present your passport to a man who's dressed (not uniformed) in a long blue coat. He's also wearing a dark wool cap, pulled down low over his eyes, and there's a little goatee at his chin. The moustache and goatee remind me of General Custer, and I can't help thinking of the way you're constantly confronted in the United States with situations that pointedly refer to well-established collective images, formed in a distant past. Our names aren't found on the special list—General Custer holds it in his hands—of visitors who come through diplomatic channels. But in addition to our passports, fortunately enough, we have also brought along a copy of the fax received from the State Department, specifying the schedule of our visit.
General Custer says he'll go and check, and then sets off along the path that cuts across the park. We remain outside, in the area before the gate, along with the guard. After a while, another man crosses the park and takes up a position in front of the entrance. He's elegantly dressed in a light purple raincoat, and his pale blue tie stands out against his white shirt. An African American, gigantic, with a perfectly shaved head. A spiraled electric cord dangles from his right ear and disappears into one of the pockets of his coat. I imagine that he must belong to the CIA or the Secret Service, which is the agency responsible for the security of public officials, but I also note that he doesn't wear dark glasses. While we're waiting to learn if in fact we'll be admitted for the tour, various other people pass through the gate and into the park of the White House. Some are young girls, elegantly dressed, but in clothes which are far too light for the bitter cold: high-heeled shoes and dark skirts, no gloves, no hats. They walk quite briskly across the open space, perhaps to get to someplace warm as quickly as they can. They might be interns. Others are men in the armed services, they too young, in uniforms of various cuts and colors and often with decorations pinned to their chests. Again they arrive with no overcoats, with a slower stride, which may all be part of a special body language intended for their colleagues.
I remember how Ronald Reagan always appeared without an overcoat during his negotiations in the 1980s in Iceland with Mikhail Gorbaciov. His indifference to the cold made him look younger. So I imagine that the giant Secret Service agent in his spring raincoat and the military personnel who salute as they pass through the gate are involved in a voiceless dialog, couched in a silent language, a kind of masculine rite of the pack, in which the game is to give no indication of feeling the cold, and otherwise you lose. As I myself am freezing, despite down jacket and woolen cap, I remember that two days earlier, on the lawn in front of the Air and Space Museum, I had looked in amazement at a teen-age boy in a T-shirt, shorts, and sandals. I was told that people from certain parts of the country found Washington's freezing temperatures to be equivalent to what for me is spring.
I also remember that the TV shows that covered events from Ohio, Wisconsin and Utah showed the candidates in the presidential primaries as they walked through snowbound streets while wearing neither hats nor overcoats, whereas the people in their entourage were often wrapped in clothing befitting Siberia.
Just as the thoughts of the four of us are freezing too solid for verbal expression, with each of us all huddled up to minimize exposure to the wind, General Custer makes his return, and announces that we've been admitted. Once beyond the gate, we walk up a metal ramp that leads to a small prefabricated plastic building: it contains nothing more than the usual security devices, like the ones at the airports and the city's museums.
The personnel inside the place is fairly hasty and indifferent. In fact, there's really no need for them to tell us what to do. We remove our belts, pull out our keys, coins and cell phones and place them along with our jackets in a plastic tray which we then push along a bank of metal rollers towards the mouth of the X-ray machine, and we ourselves proceed through the metal detector door. When we leave the building, a series of signs indicates the itinerary, which we rapidly pursue, hoping to warm ourselves after our wait in the cold. We find ourselves in front of a glass door. In our haste we had not realized that that door was the entrance to the White House. We enter a wide corridor, the walls of which are covered with a light ochre stone. They're decked with scenes of daily life: the Bush family cooking a barbecue; the Clintons at dinner; visiting foreign dignitaries. There's a composition of all the presidential Christmas cards, individually framed. A few oil paintings of presidents and first ladies. Glass cases with commemorative objects. This miscellaneous collection constitutes the contents of what's known as the Visitor Center Building, which is a structure added on to the ground floor of the White House. A small number of visitors are straying about with folders in their hands. The folders were supplied by the forest ranger at the gate, and they explain the history and contents of each of the rooms, or at least of the rooms which are open to the public, eight in all, and all on the ground floor and the second floor. There are also quite a few people standing around at fixed positions, all of them again in raincoats and with a cable descending from one of their ears. None of the rooms on the ground floor (the library, the Vermeil Room, the China Room) can be entered; all you can do is to view their interiors from behind the velvet rope that hangs across their doorways.
On the second floor it's possible to visit a number of vaster, ceremonial halls (the East Room, used for grand receptions; the Green Room, which was Thomas Jefferson's dining room; the Blue Room, which repeats the plan of the much more famous Oval Office that lies directly above it, on the third floor; the Red Room, and the State Dining Room). The furnishings are sober, almost puritan, especially in comparison to what one finds in the residences of Europe's reigning families. In every room, a long velvet rope, suspended from wooden supports, directs the tourists' movements and keeps them from freely wandering about. Beyond this barrier, standing up, a secret agent observes the situation and listlessly responds to those who want more information about the style of a chandelier or the landscape depicted in a painting. After not too long, we're again in the entrance hall, which lies at the street level of Pennsylvania Avenue. (The White House is in fact constructed on a slope.) A side wall displays an enormous portrait of Bill Clinton: William Jefferson Clinton. As we leave, we pass beneath an Ionian colonnade that supports the tympanum of the main facade. Moving off toward the gate, we pass by a guardhouse in glass and wood, painted white. The door is half open, and a soldier wearing a Kevlar helmet and dressed in camouflage dress leans against the doorway. He's talking into a cell phone, his air relaxed. Next to the black amphibious vehicle on his right, I notice a red dot that trembles on the asphalt. It comes from the laser sight of the assault rifle that he carries on a strap on his shoulder. With the corner of my eye, I see that hanging from his belt he carries a pistol in a holster, as well as a dagger and a number of grenades. Hanging from his other shoulder is a black machine gun.

JOURNAL March 2008

When Communicating to Constituents

Be clear, direct and honest. If possible, be reassuring.
Remember that you may be dealing with people who are very anxious and afraid.