EPISTEMOLOGIES OF DECEPTION: TOPOLOGIES OF THE EXTRA/ORDINARY

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Three sites. Solidere, Beirut's reconstructed central district. Dahiyeh, the Lebanese capital southern neighbourhood, adjacent to the infamous Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps and the site of Hezbollah residential and political strength. And El-Ghajar, a Lebanese village at the borderland crossroads at which Lebanon, Syria, Palestine's West Bank, and Israel abut. David Goldberg describes these locations as wobbles in the structure of contemporary sociality and politics and uses them as a springboard for a reflection on what he calls 'the epistemologies of deception" – the moment when surface and depth collide, even collapse, in spatio-temporal warping and bending, in swirls of dust.

In "The Adjustment Team," his 1954 short story (that formed the basis of the movie The Adjustment Bureau with Matt Damon now playing on a plane near you), Philip K. Dick has Ed Fletcher remark that "I saw the fabric of reality split open. **[S2]** I saw—behind. Underneath. I saw what was really there. And I don't want to go back. I don't want to see dust people **[S3]** ever again."

This notion of a "fabric of reality" splitting open is suggestive in thinking about the everyday, even as it suggests older analytics of deep structure. What, and indeed what horrors, it asks, may be revealed behind, underneath the ordinary and everyday once split open, its fabric slicing apart to give a glimpse of
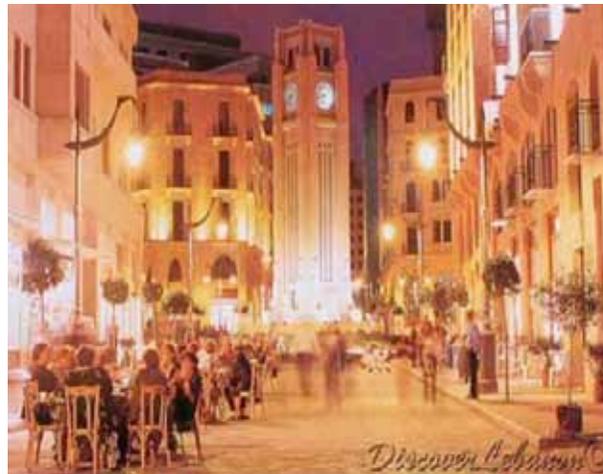
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the behind and the beneath? What can be seen and known about social make up both as constitution and as cover-up? These are the sorts of questions that have fueled social theory not only since Dick so unnervingly conjured "The Adjustment Team" but perhaps all the way into and out of the underworld of Plato's Cave.

I want to suggest another, perhaps complementary, way into thinking about these issues than that conjured by structural and symptomatic reading. The notion of "dust people" and the condition of dust as a socio-natural condition of life and its limitations conveys something both metaphorical and existential about social standing, possibilities, and challenges variously facing social subjects. It also suggests ways in which, in the face of conditions of extreme precariousness, and in the wake of what Achille Mbembe has characterized as the abolition of the limit and of taboo, social subjectivity faces dissolution, and is forced to negotiate what it means and takes to live in a critical condition today.

A workshop I recently convened in Beirut drew together colleagues from the University of California and American University, Beirut with local and regional intellectuals and artists. The engagement prompted reflections on the more general questions conjured by living in a critical condition, of social making and make-up, of the knotting of social ontology and its politics of the epistemological, of sovereignty and its limits and resistances, notably of the conditions of social deception and its revelations.

Solidere, Beirut's reconstructed central district, is located at the edge of the yacht harbor and the near end of Corniche, the famous seaside promenade. An urban clone of neoliberalizing central city developments globally, Solidere is designed to promote local elite and tourist circulation. **[S4]** Initiated by Prime Minister Rafik Hariri before his assassination, it was completed in his name and honor afterwards. Sollidere is anchored by the towering new Mohammad Al-Amin (more popularly known as the Hariri) Mosque **[S5]** that the Premier had personally financed from the fortune he had accrued

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mixing business with politics, and aside which he is now buried. Its stores and apartment buildings are built of matching stone, the streets paved in bricks of a common pastel color. Public property has been privatized with government blessing in the name of a joint stock holding company controlled by the Hariri family. The neighborhood boasts French patisseries and generic global retailers, sugary memorials and clichéd historical excavations, all closely monitored by private security guards and militarized patrols. Solidere is globally conventional urban space today, commonplace in its local watered down color and culture, trading local place for generically recognizable space.

A number of deeply local Lebanese sites stand in sharp contrast. Their edginess and their inexplicability, their illegibility or partial legibility, at least in terms of the prevailing conceptions of contemporary social and critical theory, place in sharp relief the pressing questions of contemporary social theory referenced above.

Dahieh is Beirut's southern neighborhood, adjacent to the infamous Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps, and the site of Hezbollah residential and political strength. It was heavily bombed by Israel in their most recent invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 2006. **[S6]** Two hundred and sixty residential apartment buildings were completely destroyed, and another 750 partially damaged. **[S7]** In the following four years the Hezbollah Reconstruction Agency completely rebuilt all the destroyed buildings and renewed the damaged ones. **[S8]** That's effectively clearing and completely replacing 5 buildings a month every month for four years, and renovating something like 15 buildings a month in addition.**[S9]** Quite a feat in itself.

Now none of this could have been achieved, certainly not within the telescoped time frame, under the regulatory regime of Lebanese state requirements. Hezbollah ran a competition among all Lebanese architectural and contracting firms no matter their religious or political affiliations, and ended up contracting with 33 of them to do the work. The work of reconstruction and its employment opportunities were thus widely distributed across Lebanese society. Members of the Hezbollah community who had been residentially displaced as a result of the war destruction could purchase into cooperative ownership of their newly constructed or renovated buildings at predefined prices or take a modest pay out and pursue residential opportunities elsewhere. While the buildings and their service infrastructure were built to Hezbollah defined construction codes, no permits were sought from municipal or state governments, no right to construct or state financing pursued. When Lebanese authorities tried to assert themselves politically or regulatorily, Hezbollah simply flexed its militarized and political clout, marched downtown en masse, and issued the same warning directed at Israel through and after the war: don't mess with us. At the same time, they have committed to preserving an old local church close to Hezbollah's nerve center in Dahiyeh. **[S10]**

In effect, Hezbollah was both refusing its appointed place and role, flouting state sovereignty, conveying to Lebanon and Israel that it could not be curtailed, and indicating perhaps in classic neolibaralizing terms that it was far more effective in servicing a significant portion of the population than the Lebanese state. It was at once fulfilling Solidere-like neoliberalizing state policy while providing for the neighborhood and community the sorts of

protections against crime and mistreatment so often reserved to the state.

A second site runs to Lebanon's most southern border area with Israel along the Hisbani River. The center of the river marks the official border line between the two perennially warring countries. Given the unpredictability of moving water, Israel has marked the southern river bank with barbed wire fence and military patrols, effectively inscribing the border on its side of the river. On the Lebanese side, marked by desert dust, a Lebanese businessman who had acquired his wealth in Sierra Leone and returned to his homeland as things fell apart in his adopted African country, was in the midst of building a vacation resort hotel designed somewhat incongruously as a Sahelesque fortress along the river's edge. **[S11]** Here too state permits were of no consequence in one of the most tightly controlled and intensely patrolled political geographies across the globe. Non-Lebanese require military permission just to visit the area within 20 km of the Israeli border. Three military forces oversee the borderlands, those of Lebanon, Israel, and Unifil. Nothing goes unmarked or unremarked, no movement unseen, no construction unknown. Indeed, Israel military patrols often stop on their side of the fence to cast stones across the river at the resort-in-the-making.

And yet, within this highly compacted militarized landscape, where every moment and movement is noticed and noted, a businessman builds a completely anomalous public accommodation and use structure. He builds out into the center of the river a cement and stone picnic structure, **[S12]** oblivious to whether it abuts or overflows the imagined border line running down the river's shifting middle. So, a Lebanese businessman, with no bureaucratic

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license, could call into question not just whether the picnic structure exceeds the border but the very grounds of jurisdictionality itself. In effect, a private recreational picnic spot challenges state sovereignty, authority, and command.

These slippages of sovereignty, its warping, marks the terrain on which dust people come into view. El-Ghajar is a Lebanese village at the borderland crossroads at which Lebanon, Syria, Palestine's West Bank, and Israel abut. **[S13]** Sitting at the foot of the Golan Heights in the Shems Farms valley, a couple of kilometers from the resort hotel, the village is completely surrounded by Unifil troops and barbed wire. **[S14]** Access is controlled by guard posts and armored vehicles. The United Nations solomonically drew the bordering blue line between Lebanon and Israel clear down the center of the village. **[S15]** Control of the northern half was left nominally to Lebanon; the southern half was ceded to Israel. No sooner than the cartographic lines were drawn than Israel invaded the Lebanese portion in order to secure to itself the access roads to three military observational towers peering out from the heights of Golan peaks. **[S16]** The observational towers not only look out across southern Lebanon; they effectively allow Israel to monitor any conversation it chooses to target in Syria's Damascus.

While they later returned Lebanon's village half to the nominal control of the Lebanese, Israel's Defence Forces have asserted on the ground control over the townspeople. **[S17]** The village is inhabited curiously by Syrian migrant workers who are transported each day to do whatever dirty work needs attending in Northern Israel. Yet El-Ghajar, it turns out, also provides the perfect principal trade route for hash transportation from Lebanon into Israel,

in full knowledge and acquiescence of all the parties involved. As a consequence, the village is relatively well off.

These sites confront us, then, with shifting notions of make believe, in the senses of both fantasy and compulsion. What can be comprehended about sociality in the everyday and ordinary activities and arrangements in which we find and lose ourselves, the creases and folds of which reveal and lose (or lose sight of) its inhabitants? This way of composing the analysis suggests a shift; it is complementary though not simply reducible to a notion of deep structure, and it certainly is not merely a matter of the various meanings ascribable to "surface reading."

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The three locations described here are dis-locations, and in a sense dis-locutions. They are neither anarchic nor sovereign (though not exactly non-sovereign either), not states of exception nor even declarations of emergency, perhaps law-like but not quite straightforwardly legal. They are places the coordinates of which are at once absolutely specifiable in terms of their cartographic identification and completely lacking location, or more precisely locatedness, in terms of their juris-dictionality and so too their comprehensibility. Nor are they nearly unique.

These are spaces Ackbar Abbas characterizes as *dis-appointments*. They fail to comply or to live up to pre-ordained expectations. But they are dis-appointments in the non-standard sense of not conforming

to their *appointed* places, to appointed modes of being and doing, to conventional sociality. It may be better perhaps to understand them as wobbles in the structure of contemporary sociality and politics. At once states of ordinariness with recognizable everyday markers—residential, recreational, resourceful, socially containable, exploitable--they nevertheless are out of the ordinary, refusing their *appointed* and so anticipated sites or roles, unrecognizable as and in their everydayness. They are dis-locations and in a sense dis-locutions, appearing where least anticipated and expressing themselves in unexpected and unpredictable ways. **[S18]** They accordingly lack location, or more precisely locatedness, thus casting adrift their signifying source and so also any recognizable touchstone as the stabilizing basis for their comprehensibility. In being the not-Solideres, they nevertheless place the likes of Solidere in sharp relief.

The *dis*-appointedness of sites such as these is the source and expression of their illegibility, spawning perhaps a crisis of social representation and control. The social conditions of everyday life in these sites, as perhaps more generally, can no longer be taken for granted, assumed to deliver or underwrite or guarantee—as the state once did—the baseline daily conditions of existence, more than mere survival or the staving off of bare life. What these dislocations and –locutions, among proliferating others, now point to is the generalizability of precarity, the proliferation of the conditions of precarious possibility, their conditions of possibility prompted by those erasures of social limits and taboos mentioned earlier and the shame they sometimes effectively prompt. A precarity as much epistemological as ontological, though the former not simply epiphenomenal of the latter.

Now, epistemology, conventionally understood, concerns how we know what we know. It follows that the issues most directly and deeply challenging conventional epistemological standing—that which it is constantly at lengths to hold at bay--are the twin dangers of deception and self-deception. Conceived in terms of reality torn asunder, split open, hidden and revealed, though, suggests that epistemology and deception may not be so opposed. Rather, there may indeed be an epistemology *of* deception. **[S19]**

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"Deception," under certain conditions, paradoxically, may amount to a mode of knowing. Knowing at an angle, obliquely, a kind of – if inadvertent

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– revelation. A seeing not just behind and beneath in those older structural models, but a being, an inhabitation that is fast becoming ontological, of the condition of the behind and the underneath, of subjectivities that emerge from the experience of dust conditions. Not so much a "know thyself" as a knowing in and through denials, misdirections, and threats, as Virilio suggests if in limited reference to the socialities of warring. A condition as much social as natural, indeed, fully socionatural—one of dissolution and its imminent threat or at least constant possibility. Here "symptomatic reading" is but a first step, springing the door open to such in-habitations, a passing through the (looking glass of) particles of dust actually to confront this counter-sociality more or less directly in the conditions of its possibilities and in the very being of its inhabited expression, in all its dusty swirling, rather than just, or only, symptomatically.

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Surface and depth collide, even collapse, in the spatio-temporal warping and bending, in the swirls of dust. The condition of precarity, of living in and traveling through the dust, ontologically speaking, *is* a condition of knowing epistemologically, a dis-position. As too must be the counter-condition, which metaphorically I will call (for want of a better name) a "green" life.

It is not that now for the first time we find the deceptive, the false, the aberrant, and the make-believe seemingly everywhere. **[S20]** Deception may indeed just be a banal fact of life, the outrage to which it gives rise often not much more than a psychic reflex. That phantom of a world, as Mbembe puts it, without strangers. The generalizability of that fantasy across time and geography notwithstanding, every time (or age), it seems, has its own *specific* forms and modes of deception. If so, it is suggestive to press the point: to comprehend an epoch, as Abbas says, attend to its deceptions, its fakings, its makings in and through its fakings, its make-believe. History, as he has put it, in—but also of--the faking. Neo-con-liberalism—the hyperextenuation of neoliberalism

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I have elsewhere called neo-neoliberalism—at its heart (if it has one) rewrites the historical script as make-believe, as fakery. The "make believe" serves both as compulsion, as forced imposition no matter the consequence, and as cosmetic covering over of the deformities and dust-worlds thus produced.

The epistemological endeavor here is not that of *exposing* and *correcting* deceptions, of rehabilitating the truth and our modes of knowing, of giving the surface depth. The concern is to locate the deceptions of the time, of our time and place, in all their specificity: what prompts them; what work they do socially, politically, economically, culturally; what interests they serve; what they hide from view; what they avoid and evade, void, and evince, what social ordering and modes of governance they enable.

All that is still at the level of the surface-depth model. The focus on deceptions and their conditions of possibility also helps to discern what modes of inhabitation they prompt, what ways of being in

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accommodation and refusal, acknowledgment and disavowal, being and counter-being (I am tempted to say non-being, alienage and not simply or only alienation). In short, what shape they give to subjectivity and modes of subjection, what violence they make possible or stave off. It should not surprise that games have taken on so central a place in economic and social life today (e.g. massive multi-player online games), nor that (online and televised) poker has become so popular.

In short, the challenge is to read deceptions as a way around the analytic and conceptual inadequations of the critical terms currently available to us: What are the significance and value(s) of deceptions, of deception as such? Through the warpings of deceptions, an other history, other ways of being, their readings and meanings come into view, become socially compelling, those that may other-wise remain indiscernible.

Information and its exercise, perhaps obviously, become key in this scheme (and scheming) of things. It has often been remarked that ours is the Age of Information (there are books by that title, of course: think Castells or Seely Brown and Duguid)).

Information flows globally, and instantaneously. They who control its flows and expressions, who package its dissemination, are said to hold power. But information has many sources, and multiple circuits, the control of its formations, formulations, or circulations never totalizable. Indeed, the singularity of the notion—*information*—is itself misleading. As the various Middle Eastern and Occupy movements reveal, it is more readily comprehensible as process than as substance; **[S 21]** as the more or less fleeting—im-mediate—effect of networking as instantaneously in dissolution as evolution; in being ceaselessly reconstituted rather than securing resolution, or in fact solution; as available to mashup, remixing, and redirection as to manipulation and misdirection.

So, it might be better to think of the time we inhabit less as an Age of Information (or for that matter of mis- or disinformation) as one of collapsing certainties **[S 22]**, and their more or less "unbearable" ordeals of negotiation. Collapsing certainties proliferate as deceptions proliferate and circulate, undercutting the contrast between truth and falsehood. The politics of the secret functions through the holding and measured revelation of information. This calculated revealing of secret information, of leaks--think here Wikileaks—is best conceived in terms of its secretion, the secreting of information running together the withholding and revealing of information instrumentally or inadvertently, by design (de-sign) or by default (de-fault). **[S23]**

Information, as we know so well, does not circulate everywhere at the same speed or with the same force or at the same time. The result is not just the relativities of various "space-time compressions," so commonly remarked upon today, but more their

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respective and related warpings and twistings, the bending and buckling of space and time. (De Chirico's paintings, and a good deal of Surrealist art more generally, perhaps best signals these issues.) What, it could be asked, is revealed in their bending and buckling, their warping and twisting, together, in concert if hardly in unison? What more generally can we learn from the bent, warped, creased spaces of Beirut and the borders of South Lebanon? What do they reveal about the very being of these alter-worlds and under-worlds (not just their structure), in their counter-everydayness, their un-ordinari-ness? And by relation and negation about the social being of the everyday and the ordinary? What do their ana-chronic--their anachronistic--moments reveal about social time more generally; their ana-morphic configurations about social space; the catachrestic and malapropian formulations about language, reference and "the real"? What do their counter-form(al) and pointedly non-universal sin-gularities say about social formulation, signification, and generalizability?

Is it possible, even imperative, today to think about these apparently aberrant but proliferating forms, formulations, slippages and deceptions not in terms of departures from or falling short of the norm—as exploitation, say, or corruption, alien-ation or profanation; as malformed or misshaped; as misstated or missing their mark or as out of time or of a time gone or before its time, or out of touch even with reality? But as evidence, insight into—more than symptoms but perhaps that too--how the norms and paradigms, the ordinary and everyday, are in the process of morphing from one set of sin-gularities and what they are morphing to, towards? Here the slippages may reveal between the gaps and creases something otherwise unseen about the directions or workings or effects--the *processes*--of social arrangement and their implications, their an-gles. Not just the extraordinary and unusual in the everyday but its other ordinariness, its unseen, un-registered, and taken-for-granted usualness shaping ordinary life.

Might it be that some sites—those less conven-tionally bounded in the ways the examples cited suggest--make it possible more readily to recognize that there is no (longer a) future, as once we knew or had come to expect it **[S 24]**? That just might be the impact—the effect and affect—of living in a critical condition. The proliferating—endless? eternal?—repetitions dis-appoint not only in dashing the pre-diction of the yet to come but also in the sense of spawning the refusals of the deadening drudgery, invigorating spaces however fleeting not reducible to the assimilative. **[S 25]**

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Waiting for the messianic moment so definitive of the modern now gives way to a mix of social ex-perimentation and micro-preparations in the face of ever-pending danger (extreme everything). Waiting is always a leaning away from a past towards a time perhaps intuited but not yet discerned, outlined but barely cognized in its embodiment. Living in a criti-cal condition is less this living between times and

spaces—a present past and a future--as living in overlapping times and spaces and yet unmoved by the lure of each so much as finding in their intersection the fuel for going on. Ruins are less sites for monumentalization than resources for repurposing, less prompts for nostalgia than for experimentation and improvisation.

Do the uncertainties sitting just aside or askance the confidence of certainty, that on which the latter rest, operate to obscure these shifts and epistemological porousness in (and not merely behind and beneath) the bends, warps, creases, and twists? Do the everyday and the ordinary, in their affectation of regularity and repetitiveness, solidity and predictable certitude, labor to hold at bay the rumblings of uncertainty and insecurity, the spiraling unpredictability and social splintering: the maintenance of upward mobility increasingly a pyramid or Ponzi scheme, insider trading or the auctioning of everything potentially on ebay; news of the world the now purchased and punctured worldmaking of hacking, deleting, deception, and denial?

Where in each of these instances confidence is revealed to be, as Ackbar Abbas has put it, a confidence trick. **[S 26]**

Are we to think of these cases and those like them, in short, then, in terms of an epistemology of deception? Modernity not as progress but as the social folding in on itself to stave off the polluting if ceaselessly fascinating and so enticing horrors of dust people. Literatures, travelogues, and commentaries referencing dust have long dotted modernity. Dust is the bearer of dirt and disease, contagion and the clogging of breath and life, obscuring perception and clarity, covering over the dangers and dis-ease of the unseen and the yet to come. Bourgeois interiors

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were to be daily dusted against disease. Travelers from the global north continue to comment on dust-covered dwellers of the street in Africa and India, threatening harm and health to the unsuspecting by-passer. They might look closer to home. **[S 27]** The threat of dust is succinctly captured by Benjamin in *The Arcades Project* (p. 104) when in quoting Louis Veuillot he draws the connection between dust and blood, dirt and the diseased body: "To give this dust a semblance of consistency, by soaking it in blood."

Dust represents the polluted air of the urban everyday, into which the dreams of modernity fade, dissolving with them the sharp delineation of modern subjectivity into the sea of indistinguishable similitude and differentiating heterogeneity.

The dissolution of modern subjectivity represented by the microbic molecules of dust is exacerbated in the late modern proliferation of geographies of walking: displaced subjects moved to traversing great distances to escape war, the effects of dramatically unsettling natural disaster and extreme economic difficulty, genocidal threats and catastrophic political expulsions. Dust people literalized and metaphorized in the falling swirl of bombed buildings and long dirt roads, climatic storms and fields of fading dreams, in the dirty glitter of death ridden mines and maquiladores sweat shops, between late modernity's projected promises (and premises) and its gashed and deeply dashed hopes.

This relation between deception and the dissolution of subjecthood **[S 28],** suggested by Dick's notion of "dust people" and produced in the social swirl of the hyper-neoliberal late modern conjures a rethinking of race as modes of deception, as the theological creation of peoplehood and its evolution **[S 29]**. Race can be conceived in these terms as the secreting of identity, of distinction and contrast, in this doubled and ambiguous sense, as seeping into and molding personal, social, and political formation while also conjuring (public) secrets, even banalities, of belonging, banishment, beleaguerement, and belligerence. Behind and beneath the dust, all is race: subjectivities dissolved in indistinguishability and indiscernibility, in paranoia and (imagined) threat, in the impossibility of identification and the collapsing of identity. The comforts of homogeneity

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collapse into the seething mass of heterogeneous swirl.

Can such an expanded notion of epistemology—of epistemologies as open source incessant re-formations and re-formulations--help find the productive terms for discerning and describing emergent cultural sites and political possibilities, which more often than not tend to look derivative, inferior, false, or duplicitous—until we have learned how to read them in all their duplicity **[S 30]**, in their warping, bending, creasing, twisting multiplicities? **[S 31]** Looking not for alter-times and other spaces but for the resources in the multiplicitous spacetimes to negotiate the complexities and challenges of our inhabitations for which there is no constitutive outside that is not fabricated (in both senses) and from which there is no even momentary escape. At the very least, such a sense of the epistemological would encourage us to attend to rather than to ignore those elements of the social that look aberrant because they are not yet adequately symbolizable.

What, finally, might all this suggest for critique? Might it suggest, under the critical conditions of our time, that critique cannot be a matter merely of separating true from false, of knowledge from deception, but a concern about finding a relation to what we don't know, of coming to terms *for* and *with* the social twists, warps, creases and bends of the social? Of working, in short, *through* deception to the intertwined precarity ontologically and epistemologically, economically and politically, culturally and symptomologically defining us today.

The Politics of Hope **[S 32]** is almost always--perhaps inevitably--frustrated, even dashed. The consternation following from the perceived cynicism or at least passivities thought inherent to dis-appointments I think deeply misplaced. The politics of dis-appointment slip into the breach following from the slippages and failings of a Politics of Hope. Dis-appointment concerns the refusals precisely of appointments positivistically (etymologically) understood. It is a refusal to be pinned to the frustrating constraints and delimiting obligations of assuredness and expectation.

So the politics of dis-appointment is not the product of a sense of uselessness. It perhaps is better characterized as a politics of irritation, **[S 33]** of getting under the skin of privilege and its complacencies. It is, in short, the ornery refusal of the constraints, injustices, exploitations, frustrations, and limitations produced and reproduced in and by the precarities of the ordinary and the everyday. It was spiraling irritation at grinding abuse and arrogance of unqualified claims to power in the face of persistent disenfranchisement and its attendant impoverishment that underscored the flowering of the Arab Spring, after all. And it was the layers of irritation compounded into mobilization that proliferated across the social landscapes we have come to identify as the Occupy sites. **[34]**

Hope is dashed not just in the face of uncertainty, even lingering uncertainty. It is dashed when the uncertainty is never addressed, becomes ceaseless, and as Zygmunt Bauman remarks in *In Search of Politics* (pp. 23-4) when all one can hope for is more uncertainty. What started out as an irritation becomes irksome, then anger in the face of the iterability. Iterable irritation eventually will likely become shared, and once the common grounds of the prompted conditions are identified cause for mobilization, for the rising up not simply of a social movement conventionally understood (with leaders

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and identified goals) but more distributively of the messy proliferating diffusion of refusal. The moment of enough!

That moment of proliferated refusal becomes expressed not so much in conventionally coherent politics but in the diffused and dis-appointing commitment not to do things conventionally, as expected. Irritation as a politics insists on getting under the skin of, in dis-appointing, power. **[S35]**On making power vulnerable by occupying its most protected spaces and refusing to toe the line. And once removed dispersing uncontrollably while continuing to network virtually. Irritation—being irritated and becoming irritating in turn—is the politics of calling make believe into question, of standing in the name of participatory politics and democratic possibility against sovereign power's political claim to inevitability and too-big-to-be-brought-down.

Between hope and hopelessness, hopeless optimism and optimistic hopelessness, then, lies irritation. The felt irritation of disappointment in one direction, and the displacing irritation of *dis*-appointment, in the other. In the compulsions of that divide lie the politics (now pluralized) of irritation, of irritating. The Wall Street Occupiers understand this as well as the square and street resisters throughout the Arab world. **[S 36]**

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