

A Walk with S.

by Adam Kleinman

They tried to bury us: they didn't know we were seeds.
Mexican proverb

'I'm sorry, you can't go in there!'

'Why not?'

'Well, your bathroom has been arrested.'

'That's just great! So how am I supposed to get ready for work today?!'

Although seemingly surreal, I did have this very conversation—thing is, I had it with myself. Please let me explain: it was a dream. No one objectively understands such processes; however, as stories, dreams propose delicious narratives that reward those who chose to dissect them. In any case, it would only be fitting to provide one of my own dreams here, since Rossella Biscotti asked several participants to do the same, and even contributed a few of her own, within the frameworks that make up *For the Mnemonist, S.*

Upon entering the gallery, a visitor is met first by a work entitled *I dreamt that you changed into a cat... gatto... ha ha ha* (2013). Physically, the piece, an installation first created for the 55th Venice Biennale, is comprised of a few framed portraits drawn in pencil, a series of sculptures that each resemble the remains of architectural ruins, and an audio recording featuring various women giving voice to recent dreams—the title is borrowed from one such telling. Like the filmic use of voice over, the women are here disembodied, much as any semblance of a final built structure is equally left incomplete and abstracted. Yet, the visitor shouldn't necessarily think of these women or their confines as absent. But then, where to situate them?

On a primary level, the building remnants may prove a forum; however, they too are only half there. To fill in some of these gaps it might help to explain the audio: they're excerpted recordings from a series of dream workshops that Biscotti led with a group of women incarcerated in Venice's Carcere femminile della Giudecca. Furthermore, the portraits were drawn by one of the group, as prison regulations do not allow photographs. Fittingly, something else is left just 'off screen'. To conduct the workshops, the artist and her team asked the prison administration that the room they were to use be designated as an enclave free of guards. In so doing, the site of the workshop became a sort of cloister at once within, and beyond, the strict prison regulations that dominate the participants' day-to-day. Although the Carcere femminile della Giudecca was not designed as a panopticon, it is not without use to invoke that design's philosophical implications.

Although few prisons were ever actually built to Bentham's specifications, the idea that power can be exercised by organizing people through a controlled space and, moreover, that such set-ups could influence subjectivity, would instead advance other political agendas—not least of all for Michel Foucault, a French philosopher and prison rights activist who suggested that the panopticon was the paradigmatic emblem to demonstrate how all social interactions were mediated by the modern surveillance state and its correctional systems. Just like various other leitmotifs, the image of the panopticon, and its related affects, will appear and disappear through this text. As a counterpoint for its totalizing gaze, I should mention that the carving out of a temporary safe zone in which ideas could be shared freely and without oversight was no small aim when it came to the production of *I dreamt*. In any case, the discussions there were never meant to be insular; everyone involved knew in advance that the workshops would provide material for an exhibition that would exit both their cloister and the prison. As such,

a question emerged: how to communicate, not only with a world 'outside', but between various worlds?

If you look closely at the aforementioned architectural fragments—which could be said to define small, cell-like spaces—you might think that they were each made of compressed earth. On further inspection, other detritus can be teased out. This aggregate soil follows from an actual compost heap in the prison's on-site organic farm. Like the workshop room, the artist set aside several small bins—one for each of the shared cells throughout the prison and one for the prison kitchen—to set up a parallel compost system providing the material for each of these sculptural pieces. As such, a little game developed as different persons kept track of what they deposited into the compost; this way, the receptacle became a kind of scrapbook/bulletin board around which people would discuss what they threw in and why. As a kind of medium, this process began to take on various desires: on the one hand it functioned much like a message bottle cast out to sea; on the other, it was a grand allegory for the whole project, as different fragments, dreams, memories, past meals, etc., could be said to have been decomposed and reconfigured into something more rich. Metaphors aside, these actions also shifted attention from the substances themselves. As a self-sustained network, each little 'message' prompted new lines of communication between the co-contributors—guards were not invited to participate of course. Yet, as the ultimate receiver of these broadcasts, the relation between the audience of *I dreamt*, the women, and their detention should be considered. One trajectory to pursue in this context could be how the influence of any daily bureaucracy is registered in our own dreams.

Instead of only digesting recent events, dreams often dip into the well of the past, as for example when an old but long lost friend appears. As expected, several of the dreams recounted in the audio excerpts echo prison life;¹ however,

on occasion these experiences are seemingly heard to blend with childhood memories and other extra-prison details. Whether or not their frequency might be accelerated, since as prisoners their contact with the world-at-large and its expanded stimuli is diminished, these mash-ups, in which the personal is colored by the institutional, preface another means by which social norms come to be internalized ‘from the outside’. But then again, is there really such a thing as the outside?

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The great open expanse of the main exhibition hall is quite large and is likewise bathed in a diffuse light. Aided by a sparse footprint, the objects on display appear as if in a field with loose boundaries; however, the art doesn’t bleed together so much as it presents a kind of dotted landscape. As such, *I dreamt* recedes as the visitor moves toward *The Trial* (2010–14), itself a kind of relic of an obscured yet regimented past—a partition with a door presents itself next to *The Trial*, but we have to cross the hall first. And just as *I dreamt* presents a set of unoccupied ‘rooms’, *The Trial* is set with empty chairs, benches, and desks—the depopulated scene, coupled by the airy and minimal décor of the hall, evoke a kind of ethereal, if not oneiric, mansion. Had you come the day before, you might have seen a commotion.

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The titular subject of *The Trial* is the so-called 7 April Trial, a set of Italian court proceedings that lasted between 1982 and 1984 and grouped disparate actors into the docks, many of whom were jailed. Their alleged crime: armed struggle against the state. In the case of one of the defendants, Foucault would comment ‘isn’t he in prison simply for being an intellectual?’² Such a reflection cuts to the heart of the hearings: the inquiries sought to condemn ideas as

well as persons. And while thinkers such as Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, Nanni Balestrini, and others were pinned as the alleged masterminds of various terrorist acts, their brand of social critique was to be tested as well.

Instead of demanding fewer hours, safer working conditions, or higher wages, their ideology sought to question the very idea of how industrialized labor is itself organized and what kinds of social ties these formations foster. While participation within the modern factory system could be viewed simply as a means to an end, factory executives seldom divide the workers’ share of these ‘ends’ symmetrically. Linked to the left-wing Workers’ Party Movement (Potere Operaio) and its successor, Autonomia Operaia, Negri et al. posed a simple retort: what would it mean to have a right *not* to work, or more precisely, not to work as such?

Towards such a concern, these thinkers suggested to ditch the structural inequity of the modern management complex in favor of a system wherein self-regulating actors would collaboratively replace top-down decision-making; put differently, the idea was to take control of the day-to-day functions that regiment daily life. Tellingly, these agents were not organized as a political party—because that would require a centralized apparatus that was incongruous with these principles. Instead, they were loosely held together as a kind of association of autonomous, yet allied actors. However, this experimental form of coordination would soon come into conflict with a reactionary form of experimental prosecution.

In 1978, Aldo Moro, former Italian Prime Minister and prominent center-left member of the Christian Democracy (DC) was kidnapped and assassinated. Far-left communist militants known as the Red Brigades claimed responsibility. The event—coupled to a slew of terrorist activities that would later define the next decade as the ‘Years of Lead’ (1969–79)—prompted the then sitting government to enact a series of

emergency measures aimed at cracking down on terrorists and their networks. These expanded powers allowed Negri, and thousands of others, to be ‘held for an extended period without being charged or coming to trial’.³ The pretext: that they were the active leaders of several clandestine cells, and were likewise directly implicated in Moro’s assassination. Although these allegations were unsustainable, Negri and others were ultimately tried ‘primarily on the basis of his writings, holding him “morally” and “objectively” responsible for actions on that basis’.⁴ Possibly due to the fact that words were on trial, the presiding Judge, Severino Santiapichi, and the prosecuting attorney, Antonio Marini, engaged the defendants in an almost debate-like fashion—after one particular back-and-forth on the subject of political theory, the Judge dismissed Negri’s claims by saying ‘we speak two different languages’.⁵ This breakdown of a common ground—or the refusal of one—can be seen as a mirror to the events leading up to the trial.

When Moro was assassinated, he was on the verge of orchestrating a political compromise between his party and the opposing PCI. As a pro-market party, the DC had to keep any Italian communist activities in check not only to safe-keep their own power, but to also remain diplomatically and economically linked to the United States and the East/West politics of the then ongoing Cold War—not to mention the ideological pickle that would result if a Christian Party sided with atheists. Moro’s deal aimed to expand the DC with a vast socialist base, but the whole scheme came to a screeching halt not only because Moro was killed, but also because his killers justified their deeds by labeling the DC/PCI alliance as counterrevolutionary. At the time of the 7 April Trial, a rumor circulated that the PCI had sought to purge any assumed allegiance to far-left radicals⁶ as a form of realpolitik housekeeping. Adding to such speculation was the fact that, during the 7 April Trial, a key witness for the prosecution was Severino Galante, a PCI member. No matter what the

actual agendas—secret or otherwise—were, the court proceedings would script the official story of these forces as well. The historic dimensions were not lost on another political entity, Italy’s Radical Party (PR), which broadcast the hearings to the public on their own free radio channel, Radio Radicale. These documents, the audio clips, and the court transcripts provide the ‘software’ for *The Trial*. But were you there when this program was run? And moreover, what was the machinery that made it all happen?

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On 7 June 2014, Rossella Biscotti assembled a team of local agents—all of whom were engaged in activism, organizing, and/or philosophy—to provide live simultaneous translations of selected excerpts, which she edited, from these records. Like a court stenographer, a typist transcribed their lines as each attempted to interpret ideas from one language to another. If you missed the staging itself, you might have noticed that the typewriter and the resultant print outs remained throughout the run of the exhibition. Likewise, the staging for the event, which could be said to resemble a kind of tribunal with fixed benches ringing a symbolic witness stand, was also left to hold court—ironically, these very benches were lifted by Biscotti from the Aula Bunker, the courtroom in which the 7 April Trial was conducted. No matter what totemic power such artifacts might have, you might be wondering if such contrivances are just mere simulation. For my part, I wouldn’t be so quick to discount rituals.

Long before Bentham invented the image of the panopticon, French mathematician, physicist, and philosopher Blaise Pascal also wondered how to construct an inner subjectivity from external pressures. At the time, Pascal was studying the problem of whether or not he should believe in God based on the probability of outcomes if he did or did not. Although his analysis logically proved that he should, Pascal worried

that rational certainty was not the same as holding true conviction. So as to stem reason and emotion, Pascal suggests that if ‘they behaved just as if they did believe, taking holy water, having masses said, and so on’, that would ‘quite naturally’ make them ‘believe’.⁷ By placing attention on performance and not intention, Pascal was one of the first to suggest that the affect of playing a role, or of following a ritual, could elicit deep personal understanding.

Regardless of whether or not each of the actors who participated in Biscotti’s event underwent an epiphany, I have to wonder if exhibition visitors realize how the spatial progress of the show configures the conceptual game in which they too are inscribed, and possibly implicated. To this end, did guests notice that the benches of *The Trial* were bolted to the floor, thus obliging those who chose to sit on them to view the work from a proscribed perspective? Likewise, remember that little partition wall I mentioned before? If you walked beyond it, you might have seen a short black-and-white film Biscotti shot in the Aula Bunker to record how the architecture of that site divided litigants from defendants and audience from all by design. Next to it, the complete transcripts from the past performances of *The Trial* were tacked to the back of that same wall; however, fragments from *I dreamt*—an architectural ruin, and a photograph of one of the inmates on her first official day of leave—were likewise thrown in and occupied that space. While it is tempting to directly link these two works, one on the empowerment of detainees, and the other about how a different set of people came to be detained, in the context of this exhibition, let’s also ask: how does procession trap a certain kind of reception and, in so doing, bracket memory as well? After all, since this exhibition is a retrospective, isn’t it by definition asking the viewer to be contemplative of past situations? With a keen eye towards mnemonics, the exhibition gives way to another hall entirely. Herein the next artwork toys with the very idea of seeing history through vicarious cyphers.

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The projection begins as we enter a small and darkened screening room. The film starts by showing a vibrant yellow color field; as the reel continues, the image never wavers from this yellow wash. Static can be heard, as if from a radio, and then a voice from an actual broadcast states: ‘now that Saddam has forced the world into war’. This background drifts in and out—it is diegetic sound found in the source material Biscotti used to form the soundtrack of the piece you are now watching, *Yellow Movie* (2010). A seemingly drunken man begins to speak in Dutch; indeed, it sounds as if two different, and quite sober people, a doctor and a nurse, take turns interviewing him. All their words are translated into English through white subtitles against the constant yellow screen. Alienated from a normative film mimetic, this diminished bandwidth forces the viewer not only to focus on the flow of the conversation, but also to imagine how the scene is unfolding and to project the stories being told by the interviewee.

He is Mr. Dik de Boef, a patient under the care of Professor Bastiaans, a Dutch neurologist and psychiatrist, who states in one scene that we are listening to ‘the 7th Pentothal Session of Dik de Boef’. Pentothal is a barbiturate traditionally used as an anaesthetic, but Pentothal also has an off-label use: to relax persons undergoing interrogation so as to diminish their cognitive ability. Theoretically, this handicap prevents those under the influence to construct complex stories, such as lies. In this use, the drug is often erroneously called ‘Truth Serum’; however, the forensic validity of such means is held in doubt by almost all jurisdictions today. Yet, we are not in a court, we are revisiting the discredited clinical studies of Prof. Bastiaans, the inventor of the ‘methode-Bastiaans’, an experimental form of psychotherapy that uses drugs such as Pentothal, LSD, and Psilocybin to access and cure the repressed traumas of those suffering from PTSD.

Mr. Dik de Boef, the son of a Dutch World War II resistance fighter, was once buried alive under rubble caused by Nazi bombing; we can assume from the film that he hasn't quite recovered. As with De Boef and his father, the war and the German occupation of the Netherlands left a long mark on Bastiaans, who went on to specialize in treating those scarred by these same events. No matter what the good doctor's goals might have been, his methods color *Yellow Movie*.

Bastiaans can be heard provoking De Boef throughout the film. In one instance, the intoxicated patient is asked to discuss his childhood trauma and 'dared' to face any anger, latent or otherwise, that it may evoke. De Boef, who is slipping in and out of consciousness, is at first hesitant, yet Bastiaans leads, and sometimes yells, at his patient. Then Bastiaans suggests the ultimate: that De Boef wants to retaliate, that he wants to kill as well. Although De Boef first says that this is 'nonsense', he acquiesces as the doctor convinces him otherwise—overall, it seems as if the doctor is putting words into the penitent's mouth so as to advance his grand narrative. This back and forth builds to a crescendo: the doctor ironically equates this cycle of suffering and lashing out with a parallel tale of how abused Hitler Youth soldiers came to terrorize De Boef in the first place. Not surprisingly, De Boef implies that he doesn't want to be 'like that', while Bastiaans reinforces the coerced revelation by saying how 'important' it is to understand these feelings within the 'safe environment' the two share. Tellingly, the doctor here gives up the plot: the confession might be as contrived as the place of their telling.

In addition to the conversations with Bastiaans, the film also documents the interactions between the nurse and De Boef. Instead of feeding the patient lines—let alone badgering him—the nurse gently asks De Boef what is going on in his mind; she asks if she is nagging him. Generally, De Boef's answers tend to float around images of the dead, such as bodies and horses in a field, but often eschew narrative con-

clusions in favor of the kind of loose associative thoughts that might be expected from an inebriate. Meanwhile, the background sounds have shifted, from radio news reports of war to soothing classical music—like the drugs, Bastiaans was using these external sounds so as to suggest a pre-planned mind state. Considering the two differing dialogues as pendants, the audience might question which ideas actually come from De Boef's psyche and which are implanted. Although we've left the room of *The Trial* behind, should the taint of possible coercion be read into those hearings as well? And what to make of the transcripts in translation; surely some words only approximate 'the truth'. Conversely, if Bastiaans' method ostensibly forces a new composite reality, how might his own agenda and theories have entered that script? Then again, where does the truth lie with our own memories, dreams, and recollections; in fact, where is the psyche in the first place? Is consciousness something that resides somewhere between our ears and within that grey matter we call a brain, or does it extend far beyond? The answers to these questions cannot be found here, yet the next gallery might provide some clues.

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The relatively barren screening room leads to a gallery filled with objects. There, stainless-steel tables lined in neat rows present an array of archival silver-gelatin prints. The coolness of the almost gurney-like display lends a clinical feel that matches not only the tone, but also the subject of the photographs: slices upon slices, 168 of them in fact, of a human brain. Like several of the works in the exhibition, the core material which gives body to this installation, aptly titled *168 Sections of a Human Brain* (2010–14), was appropriated from the work of Dr. G. Jelgersma, a Psychiatrist and Neurologist at the University of Leiden who produced one of the first photographic atlases of the physical structure of a single human brain. Whether anatomical imagery attracts you or not, each and every visitor to the room also falls for another lure.

Upon entering, a surprise is hung on the wall to your back. There, the artist has placed a copy of *The Mind of a Mnemonist*, a clinical study in the form of a book by neurophysiologist Alexander Luria. Like Jelgersma, Luria was also interested in mapping the human brain, but their approaches were radically different. For one, Luria worked with a living subject, Solomon Shereshevsky, a journalist whom he simply calls ‘S’. And since we’ve now introduced the question of title—yes, this is where the exhibition gets its name...

I haven’t told you, but S. is a synaesthete, that is, his senses bleed into each other; in particular, sounds register as lights, lines and/or colors. These atypical perceptions also took on characteristics, so that, for example, to S., the number ‘5 is absolutely complete and takes the form of a cone or a tower—something substantial. (...) 8 somehow has a naive quality, it’s milky blue like lime’. Interestingly, this visualization skill allowed S. to imprint vast sets of information. S. was first brought to Luria’s attention when an editor was shocked that S. never took notes; however, he could recall the facts of a meeting at will. This was not without setbacks though; S.’s eidetic mind would sometimes have trouble differentiating between objective reality and his personal image making. Likewise, the panoply of additional sensory-associations made it difficult for S. to comprehend abstract linguistic ideas such as metaphor and other poetic devices. Refracting Jelgersma’s desire to scientifically graph the site in which such thoughts may occur, Luria instead interviewed S. over a period of 30 years, so as to observe and record these immaterial connections. Even though S.’s ideations were indexical, the phenomena were idiosyncratic, and often interpersonal. In one account, S. describes a woman he knew as having a ‘crumbly, yellow voice’, and claimed that this property modified the meaning of what she said. Possibly borrowing from this very example, the exhibition also takes an associative dramaturgical and editorial course that pits artworks against artworks, but also the exhibition didactics against the show.

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According to the guide, a vibrant inkjet print should have been seen by now. The missing image: an elated young woman before a tropical island seascape. It is in soft-focus. The print, which the guide states is appropriated from archival marketing materials for Pentothal, is from a series the artist dubs *Pharmaceutical Dreams* (2010). Although the image is blurry, the referent ‘Pentothal’ clearly signals an allusion to the subject matter of the preceding gallery: *Yellow Movie*. Before discussing this ritornello-like gesture, a counter-subject can also be sketched if the 4-moves—*Yellow Movie*, *168 Sections of a Human Brain*, *The Mind of a Mnemonist* and *Pharmaceutical Dreams*, respectively—are set in fugue.

While Jelgersma’s scalpels have been replaced by more complex diagnostic tools such as MRIs, fMRIs, CAT and PET scans, etc., the positivistic drive to find just what makes the mind tick is still heavily invested in cutting into our brains. Instead of looking just for deformities, chemical brain functions—now catalogued as neurotransmitters—are imaged, tagged, and modified through the use of drugs. However effective these means may be, this mechanistic approach reduces consciousness to a system that is understood as a finite network of chemical reactions that can be catalogued and controlled manually. The trick, an aesthetic called ‘normalcy’, must first be defined so that its opposite, abnormality, can be detected and corrected. Such constructions would not be lost on Foucault, who before considering the prison first conducted a study on how the mental health system was itself set up to treat the mad so that they may conform to social convention, or conversely confine those people who could not be ‘cured’. Advancing beyond infrastructural and segregation strategies, the bio-politics of the ‘big pharma’ apparatus—Prozac, Ritalin, etc.—can likewise be read as a means to condition subjectivity. However, instead of ‘internalizing’ mores psychically, behavior is now also controlled

synthetically. In such a context, S.'s cross talk between the senses would be artificially prevented through medication. Whether or not you personally find S.'s creations—according to which, if the number 7 is 'a man with a moustache' and the number 8 is 'a very stout woman—a sack within a sack', then the number 87 'is a fat woman and a man twirling his moustache'—valuable, just consider how fellow synaesthete Vladimir Nabokov once used not dissimilar means to transform the world of writing. What would today's literature be like if he, too, had been overmedicated? In this light, could the withholding of *Pharmaceutical Dreams* from the body of the exhibition be some hidden critique of psychopharmacology? Or, conversely, if the memory of a work 'in' the exhibition is actually implanted, what might the artist be saying about experiencing the exhibition 'in real time'? In any case, my own mind now drifts back to *I dreamt*. Why, you ask? Because after interviewing the artist, I learned that the detainees had trouble remembering their own dreams since the prison doctors had taken to giving all the inmates daily sedatives so that they would 'behave' while imprisoned. I also learned that the participants began to question more than just their dreams once they realized how their dreams were being administrated.

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It's now time to leave the floor. As I mount some stairs I find myself standing above 168 photographic cross-sections of a single human brain. Looking back and down at them, I notice how these images begin to blur and start to resemble aerial, if not recon, photos of landscapes. Fittingly, I see a plant as I turn forward and look into the room above.

Welcome to *The Prison of Santo Stefano* (2011–13), the final work to be found in the exhibition. Materially, an agave cactus appears to be potted into a tiled floor. Next to it, a set of irregularly cut lead sheets, also imprinted with tile-like lines,

lay on the ground. But the patterns do not match. Just beyond a video is playing on a monitor. It depicts an isolated and desolate volcanic island topped by an imposing and austere complex. A group of shirtless men appear and carry something very heavy up the island slope. They sweat; the labor looks as hard as the sun beating down on them must be hot. The camera follows and an interior court with a central tower is revealed. Lining the tower, we find what must be the ruins of an ancient cell. It is swept. Their load is unpacked, and its content, a sheet of lead, is seen being banged and fitted to trace the cell. Is this a prison? Are these men sentenced to hard labor? And what were they making? The very sheets you see in the gallery? A second film begins on an adjacent monitor. On the same island, some men and women move to an abandoned cemetery with a makeshift cross. They fix name markers and plant cacti and flowers on the graves.

All of these actions were filmed on site in the eponymous Santo Stefano prison. It is an old prison, a proto-panopticon by design, built for the Bourbon Monarchy as a place to banish prisoners. It first opened in 1797, and was in use until 1965. In its final form, it had 99 cells. The anarchist Gaetano Bresci was imprisoned there for a year after assassinating King Umberto I of Italy in 1900. By a trick of fate, Italy had banned capital punishment in 1899, and so Bresci was the first not executed regicide, but was instead sentenced to serve a life term at Santo Stefano, one of the first detainment facilities built for that purpose. Mysteriously, Bresci died soon after his incarceration; some say it was suicide, some say the guards killed him under orders. What is known is that he was buried on site, though the grave remained unmarked for decades.

There is also a small bench in the room. Placed on top of it is a small booklet of e-mail exchanges between Rossella Biscotti and Nicola Valentino, a member of the Red Brigades, who was likewise sentenced to life for militancy. The text recounts a dream, in which Valentino felt as if he was imprisoned again.

In real life, Valentino was first placed in solitary confinement. After speaking with him, I learned that it was a form of torture. At the time, his only contact with others was when food was placed in his cell, or when one of the other prisoners was sent to clean the corridors leading to it. Unbeknownst to the guards, the custodian-prisoner would smuggle messages between other prisoners in isolation. As an act of endurance, defiance, and exigency, they exchanged the only material they had: their dreams. Outside prison, various other agents fought not to end solitary confinement alone, but also life imprisonment. Over time, Valentino was moved from facility to facility until his sentence was commuted and he was paroled. Now a publisher, he is still also an activist. Combining the two, he wrote a book on the history of life imprisonment and its psychological and social consequence; Santo Stefano prison is mentioned. For this reason, Biscotti asked if he would join her to visit the island, and to research an old article that mapped the unmarked graves in the cemetery there. Although a visitor may not know this, the second video documents the marking of these graves, as an act of respect for the interred, but also marks the birth of the *Liberi dall'ergastolo*, a political movement to end life imprisonment.

As the camera pans out, many agaves can be seen. Mnemonically we can tie the plant in the gallery to the one on the island. Likewise, we can infer from the faces in the second film that the laborers in the first were the artist and her assistants. In deference, the lead works were empathetically wrought by reenacting the prisoners' physical toil. Before being isolated, though, the condemned were taken by boat to a bucolic and wild Mediterranean island. As they climbed the steps to the prison, a bevy of wild cacti, flowers, fruits, and other flora greeted them. It was the last bit of nature, and of 'life outside', that many would see. And yet, the birds could be heard from inside the cells, and so too the crash of the surf. I know this, because I have been to that island, and those very sounds lend texture to my own memories.

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For those of us who are not like S., repetition can be a way to help set something to memory. For example, if you have to remember the spelling of a word, try writing it down not once but twice. Likewise, many songs and poems feature refrains in which key lines are repeated at intervals so as to help people keep the words or the tune. As you may recall, S. has trouble thinking abstractly, and poems really were not his strong suit. Luria may have played S. a pop chorus, but a more complex refrain, like the kind where the poet slightly changes the line with each repetition to subtly reassign the meaning and context of an idea really would have made his head spin. To this end, I wonder, would S. have noticed the slippages between the placements of works in the exhibition, let alone the slippages between the social, personal, and ideological narratives channeled through each? Even if he remembered these little returns, would he have assigned dialectical meaning to these juxtapositions? Would he realize that after seeing *The Prison of Santo Stefano*, he would have to turn around, go down the stairs, and then follow the exhibition in reverse so as to get to the one exit in the front? Surely this distancing, this double view, might tease him to consider just how the museology was constructed, and why. And if he did recognize such as a grammar, would he then look at historical referents as another form of representation, replete with their own rhetorical appeals to a collective memory? Or, then again, maybe he might just tell me he saw something red that was shaped like an arrow flying through time.

Notes

1. The shapes of the cell-like sculptural fragments are composite forms culled from how the prisoners imagined their own cells in their dreams. To render these designs, Biscotti and the other participants kept dream journals in which each sketched various dream environments.

2. Michel Foucault, 'The Masked Philosopher', in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984*, ed. Lawrence Kritzman, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 325.
3. As professors, Negri, et al. were seen as corrupting the youth. See: Michael Hardt, 'On Toni Negri and His Intention to Return to Prison in Italy': <https://antonionegriinenglish.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/on-toni-negri-and-his-intention-to-return-to-prison-in-italy.pdf>.
4. Ibid.
5. Rossella Biscotti, *The Trial*, transcript of the DOCUMENTA(13) performance (n.p., 2012), p. 28.
6. Central to the trial was the murder of police sergeant Andrea Lombardini during a botched bank robbery at Argelato in 1974. It's been suggested that the PCI tipped off the police precisely so as to cause a confrontation. Fausto Tarsitano, a well-known lawyer with ties to the PCI, was appointed to represent Lombardini's widow at the trial.
7. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 125.