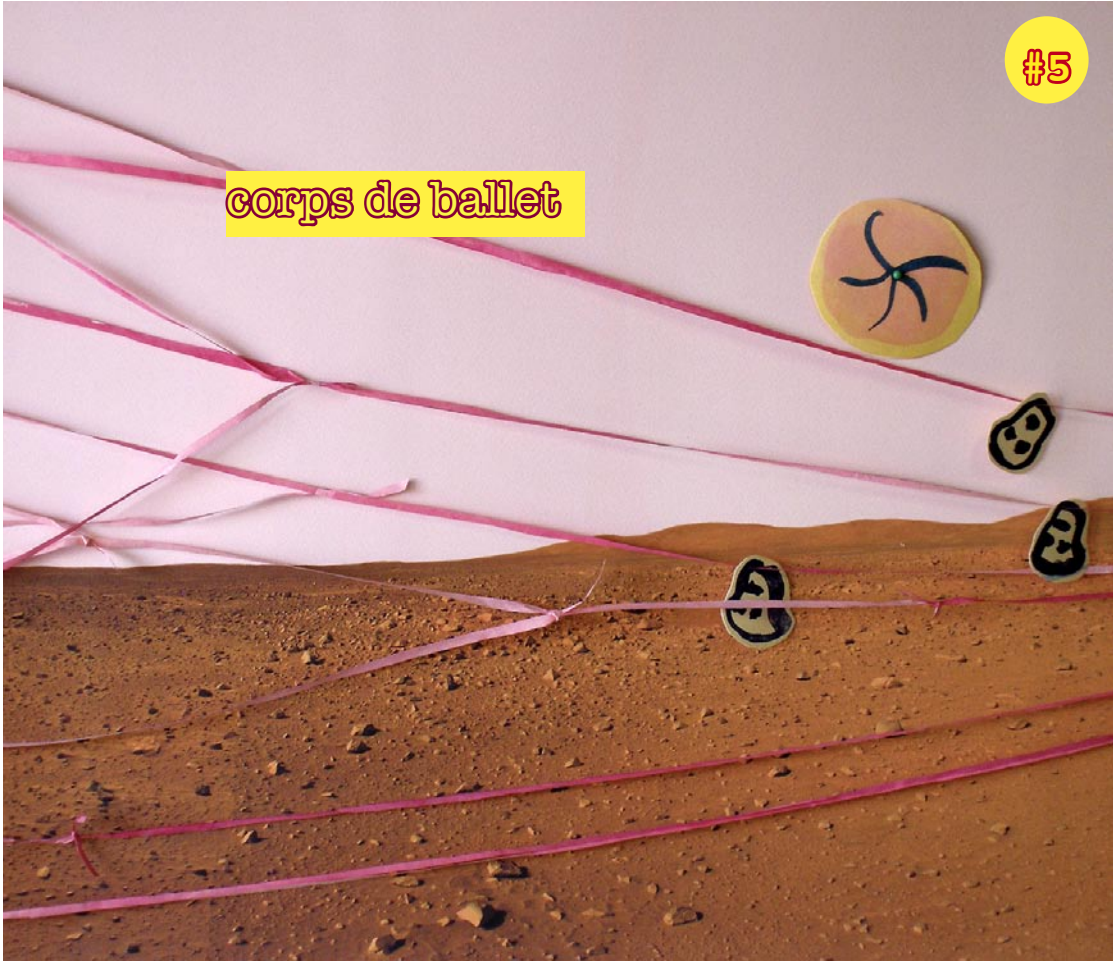


LibbyHague's

# **martian odyssey #5**

**corps de ballet**

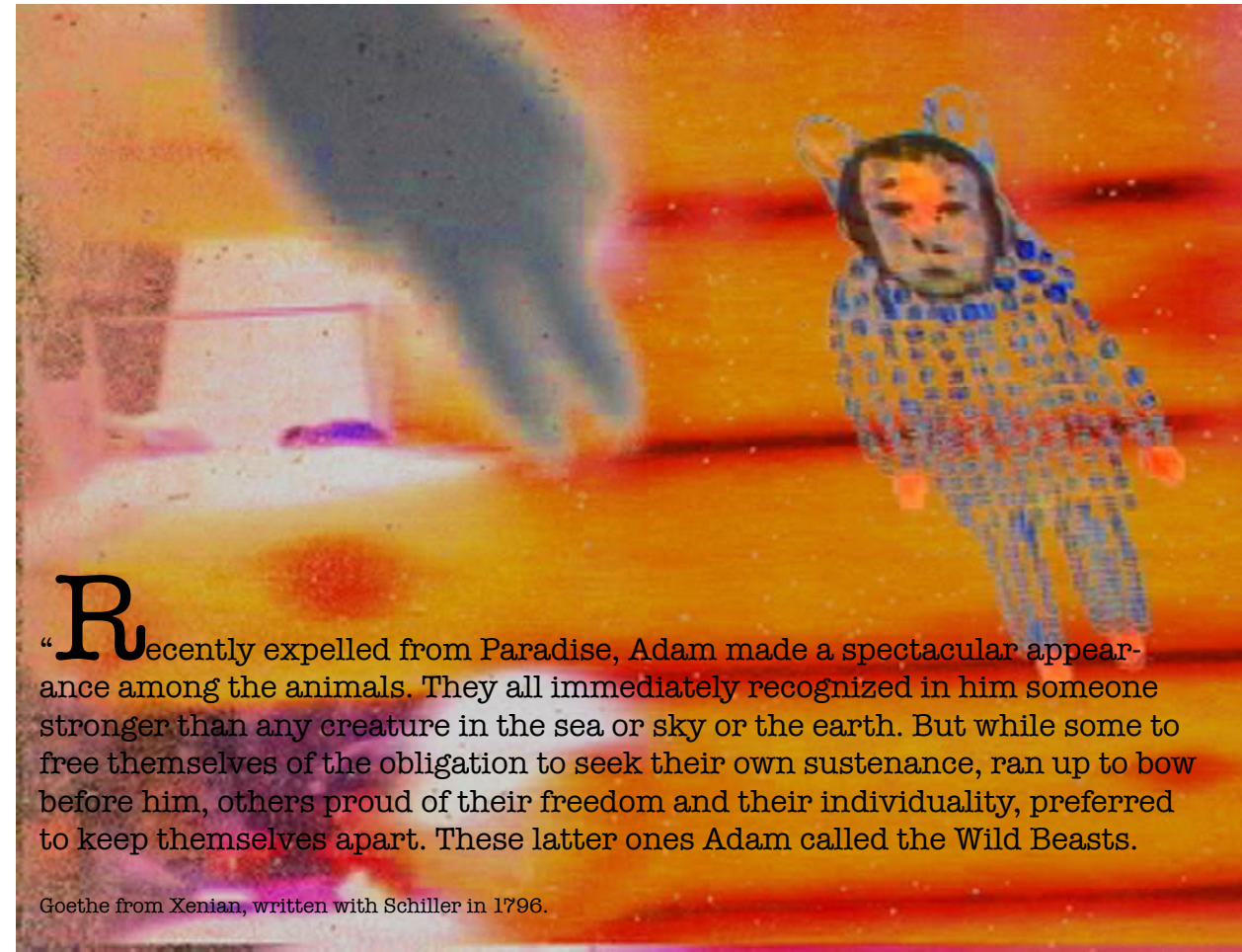
**#5**



**Marianne's story: thread 5**  
camouflage + the art of fitting in.



Hague, print installation detail, 2008



**R**ecently expelled from Paradise, Adam made a spectacular appearance among the animals. They all immediately recognized in him someone stronger than any creature in the sea or sky or the earth. But while some to free themselves of the obligation to seek their own sustenance, ran up to bow before him, others proud of their freedom and their individuality, preferred to keep themselves apart. These latter ones Adam called the Wild Beasts.

Goethe from Xenian, written with Schiller in 1796.

“ In coping with the violence of their city, Beirutis also seemed to disprove Hobbes’s prediction that life in the “state of nature” would be “solitary”. ... When the larger, macro Beirut society and government splintered, people’s first instinct was to draw together into micro-societies based on neighbourhood, apartment house, religious or family loyalties.”

Thomas L. Friedman, “From Beirut to Jerusalem”, pg. 43, Farrar Straus Giroux, NY. 1989



## thread 5

BB These girls stand around and then following a signal I can't see or hear, start to run laps, around the yard, faster and faster. Who knows why. Impressive. Appalling too. If a girl falls - and I saw it happen once - she is trampled to death and the pack runs on.

This morning Top Girl; A Team said, "B girls have abortions." No one questioned her . Everyone agreed it was horrible.



## Home-made Science Project #1

(inertia experiment additionally considered as the “spirit of free inquiry in conflict with official ideology”)

?i?hakma : HE'S CRYING

quu? : HE'S A SLAVE

<http://www.firstvoices.com/>



### **THE MOKUBA “SITUATION”:**

A thin girl (1/4 in x 2.5 in.) stands on a wheel, balanced on a pole on a trundle cart - a toy resembling the carts used to transport heretics to their deaths. An unknown number of ribbons are tied to a grid of wires. A current of air blows the ribbons and the girl, who with her thinnest side facing the wind, creates minimal air resistance. She only shivers at this point.

### **PHYSICAL PRINCIPALS WHICH INFORM THE MOKUBA SITUATION:**

Newton’s first law of inertia (derived from Galileo) states that an object at rest remains at rest and an object in motion remains in motion, until acted upon by some external force. Thus inertia can be described as the natural tendency of objects to resist changes to their state of motion.

### **HISTORICAL PARALLELS IN THE LIFE OF GALILEO ( 1564 - 1642)**

A great man is forced by the power of the Inquisition to abjure one of his most important discoveries: Towards the end of his career Galileo was warned by the Inquisition not to publish articles that contravened church doctrine. Brought before the Inquisition in 1633 he recanted. His subsequent imprisonment - confined to his home and monitored by the clergy - allowed him time to think and write and he finished his Discorsi which were smuggled out of Italy and published in Holland.

### **INDIRECT PARALLELS IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY:**

The air current can shatter the girl if she resists it by turning her full 2.5 inch width squarely in its path. She will snap. This is her dilemma - stand up and take a beating or lie low and survive. Moral inertia can set in.

### **MAIN ARGUMENT FOR COMPROMISE**

In the Bertoldt Brecht's "Life of Galileo" there is a scene near the end of the play where an ex-student of Galileo (Andrea) has come to say goodbye and speak of his recantation.

Andrea: - "Your hands are stained" we said. You're saying,: "Better stained than empty".

Galileo: Better stained than empty. Sounds realistic. Sounds like me. New science, new ethics.

### **MAIN ARGUMENT AGAINST COMPROMISE IN A GREAT INDIVIDUAL:**

Galileo:...As a scientist, I had a unique opportunity. In my day astronomy emerged into the marketplace. Given this unique situation, if one man had put up a fight it might have had tremendous repercussions. Had I stood firm the scientists could have developed something like a Hippocratic oath, a vow to use their knowledge exclusively for mankind's benefit. As things are, the best that can be hoped for is a race of inventive dwarfs who can be hired out for any purpose.



### **MAIN ARGUMENT AGAINST COMPROMISE FOR THE THIN GIRL:**

It's harder to say. The only thing that rests on it is her integrity and she might be able to come to an accommodation to life without it. It's hard to say.

### **ONE LAST QUESTION.**

### **WHY IS THE EXPERIMENT SO CRYPTIC + CAMOUFLAGED?**

Because most crisis of small thin girls go unnoticed.

## Susan Sontag's check list

### Facist aesthetic essentials ( the death fantasy)

- ✓preoccupation with situations of control
- ✓submissive behavior
- ✓extravagant effort
- ✓endurance of pain
- ✓egomania + servitude in one tidy package
- ✓pageantry : mass people together
- ✓turn people into things

see: Susan Sontag, *Fascinating Fascism*  
republished in *Under the Sign of Saturn* 1980



Photo credit: Nasa/ JPL

martian odyssey: corps de ballet, detail, stone lithography with digital output, 20m x 78 in.

## “Flat Earth Theory of Politics” Harry Glasbeek

Galileo is a classic illustration of how hard it is to buck a belief that what is is real and natural. But, Galileo’s revolutionary stance was not to envisage a new physical world, but the physical world as it is. Those interested in imagining and creating a new set of relations between human beings are not setting out to find physical truth. They have a far more difficult and noble task: imagining a better world for human beings.

We, especially those of us in what is preposterously called the developed parts of the globe, have learned how to produce a vast amount of goods and services, a form of wealth, without improving our lives. Discontent and alienation is rampant. Book titles (The Age of Discontent, The Corrosion of Culture, and the like) reflect the pervasive unease we experience in our world of comparative material ease. Hunger and war characterize our prosperous age. Fear and insecurity cast their shadows everywhere. How to think (and then bring) ourselves out of this morass of contradictions?

Ayn Rand argued that what was going wrong with her preferred order of organization, capitalism, was that “the foundations of capitalism are being battered by a flood of altruism, which is the cause of modern world’s collapse”. This view was shared by the mother of recent social and political developments, Margaret Thatcher, when she opined (and acted upon her opinion) that there is no such thing as society, but really just a bunch of individuals. All individuals, as individuals, are to maximize their opportunities to realize their

material goals. Those left behind may be looked after by the more successful, if they feel charitable. In this kind of non-society one which we increasingly approximate there is no need to do good by being altruistic to be adjudged good. The material success of some has fortified the Thatcher argument that TINA, there is no alternative, to a society where selfish individualism, competitive endeavour and the taking of advantage of others and the physical environment, will lead to an ever growing material pie, a bigger pie than the world has ever known. More: enhancement of the freedom of individuals to participate in market pursuits is the ultimate political freedom for sovereign individuals. This is a powerful ideology.

The sheer scale of poverty and violence in the contemporary world should make this kind of non-society anathema. Atomized individualism is not a sound or logical basis for human relationships. The novel, Robinson Crusoe, would have been devoid of all interest if the hero had been alone on the island. His man Friday was not just a servant. The relationship between the two men, rather than the tale of their survival strategies, is what makes the book the classic it is.

Human beings are not like bees. Bees flit from flower to flower not because they want to do so, not because they intend to do so, but because they are genetically programmed to do so. Human beings are able to programme the world in which they live; they are not bound by primordial drives that they cannot transcend. We can change the way in which we survive, live and thrive. How to envisage another set of arrangements? After all, all our thinking and



efforts start from where we are.

“Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth”, Matthew 5:16, “but not its natural resources”, John Paul Getty.

John Maynard Keynes: “Capitalism is the extraordinary belief that the nastiest of men, for the nastiest of reasons, will somehow work for the benefit of us all”.

Lily Tomlin: “The trouble with the rat race is that even if you win, you are still a rat”.

It is good to give the task to unattached children: they come without baggage, material, historical, cultural, or political. It is inspired that your protagonists should be on Mars, a planet which looks as if it has little by way of resources to fight over and whose life-sustaining and enhancing resources - if any - are not yet divided, giving no one a vested interest. Thinking anew in this powerless setting is possible.

But will we get anything new (as opposed to a revamping of the old) if we assume that there are persistent patterns of human behaviour that are ineradicable, that there are natural inclinations that make us human beings? Could we not posit that we have the potential to think and act in chosen ways, unbound by inherent characteristics? Isn't this, after all, the purpose of leaving the experiment to tabula rasa children on an unmarked, undivided, unexploited planet?

Is it possible to think that what might emerge is a world in which we understand that we live amongst others who also have desires and needs, where all are equally precious and valuable, that each of us has no more value than any other person? Then the logic of production of material welfare may become a communal responsibility in which each of us is to serve the needs of others. Our reason for producing a good or service then will not be our hope to get something in return, but our felt obligation to meet the needs of others to the fullest extent we are able.

If the need to create a world in which we all accept an obligation to all others, the blighting impacts of greed and fear (of losing out if one does not look after oneself at the expense of others) that poison our current relationships, would be reduced sharply. In a world where all are responsible for all others, relationships would be personal, rather than impersonal as they are to-day due to our relentless push to maximize our own interests, regardless of the needs of others. In such a new setting, burdens and benefits could be shared more equally; there would be less need to put a premium on merit, physical or intellectual attributes; there would be no impetus to divide burdens and benefits on the basis of gender, race or ethnicity as these characteristics do not add or subtract from our human-ness, nor do they dictate the respect or obligation we owe each other. Once it comes to be believed that the duties and obligations we owe each other are communal and that no one can gain advantages from outdoing and/or exploiting others or our environment, the decisions that still will need to be made about priorities no longer need to be adversarial. The determination

of what, and whose, needs should be preferred, as to how resources are to be allocated to give life to our decisions, as to who what skills and expertise to hone, and so on, would not have to pit us against each other. We will be sure that we will be looked after as well as everyone else. There should be no - or at least many fewer - disputes of the kind that currently drive us to develop rules of law that can be applied from above, generating elites to adjudicate and enforce our imposed rules of law; there will be far less need to develop procedures aimed at forcing compromises to deal with disputes that presently arise out of our pervasive economic and political power differentials.

[Is this utopian?](#) Of course it is. Is there any way of getting there? I don't know. It requires a Martian Odyssey to clear the way for this kind of speculation, a speculation that is based on optimism. Our current circumstance is based on a view of human beings with limited capacities, with built-in characteristics that always lead them to fight as well as to play. This is ahistorical. In that fact lies hope.

[Children](#) on Mars might very well be able to find a modus vivendi that makes those barren Martian fields (that look very much like the interior of Australia which once supported thriving, non-material societies) a place of contentment without physical luxury. Their arid, desert colour would then look very green.



Look for the inspired but creepy recent film "A State of Mind" by Daniel Gordon. It examines the Mass Games in Pyongyang North Korea with synchronized dances performed by over 80,000 gymnasts and 12,000 person mosaics. They look like pixilated video but are done by school children holding up books of coloured paper - an activity the film shows them practicing 2 hours a day. The film shows young gymnasts revealing various degrees of resistance to unrelenting state brainwashing.



### Thanks to:

Phil Anisman  
my parents  
\*Djivan Gasparyan for his song title  
Sally McKay, # 6, 8, 10, 14, 15, 19, 26,  
27, 28, 30, 19, 21,  
Harry Glasbeek # 5  
Smadar Peretz # 23, 24  
Sasha Pierce # 7

and the many authors quoted in these books

### Brief project description:

This web /pdf edition of 30 booklets, connect and complicate the individual artworks in the Martian Odyssey series previously exhibited at Loop in Toronto. These booklets are intended to serve as a basis for comments on the artwork and their themes. If you want to have your comments considered for a web edition you can respond by sending an email to [libbylibby@sympatico.ca](mailto:libbylibby@sympatico.ca) with a subject heading of Martian Odyssey. I will be regularly updating the pdf's.

### Martian Odyssey titles:

1. luck 2. riddles 3. the animals 4. translation  
5. corps de ballet 6. The Girls 7. weave 8. net  
9. slow motion 10. Big Bang 11. alouette  
12. the wrong boat 13. the disaster  
14. RAGE 15. white arms 16. plague  
17. amnesia 18. ah.. 19. string theory 20.  
laughter 21. dreams 22. Rules 23. justice  
24. forgiveness 25. day after peace  
26. un-rebuilding 27. blue-sky-blue 28. play  
again 29. stars are wide 30. sing

**Libby Hague** is a printmaker + installation artist exploring themes of disaster, rescue and hope. [full cv](#)

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2008

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