

thus offer this account hesitantly.

Checkpoints were being set up around the city by various militias, and a few words on a person's ID card determined whether they were waved through hurriedly or pulled from their car and swiftly murdered. We now know that on 3rd September 1978, 42 year-old father of three Abou Hassan was travelling from Hamra on the west side of the green-line, to Bourj Hoummod on the East, when he came across a checkpoint hastily assembled by a then unknown militia on the connecting bridge – we now know that this checkpoint constitutes the first recorded action of the „Nothing” group.

Abou Hassan was a Shia Muslim. Like all Lebanese citizens, his identity card stated as much. In this, the first act of its kind, 4 men stood in front of a row of burning tyres with automatic rifles pointed at Abou Hassan's car and hailed him to the side of the road. He was pulled from his car, his wallet was checked and his ID card found and thrown away without a single glance falling onto it. Quickly and silently one of the men dragged Abou Hassan to the handrail at the side of the road and after a brief struggle tossed him over the edge. His compatriots laughed sedately, as if to a small joke, as they heard Abou Hassan's high-pitched scream. The same men would kill 6 more people that day in the same manner, until in a little over a month these checkpoints were appearing all over the country by both sides. Armed men fought other armed men occasionally, but the casualties from these battles were vastly outnumbered by those from the countless massacres. Karantina, Damour, Tel el-Za'atar – men came to these towns and villages in convoys and proceeded to „calmly and quietly” take the lives of the women and children who lived there. Massacres occurred as a form of point scoring – a tit-for-tat. One gave birth to another, and another, until to kill civilians en-masse was no more wicked than to kill a soldier. Murder had passed through the act of killing another person; linguistically a shift had taken place, and the city of Beirut was being transformed from within by little more than a changing understanding of killing, that most taboo of societal crimes. The phenomenon of streets shifting began to be recorded, with passageways morphing into

checkpoints – arbitrary barriers impossible to erase from the psychic maps of the populous. The humblest storm drain was elevated into a cairn of Golgothan martyrdom, and more soil was consecrated to accept the nameless dead, bleaching and sterilising its purpose forever. Ashes were scattered to the benefit of urban vegetation; from such actions, landscapes are born.

Edgar Pineau interviewed the half-vegetised witnesses of the scene of Abou Hassan's murder. It has become clear that in doing so he stumbled upon a social phenomenon recorded only once before by the IIAL. This earlier event occurred at Westminster Underground station, London, and was named the 'Inertia Vision'. It was said by two separate witnesses to Abou Hassan's murder that a woman on the roadside ran to the handrail and raised her hands, staring out for approximately two minutes into the valley that had just received a fresh body. She then moved on in shock and grief, her trauma carrying her off the path, and her place at the handrail was taken by a curious onlooker who, we understand, was unaware of the death. He had merely seen a reaction and yet proceeded to mimic the action of the woman who had gone before him out of wonder, perhaps sensing the importance and murderous weight of her gesture. He left, and was in turn replaced by one who had seen him, and this chain of watchers bestowing some sense of change and grief continued for (according to Edgar Pineau) two months. By this time, cars were slowing on the bend in the road, the checkpoint had been replaced with a monument – a ramshackle pile of rough slate and red stones to commemorate a shift, a pattern. The road is now almost inaccessible, a new path has been hewn, the rock has been cut as a result of ritualised, unthinking murder. From the prevalence of new pathways in close proximity to slowly constructed cairns, it is presumed by cartographers that this phenomenon occurred a minimum of forty-six times within the city limits.

To conclude, we wish to reproduce an extract taken from Grey's notebook. As mentioned above, the Institute wishes to distance itself from any (and all) of the material contained within this extract. Nevertheless, it is felt that in the absence of a convincing and verifiable

explanation of the facts presented here, Grey's own conclusions constitute the closest approach that may be made.

„...It is upon such ritualised actions that cities have taken their shape for millenia. The extraordinary, unthinkable and grotesque gradually becomes the mundane, the automatic. Cholera pulled herself from our Lady Thames and seeped her way into the mouths of a hundred thousand pustulous families, before demanding the re-evaluation of the waterworks and sewage systems of the city.

The literal 'de-facing' of preists and icons in Northern India transformed the evolution of an entire religion for half a billion people. Murder begat murder begat social change in all senses – the functional rebel needs no reason for existence, nor does he or she realise their existence within the naturally aching and changing formation of the city. Never was this so painfully apparant than in Beirut – a collective consciousness of tribal images was thrown together with no intention other than for change, a window of opportunity for becoming lost in the city, and then claiming dominion over a sense of loss; by nail, by knife, by nervous symbolism.

It is not until we study the after-image of the iconography of the Nothing militia that we notice anything particularly remarkable or indeed symbolic about this example of group violence within social collapse. The act of killing - once emotional attachments and the primal desire to conserve rather than destroy have been lobotomised by social reconstruction – must, and always does, become something symbolic. We can view dozens of historical examples of this merely within the realm of animal slaughter, from the outwardly ritualised halal butchering practices to the striving for 'humane' slaughter in western europe – where even to this day the animal faces the man in a one-on-one, face-to-face death by bolt gun or electrocution. The act of Death, of killing (once passed beyond the barrier of normalisation and thus desensitized), has never been anything other than symbolic or sacrificial, and again, our cities are shaped by this: tragedy and martyrdom - on any scale - re-routes pathways, makes certain bricks

untouchable, demands the removal of shoes or the touch of one's head, subtracts the meanders out of rivers and alluviates flood plains. Our cities are born from unthinking faith, and our streets are carved by the fleeing soles of unthinking death. In most great capitals, the routes are slow, meandering, formed through millenia. Beirut saw its pathways curl and bifurcate through death and desire, unmindful reaction to severe cruelty and formations of unconscious patterns, hewn anew in the space of five years.”