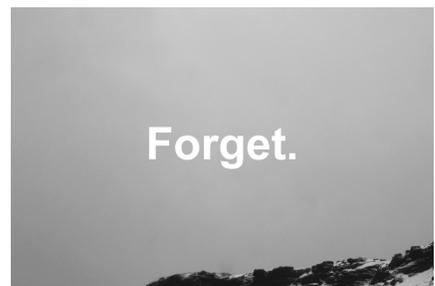
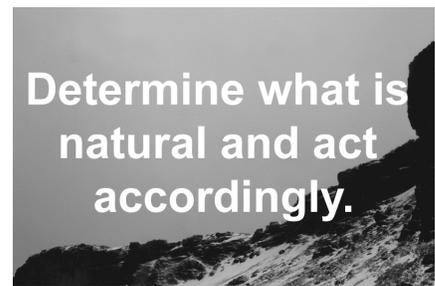
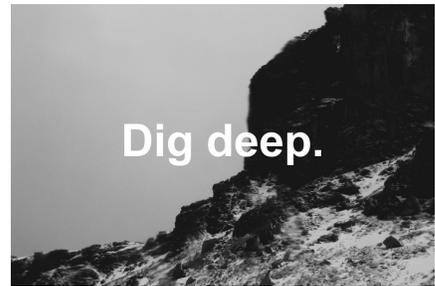


Ways To Change The Body/Land

JAIMES MAYHEW

Inspired by eco-queer and eco-feminist notions of power and ecology, as well as my own experience as a transgender person from a family of geologists and ecologists, *Ways To Change The Body/Land* is a series of photos taken out of a car window in southern Iceland with instructions that suggest small ways one could change the social, political, cultural, physical, or ecological contexts of a body or landscape: the body/land. These instructions are abstract, inciting a call to action but not assigning the power that is needed to follow through. This leaves room for questions—if one wanted to change a body/land by assessing value, what kind of value should be assessed? Would taking out a life insurance policy assess value? Would estimating available resources assess value? All of these works seek to acknowledge the constant flux of a body/land in a perpetual state of becoming. Although I do not believe that landscapes and bodies are qualitatively the same, I believe that we assign meaning to both in similar ways.

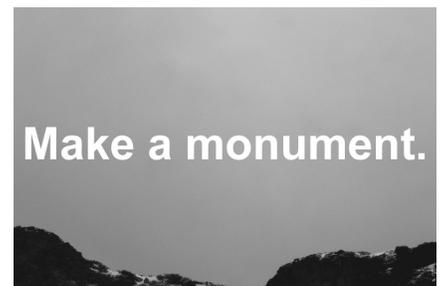
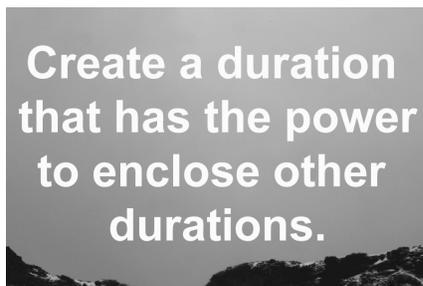
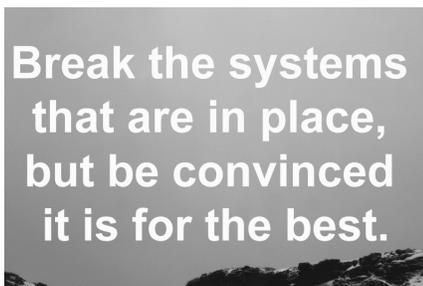
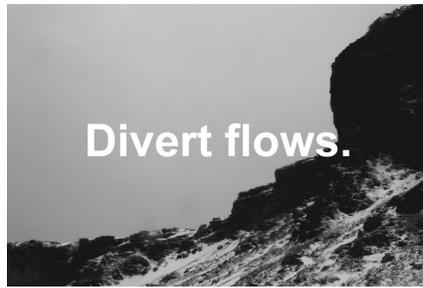


jections of “Islamic sexual repression that plagues human rights, liberal queer and feminist discourses” become intertwined with the “Orientalist wet dreams of lascivious excesses of pedophilia, sodomy, and perverse sexuality” (14). Furthermore, Raz Yosef argues in *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema*, “Israeli heterosexual masculinity and its seemingly unified collectivity cannot imagine itself apart from the conception of externalized, sexualized ethnic and

racial ‘others’ on whom it was founded and which it produced” (1). Yosef continues, “Zionist phallic masculinity is constituted through the force of exclusion of the queer, the (homo)eroticized Mizrahi [Arab Jews] and the Palestinian male ‘others’” (1). Israeli body narratives have excised understandings of the weak, emasculated (homoerotic?), disempowered, and disposed diasporic Jew and placed these attributions onto their constructions of the Palestinian/Arab body.⁷ Yosef explains that

these hyper-masculine constructions of Israeli Jewish embodiment become “structured by Orientalist perspectives about the East [or the Global South], especially that of Eastern bodies, associated with lack of hygiene, plagues, disease, and sexual perversity. By assigning the Eastern population as objects of death and degeneration, Zionism created internal biologized enemies against which the Zionist society must defend itself” (3).

In these Western projections, Arab



societies, and particularly Arab sexuality and masculinity, are understood as closer to nature, their behaviour animal-like and lacking the cultural sensitivity of their Western counterparts. These projections bleed into Israeli animalizing discourse around Palestinian “natures” even as they underpin early Zionist and contemporary Israeli narratives about the founding of Israel. In the latter, early Zionists are thought to have found a backwards people unable to care for themselves, the land, or the nat-

ural resources of Israel/Palestine. If the Palestinian people are acknowledged at all, Israeli myths about the founding of Israel construct a Palestinian embodiment that, although close to nature, is unable to properly *master* nature and nature’s resources.

II

Zionist narratives about the Jewish settlement of Israel often either deny the existence of a Palestinian people or characterize pre-1948 Palestine as a

backwards land ruined by backwards people. As an example of the former, during the 2013 Israeli Independence Day celebrations, the president of Israel, Shimon Peres, denied the existence of a Palestine people while championing Israeli mastery over the “barren and disappointing land”:

I remember how it all began. The whole state of Israel is a millimeter of the whole Middle East. A statistical error,