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States of Emergence / States of Emergency



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Joanna Kellond

Chief Editor

Preface

The felt belief that we reside in a state of emergency is a powerful rhetorical feature of contemporary life, constituting perhaps, as Giorgio Agamben has claimed, the ‘paradigm of modern politics’. If the experience of anxiety induced by that belief provides an efficient means of governmental control, its prevalence and efficiency are consolidated in a globalised world by ever-broadening modes of technological production and interaction. There is a sense that ‘emergency’ is thus involved in a reciprocal relationship with ‘emergence’. One needs only to think of the pervasive and transformative role of technology in last year’s Arab Spring to get a sense of how new modes of technological communication might be implicated in the consolidation of power whilst concurrently offering forms of newness that can begin to challenge and alter existing social realities.

As an online, open-access journal, *Excursions* aims to be part of this on-going dialogue, and it was with this in mind that we put out a Call for Papers on the topic of ‘States of Emergence/ States of Emergency’. The response to the call was exceptional, a fact which only reiterates the pertinence of this discussion. We are very happy to be able to publish a diverse and interdisciplinary range of submissions encompassing creative writing, history, film studies, policy research, cultural studies and a very personal and timely report from a group of academics working in the wake of the Christchurch earthquake of 2011.

Whilst each article stands alone as a thought-provoking meditation on its subject, taken together, these pieces provide an apposite and stimulating intervention into debates around

disaster, the environment and political power, whilst also remaining attentive to the ways in which existing and emerging creative forms might provide means of responding to and negotiating contemporary realities. Each contribution is involved in, and engages with, the others in a narrative the reader themselves can come to take part in and construct, a dialogue which seems itself to be in the process of emergence.

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