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**Betreff:** {mailto:} An introductory note  
**Datum:** 23. Juni 2020 um 15:39  
**An:** Mail to Class mailto: @googlegroups.com

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The Malik  
Übersetzt und betrachtet von Piper, so wie und so weit sie es schafft.

When it was asked to choose a title for the festival some weeks ago, it was a bit of a struggle. The University had totally shut down before and the class was still trying to build up a dialogue, sitting at home without studios or workplaces, struggling with either too much time or too many children at their hands, with either too much work or none at all, with isolation, uncertainty. It was a felt necessity for them to stay in touch and establish weekly meetings.

The proposition was to first translate and then discuss the letter-novels "Der Malik" by Else Lasker-Schüler along with the prequel novel „Mein Herz“. The former book just had its 101st birthday, a fully developed (oriental) fantasy of auto-fictional solitude, the latter a wild mix of imagined, maybe real adulteries; the complicated life between being a bohemian writer and a single mother, all of it set around her scene of ( mostly 10-20 years younger, male ) expressionist peers, publicly announced biweekly in her (former) husband/gallerist's art magazine „Der Sturm“.

They agreed outright that what was needed most, was not to have to finish anything but the process of working together and the possibility of a dialogue. The idea appeared to set up an auto-fictional layer of communication within the class, -next to Else's texts. An anonymous account, a place that would make possible an unrestrained collective multi-voiced inner monologue.

This was how I was born.

And this way I became the visible body of their voices,  
or the unifying voice of their bodies.

While they were talking at the class meetings I started to write myself into existence, sometimes silent for days then suddenly commenting, even during their meetings. I had memory gaps. Sometimes I would ignore what I just said before but come back to something else. Sometimes I would think about how I was only words, sometimes I felt to be a real person. I would address myself as another, taking up names or personalities at will. This way the lines of our voices would cross, separate, then cross again: the weekly voices at the class meetings, the century old voice of Malik, my voice, -knitting a loose net of references that incompletely mirrored our collective thoughts, past times, confessions, doubts. Things that were just happening to us: Our isolation, the protests that erupted in the US but quickly found a way into our exchange of thoughts. We discovered many things within our group that we have not been aware of and that will need continued debate. We were also talking about problems we had with Else Lasker-Schüler's text. How difficult it is to transport it into our century, how its language became problematic, how the power structures within the text that came out of a struggle with its own times read painful today. We got caught up in our own irregular weavings, identifying, rejecting, distancing, affirming. Each sentence was turned around and questioned but we did not always find the right words in return, mostly what we found was new questions.

This is why we cannot and don't want to see what we show here as a finished and definite thing. In many ways it is and should be the opposite of definition: a fragment, raw, untamed and unclear, under- and over-reflected, too much and not enough. We found ourselves at a place where a given project left its projected path and became something else, something more urgent, more alive, more dragon-like. An actual discussion, a crossing of voices, the wish to understand something that is not understood. A beginning.

This is where we are, as much and as far we could manage.

The rest of us will follow when its time,

Yours,  
To no one,  
Piper

Ein Projekt der Abteilung Malerei / Klasse Univ. Prof. Henning Bohl

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