Anthony Downey is an academic, writer and editor. Recent and upcoming publications include *Art and Politics Now* (2014); *Uncommon Grounds: New Media and Critical Practices in North Africa and the Middle East* (I.B.Tauris, 2014); *The Future of a Promise: Contemporary Art from the Arab World* (2011), and *Slavs and Tatars: Mirrors for Princes* (2015). He is currently researching *Zones of Indistinction: Visual Cultures, Global Media and Late Modernity* (forthcoming, 2016).

Archives are often viewed as ordered collections of historical documents that record information about people, places and events. This view nevertheless obscures a crucial element in these processes: the archive, whilst subject to the vagaries of time and history, is also concerned with determining the future. This feature of the archive has gained urgency in modern-day North Africa and the Middle East where it has come to the fore as a site of social, historical, theoretical, and political contestation.

Dissonant Archives is the first book to consider the ways in which contemporary artists from North Africa and the Middle East—including Emily Jacir, Walid Raad, Jananne Al Ani, Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, Mariam Ghani, Zineb Sedira, and Akram Zaatari—are utilizing and disrupting the function of the archive and, in so doing, are simultaneously highlighting a systemic and perhaps irrevocable crisis in institutional and state-ordained archiving across the region.

Basel Abbas
Ruanne Abou-Rahme
Lawrence Abu Hamdan
John Akomfrah
Jananne Al-Ani
Meriç Algün Ringborg
Héla Ammar
Burak Arıkan
Ariella Azoulay
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DISSONANT ARCHIVES

Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East

Edited by Anthony Downey

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Edited by Anthony Downey

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Featuring writing, interviews and original art work—reproduced in full-colour—by internationally renowned academics, curators, activists, filmmakers and artists, this book asks a critical series of questions: How do we define the ongoing relationship between contemporary art and the archive? How do we understand the speculative forms of knowledge that are being produced in contemporary art practices in North Africa and the Middle East? Do these practices foster a nostalgic fetishization for the archive or suggest an ongoing crisis in institutional and state-ordained archiving? And what, moreover, do artistic practices that engage with archives reveal about the politics of global cultural production?

Emerging throughout this volume as a troubled, dissonant and performative space, the archive is central to a process whereby contemporary artists produce their own critical and highly suppositional visions of the future. In exploring and producing archives, be they alternative, interrogative, or fictional, these artists are not simply questioning the authenticity, authority or authorship of the archive; rather, they are unlocking its regenerative, radical potential.

Ibraaz and the Visual Culture in the Middle East series was initiated and supported by the Kamel Lazaar Foundation
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KAMEL LAZAAR FOUNDATION

Dissonant Archives

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Anthony Downey

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Contents

Preface
A Note on the *Visual Culture in the Middle East* Series

In 2011, the Kamel Lazaar Foundation responded to the need for access to critical and historical texts about visual culture in North Africa and the Middle East by launching our research and publishing initiative Ibraaz (www.ibraaz.org). In 2014, continuing the success of Ibraaz as an online research and publishing forum, we also published Volume 01 in our *Visual Culture in the Middle East* series. It is therefore a great pleasure to announce the publication of Volume 02 in this series.

Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East grew out an of awareness of the considerable number of artists who produce work that specifically engages with regionally defined, historically localized forms of archived knowledge in the Middle East. Two distinct elements emerged in this process. On the one hand, it was notable that our shared collective, global history has recently seen an extraordinary level of growth in terms of knowledge production, especially in relation to visual culture. This unprecedented growth has nevertheless also seen a relative regression in knowledge production: a fragmented and increasingly compartmentalized way of thinking has come to dominate not only ways of understanding cultural production but also the world in which we live.

Just as artists engage in processes of archiving and critically explore the nature and function of archives, the very institutions and depth of vision needed to maintain archives seems to be also failing. This failure can be seen across the Middle East and the Maghreb, where archives remain neglected, under-funded and in varying degrees of dilapidation. An immediate consequence of this is that the very knowledge needed to produce and develop cultural knowledge is being lost at the same moment that a renewed effort is being made to focus on it. In these contexts, the role of the Foundation and Ibraaz is not just a horizontal, immediate one (focusing solely on contemporary visual culture and its manifestations), it is also about a vertical, historical engagement with visual culture from the past and key developments in the

history of global artistic production. Our role, like that of archival practices more generally, is ultimately about maintaining and imparting knowledge from one generation to the next and analysing it in a sustainable and critical manner.

To these points, we need to note how the development of public museums, libraries, educational institutions and private foundations worldwide has largely mitigated the losses we have experienced in knowledge and cultural production. These institutions take time to develop and need support. Again, it is striking that across the Middle East the commitment to the very infrastructure needed to maintain and produce viable archives and research facilities has been found wanting. There are many reasons for this, personal, political and private; however, we are on the cusp of a new historical epoch in the region and these issues need to be addressed. I hope, in all modesty, that *Dissonant Archives*, and this series in general, goes some way to raising these concerns but also directs us to an important, if not crucial, element in the broader scope of the archive: they are always future-oriented and, in detailing the dynamics of the past and present, they inevitably direct us towards that future.

Although the focus of this series is and will remain on North Africa and the Middle East, the concerns raised within it are not simply regional; rather, they are global issues. The fact that Ibraaz has become an archive in its own right means that we have to redouble our efforts to not only produce critical knowledge but to also make it as accessible as possible to a global audience. To further this in terms of action, rather than rhetoric, we already have two more volumes in production for this series, one looking at institutions across the region and how artistic, critical and curatorial practices can produce more open and engaged models of cultural production; the other volume is on the history of performance art across the Arab world.

I would like, finally, to thank friends and family for their guidance on these matters and the contributors to this volume who have been so generous with their ideas and support. The broad reach and scope of the essays and artists' projects included here hopefully provides ample acknowledgment of our ambition to see the region develop a better understanding of itself and, in time, allow the world to better understand the region and the interconnections, rather than divisions, that continue to define our shared histories.

Kamel Lazaar
Chairman
Kamel Lazaar Foundation.

Notes on Texts and Artists' Inserts

A number of essays included in this volume were published as part of Ibraaz's online platform in 2013 and 2014. We are grateful to all our contributors for revising their work and reviewing anything that has changed substantially since the original online publication of their essays. The style guidelines follow Ibraaz's style guide for Arabic, Persian and Turkish transliterations.

We are also grateful to the artists included here for giving us the permission to publish their projects as inserts in this volume. Some projects were originally intended for online viewing and we have preserved image quality throughout and present them here in accordance to the artists' wishes and intentions.

A number of artists' inserts were edited for inclusion in this volume, but full versions, including videos and interviews with the artists, are available at:
www.ibraaz.org/projects
www.ibraaz.org/interviews

Contingency, Dissonance and Performativity
Critical Archives and Knowledge Production in Contemporary Art

Anthony Downey

[T]he question of the archive is not [...] a question of the past. It is not the question of a concept dealing with the past that might *already* be at our disposal or not at our disposal, *an archivable concept of the archive*. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.
***Jacques Derrida*[1]**

How do we define the ongoing relationship between contemporary art and the archive? Considering the unprecedented levels of present-day information storage and forms of data circulation, alongside the diversity of contemporary art practices, this question may seem hopelessly open-ended. In an age defined by the application of archival knowledge as an apparatus of social, political, cultural, historical, state and sovereign power, it nevertheless needs to be posed. In what follows, I will suggest that we can more fully refine the question and offer a series of conditional answers if we consider, in the first instance, the extent to which contemporary artists retrieve, explore and critique orders of archival knowledge.[2] A central, if not defining, element in this process has been the co-option of archives as both primary resources and structuring devices within contemporary art. Although difficult to fully determine (in terms of its historical, sociological, pedagogical and theoretical cogency), this has invariably produced systems of archival knowledge that are often at odds with more formal, institutional archives. It is within this nexus, the point where art practices create alternative, often speculative archival forms, that we can begin to formulate a provisional answer to our prefatory question.

The collation and storage of information within the archive, in the second instance, is an international concern. As a global reality, however, the archive does have a regionally defined, if not national, inflection that is located

in a series of formal contexts, including the architectural site-specificity of the archive; the localized politics of admission to it; the categorical terms of collation and dissemination that underwrite its procedures; and, of course, its increasingly virtual, digitized dimension. All of these determine access (and denial of access) to the information contained within archives. These patterns of access and non-access, utility and redundancy, materiality and immateriality are defined, in turn, by historical circumstances and localized, regional dispositions. Whilst not necessarily hermeneutically or historically definitive as such, we encounter a phenomenon here that has come to define, to varying degrees, significant elements in the work of artists as diverse as Emily Jacir, Walid Raad, Akram Zaatari, Khalil Rabah, Mariam Ghani, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Zineb Sedira, Ruanne Abou-Rahme and Basel Abbas, Benji Boyadgian, Lamia Joreige, Maryam Jafri, Adelita Husni-Bey, Héla Ammar, Roy Samaha, Uriel Orlow, Amina Menia, Vahap Avşar, Lucien Samaha, Eric Baudelaire and Jananne Al-Ani. These artists have produced and continue to produce work that specifically engages with regionally determined, historically localized forms of archived knowledge, be they photographic, art historical, cultural, sociological, anthropological, textual, institutional, oral or digital.[3] To observe as much is to propose a more manageable field of enquiry: how do we understand the historical relationship of contemporary art to the regional archives of, say, the Maghreb, the Levant or the Gulf States? What, furthermore, do the artists mentioned above reveal about the archive across an admittedly broad region and, as a consequence, what do they disclose or make manifest about the politics of cultural production in, for example, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Syria, Jordan, Turkey Egypt, and Palestine?

These enquiries are admittedly far from straightforward, but there is an imminent critical need to ask why a commitment to working with archives has become an apparently dominant aesthetic strategy for contemporary artists engaged with the heterogeneity of cultural production across the Middle East? If we provisionally accept that significant gaps have emerged in archives in countries such as Egypt, Palestine, Tunisia and Iraq, does it follow that these epistemological fissures have offered a productive aperture for artists to situate their research and subsequent forms of engagement? A primary consideration here is the extent to which archives are used to explore conflict and the reconstruction of individual and collective histories, be they revolutionary or national. Which begs a further question: do these practices ultimately foster a nostalgic fetishization of the archive as a locus of knowledge production or, conversely, suggest an ongoing, possibly systemic, crisis in institutional and state-ordained archiving across the region?

What forms of knowledge, we also need to ask, are being produced in the moment that art interacts with archives and how do we articulate the epistemological substance of these forms? In posing this question, we need to

note that art does not produce verifiable knowledge as such, rather it engages in a series of ruminative gestures that give rise to non-definitive narratives and tentative forms of suppositional knowledge. A further consideration here is how the archive circulates as an apparatus that discursively produces knowledge and is often utilized by artists to reveal a set of mechanisms that are simultaneously situated in the present but inevitably projecting meaning into the future. The archive, to recall the epigraph from Jacques Derrida above, 'is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow'. This allusion to an ethics of the archive is an acknowledgement that, as a collation of historical documents that records and orders information about people, places and events, the archive should take responsibility for the functioning and formal application of its knowledge systems.[4] It is within the context of these demands that contemporary art engenders archives that are troubled and contentious spaces haunted by their own repressions and occlusions. In works by artists as diverse as Zineb Sedira, Jananne Al-Ani, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Walid Raad and Akram Zaatari, as we will see below, alternative forms of archiving and archival knowledge emerge that question the material, formal aspect of an archive and its immaterial, informal procedures of archiving. In exploring and producing archives, be they alternative, interrogative or fictional, these artists are not simply questioning veracity, authenticity or authority, or, indeed, authorship; rather, they interpose forms of contingency and radical possibility into the archive that sees it projected onto future rather than historical probabilities.

Contemporary Art and the Archive in the Middle East

In 2010, Zineb Sedira produced *Image Keepers*, an installation that includes a documentary film of an interview with Safia Kouaci, the wife of Mohamed Kouaci. Considered one of the pioneers of photography in independent Algeria, Mohamed Kouaci was responsible for many of the images that have today become inextricably linked with the events of that time.[5] Kouaci died in 1996 and his extensive archive, or what is left of it, is currently under the custodianship of Safia Kouaci, who houses it in her apartment in Algiers. Sedira's complex film, which is made up of two parts, takes Kouaci's photographic archive as a starting point for discussing a number of interrelated matters, ranging from the intimate and familial (love, loss and ensuing solitude); the socio-historical (the war of independence and its aftermath in Algeria); the aesthetic (the importance of Kouaci's images in offering a counter-narrative to Eurocentric representations of Algeria); and, crucially, the notion of historical transmission (in the context of relaying history from one generation to another).[6] At the time of the film's making, over the summer of 2010, the

archive had yet to be formally organized and it becomes obvious that Safia has not only become the archivist, the eponymous 'keeper' of the images, but the interpreter too insofar as her husband's death left little by way of time to classify his images (nor, as we discover, did it leave adequate time to discuss what to do with the archive in the long term). Safia Kouaci's memories function here as an archive of sorts against the more tangible and yet decomposing archive of photographs she safeguards in honour of her husband. One of her laments is that, following her husband's death, the clearing out of his studio was done in such a chaotic way that some photographs were discarded or destroyed. We witness here a precariousness emerge in the status of the archive, a sense of its instability and susceptibility to time. These images may be a record of the past, but they are contingent on the circumstances of the present and, in that moment, foreshadow future uses (and abuses) of the archive.

Towards the end of Part I of the film, Safia suggests that 'an archive should never change. It should remain the same until the end of time'. These comments, made in the context of the overthrowing of a political party or government, where archives are often instrumentalized within collective or nationalist versions of history, are provisional and, as Safia eventually admits, the archive is always in flux. It is this radical instability that would appear to attract historians and others, including artists and filmmakers, to archives in the first place. Ongoing disruption and dissolution, rather than continuity and aggregation, underscore an inherent dissonance within the archive as a material and immaterial form. This dissonance, this refusal to 'add up' or unquestioningly reside in the present, gives rise to a further degree of historical contingency. The fact that Kouaci's archive, perhaps the single most extant and authoritative archive of a period that included wars of independence and the emergence of the Algerian state, remains neglected and in a state of confusion must, in due course, say something of the current priorities of the Algerian state and how it continues to be riven by its own private discords, public denials and historical disavowals. *Image Keepers* tells us more here about the concerns and exigencies of the present than it does about the past. Crucially, as we will see throughout this volume, those concerns look to the future and to how people will understand and judge the motives and motivations of present-day attitudes towards an archive.

This sense of the archive as a 'question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow', to recall Derrida's point, together with the way artists consistently encourage readings of the archive's latent potentiality, are a significant feature of Jananne Al-Ani's *The Aesthetics of Disappearance: A Land Without People* (2007–ongoing). Consisting mainly of images of archaeological sites, the research for these works—which also includes two films, *Shadow Sites I* (2010) and *Shadow Sites II* (2011)—involved visiting and interacting with relatively disparate archives containing landscape and aerial photography, including the extensive holdings of the Arab Image Foundation (AIF) in Beirut.[7]

Here Al-Ani came across publications relating to the work of early pioneers of aerial photography in the Middle East, including the French archaeologist and Jesuit missionary Antoine Poidebard, who was responsible for the production of aerial photographs of Roman sites in Syria in the mid-1930s. Observing how, when the sun is low in the sky, the outlines of archaeological features on the ground are thrown into sharper relief, Al-Ani has remarked that the long-term result of her research into these archives was 'the revelation that the discipline of aerial archaeology had developed as a direct result of the discovery of previously unknown sites during aerial operations carried out in the course of the First and World War IIs'.[8] To this already extensive formal archival research, the artist interpolated material found on blogs, in oral history archives and from transcripts of war crimes tribunals, including interviews with anthropologists and sociologists who had worked with survivors of mass killings in Kosovo, in the late 1990s, and in Iraq following the downfall of the Ba'athist regime there in 2003. Influenced by the work of Margaret Cox, a forensic anthropologist who had worked in Kosovo in the 1990s and, latterly, in Iraq in 2003 to identify victims of Saadam Hussein's regime, Al-Ani relates how she became increasingly interested in 'what happens to the evidence of atrocity and how it affects our understanding of the often beautiful landscapes into which the bodies of victims disappear'.[9]

The Aesthetics of Disappearance: A Land Without People explores *inter alia* political, military, archaeological and personal archives and how they relate to historically contested landscapes and the topography of the Middle East, specifically Iraq. Implicit within this work is the understanding that newer, less linear and latent narratives emerge out of what first appear to be fixed sites of archival documentation. Aerial reconnaissance photographs from decades ago presage the work of forensic anthropology and, consequently, articulate a demand that justice be served on behalf of those who are no longer able to petition for it. The artist becomes an archivist who—in collating, rearranging, and interpreting forms of archival information—produces alternate, perhaps unconventional but no less convincing, narratives of near disappearance and eventual re-emergence. These concerns reflect an abiding interest in the archive as a central component in unearthing, so to speak, and bringing together apparently disparate strands of historical narrative and testimony. The juridical, moral and political claims of the present provoke, in this framework, a contemporary rereading of archival images and their aesthetic repurposing.[10]

The hermeneutics of the archive, the interpretations wrought from it and their simultaneous dissemination, reveals the performative, contingent and ultimately dissonant, if not anachronistic, elements that underwrite archival procedures. In Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's *Wonder Beirut (History of a Pyromaniac Photographer)* (1997–2006), we encounter the elusive photographer Abdallah Farah, who published a series of postcards of Beirut in 1968. In 1975, according to the artists, Farah began mutilating the archival


Houari Boumediene


VUES DIVERSES
VUES D'ALGER
TUNIS.
HOZALI SAA
And when all the material arrived here in boxes,
it needed to be reordered...

◀ ▲
Stills from Zineb Sedira, *Gardiennes d'images*, 2010. Part I: Double projection with sound, 19 min — Format 16/9. Production SAM Art Projects, 2009. © Zineb Sedira. Image courtesy of the artist and Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris.

negatives so that they mirrored the destruction he was witnessing during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90). In 1997, Hadjithomas and Joreige began working on a project with Farah (whom they had met at the beginning of the 1990s) and his archive. The fact that Farah's postcard images were still available in bookshops, although the scenes they depicted—including buildings and monuments—had long since been destroyed, led the artists to consider a number of issues, not least the difficulties associated with archiving civil conflict. This sense of hermeneutic anxiety and an impending collapse, if not utter destruction, of the archive becomes all the more evident in the second phase of the project where, the artists record, Farah added other injuries to the negatives that were not directly related or attributable to bombings or destruction. This phase was termed the 'plastic process' and seemed to predict, through the use of archival images, future disasters. The archive here is riven by a troubling anachronism whereby events that are yet to happen are proleptically projected into the future. These portents of doom, out of place and out of time, signify the latent element in these images—that which is repressed and yet nascent.[11]

Wonder Beirut reveals a monitory premonition of what can happen to archival images; the sense that they are inherently predisposed to radical forms of destruction and deconstruction—both literal and conceptual—and can, in the face of trauma, become both withdrawn and indeed destroyed.[12] What authority, in this defaced and withdrawn state, can they bring to the representation of historical events and our understanding of conflict? It is this concept of archival withdrawal that remains key to the work of Walid Raad and the Atlas Group. Forming a core conceptual link within any discussion of contemporary art and the archive, Raad's work is largely concerned with an immaterial force: historical trauma and its discursive production and transmutation within given social, aesthetic and political archives. Influenced by the work of Jalal Toufic (specifically the latter's writings on the idea of the "withdrawal of tradition" during times of conflict), Raad's *oeuvre* calls on the past, present and future of archival and cultural knowledge to form a timeline that accommodates representational ambiguities and, to a certain extent, speculative anachronisms.[13] As we will see in a number of the essays included here, specifically those concerned with Raad's *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow: A History of Art in the Arab World*, (2007–ongoing), the strategic withdrawal of the archive and its tentative reappearance alludes to the precarity that undermines archives of modern and contemporary art in the region, some of which have been destroyed without trace. These gaps in art historical knowledge not only complicate aspects of art history but, crucially, also produce spaces for alternative ones to materialize.

The deferral of archival knowledge and access to it suggests a temporal disjunction, a caesura or aporia in a body of knowledge that suggests both historical forms of dissonance—in the form of a civil war, for example—and

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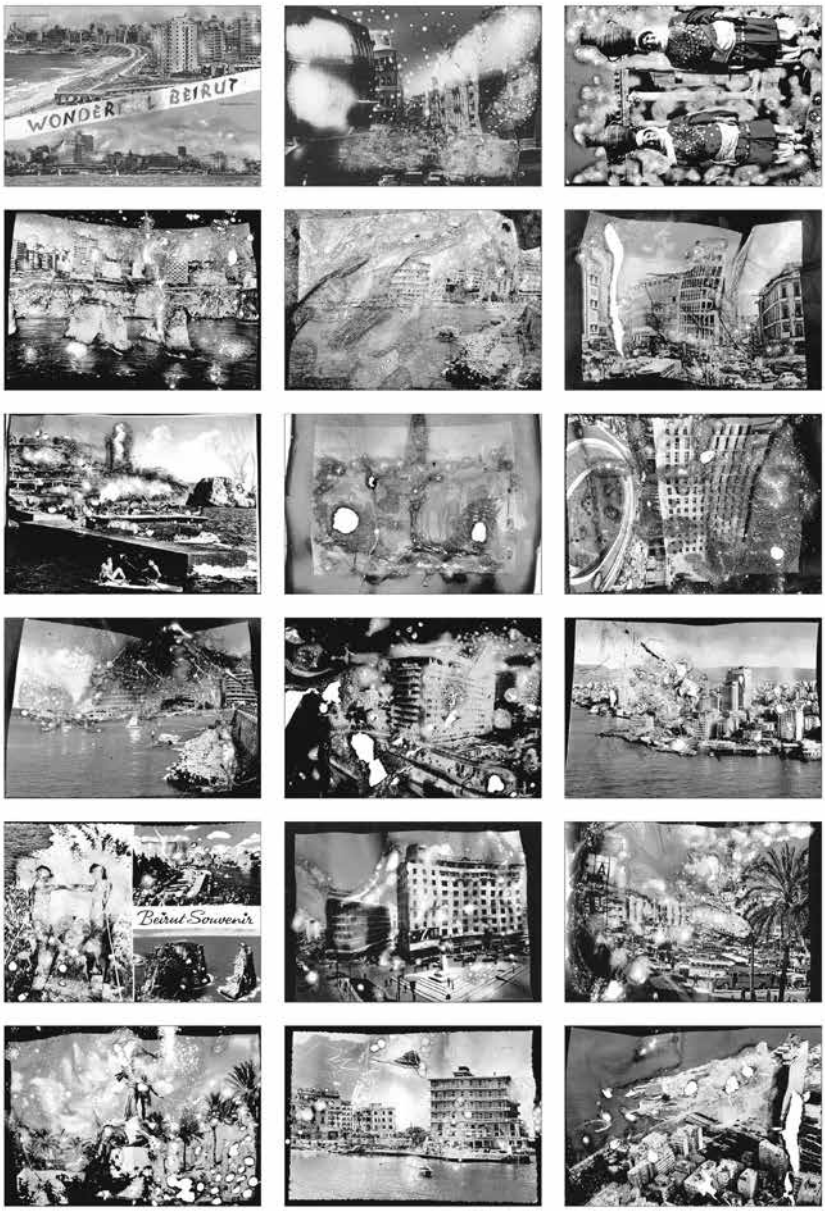
Joana Hadjthomas and Khalil Joreige. *Latent Images–01*, from the project *Wonder Beirut, the Story of a Pyromaniac Photographer*, 1997–2006. Drawer of films (extracts). Films from 11/04/98–4/11/98 (# 654-808). Photos indexed but not developed. Courtesy of the artists, Galerie In Situ Fabienne Leclerc (Paris), The Third Line (Dubai) and CRG (New York) © Joana Hadjthomas and Khalil Joreige.



▲
Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige. *Postcards of War*, from the project *Wonder Beirut, the Story of a Pyromaniac Photographer*, 1997–2006. 18 original postcards, each 4.13 x 5.75 in. Courtesy of the artists, Galerie In Situ Fabienne Leclerc (Paris), The Third Line (Dubai) and CRG (New York) © Joana Hadjthomas and Khalil Joreige.

cognitive dissonance: a sense that the archive (and the artists who work with it) enter into a pact of sorts that presents the archive as both a limitless and ordered field of research and, contiguously, an epistemically unstable source that is liable to imminent collapse if not total disappearance. In 2012, as part of Documenta 13, Akram Zaatari, with the help of a team of workers, dug a square hole in the grounds of a public park in Kassel and placed 16 wooden boxes—each containing painted photographic objects that were inspired by photographic film formats—in a steel mainframe structure. This was then covered with liquid concrete, leaving only an inconspicuous huddle of steel rods visible above ground as a marker for what lay beneath. The work in question, *Time Capsule* (2012), is an example of an artist archiving works that may never conceivably see the light of day again. In this instance of entombment, Zaatari's act recalls another by the then Director of National Museum of Beirut, Emir Maurice Chehab and his wife Olga who, at the height of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90), removed artefacts from the museum and encased others too heavy to move in wooden shuttering and concrete. To dissuade looters, antiquities were also buried in the museum's basement behind a series of steel reinforced concrete walls.[14] Almost the entire catalogue of the museum, including its card indexes and photographic archives, were destroyed during the civil war but the damage would have been far greater had it not been for Chebab's prescience in protecting it.[15] The conundrum, of course, was that the protection of the collection also ensured its withdrawal from public viewing and Zaatari's burying of his own work in *Time Capsule* not only references Chebab's fortuitous act of foresight, but also emphasizes the extent to which the photographic archive can become, as a result of trauma or the exigencies placed upon it in the present, withdrawn and thereafter deferred.

In many ways, *Time Capsule* reverses the archival impulse that has long been a feature of Zaatari's work, including *In This House* (2005), *Hashem el-Madani: Studio Practices* (2006–ongoing), *On Photography*, *People and Modern Times* (2010) and the artist's long association with the Arab Image Foundation (AIF). As a one-time member and co-founder of the AIF, Zaatari is concerned with how the archival impulse—the will to collate, order and produce value—decontextualizes images by removing them from their original social and political economy. Speaking of *On Photography*, *People and Modern Times* (2010), Zaatari has observed that the work was supposed to 'juxtapose two lives and two worlds that photographs in the collection of the Arab Image Foundation experienced: once in the hands of their original owners and once in the custody of the AIF [...] In this work I raise for the first time some kind of critique on the narrow understanding of photograph preservation, which considers photographs as objects isolated from social and emotional ties'.[16]

There is a profound insight here into what an archive does in both a material and immaterial sense: in the moment of decontextualizing an image, a photograph for example, the archive not only takes it out of its social and

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Walid Raad, *Appendix XVIII: Plates*, 2012 from the project *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*. Archival inkjet prints on archival paper, 54 plates, framed. 54.3 x 42 cm, each. Exhibition view, Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut. Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg.


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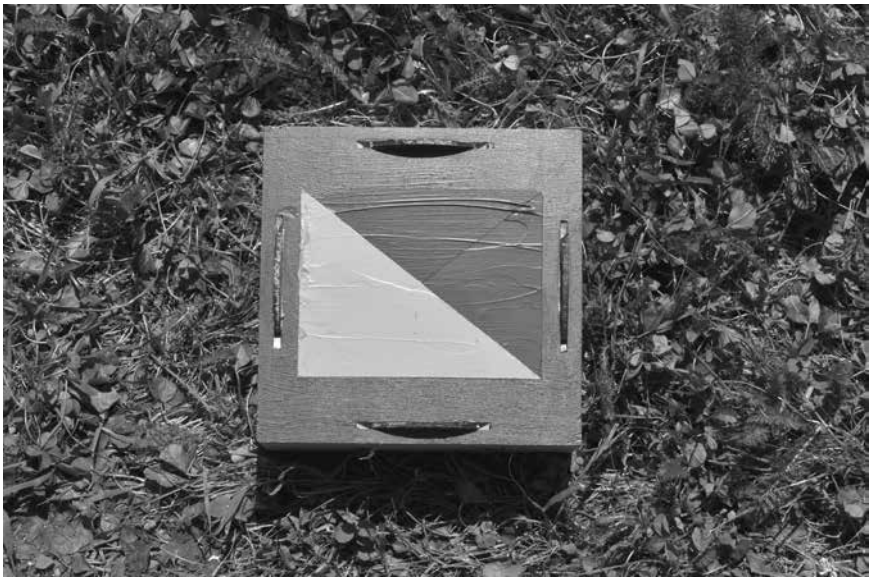
▲
Walid Raad, *Index XXVI, Artists, Saadi Wall 004*, 2011 from the project *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*. Detail. Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg.

emotional environment, it simultaneously effects a system of radical deracination whereby a social, historical and political element is displaced from its immediate conditions of production and circulation. The photograph thereafter becomes an object of speculation, be it financial, aesthetic or otherwise, and this foundational displacement becomes a corroborative gesture that substantiates the exclusive authority of the archive. In disallowing the presence of experience (in considering, say, photographs in isolation from their social and emotional ties), the archive not only demarcates its records but also what is missing from those records: the emotional, day-to-day, social and experience-based interactions that produced the very economy out of which the image first emerged. It is with this in mind that Zaatari has proposed, perhaps fancifully but no less seriously, that the archive of the AIF be returned to the people with whom it first resided and thereafter back into the social orders from whence it came.

The command of an archive, its purview and influence, is based upon the ideal of prerogative—the right exercised by an individual or group who hold office—and aggregation; the accrual, that is, of information within an authoritative and formally reproductive edifice.[17] The institutional, governmental, social, cultural and administrative function of the archive, its development as a body of information into an unquestioned system of applied narratives and beliefs, should not, however, overshadow the personal, dissonant, contingent and performative aspect of the archive as a contested site of enunciation. Throughout *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East*, these elements not only recur in contemporary art practices, they also reveal the archive as a structure that is far from epistemically stable, historically fixed or hermeneutically coherent. As we will see in the essays outlined below, this is a contingent, fortuitous and co-dependent moment that promotes conjectural possibility, potentiality and uncertainty and, in so doing, perhaps foretells of a radical emergency in the very ideal of the archive as a system of knowledge production in late modernity.

Archival Dissonance and the Future of the Archive

The precariousness of the archive as a material form, prevalent throughout Zineb Sedira's *Image Keepers*, is the focus of **Mariam Ghani**'s essay, 'What We Left Unfinished: The Artist and the Archive'. Archives are more than the sum of their materials, Ghani argues, and the apparatus of the archive—in the context of recent historical events in Afghanistan—needs to be understood in perfomative terms, one that includes administrators, historians, redactors, janitors-cum-archivists and readers, all of whom, in different ways, 'perform' the archive for its public. Lamenting how it can be also destroyed (or become withdrawn) through a performative act such as burning, Ghani details the



◀▲
Akram Zaatari, *Time Capsule*, Karlsaue Park, Kassel, 2012. dOCUMENTA 13. Courtesy of the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery.

destruction of the Afghan Films archive in 1996. In a comment that chimes with regional concerns, she explains that it is neither easy nor is it straightforward to work with archives in a country like Afghanistan, 'where books, films and monuments have all been subject to burning; stupas are looted and statues shattered; and sites sacred for one reason or another are eroded by both natural and human disasters'.

If the material reality of the archive is subject to change, then its immaterial narratives are subject to the same forces. To this observation, we may want to enquire further into the role that state and institutional archives can play in not only maintaining a shared or collective history through archiving, but in disrupting the narrative of archived histories. In **Nick Denes**' 'Measures of Stillness and Movement: The Poster in Cinema of the Palestinian Revolution', film posters are examined in relation to their state-building, revolutionary function. The film poster, as an archived artefact, Denes suggests, signalled ideological and institutional allegiances across a broad spectrum of competing and contesting factions within Palestine and beyond. When subjected to a mode of 'archival stilling', the 'moving' poster image was subsequently reproduced as a static resource from which 'new political-aesthetic movements might be derived'. Referring to the work of Raoul-Jean Moulin, Denes further remarks on the forward-looking aspect of the archive, namely, that '[t]he unmoving poster-as-record [...] "becomes a kind of oracle to be consulted", not least by artists concerned with "forging weapons for the future"'.[18]

The issue of the archive as a historical, future-oriented reality needs, of course, to be considered in relation to other more immediate forms of archived information. In **Tom Holert**'s essay, 'Coming to Terms: Contemporary Art, Civil Society and Knowledge Politics in the Middle East', a useful distinction is offered between art practices that address concerns around the archival accessibility, suppression, exploitation, racialization, gendering and monetization of knowledge, and thereafter engage in 'epistemic' or 'knowledge politics', and those who engage with a more general notion of 'cultural knowledge' and its circulation.

Detailing, in particular, **Adelita Husni-Bey**'s multi-part installation, *(On) Difficult Terms* (2013), where the artist—working with journalists at *Mada Masr* in Cairo—created a 'mind-map', Holert outlines how this project highlighted the ideological vagueness and impracticability of key terms such as 'revolution', 'coup', and 'Arab spring' as they were being deployed by western media to report on the 'Egypt situation'. Arguing that journalism, as pursued by *Mada Masr* and certain contemporary artists, participates in a radically political economy of knowledge, Holert proposes that epistemological ambiguity can also play a part in archival knowledge production and, conversely, its fallibility as a model of applied knowledge.

The idea that an archival method could speak to the historical condition of culture in a specific milieu is an attendant if not pivotal concern for a

significant number, if not all, of the artists' projects included in this volume. In thinking about the artist as a *de facto* archivist, **Lucien Samaha** presents his own particular approach to archiving and indexing through the ordering of his vast photography collection that has become, over time, a systematic biographical register. Recalling the stirrings of his career as a photographer in an interview with **Walid Raad**, also included here in an abridged version, Samaha recounts how he indexes his personal archive by inviting friends to go over past images and provide keywords and the names of those they once knew.[19] The archive is presented here as a performative, idiosyncratic and socially interactive entity; it is open-ended and subject to uncertainty and alternative modes of recall and application.

There is, in **Ruanne Abou-Rahme** and **Basel Abbas**' *Incidental Insurgents* (2012–13), a similarly unique contemporary archive mapped out across apparently diverse figures. This multilayered, narrative-based work references the writings of Roberto Bolaño—author of *The Savage Detectives*, 1998, and a quixotic, itinerant author in his own right—and traces an unlikely allegiance between the Russian revolutionary and author Victor Serge, his contemporary anarchist-bandits in 1910s Paris and a bandit gang involved in a rebellion against the British in 1930s Palestine. Into this already combustive mix, the artists emerge as protagonists in a narrative that is fraught with wrong-turns and dangerous possibility. This singular archive produces a form of insurgent knowledge that articulates the incompleteness of a shared language across oppositional movements. Fragmentation and an unreconciled, perhaps ultimately irreconcilable, impulse for political allegiances competes with a technique that flirts with disaffection and more radical forms of action.

For **Héla Ammar**, this sense of insurgency is revealed in *Tarz* (2014), where the current Tunisian political situation is explored through archival objects and photographs. Using embroidery—*tarz* is the Arabic word for the practice—in conjunction with official archives, Ammar explores historical memory and forms of popular resistance with direct and personalized reference to their political ramifications in post-revolutionary Tunisia. Elsewhere, **Naeem Mohaiemen**'s *Asfan's Long Day (The Young Man Was*, *Part 2)* (2014) presents the archive as an integral element in an exposition on national borders, revolutionary wars and insurgent belonging in post-partition South Asia. Exploring a strain of radical politics from the 1970s, this essay film, which follows on from Mohaiemen's *United Red Army (The Young Man Was*, *Part 1)* (2011), details the dissolution of the so-called Left and draws connections between German radicalism and Bangladeshi activist politics through extensive archival footage.

Independence and insurgency are also recurring elements in **Maryam Jafri**'s research into the archives of erstwhile colonies where, in *Independence Day 1936–1967* (2009–ongoing), she gathered over 67 archival photographs of the independence day celebrations in countries including, but not

▲
Akram Zaatari, *Damaged Negatives: Scratched Portrait of Mrs. Baqari*, 2012. Inkjet print, framed. Made from 35 mm scratched negative from the Hashem el Madani archive. Courtesy of the artist.

▲
Akram Zaatari, *In This House*, 2005. Courtesy of the artist.

limited to, Indonesia, India, Ghana, Senegal, Syria, Malaysia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Benin, Burkina Faso, Tunisia and the Philippines. The immediacy of revolution and its aftermath are further revealed in Adelita Husni-Bey's *Residents on Tripoli Street Archive War* (2014), where she archived the landscape of Misrata, the third largest city in Libya and the site of one of the longest and bloodiest sieges during the 2011 civil war. This archiving of a specific topographical place is likewise subjected to a more personalized form of remembrance in **Amina Menia**'s *The Golden Age* (2011–ongoing), where she tellingly reveals an archival nostalgia for Orientalist-inspired images of Algeria in the urban frescoes that dot the city of Algiers.

This prevalent tradition of artists interrogatively engaging with the archive as an institution, and the ideological contexts they give rise to, is key to **Guy Mannes-Abbott**'s reflections on the work of Emily Jacir. Drawing on Hal Foster's 2004 essay, 'An Archival Impulse', Mannes-Abbott's explores the way in which Jacir's work positions the archive as a way of working from fiction (the production of an ideological reading of events) to fact (the actuality of an event and its immanent incontrovertibility as a historical reality).[20] In the case of Jacir's *Material for a Film* (2006–ongoing), a project that examines the archived facts and fictions around the contested life of the Palestinian intellectual Wael Zuaiter, there is a concerted effort to recover fragments of his life story that obviates a version of his life that portrays him as a 'terrorist' involved in the deaths of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. We return here to the conceptualization of the archive as an extra-juridical space, a realm of contested and contestable knowledge production and historical consciousness.

In **Rona Sela**'s 'Rethinking National Archives in Colonial Countries and Zones of Conflict', she considers the archive as an ideological tool for constructing national, historical and political narratives that shape a country's modern-day perception and presentation of itself. Observing Israel's National Photography Archives, Sela explores how the archive constructs, conserves and contextualizes photographs to serve Zionist ideals and how, as a result, information on Palestinians can be extracted from the archive to write an alternative history of a subjugated people for political purposes. Continuing this sense of the archive as a dissonant, if not incommensurate space for the production of knowledge, **Ariella Azoulay**'s contribution, 'Archive', reconsiders Derrida's propositional notion of 'archive fever' and contrasts it with what she calls the 'abstract' and the 'material' archive. Analysing Emily Jacir's *ex libris* (2010–12) and her own archive, *Constituent Violence 1947–1950*, Azoulay reconsiders the potential inherent in 'archive fever' and how it offers an opportunity to articulate the archive as a formal mode of political engagement for our time.

A number of the essays collected in *Dissonant Archives* remind us of a key point, albeit one consigned to a footnote, in Derrida's *Archive Fever* where he proposed that there is no political power without control of the archive. 'Effective democratization,' he argued, 'can always be measured by

this essential criterion: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.'[21] In this context, Derrida focuses on a singular desire inherent within the archive: the provision of a foundational authority for state power and sovereign command. This sovereign, state-controlled sense of the archive has become an emblematic factor in delegitimizing forms of subjectivity and the sense that the figure of the 'occupied', or the migrant, has become the exemplary rather than the exceptional subject of our times.[22] Archival power, in the context of collating information, producing knowledge and effecting hermeneutic authority over the knowledge produced, validates an authoritarian power that is at once visible—it gives rise to laws that affect individuals and communities—and invisible insofar as it often remains hidden from public view and only accessible through forms of mediation and intermediaries. This discretionary and discriminatory logic of archiving, as applied to the voice of the migrant, is explored in **Lawrence Abu Hamdan**'s *Aural Contract Audio Archive* (2010–ongoing). In this work, individual components of the artist's extensive archive are pooled, extracted and produced as audio essays, texts and investigations into the political function of archival knowledge in producing exclusionary modes of existence within sovereign-defined notions of statehood and citizenship.[23]

The archive as an architectonics of knowledge, an edifice within which enunciative possibilities are produced, contested and rendered provisional, is further examined in **Chad Elias**' analysis of Walid Raad's multi-volume *History of Contemporary and Modern Art in the Arab World* (2007–ongoing). Setting this work within the conditions of a broader discussion about the future of arts pedagogy and cultural infrastructure in the region, Elias argues that Raad's approach to historical Islamic art could demonstrate a way for cultural and artistic institutions in the region to collect, archive and preserve work for future generations.

In **Lucie Ryzova**'s essay, 'I Have The Picture: The Making of Photographic Heritage in Contemporary Egypt', this sense of nascence and preservation is considered in relation to Egypt's photographic archival history. Detailing the manner in which Egypt has constructed its own image of its photographic heritage through vintage photographs, and the value assigned to them by individual collectors, Ryzova suggests that this formal production of an archived heritage is nevertheless complicated by the perception that the post-1952 Egyptian state failed to preserve the country's cultural artefacts—a failure that is all too evident in the decay of public archives and museums. In **Sussan Babaie**'s essay, 'The Global in the Local: Implicating Iran in Art and History', the impact of developments within the western conception of the archive and how it impacted on histories of art is focused on Iranian cultural production. Locating her argument in an understanding of the global that is co-dependent on positioning the local, alongside a concept of the present as a space that has an awareness of both past and the future, Babaie pursues this logic through

a close examination of work by, amongst others, **Jananne Al-Ani**, Walid Raad and Slavs and Tatars.

Institutions as archives, and museums as repositories of knowledge, are subjected to forms of institutional critique that have subsequently become archives in their own right. **Burak Arıkan**'s *On Networks of Dispossession* (2013) is a collective data-compiling and mapping project about urban transformation in Turkey that closely examines the relationships that exist among corporations, capital and power in the country. Similarly, in *On Higher Education Industrial Complex* (2013), the networks in higher education (specifically private universities) in Turkey are mapped so that links between boards of trustees, corporations and other private institutions are made clearer. This effort to hold corporations and institutions to account is likewise a significant feature of **Gulf Labor**'s *52 Weeks* (2013–14), which reproduces a digital archive of artists' responses to the subject of coercive recruitment and the deplorable living and working conditions of migrant labourers in Abu Dhabi's Saadiyat Island (Island of Happiness).

The future of the archive as a material and digital entity is of course crucial to any overall discussion about its sustainability and long-term function.[24] **Laura Cugusi**'s essay on the recent projects of the Arab Digital Expression Foundation (ADEF) explores the digital archive in the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution and how that context affected the type of work that the ADEF was able to undertake. Similarly, in **Laila Shereen Sakr**'s **(VJ Um Amel)** extended contribution, the issue of digital archiving is related to how Arabic social media has become a source for a new, transformative archive that can collate information on cultures in conflict and those undergoing radical forms of change. Focusing specifically on R-Shief, Inc., a laboratory for harvesting Arabic-language tweets, Shereen Sakr presents it as a case study into how an archived digital format allows independent and real-time stories to form part of a counter-archive to those of state institutions. Throughout **Pad.ma**'s provocative take on the future of the archive, detailed here in *10 Thesis on the Archive*, there is a similar proposal that we stop 'waiting' for the state or institutionalized archive and produce our own. 'To not wait for the archive,' the authors suggest, 'is often a practical response to the absence of archives or organized collections in many parts of the world. It also suggests that to wait for the state archive, or to otherwise wait to be archived, may not be a healthy option.' For Pad.ma, the archive, in its personalized, performative and digitized state, has a greater efficiency to it, an economy of usage that suggests a viral, or indeed parasitic, context for the future of the archive and its operations.

Future archives, in the framework of both digital and material evidence, would appear to be undergoing dismaying levels of redaction.[25] Working with *Other Document #131*, a heavily redacted CIA report on the capture and waterboarding of Abu Zubaydah (a Saudi man detained in Faisalabad, Pakistan, on 28 March 2002), **Joshua Craze** explores the physicality of redaction in

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Vahap Avşar, *İpdal (C64) / Cancel (C64)*, 2014. C-print 154 x 120 cm. Courtesy of the Estate of the Artist and Rampa Istanbul.

archived texts in his essay, 'Excerpts from a Grammar of Redaction'. Examining the way in which the redaction, because of the way it is carried out, renders a certain visibility to redacted information, Craze's contribution points to an imminent concern: what will the archived history of the present look like in censored form? Again, issues around legality and its suspension come to the fore here and re-emerge forcibly in **Timothy P.A Cooper**'s 'The Black Market Archive' where he explores film piracy in Pakistan, arguing that whilst the black market in films is largely proscribed by the authorities it also, somewhat counter-intuitively, could form the basis of an official, national film archive.

The archive as a haunted, disturbed space that re-emerges in the present and regenerates historical lineages is a feature of **Ania Dabrowska**'s project, *Drift / Resolution (from A Lebanese Archive)* (2013–14). A series of photographic grids, triptychs, diptychs and collages, all sourced from the archival collection of Diab Alkarssifi, *Drift / Resolution* presents personal work alongside found family albums and studio prints collected from across the Middle East. Stretching back to the late 1890s, and covering the Lebanese Civil War and the post-conflict years (and continuing up to 1993 when Alkarssifi emigrated to the UK), the photographs presented here are stripped of dates and captions and repositioned in seemingly random contexts by Dabrowska. This chance discovery of an archive, and its implications, is mirrored in **Mariam Motamedi Fraser**'s discussion of 'Nurafkan', named after an unpublished manuscript of an epic story attributed to Ali Mirdrakvandi, and purportedly written in 1940s Iran. Motamedi Fraser's role as a link to the physical archive for Gholamreza Nematpour, a documentary filmmaker interested in 'Nurafkan', leads her to a discussion of the ways in which archives can be transformed and understood based on their accessibility and the narratives and superstitions surrounding their preservation.

Recalling Hadjithomas and Joreige's *Wonder Beirut*, **Vahap Avşar**'s series of images, *Ipdal* (2010), relates the events surrounding his return to Istanbul in 2010, after 15 years abroad, and his search for the postcards of the city that he had used as source material for his paintings when he lived there. Disappointed to discover that the company who produced these postcards had long gone out of business, Avşar embarked on a search that finally led him to the source archive, which he procured, and a series of images marked *ipdal*, which is Turkish for 'cancelled'. These photographs depicted various pastoral landscapes and Turkish soldiers in decorous poses with women. The Turkish military, however, had declared that such representations lacked the seriousness with which they wanted to portray their soldiers and the photographs never made it to postcard stage. Also included here are another series of images from the original archive, *Chief Commander* (2011), which depict seven large-scale photographs of popular postcards showing famous monumental statues of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the first President of Turkey. As Avşar notes, these sculptures were produced by two European sculptors in the

1920s—Heinrich Krippel and Pietro Canonica—and, in their Modernist style, could be seen to represent a repressed European history of art and humanities that had long fascinated Atatürk.

The archive, as Derrida commented in *Archive Fever*, is not only a radically unstable form of inscription, it is also haunted by the moment of writing and the traces of its own ontological coming into being. In its manner of writing and recording, to put it perhaps more bluntly, it presents us with the very means of its own indelible vulnerability to reinterpretation, if not its fallibility as a document. In **Shaheen Merali**'s 'The Spectre (of Knowledge): The Recordings of the Cosmopolitan', he compares the archive to a 'roaming spirit—a visible but disembodied entity'. In this unstable, haunted state the archive's susceptibility to reinscription becomes all the more evident. It is this phantasmal instant that presents the artist with the opportunity to renegotiate and rewrite, visually or otherwise, the archive as a reality in waiting. But, in this schema, the artist also becomes an unreliable archivist—a nodal point for distilling the essence and ambivalence of the archive into, on one hand, a form of radical uncertainty and, on the other, a call to action.

Writing on his acclaimed film, *The Stuart Hall Project* (2013; UK: Smoking Dogs Films), which traces the seminal influence of a figure to whom many, this writer included, are indebted for their work on the area of cultural studies, **John Akomfrah** has observed the importance of the archive in recounting forms of social memory associated with (and often produced by) thinkers such as Stuart Hall. For Akomfrah, the 'question of "honouring" begins there; with memory, with uncovering the stems of memory, the ghosts of history, sifting through the debris and detritus of past events for traces of the phantoms'.Again, fittingly given Hall's seminal influence, it is an artist's intervention into the archive that retrieves and makes sense of the past for future generations.

The video installation, *Chronoscope*, *1951*, *11pm* (2009–11), by **Alessandro Balteo Yazbeck**, made in collaboration with **Media Farzin**, also draws on a not-too-distant archival source, namely, the American television interview series called *Longines Chronoscope*. Aired on the CBS network from 1951–55, the format for this programme, in which two journalists interviewed a guest, presents a document of US television aesthetics in the making. As the artists recall, politicians, diplomats and corporate executives were invited throughout this series to discuss a wide range of issues that spanned world trade issues, Communist insurgency threats, mutual defence treaties and, frequently during the year 1951, US access to petroleum resources in the Middle East.

The archive is changing, in terms of its function and form, and its ghosts return to trouble any sense of ease or resolution in this most dissonant, if not dissident, of times. This anxiety is captured all the more eloquently in **Meriç Algün Ringborg**'s project, *The Library of Unborrowed Books* (2012–ongoing), which bases itself on the concept of the library-cum-archive as a

singular institution that produces language and knowledge. Within this space, there are seminal works that have been decided upon and they circulate with an authority and inherent degree of authenticity. This is the image of the library as a canonical archive. However, *The Library of Unborrowed Books*, as the name suggests, is made up of the books that are left behind, unborrowed, unread and neglected. The framework in this instance, as the artist notes, hints at what has been disregarded, knowledge essentially unconsumed, and puts on display what has eluded us in the construction of future archives.

I began this essay with discussions of work by a number of artists who have been the subject of essays and interviews in *Ibraaz*, the online research publication that is behind the production of this current volume and the ongoing series *Visual Culture in the Middle East*. It may seem solipsistic to do so, but the intention was relatively straightforward. For one, *Ibraaz* has become a major resource for researchers and students with an interest in visual culture across the disparate regions of the Middle East, and our essays are usually lengthy and our interviews invariably in-depth. We have become, in short, an archive for anyone with an interest in, first, visual culture and, second, the politics of cultural production within, beyond and about the region. The fact that we have become an archive brings with it a significant number of responsibilities, not least the demand to make information as accessible as possible. It also brings with it a responsibility to enquire into what role art criticism can play in producing a productive (rather than merely reproductive) system for analysing, critiquing and archiving cultural production across the region.

It is with these points in mind that we need to understand how a 'knowledge economy' has emerged as an essential component in any critical and historical consideration of contemporary art and the subsequent production of archived information about culture. The virtual archive has, moreover, enabled forms of manipulation that have offered a salutary reminder of the power systems that knowledge can harness. Under these conditions, the archive has offered artists and cultural practitioners a considerable resource for exploring and interrogating precisely how knowledge is both utilized and instrumentalized, which gives rise to a further question: Can contemporary art practices and art criticism produce forms of archived knowledge to counter the instrumentalized, often monetized and politicized forms of knowledge that drive the neo-liberal will towards global hegemony? And, if so, to what use can that suppositional knowledge be put?

These, and other questions, recur throughout *Dissonant Archives* and reveal a singular concern: if we are to fully understand the function of an archive, we must consider the means and conditions of production that enable knowledge to come into being and be archived in the first place. As a discursive system of knowledge production, archives enable statements and, crucially, disallow the authority of other statements. This is a concern for artists and is evident in the logic of the archive as a system of enunciability—an

apparatus of knowledge and power—that remains crucial to understanding, if not building upon, the seminal work that Michel Foucault produced on archives. Understood as structures for not only enabling the emergence and stratification of knowledge systems, but also the contiguous categorization of subjects, the archive, for Foucault, is above all else productive, not reproductive—a singular insight that brings together many of the artists and contributors included here.[26] The underlying point in Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1969, is not, strictly speaking, concerned with the reproduction of knowledge and subjects; it is about the production of future knowledge and nascent forms of propositional subjectivity. As a system of discursive production, we should therefore consider the enunciative, productive possibilities that the archive lays down and how it 'is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements *as unique events*'.[27] In this reading, as we will see throughout *Dissonant Archives*, the archive is not only contingent, existing within the vagaries of time and events (and reacting to them), it is formative and performative, enunciative and secretive, future-oriented and chronic and, ultimately, an anxious, dissonant structure.

Archives, finally, speak to and attempt to prescribe how future generations will understand the constraints of the present and the far from remote petitions of the past. This inherent performativity, the demand that the archive repeatedly performs the substantiative truth of its being, is precisely what attracts artists to the formal, material structure of archives and their often informal, immaterial processes. The over-arching sense of the archive that emerges throughout what follows, therefore, and albeit in relation to distinct and disparate modes of production, is the extent to which artists produce their own deliberative and highly speculative vision of the future. Again, the question of art's relationship to the archive might seem expansive, however such enquiries do reveal a horizon of future possibility upon which art as a practice, perhaps uniquely, seems to not only increasingly orient itself but also seems, as we will now see, amply equipped to engage with.

1. Jacques Derrida, *Archive fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1996), 36. (Emphasis in original).

2. There have been a number of shows to date that have focused on the relationship of art practices to archiving, one of the more significant being Okwui Enwezor's 'Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art' (International Center of Photography, New York, 2008). A list of other events, which is by no means exhaustive, would include recent conferences such as 'Speak, Memory: On archives and other strategies of (re) activation of cultural memory' (Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, 2010); 'Out of the Archive: Artists, Images and History' (Tate Modern, London, 2011); 'Archive State' (Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia, 2014); and 'Radical Archives' (NYU, New York, 2014). The second edition of the 'Qalandiya International Biennial' (Qi) (Jerusalem, 2014) was organized around the theme of 'Archives, Lived and Shared"; and, in 2015, 'Past Disquiet: Narratives and Ghosts from the International Art Exhibition for Palestine, 1978' (Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona, 2015) presented an archival and documentary exhibition that explored the history of *The International Art Exhibition for Palestine* (Beirut, 1978). Recent publications on this subject include: Elisabetta Galasso and Marco Scotini, eds, *Politiche della Memoria: Documentario e Archivo*, (Roma: DeriveApprodi, 2014); Sonja Mejcher-Atassi and John Pedro Schwartz, eds, *Archives*, *Museums and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012); Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009); Simone Osthoff, *Performing the Archive: The Transformation of the Archive in Contemporary Art from Repository of Documents to Art Medium* (New York: Atropos Press, 2009); Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008); Charles Merewether, ed., *The Archive* (London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2006); and, Jane Connarty, Josephine Lanyon, eds, *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive within Contemporary Artists' Film and Video* (Bristol: Picture This Moving Image, 2006). More recently, the *Journal of Visual Culture* dedicated an issue to the archive, see 'The Archives Issue', eds Juliette Kristensen and Marquard Smith, *Journal of Visual Culture* (Vol. 12, no. 3, December 2013).

3. The subject of the nomenclature surrounding definitions of the so-called 'Middle East' continues to productively disrupt any cursory use of the term in relation to cultural production. I have examined these issues in-depth elsewhere, see 'The Production of Cultural Knowledge in the Middle East Today' in *Art & Patronage in the Middle East*, eds Hossein Amirsadeghi and Maryam Homayoun Eisler (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010), 10–15; and 'The Burden of Representation: Contemporary Visual Arts in the Middle East' in *Representing Islam: Comparative Perspectives* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 168–97.

4. I would direct readers here to Benji Boyadgian's project *The Temporary Archive* (2014–ongoing), in which the artist has archived, through the use of watercolours executed *in situ*, a large swathe of land along the Wadi el-Shami valley in Jerusalem. In a premonition of the valley's destruction by encroaching Israeli settlements, Boyadgian has meticulously noted each ruin of the field houses, dating from the Ottoman period, that dot the area and the olive groves that grow there. For the artist, this archive of paintings presents a form of 'preemptive archeology' that recreates a historical ecumene, the latter a term used by geographers to mean inhabited land.

5. Born in Blida, a city 45 kilometres south-west of Algiers, in 1922, Mohamed Kouaci was a member of the National Liberation Front (FLN) during Algeria's war of independence (1954–62) and a photographer for *El Moudjahid*, the official newspaper of the FLN. Following the war of independence, he continued to serve the newly independent Algerian government and his archive includes seminal images of figures from that period who visited Algeria (including Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba, King Hassan II, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Che Guevara and Frantz Fanon), alongside portraits of the Tunisian president at the time, Habib Bourguiba, and Ahmed Ben Bella and Houari Boumediene (the first and second presidents of post-independence Algeria, respectively).

6. Since the making and showing of the film, Sedira has noted that several academics and journalists (who discovered Kouaci's photographic archive via her film) have contacted Safia Kouaci to write about or research the archive, but there has been no movement to preserve it. Email message to author (6 January 2015).

7. The AIF was set up in Beirut in 1997 to preserve, study and archive photography from the Arab world. Apart from the AIF, Al-Ani specifically worked with the photographic archives of the Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC, where she discovered unpublished aerial reconnaissance photographs of the Western Front taken by a unit established by the renowned photographer and curator Edward Steichen during World War II; and the archives of the Freer and Sackler Galleries, where she found the remarkable landscape photographs of the German archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld. For a fuller account of the background to this work, see Nat Muller, 'Technologies of History: Jananne Al-Ani in conversation with Nat Muller', *Ibraaz* (26 June, 2014) http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/137/ (accessed 24 December 2014).

8. *Ibid*.

9. *Ibid*.

10. The question of forensics, in the context of aesthetics, is a vital element in the recently published volume *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, ed. by Forensic Architecture (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014). Observing that the term *forensis* is Latin for 'pertaining to the forum', and was therefore a multidimensional space for law, politics and economy, the ambition of this volume is to resituate and expand the idea of contemporary forensics so as to reassert its role in articulating public truths and claims for justice.

11. For a further discussion of latency in the archive, see Uriel Orlow, 'Latent Archives, Roving Lens' in *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive within Contemporary Artists' Film and Video*, eds Jane Connarty and Josephine Lanyon (Bristol: Picture This Moving Image, 2006), 34–47.

12. For a fuller discussion of the work in relation to archives in Lebanon, see Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil

Joreige, 'Wonder Beirut' in *Out of Beirut*, ed. Suzanne Cotter (Oxford: Modern Art Oxford, 2006), 76–80.

13. Jalal Toufic's thesis in *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster* (2009) provides a pertinent point of departure for discussing this notion of radical withdrawal in a non-material sense. In aspects of Walid Raad's work, for example, there is the suggestion, garnered from Toufic, that certain wars and conflicts not only affect a culture on a material level (the destruction of museums, artworks, books and so on) but also on an immaterial level whereby an artwork and the ideas behind it become unavailable to vision and thereafter 'withdrawn'—that is, remote and not readily understood or legible in the present or indeed future. The role of the artist thereafter is to either recuperate or point to the modes and mechanisms of withdrawal at work within these archives and artefacts.

14. During Lebanon's civil war, the National Museum of Beirut had the unfortunate luck to be situated along the so-called 'green line' that separated east from west Beirut, and therefore the various warring factions from one another. Its edifice and interior were severely damaged by the fighting along what came to be known alternatively as 'museum alley' and 'the route of death'. The museum is the focus of Lamia Joreige's *Under-Writing Beirut—Mathaf* (2013–ongoing). For a fuller account of this work and its relationship to archives, see Anthony Downey, 'Re-Enacting Rupture: Lamia Joreige in conversation with Anthony Downey', *Ibraaz* (30 April 2014) http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/124/ (accessed 12 December 2014).

15. The first plans to restore the museum were mooted in 1992, but the walls protecting the basement were not formally opened until the museum's doors and windows were installed. Restoration on the museum started in 1995 and it was officially inaugurated on 25 November 1997.

16. Anthony Downey, 'Photography as Apparatus: Akram Zaatari in conversation with Anthony Downey', *Ibraaz* (28 January 2014) http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/113/ (accessed 14 December 2014).

17. This is effectively Derrida's reading of the archive as an edifice and edict, as outlined in the opening pages of *Archive Fever* where he begins with archiving the term 'archive' before observing its origins in *arkhē*: the origin or beginning, or first principle. Remarking on how the Greek term *arkheion* refers to a house or domicile where superior magistrates, *archons*, resided and issued forth commands, the principal term that emerges in these pages is the prefix *arche* which alludes to both the archive and architecture. In archiving the emergence of the archive, Derrida highlights its commencement (how it is representative of a beginning or starting point in an ontological sense) and how, in a nomological, law-giving sense, the contours of the archive contiguously produce the command of law. Domicile and dominion, if not domination, become one in the edifice of the archive.

18. See Raoul-Jean Moulin, 'Posters for the Struggling Nations' in *The Baghdad International Poster Exhibition '79*, eds Raoul-Jean Moulin and Dia Al-Azzawi (London: Malvern Press Ltd, 1979), catalogue preface.

19. For the full extended interview with Walid Raad published in two parts see: Walid Raad, 'Chapters, Records, Keywords: Lucien Samaha in conversation with Walid Raad, Part I', *Ibraaz* (6 November 2013) http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/102/ (accessed 7 February 2015) and 'Influence, Passion, Process: Lucien Samaha in conversation with Walid Raad, Part II', *Ibraaz* (6 November 2013) http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/103/ (accessed 7 February 2015), respectively.

20. Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', *October*, no. 110, (Fall 2004): 3–22.

21. Jacques Derrida, *op cit*., 4, note 1.

22. I have written at length on this subject elsewhere. See Anthony Downey, 'Exemplary Subjects: Camps and the Politics of Representation' in *Giorgio Agamben: Legal, Political and Philosophical Perspectives*, Tom Frost, ed. (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 119–42.

23. This work is discussed at length in Anthony Downey 'Word Stress: Lawrence Abu Hamdan in conversation with Anthony Downey,' *Ibraaz* (2 May 2012) http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/21/ (accessed 12 Janaury 2015).

24. The issue of archiving the internet has become all the more significant following, in no particular order, the revelations from Edward Snowden, the hyper-surveillance that defines large swathes of public and private life and the passing of recent laws allowing individuals the right to remove material from the World Wide Web. For a fuller account of the inherent problems involved in archiving the internet, see Jill Lepore's informative essay, 'The Cobweb: Can the Internet be Archived?', *New Yorker* (26 January 2015): 34–41.

25. This point was made all the more pertinently in Mohamedou Ould Slahi's recently published *Guantánamo Diary* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2015). Imprisoned without charge at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, since 2002, Slahi's book, whilst heavily redacted, is the first and only diary written by a still-imprisoned Guantánamo detainee. Although a federal judge ordered his release in 2010, he still remains incarcerated.

26. I am mindful here of not digressing into a discussion of modern-day subjectivities, but it is crucial to any broad sense of the archive as a historical construct to understand that the subject—defined as a locus of multiple affinities that reside in the various confluences of reason and unreason, experience and desire, delusion and aspiration—is a syntactical, discursive construct that is produced by normative and normalizing discourses that are, in turn, dependent on historical shifts in meaning and substance over time. To note as much is to observe Foucault's over-arching insight: the subject is the product of the operation of political technologies—often located in the archive and archival impulse of modernity—on, through and within the social body. In short, disciplinary technologies, particularly the archive, produce subjects as both the effect and affect of productive forms of power and concomitant rituals of truth.

27. Michel Foucault (1969), *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (Pantheon Books: New York, 1972) 129. (Emphasis in original).

Excerpts from a Grammar of Redaction

Joshua Craze

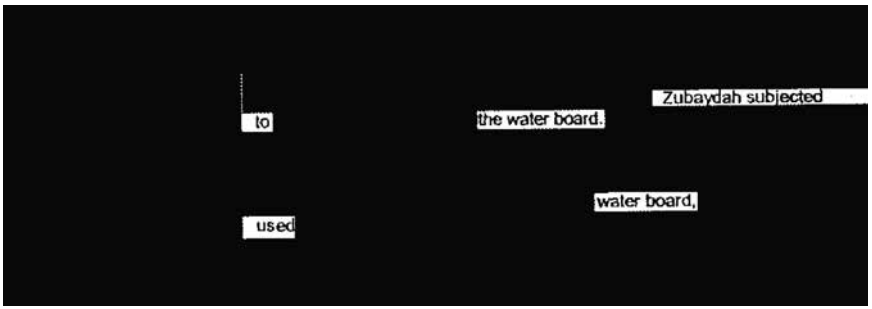
It begins with a sentence, of sorts.

Figure 1 is part of a page from *Other Document #131*, a heavily redacted CIA report on the capture and waterboarding of Abu Zubaydah, a Saudi man detained in Faisalabad, Pakistan, on 28 March 2002.[1] Abu Zubaydah spent four and a half years in detention at CIA black sites, and was vaunted by the American government as a 'very senior Al Qaeda operative' and one of its 'high-value detainees'. The government later acknowledged that Abu Zubaydah was not a member of Al Qaeda. He remains in captivity.

Almost the entirety of *Other Document #131* is redacted. When I first looked at the report, my eyes were drawn to the sentence contained in Figure 1: 'Zubaydah subjected to the water board'. It is not, strictly speaking, a sentence. The words used to compose it, etched out of their black surroundings, presumably formed parts of other sentences, with other meanings, that we are no longer able to see. The sentence that emerges is an effect of the redaction. It reminded me of the concrete poetry of the 1960s, in which significance emerges in ellipses, through the fragmentation of phrases.

The redacted page is an image. To understand it, I realized I could not discount the redactions as if they were non-sense: the annoying suppressions that get in the way of significance. I could not simply look for words, as if the redactions did not exist. I did not want to hunt for significance; it was already there, in the black. I just did not know how to see it yet.

Intrigued by the composite sentences of *Other Document #131*, I looked into the legal framework governing redaction. There are a number of reasons that the CIA can either deny a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request in full, or else redact elements of a document. Most of the criteria for redaction are related to the national security risk posed by the exposure of information contained in the documents, the danger presented to a private individual by publication of records related to them or the necessity of concealing



▲
(fig. 1)

ongoing covert operations. None of these criteria sufficed to explain the way the remaining words formed a sentence in *Other Document #131*.

As I read more of the redacted documents related to the interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, I began to see that there was a strange sort of visibility at work in the texts. The word 'waterboarding' appears again and again, surrounded by stiff black blocks of redaction. All we learn from many of these documents is that someone was waterboarded. For those involved in uncovering the American government's actions in the war on terror, such words are clues. The investigative journalists chronicling the war acted as detectives, hunting for the broken branch that would lead them through the forest to the beast. Their task—and it was a vital one—was to transform these fragments of text into meanings, and use them to tell a story of extradition, detainment and torture.

In one of my other lives, as a journalist, I had occasion to search through redacted documents in this manner. I was hunting for what was being withheld, and the redactions were but an obstruction. How I often wished I could just read the unredacted reports, and not have to patch meanings out of absences.

The black blocks were recalcitrant. I could not ever get to the things themselves. All I could do was see the areas around them, the words that hugged the black, and use this context to guess at the contours and significance of the redactions.

The more I looked, the more the black blocks started to develop qualities of their own. Some, I felt sure, must refer to proper nouns; the logic of the words around them dictated that this was so. Others seemed like verbs, or else qualifications that have no place in a firm government narrative. The longer I spent with the texts, the more attention I started to pay to the redactions, and the less interested I became in the words. I began to think that as journalists, we were missing something by not paying attention to the redaction itself.

Partly, I was simply overwhelmed by the documents' sheer mass. The whole archive of texts (memos, reports, inquiries, emails) related to the detention and torture of 'enemy combatants' from 2001–8 amounts to more than a million pages (to say nothing of the documents related to the drone war that succeeded it). Yet we were treating each document individually and not considering the logic of the archive as a whole.

Perhaps this sense of the documents' importance is an excuse. I was increasingly dissatisfied with my work in nonfiction, which, in its relentless emphasis on the empirical details of the war on terror, began to feel like it was not able to grasp *how* these details became available: it treated interviews and redacted documents alike as merely sources of information.

From 2009–11, I investigated the men who trained the American police force in counterterrorism, as part of an inquiry I carried out with Meg Stalcup for the *Washington Monthly*, funded by The Nation Institute Investigative Fund. We wrote a long article about the hustlers who, sensing a profit, had reinvented themselves as prophets, and taught local law enforcement officers

about the imminent Hezbollah invasion of small-town America.[2] The article generated a lot of publicity, and was quoted in a Senate inquiry. I remained dissatisfied. None of my experiences with these men could be included in the article, which was an investigative polemic. I could not mention the strange lust in the trainers' eyes when they schooled American cops on the danger of Muslim paedophiles. Nor could I write about the fear felt by the former marines who, in this post-Cold-War epoch, spoke suspiciously about a world in which 'anyone could be an enemy'.

Reading more of the redacted documents, I began to see a logic to US counterterrorism policy that could not be described in the established forms of nonfiction that dominate American magazines and newspapers.

It often felt like the way we approached these documents missed the point. The debate over waterboarding is exemplary. There were endless talking heads on television, musing on the duration that one needs to be to be drowned before the pain becomes severe. A radical decontextualization was at work: waterboarding became a term to be talked about in undergraduate philosophy classes, or else an activity for journalist Christopher Hitchens to undergo and find disagreeable. In these debates, waterboarding was not done in a 'situation' (to Abu Zubaydah, in a black site), but to a 'reasonable man', to be paraded before courts of law, or else debated in cafes as an instance of moral philosophy (if there was a ticking bomb, would you ...).

I began to see the public debate about waterboarding as the worldly analogue of the decontextualization of the redacted documents, which present you with only a single fact: Abu Zubaydah was waterboarded. Public debate and redacted documents alike formed part of a structure that encouraged me to cut waterboarding away from its context, and not consider it as simply one instance of a much broader system of warfare.

To understand this system does not just mean adding context, or filling in more of the story. Political analysis on its own does not cut it either. One needs to understand the redaction itself: the way in which waterboarding was decontextualized, and the way the redacted documents constructed—through their eliminations and ellipses—a narrative of the war on terror. What, I thought, if rather than treating the redacted spaces of these documents as negatives—without information; the annoying absences that block meaning—one were to attempt to study these redactions in their fullness?

I started two projects, which interrelate. The first is a novel, *Redacted Mind*, that deals in fictional terms with my experiences in Tanzania, Sudan and America, at the margins of the war on terror, and attempts to give life to the redacted documents—to the fragments of stories contained in these bureaucratic webs that could find no place in my nonfiction. The other project is a grammar of redaction entitled *How To Do Things Without Words*.[3] This grammar—an excerpt of which you are reading—is a typology of the structures

formed by the interrelationship of redaction and text. It is thus not exactly a linguistic grammar, but rather a grammar of images.

This grammar does not attempt to go beyond these images of redaction; better writers than I have already told the story of Abu Zubaydah. The task of the grammar is not to unveil the hidden words underneath the black. I treat the documents as texts that might have something to say in and of themselves: just as there is a logic to the sentence that emerges from the redaction of *Other Document #131*, which does not depend on the actuality of what happened to Abu Zubaydah. This grammar is not an unveiling, but an attempt to trace the logic of the veiling itself.

A lot of the redacted documents that this grammar looks at contribute to what Michael Taussig, in his book *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*, calls public secrets: things we all know about, but know we should not know *too much* about.[4] The word 'waterboarding' is right there in front of us, in the middle of the page. The government acknowledges it exists. We know it exists. Yet the word stands without context: we do not know where it happens, or what precisely is involved.

Equally, we know there are black sites—CIA prisons outside America—but to this day, no country has admitted the existence of a black site on its territory, even those countries (Thailand, Poland, Somalia) for which there is extensive evidence to indicate that such sites exist. We know they are there, and we know not to ask too much. Words in the redacted documents often feel like keys to doors we cannot open. Intimations of what is concealed in the black that we know we do not want to know. The redactions have a regulative function. They mark the limits of our knowledge, and of our certainty, and they open up a space of fantasy.

I spent the last two years teaching at the University of California, Berkeley. I had taught there earlier in my life, but before last year I had never noticed the extent to which my undergraduate students were invested in conspiracy theories. They all claimed that the CIA was monitoring their phone calls and emails (and what could I tell them other than that this was not a conspiracy theory?). They all thought that there was a web of covert government activity that dictated most of America's economic and political life. This is the obverse side of the public secret; the redacted spaces around the word 'waterboarding' are not just spaces we do not know—they become containers for our imaginary life, and are all the more real for being fantastical.

As I began to investigate these fantastical spaces, the typology that structures the grammar took shape. In the documents related to the war on terror, redacted subjects do decontextualized actions to redacted objects. Elsewhere, verbs disappear, and subjects do unmentionable things to Abu Zubaydah, before, in a temporary moment of visibility, the redacted report announces that the detainee appears to be co-operating, and so the enhanced

interrogation techniques can be stopped. Sometimes, the visible spaces are words. Elsewhere, it is the redacted text that makes something visible.

I named these redacted spaces in homage to Donald Rumsfeld's famous epistemology of known knowns, known unknowns and unknown unknowns, and called them visible invisibles. They are not visible spaces of planning and calculation, whose content can be assessed and quantified. Nor are they outside the limits of what can be seen. They gesture instead at the borders of the visible, and give one a momentary vision, within the redacted documents, of an invisible space that signals the limits of legitimated knowledge.

I detected four types of visible invisibles, and the grammar of redaction stabilized into four corresponding sections. 'Subjects without Objects', the section that is included in this excerpt, is an inquiry into what happens when the subjects of these documents disappear and new forms of subjectivity emerge through the process of redaction. Government documents are often stolid affairs, composed of the endless recounting of actions performed by dutiful subjects, which have predictable consequences. This section analyses what happens when the subjects are removed, and the actions hang: single sentences surrounded by black.

In a roundabout way, this grammar is inspired by the American philosopher J. L. Austin and his book *How To Do Things With Words*.[5] In this book, Austin analyses how words—like a priest saying, 'I now pronounce you man and wife' at a wedding—can do things. He explores the pragmatics of social utterances: how a person with a certain status, in a certain situation, defined institutionally and legally, can do things with words. Not anything, of course, but a range of circumscribed actions, which is given by the interaction between a person of a certain status (a priest) and a setting (a wedding, at the right moment) dictated by a series of formal and legal frameworks.

The redacted documents I study are also full of people doing things with words. Lawyers write legal memos, politicians sign government edicts and military officers give commands. The redactions themselves are also a form of doing things. There are forms of intentionality behind these omissions that count—just as much as the priest at a wedding—as forms of locution; the redactions also speak, even if their language is unfamiliar to us.

The way they speak, however, is rather different to the situations that Austin analyses. The redactions render the speech acts detailed in the documents precarious. Actions become disarticulated from both subject and situation. The speech acts of the redactions themselves are also unstable. Who redacted these documents? With what motivation? All we have to go on is the black.

This grammar is a study of speech acts of omission and redaction, where the 'person of a certain status' (the interrogator, the lawyer, the politician) is redacted out of the picture, leaving only actions, and the barest suggestions

of a situation. A black site. This is a study of what happens when words are taken away. It is a study of how to do things without words.

Subjects Without Objects

Redactions occur throughout the redacted documents. Sometimes, it is a series of locatives that are suppressed from sentences, or else whole blocks of texts that refer to hidden spaces that vanish. Elsewhere, the redactions transform the grammar of the English sentence: finite verbs disappear, actions become open questions or else are inflicted on unknown objects, performed by unnamed subjects. Subjects often vanish from these documents. Just as often, though, new forms of subjectivity emerge within the redactions: subjects without objects.

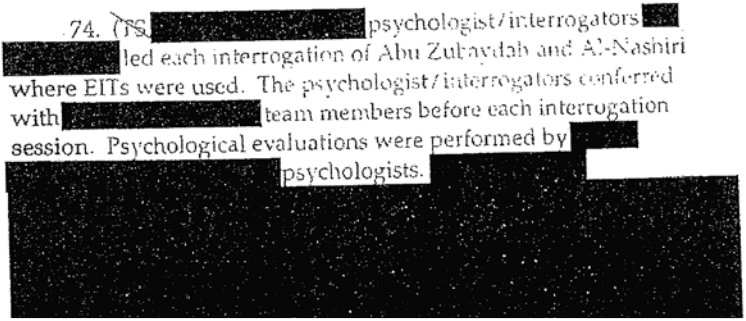
The simplest and most common form of redaction in these documents is the suppression of proper nouns. In theory, such redactions are done because revealing certain names poses a risk to national security, or else—the cynical interpretation—because of concerns about legal liability. However, regardless of the intentions underlying the redactions, the suppression of proper names in these documents has a series of very interesting consequences.

Figure 2 is a page from the CIA's *Special Review: Counterterrorism Detention and Interrogation Activities*.[6] It details the beginning of the interrogations of Abu Zubaydah and Al Nashiri—another of the American government's 'high-value detainees'. The names of the team members, interrogators and psychologists (who worked hand in hand with the CIA) are redacted. These redactions mimic the horror of the black sites.

Just like Al Nashiri and Abu Zubaydah, we do not know the names of the torturers. In the documents, only people's roles—psychologist, interrogator—are visible, and not their names. I try to work out, on occasion, whether a psychologist is identifiable: I look at the word psychologist, and try to associate familiar verbs with the redacted text next to the word, or map out regularities in the length of the redactions around it; I try to infuse, through the form of the redactions, a sense of individuality into the role. Different psychologists, I hope, different redactions. It is useless. The redacted documents create their own forms of subjectivity: amorphous, replaceable, profligate.

Both Al Nashiri and Abu Zubaydah have proper names in the documents. This is one of the odd inversions of these reports. It is the prisoners who have disappeared into secret black sites, but in the documents it is the CIA operatives who vanish. The extralegal process of rendition and confinement is mirrored by the interrogators' disappearance into the bureaucratic machinery of the redactions, where they are free—as in figure 3—to use pressure-point techniques to restrict detainees' carotid arteries.[7]

74. (TS) psychologist/interrogators led each interrogation of Abu Zubaydah and Al-Nashiri where EITs were used. The psychologist/interrogators conferred with team members before each interrogation session. Psychological evaluations were performed by psychologists.



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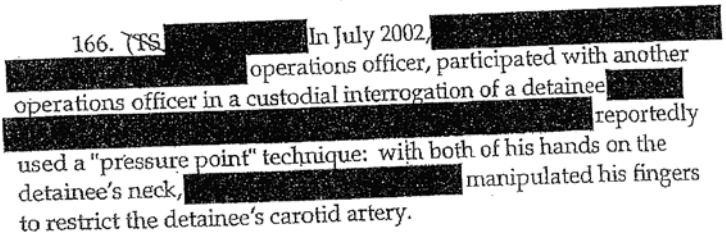
(fig. 2)

Pressure Points

166. (TS) In July 2002, operations officer, participated with another operations officer in a custodial interrogation of a detainee reportedly used a "pressure point" technique: with both of his hands on the detainee's neck, manipulated his fingers to restrict the detainee's carotid artery.



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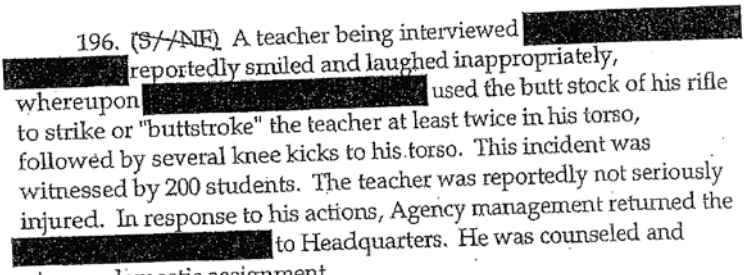
(fig. 3)

196. (S//NF) A teacher being interviewed reportedly smiled and laughed inappropriately, whereupon used the butt stock of his rifle to strike or "buttstroke" the teacher at least twice in his torso, followed by several knee kicks to his torso. This incident was witnessed by 200 students. The teacher was reportedly not seriously injured. In response to his actions, Agency management returned the to Headquarters. He was counseled and given a domestic assignment.



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(fig. 4)

The redaction of subjects tends to proceed along predictable lines. Politicians, referred to by proper nouns, either disappear entirely, or are named and blamed; American moralism about politics, you will be happy to learn, continues in these documents. The supporting staff—the doctors who are present at the interrogations, the psychologists who assess the detainees beforehand and afterwards—are referred to only by their roles, and their proper names are redacted. It is an essentially journalistic trope. The talking heads are called in, and no one really remembers what they are called; their function is to provide authoritative discourse. 'Abu Zubaydah was provided adequate and appropriate medical care.'

These statements exist in the same space as the words of experts on television, or in the courtroom, who say, 'in my professional opinion …' The criteria used to formulate professional opinions are unstated, and we have to simply take the redacted doctor's words on trust. The redacted text, the word 'doctor' promises, is effectively empty: it is not a matter we are competent to judge. Secrecy here structures power relations according to who has possession of the secret, and who does not. The secret is an empty relational term. The doctors know, and what they know cannot be transmitted or evaluated by those outside their guild. There is no secret: just professionalism, and the doctor's word.[8]

Soldiers, however, often have their rank left intact in the documents, even as their names vanish. There is a trace here of the doubling that Immanuel Kant describes in 'What is Enlightenment?'[9] He asks: Should a soldier be able to reflect and judge the adequacy of his orders, in his public use of reason, as a citizen? Of course! But not in his private use of reason, not when he is a soldier.[10] Later, as a citizen, he can judge his orders all he wants, but as a soldier, he must obey.

The documents follow Kant. A soldier must obey. All that remains visible is the rank of the soldier: neither his name, nor his thoughts.

What makes this interesting is that frequently soldiers only emerge in the narrative of the redacted documents when they have acted at variance with their duty. Their rank only emerges precisely when it has been put into question by the individuality behind the rank—the erring consciousness that disobeys or exceeds the orders. What leaves a trace in the documents, however, is not the individual, but the blemished mark of duty.

In figure 4, an officer assaults a teacher at a religious school during the course of an interview.[11] Further down the page, someone who does not even have a rank 'buttstroke[s]' (using the butt stock of a rifle to strike someone; not a sexual act) a teacher in front of 200 students for smiling and laughing inappropriately. In the documents, we are generally given the rank of the soldier (officer, sergeant), but not their proper name. All we see is the rank, the action and the black.

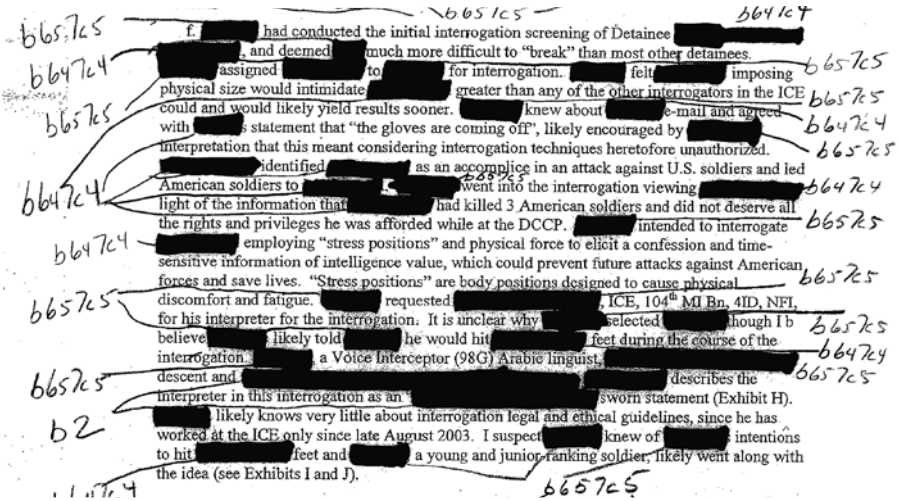
Sometimes these deviations from duty acquire their own proper names. Figure 5 is an excerpt from a military investigation into a detainee abuse incident (not an episode; not the everyday pattern of things; an incident—to be considered on its own terms).[12] All the names are redacted. However, there are so many names in the document that individuation returns, this time as a series of codes. I initially thought these codes referred to US Army identification numbers, but I slowly realized that this is not the case (US Army IDs do not have this form, and, equally, the codes in the document are also used to refer to detainees). Instead, the numbers are internal to the document, and are designed for you, the reader of the redacted inquiry (the army has access to the original copy). The black spaces now take on proper names; they are marked by an identity that makes sense only relationally, within the document. Sometimes, however, the system does not work.

We know Staff Sergeant b657c5 thought imposing physical size would intimidate detainee b647c4, but the redaction over the interrogator's name is left blank, without a code attached. There is a short circuit in the documents, and the redactions again proliferate: the interrogator and many of the commanding officers—also not identified—become exchangeable within the economy of the text.

Sometimes these blank spaces produce something like a desubjectivized space of discussion. Figure 6 is an email exchange contained within the same inquiry as figure 5.[13] It reminds me of Michel Foucault's anonymous interview as the 'masked philosopher', in which he notes that 'names make everything too easy', and dreams of a criticism in which names will no longer be known, and sentences no longer placed into an impoverished calculus of character analysis and the social world.[14] Not characters, says Foucault, but thought, that is what we need: a year without names, and a mass of entirely anonymous books, to be read without Freudian interpretations and status games. Foucault's dream here is of a world without characters. It is an interest that he pursues in the last two years of his life, as he lectures at the Collège de France. How can we speak in ways that exceed or disrupt the roles we play in life? Can we develop a different relationship to truth than one of correspondence to and confirmation of the subject positions we are ascribed?

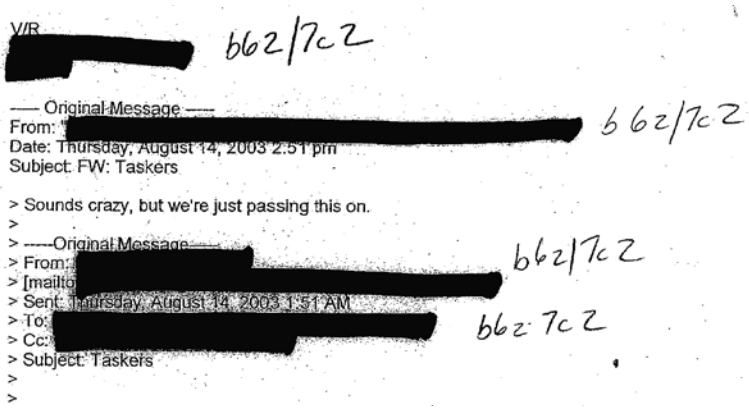
What the redacted documents bring us up against, again and again, is a closed bureaucratic legal world, in which, unlike in the situations Austin analysed, and that I described in the introduction, subjectivity and the identification of actors fall away.

In figure 6, we face a nightmarish inversion of Foucault's year without names: an anonymous world that still perpetuates the bureaucratic formulas he sought to escape. On reading the exchange, we again find identifying numbers, so we can trace these anonymous epistles, and there are admittedly appeals to experience ('I sent [*sic*] several months in Afghanistan interrogating the Taliban and al Qaeda'), but all other identifying marks are redacted. You



f. had conducted the initial interrogation screening of Detainee , and deemed much more difficult to "break" than most other detainees. assigned to for interrogation. felt imposing physical size would intimidate greater than any of the other interrogators in the ICE could and would likely yield results sooner. knew about e-mail and agreed with 's statement that "the gloves are coming off", likely encouraged by interpretation that this meant considering interrogation techniques heretofore unauthorized. identified as an accomplice in an attack against U.S. soldiers and led American soldiers to went into the interrogation viewing light of the information that had killed 3 American soldiers and did not deserve all the rights and privileges he was afforded while at the DCCP. intended to interrogate employing "stress positions" and physical force to elicit a confession and time-sensitive information of intelligence value, which could prevent future attacks against American forces and save lives. "Stress positions" are body positions designed to cause physical discomfort and fatigue. requested , ICE, 104th MI Bn, 4ID, NFI, for his interpreter for the interrogation. It is unclear why selected though I b believe , likely told he would hit feet during the course of the interrogation. a Voice Interceptor (98G) Arabic linguist, descent and describes the interpreter in this interrogation as an sworn statement (Exhibit H). likely knows very little about interrogation legal and ethical guidelines, since he has worked at the ICE only since late August 2003. I suspect knew of intentions to hit feet and a young and junior-ranking soldier, likely went along with the idea (see Exhibits I and J).

(fig. 5)



V/R

—— Original Message ——
From:
Date: Thursday, August 14, 2003 2:51 pm
Subject: FW: Taskers

> Sounds crazy, but we're just passing this on.
>
> ——Original Message——
> From:
> [mailto
> Sent: Thursday, August 14, 2003 1:51 AM
> To:
> Cc:
> Subject: Taskers
>
>

(fig. 6)

have to take the appeals to experience on trust; the subjects are not in relation to a world, but only to each other, within the terms of the document.

The argument turns around who put the gloves on the American military. For the first two participants in the email exchange, the gloves are the American tendency to continue to think in terms of the Cold War. The techniques we used against the Russians are not adequate today. The first email closes: '[t]he gloves are coming off gentleman regarding these detainees, [redacted] has made it clear that we want these individuals broken.' The last email, which is not included in figure 6, tells a different story: the gloves are international treaties that we signed, and that we partly created—we made our own gloves. That we take casualties, the email continues, is no reason to let our standards fall. The exchange is an almost clichéd argument about the relationship between revenge and responsibility, rendered in a space largely denuded of actual context. The position of the first two correspondents slips uncomfortably between violent anger: 'Our interrogation doctrine is based on former Cold War and WWII enemies. Todays [*sic*] enemy, particularly those in SWA [South-West Afghanistan] understand force [...] a litnany [*sic*] of harsher fear-up measures [are needed] [...] fear of dogs and snakes appear to work nicely', and efficacy: 'Casualties are mounting and we need to start gathering info to help protect our fellow soldiers from any further attacks.'

Anger, retribution and efficiency are constantly slipping into each other, as they do throughout the whole period, from the invasion of Afghanistan onwards. It is as if the war on terror aimed to be efficient in gaining retribution, and to gain retribution through its efficiency, but the two terms collide, and the emotional excess underlying the efficiency consistently spills out into anger, dogs and violence.

The redaction of proper nouns reaches its apotheosis in figure 7, an excerpt from the glossary of names attached to a report authored by the United States Department of Justice that traced the history of the torture memos—the legal opinions written by John Yoo (then-deputy assistant attorney general), amongst others—which prepared the ground for the CIA's interrogation program.[15]

If *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) had been a better film than it was, this might have been the list of credits that rolled at the end. It is composed of two columns: name and rank. Some of the actors are fully identified, such as John Ashcroft (attorney general, 2001–5). Others, whose ranks and titles form part of an exchangeable and unknowable class, vanish. [redacted] is a CIA attorney (page one), who should not be confused with [redacted], who is also a CIA attorney (beginning of page two). Other names are redacted, but seemingly without purpose. [redacted] is the assistant US attorney, EDVA, whose name is [redacted] (about 20 minutes of googling allows you to work out who this is). Other characters have both their names and ranks redacted. It is important

Flanigan, Timothy	Deputy White House Counsel 2001-2002
Fleisher, Ari	White House spokesperson
[redacted]	CIA Counter Terrorism Center attorney
[redacted]	NCIS psychologist based in Guantanamo
[redacted]	Assistant U.S. Attorney, EDVA
Goldsmith, Jack, III	OLC AAG October 2003 - June 2004
Gonzales, Alberto	White House Counsel 2001-2005; Attorney General 2005-2007
Hadley, Stephen	Deputy National Security Advisor 2001-2005; National Security Advisor 2005-2009
[redacted]	[redacted]
Haynes, William J., II	DOD General Counsel 2001-2008
Helgerson, John	CIA Inspector General

▲
(fig. 7)

you do not confuse [redacted] (end of page one) with [redacted] (end of page two).

One does, of course. After reading these documents for many months, I began to think I got to know Mr [redacted] (he is almost always a man). He is a central character in the story of the so-called Global War on Terror. Mr [redacted] provides, entreats and argues. He drafts documents, works long hours, gets waterboarded, administers waterboards, gets punished and is finally promoted. Because he is everywhere, even if one kills him, he quickly reappears. He is the space around the idea of law, and he couches its every clause in his blackness. Mr [redacted] reminds me somewhat of the Italian anarchist Luther Blissett: a ritualized *nom de plume* that levels differences (*Chiunque può essere Luther Blissett*, *semplicemente adottando il nome Luther Blissett* [Anyone can be Luther Blissett, simply by adopting the name Luther Blissett]). Except this time, the name is not open to British conceptual artists and Italian activists, but part of the closed economy of the redacted documents.

Mr [redacted] is the inversion of the grammatical function of the words 'Yoo' and 'Bybee'. These apparently proper nouns, placed amid the redactions of the OPR report, displace structures into subjects, and create narratives about individual responsibility and error. Mr [redacted] is quite the reverse. He is a subject formed by the structures of national security and legal anxiety that create these redacted documents. Mr [redacted] allows for a certain anonymous equality.

Those whose names still appear in the documents are either culprits (Yoo, Bybee) or detainees, and thus doubly culprits (Abu Zubaydah, Al Nashiri). They may appear to be on opposing sides of the war on terror, but in the logic of the documents they are on the same side: they are the characters that drive the narrative. Everyone else—the redacted functionaries and redacted detainees alike—is flattened out, and effectively replaceable.

As I noted earlier, these redactions have the effect of recreating within the documents something of the same sense of uncertainty that must have been experienced by Al Nashiri and Abu Zubaydah: we simply do not know who the torturers are. The possibilities are endless.

Perhaps *you* could be the CIA attorney whose name is redacted; the space then would no longer be black, but simply an underline, ready for your name to be pencilled in, as with the choose-your-own-adventure books I read as a child. This is, after all, a story awaiting its hero.

The other possibility, though, is that you could be the detainee. Mr [redacted] is both detainee and interrogator, and in his former role he is admirably Brechtian. There is little in the way of internal psychology. Sometimes the country he is from is not clear. In the interrogators' assessment of what might cause Mr [redacted] severe pain, there is little sense of a subjectivity that might experience the pain. Who is Mr [redacted]? It is an open question.

Reading these documents, these public secrets, one is viscerally reminded of why one might not ask too many questions. Why, ultimately, secrets can circulate as visible invisibles. For if there is no content to Mr [redacted], then the possibility remains that he may be a piece of us all, and that we might all be the nameless friend of Abu Zubaydah, always about to be spirited away and detained.

1. *Other Document #131*. This document was obtained following an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) *Freedom of Information Act* request placed on 7 October 2003. It was released to the ACLU on 27 May 2008.

2. Meg Stalcup and Joshua Craze, 'How We Train Our Cops to Fear Islam', *Washington Monthly*, 3 March 2011.

3. This grammar, and the accompanying phrasebook that contains the documents to which the grammar refers, are available on the Ibraaz website.

4. Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 50–1.

5. J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

6. Central Intelligence Agency, Office of the Inspector General, *Special Review: Counterterrorism Detention and Interrogation Activities (September 2001–October 2003) (2003-7123-IG)* (7 May 2004), 35. Henceforth referred to as 'CIA special review'.

7. Ibid., 69.

8. I am indebted here to Georg Simmel's classic essay: 'The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies', *American Journal of Sociology*, no. 11 (1906): 441–98.

9. See: Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' (1784) in *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth Century Answers and Twentieth Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 58–64.

10. Kant's utilization of public and private is rather different than the significance the two terms have in America today.

11. CIA special review, *op cit.*, 79.

12. Memorandum, 104th Military Intelligence Battalion. *Detainee Abuse Incident. AR 15-6 Investigation Legal Review* (6 October 2003), 3.

13. The email chain appears in the same memorandum as the proceeding foonote, 31–2. The whole exchange is contained in the phrasebook available on the Ibraaz website. Figure 6 is one of the earlier pages in the exchange.

14. Michel Foucault, 'The Masked Philosopher' in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow, Vol. 1 (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, Allen Lane, 1997), 321–8.

15. Department of Justice, Office of Professional Responsibility, *Investigation into the Office of Legal Counsel's Memoranda Concerning Issues Relating to the Central Intelligence Agency's Use of 'Enhanced Interrogation Techniques' on Suspected Terrorists*, 260 (29 July 2009), 128.