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The Lure of the Archive: The Atlas Project of Walid Raad

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I

The last thirty years have been described as ‘the era of the witness’, a time when the systematic collection of testimonies has proliferated.¹ This period could with equal validity be called ‘the era of the archive’. Not only has the collection of documents and the establishment of archives increased dramatically, but the archive is now one of the central topics of reflection throughout the humanities. For literary studies in particular, both engagement with archival documents and attention to the ‘archive’ have shifted from the margins to the centre of the field. Jane Gallop even notes – disparagingly – the remark of a recent job candidate in a literature department that it is now ‘impossible to get published without archival work’.²

The *lure* of the archive has also changed. The archive appeals to the desire to come into contact with the material of history, and to touch and read that which is not accessible to everyone, and may have been overlooked or ignored. But a shift has taken place at the conceptual level, and the scholarly desire today is often less to unearth this or that particular content in an archive than to engage with the archive itself, both as an institution and as a constitutive and transformative force. In literary studies the concern is no longer primarily with the work itself but with the discursive systems that regulate what is enunciated and written, with what is seemingly supplemental and other within the literary work, and with transformations in the forms of recording, assembling and disseminating information and memory. All of these tendencies might be described as a shift towards the archival. Our reading practices have changed, and they have done so in part through an engagement with

the archive. Key figures in this engagement include Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Pierre Nora.

A common strategy now is to read texts with an awareness of ‘*le système général de la formation et de la transformation des énoncés*’ (‘*the general system of the formation and transformation of statements*’), to borrow Foucault’s definition of the archive, and to foreground the bureaucratic apparatuses of control and surveillance that permeate society.³ Even more influential than Foucault’s theorization of the archive in *L’Archéologie du savoir* (1969) have been his studies of the development of ‘biopower’ and the growing regulation of life in the last two centuries, which emphasize the archive as central to the exercise of power.

Another central practice is to grapple with the ways in which the traditionally secondary and inferior term in a binary opposition (speech and writing, presence and absence, living memory and archive) is always already operative within the privileged term. For Derrida, the archive is *the* figure for writing that has been denigrated as external, supplemental and prosthetic. In his essay ‘La Pharmacie de Platon’, in *La Dissémination* (1972), and then later in *Mal d’archive* (1995), Derrida deconstructs the opposition between *mnēmē* and *hypomnēsis*, between living truth and ‘*la réanimation active du savoir*’ (‘the active reanimation of knowledge’) on the one hand, and the mnemonic device and the archive on the other.⁴ He demonstrates in his reading of Plato that ‘Le dehors est déjà *dans* le travail de la mémoire. [. . .] La mémoire se laisse ainsi contaminer par son premier dehors, par son premier suppléant: l’*hypomnēsis*’ (‘The outside is already *within* the work of memory. [. . .] Memory is thus contaminated by its first substitute: *hypomnēsis*’).⁵ Derrida’s reevaluation of the archive animates his elaborations of new notions of writing, text and *différance*.

A further broad scholarly endeavour, cutting across many disciplines, is to emphasize and clarify how societal and technological changes have transformed the very processes of reading and memory. The modern tension between history and memory is itself a sign of the increasing importance of the archive. Pierre Nora writes: ‘Modern memory is, above all, archival [. . .]. The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs – hence the obsession with the archive that marks our age.’⁶ Nora’s history of *lieux de mémoire* (realms of memory) is in part an attempt to counter the ‘indiscriminate production of archives’ that is ‘the clear expression of the terrorism of historicized memory’.⁷

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What I am describing therefore is not just a change in conceptual frameworks or a turn to theory, but also transformations in the nature of experience and memory in the era of the archive. The archive is a transformative force, and not simply a repository for information collected or produced elsewhere. Here is a stark example (which I have written about elsewhere).⁸ In the former East Germany, with the Stasi collecting information on a large number of its citizens, the person who has fallen under suspicion – whether a committed political dissident or merely someone who did not sufficiently support the regime – often comes to resemble and accept the portrait of him or herself assembled out of archival fragments by the Stasi. This happens in two ways: one openly confesses one’s ‘crimes’ in order to put an end to the humiliating, frightening and exhausting process of interrogation; and one begins (or continues more sharply) to think critically and antagonistically – that is, to think almost in the manner described in the accusations that have been made. The archival portrait becomes the person’s own reality, and the eyewitness to the repressive power of the Stasi, in response to this power, becomes a product, even a function, of the archive.

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There are many avenues for trying to grasp the shaping forces of the archive. The work of artists – and a very large number of artists have engaged with archives in recent years – can be particularly illuminating, since artworks not only reflect on these forces but necessarily put them into play, and play with them. In the space of a journal article I cannot provide a full overview or introduction to modern artists’ fascination with the archive, or, in Hal Foster’s words, to ‘an archival impulse at work internationally in contemporary art’.⁹ Rather, I will focus on two artists – Arnold Dreyblatt and especially Walid Raad – whose works are especially perceptive in interrogating, reimagining, performing and displaying archives, and in giving us ways of reading archivally. Their work also engages with the archive as an institution and a mechanism of collection, registration and storage, and challenges us to think differently about what structures the archive.

In his 2004 essay on the ‘archival impulse’, Foster discusses three artists (Thomas Hirschhorn, Tacita Dean and Sam Durant), and argues that while this impulse is ‘hardly new’ and extends throughout the twentieth century, the current turn to the archive has a new and distinctive character. These artists, he argues, ‘seek to make historical

information, often lost or displaced, physically present'; the task of the artist is to revive and investigate that which has escaped sufficient notice, and above all to emphasize and to rethink the materiality of these archival objects. Additionally, the 'archival impulse' now involves critical reflections on the space and the function of the archive: 'the work in question is archival since it not only draws on informal archives but produces them as well, and does so in a way that underscores the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private'.¹⁰ The repeated 'yet' underscores the awareness of the artists' archives as navigating or negotiating between the poles of the objective and institutional ('found', 'factual' and 'public') and the constructed or personal. And yet, the strong historical and critical awareness that underlies these projects is for the most part not directed towards a rethinking of the archive itself—that is, of archives as functioning institutions for the collection, registration, storage and retrieval of information. The emphasis is still largely on the *collection* that the artist has put together, and on the archival *material* that is (re)displayed for us.

Foster emphasizes the differences from earlier archival art projects, such as Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* (begun in 1961), but the key terms he cites from each artist—'collection' (Dean), 'combination' (Durant) and 'ramification' (Hirschhorn; or 'mutations of connection and disconnection', as Foster elaborates)—also bring out the continuity with Richter's project. As Benjamin Buchloch explains in his astute analysis of *Atlas*, the project involves the accumulation or collection of a vast amount of material, but 'cannot be identified either with the private album of the amateur or with the cumulative projects of documentary photography'; it is not governed by the earlier rules of collecting.¹¹ Concurrently, *Atlas* takes 'as the principles of a given work's formal organization photography's innate structural order (its condition as archive)', but nevertheless what 'does come to mind' is only 'the archival organization of materials according to the principles of an as yet unidentifiable discipline'. This 'archival impasse' (as Okwui Enwezor terms the lack of coherence or the inapplicability of the former logics governing both the organization and the accumulation of photographic images) only tangentially engages or disturbs the mechanisms of any archive on which the artist may draw.¹² The archive remains primarily the artist's own collection and redisplay of historical material that might potentially have been archived elsewhere.

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Christian Boltanski, the artist of the last few decades perhaps most associated with the 'archive', sidesteps this impasse. His work, especially since the mid-1980s, often creates an archive of the faces of the dead or the traces of the absent, and the destruction of the Holocaust hovers as an historical spectre. Boltanski repurposes the materials that survive, and the earlier archival activity that produced these materials, such as the processes of photographing, cataloguing and preserving the faces he redisplay, is largely overwhelmed by the power of the artist's new archive, which haunts us as a memorial, stressing the absence of the lives the objects metonymically invoke. Only rarely is there a dynamic engagement on more or less equal terms between past and present, bureaucratic and artistic archival activities. For the past twenty years one has been able to see in Berlin Boltanski's *The Missing House*, which inscribes on the outside walls of the two remaining buildings information about the people who lived in the (now missing) house on Große Hamburgerstraße when it was destroyed by aerial bombing in 1945. In the original exhibition in 1990, however, there were vitrines set up in front, 'arranging the copious archives concerning the missing occupants in glass boxes outside', with 'more than one hundred and fifty facsimile documents'.¹³ These archival documents also registered the Jewish occupants of the building before they were deported or forced to leave a few years earlier (a fact of which Boltanski was unaware when he began the project), and whose living spaces were then given to 'proper' Germans.¹⁴ The layers of archival activity, the bland registrations of the ordinary details of who lived in which apartment, radically disturb the more immediately visible play of presence and absence. In the 1990 version of this piece, but not in what we see today, the archive as a space staged by the artist remains in tension with the archives that produced and continue to produce the documents of who lives where.

The social functions and guiding logics of an archive most pertinent for discussions of photography and art are acutely explored by Alan Sekula in his seminal essay 'The Body and the Archive' (1986). Sekula asserts that at the end of the nineteenth century 'the institution of the photographic archive received its most thorough early articulation in precise conjunction with an increasingly professionalized and technological mode of police work and an emerging social science of criminology', and he goes on to explore why 'the model of the archive' was 'of such import for these linked disciplines'.¹⁵ Seeking to counter this history of the photographic archive as inherently an apparatus of control

if not repression that he has laid out for us, Sekula praises those artists who take ‘an aggressive stance’ against the ‘authoritative and official’ uses of the ‘instrumental realist archive’.¹⁶ The authoritative and the artistic archive square off here in clear opposition, with it being evident to viewers where we should position ourselves with regard to the fault lines that are exposed. The stance of the two artists that I shall consider here is less easy to characterize, but I shall argue that it is all the more powerful for the ways in which they burrow into the archive and thereby reshape our reading practices.

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Some of Arnold Dreyblatt’s major works are the opera, book and internet archive *Who’s Who in Central and East Europe 1933*; the ‘Reading Projects’, such as *Memory Arena* and *The Reading Room*; installations such as *The ReCollection Mechanism*, *The Wunderblock* and *Innocent Questions*; and *T-Mail* and the *T Documents*, which look at ‘the archival traces of [...] one individual, a marginal and mostly forgotten Central European figure whose multiple identities span three continents’, and who was ‘observed nearly every day [for 28 years] by the intelligence services of various world powers’.¹⁷ The points of departure for Dreyblatt’s works are found material, such as a *Who’s Who* volume of 1933, documents reproduced from government archives, and excerpts from texts dealing with memory and the storage of information.

Since I wish to focus mainly on the Atlas Project, I shall simply highlight a few important aspects of Dreyblatt’s work. His pieces give us textual fragments, and the redisplay and rearrangement of these fragments call attention to the various mechanisms by which the richness of a life is reduced to archival traces or biographical titbits. Most artwork that engages archival material still manifests a desire to transcend or recover from that which it locates as ‘archival’. Dreyblatt’s work, in contrast, does not lead us out of the archive.

Typical artistic strategies hope to perform a figural reconstruction: treating the fragment as metonymic, as something that can bloom when isolated, framed and redisplayed by the artist, pointing to the potential recovery of a life, and the marking of a loss. The artistic processes – often calling attention to that which has been neglected, overlooked and not sufficiently addressed by others – work at rendering the archival object into something non-archival, by providing a new context that projects a restoration from the desiccation of the archive. Analogously, the turn

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to the archive provides evidence of a violence that has taken place, and marks what must be fought against and changed. Pointing to a violation, a rupture, a lacuna, which the archive both witnesses and is in some measure a party to, the artist then helps us to fill it, to overcome it, to imagine an alternative. Both of these strategies aim ultimately, even if they are forms of engaging, even celebrating the 'archive', at turning away from that which is associated with the archival (that which is fragmentary, bureaucratic, impersonal, peripheral) to a realm of restored subjectivity or critical awareness.

In Dreyblatt's 'T-Projects' the 'remediation' of archival material gives us the 'life' of the document. Rather than drawing us towards ascertaining or coming to know a precipitating event, the true happening, some actual moment in the life of a person that generates the series of transcribed and filed observations, this redisplay of material displaces our attention from an origin to an afterlife, and from the individual to the archival, to the now public traces that continue to circulate. Any desire to recover an original moment of intention, action, observation, inscription or transmission (and the multiplication of possible starting-points already testifies to a crisis of determination) gives way to other fascinations. By reorganizing, cutting up, reconnecting and/or redisplaying the material, Dreyblatt helps make visible to us the reverberations—the further movement, circulation and connection—of each point of contact between an individual and state networks of power.¹⁸

Fredric Jameson argues that the postmodern subject is characterized by fragmentation:

If, indeed, the subject has lost its capacity [...] to organize its past and future into coherent experience, it becomes difficult enough to see how the cultural productions of such a subject could result in anything but 'heaps of fragments' and in a practice of the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary and the aleatory. These are, however, very precisely some of the privileged terms in which postmodernist cultural production has been analyzed (and even defended, by its own apologists). They are, however, still privative features.¹⁹

The horizons of Jameson's critique, in reaction to this loss of 'coherent experience', are restorative, situating the fragmented subject temporally and geographically: through 'a genuinely dialectical attempt to think our present time in History', and through an 'aesthetic of cognitive mapping' that would 'endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system'.²⁰ The cultural productions of postmodern subjects may remain 'heaps of fragments', but the critic

will be able to overcome these ‘privative features’, thereby restoring our ability to act (rather than merely to judge moralistically).

Dreyblatt’s work could be considered the representation of the subject as a ‘heap of fragments’, but I want to suggest that the performative force of the inscription, concatenation, reading, manipulation and redisplay of these bio-fragments deflects us from a logic of fragment and whole, and from the usual categories of historical knowledge, by which a fragment gains meaning through its subsumption into a larger framework, whether of an individual life, a political movement, a social transformation or a snapshot of an era. These bio-fragments become threads, openings, traces, possibilities, yet lead to no telos, no restorative, familiar category of ‘coherent experience’. Each statement of a few aspects of a life ends too soon – we are given a narrative that refuses to satisfy the expectations of narrative.

Yet we are presented with something very different from ‘a practice of the randomly heterogeneous [. . .] and the aleatory’. What, then, connects one entry with the next? What logic, what narrative, what geography or what history? There are many possible responses, but we must supply them, and must continue to ponder, without any hope of arriving at a restored category or picture with which we are in any sense familiar, the logic of all our categories and apparatuses of connection, both narrative and bureaucratic, aesthetic and conceptual. In our practices of reading in Dreyblatt’s work, what is restored, in other words, is always different from, other than, what has been lost.

Walid Raad’s ‘Atlas Group’ archives provide materials about the Lebanese civil wars (1975–1991). These works radically shake up the ‘archival impulse’. The violence and disruption of war necessarily arouse desires for archival evidence. One vector of these desires is to see that which has been hidden from view, and to confront that which we have not been able to grasp: marks of trauma; unofficial, non-public histories; accounts and documents that have been submerged or are not accessible to a Western audience. Whatever we may have previously seen could not give us adequate knowledge. The American media, for instance, focused on that which affected Americans (the car bombing of the marine base and the embassy; the taking of Westerners as hostages; bombed-out hotels); and we all know that the media filter and control what we see. The archive lures us with the promise of more authentic documents

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and the hope of a greater truth than we have encountered in media images.

On the other hand, we also want to critique the desire to see the authentic or the true. Part of the lure of looking at archival material about the Lebanese wars is to have our critical sophistication aroused and confirmed: to engage with a trace, a supplement, a substitute, a reproduction, an after-effect of that which we cannot access immediately and directly. The frame of the archive appeals to our knowledge that photographs cannot provide us with historical truth or the exact measure of what took place, or transport us to an originary moment; to our knowledge that trauma is precisely that which cannot be directly documented or made visible; and to our suspicion of the libidinal desire for images of violence. Embracing an archival perspective also helps us to grasp the processes of desubjectification, of transformation into something other than a human subject, that are at the centre of collective violence. Walid Raad's work plays on all of these lures of the archive.

Let us now turn to some images of his work. The series *Let's Be Honest, the Weather Helped* purports to show where bullets hit buildings in the neighbourhood of Beirut in which he lived in the early 1980s. What we see are buildings – or in one case a tree – with lots of coloured circles, like Band-Aids covering the wounds made by the bullets. The bright green, orange and purple circles, reproduced here in tones of grey and black, seen to the right of the image, enliven the black-and-white photographs, and sometimes almost completely blot out the underlying buildings (see Fig. 1). The accompanying text tells us:

I collected bullets and shrapnel. I would run out to the streets after a night or day of shelling to remove bullets from walls, cars, and trees. I kept detailed notes of where I found every bullet by photographing the sites of my findings, and by placing colored dots over the bullet holes in my black and white photographs. The color of the dots corresponded to the mesmerizing hues I found on the bullets' tips. The colors were also faithful to the distinct code devised by manufacturers in different countries to mark their cartridges and shells.²¹

The coloured dots mark (and cover) the sites of damage, and mark the location where each item in a collection was found. The bullet is here also a toy, and an aesthetic object, as we see in the beautiful pictures of each type of bullet. It is presented as intact, with its colourful tip, before it was fired, as if one could return to a moment before the shooting. The colours also purport to mark the country of origin of the bullet, playing on the *provenance* of the collection (a key aspect of art since

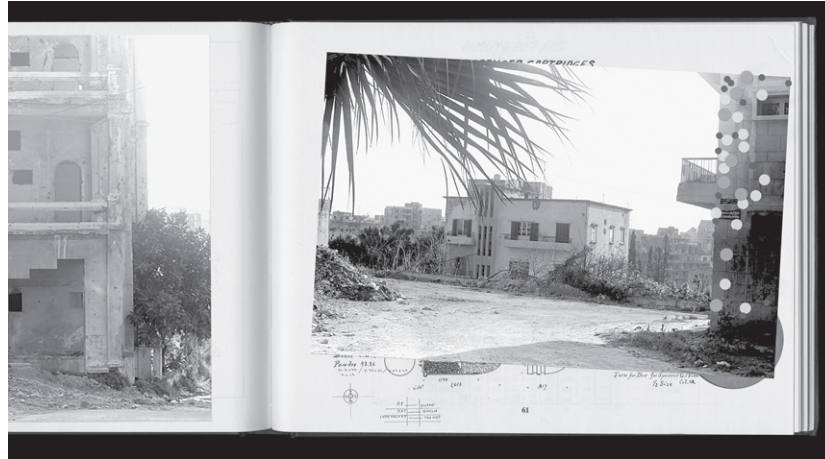


Figure 1. © Walid Raad. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.²³

the work of Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke and others), and we are told how each bullet came into his collection ('gift from best friend', 'found in tree', 'purchased from vendor').²² The collection performs a tracing of the arms trade (on the website, each picture is labelled with a country). Profit, responsibility and historical context are reinscribed onto the picture.

Each dot is a deflection: it points to, but prevents us from seeing, the damage of war. The works continually play with the structures of psychoanalysis, but any secure hierarchical logic that would determine, for instance, which images represent the traumatic event and which are only screen memories is put in doubt. Rather than providing a stable ground for interpretation or critique, the archival material reveals that each act of charting, collecting and tracking is also a substitution and displacement: that of the bureaucrat or witness who marks the damage of war each day no less than the 'boy' who pastes dots on pictures of buildings and who lovingly notes the characteristics of each country's bullets. The photographs themselves are pasted over diagrams that look like weapons' schemata. The act of making the notebook is highlighted as inherently palimpsestic, with it no longer being possible to privilege any particular layer as the proper basis for interpretation.

The seriousness of the subject-matter has led most commentators to underestimate the playfulness of Raad's work. In fact, Raad makes explicit, extends and plays with our implicit understanding of what we

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think we might learn from going into the archive. We want to know, for one thing, more about the traumatic effects of car bombs on the people of Beirut. Mike Davis, in writing about car bombs, states that 'Beirut became to the technology of urban violence what a tropical rainforest is to the evolution of plants'.²⁴ We know that trauma cannot be viewed directly, and that what we have seen on television or read in newspapers is inadequate, but we also know that the archive cannot give us direct access to historical truth or to the essence of an ineffable experience, and cannot provide an exact measure of what happened. The Atlas Project takes this knowledge as its programme: deflection from an origin, the serial reproduction of events, a substitute image for the open wound, a displacement of the incidental for the essential, a parody of the drive to gain knowledge through measurement, and a mixing of registers (the handwritten annotation and the newspaper photograph; the picture from a magazine and the personal photograph; the archival commentary and the diary entry).

In the series *My Neck Is Thinner Than a Hair*, one sees pictures of the effects of car bombs. Raad writes: 'The only part that remains intact after a car bomb explodes is the engine. Landing on balconies, roofs or adjacent streets, the engine is projected tens and sometimes hundreds of metres away from the original site of the bomb. During the wars, photojournalists competed to be the first to find and photograph engines.'²⁵ The photographs purport to be taken by photo-journalists in the 1980s and Raad claims to have found them 'in the archives of An-Nahar Research Center (Beirut, Lebanon) and The Arab Documentation Center (Beirut, Lebanon)'.²⁶ The wrecked engine—not the 'target' of the bomb (wounded people and damaged buildings)—is at the centre of a group photograph (see Fig. 2). The description presents it almost as a game—who can be the first to arrive at the destination, to find the sought-after object?—but the photographs belie this description. The photographs present literally a displacement—the distance of the engine from the original site of the bomb—while refocusing the gaze on this destructive displacement itself, with a crowd of Lebanese surveying what remains of the engine and the car. This refocusing implicates and unsettles our own gaze as well.

In another series of pictures that documents the car bombings in Lebanon, *Already Been in a Lake of Fire*, one sees a very different interplay of destructive force and documentary reframing. These images, purportedly from a notebook put together by Dr Fadl Fakhouri—who was, according to the Atlas Group, 'the foremost historian of the



Figure 2. © Walid Raad. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.²⁷

Lebanese civil wars until his death in 1993’ – present attractive cut-out photographs of the make, model and colour of each car used in a bombing (see Fig. 3).²⁸ Handwritten (in Arabic) and typed (in English) statistics regarding the quantity of explosive material, the number killed, the date and place accompany each picture. The depiction of an intact vehicle engages the fantasy for a time before the bomb exploded (and before the war). Presenting the vehicles almost in flight, mounted at a slight angle, heightens their attractiveness as pure and even whimsical objects of desire, removed from the usual advertising context. But the cut-out is also a radical reframing, forcing the viewer to imagine the car’s destructive potential when turned into a bomb, on the particular date and place that accompanies the picture.

The Atlas Project presents counter-archives, alternatives to and contestations of official archives, and performs a repurposing: each series moves away from a typical goal and towards a new one. These series are also interpolations, inserting new material into other texts. The camera’s gaze as displacement and interpolation is most directly presented in the videotape *I Only Wish That I Could Weep*, which is described as video shot by ‘Operator #17’, who was supposed to be manning a surveillance camera along the ‘Corniche, a seaside boardwalk in Beirut’, and who each evening just before sunset would divert his video camera from its surveillance function to record the sunset, and then refocus it on its proper targets. The diversion of the camera from a policing to an aesthetic function expresses a yearning for other aims (and here we are told that the operator was from east Beirut, unable habitually to see the seaside of west Beirut), but the poignancy here is less a matter of two competing purposes, or the transformation of surveillance into something else, than of one activity taking place alongside the other. The footage

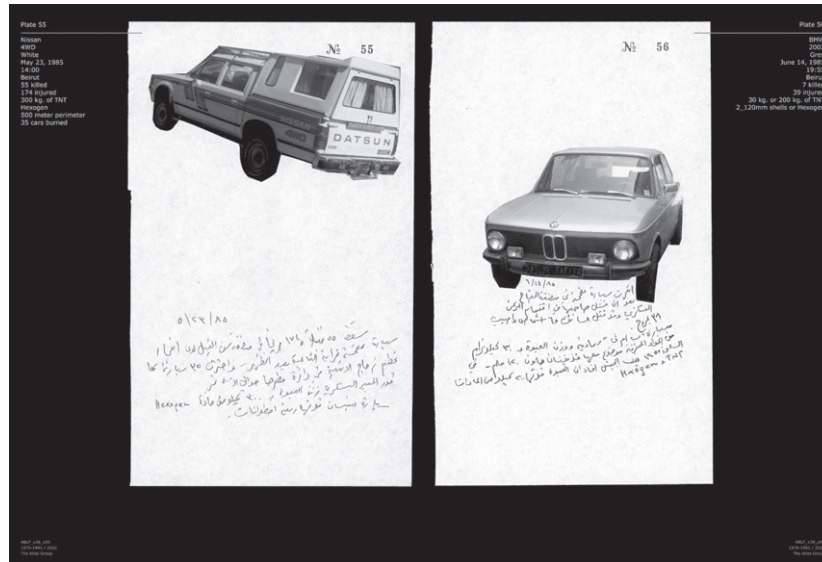


Figure 3. © Walid Raad. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.²⁹

is more like an interpolation, unseen by others and by history, into the usual fabric of purposeful daily activity, though here of course that norm is marked as a destructive, perverted one, directed more towards death than life.

Missing Lebanese Wars, purportedly also from the notebooks of Dr Fadi Fakhouri, is to my mind Raad's most extreme (and acute) example of playing against our archival expectations. It is a series of photographs of the finish of horse-races taped onto pages from a notebook, with handwritten comments about the bets and the winner, and the archivist's transcription of these notations typed onto the margins (see Fig. 4). There are several layers of perversity here, in this allegory of the historian's work. These groups of historians at the track bet not on which horse will win the race, but on the margin of error in recording the photo-finish. And rather than simply betting on the distance of the discrepancy, which could be easily measured, they bet on the time interval – how many ten thousandths of a second early or late the photograph was apparently taken, which can only be approximately calculated (we are given the elements of the calculation, but not the process of calculation itself: the photographs document the distance between the finish line and the horse's position when the photograph

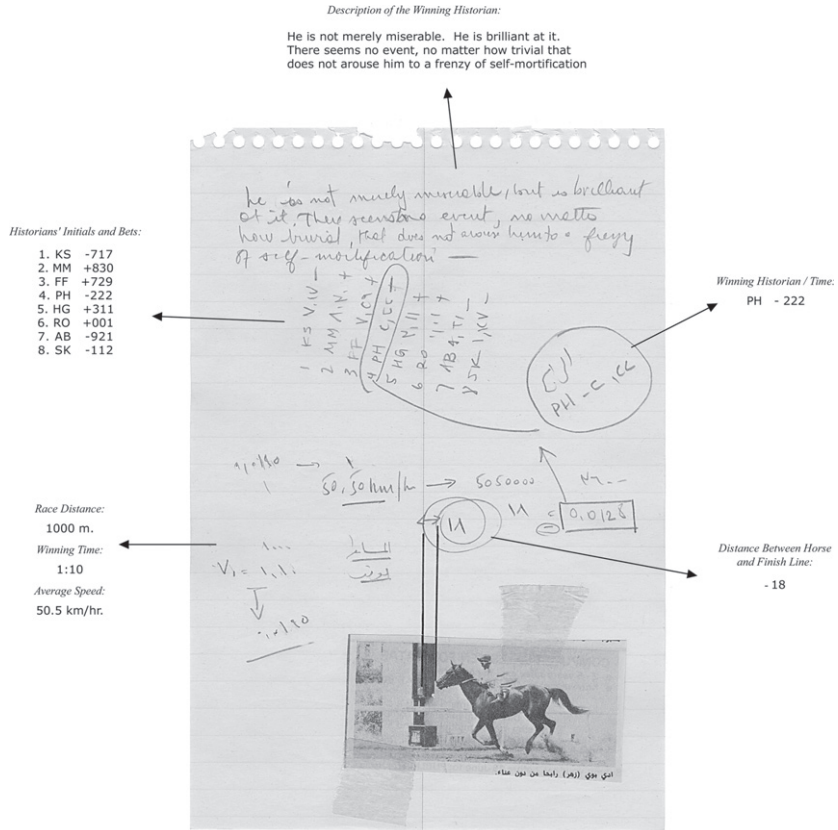


Figure 4. © Walid Raad. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.³¹

was taken, and then, apparently using the average speed of the horse, this distance as measured on the photograph is converted into a time interval). The bets are almost random guesses at an imperfectly measurable error, as in a sense they 'correct' the official record.³⁰ Moreover, the winner—the historian, not the horse—is acerbically profiled by Dr Fakhouri. All the usual tools of the historian, and all the typical forms of registration, measurement and documentation, are turned slightly away from their normal functions.

Perhaps even more perverse than the activity of placing these bets is that of collecting and archiving the results. As opposed to the records of the racetrack habitué, which will help him to progress from luck to skill (the knowledge gained of the *history* of each horse informs the future), this notebook serves no apparent useful function. No knowledge

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is gained through repetition; it does not provide anything useable to improve the future, or to inform us about, by bearing witness to, the past. Critics discussing Raad's work, and particularly this series, usually emphasize that the 'documents provoke a questioning of historical facts' and highlight that 'any representation misses its target',³² or stress his 'concern with the limits of historical forms of representation and the failure of these forms to register specific aspects of experience (psychological, perceptual) that are strongly affected by the violence of war, yet nevertheless remain unintelligible or simply unmarked by traditional forms of documentation (like photography or film)'.³³ But what the plates of this series register and represent is perhaps more striking. The archival *activity*, as a response to the random, disruptive effects of violence – and it is not surprising that this series is bluntly named *Missing Lebanese Wars* rather than Raad's usually more poetic titles – is here laid bare in its basic structures. The powerful gesture of the Atlas Group Archive, a gesture which is not diminished by reading the small print that puts into question both the artefactual status of the documents and the institutional status of the archive, is to subsume these materials into an organized archive. The imprimatur of the Atlas Group Archive – and in Lebanon as opposed to London, institutions for archiving are much less widespread or established – provides a new frame, another viewing and a further possibility of significance, for these records of a purposeful documentary activity without a conventional goal or guiding purpose. Walid Raad's work pushes us to see and engage, to return to the words of Pierre Nora, the 'exterior scaffolding' of modern memory.

NOTES

- 1 Annette Wieviorka, *L'Ère du témoin* (Paris: Plon, 1998); translated by Jared Stark as *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 96.
- 2 Jane Gallop, 'The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close Reading', *Profession* (2007), 181–186, this quotation p. 181.
- 3 Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard 'Tel', 2008 [1969]), pp. 178–179; translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith as *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1972), p. 130 (Foucault's emphasis).
- 4 Jacques Derrida, 'La Pharmacie de Platon', in *La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 77–213, this quotation p. 135; translated by Barbara Johnson as 'Plato's Pharmacy', in *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 61–171, this quotation p. 108. See also Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive. Une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995); translated by Eric Prenowitz as *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

- 5 Derrida, 'La Pharmacie de Platon', p. 135; p. 109 (Derrida's emphasis).
- 6 Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*', translated by Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26:1 (1986), 7–24, this quotation p. 13.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 8 See Jeffrey Wallen, 'Narrative Tensions: The Archive and the Eyewitness', *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 7:2 (2009), 261–278.
- 9 Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', *October* 110 (2004), 3–22, this quotation p. 3.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 4 and 5.
- 11 Benjamin Buchloch, 'Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*: The Anomic Archive', *October* 88 (1999), 117–145, this quotation p. 118.
- 12 Okwui Enwezor, 'Archive Fever: Photography between History and Monument', in *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2008), pp. 11–47, this quotation p. 14.
- 13 Catherine Grenier, *Christian Boltanski* (Paris: Flammarion, 2010), p. 194.
- 14 See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Mourning or Melancholia: Christian Boltanski's *Missing House*', *Oxford Art Journal* 21:2 (1998), 3–20.
- 15 Alan Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive', *October* 39 (1986), 3–64, this quotation p. 17.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 62.
- 17 Arnold Dreyblatt and Jeffrey Wallen, 'Hands on the Document: Arnold Dreyblatt's T Archive', in *Sign Here! Handwriting in the Age of New Media*, edited by Sonja Neef, José van Dijck and Eric Ketelaar (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), pp. 134–149, this quotation p. 134. For further information about these works, see Dreyblatt's website: <http://www.dreyblatt.net>.
- 18 This paragraph borrows from my contribution to the essay 'Hands on the Document'.
- 19 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, SC: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 25.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 46 and 54.
- 21 Walid Raad, *The Atlas Group (1989–2004): A Project by Walid Raad*, edited by Kassandra Nakas and Britta Schmitz (Cologne: Walther König, 2006), p. 126.
- 22 Walid Raad, *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow* (Cologne: Walther König, 2007), pp. 135–143.
- 23 This picture from the series *Let's Be Honest, the Weather Helped* can be found on the Atlas Group website, and the link for this image contains the words 'Saudi Arabia' (each picture contains the name of a different country, or a group such as NATO, though the pictures are not titled with these names), purporting to be the country of origin for the bullets whose damage is being marked: http://www.theatlasgroup.org/data/images/raad-note/001_SaudiArabia_Full_Page4.jpg.
- 24 Mike Davis, 'The Poor Man's Air Force: A History of the Car Bomb (Part 1)', <http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/76140/>.
- 25 Raad, *The Atlas Group*, p. 96.
- 26 *Ibid.* In *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*, Raad writes that these same photographs were 'found in the archives of the Lebanese daily newspapers *Annahar* and *As-Safir*' (p. 100).
- 27 http://www.theatlasgroup.org/data/images/volume-57/Neck_Engines_ALL8.jpg.
- 28 Raad, *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*, p. 86.

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- 29 http://www.theatlasgroup.org/data/images/volume-38/L55_56.jpg.
- 30 Even the documents themselves are subject to revision, and hardly present an official or even fixed record. The version of *Missing Lebanese Wars* in *The Atlas Group* is identical to the one on the Atlas Group website, but the plates presented in *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow* sometimes contain small differences in the numbers from the seemingly identical document in *The Atlas Group* (compare, for example, p. 71 of *The Atlas Group* with p. 29 of *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*).
- 31 <http://www.theatlasgroup.org/data/images/volume-72/plate132.jpg>.
- 32 Britta Schmitz, 'Not a Search for Truth', in *The Atlas Group*, pp. 41–46, this quotation p. 43.
- 33 Vered Maimon, 'The Third Citizen: On Models of Criticality in Contemporary Artistic Practices', *October* 129 (2009), 85–112, this quotation p. 99.

