Excerpts from a Grammar of Redaction

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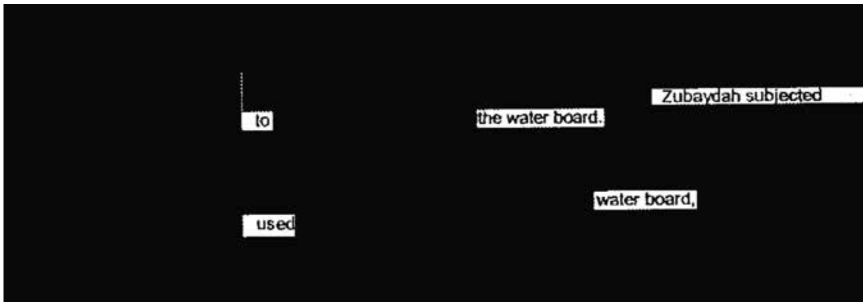
It begins with a sentence, of sorts.

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.

▲
(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.

▲
(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.

▲
(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 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, ████ 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. ████ is a CIA attorney (page one), who should not be confused with ████, who is also a CIA attorney (beginning of page two). Other names are redacted, but seemingly without purpose. ████ is the assistant US attorney, EDVA, whose name is ████ (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
	CIA Counter Terrorism Center attorney
	NCIS psychologist based in Guantanamo
	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
Haynes, William J., II	DOD General Counsel 2001-2008
Helgerson, John	CIA Inspector General

▲
(fig. 7)

you do not confuse ████████ (end of page one) with ████████ (end of page two).

One does, of course. After reading these documents for many months, I began to think I got to know Mr ████████ (he is almost always a man). He is a central character in the story of the so-called Global War on Terror. Mr ████████ 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 ████████ 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 ████████ 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 ████████ is quite the reverse. He is a subject formed by the structures of national security and legal anxiety that create these redacted documents. Mr ████████ 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 ████████ 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 ████████ severe pain, there is little sense of a subjectivity that might experience the pain. Who is Mr ████████? 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 ██████████, 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.