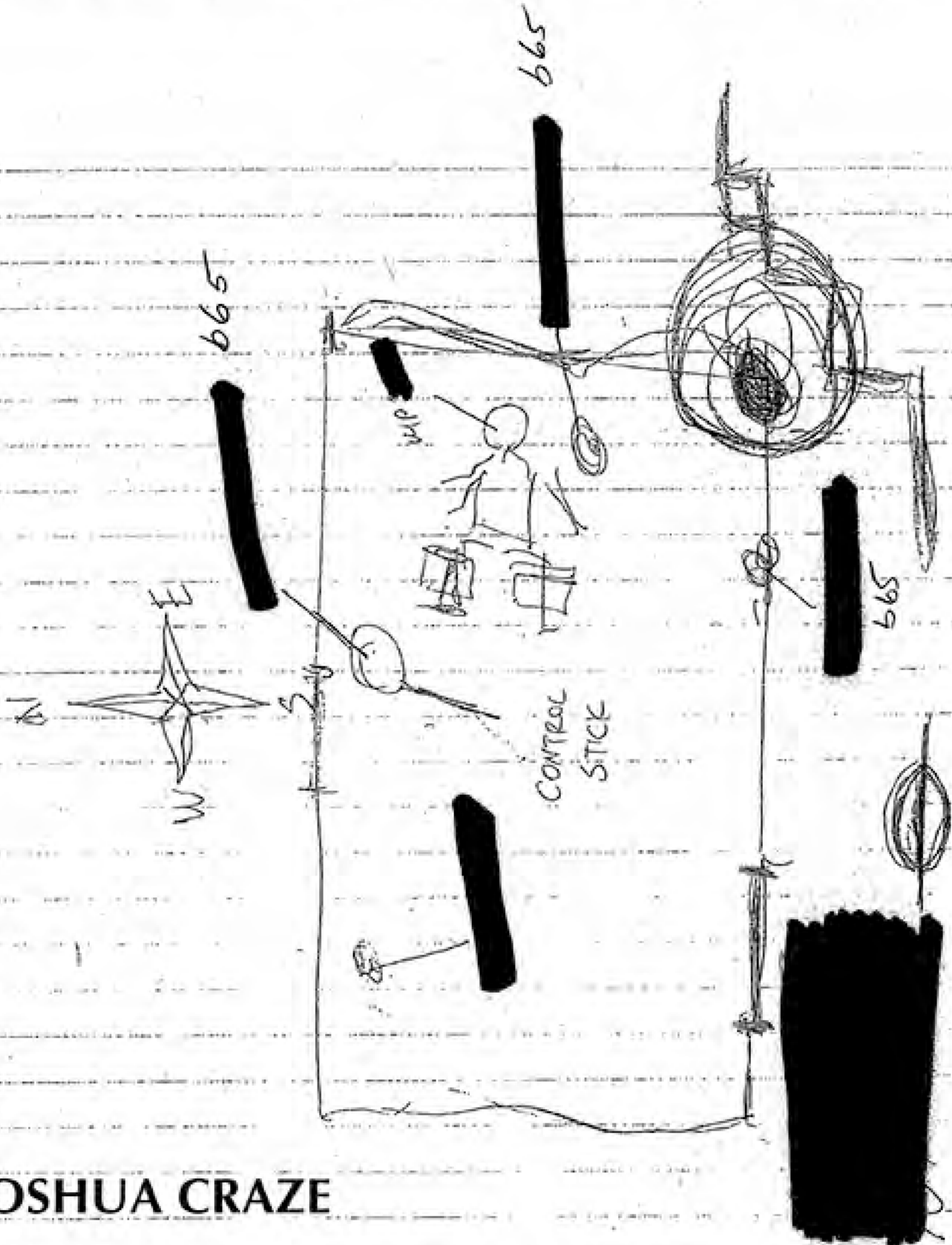


A GRAMMAR OF REDACTION



BY JOSHUA CRAZE

EXHIBIT P

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This text ('A Grammar of Redaction') is excerpted from a book project, *How To Do Things Without Words*. A version of this grammar was displayed in the New Museum's Resource Center, as part of the *Temporary Center for Translation*, Summer 2014. An edited excerpt of the introduction and the chapter entitled 'Subjects without Objects' was published as 'An Excerpt from a Grammar of Redaction', in the edited volume *Archival Dissonance: Knowledge Production and Contemporary Art* (I.B Tauris/Ibraaz, 2014).

A version of this grammar and the phrasebook that accompanies it—which contains the redacted documents referred to in this text—are available for download at: <http://www.joshuacraze.com/exhibitions/>

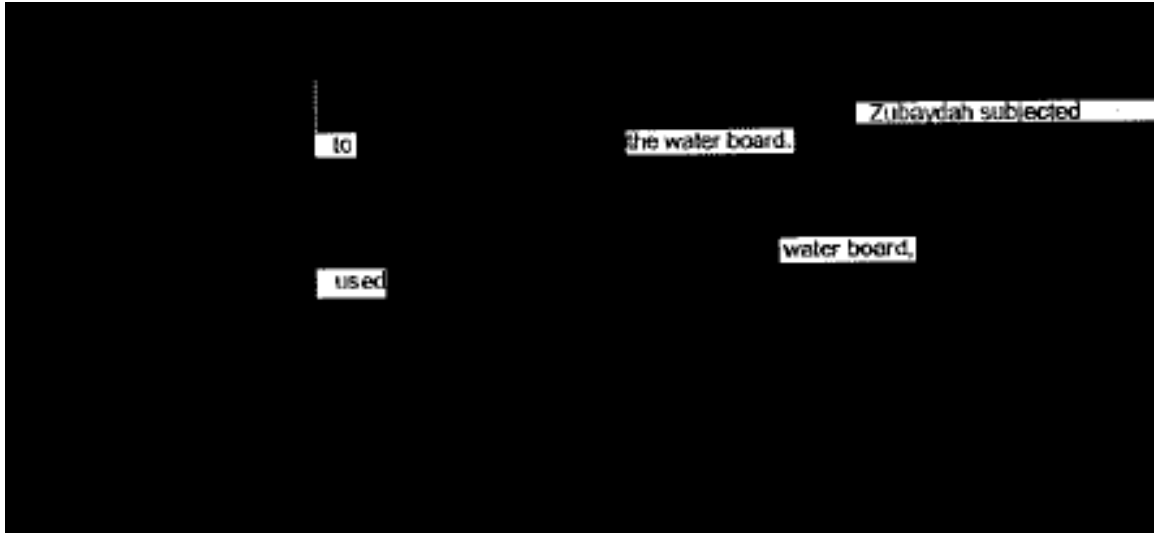
The cover of this grammar is a page taken from DOD002818, a October 8 2003 legal review conducted by 104th Military Intelligence Battalion, 4th Mechanized Infantry Division, US Army, into an interrogator's use of excessive force while conducting the interrogation of a detainee at a Forward Operating Base in Tikrit, Iraq. While it appears to be a child's drawing, this pencil sketch is actually part of a sworn statement given by one of the soldiers involved in the interrogation, and marks the position of the interrogators, the detainee, and the control stick with which he was beaten. The names are all redacted, and replaced with numbers, which allow one to track the otherwise redacted subjects through the various depositions and emails that are appended to the legal review.

The final seizing of the prey is open, for terror is part of its intended effect, but from the moment of incorporation onwards, everything happens in the dark again. The mouth is dark and the stomach and bowels still darker. No-one knows and no-one thinks about what goes on inside him. Of this absolutely fundamental process of incorporation by far the larger part remains secret. It begins with the active and deliberate secrecy of lying in wait and ends as something unknown and involuntary in the secret recesses of the body. Only the intervening moment of seizure flashes out, like lightening illuminating its own brief passage.

— Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*.

INTRODUCTION

It begins with a sentence, of sorts.



This 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 March 28, 2002. 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 their “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 this report, my eyes were drawn to the sentence shown above: “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 couldn't discount the redactions as if they were non-sense: the annoying suppressions that get in the way of significance. I couldn't look for words, as if the redactions didn't exist. I didn't want to hunt for significance—it is already there, in the black. I just didn't know how to see it.

Intrigued by the composite sentences of Other Document #131, I looked into the legal framework governing redaction.¹ There are a number of reasons that the CIA can either deny a 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 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 ongoing covert activities. None of these criteria seemed able to explain the way the 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, repeatedly. 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.

¹ 'Other Document #131' can be found as document A7 in the Phrasebook of redacted documents that accompanies this grammar. A full list of the documents contained in the phrasebook, along with bibliographic information, can be found in the list of documents at the end of this grammar.

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 couldn't ever get to the things themselves. They became a bit like Kantian noumena.² 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 redactions themselves.

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 2001-2008 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

² For many early critics such as Jacobi, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* defended the ground of reason (synthetic a priori knowledge) at a very high price, and left us uncertain as to whether our knowledge was actually knowledge of 'things-in-themselves.'

relentless emphasis on the empirical details of the war on terror, began to feel like it wasn't 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. 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 pedophiles. Nor could I write about the fear of 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 couldn't 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 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 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 doesn't just mean adding context, or filling in more of the story. Political analysis on its own doesn't 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 inter-relate. The first is a novel, *Redacted Mind*. It 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 the grammar of redaction that you are now reading, which is excerpted from a longer book project, entitled *How To Do Things Without Words*. This grammar is a typology of the structures formed by the inter-relationship of redaction and text. It is thus not exactly a linguistic grammar, but rather a grammar of images.

This grammar doesn't 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 I will look at contribute to what Michael Taussig, in his book *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*, will call public secrets: things we all know about, but know we should not know *too much* about.³ 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 don't 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 don't 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 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 email (and what could I tell them

³ Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

other than that this wasn't 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 don't 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 this grammar took shape. In these documents, 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, which follow this introduction. 'The Hidden City' details the types of locatives, both geographic and internal, that are redacted in these documents, and the visibility such redaction gives to a variety of otherwise invisible forces. 'Subjects without Objects' is an inquiry into what happens when the subjects of these documents disappear and the new forms of subjectivity emerge through the process of redaction. 'Actions without Words' looks at the way various forms of

decontextualized verbs and nouns combine with redacted text to produce a strange sort of physics. ‘Objects without Subjects’ analyses the disconnect between detainees and the traces of subjects (lawyers, interrogators, CIA officials) that one finds in these documents, and looks at the way the redactions of these texts are prefigured by an earlier set of redactions in the minds of the good middle class people involved in the war on terror.

Each section makes references to a number of different documents. I have now read around 4,000 redacted pages: from CIA interrogation files to military memorandum, from Department of Justice inquiries to the reports of the International Committee for the Red Cross. This work would not have been possible without the organizations that received leaked documents, or else went through the torturous process of making FOIA requests and then publishing their discoveries. So thank you: American Civil Liberties Union, The National Security Archive, Washington Post, New York Times, and so many others.

For this grammar, I have selected only a few exemplary cases. Rather than reprint the entirety of the documents, many of which run to hundreds of pages, I have excerpted them. You can look through these excerpts in the binder that accompanies this grammar, entitled *A Grammar of Redaction: The Phrasebook*. Each document has a code, which you can find in the list of documents at the end of this grammar. Full copies of these documents are available at <http://www.thetorturedatabase.org/> and can be searched for using the information given in the list of documents.

In a roundabout way, this grammar is inspired by the American philosopher J. L. Austin and his book *How To Do Things With Words*.⁴ 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

⁴ J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Second Edition), (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

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 set 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 a priest speaking 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 the words are taken away. It is a study of how to do things without words.

1. THE HIDDEN CITY

Sometimes, when I pour through the pages of these heavily redacted files, I can find a strict correspondence between the documents and the world. Not a correspondence between the world and the words of the documents, you understand, but between the world and the redactions, which echo, with uncanny accuracy, the unspoken spaces of our present.

In September 2006, then-US President George W. Bush finally acknowledged what journalists and investigators had claimed for some time: that since 2001 the CIA has run a series of black sites—secret prisons, outside of US territorial jurisdiction—and uses them to detain what it terms ‘unlawful enemy combatants.’ As of 2014, no country has acknowledged hosting a black site. These sites, to use the minimalist expression favored by the CIA, are something of a public secret. The American people, to the extent they care, acknowledge such sites exist but don’t know (or know not to know) where they are, even when it seems beyond doubt—as in Poland and Somalia—that they do indeed exist.

They are a visible invisible; they exist, but we know no more than that, and so they float free from any definitive geographic localization. They are an immanent possibility.

As in life, so in letters. While the language of the memos, reports, and inquiries that this grammar analyses frequently seems to be horrifically out of joint with the world in which we live, the redactions of these documents follow it precisely. Take document HC1 in the Phrasebook, which is excerpted from an inquiry into the CIA’s use of Enhanced Interrogation Techniques.

It would be customary to abbreviate Enhanced Interrogation Techniques as EITs. So much in these documents receives an acronym, as is the American government's wont, that reading them, I have a sense that this process flattens the world: EITs, OGAs, and TLC become inter-changeable, part of a sad Weberian world of bureaucracy that is closed off from its referents. The acronyms are part of a language that denies the consequences of what it describes; they are part of a linguistic redaction that mirrors the logic of the black spaces of the documents. EITs, for instance, become a stabilized series of practices. The uncertainty of the word enhanced vanishes. I shall not abbreviate Enhanced Interrogation Techniques. Rather, part of the inquiry this grammar will undertake is an investigation into that niggling first word.

HC1 announces that Abu Zubaydah, who the document claims is a senior Al Qaeda leader (he is not), was captured during a raid in Faisalabad, Pakistan, in late March 2002. "Abu Zubaydah," the document reads, "was transported to a 'black site,' a secret CIA prison facility"

and the rest is [REDACTED].

The text literally enacts itself: Abu Zubaydah is sent to a black site, and the black site is in the [REDACTED]. What is acknowledged but undefined in the world is acknowledged but undefined in the document—it is less a redaction than a visualization of our actuality.

Examples of this sort of correspondence abound in the redacted documents. In HC2, the penultimate paragraph details Khalid Sheikh Muhammad's rendition from [REDACTED] in Pakistan, to a [REDACTED] CIA black site. We know neither where Khalid Sheikh Muhammad (or KSM, as the military, with their obsession with acronyms, like to call him) was—which world he inhabited—nor

where he went. The world of terrorism and the world of detainment are mirror images of each other. Both are secret, and form part of a single landscape of redacted spaces that has its own contours and logics.

Such geographic redactions focus the narrative of the documents. HC3 is a page from an inquiry by the Department of Justice's Office of Professional Responsibility entitled *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* (henceforth called the OPR Report). The report traces the history of the torture memos that prepared the legal ground for CIA interrogations of enemy combatants, and which were initially written by John Yoo (then Deputy Assistant Attorney General) and signed off by Jay Bybee (then head of the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice).

One sentence begins: "When U.S. Military forces began detaining individuals in Afghanistan and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba..."

and the rest is [REDACTED].

The place-names revealed in the redacted documents are bestowed power by the black text that surrounds them: they *must* be the sites of importance. Guantanamo is one of the most frequent of these names. Bagram, the American military base in Afghanistan where so many were tortured, is another.

Amid all that black, there is a proper name, and the practices and people hidden in the black accrue to that name. This narrative focalization reduces the scope of our understanding to a series of already known places. It is not just that these redactions prevent discussion of other sites (Poland, Somalia), but they also turn the war on terror into a narrative about certain places, and certain people. The redaction attempts to prevent an analysis of the redaction itself,

and beyond it, the whole structure of secrecy, rendition, and confinement that gives shape to Guantanamo and Bagram, and without which, one is a colonial naval base, the other an ancient city on the Silk Road.

Such narrative focalization occurs elsewhere in the redacted documents. It decontextualizes people and things, and gives us fragments of stories. We are forced to build webs from the traces of visibility left amid the black. These redactions let some people become the stars of the documents (Abu Zubaydah, Al Nashiri—another ‘high-value detainee’), whilst the lives of others, detainees and CIA officers alike, are effectively expunged from the account.

Elsewhere, it is certain actions that become the focus. We will see infinite documents where virtually the only word left is waterboarded. All the other practices of interrogation, and all the orders and thought processes that led to the waterboarding, vanish, leaving only the action itself. This narrative focalization continually moves the reader’s attention away from the political structures that make these actions possible, and towards a moral evaluation of waterboarding considered outside of its context. This might sound like classic ideology critique: unveil the hidden structures of power, and strike at the beast! Except what is required is not an unveiling, but an attention to the veil.

There are two ‘hidden cities’ in these documents. There are the black sites, of course, normally literally translated in the documents as [REDACTED]. Parallel to them, there is a second hidden city: the space of the sovereign decision. The OPR Report is exemplary in this regard.

HC4 is a page from the inquiry. At the top, John Yoo is instructing one of his staff members to do some research. He meets with her (we know it is a woman thanks to the pronouns used; we don’t know her name) on April 15, 2002, in order to prepare for a meeting of the

National Security Council the next day. The meeting itself is redacted. We learn—from an unredacted footnote referring to a redacted block of text—only that most witnesses to such meetings had only very general recollections of what was said, and that no notes were taken (active forgetting is the ordinary form of redaction). The next unredacted block of text is three pages later, and details John Yoo setting to work on the memo. We never know what happened in the meeting. Only that John Yoo, the great villain of the Left's story of the Torture Memos, suddenly had rather a lot of work to do.

The same situation repeats itself later in the inquiry (HC5). John Yoo informs someone (the name is ██████████) by email that "Let's plan on going over [to the White House] at 3.30 to see some other folks about the bad things opinion." It is likely, the inquiry claims, that Deputy White House Counsel Tim Flanigan or Counsel to the Vice President David Addington were present, but Yoo wasn't certain who was at the meeting, and any intimations the writers of the inquiry might have had are lost to us, for the meeting itself is redacted.

These redactions occur every time that Yoo steps into the White House. Reading these documents again, while writing this grammar, I had the impression that I was watching a B-grade horror film, in which the crop circle/demonic seat of power can only be shown from afar, and never entered into; all we are left with are orcs and goblins, minions obeying a language that we can't hear, or can't understand.

Taken together, the redaction of both hidden cities (Washington *and* the black sites) produces an oddly bureaucratic drama. We learn more about the drafting process, the long working hours, and office politics than we do about the political deliberations behind the interrogations. It is as if politics itself has been redacted from the documents. With the content of the memos, and the political will behind them, so often suppressed, our reading confronts us instead

with unexpected eruptions of everyday life: the logic of the documents' narratives is often dictated by the humdrum sending of emails, and the endless redrafting of reports that—from the perspective of the redacted documents—have no content.

These bureaucratic peregrinations lead up the exemplary moment when the classified Bybee Memo (upon which Yoo was working in the excerpted pages quoted above) is taken to the White House to be signed. The report details Yoo and Patrick Philbin's preparations to go to the White House, and there is then a redaction, as if the camera panned out from the climatic final scene of the film, and on the next page we are told, "The Bybee Memo and the Classified Bybee Memo were finalized and signed on August 1, 2002."⁵

These redactions create another form of public secret. The political will to push through the OLC memos is apparent. It isn't a secret that Yoo and Bybee are *going* to the White House. What happens there, however, just like what happens at the black sites, is never spelled out. We know Yoo is there, but we can't articulate with any certainty what he does there. Equally, we can't *do* anything about it. Our own powerlessness is mirrored by the limitations of the OPR Report. The scope of the inquiry is set out in advance. The potential culprits are Yoo, Bybee, Bradbury, and the other lawyers. The main actor in the war on terror vanishes from the narrative. The redaction of the White House indicates the space of power; that which orchestrates inquiries, determines silences, and suffuses the limits of what we know.

There is also a third 'hidden city' in these documents, and it is one that allows for the oddly bureaucratic drama I sketched above, in which working on torture memos and working at an insurance firm seem essentially interchangeable. It is this 'third city' that produces

⁵ Patrick Philbin served as Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel, and later reviewed the Yoo memo, challenging its validity. The story of the torture memos is expertly told in David Cole's *The Torture Memos: Rationalizing the Unthinkable*, (New York: New Press, 2009) and Philippe Sand's *Torture Team: Rumsfeld's Memo and the Betrayal of American Values* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

the type of redacted text this grammar will analyze next: subjects without objects. The third city is that of internal space.

From these documents, one gains little sense of the interior lives of the detainees. This might not surprise us, until we remember that it is precisely their interior lives that is the putative object of the Enhanced Interrogation Techniques: the American government wants to know what Abu Zubaydah knows. Yet the endless legal analysis of interrogation practices is not based on Abu Zubaydah, but on the idea of a reasonable man.

Abu Zubaydah disappears in more than one sense. In one of the CIA interrogation files for Abu Zubaydah (HC7), we are able to read a series of post-facto evaluations (“the use of enhanced interrogation techniques proved productive; Abu Zubaydah provided additional useful information”). The text later indicates that “a psychological profile was conducted on him before the interrogations began,”

and the rest is [REDACTED].

Abu Zubaydah appears, in part due to the redactions, denuded of personality. He is an object for intervention, a man without content.

The documents create an elaborate formal apparatus about such interventions. There are extensive deliberations (HC8), for instance, over whether placing an insect in a box with Abu Zubaydah (who may have a fear of insects) constitutes torture:

“As we understand it, you plan to inform Zubaydah that you are going to place a stinging insect into the box, but you will actually place a harmless insect, such as a caterpillar. If you do so, to ensure that you are outside the predicate act requirement...”⁶

⁶ In law, a predicate act is an earlier offence (in this case, the threat of pain) that would enhance a later offence (such as placing an insect in a box with Abu Zubaydah).

For an act to be considered torture, it requires both causing severe pain (mental or physical) to the detainee, and the intention to do so; large parts of the torture memos are devoted to ways of showing that the particular practice in question could not be expected to cause severe pain, and so, if one were to do engage in that particular practice, one could not—of course—be intending to cause severe pain, and thus—of course—one would not be torturing the detainee.

“...you must inform him that the insects will not have a sting that would produce death or severe pain. If, however, you were to place the insect in the box without informing him that you are doing so, then, in order not to commit a predicate act, you should not affirmatively lead him to believe that any insect which has a sting that could produce severe pain or suffering or even death
[REDACTED]...”

Abu Zubaydah’s feelings about caterpillars are not mentioned in the redacted documents.

Equally, there is no account of the interrogator’s *actual intentions*, in the non-legal sense of the term, towards Abu Zubaydah. At the beginning of the interrogation program, there are actions in need of intentions—detainees interrogated in the dark. The CIA then turns to lawyers to provide intentions for future interrogations. These intentions are the prefabricated shadows of future acts, worked out in Washington for deployment in Waziristan. Any traces of the interrogator’s actual intentions towards the detainees are redacted from these documents.

The gap between possibility and actuality is thus eradicated: intentions are spelled out as if they already exist, and actions occur in words, and not on bodies.

One gets no sense of how Abu Zubaydah did react to the caterpillar. The CIA had already determined that, as if the human body were part of a flow chart of predictable causal relations (and the power of torture is that it makes this seem to be the case; there are limits to a person, and they can be inflicted upon them).

These redactions compress the frame of action in the documents. Consequence, intention, and inter-action between subjects are all elided. Abu Zubaydah is a temporary blockage in a circuit board, and the CIA interrogation files pose a simple question: how to get what it is inside Abu Zubaydah out, into the world?

This isn't as easy to answer as it appears. To solve the problem, one has to first determine what is inside Abu Zubaydah. Along with guts, blood, and bone, there are things he knows.

How do we know he is saying everything he knows? How do we know he is telling the truth?

The problem is as old as philosophy; analytic philosophers call it the problem of other minds. The CIA did not take up a correspondence theory of truth and attempt to match Abu Zubaydah's words to the world (can we verify what he said?) There is instead a basic, almost Cartesian skepticism to the way the CIA thinks about what Abu Zubaydah is thinking.

In the redacted documents, Enhanced Interrogation Techniques often cease after an interrogator determines that Abu Zubaydah is cooperating, only to begin again, when a different interrogator expresses doubt that Abu Zubaydah is saying everything he knows. Or, as the OPR report puts it, rather more circumspectly: "Measuring the effectiveness of EITs is challenging for a number of reasons including (1) the Agency cannot determine with any certainty the totality of the intelligence the detainee actually possesses."

At the beginning of the interrogation program, a CIA report notes that: “The Agency [the CIA] lacked linguists or subject matter experts and had very little hard knowledge of what particular Al Qa’ida leaders—who later became detainees—knew. This lack of knowledge led analysts to speculate about what a detainee “should know.””

So began the fantasies. Ali Soufran and Steve Gaudin of the FBI interviewed Abu Zubaydah first. He claimed (correctly), that he was not a member of Al Qaeda, but did give up information on Khalid Sheikh Mohammed’s role in the 9/11 attacks, and on José Padilla, who was later arrested for planning to carry out an attack inside the United States. After only a few days, Abu Zubaydah was passed onto the CIA, which began to experiment with enhanced interrogation techniques. He was stripped naked and placed inside a coffin, deprived of sleep for days on end, and finally waterboarded 83 times. Once these techniques had begun, Abu Zubaydah was, perhaps unsurprisingly, extremely uncooperative. After a few months, however, he had confessed to being a member of Al Qaeda, and to a bewildering range of terror plots within the United States. He was going to blow up the Golden Gate Bridge *and* the Statue of Liberty. This is what Abu Zubaydah *should* know. Together, the interrogators and Abu Zubaydah constructed fantastical stories.

Abu Zubaydah, like so many of those detained by the American government, ends up a fanatic fantasist, searching for a way out of the box with the caterpillar in it. The detainees became strange versions of Scheherazade, spinning one tale after another to their captors, in a desperate effort to conform to an impossible skepticism that misrecognizes what it wants. The interrogators think they want information from Abu Zubaydah. What they actually want is to remake him, vengefully, in the image of what they fear.

The redactions strip away these misrecognitions, and leave us only with formalisms—sketches done before the fact—that set out ahead

of time what Abu Zubaydah should know, how he should respond, and what the intentions of the interrogators should be. We don't learn anything about the actuality of the interrogation room, or the inner lives of its inhabitants, detainees and torturers alike. These internal spaces are either redacted in print, or else not mentioned at all.

The documents give us a story at once uncanny and familiar. The interrogation files are not full of screams, but replete with the mundane details of office work (HC9, 10, 11). Guidelines are reviewed, emails sent, reports drafted. It is the barest frame of bureaucratic action, the sort of story one might tell to one's spouse after a long day at the office, when just the intonation of the words is enough to intimate the drudgery of it all.

Isn't this often the case? Didn't the CIA case workers return home and not speak about their work to their families, other than to recite a familiar litany (email, asshole boss, lots of work, tired, beer), and isn't that eerie sense of familiarity one has on reading these documents reflective of the fact that we too return home, and our lives are a mystery to our families, just as our families' lives are a mystery to ourselves?

The redactions turn interrogation files into episodes of a strange soap opera from Washington, that, like some cartoon version of a Beckett play, fail to contain any drama at all. We recognize the office, the politics, and the email exchanges. Little else seems to happen. This familiarization reveals the uncanny nature of the operation. The memo writers and interrogators *do* live in a space like ours, because the redaction is two-fold: it is in the text, post-facto, and it is in the mind of those involved. Another day, another memo.

We all live in hidden cities.

2. SUBJECTS WITHOUT OBJECTS

Redactions occur throughout these documents. Sometimes, as in the 'Hidden City' section of this grammar, 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 vanish, 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 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 worries about legal liability.

[I have the greatest respect for cynics.]

Regardless of the intentions underlying the redactions, the suppression of proper names in these documents has a series of very interesting consequences.

S1 is a page from the CIA's Special Review of Counterterrorism Detention and Interrogation Activities, henceforth referred to as the CIA Special Review. It details the beginning of the interrogations of Abu Zubaydah and Al Nashiri. 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.

We, just like Al Nashiri and Abu Zubaydah, do not know who the torturers are. We see only the names of roles—psychologist, interrogator—but can't identify individuals. 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's useless. The redacted documents create their own forms of subjectivity: amorphous, replaceable, profligate.

Both Al Nashiri and Abu Zubaydah have proper names (but not interiority) 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 extra-legal process of rendition and confinement is mirrored in the interrogators' disappearance into the bureaucratic machinery of the redactions, where they are free (S2) to use pressure point techniques to restrict detainees' carotid arteries.

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

merely 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 doctors' words.

Soldiers, however, often leave their rank 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?*⁷ 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 being a soldier.⁸ 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 S3, an officer assaults a teacher at a religious school during the course of an interview. Further down the page, someone who doesn't 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 his proper name. All we see is the rank, the action, and the black (S4).

⁷ See Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* [1784], in James Schmidt (ed.), *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth Century Answers and Twentieth Century Questions*, (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 58-64.

⁸ Kant's utilization of public and private is rather different than the two terms significance in America today.

Sometimes these deviations from duty acquire their own proper names. S5 is a two-page 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). 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 don't have this form, and, equally, the codes are also used to refer to detainees). Instead, the codes 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 is makes sense only relationally, within the document. Sometimes, however, the system doesn't work.

We know (S5) Staff Sergeant b657c5 thought someone of 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. S6 is an email exchange contained within the same inquiry as S5. 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 social world.⁹

⁹ Michel Foucault, 'The Masked Philosopher'. In Paul Rabinow (ed.), *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*. (Middlesex: Penguin, 1997), p. 321-328.

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 lectured at the Collège de France. How we can 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 and confirmation into 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, falls away.

In S6, 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 document, we again find identifying numbers, so we can trace these anonymous epistles (b6-27c2 is the closing correspondent, whose email appears on the first page), 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 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 over 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 (the first you see on the pages I include in the Phrasebook), 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. Today’s [sic] enemy, particularly those in SWA [South-West Afghanistan] understand force...a litany [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 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, violence, and caterpillars left in boxes.

The redaction of proper nouns reaches its apotheosis in S7, the glossary of names attached to the OPR report. If *Zero Dark Thirty* had been a better film than it was, this might have been the list of credits that rolled at the end of the film. It is composed of two columns: name and rank. Some of the actors are fully identified, such as John Ashcroft (Attorney General 2001-2005). 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 U.S. Attorney, EDVA, whose name is ██████████ (about twenty minutes of Googling allows you to work out who this is). Other characters have both their names and ranks redacted. It is important you don't 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 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. He is a CIA lawyer (S8), and also went on training courses run by the CTC (S9). 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 Blisset: a ritualized nom de plume that levels differences (*Chiunque può essere Luther Blissett, semplicemente adottando il nome 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 don't know who the torturers are.

Perhaps *you* could be the CIA attorney whose name (S7) is redacted; the space then would no longer be black, but simply an underline, ready for your name to be penciled 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's 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.

3. ACTIONS WITHOUT WORDS

Sometimes, to say that these documents have a narrative is a stretch. Often, swimming in the middle of the page, is simply a fact. These facts tend to be actions, without subjects attached: verbs that float free from questions of intention and judgment, and thus any hint of legal accountability. The most striking of these documents present just a single phrase; they enact a particular variation of the passive voice, where, by dint of redaction, it is impossible to say who is doing what to whom. Thanks to the redactions, these actions take place without subject or objects. The redaction itself is also a form of action (without words), which makes manifest a particular form of narrative.

A1 is a page from the CIA Special Review of Counterterrorism and Interrogation Activities. The page is entirely redacted, except for the header “Waterboard Technique” and the phrase “interrogators used the waterboard on Khalid Shaykh Muhammad.” A2, from the same document, repeats the assertion. A3, again from the CIA Special Review, presents the most condensed form of this redaction. Except for the phrase “waterboard on Abu Zubaydah,” everything is redacted (the next three pages are totally redacted, so, presumably to save ink, there is simply the phrase ‘Pages 86 to 89 Denied in Full’).

There are no details, just a single acknowledgement. Waterboarding happened here. These moments of visibility are produced between the CIA and the journalists who request the documents. Such requests often focused on waterboarding. The extent to which the CIA was willing, at that time, to give information to the public was to give them a single word: waterboard. A visible-invisible. Yes, we waterboarded. The details are largely a matter of national security. These sorts of redactions had constitutive effects on the public debate over the American interrogation program. The focus became waterboarding. Hitchens had himself waterboarded. We debated the ethics and morality of waterboarding. Was it torture or not? Did it

cause pain? It is not that these debates are not useful, but they nonetheless reminded me of an undergraduate class in philosophy: they assessed the morality of a decontextualized action. This is the way the actions are presented in these documents, by dint of redaction, and the public debate followed the logic of the documents.

There was something of a collaboration, if you forgive my use of the word, between the journalists and the US government. We agreed on the framing given by the redacted documents. The act, not the actors. The principle, not the actuality. What has happened (that redacted passive voice), not what is happening. The better journalists and researchers—of which there are legion—did something else. They attempted to fill in the black spaces, find the hidden facts and expose the inconsistencies in the revealed words. This work, as I noted in the introduction, is vital. There is something else to be done, however, and to which these essays are a minor contribution, which is to look intently into the black spaces. Here, it is not so much a question of unveiling the redaction, as seeing the power of the veil: the way these redactions heighten waterboarding. Amid all the black, there is but one phrase. It is like we are at an erotic show, and all of our attention is focused on the single nipple that stands in for everything that is hidden. We focus on that one word: waterboard.

The documents help sharpen our focus. Often modifying clauses vanish, which might otherwise give us context. Take A4, from the OPR report, in which “Although Levin concluded that use of the waterboard was lawful,”

and the rest is [REDACTED].

The actual practice of the act vanishes. The scope of our understanding is nominal. It is (A5, A6) simply the phrase “Waterboard Technique” or “The Waterboard”; the techniques themselves are often (but not always) missing from the documents. We are reading a detective novel, and waterboard is the character

who too obviously murdered the vicar in the study; that we think waterboard is the culprit merely allows the novelist to build up suspense elsewhere. The documents could have focused on another enhanced interrogation technique, such as “insult slap” or “attention grasp,” but neither of these is believable. The organizations that demanded the documents, along with us, the readers, all want the waterboard to be responsible.

This attention to the waterboard (a noun that became a verb during the war on terror) is part of a repetitive couplet that occurs throughout these documents. A good example is A7, a heavily redacted CIA report on the raid, capture, and waterboarding of Abu Zubaydah, obtained by an ACLU FOIA request on May 27, 2008. It is called Other Document #131. On page six, a sentence is picked out from amid the black. ‘Zubaydah subjected ██████████ to ██████████ the water board ██████████ waterboard ██████████ used.’ In the document, there is a lot more redaction that I have indicated here.

The sentence that is formed is not an actual sentence. In the document, the sentence that contained the words “the water board” could refer to a different person. Abu Zubaydah, in the document, could have been subject to a cold bath. The logic of the sentence is formed from the redaction itself. Its meaning is not something underneath the redactions, or behind them: it is the logic of the redaction, which makes visible the one central fact around which debate will subsequently turn. It is the tracks in the forest that lead to the trap.

For as soon as the fact is stated, its problematic nature is annulled. Page seven is denied in full, and on page eight, one can read only a single phrase: “briefs HPSCI Chairman and Ranking Minority Member on ██████████ Abu Zubaydah interrogations.” Again the redactions give rise to a sentence that is formed from fragments of other, redacted sentences. A minimal bureaucracy created by

language's fragmentation. This second phrase annuls the first. Yes, there was waterboarding. No, it was not illegal, or unusual. People (unknown) have briefed the government. There is nothing to see here. What we see is reassurance: the absence of needing to see anything at all.

This couplet, this redacted poem, is repeated on the next two pages of the document. On page nine, the only words left unredacted are "interrogation of Nashiri. Waterboard ██████████ used." We have only the narrative of the document that leads us to believe, on the basis of this page, that Al Nashiri was waterboarded, and not another. This is the minimal story, the *récit*. Al Nashiri was waterboarded. The next page features only four unredacted words: "OGC attorney ██████████ reviews videotapes." This is the second part of the couplet: the act, and then its immediate annulation.

These are bad narratives, written by an author who is too in control of his characters. There is no tension to the words (it all occurs in the black), and everything turns out exactly as expected. It's an action film with all the scenes missing. Take A8, a page from one of Abu Zubaydah's interrogation files. We learn, mid-page, that two bullets hit Abu Zubaydah during the "arresting operation," and that after a ██████████ the second bullet caused a large wound in his leg.

It took place in Faisalabad, Pakistan. Abu Zubaydah was shot three times, and left struggling for his life. Later documents will tell us more about Abu Zubaydah. Indeed, some documents will later be re-released, with less redacted sections. The redactions themselves offer a history of the concerns of the American government, written in varied omissions, which can only be told retrospectively.

and the rest is ██████████.

Finally, we are told that “Abu Zubaydah was provided adequate and appropriate medical care.” The raid takes place off-camera, as it were. These redactions make visible the structural correspondence between the logic of redaction, and the redactions that already take place in the logic of the text; the removal of content that already occurs due to the way these documents are written.

There is something unpleasantly vicarious that occurs to me as I read these narratives. I have to fill in the black spaces. Imagine the raid. The shooting. The pain. The documents give me a minimal bureaucratic frame (adequate and appropriate medical care was provided), and they provide the ending, but they also encourage me to imagine the rest. My mind fills in the blanks, narrowly contoured by the available narrative (a shooting, ██████████, hospital treatment). It is a Hemmingway short story, replete with machismo.

A9 provides a more radically decontextualized narrative for Al Nashiri. Halfway down the page, we learn that “the Agency had Abu Zubaydah and another high value detainee, ‘Abd Al-Rahim Al-Nashiri, in custody...”

and the rest is ██████████.

There is then a whole paragraph in which we have to imagine what happened, before we are told, finally, that the “the Office of Medical Services (OMS) provided medical care to the detainees.” There is a narrative foreshortening at work here, which offers us only hospital scenes and successful arrests. The rest is redacted.

All these redacted spaces have likely, but not certain content. They appear to the reader analogously to the way that the inside of Abu Zubaydah’s head appeared to his interrogators. There is a likely, or a potential content, but one can’t ascertain just what that is.

Sometimes in the documents, what appears to be missing is a series

of actions, such as when we imagine the redacted paragraph in A9 that moves us from the capture of Al Nashiri to the hospital. Sometimes, the black spaces hint at something darker. A10, a page from the CIA Special Review, boasts that Abu Zubaydah identified José Padilla and Binyam Muhammad as Al Qaeda operatives, and that both have been captured. It also suggests that Abu Zubaydah identified [REDACTED] senior Al Qaeda operative

and the rest is [REDACTED].

The American government would no doubt claim that such redactions are because there were ongoing operations against this senior Al Qaeda operative, and thus these redactions are a matter of national security. What they summon up in the documents, though, is a vague fear. One gets the sense that Abu Zubaydah does know something, and that they are *out there*, these operatives. Much has been written about the US government's false and delirious claims about Abu Zubaydah's worth as an informant, and just as much about the fantasies that Abu Zubaydah ended up recounting, visions that he produced with his interrogators, as he struggled to give them what he *should* know. The redacted documents play a part in these fantasies. They render invisible the concrete actuality of Abu Zubaydah's speech, and instead transform his fantasies into an invisible-visible: a horde of enemies, waiting to strike, just as we dreamed about in the years after 9/11.

4. OBJECTS WITHOUT SUBJECTS

The redactions of these documents separate sentences into pieces. The objects of the sentences, mostly the detainees, have no relationship to the subjects: they are discussed separately, and seem to move in a world that is qualitatively different to that of the documents' authors. The reasons that objects appear without subjects are not to be found in the objects—the detainees—but in the subjects.

The subjects of these documents are doctors, interrogators, lawyers, politicians, and psychologists. Good middle class people. They do ██████████ to ██████████ detainees. Even when the detainees are named, they are passive. The struggle of these subjects occurs not in relation to a world, but within themselves, as battles over an a priori intentionality that seeks to justify itself before the intended action takes place. It is self-effacing, this concern with the *before*, and never with the present. Such struggles mark a redaction that exists prior to those we see in the documents.

O1, an excerpt from a document entitled 'Department of Defense Working Group Report on Detainee Interrogations in the Global War on Terrorism', is exemplary. The objects—the detainees—that are subject to enhanced interrogation techniques vanish into a series of quantitative levers. Need to give your detainee a boost? That would be "Pride and Ego Up." Detainee got too confident? You could use "Pride and Ego Down," or "Fear Up," which comes in two flavors: mild and harsh. If, by the end of it all, your guy still isn't talking, you can try the silent treatment. "Silence: Staring at the detainee to encourage discomfort."

The detainee is a series of potentialities, to be fine-tuned using these techniques, which correspond to intensities. This is the *enhancement* of the enhanced interrogation techniques: the ability to turn the knob all the way up. The flow charts that sometimes accompany these documents make it seem as if the detainee is a Fordist factory (and

the torture industry thrives on the sort of behaviorism our supposedly post-Fordist economy has left behind).

This quantification of the human is exemplified by the distinction between high-value and medium-value detainees. For a high-value detainee, the techniques need to be 'up', the pressure increased, the interrogation enhanced, and the documents redacted. Almost everything corresponds to a quantitative value.

Find the right pressure point, or so the interrogation manuals tell us, and you will extract (the word is used advisedly) what is inside the detainee. The euphemisms of the documents soften the blow, and allow one to believe that this is indeed all a game, in which quantitative techniques translate into actionable intelligence. The terms used for these techniques refer to a world away from Pakistan, where Abu Zubaydah was detained. "Mutt and Jeff" (O1) could be the name of an American sit-com, rather than an approach to interrogation. Waterboarding, equally, was earlier called "water dousing," and (O5) was also known (we don't know by whom; the subject is redacted) as a "cold water bath."

Part of the reason our subjects can refer to these techniques so nonchalantly is because they are treating the whole thing as a show. The pain they cause isn't real (waterboarding merely makes one feel *as if* one were drowning), and so the subjects' actions hang in a nebulous, theatrical space. Everyone gets a part, a stage name, and the script is written in advance. What the intentions will be. What will be confessed. The names are obscene. In an email about Abu Zubaydah, John Yoo asks whether "we know if Boo Boo is allergic to insects."

The performances are given a great deal of thought. The enhanced interrogation technique known as the "hard takedown" (O4) is often talked about as "part of the atmospherics." In an International Red Cross Report on conditions inside Guantanamo, which was leaked to

Mark Danner (who wrote about it in a series of articles for the *New York Review of Books*), it is evident that a great deal of care and precision was taken in constructing the walls into which detainees were smashed. A false wall is constructed, on top of an actual wall, which magnifies the sound as the detainee is pushed against it. Everything is done to create the appearance of intense pain, without the resulting injuries.

The performance drives the whole act forward. It makes for an unusual physics. Actions are carried out, but, if one is only to read the documents, then they seem to have no effect. No response is recorded. The body dematerializes into a set of legal and psychological conditions. The physical world is indicated, but its existence seems nominal, contoured by a bureaucracy and a legalism that stops it slipping out of bounds.

We know that torture, under section Section 2340A of the US code, is “pain that is difficult for the individual to endure and is of an intensity akin to pain accompanying serious injury.” We never hear about the pain. Only about what might be constituted as painful. What is *akin* to the pain accompanying serious injury? The *akin* in the code sets up the double world of the performance, where everything is *as if* there were pain. We hear that a “CIA debriefer blew smoke in Al-Nashiri’s face, manhandled him while he was tied in stress positions, and stood on his shackles to induce pain.” Al Nashiri’s reaction is never noted. Pain is induced, but not experienced. This is the fictive division of our subjects, in which intentions exist, and responses do not. It is the theatrical play of the real.

The redactions of the documents short cut the physical, and return to the legal. In one page of the CIA Special Review, we learn that interrogators threatened to kill Khalid Sheikh Muhammad’s children if anything else happened to the United States.

In the OPR Report, we learn that this threat did not constitute severe mental pain because it was conditional.

According to the CIA Special Review, one of the [REDACTED] interrogators then said

and the rest is [REDACTED]

This redaction continues for half a page. We do not know what occurs. We receive only a single line: "With respect to the report provided to him of the threats [REDACTED] that report did not indicate that the law had been violated." This is the enduring poetic couplet of the redacted documents, as noted in an earlier section of this grammar: decontextualized action, [REDACTED], and then reassuring legalism.

There is an odd correspondence theory at work here. One would almost want to say that it is a non-correspondence theory, for it is *as if* the mental and the physical existed on two separate planes. It is *as if* pain that does not result in actual lasting injury is not 'real pain.' The perfect interrogation technique, if one follows the logic of these documents, would be an unbearable pain, that left no marks on the body, and so could not be considered equivalent to severe bodily injury.

Alongside these demarcations of pain, however, there is always an excess, and it is often to be found in the redactions. In an initial formulation of the twelve enhanced interrogation techniques (A14) under legal consideration, the twelfth technique is redacted.

Everything is planned, worked out, and certified as legal by the

authorities. It is those same authorities, however, that use redaction to create an absence in their own planning: a twelfth, unnamed technique, that undoes the legal planning that went before. Perhaps the twelfth technique is simply the annulation of the limits of the prior categories.

Whether or not that is what is under the redacted text, this annulation is what occurred. The search for pain equivalent to real pain led the performance towards continually greater intensities. Take page A16, from the OPR report. It details the difference between the way the waterboard was used at the SERE school (and the way its use was approved in the Yoo and Bybee memos), and actual practice.

Rather than small amounts of water being placed on a damp cloth over the detainees' air passages, "Agency interrogator ██████████ continuously applied large volumes of water to a cloth that covered the detainee's mouth and nose." This difference was introduced because the previous performance was inadequate. The intensification of the technique, one of the interrogators says, is because it is "for real," and thus "more poignant and convincing." The performance must feel real.

It is not surprising that these techniques originated in a training program (at the SERE school). They are a preparation for reality; their own reality is not acknowledged. The difference, as the Bradbury memo—an OLC legal memo that superseded the Bybee memo—acknowledges is that while "SERE trainees know [the waterboarding] is part of a training program," detainees experience the reality of the performance.

The deviations from official practice nevertheless follow its logic. O6 is a page from the CIA Special Review, which investigates an incident during an interrogation that deviated from official guidelines. The detainee (whose name is ██████████) was subject to a mock

execution. The report continues: “According to [REDACTED] the technique was his idea but was not effective because it came across as being staged. It was based on the concept, from SERE school, of showing something that looks real, but is not.” Later, however, the interrogator observes that another detainee, who observed the ‘body’ following the mock execution, “sang like a bird.” No one told him it was theatre.

What the detainees experience is not the performance as if it were reality. Rather, they experience the reality of the performance. Here is Abu Zubaydah, speaking at last, and talking about his detention (this excerpt is taken from the International Red Cross Report on the Treatment of Fourteen ‘High Value Detainees’ in CIA custody):

“Two black wooden boxes were brought into the room outside my cell. One was tall, slightly higher than me and narrow. Measuring perhaps in area [3 1/2 by 2 1/2 feet by 6 1/2 feet high]. The other was shorter, perhaps only [3 1/2 feet] in height. I was taken out of my cell and one of the interrogators wrapped a towel around my neck, they then used it to swing me around and smash me repeatedly against the hard walls of the room. I was also repeatedly slapped in the face....

I was then put into the tall black box for what I think was about one and a half to two hours. The box was totally black on the inside as well as the outside....

They put a cloth or cover over the outside of the box to cut out the light and restrict my air supply. It was difficult to breathe. When I was let out of the box I saw that one of the walls of the room had been covered with plywood sheeting. From now on it was against this wall that I was then smashed with the towel around my neck. I think that the plywood was put there to provide some absorption of the impact of my body. The interrogators realized that smashing me against the hard wall would probably quickly result in physical injury.”

The actuality that Abu Zubaydah lives—and that he is aware that he is living—is one in which walls are not walls, and the truth of what he says is not the truth (it is not what he *should* say). That doesn’t make it any the less brutal. He is smashed into plywood *as if* it were a wall, with the intention to cause the same amount of pain *as if* it were

a wall, and it causes as much pain *as if* it were a wall. Everything is *as if* it were real. Pain doesn't care much for *as if*.

In the redacted documents, reality so often seems as if it were behind a wall of redaction. I find it shamefully hard, on occasion, to give credence to the documents. There is no reality effect, as Roland Barthes would have it. No detail of a room, no crumbling corner of brick. Reading these documents, can you imagine looking out from inside Abu Zubaydah's cell?

Barthes describes the reality effect (he is writing about novels) as those "*notations* which no function (not even the most indirect) will allow us to justify: these details are scandalous (from the point of view of structure), or, even more disturbingly, they seem allied with a kind of narrative *luxury*, profligate to the extent of throwing up 'useless' details and increasing the cost of narrative information."¹⁰

There are plenty of notations without function within the redacted documents. I think again of A13, and the line that emerges in the middle of a block of redacted text: 'Interrogators are required to sign a statement certifying that they have read and understood the contents of the folder'. Why is this line here? Why not redact this line like the rest of the page? Which folder? A statement about what?

These notations, however, don't make the world of the redacted documents seem any more real; they seem to refer to an almost inaccessible bureaucratic world in which what is happening is not really happening. It is just a job, or what is otherwise known as a performance.

This lack of interest in the actuality—in what actually occurs in the interrogation rooms—is prefigured in the legal memos on Enhanced Interrogation Techniques and the subsequent internal government

¹⁰ Roland Barthes, 'The Reality Effect', in *The Rustle of Language*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 141.

commentary. One government lawyer (Philbin) makes the following comment in the OPR report (O2):

“[I] did not think the memo provided a sufficient analysis to conclude that depriving a person of sleep for days on end while keeping him shackled to the ceiling in a diaper and at the same time using other techniques on him would not cross the line into producing “severe physical suffering.””

I am glad he is skeptical, but Philbin’s statement is indicative of the gulf separating the subjects from their objects. The person who is the object of this sentence is not a human being, but a set of potentially painful elements, whose pain level must be kept below a certain threshold that will be established in advance of the actuality.

This quantitative approach to the detainees soon begins to collapse under its own contradictions. Following the Bybee and Yoo memos, for instance, the question emerges (anticipated by Philbin’s comment above): perhaps, taken on their own, one of these techniques might not cause pain equivalent to severe physical suffering, but what about if they are used in combination? What if one waterboarded someone after they had been standing up for eight days, while Britney Spears was playing non-stop at ear-splitting levels, and they were deprived of sleep? These speculations, almost scholastic in character, so removed are they from empirical questions, lead to the Combined Techniques Memo (May 10, 2005), which is excerpted as O3. As a result of this combinatorial analysis (the flow chart, the factory), it is determined that waterboarding should only be used with sleep deprivation, and that it *must* be used with dietary manipulation, for a liquid diet [REDACTED].

The enhanced interrogation techniques are broken down into three distinct categories:

1) One begins with conditioning techniques. These are “designed to

bring the detainee into a baseline, dependent state,”
“demonstrating... [that the detainee] ...has no control over basic human needs.” Such techniques include forced nudity, sleep deprivation, and dietary manipulation.

2) Once the detainee is dependent, there are then techniques to demonstrate the correct *form* of response to the interrogator, or what the reports call “corrective techniques,” which are “used principally to correct, startle, or... achieve another enabling objective with the detainee.” “This category includes the insult slap, the abdominal slap, the facial hold, and the attention grasp.”

3) Once the detainee is dependent, and has been corrected—one might even say disciplined—there are then the coercive techniques, such as water boarding, which places the detainee under stress, and encourages their cooperation with the interrogator.

It is hardly surprising there is so little evidence of the interior lives of the detainees in the redacted documents. The interrogation program explicitly aims to annul such interiority, and reprogram the detainees, just *as if* there were a machine that turned humans into dependent fantasists, reliant on CIA interrogators for the absence of pain. When Abu Zubaydah later claims that he was ‘brainwashed’ by the CIA into claiming he was a member of Al Qaeda, he is telling the truth: his brain was washed by the waterboard, and reconstructed.

This is the final telos of torture: one overcomes (or abdicates) the problem of other minds by reconstructing them as your own. In doing so, our subjects (the doctors and interrogators, the politicians and lawyers) lose the ability to encounter the other, and what they encounter, again and again, is the barest material prop necessary to sustain their own subjectivity.

These are the performances of the subjects in these redacted documents. They think: we don’t know what they know. We know

what they should know. To get at what they should know, we shall act *as if* we will harm them. We will strain to create a performance that looks almost exactly like reality. But we shall not touch it. We shall instead create the reality of a performance, our performance, and the detainees shall follow the script.

This is the redaction of the mind that precedes the redactions of the documents. Sometimes, when you peer into those black spaces, you can see the subjects, staring back.

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

The list below gives full bibliographic information for the documents contained in the associated binder “A Grammar of Redaction: The Phrasebook.”

The documents are categorized into four sections, and each document has a number (indicated below), which will be used in this grammar, when I refer to the documents.

Full copies of these documents, many of which run to several hundred pages, are available at <http://www.thetorturedatabase.org/> and can be searched for using the information given below.

Both this grammar, and the phrasebook that accompanies it, are available for download: <http://www.joshuacraze.com/exhibitions/>

1. The Hidden City

HC1. 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. July 29, 2009. Henceforth referred to as the OPR Report, p. 32.

HC2. OPR Report, p. 87.

HC3. OPR Report, p. 2.

HC4. OPR Report, pp. 40-43.

HC5. OPR Report, pp. 46-47.

HC6. OPR Report, pp. 61-62.

HC7. The CIA Interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, March 2001-Jan. 2003, p. 5. Henceforth referred to as ‘The CIA Interrogation of Abu Zubaydah.’

HC8. 'A Memorandum for John Rizzo, Acting General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency', a legal memo written by the US Department of Justice's Office of Legal Council, to advise the CIA on whether a proposed course of conduct would violate the prohibition against torture found at section 2340A of title 18 of the United States Code, p. 14.

HC9. 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, p. 8. Henceforth referred to as 'CIA Special Review.'

HC10. OPR Report, p. 79.

H11. CIA Special Review, p. 12.

2. Subjects Without Objects

S1. CIA Special Review, p. 35.

S2. CIA Special Review, p. 69.

S3. CIA Special Review, p. 79.

S4. Memorandum for Staff Sergeant [REDACTED], 104th Military Intelligence Battalion, 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Tikrit, Iraq, 09323-2628, 8 October 2004, p. 1.

S5. Memorandum, 104th Military Intelligence Battalion. Detainee Abuse Incident — AR 15-6 Investigation Legal Review. October 6 2003, pp. 2-3.

S6. The email chain appears in the same memorandum for record, DOD 002848, pp. 31-32.

S7. OPR Report, pp. 271-272.

S8. OPR Report, p. 128.

S9. CIA Special Review, pp. 25-27.

3. Actions without Words

- A1.** CIA Special Review, p. 44.
- A2.** CIA Special Review, p. 45.
- A3.** CIA Special Review, pp. 20-21.
- A4.** OPR Report, p. 127, fn. 98.
- A5.** CIA Special Review, page ii.
- A6.** CIA Special Review, p. 38
- A7.** Other Document #131. This document was obtained after an ACLU FOIA request placed on October 7, 2003. It was released on May 27, 2008. It is a heavily redacted CIA report on the raid, capture, and waterboarding of Abu Zubaydah. Henceforth referred to as Other Document #131. A7 gives the entirety of the document.
- A8.** The CIA Interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, p. 2.
- A9.** CIA Special Review, p. 3.
- A10.** CIA Special Review, p. 2.
- A11.** OPR Report, pp. 86-87.
- A12.** CIA Special Review, p. 43.
- A13.** CIA Special Review, pp. 45-54.
- A14.** OPR Report, pp. 35-36.
- A15.** CIA Special Review, p. 15.
- A16.** CIA Special Review, p. 37.

4. Objects Without Subjects

- O1.** From Department of Defense Working Group Report on Detainee Interrogations in the Global War on Terrorism: Assessment of Legal, Historical, Policy, and Operational Considerations. April 4, 2003. Declassified: June 21, 2004. Henceforth 'Working Group Report', p. 63.
- O2.** OPR Report, p. 141.

- O3.** OPR Report, pp. 137-138.
- O4.** CIA Special Review, p. 77.
- O5.** CIA Special Review, p. 76, fn. 73.
- O6.** CIA Special Review, p. 71.