Performing Histories: Archiving Practices of Rimini Protokoll and The Atlas Group

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"We need history, but our need for it differs from that of the jaded idlers in
   the garden of knowledge."
   Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*

How is history written? By whom? And for whom? As art historian Hal
Foster notes in an influential essay from 2004, an archival impulse with a
distinct character of its own seems to be pervasive internationally in con-
temporary art.[1] As a part of this impulse, within the last decades numer-
ous artists have addressed the relation between the archive and power
with special regard to the writing of history. In their artistic work, they
therefore use the archive as a means, if not to create so-called "counter-
histories," then at least to approach history and historical events in ways
alternative to those offered by official public archives.[2] Furthermore, the
artists in question challenge conceptions typically associated with the
archive, such as measurement and chronological arrangement of time,
rational classification, and differentiation of objects and events, as well
as the objectification of the historical process as such. That is, as Sven
Spieker points out in *The Big Archive*, conceptions stemming from the
nineteenth-century archive.[3]

   In this essay, I want to focus on selected works by the German/Swiss
director collective Rimini Protokoll and the "Lebanese art collective" The
Atlas Group, addressing the different ways the two groups use the con-
cept of the archive as a means for engaging with history. My analysis will
be guided by three main foci. First, I will address the way the works break
with a chronological conception of time tied to the modern idea of the
historical progress of mankind. This is a conception that was dismissed as
"historistic" by Walter Benjamin in his seminal thesis "On the Concept of
History,"[4] in which he pictures history as an endless series of catastrophes.
Second, I will explore the ways the works challenge the traditional space-
bound and object-based understanding of the archive, which, as Derrida
notes in *Archive Fever*, stems from the Greek word *arkheion*, referring to
a house where official documents were filed and guarded by the superior
archons who had the power to interpret these documents.[5] As Derrida
further notices, archive etymologically also refers to *arkhe*: "*there* where
things *commence*" and "*there* where authority, social order are exercised."[6]
This underscores the commencement and commandment meaning—that
from the very beginning, as it were, the archive is related to power. My
third point of orientation will regard the ways in which the works try
to undo the concept of an *arkhe*, from which everything should com-
mence and in which the (social) law of how we interpret history should
be rooted. Hence, while not necessarily in the order outlined above, the
ways Rimini Protokoll and The Atlas Group work with the concepts of
time, space, and ontology in relation to the archive and to the writing of
history will constitute pivotal points in this essay. In the analysis I will, to
a large extent, be drawing upon my own phenomenological encounters
with the works in question.

Rimini Protokoll: Archives of the Flesh

The director collective Rimini Protokoll, founded in 2002 and comprised
by Helgaard Haug, Daniel Wetzel, and Stefan Kaegi, is famous for its use
of so-called everyday experts: non-trained actors who on or off stage will

share their field of expertise with the audience. Hence the Berlin-based performance *Call Cutta* included fourteen Indian call centre agents.[7] Unlike the spectators, however, the agents were not actually located in Berlin, but 15,000 km away in a call centre in Kolkata. In search of enigmatic photos placed around the cityscape of Berlin, the spectators were guided individually by an agent via mobile phone through streets, parks, and backyards. The agent had never been to Berlin, but by way of electronic maps, he (it was a he that I was coupled with) was able to guide the spectator from Hallesches Ufer through Kreuzberg to Potsdamer Platz in the

Figures 1 and 2   Rimini Protokoll, *Call Cutta*, Berlin, 2005. Photo: Rimini Protokoll.

same confident way he normally would at his job as a call centre agent, remotely helping customers in, for instance, California. But whereas he would normally hide his identity by speaking with an American accent and using a Western sounding name, he revealed his real name and his Indian heritage to me. By thematizing outsourcing, the performance obviously addressed the issue of globalization. However, as we shall see, problems of colonialism as well as Nazism were also at stake in *Call Cutta.*

Affective Reenactments and Haunted Histories

The performance can be divided into three levels, namely a narrative, a visual-photographic, and a spatial level. At the narrative level, the agent

told me about one of the leaders of the Indian Independence Movement, Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945), who, apparently inspired by Adolf Hitler's byname *Der Führer,* called himself *Netaji* (respected leader). Struggling to free India from British colonial forces and disagreeing with the pacifist strategy of Mahatma Gandhi, Bose decided to join forces with his enemy's enemy during World War II, namely Nazi Germany. Hence, Bose travelled to Berlin in 1941, where in co-operation with the German *Wehrmacht* he recruited and trained Indian prisoners of war for his Indian Legion. The Indian prisoners had been captured by Axis forces while fighting for the British in North Africa, and it was the aim of Bose to return to India and drive the British out by means of his Nazi-affiliated Indian army. Eventually, however, the agent told me, Bose became disillusioned by Hitler's lack of interest in Indian independence, and in 1943 he left the country in a Nazi submarine. Parallel to the story of Bose, the call centre agent told me about his grandfather Samir Muckerjee, who he claimed was one of the Indian prisoners of war serving in Bose's Berlin-based Indian Legion during the war. Unlike Bose, the grandfather remained in Berlin, where till the end of the war he broadcasted speeches to India on the Nazi-sponsored Azad Hind Radio. To the accounts of Bose and Muckerjee, the agent would add details from his own professional life in the call centre business, a field that throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century was considered the epitome of the outsourcing industry. Furthermore, ever so often he would ask me rather intimate questions such as "Have you ever fallen in love over the phone?" or "Have you ever lied over the phone?" or he would sing for me in Bengali and have me sing back in my mother tongue.

At what I will refer to as the visual-photographic level, the agent encouraged me to carefully study the black and white photos that were hidden at strategic places and that structured my route through the city. The photos (six in total) depicted Bose and the agent's grandfather in various situations: Bose drinking coffee with the grandfather, the grandfather in a military uniform, Bose shaking hands with Hitler, Bose in the aforementioned Nazi submarine, etc. Since the photographs seemed to capture Bose and Muckerjee in Germany, the photographs functioned as a kind of visual proof to the stories unfolding at the narrative level. At the spatial level, the photos were tied directly to spaces in Berlin marked by World War II. For instance, they were hidden in a park "based on the remains of the last World War,"[8] in the area around one of Berlin's central

deportation places for Jews during the Nazi era—the former train station Anhalter Bahnhof—and close to the ruins of the former philharmonic that was bombed in 1944.

By relating the stories of Bose and Muckerjee to the sometimes rather personal exchange between the call centre agent and myself, *Call Cutta* effectively established connection points between me and the other, now and then, colonialism, Nazism, and globalization. But perhaps more importantly: through my choreographed search for the photos hidden in the remaining ruins of World War II, the performance made me take part in a phenomenological and affective *reenactment* of history. In agreement with performance scholar Rebecca Schneider, we could also say that within the framework of the performance, my body was momentarily turned into an *archive of the flesh*. Challenging the traditional opposition of the archive and performance, Schneider references Gertrude Stein's concept of "syncopated time"[9] and concepts of the coded and repeated practices of primitive popular folk performances to suggest a concept of the body as a kind of archive and host to a reappearing collective memory.[10] In continuation of this, she has compared the archive to a dramatic script, i.e. to something that is "given to remain for potential future production," arguing that "materials in the archive are given, too, for the *future* of their (re)enactment. … The theatricality of this equation, even the performative bases of the archive, is that it is a house of and for performative repetition, not stasis."[11] That is, as Schneider has it, the *arkheion* that Derrida refers to is no longer necessarily made of bricks and stones and bones, and it no longer necessarily houses documents and objects, but instead performative practices that are repeated over time.

With respect to *Call Cutta* we could say that within the performance, my body was momentarily turned into an *archive of the flesh* insofar as it served as a *live topos* connecting the historical records of Bose and Muckerjee with the personal memories teased out in me by the agent, the black and white photographs from the past, and the actual spaces bearing testimony to World War II. Furthermore, as the different levels of the performance were related to each other, certain historical events would (re)appear in my mind and body, and I would be drawn into (re)participating in those events. This happened in a very concrete way, when, for instance, in some backyard I was asked by the agent to "do the Netaji sculpture" by stepping up on a raised platform and positioning my left foot in front of me, whilst raising my outstretched left arm to the left and

pointing towards India. By reiterating this pose from one of the photos that I had seen of Bose in front of a statue of a Bengali tiger (a symbol of the Indian struggle for freedom), I actively took part in a reenactment of history. It was essentially a reenactment where my body was staged as a topos that at one and the same time hosted me and someone else, now and then, presence and absence. In continuation of this, I was made aware of my own situatedness in history, when, in the middle of a story about Muckerjee's experiences in the Nazi Indian army, the agent asked me to shout, "I am part of this!" as in, "I am situated in history and thereby influenced by the events of World War II, which happened and can happen again." Consequently, I would claim that rather than proposing an uncomplicated concept of presence as temporal immediacy, *Call Cutta* offered a *constellation of time* in the sense of Benjamin, a constellation of time that makes past and present meet by exploding specific epochs out of the homogeneous course of history, thereby allowing for singular experiences with history. As he writes in "On the Concept of History": "Where thinking suddenly comes to a stop in a *constellation* saturated with tensions, it gives that constellation a shock, by which thinking is crystallized as a monad."[12] In order to approach history critically and reflexively, we should approach it from the perspective of unexpected constellations instead of from a chronological perspective that aims at articulating the past "the way it really was."

The simultaneous presence of past and present can also be viewed from the perspective of the *hauntology* which Derrida develops as an alternative to ontology understood as self-identical presence. Making the figure of the ghost the emblem of his hauntology, in *Spectres of Marx,* Derrida argues that the present time is saturated with another time, and that it is a downright ethical and political duty on the part of the individual to learn to live with and listen to the *ghosts of history*.[13] Thus, when in *Call Cutta* we are encouraged to reenact the poses of and listen to the stories of the now dead Bose and Muckerjee, we are at the same time invited to reflect critically upon the course of history. We are invited to consider whether the logic governing colonialism, and in a more indirect sense the barbarity represented by Nazism, really is a thing of the past. In accordance with this and referring to the vast number of call centres around him in northeast Kolkata with Indian employees holding jobs outsourced from the West, the call centre agent exclaimed, as I entered the reconstructed Potsdamer Platz, "When I look at these buildings, I sometimes

think: The struggle of my grandfather is not over, it is just different to-day!" In that respect, *Call Cutta* seems to address how certain logics, and in particular that of imperial capitalism and exploitation, are repeated and modulated over time, thereby making it impossible to draw a clear line between now and then and to conceive of history as a closed chapter left behind for good.[14]

(Re)appearances Directed towards the Future

In addition to addressing the repetitive mechanism of history in the way described above, *Call Cutta* drew attention to the potentially manipulated and "untruthful" quality of historical accounts by including elements of fiction into the seemingly fact-based performance. More specifically, given that, as it turned out, the fourteen call centre agents employed in the performance made use of the exact same script and consequently all referred to Samir Muckerjee as their grandfather, Muckerjee was most likely a fictive figure. And in case he really *was* a historical person, he was definitely not blood-related to all of the fourteen call centre agents. While I gradually became aware of this, I started questioning the reliability of the black and white photographs. If the man referred to as Samir Muckerjee was a fiction, how, then, could I trust that the photos portraying him bore witness to what had "actually happened" in the past? This doubt was further fuelled when I realized that what I experienced as an, at times, rather personal conversation between the agent and me was based on a script that the agent would repeatedly (re)enact with other spectators, that instead of having a personal exchange with me, he was actually "just" enacting a role within a pre-given script. In that sense my experience of having had a unique encounter with the agent was altered into an experi-ence of having filled out a pre-defined role in not only a dramatic script by Rimini Protokoll, but in a broader sense also the coded and repeated practices of man in the "script" of History.

However, remembering Schneider's comparison of the archive and the dramatic script as materials given for the future of their (re)enact-ment, I would contend that *Call Cutta* was, whilst making historical events (re)appear, ultimately directed towards the future. By this I mean that the aim of the juxtaposition of colonialism and globalization was ultimately about making us aware of and reflect critically about the way our approach to the world around us is subjected to certain logics and discursive structures repeated over and over again in history. In line with this, due to its use of sources other than the official historical accounts, the performance not only encouraged us to question writings of history that we might normally consider objective and valid accounts. It also prompted us to imagine a heterogeneous writing of history that, contain-ing fiction and individual memories, would enable us to approach history and thereby also the future in ways other than those prescribed by official writings of history. Accordingly, although the exchange between the call centre agent and me was structured by means of a pre-given script, the interactive element of the performance left a space open for unplanned, affective exchanges. In that respect, *Call Cutta* could be viewed as an ar-chival practice that, taking place within a space discursively framed as art, invited us to experiment with other ways of imagining not only the past but also ways of relating to one another in a globalized world, now and in the future.

The Atlas Group: Archives of Ghosts

While in *Call Cutta* Rimini Protokoll proposed an archiving practice based on the bodily performance of the spectator, Walid Raad—who is the founder and in fact the only member of The Atlas Group—makes the archive perform in a multiplicity of spaces, such as cyberspace (the Internet), museum exhibitions, catalogues, and performance lectures. Founded in 1999, The Atlas Group (TAG) sets as its purpose the documen-tation of the contemporary history of Lebanon, with particular emphasis on the devastating civil wars that took place between 1975 and 1991. These wars left the country segregated not only along ethnic and religious lines, but also with a vast number of mutually excluding group identities and conflicting collective accounts of history that offered only little space for individual positions, not to mention positions including more than one historical account.[15] Attempting to represent the war, TAG archive consists of private notebooks, homemade videos, and photos, as well as material from the Arab Documentation Centre and the An-Nahar Research Centre in Beirut. The material, therefore, stems from private as well as public sources and is organized in three file categories, namely, Type A (attrib-uted to *imaginary* individuals or organizations), Type FD (found docu-ments attributed to anonymous individuals or organizations), and Type AGP (attributed to TAG).[16] Although these categories clearly hint that the

material transcends fictive-realistic as well as public-private distinctions, Walid Raad always makes sure that the work of TAG appears in the same objective, matter-of-fact guise as official, institutional archives.

In the following, I will explore the archival practice of Raad by analyzing a selection of documents from TAG archive, taking my point of departure in a file contained within the AGP category.

Missed Traumatic Events

The file *My Neck is Thinner Than a Hair* assembles one hundred photographs of car engines taken by amateurs and professional photographers. During the civil wars more than 3,600 car bombs, we learn, were detonated by groups across the political and religious spectrum. Since the engine was the only part of the car that remained intact after the explosion, newspaper reports of car bombs would consistently include photographs of engines, explosives specialists, police officers, and the onlookers who gathered in the aftermath of the explosion. Raad collected one hundred of these press photos from the Arab Documentation Centre and the An-Nahar Research Centre in Beirut, and plates including the front and the back of these photos with texts specifying, among other information, the date and place of the explosions, have since been exhibited in numerous museums.[17] On the one hand, the repeated motif of men carefully studying engines seems to mimic the endless reproduction of violence and death on the part of the media. On the other hand, however, it is also important that we do not see any death or suffering in these photographs. Instead, it seems that the catastrophe has been reduced to bare facts: date and time of the explosion, name of the photographer, etc. At the same time, however, the serial strategy deployed in the work exposes the paradoxical logic of the archive, pointed out by Ernst van Alphen, namely the fact that the principle of coherence of the archive deprives the individual object of its individuality and uniqueness.[18] In terms of the photographs, this means that the engines, and in a more remote sense the events caused by the explosions, become replaceable coordinates in a system that ultimately reduces unique human lives to a replaceable mass. Exposing the serial and reducing the logic of the archive in this way, the plates arguably replicate the dehumanizing and de-individualizing logic associated with war.

However, the enormous compilation of documents and data does not seem to bring us any closer to the perpetrator or the reasons for the catastrophe. The men carefully studying the engines (doubled by me carefully studying them) and trying to reconstruct the explosion all seem somehow to have arrived too late or to be looking in the wrong place. This belatedness of the men has affinities to the logic of trauma. As Cathy Caruth explains in *Unclaimed Experience*, due to the fact that the traumatic event has never been fully experienced or articulated, it continues to return as

Figure 3 The Atlas Group in collaboration with Walid Raad, *My Neck Is Thinner Than a Hair*, Engines, archival inkjet print, 25 × 35 cm, Plate 33. Courtesy Walid Raad and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg.

the belated and deferred aftermath of the missed traumatic event. Relating trauma to the concept of the wound, she writes: "[T]rauma ... is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth in its delayed appearance and its belated address cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown."[19] Viewed in this light, the photographs can be perceived as traces of the recurring traumatic events of the Lebanese wars, which continue to haunt us and to refer to the *unknown* that we will never be able to fully grasp. However, as they confront us with our own survival and with what sets us apart from the

experience indirectly referred to in the photos, the plates also encourage us to listen to the wound of the other. That is, they propose a possible encounter with the other that would take place in an unstable terrain, since the plates are addressing us from an "unsettled" position where it is not immediately discernible who is friend and who is foe, who is victim and who is perpetrator.
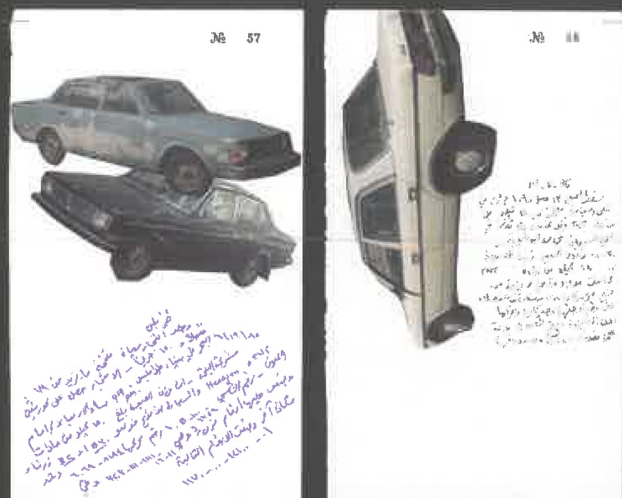

Figure 4 The Atlas Group in collaboration with Walid Raad, *Already Been in a Lake of Fire*, 1999–2002, Plate 57–58, archival inkjet print, 30 × 42 cm. Courtesy Walid Raad and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg.

Repetitions Without an *arkhe*

In the file *Already Been in a Lake of Fire* contained within Type A, a similar logic of traumatic repetition is at stake, but here the relation between the event and the documentation of this event is complicated even further. The file is ascribed to a certain Dr Fakhouri—the foremost historian of

the Lebanese wars, we are told[20]—who at the time of his death entrusted several of his notebooks and short films to TAG, including *Notebook 38*, also known as *Already Been in a Lake of Fire*. Organized according to the same serial principle as *My Neck Is Thinner Than a Hair*, the notebook contains 145 cut-out photographs of cars positioned rather chaotically on sheets of white paper. According to the accompanying texts, the cut-outs correspond to the exact make, model, and colour of every car that was car bombed in Lebanon between 1975 and 1991. Written directly on the sheets, a handwritten text in Arabic details the place and time of the explosion and the number of casualties.

Insofar as the photographs are reconstructions of the car models that apparently housed the bombs, the plates of Fakhouri can be conceived as attempts to retrospectively create documents of the object that caused the traumatic event, i.e. the explosion. Furthermore, as the title *Already Been in a Lake of Fire* (emphasis mine) and the chaotic positioning of the cars that makes them seem to be tumbling through space indicate, the cars have always *already* exploded and they will continue to do so. Differently put, the cars are confined within a loop, repeating the explosion over and over again, thereby unsettling the relation between cause and event, past and present, document and event. Viewed this way, the notebook plates could be seen as documents performatively producing their own event or, perhaps better, as repetitions without an original. In continuation of this, the fact that the plates are ascribed to the *historian* Dr Fakhouri suggests that, ultimately, the work is questioning the premises of the writing of history, in particular the idea of an *arkhe* from which everything should commence. Thus, rather than a chronological cause-and-event-based concept of the course of history, the material of Fakhouri offers a notion that allows for time to appear in unexpected constellations comprised of past and present simultaneously. Furthermore, insofar as he is claimed to be dead, the fictive historian Dr Fakhouri can be perceived as a ghost, haunting us with images exposing traces of the traumatic events of the wars, championing a time out of joint.

In line with this, Jalal Toufic notes in a publication on TAG entitled "Ruins": "Fiction has to reveal to us the anomalous labyrinthine space-time of ruins; and in case no ruins subsist for the ghost to appear, to supplement reality as a site of return of the revenant. … *It is too dangerous after a civil war or a war, which produce so much unfinished business, for there to be no ghosts*" (emphasis mine).[21] By thus welcoming the ghost, Toufic, like

Derrida, proposes a positive approach to the spectre, where its address to us is not only seen as echoing the past but also as a way of preparing for the future following the wars. And perhaps it is not so much *what* the ghosts are telling us that is important as the fact that we are open to their enigmatic address transmitting an experience of the traumatic event that, as Caruth has it, cannot be represented in any direct way. With respect to Lebanon, TAG thus seems to be suggesting that the objective is to learn to live with and listen to the ghosts, i.e. not the private ghosts of you and me but the historical ghosts of the devastating civil wars. In that sense, the traumatic logic at work in the photographs cannot be limited to private or particularized memories only, but can be said to apply to the collective traumatic memory of Lebanon as such. Viewed within this context, TAG archive can be perceived as a multiplicity of fragmented spectral addresses that, refusing to be subsumed into a homogeneous, dominating discourse, counter conventional archive logic as the policy of representation prescribed by the mutually excluding ethnic, ideological, and religious fractions of Lebanon.[22]

Closing Remarks

Comparing the strategies of Rimini Protokoll and Raad, a crucial similarity in the works is the use of fiction, personal documents, and individual memories, and the assembling of these with factual documents. As we saw, though, in the formal presentation of the works, Rimini Protokoll and Raad both understated the fictive qualities of the material used. By not revealing to the spectator that the story told by the agent was fictive, Rimini Protocol strategically used their reputation as a documentary theatre group that bases their performances on the personal accounts of the participating everyday experts. Along those lines, the "mimicry archive" of TAG was structured according to an apparently objective system of categorization that at first glance seemed to mirror official archives. By seducing the spectators into believing that they were looking at factual documents, the works drew attention to the possibly manipulated and fictive character of archives in general. Through the exploitation of the authority of the archive and subversion of it from within by blending fiction and fact, individual and official accounts, both pieces drew attention to the fact that neither archives nor writings of history are necessarily objective or neutral accounts of reality.

Returning to the three concepts mentioned in relation to the archive at the beginning of this essay, namely, time, space, and *arkhe*, they were all crucial to the works analyzed. As for the concept of space, Raad proposed a rhizomatic and multi-spatial archive. Spanning the Internet, catalogues, video works, photographs, performance lectures, etc., it is impossible to tell where TAG archive starts and where it ends. Rather than being housed in a stable space, the dynamic archive of TAG takes place simultaneously in a multitude of spaces. Rimini Protokoll, for their part, did away with a space- and object-bound perception of the archive by momentarily framing the body of the spectator as a *live topos* for the (re)appearance of certain historical events. Approaching the archive as a demarcated space where a repeated performative practice takes place over time, Rimini Protokoll in a broader sense drew attention to the way discursive structures are continuously repeated in the bodies of subjects, thereby structuring social and cultural life. At the same time, however, by having the spectators (re)enact various poses and gestures and by juxtaposing them with their individual memories, they also paved the way for an affective approach to the historical events in question. By challenging the idea of the archive as a concrete and fixed place preserving tangible objects, Rimini Protokoll as well as Raad invite us to think about the archive as a rhizomatic structure that relates, without totalizing, fragments from an unfinished past with the present and the future to come.

In line with this, with respect to the concept of time, both practices did away with the idea of chronological time in favour of constellations of time simultaneously comprised of past and present. Defining for these constellations was the fact that they drew attention to the mechanisms of repetition embedded in history and to how it is impossible to determine a beginning and an end in relation to these mechanisms and haunted histories, if you will. In the case of Rimini Protokoll the possible return of colonialism in globalization was addressed by weaving into each other the individual and partly fictive stories of Bose, Muckerjee, and the call centre agent, as well as that of the spectator, and also in a broader sense into the histories of these epochs. Depicting the traces of the car bombs in a seemingly endless series of photographs, Walid Raad, for his part, drew attention to the eternal return of the missed traumatic experiences of the Lebanese wars that no one will ever be able to fully grasp or represent directly. He thereby seemed to be suggesting that the logic of trauma is a mechanism not only related to the subject but to collective

memory as such. As for the concept of *arkhe,* both practices questioned what we base our accounts of history on. While Rimini Protokoll did this by including photographs and stories that turned out to be fictive, Raad created repetitions without an original through his reconstruction of cars that had apparently housed the devastating bombs. By demonstrating how documents can indeed be fabricated and manipulated, he points to how archives can be made to perform in ways serving particular interests, that archives can be made to perform and to produce official truths that determine our ways of approaching the world around us—who is enemy and who is friend?—in the present time and in the future.

As far as the use of fiction in the works is concerned, paradoxically it seems that the "method" of hovering on the threshold of fiction and documentation in the ways described above offers an adequate way of addressing the phenomenon of reality, a phenomenon, as we saw, that is subjected to manipulation and the making of fictions. Remembering Caruth, one could perhaps say that the blending of fact and fiction constitutes an adequate way of approaching the unknown—that for which we do not have any pre-given concepts and that which cannot appear in any straightforward way. In continuation of this, one could claim that contrary to the rational nineteenth-century archive ideal touched upon at the beginning of this essay, the archival practices analyzed above seem to offer a conception of the archive that embraces the unknown and the "unsettled" position of the archivist instead of fighting it. Instead of chronologically organized moments, we are offered constellations of haunted time; instead of logics of order and classification, we are offered rhizomatic structures with no centre and no *arkhe*; and instead of seemingly objectified historical accounts we are encouraged to listen to a multiplicity of accounts, subjective as well as factual. In that sense, the archives of Rimini Protokoll and Walid Raad beg us to imagine writings of history consisting of a multitude of histories and heterogeneous accounts, as well as fictive elements and individual memories—writings of history which would teach us to listen to and speak with the ghosts from the past in order to deal with the present time and the future to come.

Notes

1 Cf. Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 3. This tendency is part of a broader engagement with the concept of the archive which has taken place throughout the last decade within social studies as well as in the humanities. For further information on this see, e.g., Knut Ove Eliassen, "The Archives of Michel Foucault," in *The Archive in Motion,* ed. Eivind Røssak (Oslo: Novus forlag, 2010).

2 To mention but a few recent art exhibitions addressing the archive and the writing of history, one could point to *History Will Repeat Itself,* KunstWerke in Berlin, 2007–8, *Archive Fever–Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art,* International Centre of Photography in New York, 2008, and *Lost and Found: Queering the Archive,* Kunsthallen Nikolaj in Copenhagen, 2009.

3 See Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), pp. 5–13.

4 Cf. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Selected Writings,* vol. 4, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), thesis XIII, pp. 389–400.

5 Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,* trans. Eric Pronowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 1.

6 Ibid., p. 1.

7 *Call Cutta* premiered in Kolkata in 2004, and in 2005 a revised version of the performance ran at Hebbel am Ufer in Berlin. I took part in the performance in May 2005, and the following analysis is based on this experience and on the DVD *Call Cutta–a Mobile Phone Theatre by Rimini Protokoll* containing the script of the performance.

8 Cf. The script of the performance contained in the DVD *Call Cutta—a Mobile Phone Theatre by Rimini Protokoll.*

9 That is, the notion that approaching time as both between times and simultaneous does away with the traditional idea of live as "temporal immediacy" and thus with conventional binary distinctions between the "live" and the "recorded," now and then. Cf. Rebecca Schneider, "In the Meantime: Performance Remains," in *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 87–89.

10 Ibid., pp. 100–2.

11 Ibid., p. 108. In accord with this, Derrida writes in *Archive Fever:* "As much and more than a thing of the past, before such a thing, the archive should call into question the coming of the future," pp. 33–34.

12 Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," thesis XVII, p. 396.

13 See Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International,* trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. xviii.

14 As Gerald Siegmund notes, one could thus claim that within the context of *Call Cutta,* it is ultimately the unbroken logic of capitalism and the urge towards profit maximization that relates Indian prisoners of war from World War II to employees in Indian call centres and Germans who have lost their jobs due to outsourcing. Gerald Siegmund, "Die Kunst des Erinnerns," in *Experten des Alltags—Das Theater von Rimini Protokoll,* ed. Miriam Dreysse and Florian Malzacher (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2007), p. 192.

15 Cf. Regina Göckede, "Zweifelhafte Dokumente. Zeitgenössische Arabische Kunst, Walid Raad und die Frage der Re-Präsentation," in *Der Orient, Die Fremde,* ed. Regina Göckede and Alexandra Karentzos (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2006), pp. 188–89.

16 See www.theatlasgroup.org/ (accessed 4 February 2012).

17 Hence the work has been exhibited at e.g. The Whitney Biennial in New York, 2002, *Documenta 11* in Kassel, 2003, and Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, 2006.

18 Ernst van Alphen, "Obsessive Archives and Archival Obsessions," in *What Is Research in the Visual Arts? Obsession, Archive, Encounter,* ed. Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith (London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 66.

19 Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 4.

20 Cf. *The Truth Will Be Known When the Last Witness Is Dead: Documents from The Fakhouri File in The Atlas Group Archive,* ed. Hélène Chouteau et al. (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2004), n.p. The following analysis will be based on texts and images of this book.

21 Jalal Toufic, "Ruins," in *We Can Make Rain But No One Came to Ask,* ed. Max Stern and Jalal Toufic (Montreal: ABC Art Books, 2006), pp. 12–13.

22 The importance of keeping representational space open to a multiplicity of positions is further emphasized by the artist behind TAG, Walid Raad, who consequently seeks to avoid stable subject positions. For instance, by referring to TAG in the plural, by performing as an archivist rather than an artist when publicly presenting the project, and by adding an Arab accent when delivering his performance lectures in non-Arab countries, he does his best to avoid being solely fixed in one identity position.