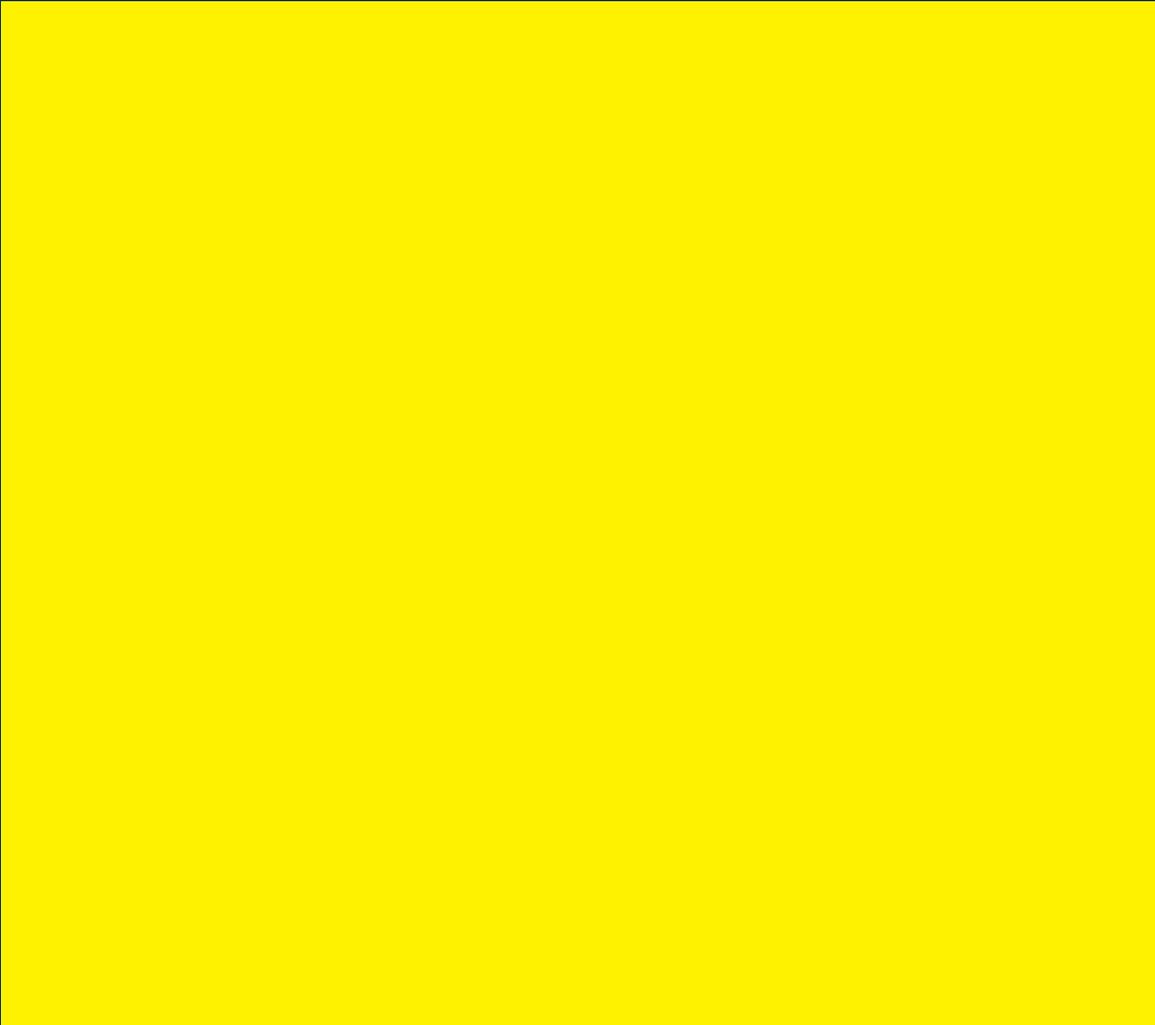


The Archive

HYBRID



The Archive

HYBRID

INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF ART, DESIGN, AND ARCHITECTURE

Hybrid – Interdisciplinary Journal of Art, Design, and Architecture
Published in Pakistan by Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture
ST 33, Block 2, Scheme 5, Clifton, 75600, Karachi, Pakistan

Copyright © Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture 2017

The opinions expressed in this publication are solely those of the respective authors. Any content published does not reflect the opinions or views of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Any factual errors in content are the responsibility of the author. The editors cannot be held responsible for any possible violations of third party rights.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the written permission of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture.

ISSN 2522-6983 (Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture)

Volume: 01 | The Archive

Editor:
Asma Mundrawala

Editorial Board:
Asma Mundrawala
Durreshahwar Alvi
Kiran Ahmad
Omer Wasim

Design:
Kiran Ahmad

Printed and Bound:
Topical Printers, Lahore, Pakistan

Hybrid

Interdisciplinary Journal of Art, Design, and Architecture

The Hybrid is a thematic periodical aimed at fostering a culture of research and writing at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and beyond. It is transdisciplinary in nature, and focuses primarily on those practices and researches that are interested in the application of any combination of art, design, architectural, and related genres, to issues of critical, cultural, political, and educational significance, inclusion, and social justice. It emphasises praxis by providing a forum for research into the creative practices that exist within urban, academic, developmental, and other milieus, especially in the national and regional contexts of Pakistan and South Asia. *The Hybrid* offers a platform for disseminating both completed as well as in-progress research, both established academic/practitioners' and students' research projects, as well as interview, photo essay, and portfolio sections. Its objective is to bring new and multiple perspectives, grounded in Pakistan and the region, to a local, regional and international audience, and to further pertinent debates.

Adnan Madani | 12

Cloud Memories, Desert Dreams: After a Destruction in Pakistan

Seher Naveed | 36

Are Images the Real Stories? Materialising Memory and Problems with Archiving

Heba Islam | 52

Landscape as Archive: Reflections on the Gadap Sessions

Madiha Aijaz | 64

Loop Lines: The Unused Train Stations

Fazal Rizvi | 78

End Notes: Unearthing Jehanara

Veera Rustomji | 98

Passages of Time

Mariyam Nizam | 108

Wooden Wares: An Archive of Loss

Editorial

The word 'Archive' at the first instance, evokes images of documents, files, cabinets, or storage spaces that are repositories of personal, collective, and collected data. However, as scholarship on the word suggests, the word "archive" carries multiple definitions.

The impulse to archive may be a human response to the inevitability of death, which attempts to transcend the immediate and corporeal, and gives a semblance of permanence to the ephemeral lived experiences that otherwise exist mostly in liminal sites.

The archive is also a means to construct knowledge about the past, in the present, and for the future. Jacques Derrida traces the word "archive" to the Greek word "arkheion", a residence of superior magistrates, the archons, as well as the place of authority where official documents were filed. The archons were not only the custodians of these documents, but also bore the ability and had the power to interpret and further consign them.¹ The archive, thus, becomes a site of hegemony and power, where, and *from where*, knowledge was/is/could be constructed, construed, and disseminated to further the dominant discourse. This hegemonic presence shapes collective memory through multiple narratives of power, and by that virtue also orchestrates/fabricates/constructs/engineers the reconstruction of memory. The notion of selective memory and the act of forgetting selectively become intrinsically linked with the archive. The way history is shaped, the manner in which certain narratives are foregrounded, or even created, while others are forgotten, neglected or excluded, evinces the role collective amnesia plays in constructing sites of remembrance.

This instantaneous reading of the archive—where it is connected to power and hegemony—is transcended when the metanarrative is subverted to challenge the positionality of the original. These "counter-archives," as Okwui Enwezor puts it in his essay, not only create other voices in opposition to the dominant discourse, but also become the means to uphold alternative narratives.²

To make visible these counter narratives, artists, writers, and thinkers have interpreted, reinterpreted, and subverted the archive; refusing singular, didactic readings, embracing uneven, fractured terrains, and occupying different positions in the "expanded field" of the archive and its meaning.³ This exercise of unpacking led us to address its multiple connotations in our first issue, aiming to defy its unitary meaning.

As a journal stemming from an art school, we have paid specific attention to visual production and engagement with the thematic. These multifarious forms of engagement are visible in the contributions: Adnan Madani's essay looks at anti archival tendencies, and argues that the archival impulse is also connected to the field of visibility; whereas Seher Naveed questions how the photograph as a technological tool for archiving has the capacity to produce false

memories. Heba Islam, in conversation with Zahra Malkani and Shahana Rajani, references Karachi LaJamia's research sessions of a mega development project in Karachi with the view to examine the displacement it has caused in the area. The exchange highlights the complexities of documenting and archiving as a pedagogical exercise. Madiha Aijaz journeys across Pakistan in a quest to document underused and abandoned railway stations. Her essay unfolds as a layered narrative, transporting the viewer to an unspecified time and place—both here, *not-here*. Drawing from his practice, Fazal Rizvi delves into personal narratives of memory and erasure, of loss and the intangible. This body of work manifests as an amalgamation of text and visuals, opening itself to multiple readings of the archive. The photographic archive also becomes the point of inquiry for Veera Rustomji's paintings. In a quest to revisit the Parsi community's history, she draws upon oral narratives that eventually complicate the very visuals that sit precariously between fact and fiction. Mariyam Nizam considers the ravaging of an archival craft through generations in the Kafir (Kalash) valleys, where objects have lost their cultural and traditional meanings, and are now a diluted form of the original.

The process of initiating this journal, through its span of over a year, has had the support and encouragement from a number of individuals at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Dr. Jawaid Haider initiated the concept and formulated its working committee that strategised its road map for the year. His confident support enabled us, as a team, to see the idea to its fruition. We would like to thank him and the Executive Director, Samina Khan, for their continued support to the Editorial Board. Steering the committee as its chair, my friend and colleague, Saira Sheikh, envisioned the shape the journal would take. Her meticulous attention to detail enabled us to approach it with the same level of integrity that was true to her spirit. Sadly, she is no longer with us after battling cancer for a year. *Hybird* was one of the many projects that she held close to her heart, and we miss her presence immensely at its culmination.

Asma Mundrawala

Notes

1. Robert Vosloo, "Archiving Otherwise: Some Remarks on Memory and Historical Responsibility," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 31, no. 2 (October 2005): 379-399.
2. Okwui Enwezor, "Archive Fever: Photography between History and the Monument," in *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (New York: International Center of Photography, and Göttingen: Steidl, 2008). Catalogue of an exhibition held at the International Center of Photography, New York, 18 January-4 May 2008. Title essay, pp. 10-51. Accessed 18 August 2017. https://sites.duke.edu/vms565s_01_f2014/files/2014/08/enwezor2008.pdf.
3. Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (Spring, 1979): 30-44.

Cloud Memories, Desert Dreams: After a Destruction in Pakistan

Adnan Madani

"I am told, however, I should not respect the cultivated soil and despise the desert. I am told, the desert is willing to wait for the work of her children; she no longer recognizes us, burdened with civilization, as her children. The desert inspires me with awe; but I do not believe in her absolute resistance, for I believe in the great marriage between man (adam) and earth (adamah). This land recognizes us, for it is fruitful through us: and precisely because it bears fruit for us, it recognizes us."

– Martin Buber, Open Letter to Gandhi (1939)

1. WHY SAVE ANYTHING AT ALL?

The 16 February 2017 attack on the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar at Sehwan Sharif in Pakistan brought to the surface several oppositions and conflicted allegiances—individual, religious, and political—that have marked this theocratic country's relationship with modernity, secularism, history, and science. At the same time, the outraged response to the attack in the media, in opinion pieces in newspapers and through the liberal academy in general points to a solidifying of positions against the virulent anti-plurality of radical Islam, against the bleakness of its anti-iconic vision—in favour of an Islam of multiplicity, where the term designates not a dogma but a more or less historico-philosophical entity that must be reclaimed as an inheritance. In the simplest terms, this means valorising the syncretism or the neo-Platonism of the Sufi tradition as experienced in what Shahab Ahmed calls the Balkans-to-Bengal complex,¹ over against the Wahhabism spawned more recently in the Arabian Peninsula. Lal Shahbaz, Jhulelal, the twice-named wanderer, provides an ideal standard for this opposition, claimed by Muslims and Hindus alike.

Sharing in the horror of this destruction, I want to set it alongside urgent theoretical questions that are raised by world forming processes that might have particular (but not exclusive) significance for the Muslim world today, connecting these to the possibility of imagining new forms of aesthetic and political life that are commensurate with the planetary shifts in technology and structures of belief that we are in the midst of. This means, perhaps, first coming to terms with the formations of destruction and protection that characterise our present precarious landscape—divided between dreams of the desert as an originary zero point

on the one hand and the poetry of pleasure gardens, groves, and nightingales on the other. Modern Muslim megacities from Karachi to Jakarta, being neither desert nor garden, yet still programmed by this language, demand their own dreams—and we have yet to grasp the form of the landscape being produced by contemporary forms of capitalism in our midst.

The last century has seen an exponential increase in our human ability to radically change the environment, at the planetary level, at the sub-atomic scale, and potentially at a galactic or cosmic scale as well. This ability to convert, translate, and transcribe—at human speed—those processes that have hitherto developed at their own temporality (*aeons*, infinitesimally small periods and so on) is paralleled and, to a certain extent, preceded by the ability to *view* these environments, particularly, as objects in relation to the human subject. This viewing is not “neutral” (whatever that might mean), but is in fact symptomatic of the deep *ocularism* of modernity, i.e. its reliance on techniques of visualising, mapping, representing, and archiving the world. *What* precisely is recorded and represented, naturally depends on the imaging/archiving technologies available at any given time. These technologies both draw on or service an existing field of vision—what we want to see (be it stars, movie stars or bacteria)—as well as produce the possibility of desiring new things to see, photograph, capture, and save for posterity.

To reiterate: why save anything and *what needs saving*?

Consider for a second the devastation of Hiroshima, the bombing of Dresden, the attacks on the World Trade Centre, the razing of Palmyra, and the daily bombing/drone attacks on a geographical area that stretches across the Middle East to the North West of Pakistan. Can we easily speak of these radical interventions without using the word “destruction” or its cognates, with all its loaded and genuine revulsion at the fact of the sudden removal from the landscape of multiple lives, histories, artefacts, and objects each of which require us to attend to them with an ethics of care? What makes these acts “destructive” as opposed to, say, the “erosion” of a cliff face over centuries by the action of the sea, or the changing of a river’s course over millennia? Perhaps destruction is characterised by a certain speed of occurrence, relative to the temporality of a system: we can speak, for example, of cosmic events as “bangs” or “collisions” even though the time-scales involved are unimaginable to the human durational sensibility. Certainly, in the earth-bound context “destruction” is a term generally reserved for the actions of humanity on its environment, man-made or “natural”. But what purpose does this distinction serve and what values does it uphold? Can we try to think, as a kind of bracketed thought experiment, the two kinds of destruction (human and natural) together in a framework that provokes us to ask what specifically characterises or stigmatises human acts of destructive behaviour such as those associated today with warfare, terrorism, or fundamentalist erasures of historical

archives? After all, looking at the *longue durée* might allow us to see any of these calamities as simply non-catastrophic *changes* or alterations to a system that nevertheless survives (as the Mediterranean Sea might be thought of as surviving its poisoning with chemicals, its stripping of life, its displacement by the bodies of drowned migrants).

I want to pay special attention as well to the way in which this word “destruction” is tied to our way of looking at our environment (man harming or protecting something called nature), indeed to the way in which we separate our “selves” from our environment and its natural entropy, and the kinds of notions of “care” that develop alongside this mobilisation. It is from this intersectionality of concepts that something like an idea of “*saving*” can emerge, and we can begin to answer the primary provocation of this essay. But to trace the root of this concept I want to start by thinking of “saving” in the most practical and everyday sense—one that precedes a theoretical understanding—before returning it to the conceptual network within which it develops on another related register. After all, the word is eminently pre-theoretical—much more so than “care” or “destruction”: I know what I have to save, instinctively: to save a life, to save yourself, to save your soul etc., but at the same time to save a date, to save a space, to save time. The first set involves protecting oneself or an object or a loved one from death, the second involves preparation, preparing for example for the arrival of something desired (but also protecting *against* the arrival of something undesirable, someone who takes a space reserved for a friend, something that takes up time that could be used to do something better.)

Another sense of “saving” is the idea of hoarding. For example, to save money means to keep it in store, rather than seeing it circulate and leave the security of the vault or the bank account. Economic saving of this kind is related to entropy as well, through an unspecified but immediately graspable relationship to expenditure, to the instinctive knowledge that one needs to expend a certain amount (of money, energy, love, anger) to achieve certain results (survival, enrichment, achievement). To this instinctive economy, “saving”, adds the perverse hack, i.e. by reducing one’s desires in the *world* of circulation, one can save a quantity of the *tokens* of circulation. The tokens themselves and the act of saving can then become pleasurable and desirable objects in themselves.

Each of these modes of saving or storing forms a vast cloud of related usages connected by a family resemblance and having some bearing on the idea of the archive as it presents itself to us in the field of modern understandings of history, science, and even warfare. The most well known account of this relationship of (something called) “the archive” to the constitution of the sciences and humanities is Derrida’s classic 1995 text, *Archive Fever*.² While bracketing or interrogating others, this essay will be deriving certain concepts from *Archive Fever*, therefore, a (very) short summary follows.

2. CTRL-S

Derrida's central claim, that archival technologies produce the very form of the archivable content is bold, but does not stray too far from a familiar technological determinism in relation to creative forms. In the same vein, as has often been repeated, photographic technologies and developments in chemicals, allowed oil painting to transform utterly in the late 19th century, giving rise to Modernism. Note that this kind of artistic modernism then becomes not simply an expression of an underlying modern outlook but also a concomitant result of the very processes that give rise to the modern, as such, inseparable from the modern subject. To put it another way, Modern art is an analogue of modern man, produced by the technologies of the cotton industry as much as by the writings of Baudelaire.

Derrida's claim differentiates itself crucially from mere technological determinism in the accompanying claim developed in his reading of Freud's death drive, i.e. the archive as a technological tool, a store of impressions and traces, is deeply connected with the very idea of *memory* on the philosophical level. Following Catherine Malabou, we might speculate on the neuro-biological level as well.³ Derrida developed a complex relationship to the archive as a support (against death, for survival), as an inaugural moment, and as that which must be guarded (by an *archon*) in a localized space (the domicile, the 'ark') to show that the nature of the archive is not simply to conserve that which is inside it—since the *inside* is thoroughly interpenetrated by its outside, in the recognizably Derridean gesture—but to open up the possibility of that which might transform it, the technologies and future accidents that might reshape its contours.

I will take away from this radical summary of a provocative and complex text some key points and questions to pursue in the present context:

1. Archival technologies determine (at least partially) the very form of the content they conserve. If, Derrida asks, Freud had access to e-mail wouldn't the very form of psychoanalysis be different from the course it did indeed take? We must extend this question, in fact, from the time of Derrida's text to the present with the near ubiquity of archivable communication technology in contemporary urban life, and the tremendous changes in storage capacity allowed by the "cloud". Would Derrida's deconstruction, his traces, his spectrality be fundamentally different if he wrote and saved his writings in the cloud?
2. We cannot speak of archives without simultaneously thinking of the death drive, of the place of destruction in those cultures, which are based on the idea of progress as

accumulation of information and iterable abilities in an inhuman memory. If Modernity is the accelerated drive of this archiving tendency (an archive fever), then does it bring forth specific and accelerated forms of destruction? How do we account for these?

3. Finally, can we extend Derrida's concept of the archive as a space of interiority/ exteriority at the confluence of biological memory and technological capacity to the planet at large? That is, can we think of the *geospace*—to use the term as deployed by Benjamin Bratton⁴—of the globalising world as an archive?

In what follows I will suggest—again following Bratton and to some extent Malabou and Virilio—that this archiving has already taken place through satellite imagery and drone surveillance and warfare, producing the earth as archivable content. The implications of this can only be drawn out very tentatively at this time.

3. DESTROYING ART TO SAVE ART

In the preceding sections, I have tried to establish a connection between destruction and modernity, and claimed that the demand to save something can only be understood in the context of the threats that object confronts. In the simplest terms, every act of destruction is also a creative act and needs to be understood as such. We cannot imagine a destruction that is not accompanied by a mission to clear out, an imaginary future where something takes the place of something else: this is destruction as clearing, and in fact as design. To think of destructive acts merely as the obverse of a civilised secular world where we all care for everything and all objects is to ignore that even the most "advanced" archive fevered economies must choose to build over historical ruins, to raze graveyards, to re-emerge from catastrophic accidents. No civilisational archive can survive without forgetting, erasing, reformatting (and Borges reminds us of precisely this in the story of "Funes the Memorious"⁵). What we are arguing over—as in the controversy surrounding the erasure of the Bamiyan Buddha carvings in Afghanistan in 2001—is something more specific, and related to the intention behind the act itself, the kind of future design vision this explosive gesture betrayed.

Indeed, Modern art has a continuous tradition of explicit destructiveness at its very heart, accompanying all the major formal and technical innovations that we associate with it. The origins of Dada in the ferment of the First World War are well known, as an anti-aesthetics that was itself aesthetics of irrationality, chaos and negation, produced as a weapon against the processes that ultimately led to the demolition and resedimentation of the European political landscape. More explicitly, if we discount this tradition of negation or perversion, art has maintained a historic attachment to destruction as a guiding concept. I believe there are two modes of destruction here that sometimes overlap in practice but embody slightly different

ambitions: one that deals in the active destruction of objects (destructiveness as such, or as a cosmic and creative principle), and the other that seeks to temporarily or permanently negate art historical narratives and aesthetic paradigms of value (effecting what Fredric Jameson might call a "dialectical reversal" of valences⁶).

The Destruction in Art Symposium (1966) held in London was a landmark event that brought together several of these tendencies in a series of happenings and artworks, including prominent artists such as Gustav Metzger and John Latham, both of whom developed throughout their careers highly individual practices of art-making premised on destruction. At the symposium itself, Latham constructed then burned down a tower of books (*Skoob Tower*), which he dubbed "the laws of England", outside the British Museum. For Latham this burning down of history physically embodied the frustration of radical art with academic and social forms of control, while leaving unanswered the matter of what constitutes radicalism in the first instance, outside these structures of power. Latham's next action, perhaps his most retold and celebrated, involved inviting his students at Central St. Martins College of Art & Design to a feast at which he served Clement Greenberg's *Art and Culture*, chewed up page by page by the artist, dissolved and placed into glass vials. Greenberg's enormous intellectual achievement, his Hegelian synthesising of art history into something like a philosophical enterprise, has to be seen as the oppressive limit to a certain idea of freedom espoused by Latham in his anti-historical programme (which he came to replace, perhaps, with notions of deep or cosmic time).

The point here is, that these acts required a particular target, one that was in no way chosen at random, and were meant to mobilise or call into existence an alternative future, radically different from the one contained within the selected archives and their history.

In an installation work in Lahore in 2009 titled, "People's Art Historical Garden Centre", David Alesworth and I repeated this gesture while shifting it in relation to our own less "natural" view of freedom, specifically from art historical narratives. We used Akbar Naqvi's *Image and Identity*, an idiosyncratic, often illuminating, and sometimes vitriolic text on Pakistani art, which at the time was the only major historical survey of the nation's art history. But instead of dissolving the text or transforming it enzymatically, we worked with a bookbinder who worked in the markets of Lahore, to repurpose the book page by page into "art-historical packets" that contained live vegetable seeds. As our part-parodic statement said:

The P.A.H.G.C. aims to create a new and green space for supra-critical reappraisal of the use-value of art history (as written from the point of view of colonial and postcolonial governmentality), by converting the plastic objects of art history into objects of everyday fetish use for the subjects of history. The dissemination of alter-knowledge and the insemination of alter-culture are the short, medium and long term goals of this project, which conforms

closely to the will of the people while correspondingly attempting to shape the contours of that will and its future forms.⁷

The shift here from Latham's work is not just one towards ironic self-awareness, itself possibly regrettable, but to an idea of repurposing, hacking existing archives to expose them plastically to what remains outside them. This is not an attack, then, but a kind of post-punk DIY entry into an archive, that looks to not extend it (which is the goal of the politics of representation) but to fundamentally transform or plasticise the very basis of the law, i.e. the archivable content.

(I am not citing this work to exemplify a successful aesthetic/political strategy, but to illustrate instead where some of the abstract ideas discussed here have found very concrete forms across a range of platforms and periods, and where they might be seen as becoming obsolete today.)

Gustav Metzger's writings on auto-destructive art provide further insight into the shape of this tendency in the latter half of the 20th century. In *Auto-Destructive Art* (1959), he says:

Auto-destructive art is primarily a form of public art for industrial societies. Self-destructive painting, sculpture and construction is a total unity of idea, site, form, colour, method and timing of the disintegrative process.⁸

Importantly, for Metzger it is not enough to destroy but to create works that self-destroy: thus participating in an ontological condition rather than negating an existing one. In other words, the form of destruction that the art work takes mirrors the processes at place in the world at large, instead of simply critiquing some values or clearing them away (as in Latham's work, which is thoroughly tied to his person as a willing agent of destruction). As Metzger says, more poetically, in another essay from 1960, also titled *Auto-Destructive Art*:

Man in Regent Street is auto-destructive.
Rockets, nuclear weapons, are auto-destructive.
Auto-destructive art.
The drop drop dropping of HH bombs
Not interested in ruins, (the picturesque).
Auto-destructive art re-enacts the obsession with destruction, the pummelling to which individuals and masses are subjected.⁹

Note as well the distancing from the attachment to the picturesque, which might also indicate a distancing from a certain Romantic view of Nature and of the past as aesthetically apprehended in the form of the majestic ruin. The ruin of auto-destruction is at best a vestige or artefact, the act itself the focus never the ruin. In this sense, it is an inhuman performance, the *essence* of

which is vanishing, as in Jean Tinguely's machines that were designed to self-destruct. As such, they are visible manifestations of the death drive within the living archive of art, a claim that is supported by the fact that the only existence of these works is within archival history where their dematerialized, anecdotal form is far more exciting and provocative than any charred remains of a canvas or glass vials full of excreta could be. This vanishing, performative aspect is also intensely *anti-ocular*, against visibility in the sense explored by Peggy Phelan in her study of the ontology of performance.¹⁰

I am bracketing for the moment, acts of destruction of the self and the body as occupying a slightly different terrain, carrying as they do the burden of a different political/philosophical trajectory of anti-humanism and the inhuman. Another study could examine at great length the connection between the harming of the self and the destruction of non-human objects; at the moment, suffice it to say that following my stress on vanishing and invisibility in the understanding of destructive art, "harm" does not fulfil the criterion. Here, Talal Asad's reading of the secular body in pain, Ron Athey's abject performances, and his work on suicide bombing might provide a link that I must leave aside for the time being.

To summarise and repeat the above, destruction in art can take the form of an attack on historical value (art history, good taste etc.) or of a desire to mirror the fundamentally destructive nature of the world at war (the picture of which is in many ways synonymous with the idea of the globalised world). In many instances, these concerns overlap, but it is important to separate them at a programmatic level, to understand better the mechanics of this tendency, which are not just mid-20th century issues. The first kind of attack was evident in Ai Weiwei's performance *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* (1995), one of the seminal works of radical Chinese art, taking place at a time when artists of that country were creating an entirely re-assembled and accelerated relationship to European art history, the Cultural Revolution, traditional aesthetics in the face of the opening up to capitalism and Western culture.

This moment in the 1990s was paralleled by developments in many other countries around the world with the advent of mass digital communication and the internet. Pakistan, specifically the megacity of Karachi, responded dramatically and innovatively to the sudden availability of information emanating from the perceived centres of the art world, in London and New York. Suddenly, what had once been rumours of movements or art historical narratives and gossip brought back by the few privileged travelling artists, became available to see and read about to anyone with a dial-up connection (which, it must be admitted, was still relatively rare). This overload brought about a shift in the very nature of several allied art practices in Karachi, which in a moment of radical a-historicism, delinked themselves from the aesthetic paradigms of modernism and its values of individual genius, its idea of art history as the story of great men (and just a few women), and even from the idea of art as something inherited from the courtly

cultures of Mughal India or the surviving colonial art and design institutions of the British. Instead, the field of practice, in terms of content, style, and exhibition shifted to the public areas of the city itself, as a network of kitsch images, political graffiti, "low culture" and pop music, populist cinema, and advertising. It has taken many years for this work to be somewhat pulled back into a more conventional academic context, and in the process it is possible that it has inevitably lost some of its original radicalism. This is not important here: instead what I am suggesting is that the work of David Alesworth, Iftikhar Dadi and Elizabeth Dadi, and Durriya Kazi amongst others was not only a response from within the world of art to the city as a living informational and experiential territory—but was instead a revision of the idea of art by an opening to another archive altogether. Here it must be stressed that the difference between the subject of art (landscapes, cityscapes etc., are manifestations of the same ocular drive) and the archive of art. It is in this latter sense that the city operated within the practices of the artists involved in what has recently been labelled, somewhat inadequately, as "Karachi Pop".

4. SAVING THE WORLD: THE MIND OF THE DRONE

Finally, I want to return to the idea of destruction as it has presented itself to us in recent years through the spectacularity of terrorism, and how it can be seen to relate to the ways in which we have thought destruction—and indeed terror—in art. Further, I want to begin to think about how the particular forms of this spectacle, its aesthetics as well as its politics might demand an engagement that is not limited to liberal shock and dismay at the very notion of destructiveness, especially since this phenomenon has symbolically and literally occupied an important place in the narrative of modern and contemporary art. Instead, I am suggesting an engagement that begins by understanding how our allegiances and subjectivities are founded in the heat flash of particular acts of destruction.

Earlier I suggested that the image of the world at war is congruent with the image of globalisation. By this formulation, I wish to invoke not just Martin Heidegger's essay titled, "The Age of the World Picture",¹¹ but also Rey Chow's more contemporary response in "The Age of the World Target".¹² Briefly, where Heidegger characterises the essence of modernity as the world becoming a picture (for better and for worse), Chow claims that the contemporary world is pictured as a *target for warfare*. This is at the largest cosmic scale and the minutest quantum one, to be precise, but also at the everyday human level of landscapes of war: in the devastation of Hiroshima, the returning of the Middle East and Afghanistan to the Stone Age through the War on Terror, the attack on Sehwan Sharif, but also in the displacement of cities and antiquities to build dams and housing schemes, in the accidents of Chernobyl and Fukushima. Nowhere is this shift to surveillance-modernity better embodied than in the phenomenon of

drone espionage and warfare, where the aim is to subtract the human eye and body from the act of destruction as far as possible. Indeed, as Susan Schuppli has shown,¹³ the algorithmic nature of the decision making process that drones are programmed with requires a deep shift in the legal and ethical frameworks that bind the global space today.

Of course, Heidegger's analysis does not imply that new media have come to replace an intuitive human understanding of the world, out of nowhere. Instead, these ways of encountering and experiencing the world through calculation, planning, and technology (which have in some sense, as mediation, always existed) have acquired a certain seemingly unstoppable traction that characterises the very subject of the modern. There is no unmediated human-world relationship on offer here, to be clear—there is, in fact, nothing outside the text or the archive. Chow's supplementary reading powerfully extends this historicising of technology to the modern need for destruction, not just calculation:

[...] we may say that in the age of bombing, the world has also been transformed into—is essentially conceived and grasped as—a target.¹⁴

The inaugural moment of this shift, for Chow, was the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki: these effected a major epistemic shift that we inhabit to this day:

The atomic bomb did not simply stop the war; it also stopped the war by escalating and intensifying violence to a hitherto unheard of scale. What succeeded in "detering" the war was an ultimate (am)munition; destruction was now outdone by destruction itself.¹⁵

After this moment of deterrence (where what was "saved" was a certain future at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives in two cities), war was to be waged increasingly in *virtuality* and in terror, rather than through the outright use of the most (auto) destructive means available. No longer was violence operating at its outer limit, but manoeuvring in new terrains of surveillance and display. As Paul Virilio says, "A war of pictures and sounds is replacing the war of objects [...]."¹⁶

Benjamin Bratton¹⁷ sees the 2009 attack on Mumbai by a Pakistani terrorist outfit as illustrating a new intensification in the ways in which technologies of mapping and imaging are enabling a certain kind of destruction as well as the resistance to it: evidence that the young, foreign attackers had made use of universally available personal communication platforms and Google Earth to picture their hitherto unseen targets must be seen along with the remarkable outflow of information in real time from the potential victims, on Twitter, Facebook, and other social media. In a sense then, this attack was made possible by the existence of these archiving technologies, as was the resistance to it facilitated at least by them. This makes the human

attackers who are relying on the ocular prosthetic of the satellite and the drone a new kind of techno-biological composition: and to the extent that these imaging technologies have their own algorithmic constitutions, these humans (and by implication all of us) are prostheses of the technology, the scattered organs of an entity that inhabits the clouds.¹⁸

For Bratton, a theorist at the intersection of software design and cultural studies, the implications of these technological ensembles, and their coherence in the unlimited cloud archive, goes beyond the honing of targeting abilities and extends to the territorial imaginaries that are produced by data visualisation tools:

[...] as it stands today, we have no idea what the terms and limits of a cloud based citizenship of the 'Google Caliphate' will entail and curtail: some amalgam of post-secular cosmopolitanism, agonistic radical democracy, and rational actor microeconomics, largely driven by intersecting petabyte at-hand datasets and mutant strains of Abrahamic monotheism. But specifically, what is governance (let alone government) within this?¹⁹

The term "Google Caliphate" is no mere provocation; rather, it is an acknowledgment of the fact that the old nation-state paradigms—within which the modern political and cultural subject operated—have been most radically challenged in our times by the internationality of cloud based data and data collection technologies, and this challenge has been grafted onto by Islamic visions of a supranational theocratic state as well as by the neo-medievalists of the so-called alt-right. In a very real sense the archive has shifted to the cloud, and the archivable content has become the earth itself—not as *world*, not as experience in the sense indicated by the Walter Benjamin quote at the beginning of this essay, but as terrain—real only to the extent that it is zoomable, navigable, taggable, and usable. It is in this terrain that the battles for radical futures are being plotted, and it is here that the destruction of shrines and temples and loci of irreducible difference is being calculated.

But in what *qualitative* way is the attack on Mumbai or the attack on Sehwan Sharif different from the continuing, low-grade attack on and takeover of "unregistered" villages and townships by land developers around Pakistan? I am not suggesting they are the same, not by any measure of symbolic importance (but even then, symbolic to whom?). They are forms of destruction, discrete but conceptually related. Reading Bratton reminds us that each of these attacks, and their technological apparatuses or archives must be seen as design interventions, attempts to change the visible landscape to make it conform to a different vision of society—to return an environment to its substratum before replanting it as a (artificial) garden: in this respect, and only in this respect, Latham's burning of the books is no different from the attacks on shrines, which to the radically a-historicist strand of fundamentalist Islam are troublesome accretions on a pure degree zero of Islam, its absolute desert origins. And yet, today, burning books, staging

a protest in front of a museum might seem hopelessly romantic at best, obsolete paradigms at worst: what destructive act could similarly traumatise the archive of the cloud?

I will end by indicating questions or areas for further investigation, rather than offering any definite answers.

First, the earth itself as archive is being eradicated or rewritten, on the one hand by its "development" in the framework of advanced techno-capitalism and on the other by those who are seeking to redesign it on utopian lines, by removing its ability to speak of the past. A unique confluence of the two impetuses is in the modern Saudi programme of levelling traditional sites of veneration that are associated with the historical lives of important figures in Islamic history, in the name of a sweeping anti-idolatry.²⁰ This active removal of the earth's evidence is matched by the profound neglect of the archaeology of early Islam and its pre-history, in the form of inscriptions, rock carvings, proto-Arabic writings, and very early religious manuscripts. The fear of history in the Islamic world means any investigations of these artefacts have to be made in a certain secrecy,²¹ away from the danger of difficult interpretations. The fact that the Islamic world has not spoken against this redesigning of history must speak of something more than a *passive* apathy.

The reduction of the earth-archive and its evidence to desert is explored in Zahra Malkani and Shahana Rajani's work as the Karachi Art Anti-University (KAAU), "The Gadap Sessions."²² This project investigates the ongoing and illegal takeover of inhabited land in Sindh by major urban developers. They attempt to document the tools of this invasion and to reveal the founding mode of *visuality* that enables this erasure of communities and their landscape. Google maps and satellite imagery provide a drone-eye view of the land as map, terrain rather than lived and living experiential space. Bahria Town (the developer) uses digital imagery to both negate the existing landscape as well as to produce a vision of its imminent future development: green communities, golf courses, shaded avenues, modern buildings. The terms for the existing land in the Bahria advertisements are pejorative: desert, barren, uninhabited. The transformation is not merely a commercial one, then, but an ethical one perhaps: making the desert fertile gives rights over the land in a tradition that goes back to the Bible and extends to contemporary debates over the right to territory in the Middle East.²³

What the KAAU's work aims to produce is a "countervisuality" that opposes the smooth digital gaze of technocapitalism with the texture of the desert, marked by borders (at the particulate as well as the anthropometric scale), textures and "glitches" (such as shrines that both disrupt and create the territory around them). The problematic of this project—if we set aside for the moment the politics of empowering local communities through providing access to networks—is visibility itself; as conceived through the lens of Glissant's thought, where "opacity" is the

required resistance to the transparency demanded by European secular/philosophical projects.²⁴

Inevitably, there is a difficult choice between becoming more visible or less. I would suggest that this can be sidestepped by thinking of what this visibility or invisibility might serve in the particular instance, and how it relates to a particular form of life that we consider worth living (i.e. not simply "preserving" as a museum exhibit, or a tourist attraction—which is what many shrines and sites of pilgrimage threaten to become in our time). In places like rural or semi-rural Pakistan, there is a still further choice: whether to become "networked" in the first place. Ulises Ali Mejias suggests that opacity cannot simply be "dropping off" the grid, but requires a certain "unmapping" of the terrain already created by the interaction of the digital network and its world. This means moving away from what he calls the "nodocentrism" of our theoretical world and a new thinking of the "paranode", that which is neither edge nor node in the rhizomatic map that is often assumed to characterise the modern distributed networked world:

Unmapping the digital network needs to involve both working within the spaces of resistance that digital networks have already made available and asking what it means to obliterate those very spaces.²⁵

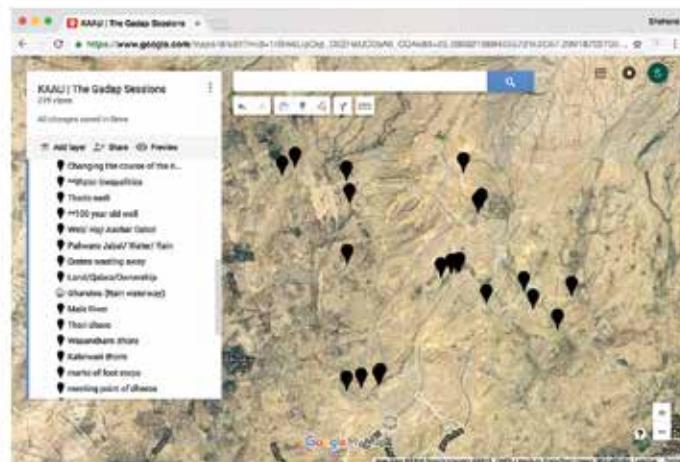
To obliterate methodically, yet again, something we have set up: does this not echo a familiar motif in European philosophy stretching from the Enlightenment, and the legacy of Heidegger's *Destruktion* and *Abbau*? Is this philosophical history itself then not a desert of shifting traces, unsettled inhabitations, and temporary settlements without permanent landmarks?

DELETE?

I began this essay by asking "Why save anything at all". I have subsequently tried to show that it is the act of saving and the decision we make about what to save that characterises a certain culture and its ethics. Saving, especially today, means saving from vision and transparency. As curators never tire of reminding us, the word "curate" derives from the Latin "*cura*", to care; and the fact that everyday curatorial activity has become such an important part of contemporary life indicates the immense anxiety about conservation that we take for granted now. Conservation of borders and national identities and managed immigration are the cosmopolitical form of this new practice. My claim here is that it is the very anxiety of saving that marks "the curatorial" as such, and places it in relation to the possibility of erasure. From this, it follows that each curatorial decision, and perhaps artistic decision, must be made each time in light of the question of saving anything at all, rather than assuming that all things are to be preserved forever, until the end of time as it were.



From zones of viewing comfort, we partake in the 'worlding' of Gadap. We simulate a whole new world of elite desires and imperial fantasies - *mehfooz aur mukamal* - on a supposedly unscripted earth, taking full pleasure in its transformation.



We began mapping Gadap's emergent and degraded ecologies – its disappearing hills, bodies of water, plant and animal species – to uncover the erasures and transformations of this sentient, nourishing landscape, the degradations and slow violence of resource extraction and sand mining.

To pay attention to fields of sound, the acoustic traces needed to hear the land's cry, as mountains are gouged and rivers are dried, as soils turn toxic.

This visualising gave priority to the biosphere, claiming a planetary viewpoint in laying bare human-nature entanglements – a practice of ecopedagogy where learning and research is not just a relation between humans, but a process of being with and in an environment.



In cosmology 'texture' is a glitch – it is the break in the system, a breakdown in symmetry, a topological defect.

The materialization of resistance.



Bahria Town's smoothness and symmetries do not remain unquestioned, they cannot always hold – they are haunted by glitches. The shrines of Dadhar Pir and Misri Shah Bokhari still left standing. We were told the tractor froze every time it approached the Pir's grave and so these graves have stayed, these textures that blemish, these breakages in symmetry dotting the Bahria Town landscape, rough the smooth, matte the gloss.

A strand of Modern art has shown us that its contextual ethical framework needs to be periodically refigured through acts of destruction, radical reevaluation, anti-historical and anti-iconic terrorism by inflicting traumatic injury from which a new, plastic art might emerge. In the existing informational landscape, radical political groups have accelerated with advances in technology to produce themselves as inhuman subjects and agents of historical destruction, in a way only dreamed of by artists. These shifts require theorists and artists to perhaps not simply distance themselves from this history of violence, but to reclaim it in the service of another agenda. A sensibility that is horrified by the destruction of a shrine or a statue or a library cannot *simply* condemn the destruction as evil in itself (this would amount to a profound conservatism, dressed as liberalism). It must produce as well a theory of experience, as Walter Benjamin attempted a century ago; one that matches the precise terror of our times, from which a beauty—melancholic or affirmative—can emerge in the name of *another* design for the future, another mode of visibility/invisibility. This design can be deployed in the Cloud, plugged in to the mediascape, inhabiting its geoscape, hacking, subverting, or destroying its limits and capacities; it can describe a theory of collective and futural experience that follows the contours of affectivities produced by the confluence of ideologies and technologies; or it can be unplugged, unsighted, deeply entranced in the proximity of rhythmic bodies, the particularity of the destination, the experience of the pilgrimage, the explosive reality of the shrine. In every case, something is destroyed, so that something must be—must ask of us to be—saved.

Notes

1. Shahaab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton, 2015).
2. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
3. Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do With Our Brain?* Translated by Sebastian Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).
4. Benjamin H. Bratton, "On Geoscapes and the Google Caliphate: Reflections on the Mumbai Attacks," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7–8 (1 December 2009): 329–42.
5. Jorge Luis Borges, *Fictions* (New York: Penguin 2000).
6. Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso Books, 2010).
7. David Chalmers Alesworth and Adnan Madani, People's Art and Historical Garden Centre Project (PAHGCP, October 2009), accessed 10 March 2017, <http://davidalesworth.com/p-a-h-g-c-p/>.
8. Alex Danchev, ed., *100 Artists' Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists* (London: Penguin Classics, 2011), pp. 344–345.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 345.
10. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
11. Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2013).
12. Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work*, Series: Next

- Wave Provocations, Series eds. Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan, and Robyn Wiegman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
13. Susan Schuppli, "Deadly Algorithms: Can Legal Codes Hold Software Accountable for Code that Kills?" *Radical Philosophy* 187 (September 2014): 2–8.
 14. Chow, *The Age of the World Target*, p. 31.
 15. *Ibid.*
 16. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
 17. Bratton, *op. cit.*
 18. I want to stop short of suggesting—as some do (and some proponents of a certain "Dark Accelerationism" welcome this event)—that humanity is shifting to a radically new mode of machinic or cyborg existence. It seems to me that this singularity seems much closer in the major technopoles of the world—near the hype of multi-billion dollar technological industries and their cultures—than it does in the vast poverty ridden stretches of the world, in cities like Karachi and Mumbai that are still composed of all-too human slum dwellers, whose technology is *bricolage* and whose mode of existence is survival. I am merely suggesting, that a *significant* shift is occurring in our time, and art and politics have been slow to respond to it.
 19. Bratton, *op. cit.*
 20. Carla Power, "Saudi Arabia Bulldozes Over its Heritage," *Time*, 14 November 2014, accessed 10 March 2017, <http://time.com/3584585/saudi-arabia-bulldozes-over-its-heritage/>.
 21. Yehuda D. Nevo's work on early Kufic inscriptions in the Negev desert in Israel (*Ancient Arabic Inscriptions from the Negev* [1993]), for example.
 22. They also work under the name Karachi LaJamia, <http://karachilajamia.com/project/the-gadap-sessions/>, accessed 22 August 2017.
 23. See Martin Buber's quote from an open letter to Gandhi cited at the opening of this essay.
 24. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997).
 25. Ulises Ali Mejias, *Off the Network: Disrupting the Digital World* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p. 16.

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience*. Translated by Liz Heron. London: Verso Books, 2006.
- Ahmed, Shahaab. *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Alesworth, David Chalmers and Adnan Madani. People's Art and Historical Garden Centre Project (PAHGCP, October 2009). Accessed 10 March 2017. <http://davidalesworth.com/p-a-h-g-c-p/>.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Edited and with an Introduction by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zorn. London: Pimlico, 1999.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. *Fictions*. Translated by Andrew Hurley. New York: Penguin Modern Classics, 2000.
- Bratton, Benjamin H. "On Geoscapes and the Google Caliphate: Reflections on the Mumbai Attacks." *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7–8 (1 December 2009): 329–42.
- Buber, Martin. *The Writings of Martin Buber*. Selected, edited, and introduced by Will Herberg. New York: Plume, 1974.
- Chow, Rey. *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work*. Series: Next Wave Provocations. Series edited by Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan, and Robyn Wiegman. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Danchev, Alex, ed. *100 Artists' Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*. London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2011.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Translated by Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Translated and with an Introduction by William Lovitt. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013.

Jameson, Fredric. *Valences of the Dialectic*. London: Verso Books, 2010.

Malabou, Catherine. *The Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*. Translated by Carolyn Shread. Cambridge: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

Malabou, Catherine. *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* Translated by Sebastian Rand. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.

Mejias, Ulises Ali. *Off the Network: Disrupting the Digital World*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Creation of the World or Globalization*. Translated by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.

Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Power, Carla. "Saudi Arabia Bulldozes Over its Heritage." *Time*, 14 November 2014. Accessed 10 March 2017, <http://time.com/3584585/saudi-arabia-bulldozes-over-its-heritage/>.

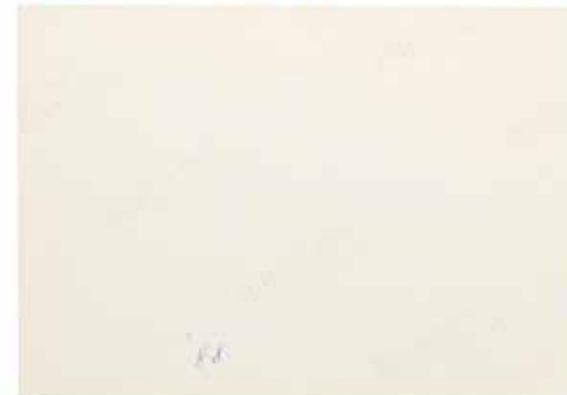
Schuppli, Susan. "Deadly Algorithms: Can Legal Codes Hold Software Accountable for Code that Kills?" *Radical Philosophy* 187 (September 2014): 2–8.

Virilio, Paul. *Strategy of Deception*. Translated by Chris Turner. London: Verso Books, 2006.

The spreads are attributed to Zahra Malkani and Shahana Rajani, from the publication titled *Vision/Texture* (2016, published by VASL artists collective).

Are Images the Real Stories? Materialising Memory and Problems with Archiving

Seher Naveed



Memory and photography are kinds of archival media, considered to represent past events authentically. Both record images, albeit in different forms, in order to recall the past. Memory, having no material or physical form as photographs, can be considered a form of mediation, which is shaped by present times, essentially free from space-time continuum. This essay attempts to question and explore memory and photographs as reliable representatives of personal history, taking cue from a personal childhood memory of a place once lived in, which turned out to be false.

Dylan Trigg quoting Augustine, "In the memory [...] everything is preserved separately, according to its category. Each is admitted through its own special entrance (1961, 214),"¹ emphasises that all of us have a series of memories that can resurface at a specific place and time with varying intensities.² More importantly, memories comprise the *act* of remembering and its *content*, i.e. the remembered. This *act* of remembering is then concerned with the mode through which the past is recollected.³ Narrating a memory, for example, is subject to the context in which one narrates it. The memory can then have various descriptions, each reliant on how, where, and under what interests we express them.

* * *

My father was in the army and after every two years, we were transferred to a new location. Change was something very familiar to me. If it were not my family going through this change, it would be our neighbours and close friends. Schools, friends, and homes were never a constant. One of the places I lived in was the Mangla cantonment, near Mangla dam in Jhelum district of Pakistan. The town of Mangla and Mangla dam are located across the Jhelum river in Azad Kashmir.

Mangla, 1995:

I am 10 years old and standing in the backyard of my house. There is a big tree in the middle of the garden where the grass never grew because of its shade. I am digging into fresh mud, creating a pit to bury some toys that are arranged on the ground. I can't remember them exactly but in this memory they are small and made of plastic and wood.

I had recently learned of archaeology in school, and understood it as a way of discovering places and people who lived before us and uncovering objects, such as stone tools and utensils, houses and civilisations buried under the soil. That day when I came back home from school I wanted to be an archaeologist.

Some days go by and I am pretending to have forgotten about my "lost" toys. I am

in the backyard, walking under the same tree looking for them. It's a game. There is a red plastic shovel in my hand with which I extract my toys. I still can't remember them but I can definitely feel their weight in my hands and the layer of dirt on them. There they were, less exciting than discovering a ten thousand year old fossil but just as incredible.

There was something transient and temporal about Mangla and because people were constantly posted in and out, none of the town's original inhabitants remained there. As people moved in and out of each other's homes, traces of past lives began to surface. Each room was a palimpsest of feelings, i.e. what previous residents thought of themselves. One was able to see this in the old broken toys people left behind, torn bits of paper, books, materials used for covering damages, dents, scratches, and marks.

To remember something, now gone, yet was once there, is the simplest way to understand how memory functions. How one experiences such memories would then largely depend on the dynamics of "meaningful involvement established at the outset."⁴ Trigg explains this by suggesting that in the case of memory of a place, there is a division of remembering, i.e. the context on which memories hang and the very texture of the specific content. Additionally, our understanding of places is determined as we compare them with other places. Therefore, it would be disingenuous to overlook the distance disjoining the present and the place I am remembering in the past, least because a tactic residue of fragmentation seeps through all of time's polarities.⁵ In trying to remember a place, which I am no longer a part of, I am reduced to the outsider of my memory. And in this return to a place once occupied, "I" am partly dispersed in time and yet absorbed in that place but never actually "there."⁶

The following memory of Mangla is more factual and has yet to recede into a spiritual past. It is more suggestive of Mangla's physical and material attributes.

On this occasion, I am standing outside my house next to the low wooden gate. There are no cement walls in Mangla and instead small trimmed hedges are used to demarcate homes, parks and other spaces. Somewhere in the distance, I see my house and a tree I often climb. My sister is with me and we are waiting for friends to arrive so we can go to the movies—it must be a Thursday because that is when we go to the cinema to catch Chinese Kung Fu movies. I don't understand this movie because it is entirely in Chinese or the subtitles are changing much too fast. So I walk out of the cinema to get some snacks from the only popcorn machine in town. There is one of everything in Mangla—one popcorn and ice cream machine, one cinema, one tailor and so on.

The first time I revisited my memory of Mangla was a few years ago. I was in my college library in London, going through a book of photographs titled *After the Floods* by Robert Polidori.⁷ In this book he documented mainly houses and their interiors, which were destroyed by floods and were uninhabited. The interiors were drenched, debris sprawled everywhere, and encrusted mud and decay created new topographies. The immaculate attention to detail in these photographs is not visible to the naked human eye. The images of these skeletal remains are, perhaps, what triggered my memory of Mangla dam and the villages that were drowned for it.

I am now on a raft with lots of families for a picnic. The air is moist and we are somewhere in the middle of the river. Somebody is pointing towards an eel they've just spotted. Seated close to the edge I am looking closely at the water. I see small fish but I am waiting to get a glimpse of a drowned city I hear stories about. I am trying to figure out a way to make the water disappear so I can see what is hidden below. As a self-proclaimed backyard archaeologist, the thought of an unknown underwater city is not sitting well with me. After all, I didn't flood the city myself, did I?

Then there was a memory when I saw a minaret or what was left of it.

I am near the water again. But this time sitting in a car and crossing the dam to get to my school, which was located in a nearby town called New Mirpur. It is a clear day and ours is the only car on the road. I can't quite tell who is sitting next to me but the space seems cramped and I turn my gaze towards the blue water beyond which are blue hills. Today the water doesn't seem alive and is lower than usual. I can see the outline along the wall where it originally reached. Something in the distance suddenly catches my eye: a slender structure rising above the level of the water, silhouetted against the setting sun—a minaret of a mosque that was once part of the drowned city.

Despite my attachment to this memory, my recollections vary in description and intensity. At times, my focus on remembering a particular thing is displaced with the more generalised sense of simply being there. It is vital to consider here that memories present themselves, at least initially, as an appearance of our past. Therefore, according to Trigg, memory is not solely confined to our minds, as it were, but it is in fact the interaction between people and surroundings that provide the source for remembering.⁸ It is conversations, places, emotions, and thoughts that suit the content of memory and as we address these memories verbally or in writing, we contextualise them, paving way for narration, which then takes over and alters memory to suit the needs of the time. An example of this could be the following excerpt from my initial writings about Mangla in 2009:

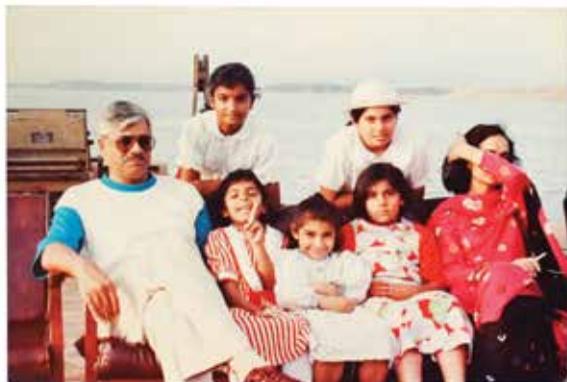
The tide is low, and the dam is less intimidating and more inviting. As I observe the water, my eyes are distracted by something out of the ordinary. In the centre of the dam, the dome of a minaret stands out.

Here the focus is more on the detail of the minaret, and not on the time of day or a sense of the ambiance. This could possibly be because I was in London at the time and my description of a minaret submerged in water to a foreign audience seemed more "exotic" as a story.

Memories are malleable, and they overlap, encircle one another—some falling into less present zones than others. The act of *remembering* plays an important role in what defines memories, and is often influenced by the context in which this remembering takes place. In other words, the reason of remembering something formulates a memory. In case, what is being remembered is a frail or confused memory, imagination creeps in to fill the void or create what is missing. Can we then assume that Polidori's photographs also provided my memory with a kind of visual reference? And if memory is compelled to negotiate with an image that allows the past to be articulated, can the relationship between memory and its image be trusted?

According to Trigg, "as remembering agents we are inclined to speak by way of having a 'picture' of things as the content of memory."⁹ Sometimes I will say, "I can still see the minaret in the water." On another day, I may recall the memory by focusing on the weather or the colour of the water. In essence, therefore, images and sensations always persist. A kind of reminiscing also exists at this point, which, perhaps, was also present during the formation of my memory while reviewing Polidori's photographs. Trigg undermines the autonomy of memory by suggesting that the reception of memory is dependent on an invisible agency that acts between memory and imagination, and if the past is preserved, it is at the expense of scraping out its original content.¹⁰ This kind of image-making or memory formation (through the act of remembering and now reminiscing) creates a discontinuity between present thought and its original version and thus has no actual engagement with the past. For this reason, memory's engagement with the past has blurred the distinction between history and fiction, making it difficult to determine where memory stops and imagination begins.

Often imagination occurs at a time when memories are contextualised either through oral or written narrative. Whatever form narration might take, we end up aestheticising memory, which requires imagination and therein we never really get to "experience an image directly."¹¹ For Trigg this involvement of imagination may seem to gradually decay the image of a memory itself, but could also keep it alive.¹² Therefore, with time, as our memories are reworked, reconstituted, and reconfigured to suit our continuously changing selves, it is the tension between the act



of remembering and the work of imagination, which points toward our need to preserve memories. In other words, our need to secure experiences from slipping our mind, heightens the role of imagination as a preserver of the past. More specifically, Trigg suggests that in the case of memory of a place, the imagination orients itself fundamentally towards the future. Here, "imagination shows itself to be an act of place-making for the future, a resistance against time, in which the preparation for the loss of place is established."¹³ He suggests that this impetus for rediscovering places through imagination comes from dissatisfaction with existing information or experience of place. While imagination can be an attempt to broaden the memory-narrative, more importantly its formation is often influenced by *reason* on which the *remembering* takes place. In essence, while we may never experience an image directly because it keeps altering through creative imagination—it would also be worth considering that our present self largely guides this imagination. Consequently, if image-making is our preference in order to imagine what there was in reality, would something more visible, such as photographs, help us reflect the past more accurately? Can we remember better through pictorial references? Did the invention of camera help preserve memories, or did it create new memories?

The following section analyses our need to preserve experiences and images by focusing on photographs and oral tradition, and their manifestation on memory.

Before photographic documentation, people relied heavily on memory and oral tradition to preserve a record of the past; visible things were then often brought together through words, speech, storytelling, and imagination. Subsequently, the invention of the photographic-image was perceived as tangible evidence of our experiences and memories. It is in them that we look for a kind of reassurance and guarantee of our past. Roland Barthes positions the role of a photograph by articulating that in front of a photograph, one's consciousness does not merely take the path of nostalgia, but for every photograph existing in the world, the path of certainty.¹⁴ There is a superimposition here of reality and the past where the photograph's primary role lies in the supreme power of authentication. According to Barthes, "Photography never lies: or rather it can lie as to the meaning of the thing, being by nature *tendentious* but never as to its existence."¹⁵ While this may be true, it is important to consider that photographs, although proofs of our past experiences, do not tell stories. Freund and Thomson reiterate this by quoting Philip Gourevitch that photographs, "[...] can only provide evidence of stories, evidence is mute; it demands investigation and interpretation [...] a photograph can best be understood not as an answer or an end to inquiry, but as an invitation to look more closely, and to ask questions."¹⁶ I would like to consider this specifically through and within *domestic photography*, which includes taking pictures for nonprofessional purposes. Sarvas and Frohlich explain that this particular genre of photography is not considered a hobby as such, but is fixated in other activities where mostly members of the family or acquaintances capture experiences of big and

small events such as holidays, festivals, parties, and casual interactions.¹⁷ Hence, the purpose of these snapshots is not that of aesthetics but to construct an optimistic representation of domestic life, and while they trigger emotions which are personal and private, the pictures themselves often remain banal and insignificant without a direct connection to the people or the context captured in the photographs. Additionally, it is only when these photographs are curated in family albums that narratives of past events may be constructed. However, what we tend to overlook is that the "active selection process in the creation of these albums can make the truthfulness of their narratives questionable."¹⁸

It is worth mentioning that I have no documentation of the minaret or the drowned city mentioned earlier. There are, in fact, just a few private photographs left from my time in Mangla, which I recently revisited. This could be because the concept of documenting every moment of our lives was not as much of a priority as it is today, and because we moved across the country so often that these photographs were probably misplaced and even forgotten. The pictures include mostly portraits of my family, birthday parties, a few picnic gatherings, group shots of people I do not recognise, and more often than not, the dam itself sits insignificantly in the background. Such snapshots are considered relics of the past and take us back in time so we can take note of things that we overlooked when/if we were there. We can also assert that most old family photographs lack information, which ultimately makes them unsatisfying, as they often need to be explained through stories. Therefore, we can consider family albums as sites of oral tradition, where images are mostly accompanied with spoken narratives.¹⁹ In a similar sense, while my images of Mangla claim the past, none of them are able to demonstrate how I remember the place. There is a consistent failure in their very nature to represent what I really want to see and confirm about the past. Experiences may be remembered in the form of images, but not necessarily in the way they are represented in family photographs, where they often contradict the narrative. Could this be because my parents took these photographs? Alternatively, could we then presume that these images are representations of their interactions with the place, and how they wanted to remember it?

We can also deduce that what appears in my photographs of Mangla is a peripheral view dictated by convention and by a lack of connection between known/familiar reality and social formalities of picture taking. It is also important to reflect that at the time roll films had to be installed in cameras, which would allow one to take between 24 to 36 pictures and another few days to get them developed. Therefore, it is only obvious that many people would have been selective about when and what to photograph, and that perhaps our individual understanding of place determined this choice of image preference. The photographs of Mangla then become fragmented glimpses, only capable of suggesting my parents' past and unable to display my own relationship with the place. Time also plays a role in our association with these images. For instance, having not seen these photographs for several years, would I remember Mangla



differently if I were constantly in contact with these pictures? Would these images then dictate my memory? If I were taking photographs of Mangla myself, would they adhere to my memory of the place as it is now? Or would they generate a different narrative?

While questioning the reliability of photographs as agents of truth, Susan Sontag explains that a photograph is not just the result of an encounter between an event and a photographer. "Picture-taking is an event in itself, and one with even more peremptory rights—to interfere with, to invade, or to ignore whatever is going on [...]."²⁰ When taking a photograph, one not only selects the subject but also the details within the focus of the image. In regards to domestic photography, this attention to detail involves framing (consciously and unconsciously) our interest or subject and excluding what is unneeded. Although, photographs claim to *tell it like it is out there*, the information reinforced by the image is through a specific viewpoint, which could potentially alter how we look at or even remember events and places photographed. Sontag goes as far in asserting that searching for reality in photographs can create estrangement from, rather than union with, our memories.²¹ She further states that the need to preserve bygone events has led to the habit of *photographic seeing*, where we "look at reality as an array of potential photographs", creating a somewhat dissociative seeing and hence doubting real experiences.²²

Photographs then are inadequate means to fill the void of memory. However, while they have the ability to be deceptive—especially since the advancement of digital technology with their unlimited capacity for visual manipulation—we still rely heavily on them to remember the past and confirm its continued existence. This polarity in photographs is common knowledge and has been explained by Karen Cross and Julian Peck, where on the one hand photographs are considered to improve memory of experiences (details otherwise forgotten), enabling us to expand our thoughts on subjects and mechanically arrange our view of things. On the other hand, photographs filter and mediate what is preserved and can control the way we remember the past—a process that is considered to result in the destruction of memory.²³ Sometimes our memory of an event or place is so convincing that we can't believe a confrontation by our own printed past. At other instances, we know the pictures first-hand and remember clearly where those stories took place. There are also moments where we falsely recognise pictures and incidents we were never a part of.

On their own, photographs do not narrate experiences as individuals can, and stories in photographs only come to life orally. In this sense, we can consider photographs not only as visual records, but also, as stated earlier, forms of oral history. Elizabeth Edwards argues that emotions in photographs can be articulated through forms of vocalisation.²⁴ Photographs and voice are then integral to the performance of one another, connecting, extending, and incorporating diverse ways of telling stories. Here orality does not simply suggest verbalising an image (*this is*

where we went for a picnic) "but the processes and styles in which photographs have dynamic and shifting stories woven around and through them imprinting themselves and being played back repeatedly through different telling."²⁵ As performative objects if photographs are able to construct the frames for patterns of telling or reinforcing memory through the structure of repetition (of perhaps images of a place/scene) could they also create false memory? And, if photographs alongside oral history can reconstruct memory, is it in light of their exceedingly detailed imitation of real life or the power of storytelling?

Let us now contemplate that photographs have the ability to create false stories and distort memory. This would apply less to current digital photography where one is aware of the potentials in digital manipulation through use of Photoshop and Instagram filters. It would instead be applicable in the case of old childhood snapshots. At times, in order to make sense of a photograph from our past, we draw heavily on memory, which could possibly trigger false recollections. Since photographs are a powerful source for perceptual information, they may act as a stimulant, making it easier for people to generate images of false experiences. Here the notion of, *to see or remember things the way we want to, rather than the way they were* comes into play. However, as suggested by Edwards, "If the tactile qualities of photographs, with their smooth surfaces and delicate paper bases, are secondary to visual, they are nonetheless highly significant in the transmission of shared values and memories"²⁶ —and can be responsible for creating false memories. To understand false memories, it is critical to refer to *postmemory* and its relation to instruments such as photographs and narratives.

Marianne Hirsch introduced the term postmemory in 1992. It was then used primarily to refer to the relationship between the children of Holocaust survivors and memories of their parents. It has since expanded to describe experiences later generations sense only through means of stories, images, and behaviours. Postmemory is therefore the transmission of memory from one generation through another. According to Hirsch, "Postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right."²⁷ Hence, unlike memory, postmemory's connection to the past is not established by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. Hirsch mentions that the photographic image is central to the medium of postmemory. It plays an important role in the transmission of memory-image not just because of the technology of photography and the belief it engenders—which is responsible for connecting generations—but also because photographs hold symbolic and affirmative power, offering direct access to past and unimaginable events.²⁸ In postmemory-inducing pictures, the distance between the past and present, self and other, seems to disappear or rather appears to merge. The illogicality and the two dimensional flatness of the photographic image makes space for narrative, elaboration, and symbolisation. For this reason then, every time we look at photographs from the past world, "we look not only for

information or confirmation, but for an intimate material and affective connection." The following concluding section of this essay, argues that the workings of postmemory can also be mediated through narration and more affirmatively through storytelling.

* * *

At the outset, I specified my memory as being false. My memory of the minaret rising above the water was a memory conjured up in my mind after I heard about it. My mother told us many times that she saw the minaret long before I was born. Evidence or lack thereof suggests that the minaret in all likelihood gave way to decades of decay and finally collapsed, and it was never seen in the later years, even when the tide in the dam was low. On my own investigation, I discovered that the sightings of the minaret were never documented, and that my memory of it was based on eyewitness accounts, and, the power of storytelling. Although little has been said about postmemory in relation to storytelling, I would like to analyse here how stories communicated orally, transfer experiences, which can also be recognised as postmemory.

According to Garry and Gerrie, "photos alone are powerful enough to elicit false memories on their own but that they are not necessarily more powerful than narratives [...] photographs do make it easier for people to imagine—and then come to believe—the false event depicted."³⁰ Some photographs (without any supporting narrative) provide such concrete visual depiction that it may get difficult then to construct information—whereas in the case of narratives and stories, one is able to generate their own details³¹

Storytelling should be understood here as being distinct from mainstream narrative writing and oral tradition. It is not an impersonal myth or a personal fiction but in fact an act of speech. Therefore, stories that have power on our memories are not simply just a form of oral tradition but are narratives with great amplitude. Here the storyteller has the ability to describe experiences (his/her own and of others) and makes it the experiences of those listening to him/her. In such forms of storytelling then, the use of orality is able to give vision to our memory's eye especially if the oral expressions are considered through emotions or paralinguistic vocalisations such as, crying, shouting, and laughing.³² In such, this vision when further amalgamated with imagination could create or alter memories. It is important to reinstate here that the process of these creations starts when, for example, family stories are disjointed and histories are fragmented.

Freund and Thomson explain that in many instances, these stories and false recollections, possibly through the act of repetition, become "stuck" in our brain and told as part of our personal life story.³³ There is always something about these stories that hits a nerve, makes them linger in our mind, and "ability to hold the image over time, a process described as 'working

memory', is ultimately the basis of extended consciousness."³⁴ Here narratives create images that are monumental and potent than the storyteller. In essence, our memories are replete with other people's memories. They are stronger, more vivid and real in any sense, but they are not ours. This is not to say that one person's lived memory can transfer into another person's memory in the same way. In fact, we do not have literal memories of other's experiences and our relationship to their past events is based on different semiotic principles.³⁵ Nevertheless, we can still say that postmemory has some accuracy. It seeks to do justice to other's memories by capturing the emotional content of their experiences and therefore aims to sustain the truthfulness of the original experience. What cannot be in our control, however, is to know how accurately the narrator (other person) remembers and to what extent these memories have already been altered.

Memory is always selective, and even if the impulse of correspondence attempts to keep memory true to what actually happened, it is the intention, which ensures that the emerging story fits in with the need of the present-self.

Notes

1. Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), p. 45.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Robert Polidori, *After the Flood* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006). Polidori is a Canadian–American photographer known for his large-scale colour images of architecture, urban environment, and interiors.
8. Trigg, *ibid.*, p. 47.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
14. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 2000), p.85.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
16. Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson, eds., *Oral History and Photography* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Web. Qtd. Phillip Gourevitch, p. 1.
17. Risto Sarvas and David M. Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media: The Changing Picture of Domestic Photography* (London: Springer, 2011), p. 7.
18. Sarvas and Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media*, p. 7.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 60. Web. Qtd. Deborah Chambers, p. 99.
20. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1977), p. 8.

21. Ibid., p. 75.
22. Ibid.
23. Karen Cross and Julia Peck, "Editorial: Special Issue on Photography, Archive and Memory." *Photographies* 3:2 (2010): 127–38. Accessed 10 March 2017, doi: 10.1080/17540763.2010.499631, p. 2.
24. Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographs, Orality and History," in *Visual Sense: A Cultural Reader*, eds. Elizabeth Edwards and Kaushik Bhaumik (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2008), p. 241.
25. Ibid., p. 241.
26. Ibid., p. 245.
27. Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29:1 (Spring 2008): 103–128, doi: 10.1215/03335372-2007-019, p. 1.
28. Ibid, p. 5.
29. Ibid., p. 14.
30. Maryanne Garry and Matthew P. Gerrie, "When Photographs Create False Memories," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 14:6 (2005): 321–325, doi: 10.1111/j.0963-7214.2005.00390.x, p. 322.
31. Ibid., p. 323.
32. Edwards, "Photographs, Orality and History," p. 242.
33. Freund and Thomson, *Oral History and Photography*, p. 134.
34. Freund and Thomson, *ibid.*, p. 135.
35. Marianne Hirsch, "Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, edited by Mieke Bal, Jonathan V. Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999), p.15.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 2000.

Berger, John. *Understanding a Photograph*. Edited and introduced by Geoff Dyer. London: Penguin Classics, 2013.

Cross, Karen, and Julia Peck. "Editorial: Special Issue on Photography, Archive and Memory." *Photographies* 3:2 (2010): 127–38.

Edwards, Elizabeth. "Photographs, Orality and History". In *Visual Sense: A Cultural Reader*, edited by Elizabeth Edwards and Kaushik Bhaumik, pp. 241–248. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2008.

Freund, Alexander, and Alistair Thomson, eds. *Oral History and Photography*. Palgrave Studies in Oral History. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Garry, Maryanne, and Matthew P. Gerrie. "When Photographs Create False Memories." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 14:6 (2005): 321–325. doi: 10.1111/j.0963-7214.2005.00390.x.

Hirsch, Marianne. "Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy." In *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, edited by Mieke Bal, Jonathan V. Crewe, and Leo Spitzer, pp. 3–23. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999.

Hirsch, Marianne. "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 29:1 (Spring 2008): 103–128. doi: 10.1215/03335372-2007-019.

Molly, Dianne. "Blurring the Boundaries: History, Memory and Imagination in the Works of W.G. Sebald." *Colloquy: Text, Theory, Critique* 15 (2008): 163–176.

Sarvas, Risto, and David M. Frohlich. *From Snapshots to Social Media: The Changing Picture of Domestic Photography*. London: Springer, 2011.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. London: Penguin, 1977.

Trigg, Dylan. *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012.

Landscape as Archive: Reflections on the Gadap Sessions

Heba Islam

From February to July 2016, the Gadap Sessions, a 'course' of sorts organised by Karachi LaJamia (KLJ, also known as Karachi Art Anti-University), brought together thirteen artists and academics to research an ongoing mega-development project.¹ The project in question was Bahria Town Karachi, and the course aimed to explore the displacement/destruction it has caused in the peri-urban area of Gadap.²

The following interview is a conversation between a participant of the sessions, Heba Islam, and KLJ, comprising artist-researchers Zahra Malkani and Shahana Rajani. They discuss the value of the Gadap Sessions as an archive, and the complexities that emerge in the process of documentation as a pedagogical exercise. The interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Heba Islam: When you initially convened the Gadap Sessions, you emphasised that this was a process of documentation rather than a more spectacular, 'activist' intervention into a space. In essence, it appeared to be an archival project. Who were the intended readers/seekers of this archive? And what exactly were you archiving?

Zahra Malkani: I think since we started KLJ, there has been a disavowal of identifying ourselves and the larger project as an activist project. This has a lot to do with an unease with the word 'activism', which seems to emerge from the idea that political change is something that happens in professionalised ways as opposed to forms of political work being practiced in very daily and often invisible ways across the board in communities that don't identify as activists. The aggrandisement of the 'activist' doesn't make sense to me because a lot of the most effective social change and threats to the state have always come from self-organised communities like nationalists, students, lady health workers, or the lawyers' movement, not people who come from outside these communities to 'organise' them. There are forms of political action and resistance outside of the framework of 'activism' which, it seems to me, have largely failed. In KLJ, we seek to explore and understand the ways in which our daily practices of art/knowledge production can be politically engaged and weaponised in a city where these practices are being increasingly surveilled and attacked. As for the idea that the Gadap Sessions was an archiving project: I never thought about it that way. The sessions were like everything else KLJ does; an experiment in pedagogy, attempting to create a pedagogical environment that was politically engaged and outside of the institutional structures that we normally work in.

Shahana Rajani: That is so true, even though we ended up producing a vast archive of documentation during the Gadap Sessions, when we started, the archive was not something that we were thinking about. We had been very inspired by 'ecopedagogy' as a political praxis, where collective and engaged study is not just a process of building solidarity and connecting with ongoing struggles in the city, but also a process of being with and in an environment, of sensing your surroundings.³ Taking this planetary viewpoint, we wanted to lay bare the human-nature entanglements in Gadap. Our initial aim was not just to go to people and record their stories, histories, and documents but also to observe and seek out the markings of landscape over time, the ways in which land has been layered with histories of place making, to document the emergent and degraded ecologies, the ongoing violence of infrastructure on land but also the slower violences of resource extraction and climate change—to see *landscape* as bearing witness, as an archive of sorts.⁴

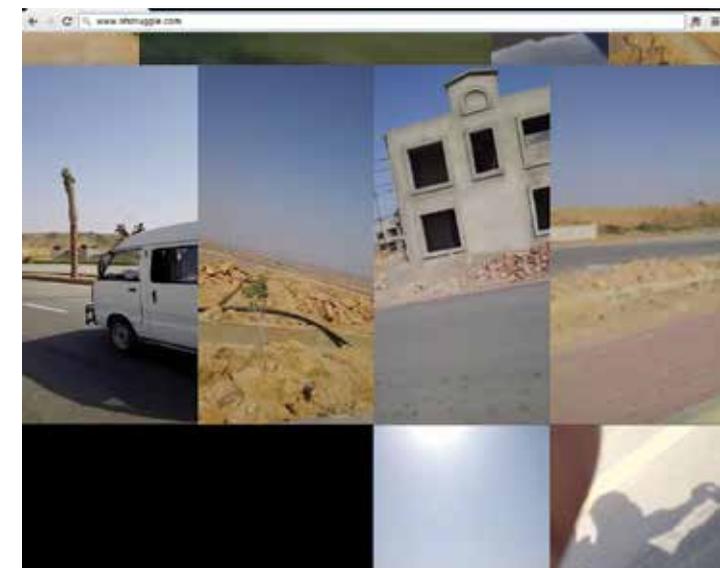
Malkani: When we were planning the sessions, there was no 'end product' [in mind]. The 'product' was simply the creation of a pedagogical environment, collaboratively, with Karachi Indigenous Right Alliance (KIRA),⁵ and a hope that that environment could somehow be a transformative experience for those people who were participating—transformative in the sense of creating a radical political attunement and personal radical political practice. The fact that an archiving or documenting impulse then *emerged* in the community that was formed out of the Gadap Sessions is simply a result of the fact that we were a group of artists and academics. Our impulses, skills, and training were geared towards documentation and archiving practices.

Islam: Elizabeth Povinelli notes, "[...] archives are not sites of knowledge retrieval but of knowledge production; or, in the act of retrieving information from archives the users of archives reproduce and conserve state power."⁶ In what ways do you think the Gadap Sessions were cognisant of this, and in what ways did the sessions attempt to circumvent reproducing state power?

Rajani: Our awareness of Gadap emerged in response to the concerted state efforts to deny visibility to indigenous dispossession and struggle. When we started the Gadap Sessions in February 2016, there was a complete media blackout regarding the illegal occupation of Bahria Town and knowledge production was being closely monitored and policed in the public sphere.⁷ So we began our collective project with the intent to document and make visible the ongoing violence of Bahria Town's development but it was not until we went to Gadap and started speaking to people that we realised that the ongoing erasures of the indigenous landscape, is part of a much longer history of structural violence, where the post-colonial state continues to enact policies of discrimination and displacement against the indigenous population of the city. Gadap is not only located at the outskirts of Karachi, but also occupies a peripheral location in our public imaginary, which is the result of the formulation of a historical narrative of the

nation that neglects indigenous pasts, presents, and futures. Institutionalised histories and state archiving are key sites and practices of this state forgetting. Our own desire to document and archive emerged in response to this wider state-sanctioned erasure.

Your question reminds us, though, that the archive in and of itself is a problematic endeavour, a manifestation of power that is full of gaps and silences. As outsiders/researchers, the imbalances of power and privilege formed the very substance of our own collected archive. We had a lot of anxieties about this during the sessions and were constantly and collectively thinking through and questioning how to work with and across these tensions and frictions of ethnographic research. We especially discussed this at great length when we started collaborating with Abeera Kamran⁸ on building a website to make our archive public and accessible. Something that we ended up doing very consciously as a result of these anxieties, was to also centre ourselves within this archive; to not present it as a complete, objective and transparent venture, but instead to engage and acknowledge our own positionalities, complicities, and obscuring visions. We are outsiders going in, and our stakes are so different from the people who are living there.



Homepage of www.ofstruggle.com, 2016–2017—a net art project engaging with the Gadap Sessions archive. The homepage is a collage of videos shot by Deen Muhammad and Nawaz Ali Baloch, each video acting as a portal into different stories, documents, and data from the Gadap Sessions. Website design: Abeera Kamran, Shahana Rajani, and Zahra Malkani. Image courtesy: Zahra Malkani and Shahana Rajani.

Malkani: Another important thing to remember is that this is not an attempt at archiving *Gadap*, ecological crisis, or displacement in Karachi; this is an archive of the *Gadap Sessions*. It is the attempts of a specific group of people in Karachi to learn and grapple with its present and its history through these encounters and collaborative learning/research practices in *Gadap*. The archive that we produced is something we are still looking at and figuring out what to do with. We struggle with the desire and people's expectations of us to share the experience of the *Gadap Sessions* and to make visible what is happening in *Gadap* because there is also cognisance of the fact that this kind of visibility is not always productive or helpful.

Rajani: Opacity is needed because in our constant desire as researchers to lay things bare, there is a violence involved, it turns indigenous communities into objects. This need to archive, on micro-levels, everything about their lives and histories from the 'ancient past' to the present is a bizarre and objectifying exercise. This compulsion to amass data reminds me of the essay, "Archivist Manifesto":⁹ Yuk Hui talks about how in today's modern age, we are *all* archivists since the ubiquity of information on the internet forces us into endless processes of data production and data navigation. We need to counter this inundation and blindness of data by politicising the question of the archive. Hui calls for the formation of a personal archive, based on "technologies of care"; that in making an archive and manoeuvring through information we need to put in that labour of care. The archive that emerged from the *Gadap Sessions* also concerned a politics of time and care, of sensing and listening, of location and situating. The challenge now is how to visualise and preserve this technics of care in the archival website of the *Gadap Sessions*.

Islam: Since we are thinking of the archive in a digital terrain, in this same volume, Adnan Madani says of your work, "They attempt to [...] reveal the founding mode of *visuality* that enables this erasure of communities and their landscape. Google maps and satellite imagery provide a drone-eye view of the land as map, terrain rather than lived and living experiential space." The *Gadap Sessions* however, also used satellite imagery to think about displacement, indigenous modes of life and land, and layers of history. How do you think this exercise subverted the impersonal visuality of the "drone-eye view" that Madani speaks of?

Malkani: Our conflicted relationship with maps and mapping has marked the *Gadap Sessions* and after. When we started the sessions, KIRA was interested in having the area mapped through the tools that were being developed at Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) through Parween Rahman's¹⁰ practice, that is, to map the land to make visible the claims and presence of informal communities and settlements, and then work towards having these claims legalised. We had planned to collaborate with OPP on the course for this but the collaboration fell through for logistical/scheduling reasons. Though we had been interested in taking this on, we were also cognisant of the problems with this kind of mapping and the privatised relationship with land

that it reproduces. Yet we ended up returning to mapping much later in the *Gadap Sessions* when there had been an exposé on Bahria Town in *Dawn* newspaper and we were told by locals in *Gadap* that it would not be safe to visit any time soon. We wanted to keep working so we thought of Google Maps specifically as a useful surface to work on collaboratively in order to get a sense of what we had learnt so far and to plan out the remainder of the course. In that sense, beyond the problems that mapping might have in terms of the 'god's eye view', of rendering a space transparent, of representing a violent relationship with land, we found it had value for us as an *analytical tool* rather than as a final product. The value was not in the product, but rather the process, which is why I never wanted to share that map with anyone besides the participants of the sessions and KIRA. I recently opened it again and found that the way in which we mapped and used the map was so irreverent. We were subverting the codes and methods of map-making in a way, with our systems of marking and classification. For example, we had a layer that was titled "Global Aspirations of Bahria Town", or how the Grand Jamia Mosque was marked repeatedly across multiple layers: erasure, history, and global aspirations etc. each time with long reflections for captions.¹¹ There's an irreverence to the language, a poetics to the way spaces were captioned, and images were placed.

Rajani: Although we began archiving on Google Maps later on, the act of mapping was central to our research from the beginning. During our visits, we always carried a satellite map with us and were always recording GPS coordinates. This impulse to use the map emerged from our own familiar ways of knowing and being in the world, where it is through the map that we learn to anchor and orient ourselves. When we first looked at *Gadap* on Google Earth, besides Bahria Town and a couple of *goths* (villages) marked on the map, there was nothing there. So when we were marking GPS coordinates, it was with the intention of wanting to re-inscribe and refuse the imperial visuality and cartographic portrayals of *Gadap* as a blank sheet, as *banjar* (barren) and *ghairabad* (deserted). However, the act of mapping is also so tainted, colonial, and full of epistemic violence—this haunted the whole project. Our counter-mapping was a difficult relation of being implicated in the very imperial protocols, which we were trying to oppose, of visualising through, and re-appropriating resources inevitably impure.

Islam: It has been over a year since the *Gadap Sessions* were convened. I have been thinking about how we can understand the work produced retrospectively. The research to emerge from the sessions has been visual, theoretical, engaged with in both public and private spaces. Should we see the sessions as a closed chapter or should we see the documentation that took place as an ongoing process/dialogue? And how can we think of the archive as the same?

Malkani: The *Gadap Sessions* were supposed to be an eight-week-long series. That the sessions ended up being six months long highlights the fact that all the participants were committed and willing to give it that kind of time, but also that the work demanded that kind of time,

that slowness. I feel we were incredibly slow about it; it was necessary and it radically removed us from our normalised ways of being at the university or galleries in which we work, which demand exploitative and violent levels of productivity from us. I think of the Gadap Sessions as a closed chapter in terms of a pedagogical project, but the hope was that it would continue in participating individuals' practices.



Reading the Bahria Town master plan map against a satellite map in Jumma *goth*, Gadap Town, Karachi, June 2016. Photograph by KLJ. Image courtesy: Zahra Malkani and Shahana Rajani.

Rajani: I agree with what you are saying about the kind of slowness, but I also feel that because our visits were scheduled only once a week or once in two weeks, they were really packed, intense, and exhaustive. We knew that during our visits, the landscape was transforming at an alarming speed so there was an urgency to the research. Once, when we went to Jumma *goth*, after two weeks, 60 homes had been demolished in that time. So every time we went there, we knew we had to make the most of our trip—meet as many people and visit as many places as possible. That is why I feel that even though the sessions have ended, critical reflection and engagement with the collected research has only come much later. In that way I feel our archive is not a finished and static product, but an open-ended and continuing process, shifting, eluding, becoming. The ways in which we are now re-thinking the Gadap Sessions archive, not simply as teleological but also presenting non-linear temporalities and alternate modes of indigenous knowledge production, these are understandings that we have been able to gauge and process over a sustained period of time.

Islam: Keeping in mind the idea of archiving as an ongoing process, some of the research that has emerged from the Gadap Sessions thinks of how what's being erased—the materiality of indigenous life—continues to remain 'entangled' with what seeks to replace it: a 'world class city' that replicates both the economy and aesthetics of Dubai. How can documenting displacement account for this entanglement, rather than relegating the indigenous to the past?

Rajani: The border-making and boundary-drawing project of Bahria Town is not simply denying indigenous communities' access to their land, but actively destroying it. This obliteration of the indigenous landscapes is an attempt to literally inscribe Gadap with emptiness. This erasure legitimises and sanitises the violence of development by removing any claims that indigenous communities have to the present. However, the emplacement of Bahria Town's new securitised geography is far from totalising. During the course of Gadap Sessions, we became aware of an extensive terrain of everyday resistance performed on a daily basis, silent partners to the louder forms of public resistance and rallying gestures, struggles that remain undetected by policing forces. It is these situated struggles that enact an entangled landscape; they create a textured interweave that scrapes at the smooth glosses and amnesiac forces of Bahria Town. The very name of the mountain *Pahwaro* is a Sindhi word that actually means to struggle in the face of difficulties and hardships. Its name is a testament to the communities' continuing relationship to this land, the spatial and temporal practices of struggle and place-making that continue to mark this landscape with meaning and memory.



A road under construction in Gadap Town, Karachi, February 2016. Photograph by Zahra Malkani. Image courtesy: Zahra Malkani.

An important medium of this ongoing struggle is visual documentation, a production of counter-visualities, images, and videos. Circulating quietly through WhatsApp and Facebook, they form a covert and undetected realm of exchanges, solidarity, and knowledge production. One powerful example is a series of short videos made by Deen Muhammad and Nawaz Ali Baloch from their mobile phones to trace the violently transforming landscape.¹² From the newly laid tar and concrete, they excavate a haunting geography, material residues and textures, of both disappearing and persisting local landmarks, spaces of leisure, water and pasture, of journeys and histories. In bearing witness, the image becomes a document of and against erasure.

Malkani: I think it is also important to understand that there are many, very diverse forms of 'contemporary indigenous life' in Pakistan. Part of the difficulty with grappling with that also comes from the newness/awkwardness of applying the term 'indigenous' to the Pakistani context—which despite its problems is a very useful political gesture in conversations about land and resource struggles in the Global South, where the term has not been widely used. We can see this for example in Bangladesh where the government cracked down against the use of the term 'indigenous' to describe communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts because they recognised the strength and potency of the term in connecting the struggles in Chittagong with a larger global community and tradition of resistance.

These struggles over land and resources are very much *contemporary* struggles and they have implications for everyone—not just indigenous communities. At the same time, there is more to contemporary indigenous life than these struggles. I think this question of the relegation of indigenous communities to the past in mainstream Pakistani discourse is connected with a larger relegation of Sindhi, Baloch, and Pashtun communities more broadly to the past, as they have always been understood in feudal or tribal terms, never depicted in urban environments. Contemporary indigenous life is not only happening in Gadap, it is also happening in Gizri, DHA, Clifton, in the rest of urban Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, in Sukkur, Quetta, Hyderabad, Peshawar—and it should be recognised as such.

Islam: There are different kinds of visualities that KLJ has employed besides mapping: For your show at Gandhara Gallery, you utilised photographs and a website. For the show at Koel Gallery, you created postcards.¹³ Some of your work has considered elements of nature and indigenous knowledge, while other work has focused on occupation. How can we interpret these different modes of representation?

Malkani: The more recent work that sprung out of the Gadap Sessions was the postcard series and the book/lecture performance. With both of these, and the forthcoming website, the idea was not to narrativise Gadap, but to self-reflect on the course as an art, research, and pedagogical project. After the sessions, there was an impulse to be productive, to be accountable

in some way, but also an anxiety and desire to not speak for Gadap, and instead the need to make our own shortcomings and problems as artists/researchers visible. That was what the book and lecture performance reflected upon. That is also the kind of tension that the larger KLJ project emerges from: The witnessing of the failures and temptations of knowledge production and research practices that we are conditioned into, although we feel the need to seek out possibilities and practices. There were ideas that we came across in ecopedagogy: That you build a road by walking and involving yourself in these practices, in careful and critical ways. To be willing to take the risk of carrying out an imperfect project over the paralysis of understanding that all constructive practices will have their problems (though I am not opposed to paralysis or refusal as a political position). To be willing to expose, discuss, and share these problems widely as an integral and essential part of the project. We initiated work on the website thinking that we would have data that we *need* to share to expose Bahria Town's violence. But while we did have this information and these conversations, they didn't look like the objective forms of data we had imagined—they were fraught, complex, and subjective. We found that we had to grapple with this and to make that grappling visible as well.

Notes

1. KLJ is "an Anti-Institution based in Karachi seeking to politicise art education and collectively explore new radical pedagogies and art practices." They describe themselves as a "nomadic space moving outside the institution to occupy public spaces in the city as sites of study, disrupting imperial modes of knowledge production and circulation." See, "About", *Karachi LaJamia*, accessed 12 May 2017, <http://karachilajamia.com/about/>.
2. Bahria Town Karachi is a mega real estate project of Bahria Town, marketed as Asia's largest real estate company. Spread over 35,000 acres, the project is based in Gadap Town, a vast region that encircles most of Karachi and is home to indigenous Sindhi and Balochi-speaking communities.
3. Francisco Gutiérrez Pérez and Cruz Prado Rojas, *Ecopedagogy and Planetary Citizenship (Ecopedagogía y ciudadanía planetaria)*, trans. Natalia Bernal and Levana Saxon (El Masnou: Diálogos, 2004).
4. "Human-nature entanglements" refers to the ways in which the environment and ecology of Gadap are inter connected with local socialities, histories, and livelihoods.
5. The Karachi Indigenous Rights Alliance was founded in March 2015 by Gul Hasan Kalmatti, Saleem Baloch and other indigenous community leaders in direct response to Bahria Town's incursion into Gadap.
6. Elizabeth Povinelli and Peter Cho, "Digital Futures," *Vectors* 3, no. 2 (September 2012), <http://vectors.usc.edu/projects/index.php?project=90&thread=AuthorsStatement>. Elizabeth Povinelli is an anthropologist whose work on materialities and socialities has focused on indigenous communities in Australia.
7. Large tracts of land in Bahria Town Karachi were illegally allotted to the real estate company by the Malir Development Authority.
8. Abeera Kamran is an IVS alumnus who works as a freelance graphic designer and front-end web developer.
9. Yuk Hui, "Archivist Manifesto," *Mute*, 22 May 2013, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/lab/archivist-manifesto>. Yuk Hui is a research associate of the project "techno-ecologies of participation" at the Leuphana University Lüneburg in Germany.

10. Parween Rahman was an architect who was the director of the Orangi Pilot Project, a community-run organisation dedicated to low-cost housing and sanitation in informal housing settlements. Parween Rahman was murdered in 2013.
11. Bahria Town claims that it is building the largest mosque in the world, after the ones in Makkah and Madinah, in their Karachi project. The mosque is said to have an 800,000-strong capacity.
12. These are residents of *goths* in Gadap, who spoke to members of the Gadap Sessions, often at risk to themselves.
13. Koel and Gandhara are two art galleries located in Karachi, Pakistan.

Hui, Yuk. "Archivist Manifesto." *Mute*, 22 May 2013. <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/lab/archivist-manifesto>.

Pérez, Francisco Gutiérrez and Cruz Prado Rojas. *Ecopedagogy and Planetary Citizenship (Ecopedagogíayciudadaníaplanetaria)*. Translated by Natalia Bernal and Levana Saxon. El Masnou: Diálogos, 2004.

Povinelli, Elizabeth. "Digital Futures." *Vectors* 3, no. 2 (September 2012).
<http://vectors.usc.edu/projects/index.php?project=90&thread=AuthorsStatement>.

Loop Lines: The Unused Train Stations

Madiha Aijaz

PAIKHEL RAILWAY STATION, PUNJAB, 9 AM

There is an uneven, piercing whistle. The green and beige enamel paint glistens in the early morning sun. The passenger train eases out of the platform—the only one to stop here, through the day. Two men board it—one a worker at the Maple Leaf Cement Factory Ltd, and the other, a cloth merchant, travelling to Khushab.

Across the platform, in a whitewashed fortress-like building of the train station, sits one Mohammad Rashid in his symmetrically arranged high ceilinged office. Behind him hang two vertically aligned portraits of Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan—one a flaming orange and black, and the other a pale blue. Jinnah in blue is flanked on both sides by hastily drawn landscapes, scenes of calm and quiet. Below them, covering the two walls, are neatly lined, twenty-six green registers. The titles in stencilled writing, log multiple activities: Approximate Returns, Safety Equipment, Duty Rosters, List of Lamps, and List of Fog Signals—a gamut of human resource to equipment inventory. It is expansive for a station, which no longer functions on the main line. Mr Rashid rides a motorbike to work; his red helmet perched on top of the cupboard indicates that. It is perhaps the only piece of current times that finds a place in the stationmaster's office. Parts of the ancient also include some woven wooden chairs, two sets of black rotary phones, and two large Avery and Birmingham token machines to give a line of clearance to the trains. This is Pakistan Railways.

On this branch line station, which serves only a few passenger trains a day, there seems to be a luxury of time to read and write, or for that matter, stencil their duty rosters.

BADIN, SINDH, LOOP LINE, 7 AM

On a muggy summer morning in April, a red and blue Pepsi sign has sheathed Ashok Kumar's Cool Corner in Badin. A rivulet roofed by a large *peepal* tree and a group of men sipping *chai* are a reminder of the small railway town it once was.

It is here that the Badin Express begins and slugs for 60–70 kilometres an hour to get to Hyderabad in four hours or more. The loop lines themselves are becoming a rarity and only three working lines in Sindh have stayed, because of Dr Fehmida Mirza's efforts. Dr Mirza has been winning the Pakistan National Assembly elections from Badin for the past two decades and has a say in such matters. The other two trains run between Kotri and Rohri and then between Kotri and Larkana.

At the Badin Station, the Stationmaster Pirdino Dahri, three pointsmen, one gateman, and a cook narrate stories of being in the railways for decades, remembering the time when the trains would be packed and people wouldn't be able to find seats. In the 1990s, they closed down passenger trains for no reason. Now it is hard to get the customers back because of the parallel roads, they say.

In Matli, the Badin Express comes to an unscheduled long stop. The two cargo bogies attached to the passenger train are being loaded with additional luggage.

(Right) Record room, Badin Railway Station (est. 1908), 2017.



(Right) Stationmaster Mohammad Rashid at the Pai Khel Railway Station along the Kotri–Attock loop line.

(Page 70-71) Pai Khel Railway Station, 2014. Many stations along the Kotri–Attock Railway line were constructed as fortresses during the British Raj. The Kotri–Attock Railway line (referred to as Main Line 2 or ML-2) is one of four main railway lines in Pakistan.

(Page 72-73) Pointsman Mohammad Irfan stands near the ticket counter. Badin Railway Station (a branch line station), 2017.





گفت

COMPLAINTS SHOULD BE
MADE TO THE STATION
MASTER AS WELL AS IN WRITING
TO DIVISIONAL COMMERCIAL OFFICER
PSC

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50

گفت

SEE FARE LIST & EXAMINE YOUR TICKET &
CHANGE BEFORE LEAVING THE WINDOW

گفت

BOOKING OFFICE



گفت

...

گفت

...

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50



ٹکٹ گھر
BOOKING OFFICE

ریلوے پولیس
ہیلیپ سٹیشن

FARE LIST		STATIONS	
FALNA			
PAUN			
MATLI			
TANDO ARSO KHAN			
MORAL SHARF			
KHATHAR			
ZALNAK			
HYDERABAD			
ASTRI			

TIME TABLE		FROM		TO		DATE	
15	KOTRI						





Stationmaster Pirdino Dahri has served the Pakistan Railways for the past twenty-seven years in multiple posts. Badin Railway Station, 2017.



Family and women/ladies compartment, Badin Express. Badin Railway Station, 2017.

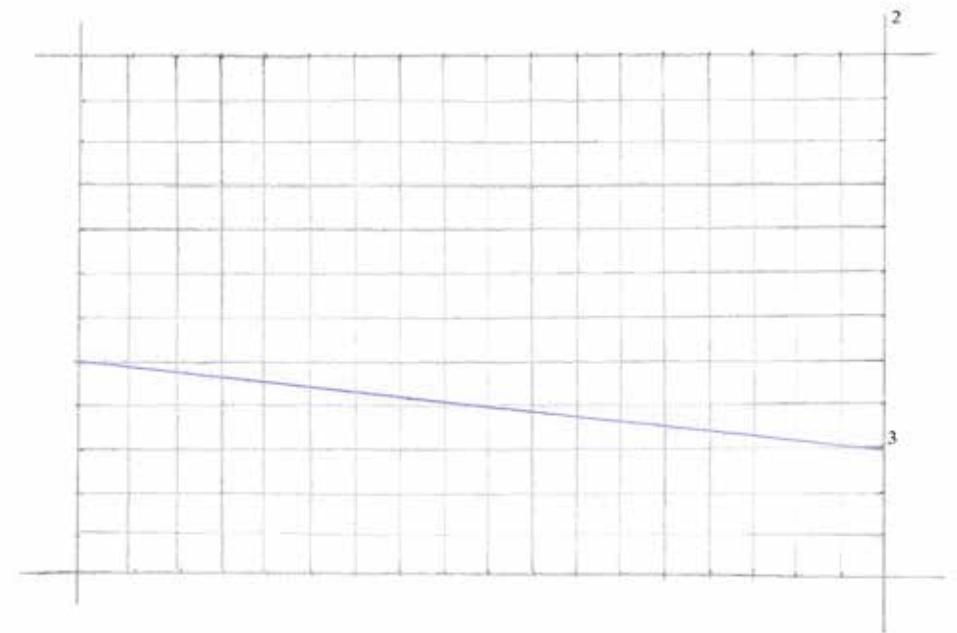
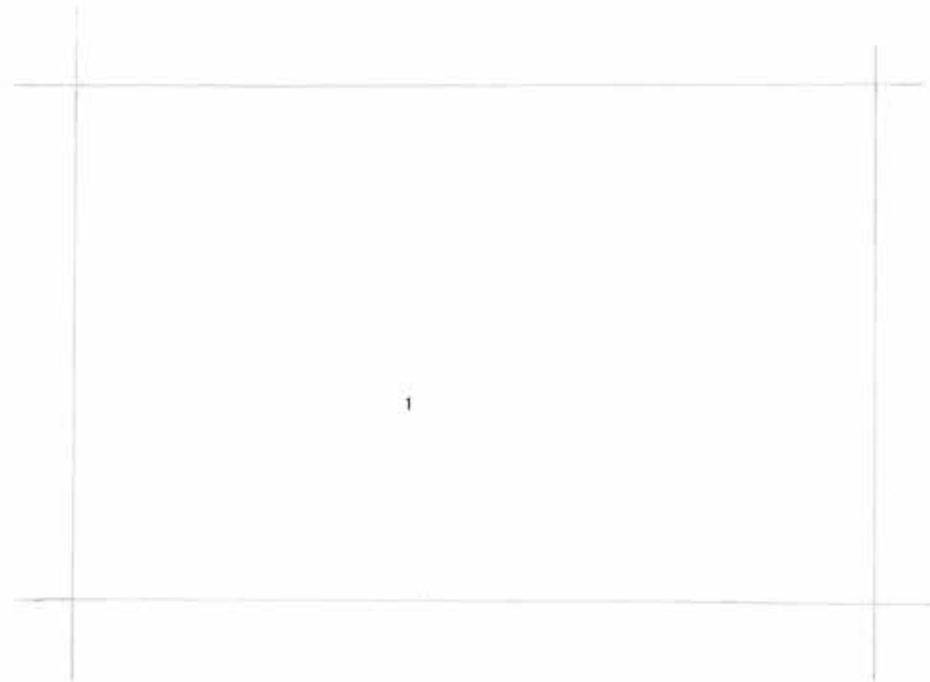


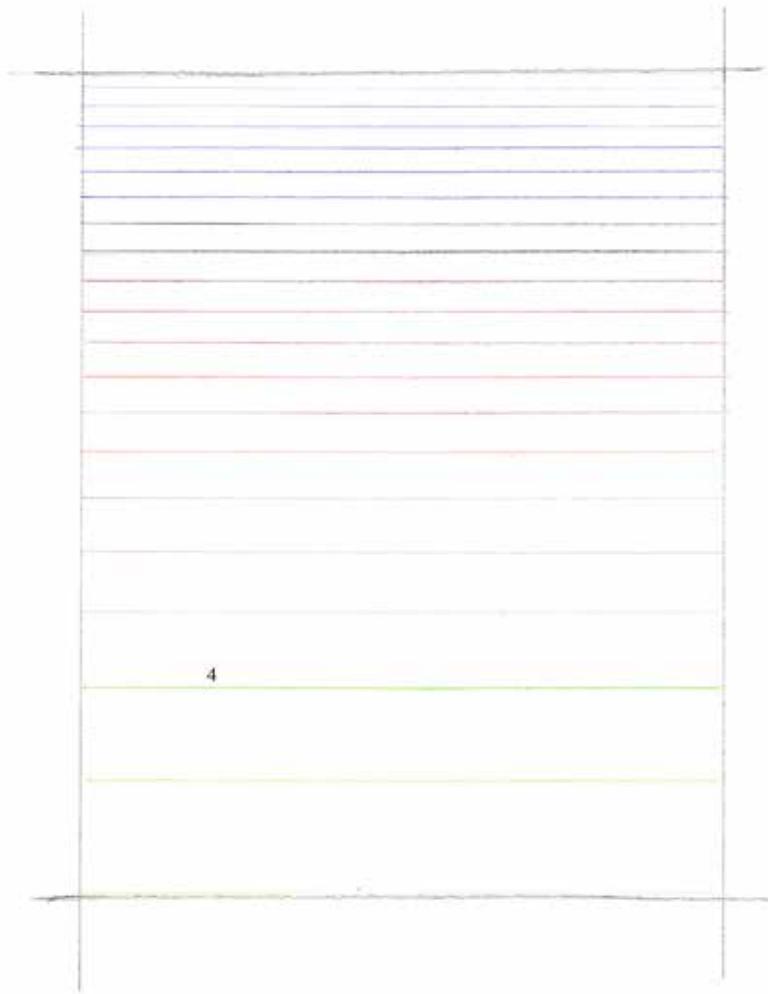
A meticulously hand lettered board installed to give information about fares and train timings, leaves a few blanks to fill in. Badin Railway Station, 2017.

End Notes: Unearthing Jehanara

Fazal Rizvi

1933 – 1997

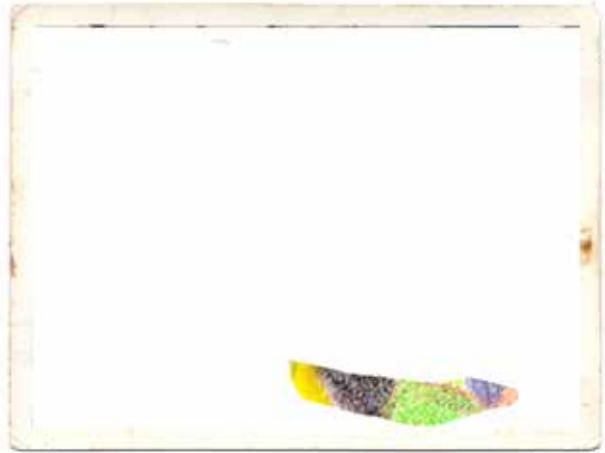






7

8



9



10



12

11

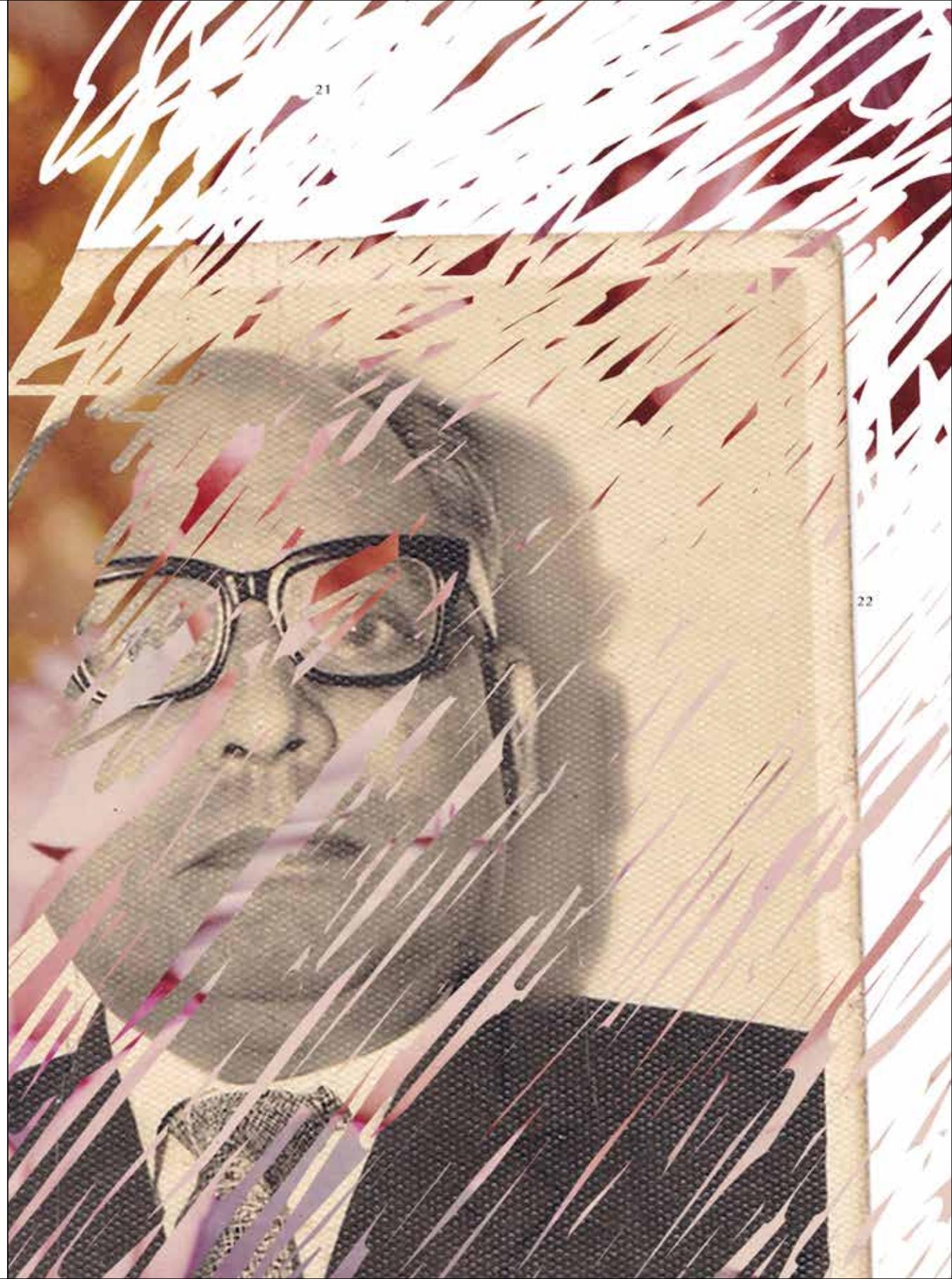


13





20



21

22



23



24



1

What does memory look like? What is its nature? Can you picture it? Can you give it a colour? A name? Can you assess its order? Or disorder? Will you ever be able to tell how it all piles up inside you? But then, does it really pile, you start to wonder.

2

Does it have a shape? Perhaps something recognisable or relatable, with a system of sorts. Maybe it has a structured form. I am imagining rows upon rows, decks upon decks of archived and documented moments, anecdotes, emotions....

3

Maybe it has a linear form like life itself. Moving along from birth towards its eventual death. But does it only constitute of moments and things we can remember and recall? Would one ever remember as far back as being born...as you come out of your mother's womb? Do you remember the cutting of the chord then? Or was that an instant that was not recorded, or we just don't have the capacity/ability to unearth things from that far back and deep. Similarly, would a brain remember much once you and I die? Would it contain all that it has collected over a span of a life, post life itself? So what is the nature of this archive? Maybe it is ephemeral like all life around us. And maybe it only lasts as long as we do.

4

Is it fields of colour? Fields upon fields within fields beyond fields. Fields that you have laid on, that you have played on. Fields where you have been merry and fields where you may have bled. All those places and those spaces that you have lived on and lived through, are those what make up these memory fields?

5

Or is it a patchwork of fragments? Fragments of time and place, carefully sewn together. But then if it is really like a patchworked quilt, we still know not which fragment gets to be sewn with which. Or maybe they are all free to associate and disassociate upon their liking.

6

And what when these quilts get torn or they wear out?

7

What about the fragility of memory itself? It is an archive more fragile than all the ones made by man. The body often tends to survive it.

8

But do tell me, what is the life of a photograph? It is paper too at the end of the day and it is way more fragile than you and I will ever be. Do you think it would last a day were it not protected within the sleeves of those albums that you hold so dear? They too tear and crumble with time. And lose colour too. And when they fade or dissolve, they obscure the only moment which they were meant to embody and preserve within them. Though from time to time they do help us traverse through territory that we once knew, or at least they make us think that we knew them well. But with one little tear, it can all be lost. But despite this described fragility, they tend to outlive most of us.

9

Photographs are framed. They in fact *are* frames. They have edges that contain and limit them. We know not what lies beyond them, but we can imagine and speculate to our liking and abilities. These edges can often be sharp and incisive; thus, they do not give all that much away. What a photograph contains is a selected, framed, and an imprisoned moment. A fragment. A splinter of time. A flash into and onto a life. A flash that lights up the frame. A flash that casts shadows where you cannot see. A flash that too has edges and limits. And a flash that can often blind its subjects. Even if momentarily so.

10

This blinding and illumination happens simultaneously. We live in a time when photographs are given much merit. Our lives are constantly documented and catalogued. However, it is important to remember that these are often carefully designed and curated instances. They are mostly staged in fact. And what such documents may reveal may prove to be novel at times, but what about all that they don't reveal? What they choose to omit. And erase. And ignore. What of all that? Who accounts for what is lost and all that is not captured on film. Who would fill in those gaps and how? More importantly who creates these gaps?

11

Also, what is this tool? A tool that helps erase and set things right. But it only sets things right for the ones with the controls. They can obliterate and change histories to their liking and need. But it is much worse when they mercilessly erase people.

12

What about when people wither away with time? Sometimes bits, and sometimes their whole selves fade, and are forgotten. You may be able to look straight into their eye, those pupils may even dilate, and you may try your luck to create a mirror to their lives in those moments when you see a reflection of your own self, glaring back at you, but from them you will only get hollow and blank stares.

13

Erasure is not always caused by an external force.

14

My maternal grandmother, Jehanara Hasan, was born in Bihar, India, and moved with her family to East Pakistan in 1947. There is not much that I have known about her. I did get to see her, but only in a state of dementia—where both her mind and body were slowly and steadily disintegrating right before my eyes. That is the only way I saw her. Breathing, but decaying. Her mind collapsing and shutting down. Years and years of life and acquired knowledge shutting down slowly and sometimes too abruptly. Though to be honest, I never really got to know what it was shutting down from. I do not know what she was like in her prime. All I have are some stories.

15

Stories of her breathtaking beauty. Why is it that mostly only such stories are remembered with the most vivid of descriptions?

16

More than the stories, photographs of her survive as a testament to all such claims.

17

"Photographs instigate, confirm, seal legends. Seen through photographs, people become icons of themselves. Photography converts the world itself into a department store or museum-without-walls in which every subject is depreciated into an article of consumption, promoted into an item for esthetic appreciation.

"Photography also converts the whole world into a cemetery. Photographers, connoisseurs of beauty, are also—wittingly or unwittingly—the recording-angels of death. The photograph-as-photograph shows death. More than that, it shows the sex-appeal of death."¹

18

Did she remember then how beautiful she was once? Was she able to confront her own reflection in the mirror? Did she recognise herself?

19

I wonder if a mere photograph would have helped her remember who she once was, and where and how. I wonder if she could look at her captured self and just learn to imitate that image. The image that to all around her was truly a representation of her. Of the beautiful Jehanara. After all the Jehanara that once was, was rendered eternal within the confines of this image. An

image that imitated the real—the truth. They say an image represents the truth most truthfully. No? And a beautiful one, even more so.

20

But why must we remember? What is the value of that? The notion of forgetting has such little merit in the ways of this world. Just pause for a second and think, that perhaps forgetting is just as natural to life as the act of remembering and reminiscing.

21

I have been told that in the early onset of her disorder, Jehanara, started to forget all the people who were close to her. She started forgetting their names. She was unable to put a name to a face that had been around her for years. A recurring happening in those days was when she would mistake my maternal uncle (*khalu*) to be her husband Mehmood Hasan, whenever he would return from work. She was projecting memories of a man she had lost more than thirty years ago onto another man, onto another body of flesh and bones.

22

Was she forgetting in order to remember and hold on to the only man she had lost so many years ago, and so far away? Or perhaps one can say that she was battling with her memories, and it is clear which ones she wanted to hold on to more. (My maternal grandfather died in East Pakistan—before the family moved to West Pakistan in 1970—amidst riots that led to the Independence of Bangladesh).

23

One of the stories most graciously narrated about her is how when she had started showing strong signs of dementia and had stopped recognising people and was losing track of most of her daily functions, she would still lay down her prayer mat at the time of the respective prayer and would often only just sit on it. At other times, she would perform some actions, and then would wrap up her mat and continue living her otherwise unstructured and uninformed life. This act of praying, to people around her, was the last reminder of some order and remembrance of a life she once lived.

24

Her daughters talk about this act of hers with much pride. They don't know whether or not she was actually praying, but to just see her re-enact something that she had performed all her life gave them some strength. To them it was not about the structured routine of life. Nor was it about the body and its fragments and tissues remembering an act that they had been conditioned to repeat even when the brain remembered not enough. To them it was a sign. A sign that gave them hope amidst the slow dimming of this light.

Notes

- 1 . Peter Hujar, *Portraits in Life and Death*, with an Introduction by Susan Sontag (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), p. 7.

Passages of Time

Veera Rustomji

To the bottom right corner of *The School of Athens* painting, a silver bearded Zarathustra can be found twirling a globe on the tip of his fingers. Flanked by philosophers in this archaic and illustrious painting by Raphael, situated in the Vatican City Museum, this image of Zarathustra is *the* paradigm portrait in European history of the founder-prophet of Zoroastrianism. Zarathustra is noted by archaeologists to have been born around 1000 BC in Bactria (modern day north-east Iran, leaning towards Afghanistan) and is professed to have introduced monotheism to the world.¹ Having been born into the Zoroastrian community of Karachi, my parents and relatives repeatedly expounded to me before my first trip to Italy—during my thesis year at university—that of all the Italian art and architecture, I must see the venerated Zarathustra in *The School of Athens*.

It is like a strange unofficial pilgrimage for any Zoroastrian whenever in Italy. As with most religious traditions, one feels the expectation to contrive emotion from impossibly intimidating structures and/or paintings. However, religious traditions and contemporary artists do not always have a harmonious relationship, as tradition dictates and relies upon a certain degree of restriction, whereas art is never categorically black and white. As an art student, I was interested in the manifold of religion in one's identity and perception of belonging. The preconceived notion that I would find a point of interaction and a sense of belonging upon seeing Zarathustra in *The School of Athens* was both daunting and misleading.

While I had already begun researching, interviewing, and fervently documenting community members and artefacts associated with the Zoroastrian faith in Karachi during my thesis year, I feared that the edifice of ancient Zoroastrian doctrine and philosophy would overpower and inculcate my approach in creating a body of work for my final year. After leafing through countless essays on Zoroastrian-influenced Persian empires and sacred scriptures, I read a study conducted with 30 Parsis at Bombay (now Mumbai) in 2001 recording personal testimonies of (then) present day Parsis in India alongside their lifestyles and cultural associations.² This compilation of records, titled *Living Zoroastrianism*, was a collaboration between Dr Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville Munshi in an attempt to provide an insightful look into how urban Parsis understand and practice their religion, acknowledging modern day realities, and the changes it has brought to Zoroastrian tradition. It is important to note that Parsis are the trajectory of Zoroastrians whose ancestors migrated from the province Pars—now Fars—in Iran to Sanjan (Gujarat, India) between the 7th and 8th centuries, and adopted Gujarati customs and



Panorama view of installation, Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, thesis show, 2015. Image courtesy: The Citizens Archive of Pakistan, Karachi.

traditions. The success of the Parsis in the subcontinent can be owed to their monopoly over trade, shipping, and calculated relationships with the East India Company.³

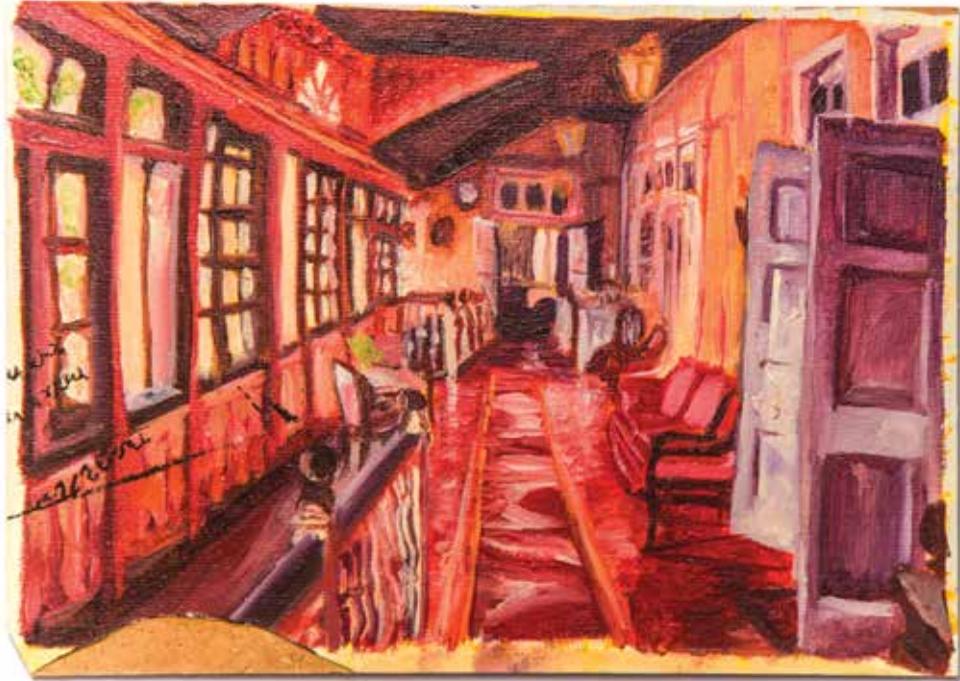
Parsi communities in India and Pakistan are substantially different to the Iranian Zoroastrians, and Kreyenbroek's research is novel in its intention to recognise that scholarly interest has focused largely on classical Zoroastrianism, which is incorrectly representative of the contemporary Parsi Diaspora. Through weighing out a range of belief systems within a small community and categorising 'neo-traditionalist' interviewees from more 'modernist' perspectives, Kreyenbroek and Munshi provide a holistic view by investigating the range of Bombay's 21st century Parsis within personal narratives and accounts, drawing upon the milieu of their culture and development.

Evidently, the values, and most interestingly, the memories spoken about by the 30 interviewees were cognisant of the adaptation in rituals and culture in their families in order to evolve and survive through the ages. The most sacred heirlooms, which presented a reservoir of *my* family history—spread out through the Indian Subcontinent, Singapore, Canton, and Kenya—

are a barrage of photo albums archived and stored by my paternal grandparents. Like the interviews Kreyenbroek and Munshi recorded, burgeoning with memories of family journeys, these photographs are to me a visual anthology of how geographic location, careers, marriage, and death can shape the identity of generations.

Unlike the interviewees' personal accounts in *Living Zoroastrianism*, these photographs were not of my own memories, as the archive stopped before I was born. Nevertheless, this pictorial journey of one family and its many trajectories marked a beginning in visual research. For my ancestors the albums could have simply been a collection of images, yet for me the documentation provided an exciting field for new investigations as "just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception."⁴ I could, from the photographs, imagine what it would have been like to live in homes that I had never seen, to walk through roads that had been eradicated since long, and to speak with individuals whose existence I did not know of.

Every relative I presented a photograph to for answers had a different story to tell; from the



Khorshed's Red Kashmiri Room, 2015, oil on canvas, 8 x 11 in. Image courtesy: The Citizens Archive of Pakistan, Karachi.
(Right) *Homi the Musician*, 2015, oil on canvas, 8 x 11 in. Image courtesy: The Citizens Archive of Pakistan, Karachi.

burnt house in Srinagar to the violinist who passed away in his early 30s, each photograph had a different meaning to everyone. It would have been futile to search for every single name and place present in each picture, too much time had passed for such accurate answers, and more importantly, the albums generated uncertainty and mystery. To interweave my own stories with theirs, I used this archive to write fictional plays about characters based on people I had interacted with or heard stories of. Through writing, editing, and directing the characters, I gained a larger threshold and a heightened sense of the environments photographed. Each character embodied particular values and traits that were cognisant of the various Parsis I had interacted with across varied backgrounds. The photo albums primarily trace my great-grandparents' lineages and their seven children's stories, however, the albums compiled handwritten letters, newspaper cutouts, and some travel documentation as well. This personal collection of notes gave fictional exploration some factual basis, which manifested in the plays being read more hyper realistically than intended.





Banus on a Sunday, 2015, oil on canvas, 9 x 5 inches. (approximately). Image courtesy: The Citizens Archive of Pakistan, Karachi.

These series of plays and scripts were the tip of the iceberg. I slowly meandered away from the keyboard and towards my oil paints by selecting photographs that echoed fragments of the multilayered stories I had collected whilst conjuring up on my own. The writings met a visual translation once the painting began; although the scripts utilised personification and fictitious elements, they were still detailed with specific references to names, cities, and religious customs. Editing with paint facilitated less control, as opposed to writing, blurring specifics and letting the imagery be open to interpretation. The photographs were overpowering in their nature; these albums were technically a finished piece of art in their own right—developed and fixed onto sheets for viewing. It was vital that although I wanted to talk about specific aspects drawn from a family archive, I did not want to limit the connection with my viewers. It was important to portray a memoir by painting, which viewers could immerse themselves into rather than stand at a distance with.

The visuals had more communicative power than the writings, as it was not of critical importance to replicate the environments in the photographs. The language and text in the plays, however, toed a narrow path where I had resolved the conclusion for each chapter and character, leaving little room for the reader's imagination. Making the elision between a web of family documents and my own paintings made the faded photographs seem somehow open to more possibilities and questions. The qualities of a piece of art are forever subjective and by fading facial features, altering hues, and refraining from ambitious detail, the 78 paintings upon interaction with viewers were in a way reflective of how even the tiniest of communities generate endless possibilities and conversations in their culture.

In retrospect, indeed I find it fascinating that my grandparents maintained a mini library in a drawer filled with transcultural documents attesting to a multitude of crossing paths and linkages. How strange it is that our notion of history is usually confined to a country's borders, a single language, and political regimes, when family archives can render a spectrum of narratives you could never have imagined existed. As there are approximately 1300 Zoroastrians left in Karachi, it is increasingly convenient for anyone to loop us all together in one overarching category. A memorabilia of albums can be seen as a counter narrative to the oversimplification of minority communities. Each photograph has endless possibilities, and each painting does not bind itself to a singular date and place in time.

As a result of the constant excavating and searching, the albums have been taken out from a single chest of drawers in my grandmother's cupboard and placed in different areas of my home, filed, and labelled for the sake of better organisation. Whenever the photographs are revisited, I am reminded that the albums are not an attestation to how one family lived and travelled, rather they are an insight of endless routes and stories about individuals and places.

Notes

1. Philip G. Kreyenbroek, "Zoroastrianism as an Imperial Religion," in *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*, Series: International Library of Historical Studies, ed. Sarah Stewart (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2013), pp. 10–11.
2. Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville Munshi, *Living Zoroastrianism: Urban Parsis Speak about Their Religion* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001).
3. Jenny Rose, "Zoroastrian Communities around the World," in *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*, Series: International Library of Historical Studies, ed. Sarah Stewart (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd), p. 227.
4. Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 104.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*. Edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Kreyenbroek, Philip G. "Zoroastrianism as an Imperial Religion." In *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*. Series: International Library of Historical Studies. Edited by Sarah Stewart. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2013.

Kreyenbroek, Philip G., and Shehnaz Neville Munshi. *Living Zoroastrianism: Urban Parsis Speak about Their Religion*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001.

Rose, Jenny. "Zoroastrian Communities around the World." In *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*. Series: International Library of Historical Studies. Edited by Sarah Stewart. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2013.

Stewart, Sarah, ed. *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2013.

Wooden Wares: An Archive of Loss

Mariyam Nizam

INTRODUCTION

Nuristan, the Land of Light, was part of a larger cultural triangle known as Peristan in pre-Islamic times, characterised "by a certain degree of cultural homogeneity that allow[ed] to identify it as a distinct unit, a former 'culture area.'"¹ The Peristan region encapsulated, "to the west, the Afghan province of Nuristan, the Chitral–Kunar valley, the upper Dir and Swat valleys, in the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, [...] the Kabul river; [...] the Gilgit river [...and] the upper reaches of the Indus basin."² As the name indicates, Peristan, the Land of Fairies, is shrouded in myth and legend. With almost no recorded history, the region relies on vague oral traditions and archaeological excavations that archive human settlement from approximately 1000 BC. Although the bordering areas were vastly Islamised by 1st century AD, the Peristan region remained largely untouched by Islam till the latter half of the 16th century. Thus, the region began to be known by Muslims in the surrounding areas as Kafiristan or the land of infidels/idol worshippers.

The Kafirs were considered fierce warriors, feared by their Muslim neighbours. Often distinguished as *Siah-posh* (black clad) or *Safaid-posh* (white clad) due to their dark or light coloured smocks, they were able to defend their traditional and ancient belief systems until the later part of the 19th century. In 1893, the Durand Agreement between the British and the Emir of Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman Khan, rapidly altered the fate of the Kafirs. The Durand Line assigned the larger eastern region of Kafiristan to Afghanistan, while the much smaller Kalasha region remained under British control. As part of the treaty, the Afghan ruler received new artillery and modern warfare equipment and in 1895, the Emir sent large armies to convert the Kafirs to Islam by force. In less than a few years, the entire Kafiristan region—under Afghan rule—had been altered dramatically. Vast destruction of pagan heritage, the slaughter of tens of thousands of tribesmen and women, and large numbers sold into slavery, wreaked havoc in the region. Objects of religious and social significance such as "numerous temples, shrines and cult places with or without cult figures of deities, a great multitude of ancestor statues, many warrior poles topped by human figures and several 'gates of honour' were stolen or entirely devastated."³ "The Kafirs were shocked, desperately clinging to their traditional beliefs and social systems."⁴ By the early part of the 20th century, Kafiristan was absolutely converted to Nuristan.

Various academics divided the area into four distinct ethnographic zones: the Kati, Ashkun/

Waigal, Parun, and Kalashmun (occupying present day Kalash valleys). *The Kafirs of the Hindu Kush* by Sir George S. Robertson,⁵ is the only detailed account of the region and its people before the rapid Islamisation. The Kafirs formed pastoral communities or tribes and followed an archaic form of religion that bears a striking resemblance to Brahmanism, Zoroastrianism, and early Vedic rituals.⁶ Although the belief system will not be discussed at great length, it is important to note that the entire community is divided on a symbolic polarity view of pure and impure: male and female, mountain and valley, goat/markhor and cow/cattle, divine and demonic, etc.

The dramatic alteration of the cultural landscape resulted in an acute loss of tradition and subsequently of craft in the region. The complexity of design and motif making, the historic and traditional narrative that Kafir objects signified, lost their meaning and value among the community as rapid Islamisation in the region created an archive of erasure.



Representation of an unidentified female goddess on a pillar in an Assembly Hall in Dewa, Parun Valley. Notice the interwoven matt design on the headdress of the deity. Source: Maximilian Klimburg, "Male-Female Polarity Symbolism in Kafir Art and Religion: New Aspects in the Study of the Kafirs of the Hindu-Kush," *East and West* 26 (1976): 479-488.

KAFIR CULTURAL OBJECT ARCHIVE

Traditional Kafir society relied heavily on objects for rituals and the appearance of the homestead for social status. The presence of, "countless wood-carvings on the doors, pillars, other important parts of the house, and on the ceremonial chairs of honour illustrate two dominant themes in the Kafir's beliefs: the belief in the magical power of horns, and the need to represent certain images in doubles."⁷ Horns of the local markhor goats were said to hold supernatural powers and only those who possessed extreme wealth—to afford lavish feasting ceremonies—or proved their virility by the slaughter of enemies, could ornament their homes with ritual objects and utensils with the symbols, and could own special ceremonial "horn chairs" or thrones. Carvings of straight or intertwined horns on doors, windows, and main pillars of the house represented the favour of male and female deities and the social rank of the owners. The appearance of human heads with *dandaku*⁸ (ceremonial crowned head decorations) on

pillars, hearths, shelves, and horned twin backed thrones are most prominent in the entire region. Often star shaped or shield motifs symbolised heroic deeds, while couples in passionate embraces symbolised the harmony of cosmic balance. Celestial figures were represented with phallic symbols, deities were depicted seated on horseback, goats, and stools with whips and weapons to show affinity and obeisance to the gods.⁹

Additionally, deceased ancestors were commemorated with wooden effigies honouring the life and deeds of the departed. The figurines known as *gandao* were erected at prominent positions near burial sites during ceremonial festivities that dotted the mountainous landscape to remind the Kafirs of their famous ancestors. Wooden poles of honour or warrior poles¹⁰ were often decorated with ornaments as above but also bore a peg system for the warriors to keep count of the casualties of their battles. The rich symbolic nature of ritual and social objects primarily fashioned out of wood thus played an important role in traditional Kafir society.

As observed by Robertson, the tribes had a clear status distinction and thus roles were often divided based on the following priority:

1. The clansmen belonging to important clans.
2. Men belonging to very small clans or groups of families.
3. Men of distinctly inferior family, but free men.
4. Slaves.¹¹

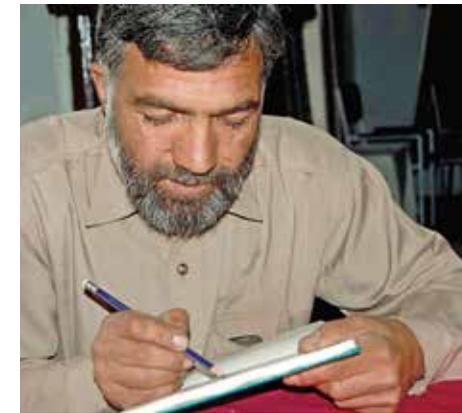
Traditionally, it was the slaves or *bari* that were artisans, preparing everyday objects and architectural elements for buildings. They were considered impure and disreputable in Kafir culture, as their occupation as weavers, blacksmiths, carpenters, cutlers, etc. were thought of as discreditable. The *bari* lived outside the village and were isolated from the remainder of the community. In the case of Parun Kafirs, the *baris* were not allowed to fashion religious or ritual objects due to their status.¹² Theoretically, the Islamisation of Kafiristan freed the *baris* from enslavement, but it did not do much to their social standing. Many fled to the surrounding regions and into modern day Pakistan looking for opportunities, only to face extreme competition in the market for their trades.

Today, the Kafir valleys are stripped bare of these ritual objects. Landscapes that were once dotted with fierce *gandaos*, warrior poles, exquisitely carved temple colonnades, and ornamented homesteads, now lie barren. Kalasha children who attend school at the Kalasha Dur Museum and Cultural Centre are taught about their ancestors through archival images of the past, when ancestors openly performed archaic rituals and rites. They are shown the once rich landscape that has been robbed by researchers, museum officials, and exotic culture enthusiasts for private and public collections around the world. Objects that hold strong cultural meaning for the



surviving community can be seen across the Chitral region, hiding in plain sight, in 5-star hotels, museums, and private homes. And while the last remaining Kafirs in the Kalasha valleys fight for their survival, objects that archive their ancient past lie unattended in the open.

ABDUL JABBAR, THE *BARI* ARTISAN?



Abdul Jabbar during his discussion with the author. March 2016. Photograph by Mariyam Nizam.

Abdul Jabbar is 45 years old and owns a small wood workshop in the valley of Ayun, Chitral District. Working with three younger artisans in training, he fashions various wooden members for buildings and interiors, while also producing various furniture pieces. His workshop is similar to several others in the vicinity but his peers consider him as one of the finest Nuristani master artisan. He traces his family lineage to Nuristan and takes pride in stating that the intricately carved patterns and motifs on his masterpieces are all traditional Nuristani designs. These include relief style rosettes, an interwoven matt design (much like a basket weave), and various other linear geometric shapes and patterns. Using ancient wood curing methods and rudimentary tools, Abdul Jabbar can produce several hundred variations of motifs for ornamentation on his wooden masterpieces. Much like other artisans in the area, he too, has learned the craft from his ancestors.

But upon deeper discussion, Abdul Jabbar is diffident in stating the traditional and symbolic meanings of his craft. His archive is a mere catalogue of motifs that do not epitomise the



(Top) Images in classroom depicting traditional *gandao* or ancestor effigies that once dotted the Kafir landscape. Bumboret Valley, Chitral. March 2016. Photograph by Mariyam Nizam.

(Left) Traditional temple pillars and *gandao* lie in the open area at the Chitral Museum. March 2016. Photograph by Mariyam Nizam.

(Centre Right) Classroom at the Kalasha Dur Museum and Cultural Centre where students are taught about Kafir culture through archival images. Bumboret Valley, Chitral. March 2016. Photograph by Mariyam Nizam.

(Bottom Right) An original *gandao* or ancestor effigy lies in the corner at one of the 5-star hotel resorts in Chitral. March 2016. Photograph by Mariyam Nizam.



Kalasha Dur Museum and Cultural Centre, Bumboret Valley, Chitral. March 2016. Photograph by Mariyam Nizam.

significance of his people or their historic narrative. Much like most Pakistani craft, the ornamentation is represented as geometric and Islamic. The rich cultural diversity of representational art and craft, as practiced by his ancestors, has become archaic and taboo. Traditional Kafir culture did not recognise the effort or craft of the *bari* artisan; while current societal pressures create an arena of fear resulting in minorities who are unable to express their true cultural and religious affiliation. Thus making artisans like Abdul Jabbar, a mere instrument in creating aesthetically pleasing craft, without the traditional or conceptual paraphernalia that was so important in the objects of yore.

During the construction of the Kalasha Dur Museum and Cultural Centre, Abdul Jabbar along with other master artisans was appointed to create the traditional architectural members in the scheme. Detailed studies of traditional objects and material culture were undertaken, resulting in a hybrid structure that utilised Nuristani designs and motifs in the elaborate wooden elements used along the façade and interior of the building. Although aesthetically pleasing, the motifs did not bring to light the complexity of motif selection and placement, as was so

ominously present in the objects in traditional Kafir culture. The representation of form and the interrelation of pattern and object have been erased to promote objects that merely “look” Nuristani.

The demolition and destruction of Kafir material culture in the wake of the 20th century—before detailed documentation of the area—left a gap in understanding the social and communal structure of the region and its people. The radical Islamisation of the Kafirs meant that individuals in the communities that once understood the symbolic references of ornamental motifs and patterns were lost. The once intricate weave—representing the hair and headdress of deities—has now evolved into the famous Nuristani matt design, while symbols representing heroic deeds and virility are now read as mere rosettes or floral and geometric motifs. The representation of cosmic balance through the inclusion of human heads and figures has completely vanished. And feathers and fruits only appear in low counts.



Detail of woodcarvings undertaken by Abdul Jabbar and his colleagues at the museum in Bumboret. Bumboret Valley, Chitral. March 2016. Photograph by Mariyam Nizam.

For Abdul Jabbar—who does not answer to which region of Nuristan his lineage hails from, whether his family was of *bari* origin—the symbolic representations of his Kafir past hold little meaning. His craft has become a mere shadow of the archive that his ancestors once possessed. Still in his masterpieces, lies an archive—a shadow of the past—where the indigenous culture was represented without fear or taboo, where the form and representational power of an object transcended aesthetics and mere motifs, where craft objects symbolised the passing of tradition and a celebration of heritage.

Notes

1. Alberto M. Cacopardo and Augusto S. Cacopardo, *Gates of Peristan: History, Religion and Society in the Hindu Kush* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001), p. 25.
2. Augusto S. Cacopardo, "A World In-between: The Pre-Islamic Cultures of the Hindu Kush," in *Borders: Itineraries on the Edges of Iran* edited by Stefano Pellò, *Eurasiatica* 5, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2016, pp. 243–244.
3. Maximilian Klimburg, "The Arts and Societies of the Kafirs of the Hindu Kush," *Asian Affairs* 35 (2004), p. 366.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 368.
5. Sir George Scott Robertson (22 October 1852–1 January 1916) was a British soldier, administrator, and author who wrote about his year long journey to Kafiristan in the book titled *The Kafirs of the Hindu Kush* (1896). He was the commanding officer of the British forces during the famous siege of Chitral.
6. T.H. Holdich, "The Origin of the Kafir of the Hindu Kush," *The Geographical Journal* 7 (1896), p. 42.
7. Maximilian Klimburg, "Male–Female Polarity Symbolism in Kafir Art and Religion: New Aspects in the Study of the Kafirs of the Hindu-Kush," *East and West* 26 (1976), p. 485.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 486.
9. Klimburg, "The Arts and Societies of the Kafirs of the Hindu Kush," p. 378.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 375.
11. George Scott Robertson, *The Kafirs of the Hindu Kush* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, Ltd, 1896), p. 85.
12. Klimburg, "The Arts and Societies of the Kafirs of the Hindu Kush," p. 378.

Cacopardo, Alberto M. and Augusto S. Cacopardo. *Gates of Peristan: History, Religion and Society in the Hindu Kush*. Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001.

Cacopardo, Augusto S. "A World In-between: The Pre-Islamic Cultures of the Hindu Kush." In *Borders: Itineraries on the Edges of Iran* edited by Stefano Pellò. *Eurasiatica* 5. Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2016.

Holdich, T.H. "The Origin of the Kafir of the Hindu Kush." *The Geographical Journal* 7 (1896).

Klimburg, Maximilian. "Male–Female Polarity Symbolism in Kafir Art and Religion: New Aspects in the Study of the Kafirs of the Hindu-Kush." *East and West* 26 (1976).

Klimburg, Maximilian. "The Arts and Societies of the Kafirs of the Hindu Kush." *Asian Affairs* 35 (2004).

Robertson, George Scott. *The Kafirs of the Hindu Kush*. London: Lawrence & Bullen, Ltd, 1896.

Adnan Madani is an artist and lecturer in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. His research interests include globalisation, secularism and subjectivity in contemporary culture, and the work of Wittgenstein and Jean-Luc Nancy. His recent writing has focused on Islam and archaeology, curatorial ethics, and the thinking of destruction in modernity, especially as seen through contemporary Pakistani art and cinema.

Seher Naveed has a BFA from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, and an MA in Fine Art from Central St. Martins College of Art & Design. She is a practicing artist interested in the changing geography of Karachi and has shown her work extensively, and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Fine Art at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Her ongoing exhibition and publication project, *Drawing Documents*, looks at various drawing practices in Pakistan as research.

Heba Islam is an Assistant Professor in the Liberal Arts Programme at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. She completed her BSc from Lahore University of Management Sciences and her MA in Anthropology from Columbia University, and is interested in urban issues in the global south and militarisation. As a participant in the Gadap Sessions, she also started exploring the materiality and infrastructure of oppression, and plans to continue researching the same.

Madiha Aijaz has an MFA in Photography from Parsons as a Fulbright Scholar. In 2014, her photographic work on Hindu temples in Pakistan was published by Niyogi Books. She has produced and written documentary films; and her work has appeared in publications like *Commonwealth Writers*, *Dawn*, *Herald*, *Roads and Kingdoms*, *India Today*, *Mint*, *Hindu* and *The Wall Street Journal*. She teaches in the Department of Communication Design at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture.

Fazal Rizvi is an interdisciplinary artist exploring notions of memory, loss, erasures, migration in his practice. He was selected for the Arcus Project Residency in Japan (2011), was a recipient of the Charles Wallace Pakistan Trust and British Council Residency at Gasworks in London (2014), and was invited to participate in the Vasl International Artist Residency in Karachi (2015). He is also a member of the Tentative Collective, and teaches at Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. He graduated from the National College of Arts.

Veera Rustomji is a visual artist and writer based in Karachi. Her ongoing research is driven by an interest in parallel dialogues of migration and heritage that inform her practice. She is currently working as an Assistant Coordinator for Vasl Artists' Association, and pursues freelance projects with numerous publishers. Veera has displayed her work within Pakistan, and was selected as an artist in residence for the Murree Museum Artists' Residency (2017). She has a BFA from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture.

Mariyam Nizam worked with architect and conservationist Yasmin Lari for more than five years after graduating from the National College of Arts with a degree in architecture. She specializes in research projects pertaining to heritage conservation, and has also been engaged in a number of community building initiatives in rural settlements across Pakistan. She was previously a faculty member in the Department of Architecture at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, and also a member of the executive committee, Institute of Architects, Pakistan.

