

**Strategies of Visualisation: State-Corporate-Military Power and
Post-Photographic Interventions**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis contributes to current scholarly debates concerning the witnessing and visualisation of twenty-first century systemic and "socially abstract" state-corporate-military power and its in/visible forms of violence. The nexus of neoliberal democratic hegemony, global corporatization, digital technologies of communication, and modern warfare have produced radically evolving contexts of war photography. This includes the engendering of art-documentary practices which mark a significant departure from socially "realistic" representations to more abstract and conceptual visualisations. In this context, "post-photographic" imagery is not adequately served by recent ethico-political debates regarding the image-making/viewing of direct and/or symbolic violence, which tend to neglect that which is *not* seen in contemporary news frames (of what is being referred to here as traditional media), namely, the in/visible systems, structures and processes of state-corporate-military power. Accordingly, this thesis argues visual culture scholarship requires recalibrated vocabularies as well as revised conceptual and methodological frameworks for the critical exploration of the subject of systemic, socially abstract power/violence.

This thesis strives to advance its contribution to theory-building by way of crafting an alternative approach to critically understanding art-documentary photography and its viewing/reception within a state-corporatist and military-mediatised dispensation. It takes a co-creative and forensic approach to the selected imagery of the UK/US-based photographers Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, Simon Norfolk, Trevor Paglen, Edmund Clark and

Lisa Barnard, critically deploying the trans/interdisciplinary conceptual constellation of, inter alia, "Plexus", "war", complicity, "Vergangenheitsbewältigung", "Gegenwärtige Bewältigung", corporate personhood, the open/public secret, the State-Corporate Exception, the "cadastral" and the "proxy measure". The concept of a "dispositif" (Rancière) is engaged in the analysis of the imagery, taking into critical account the heterogeneous elements beyond their visible content and framing. By its close, this thesis demonstrates why its refashioning of these concepts to serve as methodological and theoretical tools recasts pertinent aspects of current debates, affording critical and co-creative "ways of seeing" power, its violence, and its visualisation.

INTRODUCTION

1. Overview and Aims of the Enquiry

This thesis is about state-corporate-military power and the strategies contemporary photographic image-makers¹ are developing, and with which viewers are engaging, to "witness" or "visualise" it. It concerns not the direct, raw violence of the state "at war", but the in/visible², intangible violence of modern warfare and power in a globalized, neoliberal, transnationally corporatized, militarized and digitally hyperconnected dispensation. Instead of power's manifest forms of violence - physical (war/conflict/crisis) and symbolic (ideological/linguistic/cultural) - which has been since the advent of photography its critical focus, this thesis attends to forms of violence which been identified as "systemic" (Kotz, 2009; Žižek, 2009) or "socially abstract" (Roberts, 2014). Žižek defines systemic violence as 'the often catastrophic consequences of the "smooth" functioning of our economic and political systems' (Žižek, 2009: 1). John Roberts, taking his cue from Žižek, identifies the "socially abstract" nature of systemic violence, elucidating it as 'the amnesiacal and catastrophic "smooth" functioning of the capitalist system, based on the normalizing and dehistoricization of conflict.' (Roberts, 2014: 148). It is the kind of violence productive of/by modern capitalist democracy and the twenty-first century "perpetual war" (Kennedy, 2016) in which we are daily immersed.

The focus of contemporary photographic witnessing and visualisation on this insidious, elusive and intractable power and its covert, less visible - or in/visible - forms of violence is what, in

my view, distinguishes it from traditional or more conventional war art-documentary photography which still cleaves to a largely (art-historically speaking) **realist**³, figural photojournalistic aesthetics. Since the advent of photography as a recording medium, it has been the witnessing and representation of direct violence and its consequences which has dominated war photography/photojournalism. This latter kind of war photography is archetypically represented by Robert Capa (Spanish Civil War), Lee Miller (World War 2), David Douglas Duncan (Korean War), Larry Burrows and Don McCullin (Vietnam War), and James Nachtwey (Northern Ireland to Rwanda and beyond), et al (Roberts, 1998; Griffin, 1999; Feeney, 2015). Apart from the likes of Martha Rosler and Allan Sekula in the 1970s who sought to represent the less visible or publicly "unseen" (unattended to) effects or conditions of possibility of war and state violence, conflict and socio-economic exploitation, there has until fairly recently been a dearth of photographic attention to the systemic and more socially abstract aspects of neoliberal capitalist democracy and its forms of violence. Contemporary, dissenting image-makers have begun to evolve their practices to visualise and expose what established kinds of war photography were not: the publicly in/visible, socially abstract forms of violence which accrue within the nexus of neoliberal capitalist democracy, global corporatization, digital media and modern warfare.

It is for this reason that the works of the fore-mentioned and salubrious lineage - in either their photojournalistic or art/documentary prowess - is set aside here in the interests of the critical and creative exploration of what is now referred to as the "post-photographic" (or "post-documentary") (Roberts, 2014; Kennedy, 2016; Shore, 2015). These emerging photographic practices - as showcased by the UK/US-based image-makers treated here: Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, Simon Norfolk, Trevor Paglen, Edmund Clark and Lisa Barnard - are

amongst those whose work marks a radical departure from the familiar "face" of conventional or (social) **realist** war photography. Its politics and style of representation, which I refer to here as its "strategies of visualisation", define it as a new kind of "war" photography (see below) for which, I argue, current critical and theoretical vocabularies, whilst helpful, are still found wanting. A conceptual and creative contribution to the enrichment of these vocabularies and, indeed, to post-photographic imaging/viewing methodology, is the principal commitment of this thesis.

1.1 Time Frame

It ought to be noted that, firstly, the thesis focuses its enquiry in the US/UK context of the decade or so *prior* to the general upheaval of the Trump election victory of 2016. The bulk of the research was conducted between the end of 2010 and early 2016, and focussed largely - from a geopolitical and geolocal perspective - on "events" from 9/11 through to the beginning of the writing-up phase in early 2016. Its parameters thus both reflect and are limited by ethical and political concerns within media and visual cultural scholarship and art-documentary photographic practices at the time. Many of these developments are, however, of high ongoing relevance, and the works examined here treat of subject matter the significance of which has certainly not diminished; if anything, the current U.S. administration serves to enhance the urgency of the issues at stake. If the reader has any doubts as to the political or epistemic value of this thesis's adoption of Liam Kennedy's mantra 'Follow the Americans' as basic rule of thumb for this project (which he himself borrowed from the Welsh photojournalist Philip Jones Griffiths), then they can be reassured at least by the certainty that the prospects of and necessity

for future, further research of the questions and issues explored here has been secured by these recent developments.

1.2 Selection of Image-makers

For similar reasons as the above, I chose the above-mentioned image-makers on the basis of their contexts of image creation and production. In other words, they are either physically-situated in a US/UK context, or their projects or works treat of subject matter arising from US/UK-driven state-military global operations, interventions and foreign policy, and their attendant practices and discourses of domestic control. These economies are the primary drivers of the global neoliberal corporatist ethos subtending the interests of twenty-first century power, and its less palpable, hidden or in/visible forms of violence. There are any number of other image-makers treating of similar subject matter but based in and whose work is thus influenced or inflected by other urgent issues facing those societies. For example, an overtly colonial or orientalist context or origin of image creation/production - entirely appropriate in the sense of the critical concern with "the other", or "subaltern", and counter-visibility (Mirzoeff, 2011) - would have unnecessarily problematised the arguments being made here concerning the Western spectatorship/witnessing of war, opening up the research parameters to questions and issues beyond their design. It could be argued that there are still many other Western "post-photographers" or image-makers of war/power I could have chosen. This is undoubtedly true. To invoke just a handful of the ones also considered for this project: Genovese Martina Bacigalupo, Irish Richard Mosse and Paul Seawright, British David Birkin and Melanie Friend, and New York-based neo-conceptual artist Mark Lombardi (deceased), for example, could all be considered "war" image-makers of a post-photographic "turn"

(conceptual, abstract, digito-forensic) and could possibly have served equally well as canvasses upon which I could exercise the theoretical, co-creative, collaborative approach tentatively being developed here. However, I made the decision to focus on fewer image-makers in depth rather than conducting guerrilla raids on the work of a host of image-makers in order to allow the key concepts, ideas and arguments the theoretical time and space to unfold and develop in a more sustained and steady manner. I acknowledge without reservation, however, that these are all certainly image-makers whose work, and the contrasts between them, is eminently interesting for future research and publication based on this thesis.

As well as being a critical and theoretical exploration of these emergent strategies of visualisation and the attendant expansion of critical visual and theoretical terms, a secondary aim of this thesis was to contribute towards these strategies of visualisation themselves by way of a (Fred Ritchin-inspired) co-creative, collaborative forensic mining of the imagery in the interests of finding 'articulations of purpose outside the frame' (Hariman and Lucaites, 2007:177).

The concern with twenty-first century power, its forms of violence, and the visualisation thereof pivots on its *visual perception*; through sight, understanding, and representation it is the pre-eminently *visual cognition and imag(in)ing* of power and the forms of violence arising out of neoliberal capitalist democracy and modern warfare which dictates the kinds of questions which are posed here, the specific lines of enquiry adopted, concepts deployed and theoretical debates engaged. I investigate some of the crystallising trends and novel strategies of visualisation adopted in "dissident" (or "concerned"; Kennedy, 2016) post-photographic visualisations of this power by way of the harnessing of various trans/interdisciplinary

conceptual constellations as methodological tools *in themselves*. The key terms are "war" (and its mediatization), "Plexus," complicity, the public/open secret, corporate personhood, the corporate veil, the "State-Corporate Exception", the "cadastral", and the proxy measure. In this way, extant and re-appropriated terminology is brought into uncommon or new alignments, serving also to provide the scaffolding for a non-linear narrative arc. It is a narrative and theoretical arc which embarks on a journey from the more traditional "human" concerns with the ethico-politics of power/"war" representation, through to the less conventional and more recent concerns with the non/inhuman "face(lessness)" of power and modern warfare: its technologies and operations, its publicity and secrecy, its in/visibility, transparency and opacity.

It is in the context of corporate globalization and the digital "mediatization" of war (Cottle, 2006; see below in Keywords)⁴ that the unseen or in/visible, intangible, systemic and socially abstract⁵ violence which is the subject of visualisation here occurs. To elaborate, socially abstract violence is where the political, social, cultural and economic forces which act upon us and our environments are not always apparent as forces of violence/violation, control, or exploitation (Roberts, 2014). The role of media culture and ideology in the maintenance of capitalist democratic hegemony - the "manufacture of consent" (Herman and Chomsky, 1988) - is well-documented and theorised.⁶ The process is enhanced in a globally digitised era of networked communications, or "hyperconnectivity", and the dialectical or feedback-loop effect the newly manifold sources of news creation has on power and conflict.⁷ This is especially the case where **traditional broadcast and print media - also sometimes referred to as "mainstream" (see Keywords below)** - as a corporate creature controlled by a panoply of vested interests, is apt to enter alliances with the state (as distinct from any particular government, which it dutifully "holds to account") and the military in a mutually lubricating performance of

self-preservation. Amongst other things, this "mediatization" of war goes, I argue, hand-in-hand with the wider power "nexus" productive of the abstract, in/visible, opaque or covert forms of violence/violation, the visualisation of which is the pressing challenge for contemporary image-makers.

As outlined, the works of the post-photographic image-makers examined here eschew more traditional, photojournalistic modes of representation of manifest power and direct violence or its aftermath. Instead, their makers elect to "avert the eyes" from this well-trodden terrain and shift their focus onto the less familiar, in/visible, abstract topographies of power/violence. Simon Norfolk concisely articulates why traditional modes of war photojournalism/photography "fail" to represent contemporary war:

Warfare is becoming increasingly intangible. It is a paradox that whilst [...] we are saturated with the showbiz of war, the really interesting developments, submarine warfare, space weapons, electronic warfare and electronic eavesdropping are essentially invisible [...] Traditional war reporting risks irrelevance if it only concentrates on what can be seen, and what can be photographed and filmed when the 'real' war is taking place elsewhere. (Norfolk, archived website: 2000-2016⁸; see also Kennedy, 2016:177)

This 'real' war taking place elsewhere' to which Norfolk and the image-makers discussed here devote their efforts is now a subject of burgeoning concern not only within critical or dissident art-documentary image-making practices, but also within newer, digitally-enhanced praxis, for example forensic architecture, experimental geography and data visualisation within computing. The quote also serves to indicate the "technological turn" that recent image-making practice within art-documentary war (or critical, dissenting) photography is taking; it is *ipso facto* a turn away from the human, from flesh and blood, towards the non/inhuman, metal and software, in/visibility and abstraction. Under the broad aegis of visual culture scholarship - amongst those addressing these developments - inter alia, Andersen and Möller, Liam Kennedy, John Roberts, Rebecca Solnit, Pamela M. Lee, Jayne Wilkinson, and Jodi Dean have

all identified digitally-driven technology and neoliberal capitalist social abstraction as a significant nexus of challenge for contemporary image-makers. These authors are amongst those as setting out the proposed co-ordinates and parameters of the nascent debate on post-photographic visualisation. Their ideas are deployed or critically discussed and/or contested in the course of this thesis.

In advance of - or in tandem with - the scholarship, however, art-documentary image-makers such as Harun Farocki, Omer Fast, Paul Seawright, Simon Norfolk, Trevor Paglen, Lisa Barnard and Edmund Clark are establishing a veritable canon of imagery - both still and moving - visualising late twentieth century/twenty-first century state-corporate-military power and modern warfare. As suggested above though, the works and ideas of Martha Rosler and Allan Sekula, for instance, are in my view frame-busting precursors to such emergent image-making which defies the traditional photojournalism-based symbolic or iconological visual coding of *manifest* forms of war/power, in favour of a more conceptual, abstract or quasi-forensic approach to *in/visible*, systemic and socially abstract forms of war/power. Farocki and Fast's remote, machine "drone vision", Seawright's *Things Left Unsaid*, Norfolk and Paglen's austere or majestic, non/inhuman aesthetics of the "Military Sublime", or Barnard and Clark's banal-horrific and concretely particular visions of the "war on terror" veer emphatically from the more familiar modes of more traditional war photojournalism, such as that of Don McCullin, James Nachtwey or Tim Hetherington (see below). In largely steering away from the (affective) depiction of people, they also distinguish themselves from dissenting art-documentary visualisations of war such as that of Thomas Hirshhorn's *Pixel-Collage No. 21, 2015* (see Jürgens, 2016) or Susan Meiselas's fascinating and harrowing photo-documentation of the conflicts and crises in Nicaraguan, Chile and El Salvador (Meiselas, website).⁹

The nascent and dynamic strategies of visualisation of twenty-first century power and its forms of violence - war in particular - in its digitally hyperconnected and globally corporatized seedbed is now beginning, I argue, to crystallise into a sustained and identifiably post-photographic mode of critical-conceptual, analytical-forensic visual practice.

2. Questions and Objectives, Contexts and Literatures

In this section I articulate in more detail the research questions posed in this thesis, against a background of relevant literature and pertinent concepts and debates, to include the broad historical contexts and the theoretical parameters of this enquiry.

At its most basic level, this is what the thesis asks:

How can state power and violence in its in/visible and intangible aspects be witnessed and visualised? What strategies of visualisation are being deployed by contemporary photographic image-makers to represent twenty-first century state-corporate-military power and its systemic and socially abstract forms of violence?

In particular, what extant and new strategies and vocabularies of visualisation can be respectively deployed or developed in the challenge more effectively to "see" and unmask the operation, or decipher the complexity, of twenty-first century power and its (military, corporate) forms of violence or violation?

This introduction, amongst other things, addresses the historical contexts and background, the relevant theoretical literature, debates and concepts, and my critical and conceptual approach or methodology in the exploration of these questions.

In the course of making the case for its original contribution to theory-building, this thesis prioritises a series of concerns which resonate within recent visual culture and photography theory scholarship in the first instance. John Roberts, having identified the systemic, socially abstract nature of contemporary forms of violence, sees the representation of this social abstraction as a particular problem for twenty-first century photojournalism and art-documentary photography. He asks:

How has the role of the image-maker as *witness* evolved? What capacities for *critique* do images maintain? What new *visual vocabularies* are emerging to represent new forms of war and violence?' (Roberts, 2016: 12) (my italics)

Indeed, all three of the questions posed by Roberts are spoken to in the course of this thesis's critical and creative exploration. These questions help to pinpoint problems simultaneously of an ethical, a political and an aesthetic nature, and in this respect, they continue to reverberate within the neo-Marxist conceptual paradigm of the "aesthetics-politics" debate long since grappled with both before and in the wake of World War 2 by the likes of Horkheimer and Adorno (1973[1949]), Benjamin (1972[1931]), Brecht (1977[1955]), et al., and their kindred flagbearers down the decades. Of the raft of scholars who have engaged critically with questions of the relation between aesthetics, politics and ethics in relation to war photography and the remote spectatorship (or secondary witnessing; see La Capra below) of war and conflict through press and documentary war imagery, there are a number whose writings are particularly relevant for the concerns and parameters of this thesis. Others, whilst treating of similar issues, are less significant for this thesis in respect of its precise set of concerns. This introduction, in delineating the questions, concerns and contexts of this research, will use the opportunity to do so in tandem and via a bespoke review - or rather, overview - of the body of literature theoretically relevant to this thesis, in particular the salient writings of prominent scholars¹⁰ critically engaged with the photographic (or visual) representation of war and atrocity. The authors selected here are representative of the "vanguard" of war photography

theorists engaged in the discourse since Sontag, which include also those I have identified as heralding an emergent twenty-first century concern with the visualisation of the invisible or socially abstract.

There is naturally a veritable canon in itself of secondary literature which derives from either the authors and works discussed, or the various visual-methodological approaches to war photography. I have selected a representative sample of the kinds of articles or books that have been published over the last decade or so, to give a sense of the way in which scholars across myriad disciplines, to include visual sociology, journalism and media studies, cultural and visual studies, visual culture and visual sociology, international relations and security studies, and more, are engaged with or newly attracted to questions of visibility in the context of war, conflict, foreign policy and security.

Much of this literature, however, is not substantively helpful to the *second* part of this thesis, 1.) which centres upon the role of corporatization in power and its warfare, its forms of violence, and 2.) adopts a methodology or approach that goes beyond the interpretative and conceptual frameworks of traditional and much contemporary visual culture scholarship. This is expanded on in further detail in the Note on Methodology below.

I begin by explaining here what for this thesis still resonates with earlier writings on war (and) photography, where the thesis departs from these (albeit ongoing) concerns and debates, and finally, in what conceptual and methodological directions it strives in its theory-building to venture.

2.1. Making Distinctions: Visual Studies, Visual Culture, Critical Visuality

Before I engage the literature for the way in which it has underpinned or grounded this thesis, and in the interests of a broader, (inter)disciplinary identification of where the research aspires to mark its contribution, it behoves me to deal with the inter/intradisciplinary parameters within which the thesis seeks to mark its contribution to scholarship. I commence the review with a broader consideration of the related fields of visual studies, visual culture, and critical visuality. These are actually distinct fields the "advent" of each occurring in divergent scholarly contexts at different times. I consider the distinctions between them for the sake of clarification and to pinpoint why this is worthy of note. This is closely followed by an account of my proposed methodology, in advance of the review of the literature which subtends this thesis, inspires and instigates its arguments, and provides the critical point of departure for - and from - the latter's concepts, theories and typical methodologies.

James Elkins explains that the field of visual studies emerged in the early 1990s - as an offshoot from the cultural studies of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall - and was taken up by art historians, philosophers, literary, cultural and political theorists and critics, to include amongst others the likes at the time of Douglas Crimp, Fredric Jameson, Irit Rogoff and Jay Bernstein (Elkins, 2003:1). He tells us that prior even to the emergence of cultural studies, there was already a discipline, developed in America which went by the appellation "visual culture", which has since the mid-1990s been variously defined by scholars such as Victor Burgin, Nicholas Mirzoeff, Lisa Cartwright and Marita Sturken (Elkins, 2003:4).

Visual culture so categorised draws on nearly two dozen diverse fields in the humanities and social sciences, to include archaeology, urban planning, political economy and queer studies

(Elkins, 2003:25), and is demonstrably thus not simply interdisciplinary in nature, but transdisciplinary. Visual studies proper on the other hand is most closely allied to a discipline like art history, in that such an analysis demonstrates according to Elkins' "core competencies" - a knowledge of the relevant histories of images and their interpretation and a knowledge of particular parts of the full range of images and image-making practices' (Elkins, 2003:30). Such specialised knowledge contrasts with visual culture as a realm distinct from art history, aesthetics and media studies, which (citing Mitchell) "starts out in an area beneath the notice of these disciplines - the realm of non-artistic, non-aesthetic, and unmediated or 'immediate' visual images and experiences" '. In other words, "everyday seeing" [advertising would be a case in point] (Elkins, 2003:28-29). In Elkins' purist disciplinary view then, the more demotic subject matter and approach characterised by visual culture is to be substantively distinguished from traditional, discipline-based visual studies.

More recently, in the anthology *Image Science*, Mitchell writes

[...] theories of imagery and of visual culture have taken on a much more general set of problems in recent decades, moving out from the specific concerns of art history to an "expanded field" that includes psychology and neuroscience, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and theories of media and politics towards what can only be described as a 'new metaphysics of the image'. (Mitchell, 2015:15)

Mitchell identifies this nascent 'metaphysics of the image' through studies of visual looking in a hypernetworked era in an increasing array of scholarly disciplines which are recognising the significance of imagery and visuality in acquiring an understanding or knowledge of power and its systems, structures, and in/visibilities. By now, it would be fair to say that visual culture has become the preferred term for those studying the visual from this more varied, transdisciplinary, hybridised perspective, which itself may or may not incorporate elements of the art-historical "core competencies" so lauded by Elkins.

Gillian Rose reinforces this less narrowly prescriptive view of visual literacy. She writes

Visual imagery is never innocent; it is always constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledges. A critical approach to visual images is therefore needed: one that thinks about the *agency of the image*, considers the *social practices* and effects of its *circulation and viewing*, and reflects on the specificity of that viewing by *various audiences*, including the academic critic. (Rose, 2016: 23)(my italics)

Rose incisively encapsulates the shift in emphasis from the more "elite" art-historical, image-centred methodological approach to the one that has been steadily developing over the last decades. That is, where the image - the "product" - has become somewhat decentred, privileging a quasi-sociological, Bourdieu-like engagement with cultural-visual phenomena; hence social and material practices, circulation, audiences, etc. What she also mentions is the approach inaugurated by Mitchell, which is to regard images as somehow having agency, an idea which is also discussed in the body of his thesis and has since become official currency for those working within more materialist theoretical frameworks.¹¹

Nicholas Mirzoeff's 2013 anthology review of transdisciplinary visual culture studies provides a succinct overview of the fields of visual studies/visual culture, ranging from Erwin Panofsky (Iconology), through John Berger and his pioneering classic *Ways of Seeing* (1972), the feminist film criticism led by Laura Mulvey (and what she called "the male gaze"), Michel Foucault and the Panopticon, Mitchell and "image science", to Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright's work on "practices of looking" (Mirzoeff, 2013: xxx)¹²

With reference to his own colonial-imperial and historical study of visuality, he distinguishes what he calls critical visuality from both visual studies and visual culture in that its leading telos is a pointed insistence upon an adversarial, countervisual "right to look", thus presenting a challenge to the ongoing imposition of colonial and imperialist visuality. He writes 'Critical visuality studies claims the right to look at that which authority wishes to conceal.' (Mirzoeff, 2013:xxx)¹³ In this he emphasizes the secrecy/opacity of power, a significant theme in this

thesis. Mirzoeff too invokes the military-industrial complex as one major node whereby the politics if not ideology of colonialism and imperialism proceeds apace, largely undeclared.

He writes that Western armed forces in the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere 'forcibly remind[s] us of the continuation of colonial and imperial politics' (Mirzoeff, 2013: xxxii), and refers to such imperialist visuality as 'a militarized technique' (Mirzoeff, 2013: xxx). According to Mirzoeff, US counterinsurgency discourse-visualization techniques

restructure[s] the physical and cultural environment by dividing cities into ethnic zones [...] designating regions as safe or dangerous, constructing separation walls, and declaring no-fly zones. It operates a palpable *politics of invisibility*, with so-called "black" operations, disappearances and renditions, and the pervasive use of surveillance. *All of this is a form of visuality, even where it is not in the physical sense visible.* (Mirzoeff, 2013: xxxii)(my italics)

Mirzoeff's overview of critical visuality couched in such terms is eminently germane to this thesis, and especially the chapters on Norfolk, Paglen, Clark and Barnard. Whilst I have adopted the term visual culture, the research presented here implicitly demonstrates the pertinence of "critical visuality" for the theorization of dissenting post-photographic strategies of visualisation.

In summary, the approach here is a blend of all three streams of the study of visual phenomena: it partakes at times of visual studies when it attends to compositional or art-historical elements or aspects of the images, it is broadly visual cultural in its inter- or transdisciplinary roaming, methodological openness, and concern with the historical and material contexts of visuality. It also exercises a critical visuality in its reflections on the imperialist, in/visible politics of visuality endemic to state-corporate-military power, its strategic narratives, and its corporate-militarist, opportunistic harnessing of a largely compliant media-entertainment industry.

2.2 Note on Methodology

The thesis does not follow orthodox academic convention or the usual approaches to a scholarly dissertation for the following reasons:

Firstly, it does not aim or aspire at a formal methodological level to be scientifically objective or to proffer any quantitatively empirical or qualitatively gleaned "evidence" of its interpretations, analyses or constations; rather, it seeks by way of its composite methodology to find fresh, other, challenging and creative "ways of seeing", and theoretical vocabularies for the consideration of "war", power, violence and the strategies of visualisation thereof developed and adopted by contemporary post-photography image-makers/users.

Secondly, its agenda is more conceptually-driven than usual. The concepts are as important, if not more so, than the selected images in thinking about the visualisation of "war", power and its forms of violence. Given the very specific conceptual constellation deployed here in the services of new vocabulary and theory-building, there seemed little to be gained conceptually in rehearsing the salient points of every contribution across this diverse, interdisciplinary field. Further, what the burgeoning secondary literatures have made of the ideas where they are not directly pertinent to the present scope or parameters: the decision here to be more instrumental in my approach by zeroing in on that which spoke directly to the arguments and explorations here did, however, entail a thorough acquaintance with the broad range of writings in the field as a whole. Through this familiarity I was able to reasonably identify what was most germane to the research, obviating what I felt to be unnecessarily digressive in a more orthodox expounding of all major contributions to the ever-expanding field of war/conflict art-documentary photography. For example, some eminent early figures such as Benjamin, Brecht,

Barthes and Berger serve only peripherally. I draw only where relevant upon specific ideas of theirs upon which I rely, such as Benjamin on abstraction, Brecht on the theatre of the absurd and distanciation as a feature of the dissident photography of Broomberg and Chanarin, and Barthes on his (unstable) semiological distinction between connotative and denotative meaning in photographic imagery. This last has been found to be most useful here as a practical or derivative way of signposting the distinction between abstraction and figuration in the post-photographic visualisation context. To this end it is claiming for the terms a bespoke usage, and thus does not engage any detailed debate concerning the internal disciplinary intricacies of his distinction in *Camera lucida: reflections on photography* (1977); that raft of secondary literature is clearly important for what it does, but this thesis seeks to do something different with the material.

One of the cornerstone concepts, as it were, is that of witnessing, or spectatorship. In this regard, there is a convergence between Azoulay and Wendy Kozol (Kozol, 2014) in respect of the Kantian categorical ethical imperative they place at the heart of the "civil act" (Azoulay, 2012) of viewing photographic imagery of war/violence. Where Azoulay refers to the "universal spectator", Kozol invokes the "ethical spectator". This thesis expands these conceptions to include the creative spectator, as it were - or the co-creative, collaborative viewer; the one who "intervenes" in the image critically, forensically, in investigative and constructive spirit to co-produce the narrative, or articulate the ostension. For this thesis, Dominic La Capra's embattled "secondary witness" has been equipped with the agency to use the image as a tool towards further visualisation, seeing beyond the frame and its problematic conditions towards other possible worlds.

Similarly, the (re)appropriation of psychoanalytic terms like the (Lacanian) Gaze, or those generated within the Hannah Arendt-inspired discourse of political philosophy - such as "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" or "gegenwärtige Bewältigung" - are attended by other scholarly contexts in which the terms may be fiercely debated. Once again, their deployment here is pre-framed (as it were) by the conceptual and theoretical exigencies of the research topic. The same applies to the select ideas referred to or contested of a number of other (war) photography/visual culture luminaries whose writings have garnered critical and scholarly attention over the years, such as Paul Virilio (1989; 2006), Victor Burgin (1996), Guy Debord (1994[1967]) and Jean Baudrillard (2000). I address the significance of the recent ideas of Liam Kennedy and John Roberts, et al, in respect of the post-photographic "project" in the ensuing sections of this introduction and throughout the thesis, but for now, what must crucially be noted at this point is the following:

While the thesis to a greater or lesser extent harnesses the select ideas of those generally recognised within (war) photography scholarship or visual culture, either here as part of a review, critically or by way of re-appropriation or incorporation, it aims for the most part in these instances neither to fiercely contest nor necessarily to advance any intradisciplinary theoretical critique. Rather, contestation and critique is *performatively instantiated* in the course of the analyses and discussion of the target objects themselves - the imagery, and the myriad processes entailed in their production, reception and viewer collaboration.

In effect then, the above-mentioned key figures provide, inter alia, a set of grounding theoretical and conceptual co-ordinates - thematically, methodologically, or ethico-politically - which have come to dominate the field of war/conflict and photography. I have identified

those elements of eminent authors working critically in visual culture who have done much to inspire scholarly imagination, and serve at the very least as an inaugural point of embarkation for this research.

To encapsulate, I engage with a combination of disciplinary discourses one might expect to see in relation to the topic, i.e., along the lines of visual culture, and media and cultural studies scholarship. But it also deploys, applies, appropriates and makes strategic reference to less usual discourses or literatures in accordance with the debate, topic or idea under discussion. Its theoretical ambit thus extends to corporate and land law, psychoanalysis, forensic architecture, experimental geography, Marxian and post-structuralist critical theory, computer science, interactive mathematics, ethical and continental philosophy, and philosophical aesthetics. This "boundary-blurring" and free-ranging approach is fundamental to the aims and objectives of the thesis: the critical exploration and development of fresh vocabularies for the understanding and witnessing of power and its forms of violence must, I contend, draw on the "distributed sensibility"¹⁴ of a rich range of scholarly sources to have effective and probative scholarly purchase, or noteworthy visual cultural impact.

The chosen conceptual constellation in each chapter, and overall, anchors or co-ordinates the critical and methodological explorations, but the approach I have fashioned in this thesis towards my "reading" or treatment of the imagery and subject matter of visibility is one that has its roots chiefly in the ideas of Jacques Rancière ("dispositif") and Fred Ritchin (co-creativity, collaboration). To a lesser but still noteworthy extent, it also draws on draws W.J.T. Mitchell (in particular the agency of images, 2005, and the idea of an "image science", 2015).

The term *dispositif* has a long history in critical French theory, invoked famously by Foucault and Deleuze, amongst others, as a methodological tool to encompass the heterogeneity of the discourses and practices that in their unwieldy totality constitute any “episteme” or system of power. In plain translation, the word has multiple meanings, such as device, system, plan, contrivance, arrangement, apparatus, ensemble.¹⁵ Rancière’s usage, however, is the one I adopt here, intended specifically in relation to visualisation: it is used critically to describe a ‘multiplicity of heterogeneous elements [...] held together by the force and strategy of critique.’ (Chambers, 2013: 125) (see also below under Post-photography). One further source of inspiration for a "collaborative" approach to the viewing of imagery, its co-visualisation, as it were, derives from the perspective of Fred Ritchin on the encounter with still imagery in the modern digital "hypertextual" context. This "hyperphotographic" (Ritchin, 2009) paradigm of our encounter with imagery means that now 'viewers can choose to pursue their own curiosity in a variety of ways. They begin to bear some of the responsibility of collaborator and "co-author" ' (Ritchin, 2009: 110. See also Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 25).

I "marry" my usage of the *dispositif* with the Ritchin-inspired approach to theory-building: using the *dispositif* as at once a theoretical and a collaborative, co-creative and performative tool designed to identify, analyse and further develop the strategies of visualisation adopted by the image-makers and the scholarly vocabularies invoked to explore them. The images treated here have been almost exclusively encountered digitally (albeit most of them are analogue photographs). As such, a co-authorial or collaborative approach such as in this thesis embraces Ritchin's challenge to 'bear some of the responsibility', and is key to the way its conceptual methodology is devised and deployed. For example, Norfolk's Military Sublime is already an important (post-)photographic and theoretical intervention. By way of a critically co-creative analysis of the imagery, I harness the Military Sublime to corporate personhood, seasoning or

thickening it as a strategy of visualisation. In this way the imagery and that to which it ostends takes on an-other dimension and opens visualisation out to further enquiry, discovery, meaning and, indeed, speculation. The later parts of the thesis see the methodology moving towards a more distinct blend of forensic investigation and creativity-incentivised theory-building, if you want. Scholastic interpretation of imagery is always already a creative process, as is any kind of framing/reframing of visually apprehended phenomena. How we respond as scholars/viewers both to art-documentary imagery and to the challenge *ourselves* to visualise that which it is such imagery seeks to show, reveal or point towards is what is at stake here: in other words, there is a metalevel self-reflexive reconsideration of one's role as viewer/scholar of the nexus of war, power, in/visibility and the visually abstract. Such (inter/trans) disciplinary self-reflexivity over one's scholarly practices is, of course, nothing new. Here though, it is allied with the idea of theory-building and creative interpretation as performative and collaborative acts and processes which are closely entwined.

How does this differ, precisely, from the "ordinary" creativity inherent in interpretation of whatever stripe: iconological, semiological, rhetorical, psychoanalytic, and so forth?

To answer this, we first need to consider for a moment the way in which an emphasis on the visual now features across a broad spectrum of humanities and social science disciplines: media studies, visual cultural studies, international relations and security studies, memory studies, visual communications/sociology to name just a handful of formal academic disciplines has taken a pictorial or visual 'turn' (Mitchell, 2005; Jay, 2002), which marks the 'historical emergence of the field of vision as a site of power and social control', leading to 'a new consideration of the role of the visual, of perception, of images, and of the technologies and subjectivities that are embroiled in these relations.'¹⁶ For example, in fields not normally

associated with an enthusiasm for the visual, like politics and international relations, there is a steady move away from their empiricist and positivist roots to place emphasis on the more hermeneutic traditions of visual culture in relation to the visual turn in IR and its sister disciplines like security studies (see Kirkpatrick, 2015).

In their visual turn these disciplines rely unsurprisingly for their methodological orientation on established, extant approaches and inspirations. Iconology, for example, lends itself particularly well across disciplines to a broad range of issues to include the representation of pain, suffering, death, and atrocity; in particular, genocide (with the Holocaust being the twentieth century genocidal event predominant in the literature on the representation of atrocity), commemoration and memory studies, the body, gender, race, and othering in war (see Zelizer, 1998, 2010; Taylor, 2003; Konstantinidou, 2007; Müller et al., 2012; Zerwes, 2014; Dunleavy, 2015; Jakob and Risso, 2017; Campbell and Critcher, 2018). The semiological tradition, on the other hand, seems to work better in the consideration of ideology, powers' symbols, securitization and surveillance, although there are many examples which straddle concerns relevant to or typical of more than one formal discipline, such as security and gender studies (see Heck and Schlag, 2013) or memory and security, memory, security and risk (see Subotic, 2018; Hoskins and Tulloch, 2016). But whether it be iconological, semiological, psychoanalytic, in the phenomenological hermeneutic tradition, rhetorical, tropological or any other method or amalgam of methodologies that is deployed or performed in the analysis of the visual or encounter with "real" phenomena at a visual level, the prevailing approach across the disciplinary board to visibility by and large still adheres to a basic ethos of prioritising the image, or the phenomenon "visualised", as *true object* of analysis.

My attempt to depart from this model of conduct, or "way of seeing", is based firstly in a fundamentally modern, common, and now very familiar philosophical or epistemological presupposition: namely, that the nature of "objectivity" or the relation between the subjective and the objective (in understanding "the real") is at best very slippery and unstable. Likewise is our understanding what evidence of the real *is*, how to "evaluate" it, and what ethico-political conclusions - contingent upon precise contexts - to draw from this. Finally, we are, as humanists schooled in the historical wake of modernity and the Enlightenment tradition (regardless of whether a particular orientation is "liberal" or "conservative"), actively compelled to act upon, or exercise empowered agency, in the wake of what is essentially an intellectual-creative conviction. There is nothing "wrong" with this. However, there is always, and will always be, scope for change and revision of the way we do things and see things so as to optimise the emancipatory or life-affirming potential of our efforts. For this thesis one of the ways of achieving this is precisely through a communitarian spirit of public ownership of ideas, creativity and responsibility of the understanding of our world and how we (violently, peacefully) (re)create it and act upon it. For this thesis, there is no longer simply a true object of analysis, but rather a true objective, as I have just articulated it. The decision to merge in (negative) dialectical, Adornian fashion the objective and the subjective, the subject-object, and to "run" science and creativity, forensics and hermeneutics, data and imagination together is just that exploratory attempt to re-new our "vision" of power, violence, and horror, and attendant upon this renewal, find fresh ways to intervene as image-makers, viewers and scholars.

Technically and methodologically-speaking then, the decision, especially in the latter parts of the thesis, to run the objective and subjective together, the forensic-material and the subjective-imaginary entails a refusal to prioritise either the product or the process (as does Campbell et al., 2013), a refusal also to be contained by any one formal method or approach, and one especially that elects to "collaborate" with the image-maker and with the image, with context, text, theory, science and forensics, with data and aesthetics.

Finally, in the spirit of the approach elucidated, I determined that I would indeed "collaborate" with the image-makers with whose work I engaged, rather than adopting the position typically associated with art historical and literary criticism whereby the artist's intentions or biography are irrelevant to the evaluation of the work, or at least regarded as of a distinctly lesser order of significance than, say, socio-political context. My aim was to acquire deeper insight into their respective positions vis-à-vis each other, the notion of a "post-photographic", and a sense of what it is they expected or hoped their work would "achieve". For various reasons not within my control, I was finally able to interview only Ed Clark, which material certainly provided useful information and insight, as demonstrated in that chapter. Whether the lack of such input from the other image-makers would have aided this research or altered the outcomes or findings is difficult to say, especially since - with the exception of Lisa Barnard - the others have been reasonably voluble, eloquently so (as is also evident by way of my citations in the chapters) about their own work and their attitudes towards contemporary photojournalism and image-making practices.

In any event, it was clearly not possible to use the material gleaned from interviewing Clark in any formal qualitative sense for want of comparison, and I was unable to develop the forensic,

investigatory aspects of my methodology further in a more social scientific direction as I had aspired. This deficit remains to be made good in the course of the preparation of this thesis for the purposes of publication.

To summarise: the approach here could be - if a smidgeon self-consciously, hubristically - characterised as a forensic-materialist-*collaborative* way of viewing/witnessing/visualising. The conceptual, investigative, collaborative or co-creative and performative ethos of this kind of spectating could in addition - in the sense of aesthetic sensibility - be seen as an attempt to create a post-authorial, post-fetishist multimedial *habit* of and *habitat* for, viewing and witnessing. It thus also performs a moral pragmatics inspired by the Kantian categorical imperative: it is a duty to perform or enact neighbourly love. It is the embedding of a kind of ethical "decisionism" in the heart of visibility, visual culture, and ways of seeing.

It is an approach which is open to free association and "undisciplined" flow in the interests of putting one's proverbial best foot forward in the challenge to twenty-first century power and its in/visible forms of violence.

3.1 Critical Review of Literatures, Debates and Concepts

To reflect the basic structure of the thesis, I shall deal firstly with the war photography literature most relevant to the first three chapters, in loosely chronological order of the significance, but taking up firstly Susan Sontag and spanning such key words as complicity, secondary witnessing and spectatorship. Whilst I refer in general to the individual contributions of authors

to war photography discourse, for the purposes of this thesis, far more relevant are those aspects of their ideas I have identified here which most resonate with the themes treated in this research.

The visualisation of power and violence began for this research with the ethico-political considerations of remote or "secondary witnessing" of the viewer (a term introduced by Dominic LaCapra, 1998). It is a term often deployed here and for the avoidance of doubt defines the remote, mediated, spectator/viewer of photographic or filmic war imagery. The image-maker herself straddles the blurred boundary between primary (direct) and secondary (remote/mediated) witnessing. She mediates and frames what or how she sees on the ground but to that extent she too is "always already" a secondary witness, a remote spectator, a "distant/distanced" viewer.

Sontag's *On Photography* (Sontag, 1977) written in the wake of the Vietnam War and the US public agonistics of its media representation and viewing (Griffin, 2010), would thus be an opportune place to begin the discussion. In this work, Sontag famously argues that repeated exposure to images of atrocity in the media inured the viewer affectively against them, resulting in detachment and "compassion fatigue". She much later moderates this in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Sontag, 2003), where she pauses to reflect upon whether our digital image saturation still affords us the ethical and affective wherewithal for care and compassion, and whether the "spectacle" (Debord, 1994) of 24/7 atrocity still has the power to shock us. She writes

People don't become inured to what they are shown [...] because of the *quantity* of images dumped on them. It is passivity that dulls feeling. The states described as apathy, moral or emotional amnesia, are full of feelings; the feelings are rage and frustration. (Sontag, 2003:89-90)

The rage of which Sontag writes here is that underlying resigned impotence; the rage is eminently political, whilst the passivity is the stymied range of possible reactions (rage) defused or contained at an affective (rather than ethico-epistemic) level: either through lack of affect, or its useless "excess". Most interesting for the complicity debate embarked on at the outset of this thesis is Sontag's proposition that it is in fact the sympathetic response which is the most problematic, since it implies a distancing between "us" and "them" and a failure to recognise and understand our own complicity in the suffering of others, here not on the level merely of looking, but of citizenry itself (Sontag, 2003; 91-2).¹⁷ Such an insight is one of the few that steadily underpins the reflections of this thesis on complicity and the witnessing and visualisation of violence. Complicity as a form of Kantian moral imperative must be strategically and tactically divorced from the hobbling register of affect if such imagery is to function as anything other than a fuel for either voyeurism or guilty self-laceration. Further, the ethics of looking - the directed, compassionate but relatively detached gaze of the viewer - is not so easily sloughed off in respect of abstract or nonhuman imagery such as suggested by Andersen and Möller (2013), for reasons discussed in more detail in this thesis.

Looking at, or gazing upon horror in this thesis is not limited to secondary looking, or exclusively to the gaze of the viewer upon an inanimate (or filmically/digitally animated) image. Hannah Arendt's reflections on citizen complicity in the wake of the Shoah (Arendt, 1958, 2003) proffer a useful counter-ballast to an unexamined guilt-ridden temptation to assume one's complicity in violation, either as passive bystander (Arendt's critical context is not an exclusively visual/photographic one) or as secondary witness to the violation of the other. Arendt problematises this view, discussed in detail in Chapter One, laying some of the groundwork for a later critical engagement with, to my mind, the problematic views of Andersen and Möller (Andersen and Möller, 2013) in respect of complicity in relation to post-

photographic image-making. I contend that the Sontag-Arendt conceived complicity debate has been too cavalierly and prematurely dispensed with in recent scholarship on post-photographic war imagery and I revive and expand its terms, extrapolating to the twenty-first century post-photographic context.

Butler's forceful, Foucauldian, Levinasian and feminist-inspired approach (2004, 2009) to power, to human (inter)subjectivity and the vulnerable other, to mourning and grief, to state violence and to civic complicity constitutes in important ways the ethico-politically concrete and meaning-full bedrock of the metalevel theorising which drives this thesis about the conditions of possibility of and for the more abstract visualisation of power and its forms of violence. What I mean here is, for example, Butler's percipient analysis of the US-led "war on terror" in the wake of 9/11, and the attendant civil militarisation of society and the resurgence in right wing nationalism and identity politics of various stripes across Western democracies. She views these developments as effectively delineating the new extrajudicial parameters of modern warfare as it is waged by the West. The implications for what is now considered to be morally acceptable or defensible, the very normalisation of which feeds into the heart of governmentality, hence global commerce, is nothing less than monumentally significant for the "shape of humanity" in the twenty-first century.

Aside from this, and on a more conceptually specific note, Butler's trenchant and now well-rehearsed insights concerning the framing of photographic images implicitly or overtly informs much of the discussion or its underpinning. Butler's challenge to the view that the photograph itself is mute, hermeneutically indeterminate and not capable of offering any preferential interpretation, is often referred to in secondary literature and lies at the heart of her conception

of framing. She avers that our way of seeing an image can be compelled in a given direction in accordance with strategic (media-)military framing: in other words, the frame is "always already" there. In an oft-quoted excerpt, she asserts:

[...] we cannot understand the field of representability simply by examining its explicit contents, since it is constituted fundamentally by what is left out, maintained outside the frame [...] the operation of the frame, where state power exercises its forcible dramaturgy, is not normally representable - and when it is, it risks becoming insurrectionary and hence subject to state punishment and control. (Butler, 2008: 73)

Like the Derridean idea that the footnote in a text often conveys or betrays its repressed meaning, Butler is positing that it is what is omitted, occluded from the frame that is the most significant in terms of understanding how the image might conduce towards a tendentious way of seeing "it" : that is, the image itself and that to which the image purports to refer: reality as it "constructs" it. In *Frames of War*, Butler is tentatively setting down a marker for increased scrutiny of precisely that which escapes visual frames - the invisible, intangible relations, structures, systems of power and its violence/violations.

Further, it is in this occluded or in/visible, ex-framic zone that one is to find the operative mechanisms of its construction, and accordingly, the construction of (its) reality. If one is to accept Butler's view for now, interpretation of the image is effectively "pre-imposed" and we are subliminally, passively or unwittingly guided towards a particular understanding or reception of the image. A paradigmatic example of such propagandistic (pre)framing resides in the obvious context of an embedding, but the point Butler makes is a larger one than that, encompassing but not exclusive to it. Framing is a process which occurs the moment the image-maker picks up the camera and points it; the moment the viewer "reads" the image in her morning tabloid. The exclusion, selection, and the deployment of certain iconic tropes in photographic representations, for example, would present the public with a purposive

construction of "reality" in the services of a state-military securitist strategic narrative justifying a "war on terror" or other acts of war/warfare (Thorup, 2010), and any flagrant defiance of the prescribed frame or set of frames risks not only censure/censorship, but 'state punishment and control' (Butler; supra). When used as evidence of (war) crime, Butler observes that the photograph is already considered/(re)constituted within the context of the law, of legal truth (Butler, 2009; 81) and is thus subject (in the jurisdiction of the US military tribunal in any event) to legal-instrumental and adversarial rules and standards of evidence. An act of barbarism depicted by an image-maker who was by that fact necessarily an active participant in that act (Abu Ghraib imagery) still presents a culpability conundrum to judicial reason. This is but one example of the already problematic nature of the photograph when considered as a (humanitarian) means of acquiring/presenting evidence in the ostensible service of ethico-political (re)action. We see this issue arising in various ways, for example, in respect of *The Day Nobody Died* (Chapter Three) and in certain images presented in the *Negative Publicity* (Chapter Six) series.

One of Butler's chief concerns has been to "restore" the occluded humanity, vulnerability and "grievability" of those the concerned (or apathetic) West frame or perceive as voiceless victims. The denial of "the other" entails in dialectical fashion the ethico-political vacuity at the heart of the "moral" response of the culpable West to the effects of its "terror-democracy" (Harrison, 2008). In this, Butler and Azoulay's ultimate commitment to challenging the imperialist othering of the asymmetrically vanquished or oppressed - such as Palestinian noncitizens, Iraqi hotel employees, Yazidi schoolgirls - meets in their insistence upon the continuing vital role of photojournalism as a means of fulfilling a civic duty of care to show, to represent, to evidence, to discourse and to act. However, Azoulay (2012) draws on both Benjamin and Arendt in her formulation of the "citenry of photography": her conviction that inherent in the power of the

photographic image to open up to us other worlds which we would not ordinarily encounter is the power also to visualise alternative worlds beyond those we inhabit, and to deploy the intersubjective tool that is photography to exercise an emancipatory civic imagination in the visualisation of a social, public sphere beyond the historical, ideological, political confines of oppressive power. Again, she is inspired by Arendt whose conception of power favours the more optimistic slant that true power resides in the political will to collective action (Arendt, 2013[1958]). But it remains the fact that, for Azoulay it is most crucially a question of the cultural, legal, politico-ideological conditions of visibility under or through which it becomes possible to show or even "see" state violence, especially where human beings are "noncitizens". This insight, this ethos is quintessential to the post-photographic project to visualise power and its forms of violence, as paradoxical as that at first glance sounds. For the desire to visualise power/horror - in its in/visible and less publicly accessible or intangible manifestations is but the foundational step in the teleological direction of emancipatory travel, which I argue is the direction in which the post-photographic, at its most broadly conceived, moves. In any event, Azoulay is keenly aware of how photographic imagery is both a force for oppression and for resistance. It serves both hegemony and dissidence equally. This is why it is incumbent upon us as image-makers/viewers/users and scholars to actively valorize any attempt to grapple critically and diligently with state-military-media framing (mediatization) in order strategically to loosen the ideological webs that ensnare and deform creative critical potentials to envisage, and demand, something Other for hurt others, and thus ourselves.

In this vein, Susie Linfield (Linfield, 2010) recasts the complicity-conscious notion of Western voyeurism as a humanitarian duty: it is a misplaced sensibility which insists upon "averting the eyes", and as she somewhat polemically but justifiably argues, the self-loathing remonstrations of photography theorists and scholars achieves nought but just that hand-wringing ethico-

political vacuity of response intimated above. For Linfield it is a fundamental necessity - as it is for Sontag, Butler and Azoulay, inter alia - to probe our human capacity for violence, for barbarism, to equip ourselves with the best chance of understanding our bloody history/beleaguered contemporaneity.¹⁸ And it is photojournalism once again that proffers the prototypical mechanic-digital means better to visualise the horror of which we are capable. As per the foregoing argument, an art-documentary engagement with the socially abstract manifestations of power and its forms of violence which is the topic here shares mediatic, professional, civic, discursive, and digito-technological space with photojournalism as professionally/socially conceived. Indeed, the boundaries between the way in which the image-makers here conceive of and execute their projects is not so easily separable from the way in which this occurs at levels of the artistic, evidential, practical, logistical or commercial exigency - the boundaries are blurred at all these levels. So it is that a recognition of and concerned/dissident response to the deeply nihilistic nature of modern warfare perceived by Linfield is regarded here as an intrinsic "duty" - both for responsive, citizen-engaged "action-photojournalism" and for the slower, more sequestered, meditative image-making processes deployed within the emergent post- photography of war.

While this thesis focuses on art-documentary representations, it is, of course, only through the contemporary post-photographic grappling with mediatized framing - photojournalism - (whether professional or social/citizen, or a hybrid thereof) that the role and power of this loosely emergent species of image-making explored here (in quasi-pilot project fashion) is possible. To this extent, the contributions of Sontag, Butler, Azoulay and Linfield are eminently relevant to the arguments propounded here. Where Butler strives via Levinas to "face up" to the precarious other, predicating any ethico-politically meaningful response to state violence upon a fully (re)cognised intersubjective relation to the precarious, grievable other, Azoulay

advocates for an equality of political agency the capacities for which (whether adversarial or resistance) are afforded unique outlet and purchase by way of the photographic image. It is this "civil contract" of photography which enables anyone, she avers - the stateless, the denied, the othered - to pursue political agency and resistance through photography. Stuart Allan's "citizen witness" (Allan, 2013) may be an entitled Western observer or a dispossessed and bereft noncitizen, but both, when armed with a smartphone and sufficient bandwidth (and one ought here to be mindful of the many millions across the global digital divide who are not) may exercise their political agency as virtual "equals" (theoretically-speaking).

Even where they plead for attention to the ex-framic in/visible, these seminal ideas are largely embedded within the scopic paradigm of the visible; where even the invisibility of state violence is construed within a dominant conceptual framework of the revelation of the (violent) event, the ex-framic, the Other perspective. Butler's precarious and "un/grievable" lives, and Azoulay's non-citizens are brought sharply and humanely into critically self-reflexive focus, and their noted scholastic advocacy attests powerfully to the ongoing dissident potentials of ethico-politically engaged discourse within the Humanities. But in summary, these authors - flagbearers of the ethics and politics debates around war photography in the second half of the twentieth century - are concerned at an *evental* level with state violence. Azoulay writes that

The study of disaster should *reframe its objects as an event* involving all those affected by it - both its perpetrators and their accomplices, as well as those who are its direct victims. This enables one to rethink the body politic and its formations as a fundamental component of disaster (Azoulay, 2014: 128)(my italics)

This same insight can be, I contend, extrapolated to the study of power, of state-corporate-military forms of violence within a globally corporatized and mediatized twenty-first century "war"-scape. For this thesis, however, a paradigm shift comes into operation in respect of the scopic regime of the visible. WJT Mitchell wrote about a 'visual' or 'pictorial turn' within the

humanities and social sciences in the 1990s (Mitchell, 1994); the "turn" for this thesis is towards the visualisation of the in/visible: socially abstract, systemic, state power and (its forms of) violence. The research topic effectively turns to seeing and looking from the "abyss-mal" perspective of that which is often simply not available to view because its ontology is fundamentally abstract. It partakes of a Foucauldian relational, discursive, functional, manifestly diffuse expression, and in a twenty-first century globally digitized, corporatized neoliberal dispensation, the "logic" of such power sees it being historically better than ever and to an unprecedented degree able to normalise, indeed socialise, inordinate violence at the very heart of human endeavour, economy, and industry. It "transcends" its own normative or ideological, cultural, institutional and socio-political expressions to burrow deeply into the very motor of social reproduction, the telos of which is one committed to "perpetual war" (Kennedy, 2016).

The intangibility of systemic and structural state-corporate-military violence has, to be sure, its brutally concrete manifestations, some of which are the very topic itself of the image-makers engaged here - machines of surveillance and killing, governmental and judicial architectures, political credos, classified operations and "black sites". But in an ontological register, power and violence as socially abstract processes with invisible, intangible but very real effects, grants little or no scopic purchase to the epistemic gaze, as it were. That is, the habit of visibility that looks in the demand and the expectation that what it "sees" is translatable into knowledge, into the "real" and the intellectually tractable. Such a notion of visualisation is analogous to Mirzoeff's imperial or colonial visibility, which only a self-conscious counter-visibility can effectively challenge. Seeing abstraction is not only a process of epistemic discovery though; it is deeply creative, conceptual, exploratory, interactive and collaborative. The challenge to "see" entails more and other than an articulation of what can

or must be made publicly visible. Social abstraction and public visibility are by definition incommensurable "phenomena". My conviction is that a new conceptual framework, a new lexicon has to be slowly and gradually configured to begin to meet the challenge of seeing socially abstract forms of violence. Having absorbed the lessons of Sontag, Butler, Linfield, Azoulay et al, it thus behoves us to proceed "beyond" the dominant scopic regime yet underpinning their valuable insights, and add to this hallowed set of theoretical tools new and bespoke equipment for the forging of an appropriate anvil to recast the in/visibility problematic.

As I demonstrate, these contributions are arguably key amongst the eminent cluster of theorists whose ideas inform and inspire the topic under discussion. They constitute in part an historical point of departure, and in part a set of subtending presuppositions, for the theoretical discussions and critical analyses developed and advanced in this thesis. However, as I maintain, theoretical war photography literature from Brecht, Barthes, Sontag through Butler to Azoulay, et al, is yet positioned largely in a *scopic paradigm of the visible*, in the zones of war, conflict, neo-colonial or imperialist occupation, devastation and "humanitarian" crisis. Although both Butler and Azoulay, for example, both mordantly address American foreign policy and the in/visible ideological or conceptual frames whereby it is shaped and represented, they nonetheless, and necessarily, remain committed to an emancipatory dissidence at the level of the human.

Even drone photography and the recent enthusiasm within photography theory for "drone aesthetics" - such as that pioneeringly represented by the aesthetic visualisations of Harun Farocki and Omer Fast (see Danchev, 2016; Maurer, 2016) partakes of this object-of-the-gaze

centred scopic regime. These scholars, alongside other eminent voices writing on war and photographic representation, are committed by and large to the field of the visible; the visible effects of state violence and oppression. It is my contention that a concern with visualisation is not *ipso facto* to be aligned with or rooted in the discursive parameters of Western ocularity and its scopic order(ing). Seeing outside of it necessitates a self-conscious leap of faith beyond the scopic. Continued and persistent attention to the brute, *visible* ravages of asymmetrical power is absolutely *necessary*, as is the crucial objective of traditional photojournalism to harvest however and wherever possible some form of visual evidence (as problematic as we know this concept and its operation to be) of suffering, slaughter, oppression and (hybrid/proxy wars of) attrition in the (plural, contested) public, humane, political and legal interest. But it is also unfortunately *insufficient*. If one seeks to address the covert, in/visible or intangible levers of state-corporate-military violence, then it is arguably not, not only, or not primarily, to the theatres of war and the ravaged lands of "humanitarian crisis" that one must direct one's concerned or dissident gaze. The socially abstract violence of warfare and the state-corporate-military power that brokers it is often very far from manifest; "in any event" (as it were), certainly not to the naked - or mechanical - eye. Critical visuality in respect of in/visible power/violence, however, has to make strategic decisions as to how best *visually/imaginatively* to skewer the analytics of the latter. Revised and reconfigured conceptual constellations, an updated analytical lexicon, and a revisited methodological framework are all essential to the *strategic visualisation of in/visible power/violence*.

It is in some senses blindingly obvious that new conceptual and visual vocabularies are required for the challenge of a different kind of re-presentation of twenty-first century experience. But in another sense, photographic abstraction in relation to the social has been

around since the earliest manifestations of "art" photography at the turn of the twentieth century. To ensure that the foregoing arguments and rationale for this research is firmly historically embedded where possible, I proceed in the next section of this introduction to consider the phenomenon of photographic or visual abstraction as a cultural chronological moment.

3.2 Historical Background

Akin to Modernist abstraction in the Fine Arts over the last century, emerging practices of a more conceptual, dissident photography shares with Modernism not only a suspicion of Realism, but also a radical opposition to the violence of war and the depredations of power. The concerns of abstract art were thus, like much abstract photography, eminently social, political, dissenting (we could probably all name at least one famous abstract work that treats of the horror of war: Picasso's *Guernica*), and the different styles share a way of seeing which is elegantly captured by the Abstract Expressionist, Arshile Gorky: "Abstraction allows man to see with his mind what he cannot physically see with his eyes." (Nimmer, 2017). The visualisation of twenty-first century war, power and its forms of violence demands just such seeing: with the mind, rather than the eyes, or the eyes "only".

Indeed, abstraction in photography generally has existed since the earliest days of Modernism.¹⁹ Walter Benjamin was possibly the first philosopher/theorist to recognise abstraction in landscape photography of the early twentieth century. In commenting on the imagery [see Figure 0.1] of the photographer Eugene Atget, Benjamin writes,

The remarkable thing about these pictures [...] is their *emptiness*. [...] They are not lonely, but they lack atmosphere [...] They are the achievements of a surrealist

photography which *presages a salutary estrangement between man and his environment, thus clearing the ground for the politically-trained eye* [...] this *new way of seeing* is least at home where indulgence was most common: in the remunerative, representative portrait-photograph. On the other hand, *photography cannot do without people*. (Benjamin, 1972[1931]:21)(my italics)

The italicised phrases in this excerpt perspicuously encapsulates the way in which the medium of photography can be used to represent or express phenomena beyond the figural, portrait/person-centred uses to which art/documentary photography was predominantly put at the time, and since then in relation to the photographic or photojournalistic documentation of war and conflict. The relations between painterly Surrealism and abstraction is too art-historically specific to treat here, suffice it to say that in its photographic incarnation, the 'estrangement between man and his environment' is 'salutary' in my view precisely because it decentres the human and foregrounds social environment. Those details which were regarded as peripheral take centre stage, and the evocative and ostensive power of the 'emptiness' conduces towards an "other" and 'new way of seeing', one which is far more likely to afford the viewer the contemplative space to develop a 'politically-trained eye'. These words apply equally to contemporary abstract or non/inhuman post-photography.

Further, Benjamin also with remarkable prescience espies a problem in the emptiness: 'photography cannot do without people.' From an ethical perspective, I argue that the occlusion of "the face" presents a conundrum for politically-motivated photography, an issue pursued in some detail in Chapters One and Two.

Even some time prior to the advent of aesthetic modernism, "empty" landscapes provided for war photography itself a symbolic canvas which could be compared to contemporary war/crisis/socio-economic demise Aftermath photography, of the likes of Allan Sekula, Sebastião Salgado, Jo Ratcliffe, Guy Tillim and Simon Norfolk to name but a handful. One

such early iconic case in point is Roger Fenton's Crimean War image *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*, 1855 [Figure 0.2]²⁰. Unpeopled, war-torn landscapes have been an especially popular theme in Aftermath photography, showcased to poignant effect by Norfolk as well [Figure 0.3]. The still and haunting nature of these "empty" war spaces lends them a distinctly abstract quality, again, inviting a reflective, meditative viewing, which is by no means untroubled by questions of perspective, veracity, and meaning.

Caroline Brothers cites the French social scientist Henri Hudrisier, speaking of his photographs of the war in Algeria (1954 - 62), writing that he regards photography as essentially 'the site for the construction of "a sort of abstract history."' (Brothers, 1997: xiii) In other words, even if the images show or gesture towards human figures, specific events, concrete situations, the photographic medium cannot be treated as providing a transparent record of reality or of "history" - it is in this sense a quintessentially ostensive rather than representative medium. That being the case, the photographic representation of any one "event" is a sore site of contesting views and narratives. That photography is not a means to record reality objectively or impartially is now a view that has become "received wisdom" amongst photography theorists and visual culture scholars, and one would be hard-pressed to find any scholarship which suggests otherwise. The view was seminally reinforced by John Tagg in *The Burden of Representation* (Tagg, 1988) which critically probed the functional and tendentious uses of photography as evidence, record or documentation in a variety of contexts, to include courtrooms, hospitals, police investigations, state administrative tools such as permits, passports and licences, etc. He proffered what at the time was a unique insight into the way in which photography was used, amongst other things, as a force for social regulation. The socially abstract nature of both power and its forms of violence - to include in some respects control through regulation - and the role or function of art-documentary photography in

visualising this was, it could be argued, being adumbrated in such writing. However, I argue that social abstraction has until recently not been treated in photography and its discourses in relation *specifically* to the diffuse, systemic and increasingly intangible nature of twenty-first century state-*corporate*-military power and its forms of violence. This deficit of attention in critical or dissenting image-making practices - and in attendant scholarship - is the prime mover of my research here.

Notwithstanding the foregoing insights, for war photojournalism/photography, the visible violence of conflict and its manifest and harrowing effects has understandably been the conventional focal point of war/crisis photography; necessarily so. However, this alone is arguably insufficient as a means of - or way of - "seeing" contemporary power in its less visible, systemic semblance. There is far more beneath the flesh wounds and the bombarded ruins that is happening. As Robert Hariman pithily observes, 'War has changed, and photography has changed' (Hariman, 2014: 83). The advent of instantaneous electronic and digital information and communications technologies is the now familiar backdrop to and dynamic context of a radical transformation in modern warfare. **The media ecology (see below) in which we are daily immersed, with its inestimably expanded field for news and image consumption and co-creation/contestation has heralded a demotic²¹ dynamism in the sharing of personal and political experience. Suffice it to observe - for our purposes here - that there is abundant evidence across media platforms of this demotic "decentralisation" of the witnessing and visualisation of war/"war" beyond the erstwhile parameters of traditional news culture and production (Matheson and Allan, 2009; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Zelizer and Allan, 2011; Lister, 2013; Allan, 2013, 2013a; Kennedy and Patrick, 2014; Batchen et al., 2014).**

In sketching out the terrain of this changing modern warfare, Matheson and Allan write incisively that

Voices from within the military and strategic communities are heralding the astonishing speed of change in war-fighting tactics, many of which have been ushered in by advances in digital computers and related types of communications hardware [...] bold claims made about 'cyberwar' often invoke the military concept of Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) as a means to explain how the character and conduct of military operations are evolving. Singled out for attention are the *technological imperatives* engendering these changes, especially with regard to *globalized security networks*, so as better to anticipate how warfare will be waged in the future. (Matheson and Allan, 2009: 10) (my italics)

The technological advances in and digitally-driven nature of warfare and global security and surveillance operations referred to by Matheson and Allan is one of the particular areas of focus for the image-makers here, who are all determined to subject the 'character and conduct of military operations' as they have and are evolving to critical visual scrutiny. It is also, especially for Simon Norfolk and Trevor Paglen, the 'global security networks' that provide fertile fodder for the dissenting and concerned witness.

Indeed, since Matheson and Allan's book of 2009, such a revolution in military and security affairs has continued feverishly apace with an ever-increasing sophistication of the digital (and nascent quantum) technologies of vision, remote aerial targeting and panoramic battlefield "situational awareness,"²² virtually (as it were) consigning to military history the notion of a "whites of the eyes"²³ killing field confrontation with the enemy. All these developments are highly lucrative for the arms industry, and impossible without the research, development, design, manufacture and testing of the technologies, the hardware and the software within that industry and its stakeholders. With global arms spending estimated variously to have been between \$1.57 trillion and \$1.69 trillion in 2016 (Tovey, 2016; Amnesty International, 2017), the transnational corporate investment in arms equipment alone - quite aside from all the

ancillary service and support activities surrounding it - eminently justifies the question of its visualisation.²⁴ A traditional broadsheet report may stagger us with figures and statistics, but these arguably fall short of the representational mark when it comes to imaging the "social totality" of the myriad global effects of such a systemically entrenched militarist transnational socio-economics. It is a subject taken up - or rather, visualised - here especially in relation to the imagery of Norfolk, Paglen and Barnard.

The scintillating plethora of technologies, tools, platforms for the visual representation and documentation of power and war in this labile and challenging environment demands of image-makers an equally dynamic, evolving and transforming/transformational *mode of visualisation*. The latter is not "only" a new "way of seeing," but also a more tactical and strategic "way of knowing"- utilising the agency of visualisation persistently to bore into twenty-first century power and its forms of violence.

In terms of visual culture scholarship concerning war and photography, falling back on a liberal-humanist hermeneutics of ideological oppression, a harrowing iconology of atrocity, or an orientalist semiotics of violent imperialism, no longer suffices in the endeavour to grapple with the *in/visibility* of modern forms of violence. As intimated above, Butler and Azoulay certainly approach this crossroads with vigour and perspicacity. Nonetheless, as averred, their conceptual framework is one still largely and, as I view it, necessarily, embedded in the discursive regime of the scopic. It is thus inaugurally oriented towards revelation and visibility; the *making visible* of power, rendering it more transparent so as to be able to hold it to account (amongst other things). This thesis will take the position, along the lines of Paglen, Lee, Solnit, Wilkinson and Dean that visibility, apparent revelation and transparency, may itself be regarded as a veil which must be rent asunder in order - not necessarily to make visible - but to *visualise*

the socially abstract and very real violence which results from the synergetic play of state-corporate-military (and media) practices, activities, policies and systems. To expose in some modest measure the intractable face(lessness) of social abstraction and systemic opacity - and its staggering normalisation - must certainly amount to one of the most crucial challenges for concerned or dissident image-making and scholarly visualisation alike. If we are to take a sober and practical view of the challenge, there is no reason to suspect that it is an impossible one. As Hoskins and O'Loughlin observe, 'With more of war, conflict and insecurity recorded, stored, transferred and broadcast, there are unprecedented opportunities to trace and map the dynamics of communicating war' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010). In its aesthetic "tracing" and cadastral "mapping" of "war" and Plexus, the imagery examined here springs from just such a deep digital and archival well of material and perspectives.

In summary, this thesis is a critical and creative exploration of the ways in which contemporary art-documentary photography (as distinct from traditional photojournalism or humanitarian photography) is witnessing and representing twenty-first century state-corporate-military power and its forms of violence. Whilst human suffering, trauma, death and displacement as a result of war and conflict is the most brutal and visible manifestation of this violence, this thesis shifts from the erstwhile, habitual focus on direct or manifest forms of violence and their aftermath to the non/inhuman, abstract, and in/visible aspects of the state-corporate-military power enabling and driving such violence: in other words, the thesis for the large part maintains its scopic and scholarly distance from the photojournalistic killing fields - even in terms of the spatio-temporally remote viewing or "secondary witnessing" thereof (Felman and Laub, 1992; LaCapra, 1998, 2001; see below) - and immerses itself rather in the unseen, unusual or abstract spaces of "war" and the power that is its condition of possibility. As Roberts observes (and with which I concur),

[...] across both high cultural and popular domains of capitalist culture, we see the increasing failure on the part of producers to link image-making and the making of meaning to the forces of social abstraction [...] photography is determined not just by what photographers *mean* formally, figurally, but by what photographers *do* as photographers: that is, *where they place themselves, in what spaces, in front of what intransigent forces, and to what ends* (Roberts, 2014: 167/8) (original italics).

Pursuant to Norfolk, Roberts is alluding here to the fact **that traditional (or what was until recently somewhat complacently referred to as "mainstream")** photographic traditions or vocabularies of representation which gravitate predominantly towards visible violence, public(ised) suffering or manifest injustices, for all their urgent necessity and their emancipatory potential, are now found - on their own - wanting by both image-makers and scholars alike. The overriding objective here is to wrestle conceptually *and creatively, collaboratively*, with how contemporary image-makers are seeking - through the 'places/spaces/'intransigent forces' they choose to focus on - *to address the deficit of a visual vocabulary for the understanding and visualisation of twenty-first century power and its forms of violence* in ways which **do** 'link image-making and the making of meaning to the forces of social abstraction.' (Roberts, 2014: 167/8)

In so doing, such praxis is in itself an "index" of seismic shifts in our experience of power/violence and the ways in which we "bear witness" to it now. It is clear that visual culture scholarship²⁵ is undergoing concomitant transformation and, as indicated in the fore-going, I seek to contribute to the identification or development of theoretical vocabularies and creative perspectives which assist in a more nuanced understanding of twenty-first century power, its forms of violence and strategies of and for its critical visualisation.

3.2. Grasping the Socially Abstract: Visualising the Post-photographic

I now proceed briefly to point towards the concepts and authors axiomatic to *the development of this topic beyond the register of scopic visibility and into that of socially abstract in/visibility*. This literature is critically explored within each chapter as it becomes relevant, and so only some signposting is provided here.

In researching and developing a new conceptual framework and lexicon for theorising the visualisation of twenty-first century state-corporate-military, this thesis found fertile ground in an expansive arena of ideas of, inter alia, Jacques Rancière, W.J.T. Mitchell, Giorgio Agamben, James der Derian, Stuart Allan, Hoskins and O'Loughlin, Hariman and Lucaites, Liam Kennedy, John Roberts, Pamela M. Lee, Jayne Wilkinson, Rebecca Solnit, and the image-makers whose work is examined here themselves. They have made significant contributions to the scholarly or critical-creative discourse on witnessing, visualisation, and imagery of war and conflict, and it is their ideas, methodologies or imagery which features in this research. In the following sections, I dovetail the definition or explanation of the "new" vocabulary I have devised or been inspired by in the development of the theoretical positions here with a survey of some of the key ideas in the above-mentioned literature, whilst more chapter-specific ideas or concepts, like those of Lee, Solnit, Wilkinson, Dean and Agamben are dealt with in the relevant sections of the ensuing chapters.

Certain terms also require advance definition in this introduction as these range across, inform, underpin, or are germane to all chapters. These are "War", Plexus, corporate personhood/corporate veil, visualisation, ostension and the post-photographic. Before we come

to the note on methodology and the chapter outlines, a necessary diversion here by way of their introduction - lengthening it slightly beyond the scope of the usual in a dissertation - will ensure that the reader is equipped with the relevant nomenclature from the outset, thus being eased more comfortably into the conceptual "world" of this thesis and hopefully making the experience a more reader-friendly one.

3.3 Traditional vs Social Media?

The term "mainstream media" is eschewed in this thesis in favour of the slightly less problematic (but see below) "traditional" media for the following reasons:

When this research began in 2010/2011, and until at least 18 months to 2 years ago, it was still theoretically (relatively) unproblematic to contrast "mainstream" media with new or social media. This was the language generally adopted (and generally still is) in media and cultural studies (and related fields of enquiry such as visual culture, or the newly "visually-turned" international relations and political studies). However, it is gradually becoming apparent that a straightforward binary oppositional way of contrasting mainstream and new/social media is simplistic and problematic given the way in which traditional corporate media is proving eminently capable of assimilating and adapting to the hybridized-platform communicative techniques and modes of the latter (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Bennett and Segerberg, 2011, 2012; Allan, 2013; Aday et al., 2013). This new "media ecology" (see below) has been demonstrated to powerful effect during US election campaigns over the past decade, culminating in a twenty-first century secular apotheosis of sorts with the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States.

The power of the new media ecology has been identified as largely a result of the formidable logic of collective *and* connective action from (loosely-speaking) liberal and left-leaning through to stolidly nationalist or right-wing persuasions (Chadwick, Dennis, and Smith, 2016; Benkler et al., 2017; Morris, 2018; Boczkowski, Pablo and Papacharissi, 2018; Jackson, 2018). It has become apparent to media observers now that there is no longer (if there ever was) a clear distinction between the "mainstream" and the new, social, or alternative media (and mediums). Nonetheless, despite this blurring of professional, commercial, and technological boundaries, a certain polarization and competitiveness between them is still very much demonstrable in the differences between the older modes of production, formatting, presentation and dissemination of "traditional" centralized and hierarchical broadcast media and newer, diffused, demotic (that is, popular but not necessarily democratic) social media. Chief amongst the differences is precisely the public collective/connective "turn" of new media, not (yet) fully harnessed by "traditional" media.²⁶ For the time-being then, what was/is frequently referred to as the "mainstream" has been provisionally designated instead "traditional", in a practice adopted by other contemporary media scholars (Aday et al, 2013; Benkler et al., 2017; Jackson, 2018). The term "traditional" too is not unproblematic: it is only a matter of time before we start consensually referring to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and so forth as "traditional social media", but used on an *ad hoc* basis to refer to an older mediatic regime, "traditional" shall suffice for the present purposes.

4 Key Concepts

4.1 "War": a Fare of Mediality, Media Ecology and Mediatization

The forms of violence at stake here are in my view deeply and dialectically imbricated. As such, it would be nonsensical to treat them as self-contained, distinct phenomena. In relation to the most brutal, raw and direct manifestation of state-military violence, war, it is because we are here dealing with it as an always mediated phenomenon that it must perforce be referred to as "war". The thesis is not "about" war, as such: it is about the critical and imaginative visualisation of war. It does not "speak to" the historico-political phenomenon of ("unmediated", if that is possible) raw war in that disciplinary, discursive sense. War as it is regarded here is always mediated by and in the visualisations which are explored, examined and critically discussed. It is the contention here that a visual culture discourse on the visualisation of war ought to recognise, to "index" this fact in the way terminology is used, and one axiomatic starting point would be in the distinction between raw war and mediated and mediatized "war". "War" in quote marks, for the avoidance of doubt, has been used in the context of photography theory, such as in Roberts' *Afterimages* (2014), but not in the systematic way it is proposed here, to distinguish it from war in the raw.

It is especially a pertinent use in the context of the analysis of the *post-photographic* visualisation of "war" as these emergent practices are eminently self-reflexive, recognising their own role in the way in which war is mediated. They are aware that what they are showing, ostending towards, is "war", and not war.

Moreover, the digitally-enabled mediatization of *war* sees its media-military narration now increasingly in concert, as a collaboration, the critical (and spatio-temporal, geopolitical) distance between the media and the military having been "virtually" contracted, at least one of the significant effects of which is the creation of mutually reinforcing feedback loop in which

we are all - state actors, citizens, public and private institutions (i.e., governmental/non-governmental and corporate, respectively) caught up. In this global digital communications dispensation, as Hoskins and O'Loughlin succinctly express it,

[...] the planning, waging and consequences of warfare do not reside outside of the media. If we probe the connections between humans, technology and media to interrogate the emergent character of war and terrorism, we find that they all inhabit the same and unavoidable knowledge environment, what we have called our new media ecology. (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 5)

The 'knowledge environment' or 'media ecology' in which this 'emergent character of war' is embedded entails a very close, dynamic and arguably causal relationship between traditional, new/alternative and now social media, the conduct of war and the strategic decisions made on the battlefield itself, to include the role of mediatization in so-called "full spectrum dominance"(See Garamone, 2000; Engdahl, 2011). In terms of the visibility of war, it is the "mediatization" of war that has been possible within a historically specific "media ecology" which dictates the 'symbolic acts of violence central to terrorism, insurgency and, indeed, major military operations.' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 5).²⁷

Although the term media ecology was coined by Marshal McLuhan in the late 1960s, it was greatly expanded upon and theorised by Neil Postman thereafter, and it is Postman's theoretical framework that mostly underpins the scholarly understanding of the concept (Gencarelli, 2009). However, given the trans or interdisciplinarity of its usage, there is no definitive consensus as to its precise meaning, and it is deployed with varying emphases depending upon context. Postman himself writes that it 'looks into the matter of how media of communication affect human perception, understanding, feeling, and value; and how our interaction with media facilitates or impedes our chances of survival', and that 'the word [media] ecology implies the study of environments: their structure, content, and impact on

people' (Postman, 1970). The original definition is thus broad enough to incorporate multiple uses and emphases. Christine Nystrom writes simply that it is 'the study of complex communication systems as environments' (Nystrom, 1973). Krotz emphasizes the social aspect of the term as a research tool, writing that 'Media ecology sees media not only as means of communication, but more as *social environments* akin to any other social environment' (Krotz, in Lundby (ed), 2009), whilst the term has undergone some variation which has produced close alternative conceptions, such as "media environment" (Ruotsalainen and Heinonen, 2015), "media ecosystem" (Boczkowski and Papacharissi, 2018), and "media regime" (Delli Carpini, in Boczkowski and Papacharissi, 2018).

In their own theorization of a diffused war, Hoskins and O'Loughlin also adopt the term media ecology, referring to Cottle's usage and writing that (diffused) war is 'immersed in and produced through a new 'media ecology', manifesting 'through a complex mesh of our everyday media: news, movies, podcasts, blogs, video games, documentaries and so on' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 7). They have argued more recently (see below) how this diffusion is undergoing a phase of 'arrest' by a closer (traditional) media-military mutual accommodation in the framing of warfare and exertion of control over, or shaping of, public perceptions increasingly governed by the mobile, instantaneous, guerilla-like news inputs of an ungovernable social media (O'Loughlin and Hoskins, 2015). But they had already identified in 2010 a compelling argument for a change from representationality to *mediality* in the study of visibility and war. They stress 'the way in which media texts are interwoven into our lives', how 'these representations interact with our everyday media practices', and how mediality is a 'diffuse phenomenon' that is 'often in the background of our media practices' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 27). Mediality thus shifts the focus from a preoccupation with the symbolic content, to the ways and means of mediation, or, if you want, from its products to its processes. This emphasis is linked too to their deployment of

the terms *mediation* and *mediatization*, which they define as follows, relying upon Stig Hjarvard's distinction: Mediation refers to 'communication by means of a *medium* in a specific *social* context'(my italics), whilst mediatization is 'a more long-lasting *process*, whereby social and cultural *institutions* and modes of *interaction* are changed as a consequence of the growth of the media's influence' (my italics) (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010:5; citing Hjarvard, 2008: 114). Their conception of mediatized war or conflict is also informed by Simon Cottle (2006), who propounds it as chiefly the development between the media and the military of an alliance whereby the real-time reporting of conflicts sees a *performative* aspect to its reporting emerging; the media is no longer "passively" observing conflicts but also (re-)enacting or co-creating them. In a digital era dominated by two competing sources of news and information - traditional, "gate-keeping" centralized (erstwhile, in any event) media and decentralized social media - the virtual/digital feedback loops between the media, state-(corporate-)military nexus and the citizen establish a dialectical dynamic whereby the way conflict is reported also has a direct bearing on the geopolitical shape and consequences of that conflict, the foreign policy decisions or trends in attendance, and their further perpetuation. What remains true in contexts of either diffused or arrested war is that 'the planning, waging and consequences of warfare do not reside outside of the media' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 5).

Further, media ecology, being not only about the mediatization of war, entails too the mediation/mediatization of, inter alia, global neoliberal corporatization and the increasingly abstract financialisation of economic activity. In this way the attendant dramatic socio-economic disparities, environmental and "humanitarian" crises become narratively normalised. Whilst these developments in themselves and their implications for, say, international relations and related scholarship is well beyond the disciplinary remit or (non-empirical, theoretical)

methodological parameters of the thesis, these factors ought at the very least be kept in mind as a broad and deep backdrop for what - in the sense of "*Realpolitik*" - drives the post-photographic visualisations of the image-makers discussed here. They do not practice concerned or dissenting image-making because of a digital-media rupture of the art-documentary universe; they visualise critically because of (geopolitical, global, corporate) power and its direct, symbolic, and - the concern of this thesis - systemic/socially abstract violence/violations.

In summary, "War" is frequently written in quotation marks in this thesis with the intention of evoking this broader, more diffuse conception of war/warfare as deeply and dynamically embedded in a media ecology. "War" thus "transcends" geopolitically particular conflicts or war-zones and, when it is used, is used allusively: to refer to or ostend towards the systemic, global mediatization of war, but also of modern warfare, uncontainable within traditional news and visual frames, be they photojournalistic or art-documentary.²⁸

4.2 Plexus: on the Search for a Term

As already intimated above, I adopt a short-hand term to refer to the nexus - or the "social totality" - of power and violence that exceeds any possible framing-whether visual or conceptual : "Plexus". Although we are familiar with its common meaning in the English language, it is not a term that has been used in the context of non-scientific discourse. This is why its rhetorical appropriation in this theoretical and humanities-based thesis may be perceived to be problematic, and so warrants a somewhat extended treatment here by way of explanation, clarification and justification.

Plexus arises out of a detailed engagement with extant terms derived from various scholarly and other sources: the military-industrial complex (MIC) popularised by Eisenhower, Der Derian's state-military-media-entertainment network (MIME-NET) (Der Derian, 2001, 2009), and more recently, the investigative journalist Andrew Feinstein's military-industrial-congressional-complex (MICC) (Feinstein, 2011). Plexus is a concept that both incorporates but also exceeds this nomenclature. These terms are, for the reasons outlined below, thus mostly dispensed with in this thesis in tactical/practical favour of Plexus. On arriving at Plexus, however, it behoves us first briefly to revisit MIC, MICC and MIME-NET in order to understand how Plexus encapsulates but exceeds these terms.

The term "military-industrial complex", which came into common usage after Eisenhower's valedictory speech in 1961,²⁹ whilst suggesting a wary criticism of the US's overweening, militarist response to (communist) threat in the context of the Cold War, serves well to point towards the attendant political lobbying and congressional courting of the state-military by the arms industry. However, it does not necessarily imply a direct criticism of the fundamentally *corporatist* driver within the relations between the state, its military apparatus and corporate power. Although the term does conjure up the massive state-military-industrial juggernaut driving war, it is nonetheless too overdetermined by its historically and contextually specific, post-World War 2, Cold War context. Quite obviously, it does not extend to the more recent global-corporate "war" dispensation sketched out above. It is simply out-of-date. It fails to evoke the "late capitalist" (Jameson, 1991) cultural enmeshment of the state and military domination/violence with the media, communications and entertainment industries. Rather, taken out of its historical, inaugural context, the term military-industrial complex now suggests

a disconnect between it and ordinary (but hypernetworked) people, organisations, businesses and governments going about their daily activities; in other words, the banality and bureaucracy of "war".

For this thesis, the MIC is not just in operation "out there" in off-grid warehouses, perfectly lawful munitions factories or parliamentary/congressional seats of political power, but is very much a phenomenon that is inextricably woven through the economic, administrative and social fabric of our everyday lives in myriad ways; visible/public, invisible/secret or simply unseen/unnoticed. Whilst much of what the state does might be covert, it would be a mistake along the lines of conspiracy theory to regard this in/visibility as *necessarily* a deliberate ploy : in the same way that we do not see the factory where our supermarket loaf is baked, we do not "see" - attend to - the PMSC (private military and security contractor/company) to which the intelligence agencies outsource their detainee transportation and whose registered office is based on your local industrial estate. We wander insouciantly past the software engineer who writes the code which enables the surveillance of our high streets or monitors our private communications.

Further, these utterly mundane state-military ancillary activities are without exception based in commerce, entail a contractual transaction: whether it is for extrajudicial detainee transport, security detail, surveillance software, tea and doughnut provision, media-operations publicity or combatant-training war video games or, indeed, a fleet of flatbed rocket launchers. The legal embodiment of these nuts-and-bolts activities rests in the body, or person, of the corporate entity. The MIC, whilst invoking industry, occludes corporate personhood.

The investigative journalist Andrew Feinstein uses the phrase the "military-industrial-congressional complex" (MICC) in his book *Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade* (2011). Like Noam Chomsky and Liam Kennedy, amongst others, Feinstein is concerned to expose through corroborated detail the position of the US as centrifugal axis of the global military-industrial complex, to which its foreign policy has long and openly attested. He reveals with persuasive witness testimony and persistence the way in which international political-corporate lobbying and furtive backhanding is more or less a business as usual open/public secret, reaching surgically into the venal networks of global (but still US- led) power elites. Feinstein exposes, for example, the depth and breadth of relations between weapons manufacturers, their brokers and middlemen, their well-remunerated "military brass" executives, state and security agents/stakeholders, provincial politicians, and the broader corporate realm all engaging in transactions and activities both legal and borderline legal, if not patently illegal (in terms of either commercial/international trade laws, UN security council decree or international laws of armed conflict). To this extent, the MICC is eminently germane to the broader, frame-busting visualisation of contemporary "war".

However, it too is lacking in that it fails to evoke other aspects of state-corporate-military-media power, such as its embeddedness within twenty-first century hyperconnected/networked society and its increasingly "digital sublime" technologies of war, communications, vision and leisure. This is where Der Derian's more scholarly and conceptually sophisticated investigative journalism does take us closer to what we seek to describe.

The "military-industrial-media-entertainment network" (Der Derian, 2001, 2009) serves well to frame the profound connections between the digital/virtual rendering of perceptual experience and the quasi-ludic/theatrical "playing out" of war, both in real-time military

exercises and in civilian, militarised leisure, gaming activities. Our virtual, multi-platform consumption of war as entertainment inveigles us both subtly and egregiously - if unexamined - into "virtuous war". twenty-first century virtuous war is, for Der Derian, a US-led brand of warfare that arises through the intersection/action of technologies (especially digital communications and military) and a foreign policy humanitarian or military intervention dictated by liberal democratic norms. Moreover, MIME-NET signifies the 'virtual alliance' between the military and the media, a process of mediatization (Cottle, 2006) which ultimately normalises warfare, both "at Home and geopolitically "Elsewhere".

However, for all its usefulness in respect of the mediatization angle of this thesis, MIME-NET is not quite appropriate *per se* for the purposes of evoking the banal, workaday nature of state-corporate-military-media-entertainment power and the systemic economic violence of "war" beyond the virtual. Like MIC and MICC, MIME-NET too is insufficient as a moniker to gesture towards the quotidian, pervasive, neoliberal corporate underwriting of "war". The banal involvement of the remote citizen witness (or the concerned image-maker/viewer) in "perpetual war" (Kennedy, 2016) and in global corporatization *exceeds* extant conceptual and visual frames of reference.

Given the insufficiency of any of these terms for the reasons argued above, it seems that for *any* term to "work" for the purposes of this topic, it has to be both open-ended and critically self-referential. It has to ostend towards both its own contextual use, and beyond itself. This is what Plexus has been devised to do: *to perform both a distinct, or bespoke/ad hoc and methodological function whilst simultaneously ostending immanently towards its own representational insufficiency*. To reiterate, a concept was required which would, on the one hand, encompass the profound, globalized, subjectivity-transforming power of digital

communications' technologies, new media and the entertainment industry, especially the effects of their reciprocal media-military and arms industry harnessing. On the other hand, it had to highlight specifically the *legal-economic* embodiment of power in the person of the corporation (its shareholders), which entities exist purely to accrue profit, an exigency of which is to influence policy. In addition, the term needed to gesture towards the diffuse and open-ended nature of all the civilian and ancillary activities in perpetuating a "war"-based hegemony, in both its grand and mundane manifestations.

As we know, complex phenomena often defy nomenclature and cannot be "totalized" without the chosen terms becoming, theoretically-speaking, reifications. Likewise, any term chosen here to "encompass" something is by its own definition bound to fail on its very own terms; what Jürgen Habermas might call a "performative contradiction" (Habermas, 2015[1985]; see also Morris, 1996)³⁰, in that it cannot "capture" as a signifier what it purports to signify, or ostends towards. Apart from this, any term devised to point towards all and more of the myriad elements discussed here could sound pompous and easily vulnerable to the Adornian/Lukácsian charge of hypostasization³¹ of such complex phenomena, as well as still failing in any event to "index" their (impossible) "totality". It is an epistemological vicious circle. For this thesis, there is no escaping the proto-Nietzschean "non-identification" of any term with its (intended/imagined/conventional) referential meaning. Notwithstanding this, or precisely because of this, I finally resolved to use an extant term; a non-theoretical, ordinary, plain English one, which is rendered bespoke for the purposes of this thesis. And this is how "Plexus" was finally arrived at. It is a suggestive amalgam of plexus, solar plexus and nexus.

Plexus³² is thus proposed here not only for the sake of what this word evokes and/or for stylistic reasons, i.e., to abbreviate, but crucially, because of the fundamentally open-ended, semi-

structured nature of the diffusely systemic, evolving and *sui generis*-seeming forms of power/violence and their conditions of possibility visualised here. Indeed, as just acknowledged above, any term or phrase used in such a way with such frequency could be subject to the criticism that it reifies a phenomenon (abstract or concrete) to its epistemological and/or political detriment. So too could Plexus, which is why this thesis insists upon its very specific, visual cultural use as a methodological tool whereby to contemplate, expose, or in some way challenge the less visible and more socially abstract facets of power and its forms of violence.

Finally, Plexus is strategically posed/positioned as the conceptual and aesthetic “Event Horizon”³³ for visual artists and image-makers across media, genres and platforms in our digitally dependent, neophytically quantum and galaxy challenged era. It represents a kind of Visualisation Frontier beyond which we cannot see/think. In this way, its operation can be seen in, for example, Norfolk's Military Sublime and Paglen's secret satellites.

Immanent to Plexus is corporate personhood and the corporate veil, to which we accordingly turn.

4.3 Corporate Personhood and the Corporate Veil

As mentioned above, as obvious or evident as it seems, at the outset of this research I became increasingly convinced that the term “corporate” *itself* had to be brought definitively to the fore to highlight the fact that there is an inordinate amount of private (and private-public) wealth and power underwriting, supporting, maintaining and perpetuating state-military-intelligence-security-surveillance activities and the foreign policy decisions or strategic narratives which enable and legitimise it. Significantly, this thesis identifies at the core of the activities of

Western state governmentality the "figure" of the corporate person - *corporate personhood* - as one of the prime drivers of twenty-first century forms of violence, most reprehensibly war/"war".

Corporate personhood is what is known as an enabling legal fiction in the discourse of contract law. However, it is a fiction constitutive of the very robust connective tissue which comprehensively knits together the "state-corporate-military-security-surveillance-information-media-entertainment" nexus, or Plexus. To reiterate, Plexus is the shorthand which designates above all the systemic and socially abstract nature of the forces and sources of power and its forms of violence within twenty-first century neoliberal corporatized democracy.

Corporate personhood stems (in the UK) from case law of the nineteenth century and still prevails as "good law", however contrived the notion of it might be. As Lord Sumption phlegmatically remarks in his judgment in a case which went before the Supreme Court as recently as 2013, *Prest v Petrodel Resources Limited*:

The separate personality and property of a company is sometimes described as a fiction, and in a sense it is. But the fiction is the *whole foundation* of English company and insolvency law.³⁴ (my italics)

What founds company law resides at the very heart of capitalist socio-economics, without which legal fiction, in my view, would simply not survive in its current "incarnation". So it is that corporate personhood must as a sheer matter of self-preservative judicial policy be affirmed by the highest legal authority in the land as the 'whole foundation' of company (corporate) and insolvency (bankruptcy) law. Not only have corporations a fictional human status, they (their shareholders, directors) are also legally gifted with personal protection from bankruptcy, thus in certain circumstances permitting of a new company to spring up in the mephitic remains of the bust one no worse for wear and ready to perpetuate its capital

“offences”. Corporate persons are protected by what is referred to in legal commercial discourse as the "corporate veil": simply put, the limited liability of companies affords them as “incorporated” entities (and here the legal metaphor of the body is particularly apt) the same rights and obligations as individual persons to enter into contracts and to be bound by them (or not), and to which accrues legal protection from commercial (or personal) loss.

Amongst those who profit most from this doctrine are all the stakeholders discreetly invested in the daily business of "war", their specific agency subsumed or absorbed by normal, banal, unexceptional, corporate personhood. The corporate entity is thus afforded the ability to self-replicate with nary any censure for its "genetic" self-interest or incompetence. This legal fiction operates not only in England but throughout the capitalist world, and has been doing so for well over 100 years. However, so obvious is it, that little notice is taken of this phenomenon, to include from a visual cultural perspective.

But why, it would be fair to ask, is this *especially* relevant to the visualisation of twenty-first century "war", warfare, the state-corporate-military nexus, MIC, MICC, MIME-NET, or Plexus? Bearing witness to war and the violence of state power - visually - does not, at first (or even second) glance appear to evince much or any relation to corporate economics or the grounding legal principles governing company formation and conduct. It follows that visual culture scholarship or critical media and cultural studies does not - in general - seek to engage in any sustained legal or politico-economic analysis of the technically and/or systemically constituent "machinery" of ("late modern")³⁵ neoliberal capitalist democracy.

So it is, I argue, that often even the most anti-capitalist or dissident of theoretical frameworks tends to overlook the deep imbrication of the state - in its executive, legislative, and judicial

functions - with the corporate entity, as a particular, trade facilitating and protective legal device. The limited liability company - an incorporated vehicle of trade which is separate from its owners/shareholders and afforded its own unique identity - is one of the most axiomatic conditions of possibility of global corporatization and the increasingly abstract financial market commodification of twenty-first century trade (hence labour and livelihood: who knew what a "credit default swap" was before the 2008 "credit crunch" and "subprime mortgage" fiasco emanating from the US?) Returning to why I argue its neglected significance for the visualisation of "war" and Plexus is that the *growing corporatization of democracy and governmentality is not something that is "separate" from the state-corporate-media-military nexus and, concomitantly, "war"*. It is the connective tissue without which the organs (of state) would fall apart. For the avoidance of doubt, I am not positing any direct correlation/causal relation between, say, financial instruments and mediatized war, but both "phenomena" manifest on a spectrum in which (the interests of) corporate profit is the major "actor". The private military and security contractor (PMSC) based on the local industrial estate is governed by the very same corporate law as, for example, BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin, Saab, Amazon, CNN, Time Warner or Fox News. The plethora of activities of state-corporate-military-intelligence-security-surveillance agencies undertaken by PMSCs is just one example of such state-corporate symbiosis. Many thousands of commercial enterprises and research/educational facilities, globally, have some role to play, whether through R&D activities (laboratories often connected to universities), investment in armaments and electronics companies, security/surveillance businesses, IT services, AI expertise, and so forth. The military's media operations too are filtered through the politico-corporate exigencies at any given time of the broadcaster with which they collaborate (Cottle, 2006; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010, 2015; Matheson and Allan, 2009). Perhaps because it is blindingly obvious that none of these statefare/warfare activities can be undertaken without some kind of

commercial, corporate participation, this very fact is somewhat overlooked as having further intrinsic significance, at least in respect of the question of the visualisation of war/"war".

To reiterate, these kinds of activities unfold mostly under the public radar and are by and large generally unseen or simply ignored. The private and surreptitious nature of such ubiquitous daily commercial transactions envelope us quietly, discreetly, in the normal course of things. By extrapolation, corporate "personalities" (by way of commercial branding, marketing), so integral to modern neoliberal democratic state power and its legitimacy (literally underwritten by international trade and commerce) is somehow still "veiled" in photographic attempts to visualise it, especially in relation to war/"war" and its enabling conditions. I aver that one of the reasons why this veiling persists (in both image-making practices and visual culture/studies scholarship) is - at least in part - our ideological attachment to human subjectivity as supreme driver of Events/History. Even now, our theorising about artificial intelligence and what it means to be/become human is still "always already" based within pre-established discursive frameworks which in specular fashion (like looking in a mirror) either centre or decentre individual/collective identity, human (inter)subjectivity. Our ideological stabilisation as subject-citizens pivots on a mutually reinforcing intersubjective address to each other within these normative discursive frameworks. Without venturing into the theoretical detail of it, Louis Althusser's Marxist-Lacanian notion that subjects are specularly "hailed" in ideology (or "interpellated" into society) is particularly useful here. In essence, Althusser argues that individual subjectivity is effectively constituted through a "material ritual practice of ideological recognition in everyday life" (Althusser, 1970; see also Cotterrell, 1992).³⁶ This process of self (and other) recognition in or through ideology, when extrapolated to the relation between the constitutive subject and a socio-economic construct like the legal fiction of

corporate personhood produces not recognition, I argue, but misrecognition: a misrecognition by the human individual of the *agency* of the corporate person.

The corporate person has honorary personhood, if you want, but because it is regarded simply as a trade-facilitating instrument, its own interpellative or hailing power (at the crudest manifest level, the "brand") is not recognised *as such*. Veiled by its commercial instrumentality, the capital-reproductive personhood of the corporation is arguably one of the biggest "public secrets" of liberal democracy. I contend that there is a dual fiction at work; apart from that of corporate personhood, it is the ideological conviction that the human subject alone (whether as individual or collective) has the power of agency. The freely choosing consumer unswayed by anything more sinister than repetitive advertising is a useful fiction for capitalist hegemony. Echoing Lord Sumption, Cotterrell writes,

Althusser's analogy of the mirror suggests that the locus of the person or subject is necessarily a human being [...] However, it is clear that the most important legal persons in capitalist enterprise in contemporary Western societies are *not* human individuals but *corporations*. (Cotterrell, 1992:124) (original italics)

This simple recognition is the key to how modern Western power and its particular systemic forms of violence function: as condition of possibility is the ability to limit personal/human liability for the losses incurred and damage done to others. It is a purely commercial calculation, devoid of any moral implications; the "miscegenation" (as it were) of morality and commerce cannot be countenanced at law, which keeps the law of contract and the law of tort (personal injury) entirely separate. Corporate capitalism as a system is singularly amoral, rather than immoral. It is not so much a matter of evil being banal (Arendt), as power and its violence/violations being amoral.

By way of both extrapolation and analogy, the corporate facilitation of war and "war" is ethically neutralised by virtue not only of the protective corporate veil, but of the hegemonic

veiling of the supremacy of corporate agency. It is the moral equivalent of the US's National Rifle Association's (NRA) favourite adage which is chanted in the wake of any school mass shooting in American suburbia: "People kill people, not guns." Instead, it would be "Greed and consumerism causes social injustice, not corporate ontology." Like the thoroughly corporatized, militarized NRA member, seen in the light of the 'hailed' subject of ideology, the corporate person - Amazon, or Lockheed Martin, say - is a thoroughly unself-reflexive, blind entity which sees nothing but does not need to: no hailing is required for the entity whose personhood is already established *a priori* in legal structures of power to which individual human personhood, or even "bare life", is subordinate.

Corporate veiling becomes increasingly significant in the thesis as the chapters progress, with the first proper discussion arising in the Norfolk chapter. This fits in with a narrative arc that takes the reader from the more traditional concerns within war photography as they articulated themselves in the course of the twentieth century - such as the issues of complicity and iconicity referred to earlier - to the more recent/emergent concerns arising in twenty-first century debates surrounding both the subjects and politics of representation. In a curious sense, the issue of corporate personhood, if considered in the light of the politics of identity, its fluidity, its individualism or communitarianism, its humanity or its cybernicity, provides fuel for a consideration of how human subjectivity is not only militarized, but also corporatized. It is of a cloth with subjective atomisation: the 'passive surrender to subjective sensation and inclination' within the 'aesthetic culture' of corporate capitalism (Grumley, 2016[1989]).³⁷ Individuals regarding (and marketing) *themselves* as commodities is but one facet of the effect of a corporatized "culture industry" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1973[1949]). The boundaries and articulations of subjective identity is clearly beyond the remit of this thesis, but the point being made in essence is that both the corporatized individual and the (company) corporate person

are axiomatic nodes within the systemic or socially abstract "articulation" of power and its forms of violence. The corporate persons of Plexus lead by way of this incremental architecture into the heart of "war" and what it means to be a concerned or dissident witness now.

In the brief overview of the chapters below, I adumbrate the relevance of corporate personhood in respect of the visualisation of the technologies and covert activities of Plexus and "war". It is especially in the last 3 chapters of this thesis that corporate personhood/the corporate veil is afforded more detailed and extended treatment, with the first three chapters serving less directly to pave the theoretical way for the more pointed and intense treatment which follows.

4.4 Visualisation and Ostension

Within the highly dynamic, fluid and labile context of digital image production and our daily immersion in interactive, image-steeped databases, the very relations between making and viewing imagery has become more complex, unstable,³⁸ radically transforming photographic praxis, whether professional and photojournalistic, art-documentary or citizen/civilian image-making. I concur in the main with the view that 'Because the image [now] is continuous, frameless, multiple and processual, it cannot be unpacked with the tools of semiotics and structuralism that were developed to deal with finite, framed, singular and static images' (Rubenstein and Sluis, 2013: 31). Since this thesis attends not only to images as aesthetic expressions in-themselves, and includes within its expanded ambit of discussion and analysis the "social totality" in and through which the images emerge, the term "representation" is not only inadequate, it is inaccurate. Visual *representation* evokes the end-product and its passive reception/viewing. It is for these reasons that the term "visualisation" is adopted instead. It embraces the open-ended, dialectically always incomplete nature of the image and its creation,

dissemination, reception/viewing, socio-cultural or political potentialities and effects. It attends to product and process, image-maker and viewer, system and context. It involves the active, critical imagination of the viewer as much as the creative act of the artist-photographer, or the "agency" of the image itself (Mitchell, 2005).

The term "ostension" - used most often in connection with socio-linguistics to capture the gestural, non-verbal act of communication characterised by pointing at something - is taken up by John Roberts (Roberts, 2014). He uses it to signify the visual, symbolic pointing at the world performed by the image, what he refers to also as the representation. This thesis derogates slightly from such a usage of the word ostension. Whilst overlapping with the way in which Roberts deploys it, here it is meant to convey an "act" of the image/image-maker which is less "pointed", as it were: ostension gestures openly towards, rather than pointing/showing with deliberation or conviction. It is a more subtle visual gesture which often declines to identify a specific target in anything more than a metonymic or oblique manner, because the target itself may be intangible or in/visible. Given Roberts' own concern with social abstraction, it is this latter sense of ostension that is considered to be the more nuanced and "accurate" usage in theorising the "representation" of social abstraction. As I argue in the chapters which follow, the strategies of visualisation at work here seldom point; they gesture. This then, is what it meant here by ostension.

So whilst the thesis demonstrates that visualisation (and, in connection with this, ostension) exceeds the immediate contexts and intentions/motivations of image-makers, it does not, *pace* Barthes, for example, minimise the significance of artistic or viewing *intentionality*. And whilst the process of strategic visualisation is paramount, the thesis does not always or necessarily

prioritise the process of image-creation over the resulting product, as is to be seen with the co-creative or collaborative approach taken particularly in chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the thesis, where the image itself is the inaugural site of ostension/further visualisation. In this thesis, the image even in its post-production, aleatory life in the myriad spatio-temporal contexts of its viewing or usage can still claim a species of Adornian aesthetic autonomy, or Mitchellian agency.³⁹ In this sense, the critical methodology here does not conform to the recent emphasis on process over product (See Campbell, 2013: 265-270) at the expense of its material indexicality and ostensive function. Just as both image-maker and viewer are "spoken to", both product and process are brought "into the frame" of the analyses and critical explorations. It is partly out of this "undisciplined" free-ranging that I seek to introduce new vocabulary for a creatively critical approach to visualisation, and stage a modest theoretical intervention in recent visual culture and cultural/media scholarship in respect of contemporary "representations" of power and its (less visible, more socially abstract) forms of violence.

4.5 The Post-photographic

In the last decades a less familiar kind of "war" photography or hybrid image-making praxis has emerged within the context of the digital, ushering in a style, ethos or approach in art-documentary photography of what is being called variously a "post-documentary" or "post-photographic" moment or movement (Shore, 2014) in war photography, and it is this categorisation of such image-making to which we attend here.

In an early discussion of "post-photography" within what was then a newly emergent digital media context, W.J.T. Mitchell focussed his analyses primarily on the impact of new electronic and digital media and imaging technologies on photography. His approach then was

understandably a technological rather than a conceptual-philosophical or ideological-strategic one characteristic of his more recent work. Although published much later, Liz Wells' (editor) introductory text is not concerned to define the post-photographic beyond the periodising, technological vocabularies with which much scholarship in the area remains content. However, she considers the 'histories' of photography from an array of perspectives, observing

[...] historical, theoretical, and philosophical explorations of photographs as images and objects, and of photography as a range of types of practice operating in various contexts, are necessarily wide-ranging. *There is no single history of photography.* (Wells, 2015) (my italics)

It is with the above italicised words in mind that the way in which the term post-photography is (or is not) deployed in this thesis is discussed here.

Robert Shore writes 'Post-photography is a moment, not a movement'. He suggests that it is the digital era of a demotic explosion of image-making and viewing platforms and the advent of the "citizen-photographer" and "citizen witness" (Allan, 2013a) that is the driving force behind his post-photographic 'moment'. Contemporary image-makers, he writes, 'do not subscribe to a common philosophy of image-making', but that 'despite originating from all points of the twenty-first century globe, do visibly share a social and technological context.' He observes that because the world has now become so 'hyperdocumented', people (not only artist-photographers) are increasingly turning to 'found imagery', with 'the internet serving as a laboratory for major experimentation in image-making' (Shore, 2015:7). Notwithstanding the one point upon which I disagree (his identification of the post-photographic "moment" exclusively with the digital era), for the most part, what he writes is a fair reflection of the impact of the current networked climate on art-documentary photographic practices.

In respect of conflict photography, Shore asserts that the photographic departments of newspapers and magazines are dismantling and instead their reporters are being trained in iPhone photography, 'putting traditional photojournalism under tremendous strain'. Stuart Allan further comments on just this point writing that from the 1990s 'the professional's claim to be the people's witness, the dispassionate relay of factual truths for the benefit of distant viewers was proving increasingly open to contestation' (2013a:185) and referred to the (photography) 'profession's deep identity crisis at a time of shrinking outlets for photojournalism with strong political and social content', and on the attendant impact of 'new forms of digital storage.' (2013a:187) Allan points out that the jury is still out on 'the visual ecology of digital photojournalism', which is 'still in a state of flux, open to a myriad of competing definitions.' (2013a: 197) We shall see here that it is in this 'state of flux' and unstable nomenclature with which the image-makers discussed too are embedded, for some of whom led to permanent disenchantment with any ongoing attempts to work within a traditional media economy/ecology. As a dissident image-making practice, post-photography is inevitably subject as much as other visualising practices to the same exigencies and contingencies surrounding the production, circulation, viewing, using climate in which their strategies of visualisation are materially (and virtually) rooted.

Notwithstanding this, the category "post-photography" is as yet an unstable one and there is no solid consensus as to precisely whether it is a stylistic, formal or temporal/chronological designation. For prudence' sake, the view taken here is that it is a combination of both. In any event, there are some characteristic features of post-photographic image-making which can be enumerated. Post-photographic image-making practices use photographic technology (digital or analogue) in hybrid and unconventional ways to visualise (as opposed simply to "re-present") those aspects of social reality which (apart from the philosophical) elude

existing/normative referential frames. Sometimes a camera is not used at all. Still and moving imagery is combined, or imagery and artefact, imagery and text/narrative, installation, performance, investigation, excavation or expedition. Often archival or “found” imagery is used in various ways, such as collages, photomontages.⁴⁰ A prominent and well-known purveyor within war visualisation of such methods is the artist Thomas Hirshhorn, who has created a number of note-worthy and rather harrowing murals and collages showing wounded, traumatised, dying or dead soldiers.⁴¹ This kind of image-making has long been a staple of the fine arts, and it is this mixed media, multi-platform mode of image-making which is often "borrowed" in the kind of photographic visualisation strategies explored in this thesis.

In this light, the images featured are just one element of an assemblage of elements/events, one node in a “system of the sensible” which makes up an aesthetic/communicative dispositif (Rancière, 2009). Since such heterogeneous visualisation strategies have been used to varying degrees for some decades now, it is contended here that the post-photographic is not, contrary to the hubris of the word, entirely new. In terms of “war” photography, the post-photographic "moment" was possibly inaugurated by Martha Rosler’s *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967–72), which is a series of photo-collages in which Rosler overlaid the tasteful images from interior design catalogues with those of the Vietnam war⁴²[See Figure 0.3]. She has not taken any pictures with a camera; rather, she has drawn on popular cultural and commercial imagery to ostend towards the hegemonic "closeness" of war.

What *is* new is, firstly, the range of digital techniques and platforms now at the disposal of image-makers, and the “virtual” nature of this mode of aesthetic production. Secondly, it is the global, corporate, and geopolitically ubiquitous "war" context that has evolved over the last

few decades that is "new". This is why, I argue, it is eminently justifiable to treat contemporary post-photographic image-making as indeed introducing an unprecedented kind of imagery and mode of visualisation.

This has been recognised by the scholars mentioned earlier who demonstrate an increased interest in the concept of the post-photographic. The nexus of virtuality and "war" lends itself mimetically well to the shadowing, adumbration, "inchoation" of the in/visible/opaque/secret. This context of visibility - both of/for power and dissidence - is ironically the very condition of possibility for the contemporary burgeoning of the post-photographic visualisation of twenty-first century power and its forms of violence/violation.

In his recent reflections upon contemporary photography, Kennedy remarks

As the nature of warfare changes so photography must shift its strategies to reflect this. [...] it has been doing this for fifty years. Indeed, while photojournalism may not be dead, it seems to thrive on a constant state of crisis and predictions of its death [...] there is a healthy, ongoing discussion about both what remains of the ethos of concerned photography and the emergent visual strategies for documenting war in a post-photographic age. (Kennedy, 2016: 178)

Kennedy seems to be warning here that it is premature to announce the demise of photojournalism as an avenue of 'concerned' or dissenting documentation, insisting on the ongoing continuities between the latter and 'emergent visual strategies.' There is too much of a "blurring of boundaries" between art-documentary photography and photojournalism now to overstate the role or function of a "post-photographic" visualisation of war/warfare. The digitally demotic capacity for citizen war-witnessing the attenuation of the role of the concerned professional photographer does not equate to the supremacy of the former and the impotence of the latter in respect of war witnessing/visualisation. There is an ongoing vibrancy in conventional war photojournalism which is not diminished by emergent modes of

documentary photography. Kennedy refers, for example, both to the representation of the 'reality of war in sleeping soldiers' of Tim Hetherington, and the 'abstracted spaces of high technology' of Simon Norfolk as occupying contrasting ends of a *continuous spectrum* of the visual representation of war since the advent of photography (Kennedy, 2016: 179) (my italics). However, as we have explained in the foregoing, it is one of the hallmarks of the emergent post-photographic that it often (though it must be noted, not always) avoids the terrain of traditional war photography/photojournalism featuring the direct, raw violence of frontline war or conflict/crisis, preferring to grapple with the non/inhuman, in/visible, socially abstract and conceptually complex aspects of "war". It is a shift in focus from violence to its conditions of possibility: power, or as I tactically/practically refer to it here, Plexus.

As Ethel Baraona Pohl writes, 'We inhabit intangible territories. The networks of invisible infrastructures which surrounds our world are extensive and growing day by day.' (Baraona Pohl, 2012). The sentence aptly captures what it is Norfolk's Military Sublime project wrestles with. He is amongst those image-makers referred to by both Roberts and Kennedy who seek visually to capture and offer a mode of resistance to the social abstraction of power/Plexus, and the non/inhuman technologies, mechanics, systems and processes whereby it is "realised".

Norfolk typifies the post-photographic approach, which entails a 'more meditative form of photojournalism [...] a more investigative framing of the events and its representation within news frames but also to broader and deeper forms of documentation that engage cultural and political contexts.' (Kennedy, 2016:11) It is an observation which holds true of each of the image-makers whose work is discussed in this thesis. Whether their work is classified as art, documentary, photojournalism, or recognised as boundary-blurring adventures into hybridity

and the polymorphous use of both digital and analogue techniques, or whether the imagery is derived from both archival (or “found”) material or is actively produced, this kind of practice distinguishes itself for its highly considered, measured, conceptual, meditative or forensic nature, marking it as a typically "post-photographic" (in other words, non-photojournalistic, non-"citizen-witness") mode of image-making. The strategies of visualisation arising out of this praxis are introducing new and, as we shall see, sometimes controversial visual vocabularies. In so doing they 'push the boundaries of photographic practice to critically reflect on the contexts and scenery of war' (Kennedy, 2016 :10-11), and for my purposes, reflect also on the nature of twenty-first century power and its less visible, more abstract forms of violence.

5. Chapter Outlines

In summary, the discussion situates these image-making (and viewing) practices within the broader context of a dominant, neoliberal capitalist, digitally hyperconnected world order. Within this general context is discursively embedded more specifically the themes of (r)evolutionary developments in modern warfare, media ecology and, concomitantly, photographic practices. The image-makers whose selected works we examine here all share a concern with this geopolitical and socio-economic dispensation and they seek by way of their cultural/aesthetic politics (the visualisation projects they embark upon) to identify and question, challenge, resist or dissent from the egregious violations and injustices to which civilians, communities, and populations both at Home and Elsewhere are subjected, of which war/conflict or any state-military violence are the most "atrocious" forms. Whilst the resulting death and human suffering, and the socio-economic immiseration of millions are the most brutal and visible manifestations of this violence, the visualisations here focus largely on the systemic, socially abstract and non/inhuman aspects and acts of power enabling, driving,

reproducing and using violence in the interests of its self-perpetuation.

These chapter outlines sketch some of the themes and concerns axiomatic to each chapter which, as suggested above, are all conceptually intertwined or resonate with one another in various ways.

Chapter One:

Complicity: revisiting the ethics of witnessing in relation to the non/inhuman

This chapter grapples with the *complicity of the secondary witness*, in other words, here both the post-photographic image-maker and the viewer. It asks, amongst other questions, what are the ethico-political implications of an absence of bodies/persons/faces in this imagery? More specifically, does the nature of the imagery mean that image-maker and viewer are “absolved” from complicity in a further violation of victims of state-military violence through their voyeuristic intrusion?

What the chapter seeks is to consider the question of complicity in relation to the witnessing of the non/inhuman “face/s” of war. I argue that it is an area of debate that has been neglected in respect of the post-photographic, or where it has been engaged, a sweeping and unexamined assumption has been made. Namely, that as image-makers/viewers, we are absolved of any complicity when creating/viewing images of war that do *not* contain scenes of the traumatised, injured or mutilated victims of war and conflict. I contest this assumption, and in so doing, harness Hannah Arendt's thoughts in relation to the Holocaust and German “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” (trans. “coming to terms with the past”), “gegenwältige Bewältigung” (coming to terms with the present), the Judeo-Christian notion of guilt, the Lacanian “Gaze” and the Levinasian face as condition of possibility of an empathic relation to

others. This chapter serves also to establish philosophically the ethical co-ordinates which will quietly subtend my further enquiry into the post-photographic visualisation of “war” and Plexus.

Chapter Two:

The Aniconic Challenge and Post-photographic Discontents

This chapter “flows on” from the previous one in that it continues to dwell to some extent on the issue of complicity, but now against the more materially-grounded and specific backdrop of instances of war photojournalism, the “becoming iconic” of horrific images, and the very deliberate use of these iconic images as templates for the creation of mainstream-able, award-winnable war pictures both in photojournalism and documentary war photography. By examining the contrast between the iconic war photograph and its “aniconic” palimpsest and/or visual addendum, the chapter seeks to anchor the non/inhuman “turn” in emergent post-photographic “war” imagery as one of its cardinal aesthetic, philosophical and forensic features.

One of the central issues the chapter circles around is that of the acquisition of “evidence”, and the harrowing ethico-political negotiation for the photographer/photojournalist of “capturing” this evidence, “the truth”, and the question, as posed above by Roberts, as to what it means/how to witness war now. The chapter engages with the well-rehearsed, heart-rending “case studies” of Nick Ut’s *The Terror of War* (1972)⁴³ and Kevin Carter’s *Starving Child and Vulture* (1993) as material substrate in which to anchor the discussion. It then proceeds to consider what could be regarded as some particularly aniconic (elucidated in Chapter Two) post-photographic ways

- represented here by Alfredo Jaar and John Haddock - of dealing with the ethics of representing the direct violence of war, indirectly. The strategies of visualisation adopted to this end are discussed here, with the question of complicity briefly raised once again.

Like the previous chapter, this one thus gradually works the theoretical and narrative arc of the thesis towards a more exclusive focus on the visualisation of the non/inhuman or socially abstract incarnations of “war”/Plexus in later chapters. The chapter is also a bridging one, rehearsing in preparation some of the issues which are alluded or referred to in the next on Broomberg and Chanarin, and later chapters.

Chapter Three:

Broomberg and Chanarin: Strategic Visualisation, or Aesthetic Vacuity?

This chapter scrutinises in sustained depth one major work by the duo, entitled *The Day Nobody Died*, created during an embedding with the British Army in Afghanistan in 2008. As the title suggests, it considers whether the work represents a “meaningful” or “effective” intervention in the visualisation of modern warfare, or whether it can/should be regarded as a self-serving exercise to make an abstruse aesthetico-political point.

Whilst featuring some of the issues considered in the foregoing chapters, such as complicity, this chapter dwells at greater length on the abstract visualisation of Plexus. It also deploys concepts such as “mediatized war” (Cottle, 2006), “Diffused War” and “Arrested War” (Hoskins and O’Loughlin, 2010; 2015) thus laying some of the conceptual foundation for the advance of the narrative arc into the twenty-first century digital virtualisation of witnessing and the state-corporate-military mediatization of war, the dissenting “mediation” of which reality

by way of critical aesthetic engagement is, in my view, a chief concern of contemporary “war” photography.

Chapter Four:

Simon Norfolk and the Military Sublime

This chapter launches straight into the strategic visualisation of “war”/Plexus by way of its technologies, its hardware, focusing on the images produced by Norfolk in his Military Sublime project. The imagery showcases what Rancière terms the “politics of metonymy” (Rancière, 2009), and emphasises also for the first time in the thesis corporate personhood and the corporate veil as critical nodes of Plexus/"war" and their critical visualisation.

Selected images from three works (or series) are serve as material substrate in which to anchor the critical and theoretical deliberations: *IBM BlueGene L*, *TERA-1*, *MareNostrum* and *Astra 3B*. As is evident, each of these works is captioned by its corporate name - the “face” of its brand. Explored in the course of analysing Norfolk’s strategies of visualisation are the connections between digital communications and mediatized war, AI and killing machines/technologies, the visual rhetoric of power and neoliberal, global corporatist “ways of seeing” (and being).

Chapter Five

Trevor Paglen: Visualising the Open/Public Secret, the Transparent Opacity of Plexus

The previous chapters will already have introduced terms and laid the groundwork for some of the issues explored here, swinging the narrative and theoretical arc to the question of the open/public secret of power of Plexus and its forms of violence. Paglen is the most internationally known and pioneering of the image-makers discussed in this thesis and I begin by contextualising his strategies of visualisation in a preliminary general introduction to his array of activities/projects. The overriding concern across all of Paglen's work is the making visible of what is either deliberately concealed, invisible to the naked eye, neglected by traditional media and documentary photographic traditions, or simply not attended to by the broader public. I examine and question some of the implications - philosophically and ethico-politically - of Paglen's methods and the methodology informing or subtending Paglen's strategies of visualisation.

Central to the discussion are the notions of the open/public secret, transparency, and opacity, and recent scholarship concerning these terms is critically engaged. Again, as with the other image-makers, Paglen eschews the human figure and like Norfolk, focuses his lens instead on the modern technologies of state-military power. Works from three series are explored and critically discussed here: *Limit Telephotography*, *What Lies Beneath* and *The Other Night Sky*.

It ought to be noted here that there is also - largely by way of the concluding thoughts - some treatment of Paglen's more recent ideas concerning the invisibility of contemporary visual

culture and the algorithmic "motor" of digital communication and information technologies.

The implications of this are briefly discussed with a view to pointing towards future research to be undertaken.

Chapter Six

The Cadastral and the Proxy Measure: Towards a Visual Forensics of "War" and Plexus

The imagery of Edmund Clark and Lisa Barnard is treated together in this chapter, given the distinct similarities and contiguities in both their subject matter and their approach towards it. Whilst all of the fore-going image-makers partook in an "aesthetics of the sublime" to varying degrees, this is an approach which these two, by and large, self-consciously eschew in favour of the more "mundane" face/s of "war"/Plexus. This is especially so in the case of Clark, but Barnard's work too - those projects or images discussed here, in any event - is clearly more aligned with a desire to capture the mundane/profane rather than the sublime/sacred monstrosity of power.

Both the subject matter and the strategies of visualisation therefore adopt a different visual vocabulary to Norfolk or Paglen, for example. However, there is a pronounced overlap in the interests and methods of Clark and Barnard with Paglen in respect of mapping, or topography. Paglen "maps" cables, "black sites" and satellites, and so the previous chapter provides a bridge to the driving analytical concept of the "cadastral" in this chapter. This, together with "proxy measure" are the key terms (defined in more detail in this chapter) which guides my analysis of their selected works. The images discussed are drawn from Clark's *Negative Publicity* series, and Barnard's *Whiplash Transition* series respectively.

CHAPTER ONE

Complicity, Secondary Witnessing and the Journey from Atrocity to Facelessness

1.1 Introduction

Looking at Simon Norfolk's image of *TERA-I*⁴⁴ [Figure 1.1], a supercomputer which designs and simulates the testing of nuclear weapons, one might well enquire what on earth the notion of complicity has to do with either the making or viewing of such an image? Compared to the viewing of an "atrocious" image, one feels negligible, if no emotion whatsoever; at least, not remotely the same level of deep disquietude in looking. Arguably, complicity is not a concept that immediately - or at all - springs to mind or heart in viewing this object. And, whilst we have no direct access to the mindset of the image-maker, it is fair to presume that he - Simon Norfolk - was not quite wracked by remorse in making the image, as say, Kevin Carter was in the controversial and suicidal aftermath of his intolerable, Pulitzer prize-winning image *Starving Child and Vulture* (1993)⁴⁵. Remorse would have been far from his mind in his contemplation of the aesthetic, representational and intellectual challenge before him. Here Norfolk had chosen to "subject" to scrutiny not atrocity, but the technological, non/inhuman facelessness of "war", and in that moment it would appear that he had evaded the ethical agonistics which attends much war photography. But had he? And when we view *TERA-I*, do we?

As quoted in the introduction, 'war has changed, and photography has changed' (Hariman, 2014: 139), and there are concomitantly fresh challenges in thinking the "new" photography which leads to some extent to the temptation to gloss over "old" ways of looking in the attempt

to develop fresher vocabularies. I use complicity here not only as a conceptual but as a methodological tool in respect of the post-photographic forces the encounter between visual/social abstraction and the ethico-political engagement of the image-maker/viewer. Scholarly reflection on *non/inhuman*, or *socially abstract*, *in/visible* imagery has to date not invited much or any consideration of complicity, and as we shall see, if it is at all mentioned, it is swiftly discounted as not having much relevance at all to the study of these acts of visualisation and the imagery thereby created. This chapter departs *ab initio* from erstwhile debates on complicity and/or the ethics of the secondary witnessing of war and atrocity. The "witness" and the one who "bears witness", are not the same here. A witness looks, see, maybe knows, but may or may not act upon that knowledge, or be capable of acting upon it. It includes both the "perpetrator" and the "victim"; that is, the one who will not say, and the one who cannot say. One who *bears* witness is, in whatever small measure, able to relate, visualise, narrate, ostend or gesture towards, however in/effective that testimony might be.

It is a deep and complex area of research and thus beyond the delimitations of the current topic, but it is worth invoking here for the purposes of more closely defining what is meant by "secondary witnessing". It was initially devised predominantly to examine the nature and function specifically of post-evental art-cultural (in other words, media, literature, art, film, theatre and so forth.) memory and witness testimony in relation to the Holocaust (Felman and Laub, 1992; LaCapra, 1998, 2001). It is also readily invoked in relation to recent and contemporary conflicts and asymmetrical or oppressive abuses of power (Susie Linfield, Judith Butler, Wendy Kozol, and Ariella Azoulay, et al). Whilst this meaning is retained here, the definition is expanded to include critical-creative acts of witnessing and visualising contemporary state-corporate-military power; in other words, **to the creation and viewing or using of imagery to visualise what it is we do not see, "know" or understand** about twenty-first

century power and its forms of violence. In other words, we treat here not the secondary witnessing of atrocity as it has been historically understood/manifested, but the *secondary witnessing of in/visible and/or socially abstract forms of violence coeval with the operation of "war" and Plexus.*

This expanded sense of secondary witnessing departs somewhat from its paradigmatic usage of those mentioned above, propelling us instead along a transdisciplinary path of exploration of complicity, particularly with a view towards re-examining the latter's role in the context of the post-photographic visualisation of "war". In so doing, the chapter revisits some extant debates and theoretical assumptions concerning complicity.

A case in point in respect of the almost facile shrugging off of complicity in the current photographic context is to be found in an essay by Andersen and Möller (2013:203-221), where the pair consider the limits of current photojournalism, positing a way forward via (art/documentary) post-photography which 'explores the realm between the poles of visibility and invisibility and the relationship between the politics of security and the politics of surveillance'(2013: 204) in relation to the 'intangible, abstract workings of state power, including forms of visual governance' (2013: 205), in connection with 'current forms of warfare'(2013: 203). Andersen and Möller assert that by 'visualiz[ing] structures and institutions rather than people', post-photographic image-makers such as Simon Norfolk and Trevor Paglen succeed in 'avoiding ethical dilemmas in connection with representations of people in pain'(2013: 203). I regard this assumption that one avoids/escapes complicity simply by *not* imaging/photographing suffering, traumatised or dying people, focusing instead on more abstract forms of power and violence as problematic. In short, there is in general a

manifest lack in visual culture studies of nuanced examination of the notion of complicity in relation to post-photographic image-making which tends to be more abstract and conceptual than other figural or iconographic forms of visualisation. As I argued at the outset, such an analysis, rooted in the signally most crucial motor of Humanities scholarship: ethics, is surely the *sine qua non* for further *critical* enquiry into the *witnessing and visualisation* of Plexus, no less urgent in respect of the 'intangible, abstract workings of state power' (2013: 205).

This primary objective of this chapter is to establish some useful theoretical co-ordinates and vocabulary, and take forward into the following chapters, in which we begin the substantive analysis of non/inhuman or abstract imagery characteristic of post-photographic practices and strategies of visualising "state-corporate-military-security-surveillance-media-entertainment" power and its in/visible or unattended to forms of violence: Plexus and "war". At the very least, the chapter aims to create a fertile tapestry for further reflection on the subject of complicity in relation to the witnessing of the non/inhuman, in/visible or socially abstract mechanisms and technologies of "war" and/or Plexus.

To reiterate, Plexus both entails and exceeds existing nomenclature like military-industrial complex, MIME-NET and the state-corporate-military nexus by virtue of its ostension towards the systemic, quotidian, day-to-day, diffuse and pervasive nature of the activities, processes, relations, technologies, institutions, socio-economics and culture of militarized and corporatized neoliberal capitalist democracies. Although, to be sure, it is humans who are the motor of Plexus, their deep involvement in "war" - at Home or Elsewhere - what occurs abstractly, technologically or mechanically "behind the scenes" is seldom the focus of, or included in, traditional war/conflict/crisis photojournalism or more conventional art-documentary image-making practices. This is where, as recognised by Andersen and Möller,

Kennedy and Roberts, et al., post-photographic visualisations of state-military power and its forms of violence are steadily moving beyond the representation of war to, I argue, the *visualisation* of "war" and Plexus. This is a stimulating and important development both for the visual representation of power and its forms of violence, but also for public debate on the nature of twenty-first century state-corporate-military power. However, the implications of this systematic occlusion or absence of "the face" is an issue which requires, it is contended, a critical revisiting of complicity.

1.2 Themes and Structure

To acquire a philosophically richer insight into the question of complicity in respect of such strategies of visualisation in "concerned" (Kennedy, 2016) or dissident post-photographic image-making, it is worth making a slight detour before rejoining the main thematic path; the first part of the chapter does this. This brief diversion takes us into narrative and discursive memory and history in relation to notions of complicity (considered here as secular guilt) and culpability surrounding our secondary witnessing of atrocity.

The detour serves to provide later chapters with a more solid foundation for the other concerns this thesis visits: whilst we take leave of complicity as a sustained thematic after this chapter, the term continues implicitly or overtly to visit later chapters. In so doing, complicity comes to constitute the "silent partner" whose voice has been heard, whose investment continues, but who withdraws from the day-to-day decision-making of the enterprise. As conceptual silent partner it frees up a focal space for other fecund political, epistemic and aesthetic questions surrounding the visualisation of Plexus. Ultimately pivotal to the enquiry is the challenge of

complicity for the concerned "secondary witness": the image-maker/viewer of "war" and Plexus.

The narrative and theoretical arc here proceeds in stages through the key concepts of complicity as biblical trope, "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" ("coming to terms with the past"), "gegenwältige Bewältigung" (coming to terms with the present), and the psychoanalytic/phenomenological notions of the "Gaze"⁴⁶, the "Face" and the "Other" found in Sartre, Levinas and Lacan. Embarking from the viewpoint of the witness/viewer's gaze upon the suffering person, it shifts focus along its trajectory from the (inter)subjective, personal gaze to the one-sided impersonal gaze upon the non/inhuman and/or abstract. In later imagery we see both figural representations, and those which appear at first glance to be non-figural, or abstract. The concept of complicity is (re)considered here in respect of such relatively abstract instances of looking, exploring how its relevance persists for the viewing of non-/inhuman imagery.

The chapter begins by firstly providing a contextual note on the literature pertinent to photographic witnessing and complicity, situating these in arguably their most significant historical and discursive context of the last century: genocide, in this chapter the Holocaust in particular. The concept of "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" initiates the critical discussion surrounding complicity and is necessary, I argue, effectively to grapple with a complex concept/emotion, complicity, itself conditioned by cultural memory. Both "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" and complicity entail a form of contemplative self-reflexivity also evinced in the act of critical or dissenting visualisation. Further, whilst there are a fair number of literary, historical and theoretical studies of complicity in-itself in relation to war and atrocity, the concept of complicity has thus far failed to be considered in sufficient

philosophical or theoretical depth in relation to the *making and viewing of in/visible (or as this fading-vanishing slide on the dim end of the scopic scale shall henceforth be referred - in/visibility, non-/inhuman) war/power imagery.*⁴⁷

Proceeding thus we turn from the intersubjective gaze upon the Other to the "unilateral" gaze upon the non/inhuman post-photographic subject/object⁴⁸ of visualisation, considering the implications for complicit reason (as it were) in the absence of the "face", the human. In this literature, the concept of the gaze is closely related to the Other and the face- gazing upon (the face of) the Other and being seen by the Other - takes us tangentially but, it is hoped, fruitfully along the pitted path of secondary witnessing.

Phenomenological psychoanalysis is a highly specialised field and so it is really only the kernel of the relevant insights here that can be harnessed or extrapolated for the purposes of this thesis; clearly, it is not possible to engage on an optimally immanent level with these notions. What I seek to achieve with this foray is to bring the concepts specifically of the gaze and face into twenty-first century *post-photographic* visualisation, and to test thereby how they do (or do not) serve us theoretically in making sense of the acts, processes and strategies of visualisation of "war" and Plexus. Since they are concepts to which notions like voyeurism and complicity seem naturally to cleave, it behoves us to put them to critical use in the attempt to develop or expand vocabularies for the analysis of and co-creative contribution to post-photographic strategies of visualisation and their theorisation.

1.3 Note on Extant Literature, Frameworks and Debates

The primary literature on complicity and photographic witnessing in the context of war and violence/violation has already been covered in the introduction; the likes of Susan Sontag, Dominic LaCapra, Judith Butler, Susie Linfield, Wendy Kozol, and many others already mentioned (or not) have hollowed out a groove now well-hewn in scholarship on the ethico-politics of witnessing war.

Indeed, with some key exceptions, such as those referred to in the introduction - Andersen and Müller, Kennedy and Roberts, et al - there is not a vast amount of sustained scholarship on the topic of the more abstract, conceptual witnessing of the less visible, more abstract and systemic state-corporate-military-cultural forms of violence. One key objective of this chapter is to demonstrate that complicity - unlike in other contexts of raw violence, atrocity, genocide - is as yet an underexamined, marginalised issue in the nascent and emergent scholarship surrounding the conceptual witnessing and visualisation of modern warfare, or “war”, and its condition of possibility.

Briefly to summarise, the significant feature distinguishing the approach proposed here from those writing about the post-photographic visualisation of war and state-military forms of violence, is that this chapter forces the encounter between complicity - usually reserved for image-making/viewing of peopled imagery - to that of "faceless" imagery. My approach here to contemporary "war" visualisation embodies an attempt to extend and expand treatment of the concept of complicity *in-itself* in relation to witnessing and strategies of visualisation within the context of post-photographic image-making and viewing practices.

1.4 Complicity in historical context: “Vergangenheitsbewältigung”

Witnessing, violence, atrocity, genocide, trauma, grief and memory are, in particular, terms often clustered together in scholarly discourse concerning war, conflict and state-military forms of violence, understandably so. Such terms, by a process of discursive accretion and public scholarly reinforcement, have become a conceptual constellation which serves as a ready theoretical framework or methodology for further research and fresh perspectives, and shall no doubt continue to do so for a long time yet. It is part and parcel of “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” the collective and individual process of “coming to terms with the past” or the coping with/handling of /one’s past; most often used in Germany in relation to the Holocaust, the Third Reich and National Socialism/Nazism.⁴⁹ The term has no adequate English translation; and the closest, rather anodyne “coming to terms with the past” does not in my view carry the historical, emotive and psychological force of the Teutonic *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.

There has for some decades now been a vocal determination in Germany to remember and confront its ignominious past (Levy and Sznajder, 2002; Reichel, 2001). Archival material and public intellectual debates on both traditional and alternative television channels is frequently broadcast, to include a considerable amount of original footage of Hitler and his “Schutzstaffel” (SS) Nazi party élite corps, images of the concentration camps and victims of the final solution, images of a bombarded, suffering German Volk, and so forth.⁵⁰ The former German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, alert to a somewhat emotive and guilt-burdened proclivity in documentary media and public debate concerning the national complicity in the Shoah,

called for a more (useful) systematic "politics of memory": "Gedächtnispolitik" (Möller, 2002: 229). Further, the psychosocial and cultural role of this eternal collective return to the atrocious war crimes of the "Vaterland" has understandably generated much scholarly debate (Kantsteiner, 2006; Ebbrecht, 2007, Erll, 2011). Indeed, there is no shortage of scholars and writers working within the field of memory studies and mnemohistorical research - much of in it relation to the Holocaust. As Astrid Erll observes, 'The Shoah has proved a test case for historical memory.' (Erll, 2011: 45) It persists as the paradigmatic test case, as well it might, given its scale and systematic nature, and the invidious position of those "witnessing" (secondary) or archiving it. Of the many post WW2 luminaries of ethical philosophy, Hannah Arendt is pre-eminent for her provocative and controversial remarks on collective guilt/complicity. Her perspective militates against the notion of an all-encompassing and structural guilt, as she espies an inadvertent, ironic exculpation therein. Thomas Doherty pithily summarises and quotes from Arendt's argument as follows:

[...] the taking of guilt upon ourselves, acknowledging a complicity with a past act that was actually carried out by individuals other than ourselves, is not necessarily a good thing. In post war Germany [Arendt] points out, 'the cry "We are all guilty" that at first hearing sounded so very noble and tempting has actually only served to exculpate to a considerable degree those who actually were guilty. Where all are guilty, nobody is [...] in our case of collective guilt feelings [this] would mean that the cry "We are all guilty" is actually a declaration of solidarity with the wrongdoers. (Doherty, 2016: 27)

Arendt's (and Doherty's) words here point towards a performative paradox of sorts; she is saying that by claiming co-responsibility, assuming a *mea culpa* mantle of guilt – without actually having been individually, actively the wrong-doer in the situation – one is enacting a confession, with the implication that one must be/can expect to be "forgiven". One is in one fell morally ambiguous swoop performing a self-expiation, and sheltering the "real" wrongdoers under the collective cloak of solidarity. This begs the question: how is one to express a sense of complicity, acknowledge a queasy moral dilemma, if not through seeking out dissenting others who may feel similarly? The general question here must, of course, be

narrowed to the concern with secondary witnessing and complicity, but the point Arendt is making is still germane, particularly so, in this regard. Does every act of gazing upon the pain, suffering, death of another entail a structural, ineluctable complicity in the secondary violation of that other? No *definitive* answer is proffered; indeed, I contend that the question itself will always be an insufficient, but necessary, one in the critical discussion of secondary witnessing, even that pertaining to the (abstract, conceptual) gazing upon the non/inhuman.

More recently, Debarati Sanyal focuses on the concept of complicity itself in her magisterial study on memory and complicity in relation to atrocity and to the global forms of violence in which we are all haplessly implicated (Sanyal, 2015). She uses the phrase ‘ironic complicity’ in her case studies of various literary or visual works, such as Albert Camus’ book *La Chute* (The Fall, 1956) or Alain Resnais’ film, *Nuit et Brouillard* (Night and Fog, 1956)⁵¹ in her reflections on the politics and the poetics of Holocaust memory. Through her readings she rejects the notion of universal, ineluctable complicity and instead (like Wendy Kozol in relation to “ethical spectatorship”) seeks to posit an ethics of ambivalence. One artist-image-maker who does not shy away, it seems, from complicity as an ineluctable moral fact of looking at atrocity is Christian Boltanski. He has worked prolifically with archival photographic imagery and his methods could certainly be described as "post-photographic". Boltanski frequently “used” images of persecuted or deceased Jews (amongst others) during World War 2, and in reflecting ironically on his role as voyeur, spectator of atrocity and, as artist-user of images, being a thrice-removed witness of horror, he says : 'I love to look at awful images; I'm also a criminal. I'm fascinated with the act of dying.' (Boltanski, 1997: 27)

Boltanski sees his complicity as image-maker as "criminal" in nature. In the juridical sense, being complicit in the crime of another attracts a guilty verdict and some form of censure or

punishment. But social, “non-legal/criminal” complicity in making and viewing the violence of war and conflict attracts no judgment or penalty other than that of (individual or collective) conscience, endless debates on the ethics of witnessing, of looking at atrocity, intruding upon grief, humiliating the already degraded with our remote and non-participatory vision. Scholastic, professional or artistic self-flagellation as a means of expiating this guilty “knowledge” of the brutalised other seems to proffer at most an evanescent catharsis, sufficing in its ostensible goal only through sheer repetition. We know via Freudian tutelage that repetition signals irresolvability: a “mental pathology” triggers repetitive (obsessive) behaviour, a persistent melancholia signals incomplete mourning. From this perspective, the “need” to repeat the exercise of visualising horror, followed by a form of scholarly self-castigation points towards a haunting dilemma: to look or not to look, to agonise or to decathect, detach, where neither is a satisfying option. Lacan’s notion of the gaze (as reappropriated here) implies just such an agonistic nexus of the scopic drive, violence/compassion, and complicity.

The argument of this chapter vis-à-vis complicity and secondary witnessing finds some resonance with Arendt, Sanyal or Kozol above, but as a whole runs somewhat differently, and does not shy away from a finding of “ineluctable” complicity. This is elucidated further on, but suffice it to observe for now that a particular focus on the practices of looking at/witnessing and visualising the less/invisible, the non/inhuman conduce towards a twisting or wringing out of the somewhat saturated ethico-affective discourse dominating image-making and the witnessing gaze.⁵²

1.5 Secondary Witnessing and "Gegenwärtige Bewältigung"

A further point it is worth making here is that when one is thinking specifically about being a witness of contemporary, twenty-first century power and its more socially abstract forms of violence, it is quite arguably not complicity which tops the ethical image user's list of representational concerns. What the image-maker is more likely to be pondering in her need to "intervene", is her visual vocabulary, and the visual literacy of those to whom she is "addressing" her imagery. She seeks no doubt to find a *visually vocal* way of intellectually and affectively representing and working through the less visible forms of violence of which humanity is capable. This process of finding terms is, I suggest, a kind of "gegenwärtige Bewältigung" - *coming to terms with the present* (Kohlstruck, 2013: 12). The notion of the gegenwärtige Bewältigung of the witness can be regarded as intrinsic to, or at least implicit in, the discussion of complicity in contemporary (secondary) witnessing, current/ongoing visualisation and viewing. The issue of complicity is, from the outset, riven through with mnemonic processes that are at once social, psychological, intellectual, affective and ethico-political. This deep conceptual bench cannot be explored here, but presents rather a challenge for further research on the issue of complicity in relation to the contemporary witnessing and visualisation of the more socially abstract manifestations of power and its forms of violence.

The dominant conceptual constellation surrounding secondary witnessing of atrocity is thus deviated from in respect of the non/inhuman face(lessness) of "war" or Plexus. Such representations eschew as primary concern trauma, grief, memory and atrocity: "invisible" or socially abstract forms of violence do, of course, encompass and entail all of this, and memory studies examines the recent past and contemporaneity too; the critical discourse is an ongoing and current as well as an archival, retrospective one. However, there is a particularity

(historically, practically, technologically, semiotically and philosophically) to imagery ostensibly concerned with war/power/state-corporate-military forms of violence, for which the dominant conceptual constellation discussed here is inadequate as a cluster to provide effective *theoretical* purchase on complicity and Plexus or the witnessing of social abstraction. This is why the need for other terms, mooted terms, experimental terms, is proposed as a step forward in advancing the nascent discourse on post-photographic strategies of “war” visualisation.

Below, we sharpen our exploration of the connections between the notions of guilt and complicity, religious and secular discourse by discussing their continued deployment within the Humanities - that broad seat of scholarship within which visual and visual cultural studies comfortably nestles.

1.6 The Watchful Gaze and Complicity as Biblical Trope

As I have argued above, whilst many eminent theorists consider the complicity of the secondary witness in the context of war and crisis photography, very few contemporary visual culture scholars deal with the ethics of viewing *abstract or non/inhuman imagery*. Similarly, whilst the Gaze in relation to witnessing and photographic (and filmic/pictorial) representation has been abundantly written about (Mulvey, 1989; Bryson, 1988; Pollock, 1988), it has not been brought into critical constellation with either complicity or abstract and non/inhuman visualisation⁵³. This is where this chapter has taken its leave from the complicity in witnessing debate as it currently stands, and ventures into relatively new territory.

As I advanced in the foregoing, complicity as a secular notion *in-itself* has not travelled far from its theological launchpad.

Michael W. Kaufmann reflects on this point in his study of the narrative of secularisation within the Humanities. He ponders

[...] the fact that many histories [...] act as if the narrative of secularization has concluded allows them to treat (or ignore) both the secular and the religious as if they were normative, fixed categories. But the simple fact that secularization has a narrative suggests otherwise: that along with religion, the secular was and continues to be a product of historical contingency and change. And so the overall aim [...] is to reopen that narrative (Kaufmann, 2007: 609).⁵⁴

Kaufmann is suggesting that far from being settled, 'concluded' and thus slipping into discursively normative categories (like complicity) that can be used uncritically or self-evidently, the situation of religious and secular discursive frameworks is unstable, mobile and certainly not settled. Whilst legal and judicial discourse relies openly on religious doctrine in the performance of its function, Kaufmann's point is more piquantly illustrated in visual cultural studies by the very terms used in debates surrounding the ignominy of the secondary witness, or the viewer/voyeur of violent imagery from, inter alia, Sontag through to Felman and Laub (1992), La Capra (1998, 2001) (Butler (2009, 2012), Linfield (2010), Lucaites and Hariman (2007, 2013), Kozol (2014), and others. To invoke morality, an ethics of witnessing and viewing is *ipso facto* to invoke a set of principles which, if not inaugurated by Judeo-Christian religious thought, is at the very least deeply undergirded by it.

To encapsulate the foregoing, complicity could be understood as part of a religious trope which is deeply discursively embedded in secular western culture, including both scholarly and political discourse (Kaufmann, 2007). Judeo-Christian doctrine is, pursuant to Derridean deconstruction, for example, regarded as an epistemological condition of critique within the

humanities. It is not difficult to discern a certain Judeo-Christian flavour to the term “complicity”; regarded in this context, it is none other than secular guilt. Guilt has a deeply constitutive centrality in the emancipatory ethos underpinning much humanities scholarship today, inextricably entwined with the concepts of forgiveness and penance, salvation and redemption. Read deconstructively, even when the religious connotations are self-consciously disavowed, or the terms themselves humanistically secularised (as, for example, reconciliation, restitution, reparation), the damning power of their origin nonetheless all the more forcefully throws them up - like the word complicity - as accusatory presences, haunting the lacunae of modern critical endeavour like a disassembly of disturbed bones carelessly excavated from ancient and sequestered burial sites.

So, whilst “modern” complicity is usually invoked in a secular, humanist register, to include legal and political discourse, a certain religiosity of affect lingers. God may have been ousted, but moral precepts and principles associated with an inaugural Divine law persist in the liberal scholarly, humanist and judicial institutions and discourses of Western democracies. The theological rhetoric of guilt (complicity), forgiveness (reconciliation) and penance (reparation, restitution), recast as a secular, Enlightenment evocation of an abstract, universal “duty of care” (peculiar to common law jurisdictions or those which share some of the characteristics thereof) for the other produces, paradoxically, the phenomenon of generalised guilt, not dissimilar to the jurisprudential principle underpinning the notion of vicarious liability in civil law, and which resembles the structural, deterministic guilt of which Arendt is so critical. Guilt “by association”, and crucially, by situational/national extension, effects an ontological blurring of boundaries between guilt and innocence. By the discursive *defusing* of guilt, that is, ideologically and rhetorically, the notion of complicity achieves the remarkable fiat of *diffusing* and internalising guilt to such an extent that one no longer needs to have “done

anything” to attract self-reflexive censure (and like pervasive surveillance, usefully obviating the historically erstwhile practice of "trial by ordeal", somewhat inimical to liberal capitalist purposes). In this way, one could argue somewhat provocatively that a “ready” sense of complicity in the concerned secondary witness of atrocious imagery paradoxically ensures the guilty compliance upon which power insists, whilst power itself suffers scant or no penalty for its own plunder, in which we are then structurally complicit by virtue of that same compliance. This is precisely what Arendt is getting at in her disavowal of the moral impulse of a generalised *mea culpa* and it is an insight that holds as true for the remote spectator as it does for the observant citizen.

The very existence of a visual cultural studies discourse whereby acts of witnessing, image-making and viewing become so ethico-politically fraught rests precisely on this historical retention and transformation of the Judeo-Christian moral impulse; a kind of secular Hegelian sublation, if you will. If we add the sense of sight - "the Gaze" - to the conceptual constellation of "violence", and the “Other”, we have a third term whereby more precisely to triangulate, as it were, the discussion surrounding complicity in the visualisation of war, and “war”.

The gaze plays a central role in the moral-poetic, affective response to imaginary/real scenes or real/imaginary knowledge of the suffering of others. The fact that the "mere" looking of the viewer/secondary witness has engendered such a febrile and agonistic ethical debate in the study of war photography attests to the almost instinctively deep distrust with which we regard seeing, looking itself (Linfield, 2010): as if we are always somehow on the verge of trespass should we not avert our eyes from horror, like being subject to a biblical injunction against the

worship of idols. It is not for nothing that the word "voyeur" has such prurient and unsavoury connotations.

One eminent twenty-first century scholar and psychoanalyst who "regarded" himself as just such a voyeur – a voyeur of the socio-economically privileged kind – was Jacques Lacan, and it is to his early reflections on his invidious position as witness that we now turn.

1.7 Whither Complicity for the Post-photographic?

Why Lacan's notion of the gaze is deployed here in relation to complicity is that it introduces a third term, interrupting the dyadic dynamism of the reciprocal gaze between two people (faces). That third term functions to gesture (or ostend towards) the world outside of the intersubjective and witnessing gaze, revealing "it" as embedded in an intractable material context. It takes the "figure" of a sardine can here, which functions rhetorically (ultimately, metonymically) to index (the violence of) power/Plexus, providing the first theoretical coordinate in for this thesis for the analysis of the shiny metallic non/inhuman objects of post-photographic visualisation, such as those of Norfolk's *Military Sublime* supercomputers, Paglen's weaponised drones and Barnard's exploded shells.

We come, then to this "third term" as it presents under the observant gaze of Petit-Jean.

In explicating the origins and development of his views on the gaze in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1998 [1973]) Lacan tells a story about an early encounter with fisherman in Brittany:

One day [...] as we were waiting for the moment to pull in the nets, an individual known as Petit-Jean [...], he died very young from tuberculosis, which at the time was a constant threat to the whole of that social class – this Petit-Jean pointed out to me something floating on the surface of the waves. It was a small can, a sardine can. It floated there in the sun, *a witness* to the canning industry, which we, in fact, were supposed to supply. It glittered in the sun. And Petit-Jean said to me – “You see that can? Do you see it? Well it doesn’t see you.”(Lacan, 1964: 95. See also Siegel and Berry, 1997: 194)⁵⁵ (my italics)

Lacan is aware of his own anxiety and feelings of guilt at his voyeurism as an urban and urbane outsider from a distinctly privileged background in comparison with working class Breton fishermen. He is the complicit witness by virtue of both his “subject position” and because he is there essentially as intellectual voyeur - not to cast a net and earn a living, but to harvest experience of, *evidence* of, “the Other”.⁵⁶ The poignancy of the fisherman's philosophically astute observation above – belied by its seeming simplicity – and the early, “class-based” death of that observer, was clearly not lost on a young and impressionable Lacan. It led him to reflect upon the role/s of the witness; who is bearing witness, and of what exactly? Particularly significant here is the role reversal or interchangeability of the positions of the observer/viewer and the subject or person being viewed/scrutinised, as well as that of the subject (the viewer) and the object (the viewed).

The other “witness” apart from Lacan and Petit-Jean is the sardine can. But it is the rhetorical (metonymic, metaphoric) role of the tin can as “witness” – so designated by Lacan himself in the excerpt above – that introduces the Gaze-decentring nuance here. The sardine can “represents” – is symbolic of – the fishing industry and the immiseration of those compelled to earn their meagre living through it. But it also ostends, metonymically, towards the entire political and socio-economic system, its structures, relations and mode/s of (re)production which avail Lacan of his privilege and condemn Petit-Jean to an early grave. Petit-Jean, and so too Lacan, “recognise” their own social relation (or lack of it) to each other, and thus their

relative social/subject positioning via the inanimate, tinny gaze of a “third party”. Moreover, it is one which is entirely indifferent to that to which it bears witness; ‘it does not see you’ (or me). This “unreturned” gaze of the proxy witness, the seen (visualised) object is, of course, crucial for the critical contemplation of “war” and Plexus visualisation. If we are viewing the *technologies of war*, on this model, the *machines* depicted are paradoxically both witnesses (to horror) and blind non-purveyors of the ocularcentric gaze. Later chapters attempt in some measure to unravel the ethico-political and aesthetic implications of this twisted dynamic.

Implicit in Lacan's formulation is the self-alienation of each person party to a mutual gaze. Whilst one is connecting with an other, one is also unable to see oneself as the other sees one, and vice versa. This is a structural, dialectical feature of our interaction with others, and by virtue of the gaze, the face. Levinas declares that 'access to the face is straightaway ethical' (Levinas, 1982: 85). and that ' Vision [...] is a search for adequation; it is what par excellence absorbs being. But the relation to the face is straightaway ethical.' (Levinas, 1982: 87) The interfacial relation establishes a reciprocity of vulnerability (of the self) and care (for the other, who is like oneself, also vulnerable). It is why it is somehow more difficult to see the face of the suffering other, the one who looks back at you from the screen or page, recedes into the geographical or virtual distance. In relation to the concept of complicity, the visualisation of the *faceless, non/inhuman and/or less visible* forms of violence (which surround us day to day and which we both "look at" but often do not see) remains a conspicuous blind spot in traditional war or conflict photography and photojournalism. The Event horizon - the limits of what can be seen, visualised beyond the frame – is still a matter of re-presentation. If “war” and Plexus marks a contemporary Event horizon of power and its less visible forms of violence, nonetheless, in attempts to visualise it, a process of (re)constitution occurs by way of visual grammar/rhetoric – symbolism, metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, elision/ellipsis, hyperbole,

occlusion, etc. These and other devices are frequently used by image-makers, and the challenge for those attempting to visualise current state-corporate-military power and its *less visible or socially abstract* forms of violence in a hyperconnected era of mediatized war, remote, digitally-powered warfare and ubiquitous civilian surveillance is in its own way as tricky as the challenge of “truth” and “objectivity” is for the battle-field embedded photojournalist.

Trevor Paglen's telephoto image of a US Predator drone on a secret air field [Figure 1.2] being primed for a remote strike is likely to have an entirely different visceral impact to images of the slaughter and devastation they wreak. In fact, this grainy, clandestine image has undoubted aesthetic appeal. But what about the conditions of its creation? Just as the remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) crew sitting safely in Command Central is removed from killing-field combat, "blinded" to the “whites of the other's eyes”, the image-maker creating the picture of the RPA is “absolved” of the necessity of “being there” in order to “bring home” the evidence. And analogously to the way that the “collateral damage/murder”⁵⁷ inflicted by the air-conditioned bombardier is conveniently remote, so too are the unintended consequences of this kind of image, *its* collateral damage. The *unseen* collateral damage is mirrored in the creation/reception of post-photographic combat-zone decentred images; the effect thereof is not simply to afford the viewer moral and aesthetic respite from direct violence visited upon others Elsewhere, but more significantly, such imagery serves also to sever - or at least attenuate - the representational link between the effects of violence and its causes/conditions (of possibility). In other words, I see the armed drone in its Military Sublime aesthetic incarnation and in that moment of viewing, the corpses which result in its deployment are erased, or occluded indefinitely from view (on this point, see further discussion of drone warfare in Chapters 6 and 6). But I know they must be there. Complicity is shelved beneath the image of one “abject” (the drone) beneath which in turn is obscured the image of another “abject” (the corpse) in a

kind of visual palimpsest, the effect of which is to scope out affect and zoom in conceptual abstraction.

It is to be noted, however, these images are not just an implicit comment on/gesturing towards that which is spatially/geopolitically/conceptually beyond the frame, but that which is (by its very nature) invisible, impervious even to visualisation, or simply inaccessible. Simply put, complex power nexes and forms of systemic violence are difficult to visualise. Here it is not so much an 'ineluctable modality of the visible' (James Joyce) as the ineluctable conditions of visibility itself. The ethical debate concerning whether complicity as secondary witness of atrocity is ineluctable shifts then, to an overriding question of the intellectual commitment of the image-maker/user/viewer to visualise effectively that which evades sight or eludes comprehension. *Complicity is suspended in the face (lessness) of the search for a visual vocabulary to visualise "war" and Plexus.* The impossibility of a "complete" representation means that visualisation will always involve reaching for/testing its limits, or perceived limits, intellectually, technologically, formally and substantively. Paglen's drone image, or those of military black sites shimmering in the distant desert are visual rhetorical substitutions for a state-corporate-military power nexus that is so extensive and diffuse that it can only be conceived in socially abstract terms. They, like Simon Norfolk's *TERA-1* or Lisa Barnard's detonated ordnance, polished up to a fierce glare against a pitch-black background [Figure 1.3], can be "read" as synecdochal signposts for a system whose global reach and complexity cannot be represented in its (figural) totality: "war", Plexus, the systemic nature of their forms of violence and attendant processes of citizen subjectivization/corporatization/militarization.

1.9 In Conclusion

The question of complicity in relation to the witnessing of the non/inhuman and in/visible “face(lessness)” of war is an area of debate that has, I argue, been neglected, or where it has been engaged, sweeping and unexamined assumptions have been made. For example, that as image-makers/viewers, we are absolved of any complicity when creating/viewing images of war that do not contain scenes of the traumatised, injured or mutilated victims of war and conflict, or that questions of an ethical nature are not relevant to representations of war or power that do not depict humans in extremis.

In this chapter, I contested this assumption, and in so doing, engaged theoretically and philosophically with concepts germane to the topic, such as the “Vergangenheitsbewältigung”, Judeo-Christian guilt, the Lacanian "Gaze", Levinas and the face as the "condition of possibility" for an ethical relation to the Other, and, of course, post-photography and the witnessing and visualisation of “war” and Plexus.

Engaging also with Hannah Arendt, Lacan and Levinas, inter alia, I considered whether complicity as a witness/image-maker/viewer could be regarded as something not to be avoided/resisted, but to be paradoxically embraced as the very condition of possibility of compassion and empathy for others; or whether, pursuant to Arendt, embracing a collective complicity provides a moral fig-leaf for the actual perpetrators/causes of egregious violence against others. These issues, amongst others, were regarded also in the context of current post-photographic attempts to witness “war”, or Plexus, and the ethical/political efficacy of such attempts in relation to the issue of complicity. I also considered - against Arendt - whether complicity could be regarded as a structural and ineluctable feature of our secondary witnessing

of violence done unto others, or whether in so doing we once again permit of an easy exculpation for the "careless" viewing of war.

By invoking the concept of complicity, this chapter enacts a self-conscious and deliberate return to the register of deontology, to an ethical-philosophical positioning in the study of the visualisation of "war"/Plexus. At the risk of being repetitious, it must be emphasised that my guiding contention here is that theoretical enquiry into the technical, political, legal and mediatic issues surrounding the secondary witnessing of "war" and Plexus labours at an epistemological (and methodological) disadvantage if the ethical/moral implications of such witnessing - as non/inhuman or abstract as it may be - is not addressed head-on from the outset. Only then is an inquisitorial epistemic space freed up for the critical consideration of *other* significant aspects of the visualisation of "war" and Plexus, which I argue are best attended to *relatively* independently of the ethico-affective freight of complicity (that is, pursuant to the "silent partner" metaphor invoked in the foregoing, not ignoring/avoiding complicity, but incorporating it).

In summary, in the visualisation of violence it is not difficult to understand how complicity functions in the dynamic nexus of the image-maker and viewer of images depicting actual bodily harm; grievous injury, suffering and trauma, death and devastation. The nature of the way we see or gaze upon others and they see, gaze upon us engenders through its self-decentring process a (subconscious/subliminal/imperceptible) anxiety, an anxiety which we naturally seek to assuage, or resolve. This is the ethical and psycho-affective mindscape which anchors our acts of image-making/viewing, and continues to "operate" in relation to the visualisation of "war" and Plexus. Those images created with a view to reveal, to show, to expose forms of violence that are non-/inhuman, invisible/less visible or socially abstract do

not immediately present as entailing complicity in violence/violation in the (psycho)dynamics of their creation, reception and speculation,⁵⁸ but as I have argued, this view is both simplistic and underexamined.

The narrative arc and the discussion as it unfurled demonstrated that we cannot escape this "lived horizon" of our moral gaze, whether we view human atrocity or its non/inhuman causes and conditions of possibility. I also argued that the question of complicity in secondary witnessing can be seen as shifting to one of the very conditions of the visibility/visualisability/representability of Plexus and "war": ineluctability is not in this instance a matter of further violating the Other through acts and processes of secondary witnessing, but ineluctability resides rather in the fraught challenge to ostend towards the "faceless" conditions of possibility of "war".

In a nutshell, this chapter served - essentially, necessarily - to prompt further critical engagement with post-photographic strategies of visualisation in just such an inquisitorial epistemic space (now, provisionally) freed up for the critical consideration of *other* significant aspects of the visualisation of Plexus.

CHAPTER TWO

The (an)Iconic Challenge and Post-photographic Discontents

2.1 Introduction: Aims, Themes, Questions

In order better to understand the formal/aesthetic, epistemological and political significance of the post-photographic choice to steer clear of the human figure in the visualisation of "war" and Plexus, the photographic icon as it arises in war photojournalism provides both a powerful and a foundational point of entry. Here I take a brief, art-historical look at the icon, and then turn to some familiar examples and their public and/or scholarly reception, considering also the ways in which these icons have been post-photographically "treated".

Iconology is an historically rich field of interpretation, dating back to the Ancient Greeks, and certainly since the Renaissance (Hedley, 2016: xi; Mitchell, 2015:7). It is also a field that, Mitchell says, 'opens the border to the image, the fundamental unit of affect and meaning in art history' (Mitchell, 2015:6). This, Mitchell suggests, by way of extension through media aesthetics and mass media, is equally the case for contemporary visual culture (Mitchell, 2015:7). Certainly, the use of iconography in war photography/photojournalism attests to the ongoing significance of the icon for image-making and visualisation practices. The iconic war photograph has for some time now been an area of energetic scholarship. In this chapter, the reader shall admittedly encounter somewhat familiar, indeed, well-trodden ground. However,

the chapter tries to reassemble and re-present some particularly compelling analyses and theoretical ideas concerning the iconic war photograph within the context of the post-photographic re-working of two "atrocious" images: Nick Ut's Nick Ut's *The Terror of War* (1972) [Figure 2.1], (referred to henceforth pursuant to Hariman and Lucaites "Accidental Napalm"⁵⁹ and Kevin Carter's *Starving Child and Vulture* (1993), which I have chosen not to reproduce here.

It ought to be noted that iconicity as an art-historical term and as a type of image composition is too rich and multi-faceted a concept to treat of here: in this chapter, it is examined for one very specific purpose only; that is, to revisit it purely in the context of the post-photographic visualisation of war/ "war". It is a term that, like complicity, one would *not* normally associate with conceptual or abstract, non/inhuman or non-figural imagery that is "disruptive" of erstwhile conventions of war representation. By raiding the historical war icon archive though, post-photography enacts a palimpsestic re-visualisation of both the "evental" subject of the image, and intervenes in its public reception, serving in the process to broaden or diversify nascent approaches to contemporary dissident photography and its strategies of visualisation.

In the chapter I thus explore both the post-photographic "eye-averting" turn away from the affect-laden iconic towards less mimetic or figural, and more conceptual or abstract representations of "war" and power (Plexus) using these case studies to identify what it is post-photographic visualisation does differently, and why. I thereby also address the re-affirmed embrace by some post-photographic image-makers - typically Paglen and Norfolk - of certain avant-garde strategies such as "distantiation" (Roberts, 2014) and (conceptual, aesthetic) "objectivism" (Chouliaraki, 2013) peculiar to some early twentieth century war photography.

A further task for emergent practices of photographic visualisation is thus somehow to re-engineer conditions of reception. This means that a critical spectator has to be created, as it were. The continued adoption by many professional photojournalists and award-winning photographers of conventional iconising, emotive or jingoistic templates for the representation of war/conflict is thus regarded with some contempt by contemporary post-photographic image-makers, such as Simon Norfolk. He has in the past expressed vocal contempt for the ongoing practice of seasoned war photojournalists who continue to frame war iconically or stereotypically, repetitively deploying the same visual rhetoric of war, and ultimately giving to the public precisely that which serves to preserve an unchallenged state-military status quo: patriotic, anodyne or formulaic imagery which “sanitizes” conflict and reproduces imperialist-patriarchal-colonial-orientalist and, indeed, humanitarian visuality: the soldier as wholesome hero of tender years, asleep like a baby in his barracks after a bloody skirmish (like Tim Hetherington's award-winning imagery), or candy-dispenser to innocent children and courageous saviour of traumatised civilians in barbaric lands (favourite traditional media motif). Here, I analyse the images in the contexts of both Norfolk's own views and of the broader dynamic giving rise to post-photographic witnessing and visualisation. My argument in essence is that the imagery discussed functions both as purveyor of a critical visualisation of “war” and Plexus, and as “symptom” of a maligned middle-ground, striking a kind of compromise between more, and less familiar/traditional modes of witnessing - i.e., visualisation.

In a discussion with Andrew Hoskins (Open Eye Gallery, 2012)⁶⁰, Norfolk criticises humanist or humanitarian photography for “espousing the iconicity of historically successful war

photography” (i.e., award-winning) and remonstrates with the "perpetrators", such as James Nachtwey and Tyler Hicks (both having won multiple awards, to include the Pulitzer prize and the Robert Capa Gold Medal) for the self-aggrandising cheek of it. (See Nachtwey, 2014; and Hicks) ⁶¹

Whatever axe Norfolk has to grind though, his polemical comments about the formulaic iconicity of much traditional press photography is not without merit. However, this disavowal of iconic stereotypes is just one aspect of the critical re-invention of war photography as a contemplative/conceptual image-making genre beyond news frames that has been taking place. As has been pointed out, post-photographic image-makers are electing not to confront human desperation with the camera. This retreat from scenes of horror may be less a matter of "averting the eyes" from death and suffering out of ethico-affective considerations, and more a calculated, intellectual, dissenting act. The decision to eschew human figuration in favour of the non/inhuman or in/visible/abstract is a deliberate and self-reflexive one. It is a strategic refocus on the ("unseen") perpetrator as primary subject of "war"(warfare) visualisation. The post-photographic gaze - as we shall see in the chapters which follow - focuses sharply and defiantly on Plexus: power and its social, systemic, abstract forms of violence.

It must be noted that the image-makers considered here do not necessarily all refrain from the witnessing of the direct violence of conflict or power. Broomberg and Chanarin, and Norfolk have all created images which feature (violated) persons: in the case of Broomberg and Chanarin, through their portraiture and collages based on imagery from war and conflict archives, and in the case of Norfolk his raft of *Aftermath* imagery taken in the wake of various wars/conflicts (see Chapters Three and Four below). However, in all adopting strategies of

visualisation of "war" which occludes the human form and "targets" instead heavy metal and faceless power, whereto with the question of the familiar, conventional forms of evidence we have come to expect in respect of representations of state-corporate-military violence/violations? This question is the first amongst those contemplated in the next section on background and orienting literature, after which follows the substantive treatment of iconicity (and the "aniconic").

2.2 Note on Historical Background and Debates

For the post-photographic image-maker, her "evidence", straying as it increasingly does from actual theatres of war and the iconising tendencies which persist in photojournalistic and documentary practices, the challenge is at its most basic level to re-present "war"(and Plexus) in ways other than seen in traditional photojournalism and the erstwhile social realist or humanist conventions of art-documentary representations of war/state-military violence.

In other words, the post-photographic image-maker, eschewing tradition/convention and "competing" with both traditional media and the global citizen witness of war, in a changing war/media landscape faces visually "untriangulated" territory beyond the normal human and figural confines of war representation. Her visual forensics extends to the ontological enormity and complexity of modern "war", globalised, neoliberal, quasi-feudal⁶² state-corporate-military power and its less visible, socially abstract and systemic forms of violence which - as in/visible or un/seen as they may often be - are in no way metaphysical; they are real, very complex and frequently impervious to public scrutiny. In writing of photojournalistic visualisation, Matheson and Allan observe that

For the photojournalist confronted with the challenge of bearing witness on our behalf, the effort to record human consequences is simultaneously one of interpretation, of assigning apposite meaning and relevance. The representation of violence, in other words is partly constitutive of its reality, which makes this interpretive process acutely political. (Matheson and Allan, 2009: 130-1)

In saying that the interpretation, the framing, is ‘partly constitutive’ of the reality of the violence, Matheson and Allan implicitly recognise that the question of proof, of evidence is far from a straightforward one of “simply” showing via direct visual “capturing” of the moment. The evidence has at least partly to be framed, construed, constructed (Butler, 2009; Baybars-Hawks, 2016). War has always had to be strategically communicated in accordance with myriad political, socio-economic and cultural contingencies and exigencies. In the twenty-first century, the erstwhile clear distinction between battlefields and civilian landscapes has been irrevocably blurred, with digital "hyperconnectivity" (Quan-Haase and Wellman, 2006)⁶³ and mediatization playing a key role in the struggle between competing narratives and visualisations of war (Cottle, 2006; Matheson and Allan, 2009; Allan, 2013, 2013a, 2014; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Chouliaraki, 2013, 2015). Images in this sense are never “self-evident”. Clearly, one cannot posit some easy equivalence between the subject/social positions or “responsibility” of the art/documentary post-photographic image-maker who takes as her subject matter war/conflict/state-corporate-military violence; the independent photojournalist perilously recording events in an active warzone; the embedded war reporter under military restraint; and the citizen witness accidentally or otherwise embroiled in an incident of terror. Each in their respective ways and in accordance with their own divergent situational needs and ideological or commercial agendas still has to engage with the contemporary politics of war representation, to include its framing or selective focus, its rhetoric, the way it is then verbally captioned and the contexts or conditions of its public distribution/digital dissemination.

Where war is thoroughly mediatized, the enhanced potential for a conflict of media narratives in dialectical turn further inflames and shapes conflict. The buoyant synergy of state-corporate-military power relies not in minor measure on such mediatization, a crucial concern for the visualisation of "war"/Plexus. Their post-photographic visualisation "does battle" with media representations of war/power which obscure, dissemble, hegemonise and normalise both war and the militarization (and corporatization) of society. Chouliaraki avers that as a result of this new media(tized) dispensation, 'a new authenticity of photojournalism emerges [...] that rejects the objectivism of the 'total gaze' and embraces the testimonial truth of [the ordinary person]' (Chouliaraki, 2013: 332). By opposing 'authenticity' to 'objectivism', Chouliaraki is pointing towards a tension between the competing (sources of) "narratives" at work in citizen/"new photojournalist" witnessing and those practices which cling to an ethos of objectivity/neutrality in war reportage/visualisation. The digitally-driven popularity of "authentic first-hand experience" is, however, further bolstered by the propagandistic-humanitarian, economic-cultural "soft power"⁶⁴ visual tropes deployed so enthusiastically by traditional media and in the media-military narration/visualisation of war. The digito-ideological "turn" within social and traditional media towards authenticity has the ironic effect of once again opening up a space for the critically self-reflexive renewal of "objectivism" in war/power visualization, and it is a space, I argue, that is being "occupied" quietly but formidably by post-photographic ways of seeing. In a critical sense, in its shift away from affect and immediacy/authenticity, and in its more conceptual and abstract approach to war, post-photography performs a paradoxical return to this maligned objectivism, entailing, as we have seen, fresh questions concerning complicity and the ethico-politics of representation.

These are significant ideas in respect of what post-photographic witnessing and visualisation seeks to do, or does in this space: in its non/inhuman, more distant and abstract approach to its

subject, it is not only turning its testimonial back on "emotionality" and/or visceral violence, but also the jingoistic/propagandistic "hearts-and-minds" strategic narrative of Anglo-American hegemony. Unlike the camera-ready instantaneity of "authentic" witnessing, post-photographic practices are of the analogical kind, technically and/or stylistically: slow, deliberate, measured, considered, and sometimes abstrusely conceptual. (In Chapter Five, Paglen, for example, describes the "philosophy" behind his visualisation projects as partaking of the Adornian "negative dialectic".)

Of course, it is highly unlikely that a war photojournalist or citizen witness would have the space-time to take such an approach to recording events as they unfold, so this observation is not intended as a direct or empirically meaningful comparison. Rather, the modes of social-traditional and art-documentary visualisation continue to conform as they have in the past to a high/low differential cultural condition of image production (Edwards et al, 2010). This is the not unfamiliar, materially constitutive backdrop for the post-photographic image-maker who, like the Modernist/Avant-garde artist, seeks to devise an aesthetics of seeing that is critical and dissenting. Where Modernist visions of war were deeply nihilistic though, we shall see that post-photographic visualisation has an almost emancipatory and even tutelary/didactic aspect to it.

In respect of the gaze, there are grounds for espying a 'total gaze' ambition in some, such as Trevor Paglen and his stratospheric night skies and ocean-depth fact-finding expeditions into the dark heart of state-corporate-military power. We return to Paglen in Chapter Five, but for now, it ought to be observed that there are far too many permutations in the types of imagery that fall into the above-mentioned categories - and it is beyond the delimited topic of this

chapter - to identify or discuss these in depth. Instead, the iconic - which is arguably the zenith of what any image can achieve in terms of its Realist, social ambition or strategic narrative value - is the kind of image which is used here as evocative vehicle for the further exploration of the characteristics which differentiate (or are shared by) traditional (photojournalistic, art-documentary) imagery and that of the post-photographic.

The next section examines iconicity in historical context, revisiting once again the concept of complicity in both iconic and aniconic instances of witnessing and visualisation.

2.3 Iconic vs Aniconic

Scholarly literature on the *iconic* image of war/violence/suffering abounds,⁶⁵ and some of this writing is drawn upon here in the ensuing discussion. With its historical roots in divinity and the representation of God, the icon is a fundamentally different species of imagery to the secular, post-humanist, digital era conception of the post-photographic that has been purveyed here thus far. If we are to understand how the works of Jaar and Haddock examined further on might be construed as aniconic, we need first to know precisely what we mean by iconic. Bringing the two into unlikely juxtaposition therefore warrants a little explanation.

Historically, both iconic and aniconic are related to the religious context of Abrahamic monotheism, and represent the different theological or doctrinal positions on the worship of images representing God, mortals or the natural world. The aniconic, strictly defined, refers to

the prohibition (in Judaism, Islam) on such material representations of deities or living creatures such as found in the Eastern Orthodox or Christian icon.

Etymologically, the word icon is "image" in Greek, with the word imagination cognately rooted in "imago" (Hedley, 2016: xi). This is where that 'border to the image' Mitchell perceives the icon to open up, becomes especially interesting in relation to the post-photographic image/imagination since, as Hedley remarks, the currency of the imagination does not reside solely in images in the iconic pictorial sense (Hedley, 2016: xi). This is why in this chapter the distinctions between the icon, the image and the aniconic prove not to be as stable as one might "imagine" them to be. In this chapter, I have refashioned the term aniconic to refer to the post-photographic "prohibition" on the material representation of the human figure. The visualisation of "war" and violent/violating power through the non/inhuman and conceptual/abstract is, I argue, a species of "aniconic" visualisation.

One obvious difference between the "traditional" photojournalistic/documentary iconographic image and the aniconic post-photographic one is the way in which the image-makers transform the "raw" image via what Rancière calls 'forms of redistribution of the elements of representation' (Rancière, 2009: 97). The image-maker/user is, at least in part, attempting by such transformations to inspire a critical visuality in the viewer. At least one of the key objectives of such post-photographic practices is in some way an attempt to re-engineer citizen spectatorship, to inspire the aniconic imagination and elicit an investigative (rather than purely abstract) response. It is once again, I argue, a performative paradox: in this regard it is the use of abstraction to provoke a more materially forensic engagement with the visual.

To illustrate and further the foregoing ideas, two familiar and harrowing iconic images, and their aniconic transformations, will be critically discussed. Thereafter, the chapter discusses the absence of the human being in general in this emergent non/inhuman genre of post-photographic "war" imagery.

2.4 "Accidental Napalm" and the Person as Proxy, Paradox or Rhetorical Figure

Nick Ut's *The Terror of War* (1972) [Figure 2.1], otherwise known variously as "Napalm Girl" (Alimurung, 2014; Time Magazine, 2016)⁶⁶ or "Accidental Napalm"/"Accidental Napalm Attack" (Hariman and Lucaites, 2003, 2007; Westwell, 2009) was taken by Ut in Vietnam in the aftermath of a napalm aerial bombing allegedly by the South Vietnamese forces of a village in which the Viet Cong were hiding (CNN, 2015).⁶⁷ There is a substantial raft of journalistic/popular, historical, and scholarly literature on this conflict and its mediation/mediatization and the images which appeared at the time in traditional American press, and this literature will not be engaged here (see Griffin, 2010 for a noteworthy example), suffice it to remark that the image is a highly reproduced one and, as Nancy K. Miller writes, 'shocked the world and still stands as one of that conflict's central icons.' (Miller, 2014: 147)⁶⁸

Miller's critical feminist analysis of the reception of the image, amongst other things, picks up on the naked femininity of the central figure, Kim Phuc (as does Hariman and Lucaites, Kozol, Pollock and others), remarking that Kim's brother, front left of the picture, with an equally agonised wailing grimace is largely occluded from commentary or interpretive frames. She writes, 'it's the girl who gets targeted as the story, an American story created by and for the

media' (Miller, 2014: 154). And Kozol, drawing on Hariman and Lucaites' study of the image remarks on the "gendered performance of pain" which operates to "mobilize moral outrage" (Kozol, 2014: 170).⁶⁹ Hariman and Lucaites, like Kozol, point trenchantly towards the paradox of the image; the 'ambivalence in witnessing' (Kozol, 2014), in the following paragraph:

[...] the photograph violates one set of norms [the showing in the press of the naked female body] in order to activate another; propriety is set aside for a moral purpose, which is to say 'Girls should not be stripped naked in public; civilians should not be bombed [...]. Just as the photograph violates one form of propriety to represent a greater form of misconduct, that breach of public decorum also disrupts larger frameworks for the moral justification of violence [...]. The picture creates a searing eventfulness that breaks away from any official narrative justifying the war (Hariman and Lucaites, 2007:176)

What is suggested here in other words is that the *critical* impact of the photograph rests ironically on its violation of propriety, not only "of the girl" in taking the photo, but of the normative moral code governing what we should or should not be viewing in public/as a public. There is a complicitous violation, and a dissident one at the same time. Therein clearly lies an ethical paradox.

But underlying this more overt reading of the image is the question of its deeper 'searing eventfulness': something which remains outside of official discourse, or elided/ marginalised in public discourse, and that is the traumatic, catastrophic crisis of a society, disrupting its everyday rhythm and behavioural norms. It shows, in other words, that 'the horror of war is the destruction of social order and of meaning itself.' (Hariman and Lucaites, 2007: 179) Whilst we cannot here do justice to the entirety of Hariman and Lucaites' inspired reading, the point being made here is the following: by lending to this iconic image a wider, more socially abstract reading, pointing outwards beyond the geopolitical and spatio-temporal frame, they generate questions of a global, existential and philosophical nature which is both mindful of state/social

violence in its particularity (the event), but also percipiently aware of the greater in/visible Event (of “war”/Plexus) subsuming violence at the level of manifest, visible eventality. To extract or extrapolate from the theoretical crux of this analysis, the iconic war archive (such as Broomberg and Chanarin - see Chapter Three) when (re)visualised through the prism of the critique of neoliberal democratic social order continues to resonate with war and power in a twenty-first century dispensation.

In other words, Hariman and Lucaites take what is an iconic image and lift it from its canonic pedestal, (re)assemble or reframe it, and re-interpret its significance for current contexts of witnessing. This is an interesting and imaginative treatment of a prize-winning icon, which “disrupts” its iconicity by “reframing” it in terms of an Evental “gegenwältige Bewältigung”.

In contrast, Kozol enquires what it is that cannot be recovered in the aftermath by a post-evental (rather than Evental) viewing/using. She reflects on the spatio-temporally and culturally removed “secondary witness” (Felman and Laub, 1992; LaCapra, 1998, 2001) and “rhetorical witness” (i.e., a consciously *intersubjective* ethico-politics of viewing),⁷⁰ observing sensibly that ‘Geographic, temporal, social, and cultural differences position the historical witness in a distanced relation to military violence.’ (Kozol, 2014:168) She is concerned to examine what the secondary/rhetorical witness “does” with this material in view of this, and analyses the work of two artists who creatively re-render Nick Ut’s photograph in ways that comment immanently upon the violent moment in time that cannot be recovered by the post-evental viewer. Kozol’s reading places a definitive emphasis on the ethico-politics of memory in relation to witnessing, the “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” involved in the revis(ion)ing of contemporary war witnessing.

Although Kozol writes of both Vik Muniz and John Haddock's (Muniz, 1989, Haddock, 2000) re-visualisations, for our purposes we need only consider Kozol's treatment of the latter, and later, post-photographic image. In Haddock's digital take on Ut's photograph, entitled *Children Fleeing Napalm Strike*⁷¹ [Figure 2.2] he re-presents a black and grey smoky landscape of an empty road in which the figures have been "virtually" erased, where what were once terrified running children is now a watery, smudgy grey-toned haze. Kozol postulates that the duplications and strategic revisions of "Accidental Napalm" are acts of mimesis that, rather than being 'false imitation[s] of the real', create instead an 'affective space that engages with what cannot be recovered' and that such (re)creative visualisations attempt to 'sceptically reorient photojournalism to explore how mimetic oscillations configure remembrances of the Vietnam War.' (Kozol, 2014:169) What Kozol appears to be arguing is that the mimetic challenge of re-renderings such as Haddock's lead viewers⁷² to revisit their (collective cultural) "memories" of the war, which memories were largely formed through the press photographs (and narratives) in which they were at the time immersed, or have post-eventually encountered. What I extract from this reading for present purposes is that the configuration (or reconfiguration) of the memories which is entailed (or not) in the viewing of a work like Haddock's which, by both deselecting Kim Phuc as focal centre and erasing the other figures also thereby reframes the event, visually deconstructs its "icono-logic" to re-present the event and its "meaning" afresh. It is thus an aniconic act. The image is released from its iconic capture and fresh cultural relevance is found in it.

Kozol writes further that 'erasure paradoxically calls attention to spectatorship even as the image explicitly denies the pleasurable act of looking with sympathy at those who suffer'

(Kozol, 2014:175). It is not certain that the aniconised image denies what she claims it does, a connection with the 'pleasure of looking' and simultaneous sympathy with the pixel-disguised victims. That is a moot point: is it spectatorial pleasure, or rather a vaguely disturbed feeling - neither pleasure nor pain?

Notwithstanding this, Kozol's underlying insight is a perceptive one: that Haddock's digital erasure of the persons in the iconic image

[...] foreground the discursive power of the news media to structure memories of the Vietnam War. He also foregrounds the epistemological and affective implications of erasure as a constitutive aspect of historical memory (Kozol, 2014:174).

Kozol is not making a mundane point about photojournalistic digital manipulation here; she is reiterating a broader point about how in tandem with images, news media narrative frames have the power to influence if not determine how events are collectively remembered and culturally, historically construed. In this sense she is suggesting that erasure here is used as a rhetorical strategy to challenge or resist the dominant narrative framework/s surrounding the iconicity of the image. The overriding point is that the colonial-oriental-imperial-discursive framework - 'that render colonized subjects invisible' - in and through which the (Anglo-) American viewer regards the image is challenged. However laudable this is though, she espies an ethical paradox too in such a strategy of visualisation. It is worth quoting her reservations at length:

[P]ixellation calls attention to the problematic of the gaze by removing the girl whose naked and vulnerable body has become one of the most famous spectacles of the Vietnam War. Yet Haddock's strategy also reproduces the colonial act of erasing subjugated people from historical visibility. The ethical paradox is that of representation itself, for without visual depictions of victims and trauma, what compels the viewer to encounter the violence and thus to witness the racist and gender logics of this war, *including complicitous citizenship? The challenge that work like Haddock's poses yet may not fully address is the challenge of witnessing without a visual referent of human suffering.*' (2014:175) (my italics)

Kozol is astutely positing that the strategy is not a straightforward one with an unambiguously “dissident” effect; the ‘ethical paradox’ of the aesthetic re-visioning is that Haddock himself performs once again mimetically the ‘colonial act of erasing subjugated people’: in making his point, he rehearses rhetorically, mimetically, what colonial imperial power/discourse does. He is clearly doing so self-reflexively, but the ethical performative paradox remains. Kozol's perceptive observation is equally germane to other post-photographic strategies of visualisation we shall analyse later on, to include those of Broomberg and Chanarin. In *The Day Nobody Died* they are also caught up in an ethical performative paradox in their attempts to ostend towards a different kind of “erasure”.

In addition to this, the italicised lines in the quotation above begs the question as to how - without “sight” of the human - we are to engage with our own ‘complicitous citizenship’ as secondary witnesses? The question appears as a red thread through this thesis, for which there are no straightforward answers, and which in my view ought to subtend or underpin any enquiry into the non/inhuman witnessing of "war"/Plexus. This point speaks concretely and with piquancy to the three questions raised in the introduction by Roberts: 'How has the role of the image-maker as *witness* evolved?' (Roberts, 2016: 12) At least one response to this is that it has evolved along with Plexus in the digital/quantum twenty-first century with changing perceptions of and attitudes towards *evidence* and its re-presentation. The making visible of intangible "evidence" is an aim and a task pre-eminently suited abstract visualisation. Then, 'What capacities for *critique* do images maintain? What new *visual vocabularies* are emerging to represent new forms of war and violence?' (Roberts, 2016: 12) (my italics). These two questions are imbricated: one easy answer is that the "ground-breaking" aniconic (rather than

iconoclastic) strategies of visualisation afford fresh critical momentum to dissenting "war" photography. However, it is equally the case that post-photographic developments in the witnessing and visualisation of "war" and Plexus does not automatically entail "progressive" and unproblematic, ethico-politically uncompromised ways of seeing. Digital era, stylistically sophisticated, meditative image-making practices such as that of Haddock still stray as ineluctably as traditional analogue photojournalism into the ethical minefield of complicitous witnessing, even after the figures and faces of war have been strategically erased.

A distinction must be made though, between the *viewing* and/or photographic/aesthetic *re-visioning of* an iconic image: the icon has become one over time and through repeated dissemination in heterogeneous contexts of reception and attended by varied public/collective and scholarly articulations. In respect of the contemporary aniconic visualisation of war, however, the roles of temporality, spatiality and memory are different. As Hariman and Lucaites ask, 'why any icon continues to define the past' and to 'dominate collective memory' (Hariman and Lucaites, 2007: 173 - 174) are matters that are especially pertinent to critical reflection upon the public construction of memory. From my point of view here, the post-photographic reworking of the icon when regarded in the context of the Evental (as opposed to evental) "gegenwärtige Bewältigung" as discussed above questions the very process of becoming iconic, immanently undermining its *own* potential to become iconic. Perhaps in one sense because, as Hariman and Lucaites write, the iconic photo 'freeze[s] the spectator in a tableau of moral failure' ((Hariman and Lucaites, 2007:182), a "tableau mort" if you want, and that the more we develop a collective critical attitude towards such imagery, the less "acceptable" seems to become violent or traumatic imagery of war/conflict, our making of them and our viewing of them.⁷³ In other words, our "intolerance threshold" is negatively impacted (Roberts, 2014). An example of this would be just such a critical observation by Pollock, who,

in relation to atrocity imagery says the following:

Photographs taken during and documenting/witnessing widely different instances of Nazi killing are *promiscuously* used to lodge a particular image of the event in cultural memory in ways that, I suggest, *pacify or anaesthetize* the retrospective viewer produced by mediated cultural rather than personal memory.' (Pollock, 2012: 65)(my italics)

This is quite a damning statement, and one reminiscent of the excoriation of the early Sontag in *On Photography* of the retrospective, voyeuristic viewer of war. The contemporary viewer below the age of around seventy-five obviously cannot have any personal memory of the Holocaust, and it is not at all certain that the horrendous imagery that exists of the extermination camps **does** pacify and anaesthetise. And those who use such imagery 'promiscuously' are more often than not scholars, historians and documentary media/film/image-makers. The process of "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" discussed in the last chapter is an inevitable part of the narration of the past and the creation of cultural memory; the process is by its nature prodigiously repetitive and to that extent, indeed, anaesthetising. And yes, this atrocious imagery is certainly lodged in cultural memory, but each new generation must discover these unspeakable events for itself, each new cohort of spectators must "learn" how to negotiate their intellectual and affective way through such imagery. It is rather a matter of specific kinds of cultural mediation that may produce dazed pacification or even perhaps indifferent incomprehension.

In any event, the italicised terms evoke the highly fraught relationship we as "concerned" scholars, viewers and image-makers have developed over the past decades with images of violence done to Others, rather than ourselves. This invidious self-positioning is the starting point for the ethico-critical trajectory which has dominated critical discourse surrounding our collective cultural (artistic/scholarly) memory and the self-reflexive secondary witnessing of war. However, bearing witness to twenty-first century "war" and Plexus entails a recognition that "I" am not/no longer as remote from "war"/warfare as both critical scholarship and

traditional media and documentary representations of war may have led me to believe. “I” am also the subject of my witnessing; my Self is no longer a privileged vantage point from which I see the damaged Other remotely/retrospectively. Not only has my Western-colonial-orientalist gaze been knocked from pole position, I am now specularly included as subject/Other of the concerned/critical gaze. This radical decentring of the subject position of the (visualising) witness is another signal aspect of Roberts' query as to how the role of the image-maker as witness has evolved. Rather than an evolution, as such, in his *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009), Rancière rejects a theoretical framework which casts viewing in dichotomous terms as either an active critical process or passive voyeurism, and insists on the dynamically enmeshed roles of the viewer/image-maker/image as elements within the "system of the sensible", each co-constitutive of the image's power and meaning. In elucidating this system of the sensible in respect of the ethico-politics of spectating war imagery - whether conventional or dissident - Rancière refers to Martha Rosler's photo-collage series *Bringing the War Home* (1972), arguing that

For the image to produce its political effect, the spectator must already be convinced that what it shows is American imperialism, not the madness of human beings in general. She must also be convinced that she is herself guilty of sharing in the prosperity rooted in imperialist exploitation of the world [...] *she must already feel guilty about viewing the image that is to create the feeling of guilt [...] The mere fact of viewing images that denounce the reality of a system already emerges as complicity with this system.* (Rancière, 2009: 84/5)(my italics)

Aside from the fact that Rancière's language points towards the Judeo-Christian discursive subtending his secular-critical engagement with war imagery, his insights here bring into clear purview the utter prismic contingency of any viewer's interpretive capacity. What he is in essence getting at here is that, in other words, if one is to interpret images “against the grain” as signifiers of war, social breakdown and related forms of violence, one must first know how "to read" imagery in order to extract this hegemony-challenging viewpoint or content. Rancière

rejects the intrinsically patronising implication that an ethical "reading" presupposes a certain degree of visual-cultural literacy. The inference here is that it is not the image itself whence our ethical response arises: the capacity for such an ethical response must already be in place, as it were, in order for me "correctly" (compassionately) to read the imagery. I must already understand my own complicity in the suffering of distant others as a result of the actions of - and my systemic participation in - the society in which I live. This perspective would suggest that an image itself is not alone capable of shifting the framework of its own perception/reception: imagery is borne out of (and co-constructs) the ideological/discursive referential co-ordinates of its own meaning and its possible effects, to include the political. As Rancière elsewhere maintains (along with others), there is no direct path from imagery of violence to political activism (Rancière, 2014).

Not only is the viewing witness decentred, but so too is the image-maker and the image, which in turn surely entails a shift in the thinking/visualising the *what* of the viewer/image-maker/image's **focus**, which seems ever to be receding to a theoretical vanishing point: the Event of "war" and Plexus, to which we now turn.

2.5 The Violent "Event" and its Post-photographic Curation

As we have seen, the iconic image, the violent image, and their critical aesthetic re-rendering in their own ways lead to strafing anatomisations of both image-making and public practices of viewing and memorialising war, and the theoretical scholarship concerned with it. When the iconic image of an "Event" is the focus for self-reflexive social/cultural critique, the significance of the historical event itself still constitutes the delimiting or defining frame of

relevance, too far outside of which cannot be ventured without doing an injustice to that event and its critical understanding. This is what Hariman and Lucaites mean when they (with reference to the insights of Alan Trachtenberg) write ‘[...] images denote only fragments of any co-ordinated action. They give specific events a singular significance but they leave larger articulations of purpose outside the frame.’ (Hariman and Lucaites, 2007:177) Presumably, what is meant by ‘these larger articulations of purpose’ refers to phenomena which are “bigger” than any one war, conflict, bombing, act of killing, terrorism, torture, or a Plexus “event” such as the military-media-industrial-academic perfection by the likes of MIT and Google of the control algorithm for a drone swarm⁷⁴, or a proxy war involvement by power in any given regional conflict to wrangle geopolitical supremacy or maintain and perpetuate a lucrative trade in arms, and so forth. If one understands the phrase to refer to the diachronic, structural, relational patterns and nexes, flows and distributions, continuities and discontinuities, activities and concealments which go to make up social existence and the dynamics of power, control and dispossession with which it is riven, then there is no one image, iconic or not, that could ever *but* leave ‘larger articulations of purpose outside the frame’. The case studies in this thesis are emblematic of this: there is often no “newsworthy” Event - in the ordinary language, “common-sense” understanding - being depicted. This is because the Event (of Plexus) is always happening, everywhere, both in no particular place and in very specific places (such as Paglen's underwater fibre-optic NSA/CIA secret surveillance cables, or Barnard and her arms trade fair exhibition).⁷⁵

Here, the question to be asked would be the inverse: in leaving ‘larger articulations of purpose outside the frame’ are such post-photographic interventions “guilty” of the aesthetic elision of the myriad *particularities* of social, institutional, structural and systemic? We shall return to this question in later chapters, but for now, we return to the people-erasing trend in much post-

photographic imagery of "war"/Plexus, which on the face of it seems inimical to the "purposes" of iconic war photography.

If as above the traditional iconic image 'freeze[s] the spectator in a tableau of moral failure' (Hariman and Lucaites, 2007: 182) the post-photographic aniconic image still has the viewer, in my view, if not quite white-water rafting in rapids of moral uncertainty, at least left somehow bereft of the old ways of seeing, the familiar complicity conundrum and resigned self-contempt at her helplessness in the haunting face of the violent image. How is one to view pictures which ostend towards monstrous violence, but do not, or refuse to, show it, thereby "depriving" the concerned/dissident viewer of her reassuring amalgam of shame, horror, sadness and anger? It is a question which goes begging in each of the post-photographic images examined in this thesis.

Succinctly paraphrasing Didi-Huberman, Griselda Pollock, in her chapter "Photographing Atrocity: Becoming Iconic?", writes that the lessons to be drawn from viewing iconic imagery are that, 'First, we must be scrupulously attentive to the materiality of any image as a means to defeat the dangerous tendency to generalize the Holocaust or any other atrocity. Second, [...] *images become iconic when they are made to represent the whole complexity of an event in their exceptional singularity*' (Pollock, 2012: 67-8) (my italics). The reason why an image becomes iconic, in the Didi Huberman/Pollock view, is that it comes to carry the weight of the entire violent context in which it is embedded; a kind of rhetorical shorthand. One such iconic image of the "post-photographic" but figural kind is the critically well-received *Taliban, 2001* (sometimes known as Taliban Soldier) [Figure 2.3] by Luc Delahaye, which still "frames" the dead person. The image certainly "succeeds" in its metaphorically/metonymically allusive

composition to "carry the weight of the entire violent context" of the conflict in Afghanistan, but in my view, the aestheticisation of someone's body as it lies there dead will always also "fail". Notwithstanding what has been said above in respect of overtly aestheticising strategies of visualisation, the exercise of imaging death in whatever form does absolutely nothing for the body of the person, nor their dignity. Least of all can it restore them to life. Aesthetic commemoration cannot effect redress, reanimate corpses, or effectively relieve the viewer/visualiser from "complicitous citizenship" (Kozol, 2014). As the Dutch-South African artist, Marlene Dumas, insists, 'Death can't be seen, it has to be touched. Images don't care. Images do not discriminate between sleep and death. We do. We have to.' (Dumas, 2004: 2)⁷⁶ Her words ring particularly true in respect of *Taliban, 2001*.

To reiterate: I argue, contrary to Andersen and Möller, that the aesthetic or rhetorically "dissident", post-photographic re-rendering of human slaughter still fails signally to dispatch with the knotty ethics and politics common to traditional war photojournalism. I contend it is a "failure" which - as unlikely as it may seem - also haunts the post-photographic non/inhuman or abstract/conceptual visualisation of state-(corporate-media)-military violence.

However, the post-photographic re-visioning of human trauma and tragedy, where it refrains from haunting, can succeed in critically memorialising. In the next section, we are once again confronted with an iconic image - that of a professional photojournalist rather than an art-documentary image-maker - and consider what Rancière's take (via Alfredo Jaar) on it means for post-photographic intervention.

2.6 The Kevin Carter Case: System and Sensibility

When the public finds an image "intolerable", collective guilty conscience of 'complicitous citizenship' might unleash expressions of opprobrium and moral outrage, and its effects. Just such a bleak instance occurred in the case of Kevin Carter, leading to an image becoming iconic and a man killing himself.

Griselda Pollock writes about his "story" in detail (Pollock, 2012: 65-78), so only a bare summary shall be provided here. Kevin Carter was a press photographer in South Africa in the early nineties when the country was on the cusp of the dismantling of Apartheid and was in an incendiary state, especially in the black "townships", where state-of-emergency police brutality was rife. Kevin Carter and a small collective of dissident photographers - the Bang Bang Club⁷⁷ - were concerned to expose this violence not only to the white South African public but to a broader, international audience. It was perilous and harrowing work. Taking a break from this, Carter took on an assignment in Sudan in 1993, during a famine that had become lethally endemic and was annihilating large swathes of its rural, peasant population. He found his way to a feeding station, and it was there, just a few hundred yards from it, that he noticed a tiny emaciated Sudanese toddler, starving to death. She was to become the tragic subject of the image - *Starving Child and Vulture* (1993) - that won Carter the Pulitzer prize for photography.⁷⁸ He himself describes how a vulture waited ominously close by whilst he waited to see if the predator would majestically (and photogenically) spread its wings. All the while, the tiny girl struggled and failed to hobble or drag herself towards the feeding centre. She was naked, had clearly been orphaned or abandoned, and there was no help to hand. He smoked a cigarette and waited. The vulture, however, kept its wings close to its chest. So, after some twenty minutes, Carter took his picture and carried the little girl to a feeding centre (whether

she survived or was too wasted from inanition like millions of others is unknown; on the balance of probabilities though, with no parent fending for her, she died). Nonetheless, he realised the image he so painstakingly framed would be a striking one, aesthetically and morally.

Around the same time, his close friend and committed dissident photographer, also a member of the Bang Bang Club, Ken Oosterbroek, was killed during an independent foray in a strife-torn, burning township in the Transvaal.

Shortly after winning the 1994 Pulitzer Prize for his controversial photograph, Carter took his own life, at the age of 33. A sentence in his suicide note read:

I am haunted by the vivid memories of killings and corpses and anger and pain [...] of starving or wounded children, of trigger-happy madmen, often police, of killer executioners [...] I have gone to join Ken if I am that lucky.⁷⁹

Carter was comprehensively castigated by the spectating, "humanitarian" public for not immediately sweeping up in his arms the skeletal mite and ensuring she was provided with water and sustenance without delay. His invidious complicity as photographer-witness, notwithstanding the undeniable sincerity of his intentions - the very reason why he was in Sudan in the first place - was regarded as tantamount to a criminal dereliction of duty towards the toddler for the purposes of professional self-aggrandisement. Pollock writes stirringly of the case, observing mordantly that

Carter was condemned by those he had made share the intolerable truth of one African child's exposure and reduction to bare life as this tiny morsel of humanity is abjected by the lack of fundamental nourishment in a world of unaccountable wealth and the production of excess. (Pollock, 2012: 77)

Pollock eloquently targets precisely that morally outraged audience who cannot face the 'intolerable truth' of their own imperialist heritage and image-consuming complicity in the famine, as reflected specularly back at them in their viewing of the execrable image. The case of Carter and the unnamed African toddler continues to trouble visual culture scholarship in relation to the issue of complicity. The image is a visual omen of sorts, shrouded in death, victimhood, faceless power and its diffuse and unaccountable forms of violence. What sets this icon apart is that it is an emblem of the pain and suffering of both the (adult) image-maker "perpetrator" and the (baby) innocent victim depicted. The iconography of the image reaches beyond the facts of its creation into the most sacred and deeply held attitudes and sentiments towards innocent children and the protective role of any/all adults. Both Pollock and Rancière engage with the impact of this photograph and its backstory in their discussions of works by the Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar, who often uses war imagery post-photographically to 'expos[e] media culture's failure to "see" atrocity' (Pollock, 2012:72). There were two atrocities occurring: in relation to the Sudanese conflict and the famine, and in relation to the audacious messenger who dares to bring tidings of messy, helpless and ineluctable complicity to a viewing public which refuses to recognise the same.

To ostend towards this "unspeakable" layering of atrocity, Jaar created an installation, *The Sound of Silence* (2005) [Figure 2.4] which, as Pollock perceives it 'interrogate[s] a collision between mediatized culture and suffering.' (Pollock, 2012: 72).⁸⁰

The work consists of a steel container structure, with an entry point at the rear, which is simply a darkened space giving the impression of being like the interior of a camera. There is an 8 minute screening in fragments of the life of Carter, showing how as a younger man he had been

a conscientious objector (to conscripted military service in the South African Defence Force) and eventually made it his mission to bear witness as press/documentary photographer to the sheer brutality of the Apartheid regime. Throughout the fragments, the words 'Kevin, Kevin, Kevin' are flashed up on the screen and finally, very briefly right at the end, 'for only those fractions of a second needed for the camera to open its shutter and register the analogue picture on its exposed film' (Pollock, 2012: 72) the iconic image of the dying toddler is shown.

Jaar's short film is a kind of visual poem, essentially (re)situating the reviled iconic image in the very particular context: the cultural-mediatic, and the peculiar socio-political and personal circumstances of its creation. He thereby eulogizes Carter, giving him an aesthetic memorial. By placing the toddler back into the historic soil of Sudan's trauma, alongside the countless others who shared her fate, Jaar also commemorates an Event which is not yet over. In Rancière's reading, Jaar's paean is a performance of just that (re)distribution of the sensible - the visible - which in taking the original image out of its previous cultural-materially dominant configuration, re-presents it for a "second take", as it were. The second viewing, reflecting as it does upon the first viewing, thus carries within it the self-reflexive, collaborative momentum which will be required from the viewer, viewing for the second time. It is one of the critical features of post-photographic imagery that it often provides a retrospective or alternative context. Or it alters 'the sensible system' in which an image is presented to the public. As Rancière states in respect of this secondary witnessing of a reverberating atrocity, 'the problem is not whether it is necessary to create and view such images, but the sensible system within which it is done' (Rancière, 2009: 100). That is, as elucidated above, a non-hierarchical "system" whose productive, relational, material and formal elements which combine "collaboratively" to defuse a hubristic viewer-centred crisis of witnessing, and recoup for the image and its subject a 'purpose outside the frame.' (Hariman and Lucaites, 2007:177)

The politics of metonymy is once again alluded to in Rancière's perspective on a film by Rithy Panh on the Cambodian genocide *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* [Figure 2.5]. He describes how Panh

[...]chose to represent the machine rather than the victims: the survivors and former guards were made to react to daily reports, to minutes of interrogations, photographs of dead and tortured prisoners, paintings made from memory by a former prisoner (Rancière, 2009: 101).

The machine is the rhetorical figure symbolising the monstrously violent inhumane regime responsible and all those acting in its service. By showing the particularities of how this machine functioned in his recruitment of both survivors and victims to react to "evidence" of their experiences, the film 'shifts position by demoting those who have just expressed their power as torturers once again to the position of school pupils educated by their former victims' (Rancière, 2009: 101) and thereby creates a new '*dispositif* of visibility' (Rancière, 2009: 102).⁸¹ As above, the *dispositif* - or system - of visibility is, as Rancière conceives of it, a 'sensible' one, in the sense that the arrangement (or rearrangement) and coherence of all the elements of a work (filmic, photographic, performative) is what configures its meaning/s.

Rancière demonstrates how this idea of a *dispositif* can be seen at work too in Alfredo Jaar's 1995 Rwandan massacre installation, *Real Pictures* [Figure 2.6] This is an installation which consists of little sealed black boxes, each enclosing a picture of a murdered Tutsi which one will never see, and accompanied by descriptive text informing the viewer about the victim, thus succeeding in disrupting the "official system of information" whereby the testimony of words is opposed by or underwritten by the evidence of the image (Rancière, 2009: 95). It is in this 'redistribution of the elements of representation' (Rancière, 2009: 97) - containing images (but not "about" imagery), metal boxes and narrative text - that the ethico-political power of the work resides. And it is in this 'distribution of the sensible' that the personhood, the dignity of

the victim is not so much restored (as considered above, it is debateable whether this is "possible"), as simply not further intruded upon.

Arguing "against the grain" of Rancière's conclusions in respect of the self-conscious use of the *dispositif* for which he holds out high hopes for dissident visualisation, one could maintain that a perceived restoration or non-intrusive concern can be regarded as an abstract aesthetic device whose "real" function is to convince the viewer and image-maker/user that they have anti-complicitly engaged an other, less egregiously self-referential politics of witnessing and visualisation. Such engineering, in my view, is no less susceptible to a veiling or dissemblance of the actual, structural or systemic, hegemonic and socially abstract conditions (of "war"/the violence of Plexus) in which the image-maker and the spectator or "secondary witness" is daily embedded. This reservation is more fully explored in the ensuing chapters.

2.7 In Conclusion

Whilst the broader theoretical framework of this thesis is a trans/interdisciplinary, there are clearly some ideas and some concepts, critical engagement with which steer it in certain directions. So it is with the critical adoption here of salient theoretical insights and trenchant analyses of the foregoing scholars concerning dissident or disruptive strategies of representing the problematic, 'culturally mediatized' (Pollock) iconic image. One of the challenges here was to use this scholarship and these examples (and others, as shall be borne out further on) in the scholastic scrutiny of some controversial imagery and their contemporary post-photographic re-visionings. Whether what the image-maker does with the already extant image is a matter primarily of the 'sensible system' of the (re)creation, or a matter of the disruption

of a new '*dispositif* of visuality', what is apparent is that the ways in which traditions or conventions of both the visual and narrative witnessing of horror are challenged or "disrupted" are multifarious, hybrid and medium/platform-traversing. I argue that, as well as the deployment of formal rhetorical figures or strategies of visualisation, the post-documentary or post-photographic visualisation of war/"war" and state-corporate-military forms of violence utilises technologies, devices and materials in the service of a more self-reflexive and reverential aesthetics of secondary witnessing. However, the aestheticising re-vision of an image of raw violence, for example, that of Delahaye's *Taliban, 2001* results, I submit, in a "neo-iconic" palimpsest ethically no different to the kind of war image which invites indignant reproach. In contrast, the "aniconic" refusal to image or frame directly the human victim/distant Other [see Jaar's *Real Pictures*; Figure 2.7] yields or is part of a *dispositif* which intervenes in both conventional and scholastic viewing by decentring the viewer/witness and inherently questioning the roles of not only the witness, but also of "evidence". If there is a lingering moral precept involved in this post-photographic sensible system, it is, like the prohibition of icons in certain Abrahamic faiths, a quasi-biblical injunction that "Thou shalt not depict the suffering Other".

In later chapters we shall be taking another look at, inter alia, the politics of metonymy in the non/inhuman and/or socially abstract witnessing of "war" and Plexus, and critically evaluating their *dispositifs*. For now though, such strategies of visualisation in the aesthetic re-rendering, reframing and recontextualisation of the violated victims have been found here to be poignantly compelling but incapable of proffering to either the image-maker or viewer any ethical "redemption." Concerned or dissident post-photographic visualisation remains as exposed as conventional, socially realistic, or iconic representation is to the problematic roles and relations of and between the image-maker, viewer/witness, and image.

We have seen, for example, how Chouliaraki's 'war imaginary',⁸² Kozol's 'ethical spectatorship' or 'complicitous citizenship', Rancière's '(re)distribution of the sensible' or 'politics of metonymy', or Hariman and Lucaites 'larger articulation of purpose outside the frame' are all demonstrably useful for the analytical and theoretical depth they bring to the topic of the witnessing and visualisation of war and violence. However, I maintain that they do not necessarily address the visualisation of the in/visible or non/inhuman aspects of "war" and Plexus. One of my objectives, as stated in the introduction, is to expand and develop new terms for post-photographic enquiry, and for this reason it has been necessary by way of this bridging, critically expository chapter to evaluate and build upon some extant terms and frameworks for what they bring to the enquiry. The ensuing chapters continue to make use of notions like a *dispositif* of visibility in the identification and discussion of elements of non/inhuman post-photography: the configuration of abstract and concrete elements and how our co-creative interaction with them might yield some new vocabulary or theoretically useful avenues for the critical witnessing and visualisation of "war" and Plexus.

In turning now to the work of Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, we see that they too are vocally and overtly concerned about their own complicitous position as image-makers, and the ethico-political efficacy of their image-making practices. Although some relevant background in this respect is provided, I discuss their mission primarily with reference to a single, seminal and controversial work, *The Day Nobody Died*.

CHAPTER THREE

Performing "War": Strategic Visualisation, or Aesthetic Vacuity?

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two is a critical and theoretical treatment of one particular and controversial instance of abstract/less visible or non/inhuman visualisation of "war" (and, ultimately, Plexus) in the context of a rather unorthodox and somewhat curious embedding, that of Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin with the British Army in Afghanistan in 2008. The chapter focuses exclusively on only a single (and seminal) work of Broomberg and Chanarin, *The Day Nobody Died* (2008). It is thus in no way "representative" of their varied oeuvre as a whole and the claims and analyses here cannot be extrapolated (not in any simple or straightforward sense, in any event) to their other projects. I engage with this work as one particular but highly significant example of a post-photographic strategy of "war" visualisation. The concept of complicity is also briefly revisited in relation to their visualisation of war/"war".

Like the other image-makers discussed here, their work traverses traditional distinctions between photojournalistic and art-documentary photography, and the ways in which they elect to represent and visualise war and related forms of violence situates them within the contemporary ambit of the post-documentary or post-photographic. Broomberg and Chanarin's work covers subject matter related to war and conflict, military and colonial forms of violence and oppression, to include political, social and economic exploitation and immiseration, its scars and traces in society. Their experimental praxis has led them to explore in their chosen

subject matter in ways that self-reflexively and critically engage with the aesthetics, politics and ethics of the representation of violence and its conditions, which efforts have drawn serious scholarly attention (for example, Pitman, 2008; Stallabrass, 2008; Somerstein, 2014, Colberg, 2013, Innes, 2014). The images in their recent oeuvre demonstrate how mindful the duo are in their own framing and the ever-present, fraught issue of the aestheticisation of someone's suffering, and the role of photography in further violating the victim by its own violence – its intrusion and its re-presentation of the violence/suffering. In this respect, Broomberg and Chanarin are as disdainful as Simon Norfolk of the traditional iconising or stereotyping tropes rolled out by photographers such as James Nachtwey, whom they accused of being 'part of the war-waging machine' (Stallabrass, 2008, 2013), and Tim Hetherington whose World Press Photo award-winning image of an exhausted US soldier they coolly assess (prior to his death in Libya) as being iconising, predictable, nostalgic and 'an amalgam of all the images of war and death that we have embedded in our memory' (Broomberg and Chanarin, 2008). They somewhat sanctimoniously entreat other photographers and/or photojournalists to be more mindful of the 'aesthetic rules they engage' (Stallabrass, 2008).

Explaining in an interview why the pair have in recent years veered away from 'shooting' people and instead exploring extant historical archives of war and conflict imagery (another feature charactering emergent post-documentary or post-photographic practices), Broomberg talks of the more critically self-reflexive way they have been

[...] looking at the archive, or technology, or materiality, is a way of examining our mistakes. Making a general point about how images are complicit in a genocide or trauma means *we* were complicit—and we still are. For instance, say we abstract an image in Belfast, during the Troubles. Those fragments of images are still somebody's ankle that you see. Maybe you don't see the whole body. But that person's mother will still recognize her child's ankle. In other words, there will be somebody who's wounded by whatever you're producing. And you can't help that. (see Somerstein, 2014)

In this quotation they are talking about the archival photographs of the Belfast troubles they were using for a project with the Belfast Exposed gallery, entitled *People in trouble laughing pushed to the ground* (2011) [Figure 3.1]. Despite their attempts to respect the lives and dignity of the civilians caught up in the violence, they clearly realise that "failure" to do this is perhaps an inevitable part of secondary witnessing. One of the methodological decisions they have made in tackling this representational complicity dilemma has been to “ stay away from humanistic photos that evoke pathos and sympathy”, regarded as “useless emotions”, and to “try to explore darkness through mechanisms not usually used in photography”, explains Broomberg (in speaking of an earlier project, Fig.),⁸³ and further, to try "to look at how photojournalism is embedded in an economic and political system that renders it quite impotent."⁸⁴ In other words, according to their own manifesto their mission is self-reflexively and critically to re-view what they consider to be outmoded and/or inefficacious strategies of representation of, inter alia, war and conflict.

Quite apart from their own complicity as image-makers and users of images of violent conflict, they are concerned with the role photography and archival photographic imagery as a mode of communicating forms of state-corporate-military violence that are not necessarily evident to the naked eye. They also reveal their ambivalence concerning the "citizen witness" (Allan, 2013), who as the following statement implies is both a scourge and a force for good. As they remark,

The civilian journalist, anyone armed with a mobile phone is now a potential witness. Did you know that *Associated Press* now have more people scouring social media than they have professional photographers in the field looking for "evidence"? The playing field is now wide open, and hopefully with more and more people feeling the need to blow the whistle the more we'll know about the dark workings of the state. (see Colberg, 2013) (original quotation marks)

The quotation points towards a number of issues for them: the new *global digital communications* dispensation which has led to the emergence of the *citizen witness*, who competes with the professional photographer in the harvesting of *evidence*. But they clearly also recognise that this demotic and ubiquitous citizen witnessing is also a highly significant development for the gathering of evidence, which cumulatively serves to expose the '*dark workings of the state*' (whether it is a Western capitalist democracy or otherwise). Although the pair have never been war photojournalists in the conventional killing-field sense, confronted with the "competition" in recent years, they have definitively turned their backs on conventional photojournalistic practice and its jaded tropes and chosen to concentrate on a more contemporary, dissenting *art* of image-making which seeks aesthetically to visualise the non/inhuman and socially abstract '*dark workings of the state*.'

Notwithstanding this, their varied oeuvre contains very few images which do not depict human beings in some shape. A conspicuous *exception* is the work examined here, *The Day Nobody Died*. Since this thesis focuses exclusively from this chapter onwards on non/inhuman imagery, this one has been chosen here precisely for this reason. *The Day Nobody Died* has as its centrepiece a series of abstract, non-figural images. Although the accompanying video and stills do show soldiers; alive and well but, as we shall see further on, relegated to a kind of object/ancillary status in the work; as such, their humanity is elided, and their personhood reduced to a function of the performance in which they are engaged.

3.2 *The Day Nobody Died*

From the outset we shall be regarding *The Day Nobody Died* as a Rancièrian image/text *dispositif* to which the authorial narrative lends itself to the overall "composition". In other words, it is not possible to view the work without taking their creators into account. The 'dispositif' - system of visibility - is, as Rancière conceives of it, a 'sensible' one, in the sense that the arrangement (or rearrangement) and coherence of *all* the elements of a work is what configures its meaning/s. (Rancière, 2009: 102). How does this dispositive function as a post-photographic visualisation? We proceed now to discuss its elements in more detail, in relation to its discrete elements, the image-makers' claims for it, and its scholarly reception.

Broomberg and Chanarin's website usefully provides a synopsis of the concrete context of this work, but very briefly, as a condition of their embedding with the British Army in the frontline of Helmand province in 2008, they had to sign a form banning them from taking any images of actual combat. Proscribed were dead or wounded bodies and enemy fire; a "protection for propaganda" contract which they described as "a deal with the devil" (Colberg, 2013). Their only option - if they wanted to gain access to the front line - was to lie and pretend that they were *bona fide* photojournalists (rather than art-documentary image-makers) and, knowing at the outset about the rigorous censorship constraints, decided they would defy protocol (as far as they could) and make a "performative act of resistance" (Colberg, 2013). Their trip coincided with one of the deadliest months of the war, in which there were many Afghan and British deaths and casualties (taking the British deaths in the conflict to 100). On the fifth day of their embedding, nobody died. The title is thus ironic; there had been a lot of death everyday, except for this one solitary day. As Randy Innes writes, 'The title haunts the project as a whole;

it designates that which is normally of little interest to a war journalist or war photographer: an absence of events.' (Innes, 2014)

Amongst the events they were supposed, as “photojournalists”, to record was a trip by the Duke of York to visit the troops and a press conference. Whilst they were forbidden to record the violent and fatal events, they were expected to attend assiduously to the more mundane events, no doubt to replicate and maintain a nationalist-patriotic, paternalist-heroic, media-military narrative. Against this backdrop they implemented their “subversive” mission, and whilst they could not simply flout censorship constraints, they could test what was tolerable to state-military, command-and-control sensibilities. They were eventually escorted out of Afghanistan when it became clear what they were up to (Innes, 2014), but not before they had created their absurdist-iconoclastic art-documentary post-photographic work, a series of images, most of which are non-representational, or non-figural. Broomberg and Chanarin's primary strategy of visualisation consisted in the way the techno-mechanical elements of the photographic process were used or "abused". No photographs were taken during the embedding at all. A video - discussed below - which was filmed over several days was made and screenshots or stills were harvested from that, but the camera was not used in making the centrepiece series of images. These were made by the simple process of unrolling of a 6 metre length of photopaper "on site" in Helmand province, and exposing it to the sun for 20 seconds at a time.

The results are undeniably aesthetic: streaks and stains of various hues from a fiery yellow-orange-red spectrum to the cooler hues of black and blue [Figures 3.2 and 3.3]. Although some are suggestive of blood and fire, especially if one knows the context of their creation, the

average unapprised viewer looking for a pleasant piece of abstract art to adorn her wall would not be offended by this series (although the average viewer is very unlikely to be able to afford the works - see below). The captions to the individual images, like the one eponymously titled *The Day Nobody Died*, have equally suggestive titles which allude or ostend to an event (which they were prohibited from recording), but without showing it; such as *The Repatriation*, *The The Fixer's Execution*, *The Press Conference* and *The Jailbreak* [Figures 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7]. Apart from these images, there is the video and screenshots of the absurd journey of the mute box of photopaper, which was the "documentary" accompaniment to the "artistic" project they had conceived [Figures 3.8, 3.9].

The video began prior to the light exposures, and entailed harnessing the logistical aid of the British Army to transport the box of photopaper from London to Helmand, as they describe on their website, 'on Hercules and Chinooks, on buses, tanks and jeeps.' And, of course, in military aircraft too. They refer to it as an 'absurd performance' in which the 'co-opt[ed]' soldiers unwittingly 'played the lead role.' This is the meaning (presumably reflecting their own self-assessment of the significance of the work) the website ascribes to the project/performance:

In this performance, presented as a film, the box becomes an *absurd, subversive object*, its non-functionality sitting in quietly amused contrast to the functionality of the system that for a time served as its host. [...] the journey of the box became, *when viewed from the right perspective, an analytical process, revealing the dynamics of the machine in its quotidian details, from the logistics of war to the collusion between the media and the military.*⁸⁵ (Broomberg and Chanarin, website) (my italics)

The language used in this description - words/phrases such as 'absurd, subversive object', 'profound critique [...]' and 'radically non-figurative [...]'⁸⁶ etc., clearly demonstrates the (self) belief that what they had achieved with this project/performance/work is a dissident showcase which ironically points towards everything that is wrong with traditional conflict photography and the more recent institution of the embedding.

The project, conceived in and inaugurated in London with the ‘absurd, subversive object’, the mute box, was - it could be argued - never in the first instance about challenging the limits of what could be done in the framework of an embedding, or even diverging from conventional frames in order to re-frame what they found/had access to in an unorthodox way. The work seems from its inception to have been conceived as a vehicle to express their ethico-politico defiance as image-makers to the ‘dynamics of the machine’ and ‘the collusion between the media and the military’. This collusion they witnessed first-hand, reminiscing about the MoD’s ‘combat shooters’ (soldier-photographers) who would return to the base of weeks spent on the frontline and immediately hand their digital chips to ‘Media Operations’ to be censored (Stallabrass, 2013: 134). Given this first-hand insight into the extent of the publicly-withheld war, their work is also at the very least an attempt to challenge or disrupt the viewer’s expectations of what war/“war” photography *should* show, and how it should show it. The work, it says on their website, ‘den[ies] the viewer the cathartic effect offered up by the conventional language of photographic responses to conflict and suffering.’

Their self-assessment does contain one phrase which could be seen as a subconscious caveat of sorts to the project: the phrase ‘*when viewed from the right perspective*’, revealing their presumption that the perspective of the potentially errant viewer may need to be “put right” by coaching her in advance as to what the “right” way to view the work is. But the very mention of it conjures up the idea that it may be viewed from another (albeit “wrong”) perspective. They seem to anticipate this challenge. In 2014, some 6 years after the embedding and exhibition (and ensuing critique) of *The Day Nobody Died*, Chanarin says the following about the work in interview with both of them:

[...] it has failure built into it from the start. Obviously we failed to represent the news in any figurative sense. We also failed the soldiers who were scouring us through the theatre of war, as they call it, by subverting their embedding system [by not making the kinds of images they were expected to produce]. We failed the viewer who came to work with a whole range of expectations about what we, their witness or proxy, might bring back from the front lines to show them. (Somerstein, 2014)

Superficially-read, the statement appears at the very least to imply a sense of regret at having ‘failed’ soldiers and viewers alike in a recondite vanity project.⁸⁷ But the statement is not expanded upon or probed by the interviewer, and so remains somewhat ambiguous as to whether it is suggestive of any self-critique at all. Chanarin could be saying that the failure ‘built into’ the project from the start was done so intentionally: it had to ‘fail’ to meet the expectations of soldiers, the military, the media, the viewer, or otherwise it would be failing as a subversive gesture. He could be saying, therefore, that this project was an anticipated and necessary failure as a traditional/conventional piece of photojournalism in order that it would succeed as a radical and subversive act of (post-photographic) art-documentary. He could, however, also be mindful of the failure of the work to have any political impact, or perhaps, that it did not quite deliver the dissident impact that they had hoped for.

Whatever the answer is, the above description/self-assessment of the project still remains on their website (at the time of writing: July 2017; the work was created in 2008), suggesting that on balance, Chanarin is, in tutelary fashion and perhaps to pre-empt further unwelcome criticism, pointing out that the point of the work is that it had failure ‘built into’ it from its inception; the failure was intentional. It is, of course, also to a large extent irrelevant what the purported intention of the image-makers was when it comes, not only to the public reception of the work, which has not always been admiring.

One vocal sceptic is *The Guardian* journalist, Sean O'Hagan , who in a review of Broomberg and Chanarin's oeuvre in 2011, enquires scathingly:

[...] is the work they produce a serious critique of traditional photojournalism or another example of how photography is in danger of disappearing up its own postmodern backside in its attempts to interrogate itself? (O' Hagan, 2011)

O' Hagan clearly has no patience with art-world abstractions or what he perceives as abstruse postmodern gestures that claim to be politically radical. When *The Day Nobody Died* was exhibited in Germany (alongside one of their archival reworkings, *Afterlife I*), another critic of their work, Thomas Linden, remarked laconically, 'If one considers that the soldiers were risking their lives, the performance leaves a rather unpleasant aftertaste.'(Linden, 2011: 23)

He goes on to point out without commentary that the images exhibited were on sale for between 3,800 and 18,200 Euro.

Further, O' Hagan expresses doubt that Broomberg and Chanarin are able to offer any meaningful alternative in place of photojournalism's traditional role, and in considering in particular the significance and value of *The Day Nobody Died* series, acerbically contends that it is nothing

[...] but a postmodern performance where abstraction – the exposed sheets of film – and mundanity - the photographs of a box of paper – converge, [creating] a series of photographic gestures in which images are emptied of meaning to make a rather laboured point? (O' Hagan, 2011)

Irrespective of these (fair, it must be said) criticisms, the work, even when regarded in good faith as an act of aesthetic resistance/dissidence undoubtedly have in common with a number of other works within this emergent “genre”, their “failure” (to conform) is the condition of possibility for their success as dissident/subversive strategies of (non)representation. It is a performative paradox. To this extent it could be said that there may be something about some

post-photographic practices, in testing the limits of the representation of "war" and the 'dark forces of the state' (Broomberg, see above), they are compelled to "perform" the inadequacy of their visual "evidence" by withholding, eliding or visually "palimpsesting" the tangible, visible, available but insufficient evidence. This reading may befit *The Day Nobody Died*, but such a performative paradox is not necessarily the case. The perception of its built-in failure is precisely one of the aspects of this work which endows it with its power as a work of art. As a representation of "war", the 'dark forces of the state [media-military nexus],' however, it is defiantly non-documentary and abstractly oblique in its visualisation.

3.3 Vis-à-Vis Framing

How does *The Day Nobody Died* present to us a prototypical example of the language and strategies of visualisation that might be effectively harnessed in the visualisation of, not only "war"/modern warfare, but its extensive conditions of possibility – Plexus? Whatever their material medium and whatever their visual rhetoric or vocabulary, like any other image-makers, they too cannot but work with and within the structural and substantive inevitability of the framing process. The project as conceived before their arrival in Helmand province already entails the selection or “design” of a frame; and the "chosen" frame itself works with and within myriad other extant discursive, social, ethical, politico-economic frames of and for representation or occlusion.

What is the situation vis-à-vis framing when the concerned image-maker does defy proscription and enacts her own disruptive, dissident, or anti-hegemonic counter-visibility? Notwithstanding the foregoing positioning of the *The Day that Nobody Died* as a defiantly

iconoclastic/aniconic one, it would be fair to consider that for Broomberg and Chanarin, troubled to a degree by their invidious position as embeddees, the work is, if nothing else, a self-reflexive and critical “commentary” on the vested power of media-military (pre)framing to manipulate and to delimit/determine the possible range of interpretations we the incapacitated spectating public may be capable of generating.

Upon a first encounter with the work, it seems that the political *space* of the work remains vacant, void of content, deliberately so. The political *effect* of the work resides, it seems, purely in the "exframing" refusal to frame, in the “where” the camera is or is not pointed to, and “how” the work, materially, technically, achieves its unorthodox non-framing. What does this tactic, or strategy of "non-visualisation" achieve? How could one identify or describe the critical(non)frame of *The Day Nobody Died*, other than to say it is an aesthetically abstract and conceptual work of art? In discussing this to useful effect, the question of the elided events/Event (the missing evidence) must be broached.

3.4 The Event, the Performance, and the Evidential Curse

This section discusses various aspects of the event/Event (war as incidental "event" and "war"/Plexus as underlying conditions of the incidental event: Event), evidence and the witnessing, communication or visualisation thereof. The relations between these (and other) terms is complex and labile, and is thus broken down into 3 subsections. Here we also take a closer look at the inside, material, aesthetic workings of *The Day Nobody Died*.

If we have a reasonable expectation that the images “say” something about the events that occurred during the embedding, then we might seek to scour them for some kind of sign; we might seek to see beyond their abstraction, and with the assistance of the captions provided by the image-makers, to assign particular meaning to, if not each individual image, the series as a whole. Indeed, this is what most art-culture press reviews of the work understandably do. These images, that is, the light exposures, show literally nothing. As Innes reflects, ‘they [the images] seem to show nothing; they cannot easily be added to evidentiary, archival, or memorial inventories.’ (Innes, 2014)

The unusual feature of these images is that apart from their non-figural abstraction, they are not photographs (since there was nothing to develop) but absent photographs, teasing proxies in place of where the action/truth should have been recorded. In this sense, these non-photographic exposures show only their self-identity; that is, they do not refer to any figure or object in the frame, and the colour as a result of the paper’s chemical reaction to light exposure is a process that occurs “immanent” to the photopaper and thus precedes the image or the moment of image-creation. That moment, of course, never takes place. The resulting “image” then is self-referential, and has nothing to do with the war. The link of these images to the locus of conflict, violence, death, is graphically severed. And yet, ‘the photographs remain tied to the sensible event of their production (their emergence through light)’ (Innes, 2014). The paper was there, close to the locus of the events which could not be shown. The absence of the events on their material surfaces is “figured” or “indexed” by the smears and striations which formed there where the bodies died on the ground, and where they should have reappeared on photopaper as violent images of violence. The stains are therefore also signs of dis-ease with the use of the photograph as carrier-pigeon of death, suffering, of the very “institution” of war photography itself. Since the images are not photographs but light

exposures, their very form is already a comment on photography itself as a genre, a means of (documentary) communication, and an art form. In this regard, the work can be linked to the long and venerable “tradition” of avant-garde and modernist photo art, which Innes explains, is because it borrows from its ‘tactics [...] by advancing and exploring the materiality of the medium and by reducing its products to a display of photographic effects and procedures.’ (Innes, 2014)

In their ‘effects and procedures’, the images are a paradoxical hyper-aestheticisation of war photography, where the deliberate eschewal of the media-military frame and its own “withholding” of the graphic evidence occasions the image-makers’ tactical withholding of the mundane evidence in their own political rejoinder to the latter. This withheld evidence is reconjured as pure spectral colour. Letting something as indifferent as the interaction of nature and technology, which in any other context – apart from the aesthetic - is likely to be a mistake, an unintentional effect, here takes pride of place as deliberate marker of the failure of, not only the embedding regime to produce “truth”, but of war photography as privileged purveyor of “evidence”, or for that matter, reality.

However, aesthetic abstraction in itself would not be enough to construe it as a dissident or “radical” work; as Innes points out, such techniques and procedures having long since been practiced in avant-garde and modernist photo art (Innes, 2014), and any cursory internet surf will reveal too how such techniques have been appropriated within traditional conceptual art-photography. Once again, no single element of the work determines its contemporary charge or potency; it is rather the *dispositif*, the sensible system of its discrete elements, combined as they are to gesture towards their greater goal. Broomberg and Chanarin themselves are intent

upon emphasising that the photographs (which they call ‘action-photographs’ - see above)⁸⁸ themselves are not the most important part of their “witnessing” of the events of the war : they are never “meant” to be viewed except as part of a dual installation. Broomberg and Chanarin insist that the photographs must be shown in tandem with the video film/stills made of the act of their production (Stallabrass, 2008).

So whilst the image-makers could be regarded as self-indulgently roosting in the now familiar grooves of the modernist avant-garde, or lingering effete in the Romantic tradition of philosophical aesthetics, playing on the notion of (the monstrous beauty of) the Sublime, this only bears scrutiny if the images are taken out of the context of the “whole” (fully-articulated) performance. In that case, they could indeed resemble the anodyne décor of an upmarket, "aspirational" gastro-pub. The insistence upon an engagement with the totality of the work is, in this sense then, an insistence upon attention to the work’s “*dispositif* of visuality”: its system of the sensible, or the distribution of its sensible elements. The viewer is asked to pay not only attention to what she sees, but to its curation, if you want: the work as a totality is more than the sum of its discrete parts; it is a self-referential meta-work.

The “imposter” embedding thus becomes the theatre of and for the 'performative act of resistance' (Colberg, 2013), which itself takes place within a theatre of war. The performance relegates what should have been the actual subjects of the act – the combatants - to its participant-objects. The photographers, as both audience (rather than secondary witnesses) and proxies for the public orchestrate the performance so that they are at once both conducting it, and getting the soldiers to “play” in it. And out of this dissonant symphony they concoct a series of images, a video and some stills/screenshots. The work’s hybridity as visual artefact is

thus performative on a number of levels, but at least two axiomatic ones in the first instance; it gestures towards the moral and practical impossibility for the image-makers of the protection-for-propaganda brief of the embedding, and it ostends towards the ethico-political and aesthetic unacceptability of the war photograph alone or in-itself to be able effectively and without further violation to communicate suffering and violence. Innes is making a similar point when he observes that central to *The Day Nobody Died*

[...] is a concern with the violence of war, the violence of state apparatuses that act in our name and of corporate ones that do not, and the violence that inhabits visual, and especially photographic, representations of wars [...] [it] *raises questions regarding the intersection of that violence with its elisions from representations of war*: it expresses a self-reflexivity concerning the ethics of representation in war photography.(Innes, 2014)(my italics)⁸⁹

What he is saying is that the violence of the state-corporate-military nexus, the violence of the representation of war itself, and what is elided, left out of those representations is being countered here by what is essentially an act of self-reflexive countervisuality. The act pivots on this “moment”, which it does not let go of. The act is not designed to show anything other than this critical and self-reflexive position. Therein lies both its strength, and its "evidential" weakness.

In respect of “evidence”, the work - the images as Mitchellian agents - gestures that it cannot deliver this because to do so is both impossible through military censorship, and in any "event", ethically fraught. It says that images seeking to represent such forms of violence should include within their framing their own secondary violation if they are to assume a prosecutorial role. In seeking to 'try to put the burden of looking back on the viewer [...] to rob the viewer of the cathartic effect of looking and ignoring images of trauma' (Stallabrass, 2013:137), they eschew any role that may be expected of them by the viewer as visionary seekers of truth and harvesters of “hard” evidence of execrable military violence. Broomberg and Chanarin refuse to let

media, reporting protocol or public expectation dictate what and how they practice art (post-documentary/post-photographic) image-making.

Irrespective of their stance, intentions or beliefs, the question as to whether *The Day Nobody Died* constitutes evidence of anything is worth further scrutiny, if only because evidence and the role assumed by photography in its presentation is so deeply and historically entwined that it is not dispatched in one quasi-avant-garde performance.

If one is to regard the photographs as indeed evidence of sorts, it would seem to be simply that they are a form of negative evidence: their own aesthetic eschewal of evidence both suggesting and generating a critical review of the very concept and role of evidence in a global context where public and media narratives are dominated by powerful, international vested interests. It is also a media ecology in which there arise multiple contesting narratives, some of which - given the power of the vested interests, such as those of the state-corporate-media-military nexus - cohere into strategic narratives (Miskimmon et al, 2014). So, as well as war photojournalism and the communicative *dispositif* of photography that is being immanently questioned, it is also evidence of war that emerges as a “player” in the performative act; it too is a narrative actor of sorts. Evidence is a currency in strategic narratives, and consequently, what we regard as, or how we conceive of evidence is crucial to the emancipatory ethos of critical visualisation.

To reiterate, the problem of evidence can be traced through its constitution as a *lack* of evidence, by its negative presentation as a *non-event*: in other words, there is no evidence not because there was no evidence but because there is no way of showing/knowing what that

evidence is. So this self-referential, recursive gesture towards the lack of evidence in *The Day Nobody Died* is itself thus indeed a certain kind of evidence. It is the screaming footnote to a vacuous/repressed image-text. The ontological *sine qua non* of evidence is, of course, the event. Simply put, there is no need to evidence a non-event. But here, as with representation, the concept of an event - what it is - also necessarily arises, in an infinite regress of entangled issues which threaten to vortex themselves into reiterative irrelevance. A work like this one which is so deeply self-referential has to bear the burden of ultimately saying nothing at all because it points, as a visual footnote, towards its own deliberate vacuity. This time, however, it is not repression which is the adversary, but state-media-military suppression.

So, in this more sympathetic reading, if we see the lack as a mute gesture towards its repressive/suppressive state-media-military occlusion, as the "Event" that is outlawed by the Law, as it were, then the strategies of visualisation take on another tenor. It is not delivering the 'visceral form of evidence' (Stallabrass, 2008) that is clamoured for to arraign perpetrators, deliver justice and create/preserve/disrupt collective memory; this is the abstract erasure of evidence, or of evidence reframed as erasure. And in this, Broomberg and Chanarin themselves allude to the technique of Brechtian distantiation that they consciously use in their defamiliarizing aesthetic gestures; here, it would be non-figurally to deconstruct the "evidence of the senses".

Notwithstanding this, there is a caesura for the image-makers between the aesthetics of performative resistance, and the ethico-political implications of "withholding" evidence. As already suggested in the previous section, they effectively withhold evidence of the fact that evidence is being withheld. In so doing, they trans-mute this state of affairs into their light

exposures, which *suggest* transparency but are the very opposite, as they are no doubt "intended" to be. They index the opacity of the embedding and the diffuse, systemic and complex media ecology conditions governing public communication, that is, the withheld, or invisible/unattended to/unseen, evidence. By doing this, they function ironically like the blacked out boxes of a redacted document. They pre-empt the opacity of "war" by performing it themselves. In respect of the question of evidence then, *The Day Nobody Died* could be regarded as a crafty representational recursion, of sorts, a refractive interior vista without end of visual frames fitting into visual frames. Its recursive, reiterative *dispositif*, takes the form of several interactive layers of embedding: the photographs are embedded in the video, the video is embedded in the theatre of war in which the participants - the soldiers, the photographers, the photopaper - are themselves all embedded during the process of a military embedding of photographers.

There is a point to it. The work is not telling the story of any event (the *Brother's Suicide*, *The Fixer's Execution*) or any "non-event" (*The Day Nobody Died*), but is eliding these stories, these bits of evidence, into the bigger Event, the Main Event, *which is Plexus itself*. The machinery of the state-corporate-media-military nexus that makes, produces the mundane, the fatal, events. As Chanarin comments, 'the journey of the box shows the mechanism, the workings of the war' (Stallabrass, 2008). The "shows" in this sentence, however, should really read "ostends towards", as global military logistics can only stand in metonymic relation to the "overall" workings of "war". So, to understand the "war", see the images, to understand the images, see the performance, to understand the performance, see the mute box, to understand the mute box, see the video, to understand the video, see the embedding agreement, to understand the embedding agreement, see "the war", and so forth, in an Escheresque looping

staircase where neither a point of entry nor of egress is discernable. The recursive mockery of the process is underscored by its self-consciously Brechtian strategies of interruption and distance, with the soldiers bewildered by their role as actors of a different kind in the theatre of war. The video stills which accompany the abstract exposures are where the viewer is required to retrieve any erstwhile encounter she may have had with Brechtian dramaturgy, and to recognise these strategies, and the “comical” or absurd effect thereof. In addition, the mute box becomes the centre of the action, used as a semiotically decentring device. Broomberg remarks:

The fact that the box carrying the photographic paper appears in each scene undermines the spectacle. The unfolding of the conflict is constantly interrupted by this mute, comical witness that literally blocks your view during the whole journey. (Stallabrass, 2008)

Broomberg ascribes to the mute box the parodic function of witness, and sees it as undermining the spectacle, whereas the mute box could equally be seen as constitutive of the spectacle: there would be no spectacle without the box. The box is animated into agency by its meaning-constitutive role. If so, which “spectacle” is Broomberg referring to when he perceives it as being undermined by the box? Is it the “unfolding of the conflict” that they are prohibited from recording? If this is the case, what is it about the conflict that is spectacular? Surely the spectacle resides purely in the representation of the conflict, which is not being represented here? And if Broomberg means the spectacle of soldiers having been unwittingly recruited into an absurd performance for the sake of a “concerned” critique of the politics of war/“war” representation, then one may well find the exercise to ‘leave a rather unpleasant aftertaste’ (Linden, 2011: 23). The ethico-political substance of the work is still somehow overshadowed by its absurdist aesthetics.

Broomberg and Chanarin have delegated the role of witnessing to the box and the photopaper, as argued above, and demonstrated in the following remark:

[the pictures] are in a sense real witnesses. Those documents, that piece of paper was actually there in the place. Its relation to the event is more clear than a traditional photograph. It bears the scratches, the effects of the light, the heat, the environment on its surface (Colberg, 2013)

The evidential problem is that the point of entry, “seeing the war”, *witnessing* the war, is the one thing that – in spite of all the sound reasons for "ex-framing" - is not done by the work. It is an irresolvable problem for the work, and if there is any lasting power to the work, then it is a problem that must always be attended to as a self-consciously chosen, deliberate impasse. In making a general critical point about the secondary witnessing of war via their abstract and conceptual strategies of visualisation, Broomberg and Chanarin elide the particularity of the conflict in Helmand province, Afghanistan. They would no doubt argue that the embedding regime meant that they would never have been able to represent the particularity of the conflict in any event, but this argument would not abrogate the force of the criticism that there are certain ethical difficulties with the choice they made, as "well-intentioned" as it was. In seeking to avoid the media-military complicity of a prescribed hegemonic witnessing of authorised events, the duo by default become citizen-complicit in the somewhat art-world hubristic use of the existence of "violence against others" as their ostensible subject matter to showcase their critique of the way that this violence is or is not represented. It is, admittedly, a catch-22 situation. It is paradoxical, irresolvable. That such resolution is neither proffered nor sought is perhaps one of the “redemptive” strengths of the work.

3.5 Abstract Absurdity, the Mundane and Mediatization:

a Missed Opportunity?

To summarise, the foregoing has sought to problematise the ethico-politically motivated, deliberate perversion of the processes (technical, ideological) of the witnessing of war/the

"war" machine evident in *The Day Nobody Died*. The performative paradox of the work – an act of witnessing that doesn't witness - is mirrored by its own "success" and "failure" as a war-visualisation strategy. Chanarin's remark that failure was built in to the work from its inception resonates here: it was never going to (be able to) witness what it ought to. And out of the ashes of this failure, it seems, rose the (generally) critically acclaimed post-photographic artwork, which has been praised for the power it has to disrupt the viewer's expectations of the war photograph, encouraging a more self-reflexive and critical viewing of war imagery (potentially). At least, as already quoted above from their website, this is the express hope of the image-makers: the work 'den[ies] the viewer the cathartic effect offered up by the conventional language of photographic responses to conflict and suffering.' But if one were to take their *other* words, that it is also concerned with 'the dynamics of the machine', which in the context of these words can be read as the war machine, and let this phrase present as the leading hook upon which to hang the hat of one's analysis, the work rises from the lens-clogging dust of the embedding and blows free a critical space in which one might visualise that which reaches far beyond the events on the ground and the particularity of the conflict, to the Event Horizon (see below) of "war", and Plexus.

As Cottle persuasively argues, mediatized conflict is 'profoundly implicated in the conduct and multiple contentions of contemporary societies' (Cottle, 2010: 192). We have seen how the rapidly changing nature of warfare within a digital/virtual dispensation and the algorithmic wherewithal to *realise* "war" virtually both Elsewhere and at Home takes the forms of violence thereby produced into a realm far beyond what is visibly available to the senses, let alone what is practically knowable, whether this is because of its concealment on the one hand, or its radically diffuse nature on the other. Further, the fact that now 'War and social media are interpenetrative realms' (Der Derian, 2010: 21) means that the violence of war/"war" is further

created and perpetuated by its public and citizen co-representation, its social visualisation, its leisure society wargame simulation, and so forth. As quoted above, Matheson and Allan write that 'The representation of violence [...] is partly constitutive of its reality, which makes [the] interpretive process acutely political.' (Matheson and Allan, 2009: 131) Warfare, and war fare, takes place in an era of virtuous/virtual and mediatized war, and its conditions are diffusely co-created in the eyes of the beholders/participants (soldiers, reporters, "spokesmen", private and public stakeholders, citizens...), which manifold collaboration then also impacts dialectically on war/"war" and society itself.

This recognition is also further expanded by Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin, who write:

It is crucial to recognise that the absolute interpenetration of media and warfare has produced an emergent set of far more immediate and unpredictable relationships between the trinity of government, military and publics. These are significantly engaged in an emergent kind of conflict [...] 'diffused war' - that is immersed in and produced through a new 'media ecology'. (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 6)

In other words, the 'absolute interpenetration of media and warfare' is generative of a signally different kind of state-military-citizen nexus whereby war or conflict is now mediatically co-orchestrated by all stakeholders/those "at stake"; in cacophonous concert, as it were, even where there is discord. Hoskins and O'Loughlin's 'diffuse war' places emphasis on the pervasive role of our 'everyday media practices' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 27). Our marrow-deep interment in 'media texts' and our hyperconnected accessibility to the public means of mediation and representation of "war" sees its diffuse (re)production and (re) distribution not only geopolitically, but "geolocally". twenty-first century warfare is inconceivable without social media, in a nutshell. Hoskins and O'Loughlin's notion of "diffused war" has since been superceded by what they now refer to as "arrested war" (discussed later in the thesis) but their articulations in respect of diffused war nonetheless retain relevance for present purposes.

Alongside the government, the military, the media ecology, we the public are co-producers of "war".

In considering the question of the representation of war, Hoskins and O'Loughlin ask, 'do images of war show or hide?' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 20) They argue for a strategic 'change in emphasis in the study of visuality and war, from a concern with 'representationality' to that of 'mediality' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 21), because of 'the way in which media texts are interwoven into our lives; that is, how the continuity and familiarity of these representations interact with our everyday media practices' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 27). They are quick to point out that they are not proposing that representationality is no longer significant; only that they seek to provide some necessary theoretical balance in a field where emphasis on the scholarly 'analysis of media content, institutions and ownership has resulted in mediality and mediatization being underexamined or completely ignored' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010: 27). In their own anxiety to dislodge the primacy of representationality in critical or dissenting image-making practices, Broomberg and Chanarin have overtly taken up a position which has some resonance with that of Hoskins and O'Loughlin. They say in an interview that

[...] that eco-system, the moral, political and financial world that images work in, began to interest us more than the individual images. So, our work began to look at revealing the mechanisms at work around image making, distribution and consumption. (Colberg, 2015)

Their approach in previous projects has indeed been traditionally image-centred, and they have taken much care with the slow ("lomographic") framing of their images and deferential care too of their imaged subjects. This aniconic turn away from the image as figural representation and more towards the conditions and material/discursive contexts of their creation and viewing

dates from around the time of *The Day Nobody Died*, and so this work represents a kind of watershed moment in their practice, where 'larger, more abstract meanings' are sought. In referring to Barbie Zelizer, Matheson and Allan explain her view of what photographic imagery in a war context can achieve, writing

[...] photographs appear to stand not only as a particularly powerful form of evidence for journalists but also as pegs on which *larger, more abstract meanings* are hung. Thus they are better able than words to act as eyewitness testimony connecting the viewer with the event and compelling public attention. (Matheson and Allan, 2009: 153) (my italics)

These 'larger, more abstract meanings' are, it seems, precisely what Broomberg and Chanarin are aiming at for the work, and one of the reasons why any attempt to picture specific events or individual subjects was eschewed in favour of the conceptual approach. In doing so, however, they would also be distancing themselves from the photojournalistic impulse to connect 'the viewer with the event', whilst trying to connect her to an "other" event/Event: both the incidental "event" of the conditions under which the work was created, and the subtending Event of "war"/Plexus.

In summary once again, they sought with this project to challenge or resist prevailing media-military collusion/hegemony in their (re)iteration of normative codes in the representation of war and conflict by not complying with these codes or the expectation that they would. They were trying to change (the fields of) perception concerning the way war is presented to the viewing public, and concomitantly the way we perceive or "consume" war/conflict. The work requires the kind of viewing, contextualisation and reflection upon that is not usually peculiar to the more affect-laden photojournalistic or documentary representation of war. It requires a certain detachment and intellectual contemplation. In resonance with the discussion of mediatized war in the foregoing - as Hoskins and O'Loughlin point out - the 'experience of war

is mediated'. The point, although much rehearsed already in this thesis, is not a trivial one and justifies reiteration: the recording, visualising, narrating and then further operating activities of the military are shown to be extensively, deeply mediated at many levels, well beyond the "combat shooters"(military photographers) and Media Operations.

From the public media perspective some of this has, of course, led to the military's own (fleeting) undoing and (prolonged) ire; such as in the US the "Collateral Murder" helicopter gunship video supplied to Wikileaks by Chelsea Manning and the release of the Abu Ghraib torture trophy pictures. For the most part, however, the strategic state-media-military "image-fare" (Yarchi, 2016) and broader mediatization serves frequently to perpetuate the war/conflict, however messy/risky; continued militarization is what Plexus requires for its continued neoliberal, transnational corporatization.⁹⁰ The almost seamless virtuality of warfare now is evocatively "imaged" by the journalist in this excerpt. What can also be inferred from the timing of the excerpt is that Broomberg and Chanarin would have seen precisely what this reporter himself saw, as referred to in the foregoing, and recounted in their 2008 interview with Julian Stallabrass. On a strong balance of probabilities, they had the opportunity to photograph some of these communications activities (although perhaps not computer monitors and such directly) since these were not amongst the proscribed activities themselves, if they have given an accurate account of the nature of the prohibited activities (the "frontline", deaths and injuries, combat itself).

Since this is not a quantitative, empirical study, no survey has been undertaken here concerning how many such "military-comms" images appeared in traditional media in the UK in 2008, for example, but irrespective of this, it is reasonable to assume that Broomberg and Chanarin would

have had the chance to visualise such activities in "other" ways. There is thus an element of the "missed opportunity" about what they eventually did come up with, given the audacious and risky nature of their mock-embedding. Not least this is because they went in with a pre-conceived plan from which they ostensibly and doggedly did not deviate; they stuck to their aesthetic-conceptual guns, as it were, and "framed out" the "mundane" activities around them. The criticism here is, admittedly, a circumstantial and polemical one, but in respect of Hoskins and O'Loughlin's call to heed more critically the mediality/mediatization (rather than the mere representation) of war, it is surely a valid one to raise in respect of the visualisation of "war," even if that image-making activity is presented as a critical and dissenting art-documentary rather than a photojournalistic undertaking. Moreover, their self-professed approach - they write on their website that they sought to show the 'quotidian' mechanics of war, such as the logistical - is somewhat disingenuous, as the logistics they were recording were those involved in transporting the mute box. What they actually end up doing is arguably not recognisable as a representation of what *is* quotidian about war. A soldier shifting a box of photopaper is *not* a quotidian detail of how war is waged or conflict is mediatized. In its war photography parody and iconoclasm, it "forgets" about and neglects the 'quotidian' mediatization of "war". This is where its aniconicity, in contrast for the claims made for it earlier, arguably fails to challenge our perceptions of war or meaningfully to contribute to a new visual vocabulary which aims to do just that.

The embedding was a unique opportunity critically to engage the media(tized) fray rather than step outside of it, elide/occlude it and persevere with an aesthetically rarefied "take" on the 'dynamics of the machine in its quotidian details, from the logistics of war to the collusion between the media and the military.'⁹¹ It is difficult to see just how the last part of that sentence, 'the collusion between the media and the military' is visualised, even ostensibly, and to this

extent, a question mark as to whether they have fulfilled or realised their own "authorial" brief remains. In other words, in *The Day Nobody Died*, the goal to challenge or resist normative and/or media-military (primary) framing of war and conflict has in this particular respect "dramatically" failed to do so. The resulting images and video do not "speak" to anything that the media-military are collaboratively/collusively "really" doing and the way they are doing it. Apart from as an abstruse, absurdist/parodic comment on the embedding process, the work does not seem "on the face of it" to challenge either the frames or strategic vocabularies of media-military co-operation. To be sure, it creates its own vocabulary, but it is very much a *private* language, and one that is likely to be somewhat inaccessible to many "uninitiated" viewers.⁹² As a work of iconoclastic art, it is a roaring success. As a visualisation of the 'dynamics of the machine', this work falls short of the sensible mark; its *dispositif* is a singularly uncommunicative one.

Having argued this, though, I ought in the interest of fairness concede that the harvesting of *any* direct evidence - including that presumably of media-military collusion - is inherently problematic. This has been borne out by a number of media studies done on digital era war reporting which point, like that of Matheson and Allan, towards just how problematic the question of evidence, truth and gaps in coverage is in the narratives (albeit competing) that emerge. As they observe in respect of the reporting of the American vanquishing of Baghdad in 2003, 'The spectacle of real-time war constructed by journalists and the military was not only a partial and inaccurate picture, but it marginalized alternative perspectives of war.' (Matheson and Allan, 2009: 72) Broomberg and Chanarin, whilst apparently indifferent to the hazy details of media-military co-operation in Helmand, nonetheless were seeking with the work to present their own anti- or non-complicit, alternative perspective of "war". In this respect, it is interesting and significant that they used analogue technology in their project; a

video camera (one assumes, given their determination not to take any pictures with a camera, that this device was not being used to transmit any images) and the photopaper. An analogical commentary on a digitalised war moreover lends the project both aesthetic and critical depth. Again, on a more well-disposed construction, the work *does* ostend towards the fact that the "truth" of modern warfare is no more available to digital as it is to analogue technologies of communication and information. Whilst the work could hardly be seen as a commentary on the common practice of the digital manipulation of war imagery, as a general point, this is one of the "meanings" that is available to the work. This construction of the work still, however, sees it as a 'marginalized alternative perspective of war': in this case, though, its marginalization is deliberate and its recalcitrant refusal to "report on war" in order to show a deeper truth remains its overriding purpose. What other "construction" could, collaboratively-speaking, be put on *The Day Nobody Died* to recover for it more of its dissenting, or "disruptive", potential?

3.6 The Gaze of the Image

In *What do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, Mitchell asks,

Why do people have such strange attitudes towards images, objects, and media? Why do they behave as if pictures were alive, as if works of art had minds of their own, as if images had a power to influence human beings, demanding things from us, persuading, seducing, and leading us astray? (Mitchell, 2005: 7)

His query alludes to the tendency we have as viewers to animate the image, unconsciously to ascribe to it a species of agency. A capacity to think, desire. Mitchell goes on to suggest that our magical attitudes towards images are very much akin to those mystical and totemic responses in "the ages of faith", and that in spite of modern scepticism and iconoclasm, we ' never really "get over" [this response] when we grow up, become modern, or acquire critical

consciousness'. (Mitchell, 2005: 8) In the viewing which follows of the light-exposure images of *The Day Nobody Died*, it is just this "innocent" posture towards the images which is adopted. And in accordance with Mitchell's credo, what is demanded of the images is to enquire not "what do you mean?", but "what do you *want*?" Mitchell writes that posing to the image a 'question of desire rather than meaning or power' (Mitchell, 2005: 9) accounts, unlike hermeneutical and semiotic approaches, 'not just for the power of images but their powerlessness, their impotence, their abjection.' (Mitchell, 2005: 10)

Here we explore that impotence and abjection, and see what we "make of it."

If we visualise the myriad lines radiating out from the images as agents, having been, in accordance with Mitchell, given life, animated through their creation and subsequent viewing, these lines lead us at some point to the images' own deep embedding in the visual economy or eco-system of its animation and further circulation. The lines also vector their Plexus embedding: they are notched with the traces of state-corporate-military-media-entertainment-surveillance-security nexus, to each node of which they have a very specific relation as (perverse) products of an embedding. In this, these images are more at ease with their ostensive function: in their aesthetic embodiment, they resonate visually with what Lacan would call the "*petit object a*" of the gaze. In short, the intractably Real of experience that cannot be captured by symbolic codes. Here the non-figural forms of expression do somewhat better, and abstract image-making is a kind of mimetic incarnation of the socially abstract and scopically in/visible. It might be a quasi-fetishistic exercise to ascribe agency to images and then speak of following their gaze, but it is such an engagement of a psychoanalytic paradigm that the real "work" of the images as conduits to a better grasp of 'the dynamics of the (war) machine' can perhaps be better appreciated.

So, following the gaze of the images self-specularly observing their own creation, we see the images coming to understand how all the parties which played a role in their creation thereby themselves unwittingly gesture towards Plexus. Plexus, like diffused war, is too pervasive and sprawling to "spell out", but the images, in the story of their own creation, ostend mutely towards Plexus. As a viewer then, the story has to be (re)imagined as if from the perspective of the images; they, unlike Petit-Jean's sardine can, do "see". If we gaze with the images outwards, following their collective memory, we track their journey in a box of photopaper in a military aircraft, onto utility vehicles accompanied by soldiers - the trains, buses and jeeps Broomberg and Chanarin tell us of - out to Helmand province, culminating with the photopaper's exposure and the images' creation. This is the part of the story the images tell : that each exposure was made on a different day of the embedding, with deaths and casualties on both sides. Each was made, say the image-makers, "in response" to these terrible events.⁹³ A pair of contrasting images, one fiery, and one almost blacked out with an ebbing flame licking at the corner of the frame [Figures 3.2 and 3.2a], were made on the fifth day of the embedding, the day nobody died.

The images become thus the proxy witness of the war, of the deaths and the traumatic injuries sustained by the combatants. They take the place of the camera, or the eye of the photographer, and are as such a less mediated instance of representation. Evacuated of "content", and reserving for themselves the "right to remain silent" about the horror of war, these images rely upon the verbal, the textual narrative provided by their creators for their ethico-political power. Broomberg and Chanarin can present themselves as concerned secondary witnesses, but they do remark of the images that they

[...] are in a sense *real witnesses*. Those documents, that piece of paper was actually there in the place. Its relation to the event is more clear than a traditional photograph. It bears the scratches, the effects of the light, the heat, the environment on its surface. (Colberg, 2013) (my italics)

The images as agents (rather than objects) of the gaze do more than this though; their "sightlines" also vector "behind the scenes", prior to and outside of the *mise-en-scène*, to the embedding contract and the military lawyers who drafted it, to the expectation by the military that the embedding would follow the unspoken protection for propaganda protocol of a usual embedding. Their smears, stains and swathes of colour do not just abstractly index the deaths, and one day in which life was not lost, but also index the unacceptable contractual conditions of an embedding, and the strategy of resistant visualisation that was developed as a result. We begin to "make sense" of how the work - in its post-production autonomy - functions, how its ironic/absurd *dispositif* of visuality is structured. Analogically-speaking, the images' point towards their own embedding in this self-referential system of sensibility. They are not the media or art-documentary images they were "meant" to be; instead, they mimetically (that is, like their makers) resist their visual cultural encoding, and deny/defy their "purpose" in representing conflict. They insist on their post-photographic emancipation from the bedevilled transaction, on their own "freedom of contract". This is their desire: artistic autonomy. But in their bid for freedom, they also leave us with this insistence: an insistence upon an "Other" way of seeing war: ostending towards strategies, techniques and vocabularies that seek to visualise mediatized "war", diffused conflict, Plexus.

3.7 In Conclusion

Broomberg and Chanarin, whose mission had once been to communicate “the impossibility of representing the pain and horror of personal tragedy,” (Stallabrass, 2008) shift tactical focus with *The Day Nobody Died*, from the human to the non/inhuman "war machine". The shift in focus *in-itself* justifies, I contend, its call to develop “a new language” in art-documentary photography. However, the work can be regarded *both* as operating a noteworthy discursive and paradigmatic shift,⁹⁴ whilst reverting to modernist/avant-garde abstraction and the Brechtian theatre of the absurd. In this, it reveals its own limits of representation. As I argue in the fore-going, in one sense this is deliberate and self-reflexive, and in another it is demonstrative of a missed opportunity. It is, in essence, a performative paradox. But it is one which tellingly ostends towards the ethical imperative to persevere in the development of strategies of visualisation which refuse to let "war" and Plexus out of sight.

The Day Nobody Died shifts focus from traditional media reportage of the combat in Helmand province to the “untold” story, to the concealed, or inaccessible, or dissembled, or invisible story. At least, this is what it attempts. In so doing, it moves beyond the immediate eventuality of the conflict, to the complex and concrete conditions of twenty-first century war, beyond any specific geopolitical factors in play. This reading of the work would render the locus of the embedding almost arbitrary: any conflict in which global neoliberal corporatist democracy is involved would have sufficed for the purposes of the strategic visualisation of "war" and Plexus. Such a “frame” destabilises the notions of event, of evidence, of witnessing, and of representation. The terms are transitive: they have an object to which they necessarily refer. This means that one has to revisit the usefulness of these concepts - event, evidence, witnessing,

representation - in the context of this spatio-temporally, geopolitically/geolocally unmoored framing. It ostends, inchoately, almost to the point of aesthetic vacuity towards the "social ontology" (Burchardt, 2017; Roberts, 2014) of Plexus; of an historically unprecedented global, "post-political" Order of Power, which uses "war" to maintain its quasi-feudal dominance. It both relies upon and resists its own mediality/mediatization to perpetuate itself, and in this zone of acquiescence and contestation, secondary witnesses, remote as they are from "real" danger, still have a crucial role to play on the side of contestation. There can be no doubt that this is the side to which Broomberg and Chanarin pledge allegiance, and of which *The Day Nobody Died* is a small visual voice in the echoing chamber of competing communications and digitally chaotic visualisations.

To reiterate, what is in effect being ostended towards in *The Day Nobody Died* is, I argue, the insuperable machine subsuming all actions and events of "war" "on the ground". The images are abstract visualisations of this machine. Its aniconic aesthetic sublimity is freighted with a "real" presence, albeit one not to be found on the ground in the form of the human body. The work ostends – even if by teleological default - towards the evasively coy, monstrous face of the Military Sublime: in the absence of the visceral what emerges is the mask-shaped empty space inside the plaster cast of a face (rather than the film negative), that is the abstract facelessness of power that is as ethereally pervasive as it is brutally particular. The conceptual shorthand for this power adopted here - Plexus - fails, as do the images, to re-present it, to "place" it. But this built-in failure, in sombre Beckettian fashion, "fails better". *The Day Nobody Died* fails better as a post-photographic work than a "conventional" one which fails to witness the particularity of violence and suffering. It fails better in part because it provides no aesthetic consolation/resolution. The more complete the aesthetic consolation, the ethico-political redemption of the anti-complicit, self-critical liberal/dissenting viewer, the less urgent

the need to subject to visual scrutiny systemic or socially abstract forms of violence. The ultimate subject/object of *The Day Nobody Died* - "war"/Plexus - is implacably systemic, nebulously diffuse, less visible, more socially abstract, less graspable, and as such, urgently demanding of inconsolable, critical visualisation, whether these efforts "succeed" or "fail".

CHAPTER FOUR

The Military Sublime: "War", Plexus and State-Corporate Exception

4.1 Introduction

In chapter one on complicity, I began by asking the reader what it is they as viewer “see” when they look at - or gaze upon - Simon Norfolk's image of the *TERA-1* nuclear testing simulator supercomputer [Figure 1.1]⁹⁵. There it was in the context of a discussion of the departure within post-photographic image-making from the representation of direct or "raw" state violence to indirect, less visible forms of state-corporate-military violence, "war". It concerned in part the difference between the ethico-affective politics of the representation of atrocity versus that of non/inhuman and more socially abstract forms of violence.

This chapter finally takes leave of considerations of complicity, having dealt with these at some length in the foregoing. The conceptual framework - or constellation - shifts now to the nexus of technology and the sublime. It is for reasons which I argue below an "amoral" probing into the visualisation of non/inhuman power and its more abstract conditions of possibility for violence, for atrocity.

The chapter will focus on Norfolk's images of supercomputers and communication satellites: in other words, the hypermodern technology that enables/is the digito-technological condition of possibility of modern warfare and mediatized war. This is the machinic face of Plexus:

mechanical, chemical, technological, electronic, digital, and quantum all at once. Austerely concrete and ethereally abstract, creative and destructive, kinetic and inanimate.⁹⁶

John Roberts, in his discussion of Norfolk's *Military Sublime* writes, 'it is the very absence of the human figure for Norfolk that allows him to resecure [the] spectator⁹⁷ and by extension re-establish the politicization of the image.' (Roberts, 2014: 109) He goes on to write that 'the politicization lies in the conjunction and display of "inhuman" forces within the scan of the panoramic [...]' (Roberts, 2014: 109). Although Roberts is referring more to Norfolk's post-conflict, aftermath photography, his words are as apt in respect of Norfolk's images of the austere technologies of war and power. These images visualise the very condition of possibility of our machinic and hypernetworked lives, of digital technologies of information, communication, visualisation and surveillance, and this chapter launches straight into the visualisation of "war"/Plexus by way of its technologies, its hardware.

Further, the matter for critical exploration here is what the strategies of visualisation - part of which is constituted by the subject matter, the imaged objects themselves, the images as agents - reveal not only self-reflexively about the strategies adopted, but about the nature of "war", power and its forms of violence in a global, neoliberal capitalist, digitally hyperconnected context - Plexus. In other words, the visualisations speak self-reflexively to *their own* condition of possibility as well as to the those conditions of possibility *themselves*.

Explored in the course of analysing Norfolk's strategies of visualisation are the connections between digital communications and mediatized war, AI and killing machines/technologies, the visual rhetoric of power and military-corporatist "ways of seeing" (and being). The imagery

showcases what Rancière, as we saw earlier on, terms the “politics of metonymy” (Rancière, 2009). The chapter emphasises also for the first time in the thesis "corporate personhood" and the "corporate veil" as critical nodes in the state-corporate-military triumvirate, and indeed, "war" and Plexus. It situates the Military Sublime also within the media-theoretical contexts of "mediatized war" (Cottle, 2006), "perpetual war" (Kennedy, 2016), and "Diffused/Arrested War" (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; O'Loughlin and Hoskins, 2015). Finally, the concept of the "neo-iconic" is briefly considered in the concluding remarks.

In the Supercomputers' series, there are many photographs of an array of supercomputers, both aesthetically compelling and suggestive of the more technologically mundane aspects of its functioning; the computer cables and electricity power sources, the cylinders and the service equipment. For now, however, we leave aside the banality of the technologies of "war" (to be explored later) and gaze instead upon its grand and exciting machinery. They are the supercomputers *IBM BlueGene L*, *TERA-1* and the *MareNostrum* - when this research began in 2010 amongst the most powerful computers in the world⁹⁸ - and the communications' satellite *Astra 3B*. These Janus-faced machines are to be our portals into the "Monstrous Sublimity" of "war" and Plexus.

4.2 Background Orientation: Norfolk's Turn to the Technological Non/Inhuman

The images that have been chosen here from Norfolk's Military Sublime series are all highly aestheticised exemplars of his project. They take their place in an array of images of which distinctly gesture towards the more banal aspects of "war" or Plexus. Nonetheless, even the banal imagery can be conceived of partaking of the aesthetics of the sublime. The thick and

bright orange cabling of the nuclear supercomputer [Figure 4.1] is not as visually appealing as the supercomputer itself, but in the “sublime” context of the latter, within the sublime assemblage or *dispositif* (Rancière, 2009), it too takes on an “auratic” (Benjamin, 2010[1935]) quality.

Norfolk’s visualisations of hypermodern technologies of war, surveillance, information and communication are *prima facie* artistic. In this project, as we shall see below, he is not attempting to document a glaring injustice or communicate a radical politics, in spite of his recorded and vocal concern for “war”, state power and the corporate-militarization of society. In other words, these images function less as symbolic *declarations* of dissent, and more as synecdochal *signposts* of dissent, ostending beyond themselves/their "author"/their "content" to their wider contexts, conditions, cultural embedding. Whilst their "author" gestures with the photographed object, the image itself (as agent, perhaps) does not gesture, it ostends. The images of the objects are not so much semiotic markers as metonymic ostenders. They are inviting us to reflect upon the less attended to, less tangible or visible *systemic* - rather than direct or symbolic - forms of violence of “war” and Plexus in which we are all immersed.

In preliminary orientation of the discussion, it is useful firstly to gain some small insight into why the image-maker himself - a veteran of “late” photography; of the aftermath of conflict and war zones such as Rwanda, Bosnia and Afghanistan - embarked on a project in which no trace of “the distant suffering of others” was to be found. In a justification of his unconventional, non/inhuman visualisation, Norfolk says

[...] people gobble up the photograph. They become what the photograph is. For me, people just aren't that important; it's about this panoptic process, it's about this possibility to look into every aspect of our lives. (Roberts, 2014:109).

The words 'people just aren't that important' sounds deceptively indifferent, even callous, but given his track record as concerned/dissenting witness of war and its aftermath, Norfolk is not saying that the suffering of individuals is of no consequence to him; rather, what he is suggesting is that it is the immense, overarching and panoptic, omniscient power (or conditions of possibility thereof) of the state upon which we should *now* be focusing our critical attention. Norfolk sees in the technologies of the state-corporate-military-media nexus a species of public (if often hidden) evidence of the dark arts of power, and for the Military Sublime project, he focuses on the visualisation of this power by way of the (re)presentation of its technologies, its physical machinery; in other words, he elides “raw” violence/power in order to reach more effectively and less affectively into its virtually invisible, as it were, conditions of possibility. As Norfolk explains, 'All of the work I'm doing, I might even call it: 'Toward a Military Sublime.' Because these objects are beyond: they're inscrutable, uncontrollable, beyond democracy.' (Connor, 2007; see also Norfolk's website for *Full Spectrum Dominance: missiles, rockets, satellites in America*)

At least one of the primary reasons why Norfolk's Military Sublime images elide the human presence, and almost mimic the Hollywood, futuristic, sci-fi genre (Norfolk himself refers on his website to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*), is that he is simply weary of witnessing and imaging human pain and suffering. Norfolk's views in conversation with Andrew Hoskins at the OpenEye Gallery in 2012, are especially revealing. In respect of previous projects entailing harrowing visits to the violent aftermaths of, inter alia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan, Norfolk tells the audience that he “never wants to photograph bombed landscapes [again]” (Norfolk and Hoskins, 2012).⁹⁹ These typically show bombed-to-

smithereens landscapes and towns, mass graves which still bear the traces of death, or bereft and traumatised people sparsely dotting the “backdrop” as they go about trying to survive in their ghost towns. He is, he asserts “more interested nowadays in photographing the technology that’s going into fighting the battles of the future and the intellectual brilliance that’s going into designing [those weapons]”. In other words, he is no longer interested in what is now being called “late” or “aftermath” photography as a way of approaching the visualisation of war, and more interested - and here, taking the liberty of paraphrasing him - in the "gegenwältige Bewältigung" ("coming to terms with the present" - see chapter one) of "war" and Plexus. This means looking at with intent and visualising mediatized war and systemic violence as it is occurring in the present and in the very "spaces" we occupy. This way of seeing, for Norfolk, requires a strategic departure from the elegiac or melancholic contemplation of that which is "late", of the aftermath.

In viewing this imagery, one could imagine a world of androids, where the machines have superceded, superannuated, and entirely dispensed with humans, becoming *sui generis* and existing simply to fulfil their post-hominidic purpose. They are often highly aestheticised images, a fact which has also made them broadly appealing, so much so that Norfolk now has an international profile, benefitting from enthusiastic gallerists and admiring press or scholarly appraisal (Atkinson, 2009; Bubich, 2016; National Geographic, 2016). Liam Kennedy describes his views as ‘veer[ing] towards polemic’, but affirms his project as ‘a valid indicator of the challenges facing those who wish to visualize the evolution of the military-industrial complex and the broader militarization of everyday life.’(Kennedy, 2016: 177). He raises Norfolk’s vociferous views in respect of the way war is being represented by photojournalists in the twenty-first century. Norfolk is utterly scathing of traditional news and documentary photojournalism, opining that it is still stuck 'in the language of the 1950s and that is bad for

journalism and, ultimately, bad for democracy' (Kennedy, 2016: 177). Kennedy points out that these projects by Norfolk and others are challenging precisely because they seek to document 'the less visible institutions and infrastructures of power and governance that execute perpetual war.' (Kennedy, 2016:178)

He goes on to observe that the recent interest

[...] in visualizing new sites and forms of warfare points up not only the intangibility of the new technologies but also the emergence of new forms of violence that rarely come into focus in traditional media. (Kennedy, 2016:178)

He is aligning in this sentence both the 'intangibility' of new technologies and the 'new forms of violence', which are equally intangible, not always immediately, or ever, visible. My argument in this thesis is that one of the central features of "invisible violence" (and, it must be noted, not in-itself all that 'new') resides in the face(lessness) of corporate personhood. This then will be the precursory point of departure for the more detailed analysis of the strategies of visualisation at work here. It is above all the *role of corporate agency* in the (digitalized) Military Sublime upon which we focus here.¹⁰⁰

4.3 Death and Limited Liability

To return to the machine as "cool" corporate purveyor of death, the nuclear supercomputer is the supreme "smart device" commercially packaged in the shape of corporate personhood, and used as it in the services of both image-fare and warfare (keeping in mind their potentially genocidal "intent"). Branding, the corporate identification version of cattle-scorching, is central to Norfolk's visualisation of "war" and Plexus. In the powerful preface to these images, Norfolk writes,

In our era, the question [of the power of machines] has been stated most eloquently by Stanley Kubrick in his film *2001: A Space Odyssey* in which a spaceship's on-board computer is so intelligent as to be uncannily near-human. Faced by its own 'What-am-

I?’ crisis it turns darkly homicidal towards the crew that have become a ‘contradiction’ to its mission.¹⁰¹

The example chosen by Norfolk is significantly telling for the Military Sublime imagery examined here. The imaginary identity crisis of the near-human machine is, it is argued here, “reflected” in the emphasis on the corporate personhood, as it were, of the supercomputers and satellites. There are layers of corporate personhood. In the first instance, the corporate parent itself, the incorporated, limited liability or public limited company, the legality of whose existence rests on the legal fiction of the corporate person, as discussed in the introduction to the thesis. The legal fiction of corporate personhood exists to enshrine in the company - which may have a single or many shareholders - the “human” right as a legal entity to enter into contracts and be bound by them, to hold property, to have rights and obligations, to sue and be sued, like an ordinary human citizen. The idea that laws, to include constitutional protections, could apply not only to natural persons but to corporate entities dates back at least to around 1882 in America, where the judiciary interpreted the 14th Amendment of the US constitution to cover the rights of corporations, to be regarded for the purposes of the law as “persons” (Torres-Spelliscy, 2014), confirming this in case precedent in 1886.¹⁰² We saw in the introduction too how the legal fiction of corporate personhood was also independently establish around the same time in the UK and only recently been reconfirmed by the UK Supreme Court in 2013.¹⁰³

Further to this legal foundation of corporate personhood, corporate branding has literalised the fiction; the corporation and its products have been given identities - the personification of the corporate entity is almost complete. With the ability of the machine now to interact with us, or even possibly exceed our intellectual capabilities as a species (estimates as to the advent of artificial superintelligence - "ASI" - vary from just a few years hence to some decades yet) we are arguably but a skin graft away from the bio-corporation. In respect now of bio-machine hybrid technologies (which, it must be conceded, have potentially very promising medical,

scientific and environmental applications) modern techno-science has produced, inter alia, adaptive prosthetics, human brain implants and robots that incorporate organic tissue which are, as yet 'interfaces that mediate our interactions with the world' (Froese, 2014). Bio-technology in itself, however, is a somewhat misleading and "sensationalist" example to invoke in the sober contemplation of the implications of corporate personhood for AI (or ASI) which enhances the very real broader "biopower" (Foucault; see Adams, 2017) of Plexus. This is where the supercomputer is pointedly visualised in its embodiment as a corporate *personality* - in particular *IBM BlueGene L* - by way of a rhetorical configuration consisting of personification, metaphor and metonymy: it is literally a legal person, albeit a fictive one; it functions too metaphorically as an individual with a name, characteristics, a history; and it ostends beyond its "self" to the broader state-corporate-military machinery of which it is a part, a product, an actor and a representative.

The tropo-logic of this idea extends, again by way of ostension, to the human encounter with systemic violence: there is a quasi-autonomous machinic quality to the way in which the state-corporate-military behemoth "pushes through" its agenda – an agenda laced with the "strategic narratives" (Miskimmon et al, 2014) of humanitarian intervention, or of national defence and security. By visualising the machine, that is, re-imagining it to gesture imaginatively towards the potentially destructive contradiction internal to the machine as it is gradually humanised, Norfolk invites the viewer to witness a form of violence, for which the machine-as-liberal-humanitarian-warrior-defender-mascot functions as rhetorical figure.

All of this corporate-parented technology and machinery - or rather the images thereof - metonymically "index" the Military Sublime, in ways that shall be co-creatively demonstrated

below.¹⁰⁴ These images are the ones which are, for this topical framework, telling showcases or objective correlatives of Plexus and its insidiously subject-constitutive power. Plexus is not a state-corporate-military monster against which we are at "war": it is the soft-hard, paradoxically parental techno-substrate in which we are foetally immersed, both "at war" and "at peace."

4.4 *IBM BlueGene L and Bull's TERA-1*

As pointed out above, Norfolk finds inspiration for his war machine imagery in Kubrick's cult-status film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In this film, one of the central characters is a computer called HAL9000, whose "personality" is an almost poignantly bionic blend of what we imagine to be a hybrid human-machine consciousness, as suggested by his responses to "Dave." Norfolk explicitly references this computer when he playfully adopts one of its (popular) utterances in his title *The Supercomputers: 'I'm sorry Dave, I can't quite do that*. Amongst the supercomputers series of images are those of a nuclear supercomputer *IBM BlueGene L*, built as the name eponymously suggests, by the US computing/military/armaments behemoth, IBM,¹⁰⁵ and the French-built, Bull's *TERA-1*¹⁰⁶, which we have already encountered earlier. [Figures 1.1 and 4.2]. This corporate branding of BlueGene L is of particular significance. It highlights its corporate ontology - machinehood/personhood - and is thus, in my reading, a highly significant "move" on the part of Norfolk. He does not seek to aestheticise the name; but he does not have to. The name is already an evocative and literary one. It does not spell out what the machine has been designed to do, which is, ultimately, to perform another Hiroshima or Nagasaki. The very fact of its as yet unleashed potential is surely cause enough for concern, and for resolutely dissident "secondary witnessing." But the name somehow confers a personhood on the killing machine. It has a name in the first place. It is a pleasing, sci-fi

sounding name - BlueGene L - whilst being a corporate-branding affectation, is also somewhat mysterious, with the cipher-like, free-floating "L" on the end. Like "Enola Gay", who would connect such a name to genocide? The endowment of killing machines with corporate personalities is but one tactic among a host to neutralise, mythologise or make more "user-friendly" a technology which is fundamentally inimical to the preservation of human life. It is for good reason that the machine is not called "IBM Nuclear Supercomputer".

Amongst the most chilling and austere photographs of the three projects are those of *TERA-1* and *IBM BlueGene L* [Figures 1.1 and 4.2] The first of these photographs, in its sparse palette of black, silver, and grey depicts the narrow passage between two banks of the nuclear simulation supercomputers. Its receding perspective geometry and total consumption of the frame by the banks lends the composition an austerity, sterility, coldness. Supercomputers are always housed in chambers maintained at low temperatures to prevent them from overheating, which is also aptly conveyed by the tonal hues of the image. But the precise geometry and the highly aestheticized perspective of the image also cast it in a sublime light. It is a consummately skilled rendering of the sublime "beauty" of modern technology. But once we are aware that what we are viewing is a nuclear simulation supercomputer it is a damning embodiment of the Monstrous Sublime heart of modern warfare, and "war."

This image of *TERA-1* [Figure 1.1], when juxtaposed with that *Staircase at Auschwitz*, [Figure 4.3] a very moving photograph of a tragically worn staircase at Auschwitz Norfolk once took, these monstrously sublime banks and their icy passage put one in mind of this staircase. The geometry is almost identical. It is an aesthetic topography which ostends towards the barbaric journey from "analogical" to "digital" genocide. Norfolk has never, as far as is known, curated these two images together as such. Here, in co-creative fashion, it is a *dispositif* of juxtaposition

which is deployed in the visually "cognitive mapping" (Jameson, 1988) of a topography of continued/contemporary terror.

In the harrowing archive of Holocaust imagery available online, there are any number which could in similar fashion be placed alongside those of Norfolk's, the juxtaposition of which would ostend towards the same intergenerational horror. *Auschwitz II* [Figure 4.5] is just such an image, the barracks in which share the same dastardly geometry as the *Staircase at Auschwitz* and *TERA-1*. The movement in the icy passages between the computer servers, the wall and metal railing and the wooden pre-mortem stalls in these three images respectively traces, literally, the foul and merciless passages shuffled along by the victims of genocide and their captors, to the ascetic, silent passages of the corporate engineers of modern warfare.¹⁰⁷

So too is it in respect of the next image *IBM BlueGene L* [Figure 4.2], seemingly taken with a wide angle lens, also showing banks of black units composing the nuclear supercomputer. Spread apart in rows, against the chilled housing of an entirely white backdrop of floor, walls and harsh overhead lighting, the image too is sterile and non/inhuman. These banks of the nuclear supercomputer units also, in keeping with the above visual juxtaposition, conjure up the rows of barracks at Auschwitz-Birkenau, housing those who were being systematically exterminated in, in a stock image found online entitled *Auschwitz II* [Figure 4.5] The geometry and the tenebrous ambience of the tow images echo hauntingly down the centuries from the mechanics of the Shoah through to the digitality of the Military Sublime. At the very centre of the picture, right at the back of the building, the "vanishing point" of the image can be seen. This is the point at which the parallel lines in a picture appear to converge, creating depth and perspective. It is thus a geometric, ocularcentric phenomenon; for the eyes only. In this image,

a white luculence emanates from that spot, a spot which marks a break between the unit banks: a kind of doubtful dash in the middle of an ambitious sentence.¹⁰⁸ But is there any doubt? The space signifies nothing, and at the same time speaks to the absolute amorality of the machine: worse than immoral, it is inhuman. In a chilling metaphorical parallel, the aesthetic "vanishing point" of the Norfolk image is brutally mirrored by the literal "vanishing point" in an online-archival image entitled *Execution yard of block II - Auschwitz II-Birkenau* [Figure 4.6] Here there is wall between what appear to be the blocks for camp administration or wardens' housing. It is against this wall that prisoners who were fortunate enough to escape the gas chambers were summarily dispatched by firing squad.

The juxtaposed geometries of the "corridors of death" of both the concentration camp images and *IBM BlueGene L* map genocide held in twenty-first century reserve onto historical genocides. The sterile and cool passages of the nuclear supercomputer visually palimpsests the decaying pile of gassed, emaciated corpses, and the waxy melting of incinerated human flesh from its skeletal grid after the blinding light of Hiroshima. So visualised, *IBM BlueGene L* serves as a consummate "showcase" of Plexus. The process, context and product of visualisation merge co-creatively in this *dispostif*. All these spaces speak. The buildings speak, the walls speak, the machines speak, the images speak...or they cry. These images ostend both metaphorically and metonymically towards the eternal return to human self-annihilation which marks "History" and dogs any accounts of it.

Norfolk explains that one of the very first places he visited as a photojournalist was Auschwitz.

He recalls,

[...] when I looked at landscapes around Auschwitz, it almost seemed that they wanted to vomit out the poison of what they had witnessed. It was as though they could not

bear to hold it and if you had bothered to equip yourself with a little bit of history of what had happened, you could spend some time in amongst those landscapes and understand that they wanted to tell you their story. When I was putting my camera on them, it felt uneasy because the fog would come in and it would look like gas, and then your eyes would fall on the bare wire and it would look like tears [...] (Bubich, 2016).

There is an aesthetic, formal and ethico-political contiguity between the earlier "aftermath" photography of Norfolk's in which he visited historically atrocious landscapes, understanding that "they wanted to tell you their story," and the contemporary landscapes of "war," of the Military Sublime to which he has turned later in his career as art-documentary photographer. He has found his own visual vocabulary both then and now, but it is evident that "the Archive" of atrocity bears its mephitic traces in his own aftermath and post-photographic visualisations. In respect of Norfolk's distinct species of aftermath imagery, there is clearly a "blurring of the boundaries" between the war aftermath imagery and that of the twenty-first century non/inhuman "war". Whether archival, aftermath or post-photographic, these intertwined sources of "war" and Plexus all ultimately ostend to the human being; a moral/amoral/immoral mortal, a frighteningly vulnerable and inconceivably violent force of nature.

4.5 IBM's *MareNostrum*

The other supercomputer we look at, the *MareNostrum* [Figure 4.7] is positioned, ethico-politically speaking, at a very different angle to the above two. This machine is an incarnation not of Death, but of the "soft power" of Plexus.

IBM's/Norfolk's *MareNostrum* is the largest supercomputer in Spain, was built by IBM (using also the technologies of Lenovo, Intel and Fujitsu)¹⁰⁹ to support all manner of communications and research activities across the board – business technology, the sciences, education,

environment, business, financial markets, medicine, and so forth. In other words, it is used in the service of the private-public civilian-commercial sphere, and to that extent, it is akin to the mini-supercomputers we all possess in the form of our smart phones, laptops or tablets.¹¹⁰ Like our personal devices, it is the sort of AI, the kind of machine, to which one can more easily relate; it is in many respects productive for and of humanity, rather than (ostensibly) in any way destructive. In contrast to the corporate "froideur" of *IBM BlueGene L*, its name - meaning "our sea" (referring also with some historical symbolism to the way Imperial Rome referred to the Mediterranean - "Mare Nostrum") conjures up images not only of Nero's Rome and the madness of diminishing power but, in European Union federal democracy, of warm maternal or fraternal sea-faring, national voyage-of-discovery pride. The name itself is a fine piece of Plexus propaganda, which is not to say *MareNostrum* does not do "good" things for humanity. Clearly, its uses are varied and many ; for example, climate prediction, atmospheric change measurement, computational earth science and geophysics are all uses which are undoubtedly beneficial to the planet, playing an important role in helping to understand and avert climate change disaster (paradoxically, of course, *MareNostrum* like all our digital devices is materially constituted by the exploitation of earth/people in the mining of the many materials and minerals required to construct the supercomputer). Notwithstanding its ostensibly beneficial uses, the AI - the digital brain - of the supercomputer, this one and others like it, is a prime enabling condition of possibility for not only (mediatized) "war," but digito-corporate globalization: the condition of possibility for Plexus.

However, at first glance Norfolk's image of *MareNostrum* seems to show this more optimistic side of the human-machine collaboration. There is good reason for this: the computer is located in the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre (BSC), and the public is welcomed on its website (a consummately skilled piece of public relations) to come and "visit the computer."¹¹¹ It is

ensconced in an extraordinarily beautiful, old ochre-hued, stone building, with Romanesque arches and round portals lining all sides of the commodious hall in which *MareNostrum* is housed. The ceiling has also been painted a warm terracotta or sienna hue, and the lighting is discreet and sympathetic. The contrast between the aged edifice and the hypermodern machine is a striking one, and the physical proximity of the two suggests to the visitor and the viewer just one "grand narrative": the story of the Progress of Man through the Ages. The machine is encased further in a chilled glass house, with a semi-circular sliding door for ingress and egress in the centre, suggesting transparency, accessibility, public service, but also museum-like and oracular untouchability, "cool" prestige.

It is as if Norfolk has pretended to allow himself to be seduced by the charm of a name, a benign-sounding ethos, and an elegant and venerable edifice in his visualisation of this machine. He has not attempted, or found, an "other" way of visualising and representing the machine. And in this he has competition. For beauty alone, the photograph shown on the history tab of BSC's site almost upstages Norfolk's image for its high spec, warm glowiness. [Figure 4.8] ¹¹² It is no wonder, then, that this image, the first in the supercomputer series, tells a rather different story to *IBM BlueGene L* or *TERA-1* which have an altogether more forbidding inhumanity. *MareNostrum* represents the benign corporate personality, whilst *IBM BlueGene L* and *TERA-1* inhabit distinctly sinister personae. Norfolk does not perform any visual equivalence here ; *MareNostrum* is a distinct techno-scientific entity with, on the techno-face of it, a life-affirming telos. The telo-ontology of *IBM BlueGene L/TERA-1* on the other hand, is a nihilist one. Nonetheless, *MareNostrum* is pictured under the 'HAL9000' auspices of the series, of which Norfolk writes,

These computers are not amiable assistants; they are distant and sinister; cold and inscrutable. In a zero-sum game, it feels like they grow stronger not to help us, but at our expense. The powerfulness sequestered in these machines can result only in our

powerlessness. They are omniscient and omnipresent and these are not qualities in which we find a simularum of ourselves – these are qualities that describe the Divine. The problem is not that these computers might one day resemble humans; it is that they already resemble Gods.¹¹³

These words read like a febrile affirmation of a Nostradamus prophecy or a portentous pronouncement by the Delphi Oracle: the prose is charged and passionate, the vision clear. It is Danté envisioning the inferno of profanity and perversion which must be negotiated before he can enter paradise, only to find that God has absconded to hell. Norfolk's image of *MareNostrum* might look friendly, but benign or benevolent is not the view he takes of the machine. Whatever the viewer might think of his visualisation, this is not how he regards the machine itself. Revisiting the image, and reframing it so that we deliberately mask the ideological distraction posed by the venerable architecture by which it is framed, we may see what Norfolk sees.

And this is what we see, which is perhaps best gestured towards by plotting the “progress” of the machine. *MareNostrum*, whilst still looking the same, has undergone an upgrade since Norfolk took his photo, and is now referred to as "MareNostrum 4". This is what we are told about it by the BSC:

MareNostrum 4 has two distinct parts: The general-purpose block has 48 racks with 3,456 nodes. Each node has two intel Xeon Platinum chips, each with 24 processors, amounting to a total of 165,888 processors and a main memory of 390 Terabytes. Its peak power is 11.15 Petaflops, or what is the same, it is able to perform more than eleven thousand trillion operations per second, ten times more than the MareNostrum 3, which was installed between 2012 and 2013. Although its power is ten times greater than that of its predecessor, it only increases energy consumption by 30% and now is of 1.3 MWatt/year.¹¹⁴

This sort of information, “virtually” unintelligible to lay-persons, is somehow as impressive to us as it is to a software engineer. It is a universally impressive and daunting set of facts, and couched in a “superior” technical discourse that leaves one mentally bowing and scraping

before the prowess of it all. It is a language that forms an *assemblage* with the cool glass walls and venerable ancient stone architecture surrounding the machine: it is both publically accessible but also unapproachable, not only physically, but intellectually. It is represented as a superintelligence, and thus easy to see why Norfolk attributes to these machines a quasi-divine quality. Like viewing a rare and precious artefact in the locked glass vitrine of a museum, we may view *MareNostrum* in its vitrine, in a building, moreover, which certainly bears every resemblance to a typical museum for ancient artefacts. The machine is packaged in its very own visual-verbal *dispositif*, providing an impeccably neat and persuasive mini-showcase for a Plexus strategic narrative. Here before the Plexus machine, we are invited to stand in awe, in worshipful obeisance.

Even more mordantly than with *IBM BlueGene L* or *TERA-1*, the contradiction internal to the image is one that is mimetically internal to the machine. The image of the contradictory machine is a paradigmatic negative dialectical instance of what Walter Benjamin (and Adorno and Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*) might hypothetically identify as a form of cultural barbarism. Again, one is put in mind of Benjamin's famous quote: 'There is no document of civilisation that is not at the same time a document of barbarism.' (Benjamin, 1969: 256-257).

The image as "document" does not present us with an aesthetic resolution of the contradiction, sublated as a dissenting cry for resistance or revolution. It is far more oblique than that, and maintains its critical detachment by suggesting *neither the possibility of utopia nor the possibility of resistance to dystopia*. It is this critical suspension of any resolute political judgement which, on the one hand, lends the image its autonomy – as it were – as a work of art, but on the other radically attenuates any emancipatory claim it may have. In other words,

it is powerful as a work of art, but “fails” as a dissenting proposition. Whilst the corporate image-fare of "MareNostrum" upstages Norfolk's aesthetics-of-the-sublime *MareNostrum* rendering, it is the very fact of, the act of contemplative visualisation itself which carries the full weight of concerned resistance.

We now turn to another machine; a close technological cousin of the computer, whether the supercomputer like *MareNostrum* or the personal smart device with which one tweets and texts. It too is a mode of the transportation of data. It too is a vehicle for the transmission of information and entertainment, or for espionage and surveillance. But the public secret of interstate or industrial espionage is not the species of covert activity with which this thesis, or this chapter is concerned. It is the non/inhuman inter-face of the technology and the citizen (witness) which is of interest here. This machine too possesses the quintessentially human power to communicate, to control and to violate. It is telecommunications satellite: *Astra 3B*.

4.6 *Astra 3B*

Astra 3B was built by the world's largest commercial satellite operators, SES Astra, and is one of the biggest digital TV satellites ever launched, according to Norfolk.¹¹⁵ Of the background to this project, Norfolk writes

Despite their importance to the global economy and to the military, to my knowledge, no artist has ever been asked to look at the entire production process of one of these satellites from manufacture to testing; to command and control right through to picturing the rocket on the pad. In cahoots with 'This Is Real Art', SES Astra [a German company] permitted me to follow their launch campaign.¹¹⁶

There are many images on the site, so the ones that will be engaged here are the "bookends", the first and last in the series: the satellite itself in its enormous blue chamber awaiting launch, and the rocket which is poised to launch it into orbit.

This first image can be viewed from various angles by scrolling up and down and left to right with the computer mouse [Figure 4.9]. Aesthetically, it impresses instantaneously. Not all the elements in the image are easily identifiable to the non-engineer lay-viewer, so viewing it requires one's concentrated scrutiny. The image looks spectacularly futuristic and everything is bathed in a sunny sky-blue colour. The texture of surfaces of the satellite holding bay looks like the hide of a spiky dinosaur, or simply the foyer wall décor of a well-funded research institute. The satellite is off-centre, to the right of a tall tower, and its yellow-gold panels or heat shields emit an Aztec glow in the discretely muted lighting. Its appearance puts one in mind of a 1950's sci-fi, archaic-animatronic entity; but a friendly one. How much of this benign-alien "soft powerness" is Norfolk's doing and how much is a question of the plant's design and lighting can only be surmised/interpreted without asking the photographer himself, but the image could be categorised as the perfect publicity shot for SES Astra.¹¹⁷

The last image is Astra 3B's launch rocket on its launchpad surrounded by four Eiffel-tower like supports [Figure 4.10]. This photo, with an overcast white-grey sky as canvas, and the geometric, straight lines of the rocket and towers, is both a sombre and austere one, contrasting clearly with the somewhat friendlier satellite image. It speaks of immense power, and of distance. It is the hard exterior, whilst the satellite is the soft interior; the protective carapace to the yielding flesh. It would not be a coincidence that Norfolk has positioned these two images at the beginning and end, respectively, of the website image series for *Astra 3B*. Whilst we shall not be considering the images sandwiched between these two, it would be fair to say that they mainly deal with the less visually and eventually dramatic elements of the process. Although Norfolk does not give any hints as to his arrangement of the series' images, it seems

that the first and last images carry most of the rhetorical weight of the work, and curatorially, function also as the narrative “quotation marks” for the others.

Now, given that the images were made for commercial, publicity purposes, and given that they were designed, framed as such, what could they – the end “product” – tell us about the war machine that it is Norfolk’s mission to reveal to us? As a reminder of what it is that he seeks to achieve in his work, commissioned or not, this is what he says his overriding mission is:

[...] to understand how war and the need to fight war has formed our world; how so many of the places we occupy, the technologies we use, and the ways we understand ourselves, are created by military conflict. ¹¹⁸

All of Norfolk’s oeuvre is in some way related to state-military activities, and this one likewise does not depart from this theme; the mass-media corporate substrate of *Astra 3B* only enhances the technology-mediality connection.

Part of the task for those who profit from communication satellites is to present a congenial narrative which allays uncertainty, confusion, feelings of inadequacy or alienation from what is happening to and around us and our community. To keep the wheels of "sociotechnical life" (Thrift, 2004: 175; cited also in Hoskins and Tulloch, 2016: 7)¹¹⁹ optimally lubricated, these technologies must be marketed in strategic ways that offer reassurance, a feeling (or illusion) of community, a feeling of control/enablement, coupled with more than a smidgeon of the Benjaminian "auratic": a sense of awe/admiration/mystery, etc. *Astra 3B*'s makers, SES, like *MareNostrums*' BSC in Spain, have designed a website with just such a psychologically astute, user-friendly interface. Not only does their "sublime" image of a shiny, cerulean blue-winged and glistening, gold-panelled *Astra 3B* floating heroically and "auratically" in invincibly black orbit compete once again in the beauty stakes with Norfolk’s image, the website pre-empts your being too overwhelmed or alienated by this futuristic, alien-looking machine, putting some emphasis on the music festivals to which you can be connected via its signals, or the

football matches you can savour via their 'European Sporting Package' for which you can at a "reasonable" cost subscribe.¹²⁰

Media and communications technology companies, their shareholders, stakeholders and publics are all deeply enmeshed in this media-corporate zone, a zone in which warfare is corporate-mediatized, and society is corporate-militarized. The enmeshment of such a satellite with those whom it serves, the public, the traditional media, the state-corporate-military nexus is very powerfully symbolised by the images of *Astra 3B* and its launch rocket. It shows us the technologically "awesome" condition of possibility of mediatized war and corporatized public media. But the communications satellite is a Janus-faced machine: the "light" face of the machine "speaks" of progress, of democracy, of free speech, of uplifting entertainment and well-deserved leisure, of global connection and modern prosperity, whilst the "dark" face speaks of "perpetual war" and a state-corporate-media-military convergence of interests. The dual threat of violence (and punishment) and promise of profit (and security) has proven to be a winning combination for power, and neoliberal capitalist democracy wields it as well as any putative oligarchy. However, there are no sharp lines in this Jekyll and Hyde state-corporate-media-military-entertainment-security-surveillance (Plexus) physiognomy, and one of the arguably most "observable" indicators of this resides in the new media ecology that has evolved with the advent of global digitalization.

4.6a *Astra 3B* and "Arrested War"

As touched upon in the previous chapter, for O' Loughlin and Hoskins the institutional destabilisation of the traditional media as a result of the meteoric, global growth of digital communications and information technology, social media and "democratised" platforms for

citizen journalism/witnessing is no longer the confounding, urgent issue it once was for traditional media and its stakeholders, to include the state-military nexus. They suggest that corporate news purveyors, government policy makers and the military are once again beginning to feel in control of news agendas (O' Loughlin and Hoskins, 2015). They argue that the traditional media has now succeeded in harnessing the new media ecology, and thereby ushered in a new phase of media-military collaboration. They theorise that the military is again

drawn to the mainstream media ecology because it has *reasserted its function as primary channel of the world's affairs*. We live, now, in a time of *Arrested War*. War no longer evades the eye of the primary gatekeepers. The dynamics once deemed chaotic are now harnessed. (O'Loughlin and Hoskins, 2015) (my italics)

Traditional media is in their view once more ensconced in its privileged position as 'networked gatekeeper[s]'.¹²¹ By having re-established its position of gatekeeping authority in the new media ecology and learnt how to use/co-opt the global, smart phone equipped citizen witness, media-military control of "war" effectively 'arrests' it, redirecting its erstwhile digitally-challenging diffuseness into a reconfigured/ing funnel of state-corporate-media-military narration.

They attribute this to a further shift in the nature of mediatized war, one from 'Diffused War' (as encountered in the last chapter), to a 'new paradigm of war': 'Arrested War'. It is worth quoting them in full in this respect, for the purposes both of reiteration and the further discussion below. They write,

[...] Diffused War referred to a new paradigm of war in which (i) the mediatization of war (ii) made possible more diffuse causal relations between action and effect (iii) creating greater uncertainty for policy-makers in the conduct of war. Under conditions of Arrested War, however, the mainstream rather than being in competition with mediatization, instead harnesses it for its own ends. Policy-makers and militaries have renewed confidence in the mainstream's appropriation of the current media ecology, and enter into closer relationships with it. The British mainstream media were granted more official access to UK troops in Afghanistan than in any previous conflict in history (O'Loughlin and Hoskins, 2015).¹²²

What they are in essence saying here is that the 'mainstream', having gone through a period of adjustment, has now found the measure of the new media ecology and can work more collaboratively/less jarringly with it. As a result, vested traditional media relations with policy-makers and the military have been functionally restored and together they can proceed with their project of 'networked gatekeeping.' It is my view that the role of the media in networked gatekeeping applies even more fundamentally to corporatist hegemony; after all, the relationship between the traditional press and its *own* corporate personhood is arguably a far more stable and pernicious one, less susceptible to political or US election vagaries. Further, the advent of both Brexit and a Trump presidency in the West and surrounding factors to include electoral disruption by (allegedly Russian) social media bots, and the combative nature of the current Trump administration's relationship with traditional news media could well have/be having an impact on media-military "war".¹²³ However, for the *purposes of the present discussion*, what is to be extracted from O'Loughlin and Hoskin's idea here, is that 'the traditional has re-asserted its role and function within the latest of the media ecology' (O'Loughlin and Hoskins, 2015). In respect of media ecology, this is patently the case, irrespective of an unusual US "Manchurian candidacy". By way of extrapolation, I would argue that the "immaterial battlefield of perception" (Virilio, 1989) is, pursuant to this view, once more being systemically (if not quite systematically) *managed*, albeit within the dynamic media ecology of always-competing and contested eventual narratives. And the traditional media now, in an "Arrested war", has little problem or compunction with the harnessing of citizen witness evidence or testimony.¹²⁴

Enmeshed within a "post-political/post-ideological" (pursuant to Badiou, Žižek, Rancière, Mouffe, et al) framework of global neoliberal corporatization as the hegemonic "order of

things", Arrested war could thus be understood also as the (reasserted) media-corporate control and dictation of "war" in accordance with the adaptational exigencies of Plexus. In such an Arrested "war" dispensation, the humble communications satellite could be regarded as the ultimate symbol of a post-ideological/post-political world: it matters not what the narratives are, it will transmit them. It is happy to permit contesting narratives and eventual political upheaval or religio-sectarian strife because *none of this undermines its corporate supremacy*. *Astra 3B* thus far exceeds its "exchange/use-value": it is not only a lucrative provider of services but also a symbolic defender of corporatist capitalism, and a silent partner and liberal patron of mediatized, perpetual, Arrested "war."

Significantly, Norfolk does not shy away from referring to the satellite image by the brand name - "Astra3B" - of the corporate entity in the title to the series; no effort is made to aestheticise its commercial provenance away; quite the opposite.¹²⁵ As with the nuclear supercomputer *IBM BlueGene L*, Norfolk in this way pays close attention to the "corporate" factor in his visualisation of the Military Sublime. What the images also ostend towards, especially the "soft" satellite image, is our own cosy implication in Plexus; we partake of not only of its visual economy generally, but we are so thoroughly immersed in and seduced by its MIME-NET embrace. Not only is war and conflict normalised and society militarized (about which much has been written), but, I argue, we have become comfortable with our own foetal immersion in the reassuringly familiar ambiance of global corporatization, without which the militarizing "deformation of human potentials" (Lutz, 2002) would, arguably, not be so childishly easy.

Cultural neoteny¹²⁶ is the immersive means whereby the political and socio-economic depredations of Plexus continue unabated and "misrecognised": *the event of social*

militarization is but one node of the Main Event of global corporatization. That is, not of capital in itself, but of its corporate incarnation. Plexus and its cross-sutured pockets of power has found its most persuasive face yet in the figure of the corporate person, and behind the benign corporate veil of the "MareNostrums" and "Astra 3Bs", we revert to a collective infantility, a "state" of cultural neoteny in which the pleasure-pain principle dominates as dialectical motor of the profit-security/risk-fear axis of neoliberal capitalist democracy (This, in socio-psychoanalytic terms, encapsulates possibly one of the most significant ideas of this thesis).

As visual metaphor and, indeed, metonym, the "soft" satellite reassures us that it is okay to be foetally immersed; that this is "the best of all possible worlds" ('die beste aller möglichen Welten'; Gottfried Leibniz, 1710) and the way of contentment lies in ludically yielding to it and otherwise keeping intellectual curiosity or outright outrage safely contained in entertainment, critical scholarship, dissident art/documentary, an Occupy protest or two, and the ballot box of parliamentary or representative democracy.

But the image, cloaked in its "soft power" as means of social connection and prosperous leisure, has at its (re)tail end "hard power" - brute and oppressive force - as incarnated in the launching rocket, which doubles in every sense as both symbol and concrete feature of state-military violence, and by its ancillary function in respect of the media satellite, of mediatized conflict. This SES Astra rocket image [Figure 4.10] is special, however, because it contains within it both the power to deliver viewing pleasure - it launches the communications satellite - but through association with the rocket as weaponized, as an inter-ballistic missile/nuclear warhead, also to deliver us/the Other pain. Rockets deliver our spectacles, our entertainment, our deaths and our citizen complicity in their existence.

These objects, the *Astra 3B* satellite and rocket are, like the old sardine can seen by Petit-Jean in Chapter One, both metaphors and metonyms for something much larger than themselves. As images, they are the small (even if “awesome”) parts of a war machine that ostend towards the metamachine - Plexus - that keeps us busy, distracted, and "at war." In this sense, they not only ostend towards “war” and Plexus, but are actually a materially constitutive part of it, both as images, and as referents. The function of their visualisation is rhetorical, above all, synecdochal. W.J.T Mitchell, in his analysis of a photograph by Allan Sekula of a rusty wrench in an abandoned shipyard [Figure 4.11], writes

[...] *the image* is a phenomenon that crosses the border between nature and culture, non-human physical-chemical processes, and human fabrications [...] *it is a synecdoche for the entire system of global capital and the detritus it leaves behind*, the fossil trace of disuse and obsolescence. The unused wrench is a figure for the bankrupt, closed shipyard in Los Angeles harbour [...] (Mitchell, 2015: 224) (my italics)

This 'image' as 'synecdoche for the entire system of global capital and the detritus it leaves behind' could equally apply to the image indexing the suprascent feat of human invention that is the modern satellite, as to the iron-age, humble wrench. Like the downed wrench, the communications satellite will one day be superannuated, left floating aimlessly in orbit, a shadow of its former powerfully connected and hyperconnecting self, still with all the organic quiddity of its worldly/planetary origins, as it were, but void of any purpose. Living on perhaps, will be its post-political corporate “war” legacy. The image of it created by Norfolk, in my reading, enacts a performative "politics of metonymy" (Rancière, 2013), ostending towards 'the entire system of global capital and the detritus it leaves behind.' (above)

As curated in the series by Norfolk, both *MareNostrum* and *Astra 3B*, unlike the more obvious nuclear supercomputer (or the rockets and missiles of his other works), embody the scintillating sadomasochistic appeal of "soft," amniotic Plexus, and our willing dependence on it.

4.7 The State-Corporate Exception and the Trojan Horse

Violent conflict and atrocity are the effects of brute force and, with the advent of photography, have been made increasingly visible to modern publics. We have observed how such violence in its eventuality is but the visible or conceivable, "thinkable" face of Power. Power, considered, according to Giorgio Agamben as "state of exception"(Agamben, 2005), is as I understand it the extended powers Power cynically arrogates to itself to flout its own rule of law, or contradict/ transcend its ostensible political ideology. It is Power's abuse of power. It is not a phenomenon exclusive to twenty-first century neoliberal capitalist democracy (consider the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution, the Nazi state and the Shoah, the South African Apartheid state) but in its post 9/11, digital, corporatist and military sublime incarnation, it assumes far more elliptical and impenetrable shapes, and is far less fathomable. More specifically in the contemporary context, such a state of exception entails the state curtailing (or entirely withdrawing) the legal protections and civil liberties of citizens and non-citizens alike, which would formally be afforded by such historically significant documents such as, for example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the UN in 1948, the Geneva Conventions, the UK Human Rights Act 1988, and the US Constitution. Typically, the "war on terror" exceptions have permitted or "justified" indefinite detention without trial (Guantánamo Bay, the State of Emergency Apartheid state), or the trial by military commission of suspects, even civilians, extraordinary rendition and torture (which is a subject we turn to in Chapter Six in respect of the work of Edmund Clark). Agamben's state of exception reduces the citizen to "homer sacer" - to "bare life" - a human without legal or civil rights or entitlements.

Here I extend the meaning of the phrase "state of exception" to corporate globalization, describing it as a *State-Corporate Exception*, whereby the corporatization of "war" effectively "dehistoricizes and normalizes" (Roberts, 2016) the systemic forms of violence of Plexus. Violence now comes in a corporate-hegemonic packaging, with corporate branding/personality, corporate identity. When drone technology becomes a commercial and public tool of citizen visualisation then it is not difficult to see how in a cultural, neotenous, ocularcentric and habitual yielding to the scopic drive, many do not gleefully experience the "State-Corporate Exception" as anything but the stimulating and "awesome" "best of all possible worlds" (Leibniz, 1710).

In terms of representation: the state/power knows of the consequences of its own violence, its own foreign/corporate "policies": *it* does not need to be shown. As Badiou, cited by Žižek, somewhat provocatively declares, 'It is better to do nothing than to contribute to the invention of formal ways of rendering visible that which Empire already recognizes as existent.' (Žižek, 2009: 183) What is a far more meaningful in accordance with this view is to show what the state/power does *not* want to be seen. It ought to be reiterated here that this is not regarded here in respect of twenty-first century Western power as a deliberate and concerted effort (on the whole) : it is a matter of the systemic and socially abstract effects and manifestations of Plexus featuring unevenly in what the ' Empire already recognizes as existent.' This is especially what the next chapter on Paglen examines, but here, Norfolk renders visible what we may well see, know about, have access to; only we are not looking/seeing. That is, we are not looking beyond the Plexus screen, the corporate veil. What he is addressing is our "way of seeing" (Berger, 1972): a "State-Corporate Exception" so characteristic of modern neoliberal capitalist democracy, but which was established back in the 1880s in the US in company case law precedent (see above): the enabling legal fiction of corporate personhood. As John Roberts

crisply observes ' [...] what is visible is not necessarily seen, and what is seen is not necessarily visible - or is barely visible' (Roberts, 2014:158). This statement resonates with that of Norfolk, who declares with a laconic flourish that “The military love the idea that war will disappear into the invisible.” (Norfolk and Hoskins, 2012). Here I argue that one of the ways in which the State-Corporate Exception does this is by way of the corporate Trojan Horse, as it were; the sequestering in plain sight of the violent and violating ends of power/profit in the mediatic "war" technologies and machinery of pleasure and pain, leisure and labour.

4.8 In Conclusion

It has been seen how Norfolk is concerned to show/image the above "objects" as, inter alia, techno-scientific-corporate artefacts. We have seen also how the policy makers and state, citizens and public, the media and the military are narratively co-productive of the systems, institutions hierarchies, structures, relations, nexes which, in short, co-ordinate the socio-cultural “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1996) of both power and pockets of resistance. My argument has been that the red thread throughout is, apart from media, the corporate entity which seamlessly and insidiously "mediates" between all participants in an expanded heterogeneous field of the body politic (or body post-politic). Mitchell invokes just this metaphor, of the body politic, in his ruminations on how the corporate body might be visualised. As he nimbly ponders,

On images and metaphor, such as the metaphor of the “body politic” [...] what kind of body is imaged in the *figure of the corporation*? These sorts of reversible and foundational metaphors are [...] the "metaphors we live by" (Lakoff and Johnson 2003). They are not merely ornaments to discourse but *structuring analogies that inform entire epistemes*.(2015: 19)(original quotation marks; my italics)

These "the metaphors we live by" – the visual or literary rhetoric, the synecdoche is, according

to this view, more than a matter of the deployment of a Rancièrian politics of metonymy, of aesthetic tropes to illustrate or make sense of realities that are ineffable, intractable. The images and the language feed into the “epistemes” we construct and the discourses that are developed. For example, what began as a metaphor – the “body politic” – now figures as a literal, a physical site of racial, colonial, sexual, national and identarian contestation. And so it is too with other “structural” or founding analogies and metaphors that arise in our discourses and visualisations. The challenge to image the ‘figure of the corporation’ is met, in my reading, with *neo-iconic* (as distinct from iconoclastic or aniconic) panache by Norfolk in his Military Sublime imagery of the supercomputers and the satellite machinery examined here. He seems to be exploring in his visualisations a new kind of post-photographic, ironic iconicity, whatever he may disparagingly opine of conventional war photography.

In other words, by engaging the aesthetics of the sublime in figuring the corporation visually, Norfolk begins a fresh but not entirely new, I would argue, neo-iconic visual vocabulary of “war” and of Plexus. This neo-iconicity arises out of a distinctive and dissenting use of the formal, compositional and archetype-evocative aesthetics of the sublime. His images are not iconoclastic in the sense of a satirical or parodic re-representation of a traditional, hallowed icon. They are, indeed, not iconoclastic at all. Neither are they iconic, or a refusal thereof: aniconic. They are not close cousins of *The Day Nobody Died*. However, the aesthetics of the sublime is notwithstanding this harnessed to critical and deeply ironic effect. The neo-iconic dissent in this instance serves to shed light on corporate identity, and thus, concomitantly, to question our own “identity politics”, our (Western) subjectivity and the peculiarly enervated, twenty-first century “body politic”. Having explored the imagery along some of its diverse trajectories, we have reverted to the legal device nestled quietly at the misleadingly diffuse centre (in the sense of the cosmologist’s thesis that the “Big Bang” origins of the universe exist

“everywhere”) of a rabidly "neoliberal" kind of Western capitalist democracy, voraciously globalizing in its imperial-corporatist effects. As acerbically proffered by Roger Cotterrell, it is not the human person which is legally the most important person in capitalist democracy; it is the corporate person (supra. Cotterrell, 1992).

But in sinuous dissemblance of this stark *de facto* reality, the corporate body "unveils" itself in the body politic (the contestatory sexual, racial, national, identarian, post-political sprawling body) by insinuating itself at the very sex, skin, heart and soul of the “*bodies politic*”. As synecdochal observer and carrier of the corporate person/body, Norfolk’s neo-iconic Military Sublime demonstrates performatively what all dissenting and concerned image-making/using practices today ineluctably do: that their cultural-corporate assimilation/appropriation/marginalisation ensnares them in an artistic-medial-ethico-political performative paradox. We saw that with Broomberg and Chanarin, and here with Norfolk, the dissenting function of the visualisations acquires its critical energy not only in an aesthetics of the sublime, but through an overwhelmed neo-iconic aesthetics. In this valiant but uneven way it pierces - for a moment - the corporate veil¹²⁷, exposing the blunt instrument that is the corporate personality in whose beguiling penumbra we yield to “war” and to Plexus.

In the next chapter on the projects of Trevor Paglen, some of these issues and discursive themes are once again - directly, implicitly or obliquely - engaged, but with the significant difference that the projects we discuss are those made in the context of a very conspicuous desire of state-military power to conceal its activities. In other words, the "market desire" must, in these instances, hide its naked brutality, its "terror-democracy"¹²⁸ behind the fig-leaf of the democratic ideology of transparency, and the (citizen-participant) strategic narratives which legitimise and maintain (US) neo-colonial-imperial foreign policy. As importuned by Philip

Jones Griffiths and taken up with alacrity by Liam Kennedy, in the next chapter we shall “Follow the Americans” in our discussion of Paglen’s strategies of visualisation of “war” and Plexus.

CHAPTER FIVE

Visualising the Open/Public Secret: the Transparent Opacity of Plexus

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we turned towards the pointed probing of the non/inhuman powers of modern "war"/Plexus technology and its strategic visualisation. To do this, a focus on Norfolk's Military Sublime imagery led to a critical exploration of corporate personhood. An archival and co-creative exploration of Norfolk's strategies of visualisation of both the concrete material and the intangible, abstract conditions of possibility of (mediatized, perpetual, diffused/arrested) "war" in a global-corporatized, hypernetworked, digito-quantum era yielded, theoretically, "State-Corporate Exception" Trojan Horse of Plexus and "war." These ideas or insights will all be relevant for this chapter too, however they shall not be rehearsed here. They are to be considered as a predicative set of conceptual co-ordinates onto which the key terms adopted here are being grafted by way of exploring state-military secrecy. Apart from the Norfolk chapter, previous chapters will already have introduced terms and laid the groundwork for some of the issues explored here, bringing the narrative and theoretical arc of the thesis to the question of the *open/public* secret of power and its less visible or less public forms of violence.

In this chapter the imagery is once again non/inhuman, but the images are less "about" the technologies of warfare/statefare and more about ways of seeing that which is invisible or concealed, intangible or socially abstract. The aims of this chapter are to understand how Paglen's images function as visualisations of "war"/Plexus, and how their productive *dispositif*,

their system of sensible elements, from the image itself and its composition to the triadic relations between the image, image-maker and viewer serve as ensemble in the, pursuant to Ritchin, *co-creative* significance of the imagery, tropologically, politically and epistemologically. Further, the chapter seeks to contribute to the visual culture and cultural studies vocabularies and arguments in the emergent debate on the representation and visualisation of power and its socially abstract forms of violence, in the spirit of, for example, John Roberts and Liam Kennedy. To this end, the notions of the open/public secret, visibility/invisibility, transparency/opacity and secrecy/revelation have been identified as central to the emergent debates surrounding the post-photographic practices of those such as Paglen. These notions shall be critically examined in the course of the exploration of Paglen's imagery. Further, eventality or the Event is also once again harnessed, as is the notion of the Adornian "negative dialectic" as methodology of (counter)visualisation.

The title of the chapter indicates the overriding concern across all of Paglen's work: the making visible of what is either deliberately concealed, invisible to the naked eye, or not attended to by the broader public. Again, as with the other image-makers, Paglen eschews the human figure and like Norfolk, focuses his lens instead on the violent or sinister technologies of power. Paglen is the most internationally known of the image-makers discussed in this thesis and this chapter contextualises his strategies of visualisation by way of a preliminary general introduction to his array of activities/projects. The signal difference between his aesthetics of the sublime image-making and Norfolk's is that Paglen's objects are ones that are generally physically less visible or accessible than Norfolk's. Although Simon Norfolk does also to some extent seek to represent what is not publicly accessible/known about, such as Ascension Island and the secret surveillance activities of GCHQ,¹²⁹ Paglen's work is more systematic in this regard. Nonetheless, both their respective approaches to their subject matter and their aesthetics

share distinct characteristics, which point towards a certain kind of commonality in the way post-photographic image-makers are approaching the spaces and contexts of “war”/Plexus and its more socially abstract, less direct forms of violence.

Since his early work on the CIA’s rendition program and “torture taxis”¹³⁰ and the shoulder patches of quasi-secret organizations (Paglen, 2010) Paglen has attempted to reveal what he calls "black world" activities through his projects, typically investigating the state surveillance activities and the deployment of secret satellites, weaponized drones, secret military bases in the deserts of America, the undersea fibreoptic cables serving the NSA and GCHQ, and so forth.

Alongside these projects which have resulted in some of the compelling imagery we view here, Paglen has published several books and articles. Whilst all or any of the works (and the texts) are relevant to this topic, as with Broomberg and Chanarin and Simon Norfolk, it would be impossible to “do justice” to such an extensive oeuvre reflecting multifarious strategies of visualisation. So once again, for the purpose of obtaining purchase on what is most relevant for the thesis topic - the strategies of visualisation of “war”/Plexus - only a modest number of selected works have been chosen for their significance as "showcases" of Paglen's registers of art-documentary visualisation. The imagery partakes either of the “aesthetics of the sublime” or, I argue, a kind of "data aesthetics" in the visualisation of "war" and Plexus. All the imagery examined here is taken from the projects *Limit Telephotography*, *The Other Night Sky* and *What lies beneath*.

Paglen's investigations and visualisations take him into the dark heart of the US state-military and intelligence agency activity and its attendant technologies, to include the CIA, NSA, and

UK's GCHQ, in order to uncover and recover for the *public gaze* the activities and relational networks of this vast crepuscular "black world" (as he calls it) directing, influencing and subsuming official state policy (its strategic narratives) in the "war on terror". In this respect, he very much heeds the call of Philip Jones Griffiths mentioned in the last chapter and referred to by Liam Kennedy, to "Follow the Americans", (Kennedy, 2016), as what he does is clearly revelatory not only of these covert military-industrial activities, but also "speaks to" some of the neoliberal, imperialist, global-corporatist and manifest impact of American foreign policy.¹³¹ Jodi Dean succinctly encapsulates, not what Paglen's *mission* is, but rather the *effects* of the representational tactics that characterise his image-making and lend them their aesthetic and political power. Alluding to the intertwined aesthetic, evidential and tutelary aspects of his works, she writes that his work

[is] emblematic of a type of photography that *shifts between image and information*, between a seductive formalism and the *carefully controlled revelation of evidence*, strategically deploying visual and textual details in tandem so that the viewer becomes aware of what exists outside the confines of the frame.(Dean, 2016) (my italics)

In this description, we understand that whilst Paglen may indeed harness the 'seductive formalism' of an aesthetics of the sublime, he is also equally concerned to gather evidence and to inform the public, and he wishes to do so with empirical heft and qualitative probity. However, in the context of the paradox of democratic and ideological "transparency", what is evident/evidence is considered to be *prima facie* problematic, and Paglen's images are crafted to ostend immanently towards the problem of the evidence they themselves present. Unlike Broomberg and Chanarin, for example, Paglen does show the viewer something akin to a form of evidence. In this case, material but less accessible/tangible/visible evidence of the extent of the events/Event of Plexus. The 'representational limits of photography' that Dean identifies as intrinsic to the projects sees Paglen grappling with the tension between the political urge to reveal what he "sees" - literally and figuratively - and the intellectually self-reflexive

commitment to the unremitting questioning not only of what he sees, but what the image shows or ostends towards. The pre-framing, the framing, the "ex-framic" visualisations all function at intertwined but differentially operative levels in relation to evidence; its revelation and its contextualisation. One of the reasons why the revelation of the evidence is so 'carefully controlled' as Dean puts it, is to elicit in the viewer that questioning and critical attitude which Paglen himself brings to bear in his visualisations. The withholding too is a strategy of visualisation. It is, as it were, a metalevel methodology, one designed to suggest to the viewer how she might go about "seeing" state secrets. For example, in relation to the "open secret" of drone warfare in Pakistan, Afghanistan or Syria, this "invisible" aspect of post-political warfare actually receives abundant media coverage. But it is mediatized coverage; it is the publicly deigned "war."

However, although drone warfare is now publicly highly visible, the actual strikes planned and executed are always "officially secret." (De Angelus, 2015: 79). As Paglen interjects in an Art/Basel talk with Jenny Holzer in 2015, such phenomena are "something that you didn't know or hadn't seen because you don't know how to see it." (Paglen and Holzer, 2015) Art, he adds, "is part of creating the conditions by which one can even have a conversation in the first place" (Paglen and Holzer, 2015).

In terms of creating these conditions, Jane Wilkinson incisively identifies that the challenge now for art-documentary image-makers like Paglen and Norfolk, is to negotiate the tricky scopics of what can be shown because it is public/visible/representable and what cannot be shown because it is secret, in/visible, unrepresentable, but which nonetheless must be imaged. She incisively avers

This is the tension with which the photographic must contend: how to use visual aesthetics while at the same time articulating what is not immediately visible but is

still, of necessity, embedded within an image. What the process of photography renders opaque has as much to contribute to the meaning or import of images as what it renders visible. The paradoxical relationship between exposure and redaction, between visibility and invisibility, between the visual and the opaque, is one taken up by contemporary artists struggling to find ways to articulate the unseen or unpublicized networks of power that structure life under the state (Wilkinson, 2015).

This ‘paradoxical relationship between exposure and redaction, between visibility and invisibility, between the visual and the opaque’ accompanies almost all of Paglen’s works. Paglen does not like opacity, and goes about systematically trying to pierce its state-corporate-military veil. His projects respond to such strategic narrative framing and dissemblance of the state with a counter-visual tactic: his imagery instantiates in this way the kind of anti-colonial/imperial strategic counter-visualisation called for by Nicholas Mirzoeff (Mirzoeff, 2011).

The visual imagery which results from his clandestine evidence gathering works best when both the artistic and documentary aspects of their creation are considered together as a Rancièrian assemblage, or *dispositif*. Whether the visual component of Paglen’s work is a photographic image, a performance/documentary video and/or a physical installation, the visual, the textual and the performative combine in ways which are designed with deliberation to afford them a multi-pronged evidential and political weight. The aesthetic is, in this sense, that which is “in excess”, but is at the same time, not superfluous.

As Catherine de Lange succinctly summarises,

Paglen's hybridity mobilizes compound identities like the artist-scientist, the artist archivist, and the artist-cartographer in order to create spaces where the political interventions of art emerge through the encounter of aesthetic practice, investigative research, and epistemological self-reflexivity.’ (De Lange, 2012)

Paglen’s practice embraces the very technologies - visual, electronic-digital, mechanical - used by his research subject/objects, lending to his strategic counter-visualisation a kind of techno-

scientific state-of-the-art kinetic energy or silicon “street” dynamism. However, there are instances in which he also shares - to some extent - a more purist, traditional mode of photographic practice, such as Broomberg and Chanarin's or Simon Norfolk's painstakingly crafted "lomophotographic" analogue technology image-making practice. This is demonstrable in his attempts, for example, to develop a more sophisticated kind of telephotographic lens for taking time lapse photographs from a distance of many miles. For the *Limit Telephotography* series, Paglen is described on his website as employing ‘high-end optical systems to photograph top-secret governmental sites’; indeed, Paglen divulges that he himself adapted image-making equipment used in astronomy for the purposes of celestial imaging, to long-distance imaging over distances of around 40 miles, for example (Paglen and Holzer, 2015). These systems are now highly advanced, but the technology is essentially the same as that which has been used for decades within astronomy and cosmology.

In all the technical and visual challenges he sets himself, however, one he does not engage with is the framing of people. Paglen never depicts humans in his image-making. On the absence of people in his images, he explains,

I'm not providing a complete aesthetic of the invisible wars - there are other people that do speaking to humans much better than I do. My contribution is in *trying to look at structures*, trying to look at how we see the *infrastructure of war-making* that goes from the depth of the ocean to the stars in the night sky and is ever present and yet invisible. (De Angelus, 2015: 80) (my italics)

There is an intellectual, investigative and, moreover, epistemic quality to this “trying to look at structures [...] the infrastructure of war-making.” He is not inviting the viewer to see the effects of war but rather its conditions of possibility. His “aesthetic” in this sense strategically occludes or elides the human form. It thereby severs the ethico-affective relation in traditional war photography to suggest a responsive register that does not require *affect* as a trigger for indignation or compassion. There is thus a didactic and philosophical element to the image-

making; civic responsibility is given, in my reading, in the "transcendental idealist" spirit of Kant, the status of a "categorical imperative" (Kant, 2016[1785]; see also Paton, 1971), regardless of one's ability to feel compassion or see affect-evocative imagery which elicit a compassionate response. For Paglen, as for Kant, one's duty to one's "neighbour" is an ethically formal one, not borne out of affect or love, but out of a moral and intellectual conviction in the existence of universal categorical imperatives pertaining to the "equal" and universal "grievability" of life (to borrow a Butlerian phrase).

The paedagogical thrust of Paglen's mission was articulated in an interview in which he expressed the aim that he would like to teach/to show people how to recognise the reconnaissance satellites "going over London" (De Angelus, 2015), so that once one learns that this is happening on a continual basis, one begins to notice how many there are. This in turn impresses upon one the visible reality of a society at war with itself, and with others, acquiring that much more moral (and empirico-epistemic) force. There is also the thoroughly abstract, in/visible reality of a society at digital-virtual war with itself, closely related to the subject matter dealt with in this chapter, but to be distinguished in important ways from it: most significantly though in relation to the way in which visual culture itself has 'become detached from human eyes and has largely become invisible' (Paglen, 2016); in other words, visual culture itself as grounded in algorithmic abstraction. This latter aspect of Paglen's more recent ideas (outside of the period parameters of the research undertaken for this thesis) is dealt with by way of pointing towards further research in the Conclusion, but also partly touched upon in Chapter Six in relation to Barnard's drone vision imagery.

In this chapter the in/visible is still, ontologically-speaking, related in some form to that which hovers at the shifting interface between that extant, tangible reality which is hidden or secret,

and that which evades representation, not necessarily because it is concealed, but because of the socially abstract nature of its "ontology". There is still something that may, even marginally, be "imaged".

As is discussed below, because of the nature of what Paglen is imaging here (such as in the *Telephotography* series), the images of objects taken over distances of many miles are generally hazy and blurred, and the viewer cannot be entirely sure of what, if anything, she is looking at. This Paglen does leave for her "conspiratorially"(as it were) to interpret. She colludes with him in seeing what she should not, and collaborates with him in trying to understand what it is she is looking at and what the image does not show. In this process, the limits of visibility of "war" and Plexus are abstractly and/or conceptually "indexed" or "performed" by the limits of representation itself.

An illustration of this would be how the images of the secret satellite traces in *The Other Night Sky* do this by ostending towards the always-invisible contexts, structures, relations, systems and processes which give rise to the barely visible object in the stratospheric distance. The rocket, missile, UAV or stealth plane hovering at the orbital margins of ocular perception, at the knife-edge of public visibility, incongruously and tropologically like Petit-Jean's sardine can in Chapter One, assumes for the viewer a rhetorical role: as for Lacan and for Norfolk, that of the synecdoche, the part of "the whole" which represents by visible proxy the (unfathomable) "totality" of the horror of which it is a part (war/"war"/Plexus). Indeed, the limits of what can be furtively photographed territorially over long distances with a telephoto lens is a characteristic challenge Paglen set himself in his desert, military-black-site reconnaissance sojourns with his *Limit Telephotography* project upon which we focus next. These limits of representation are not philosophical or metaphysical in the first instance. There

are geophysical, actual impediments to seeing or having the "right to look"(Mirzoeff), and Paglen is determined to contest these technical and structural limits to seeing - and to the photographic representation of "war", power and its forms of violence as far as possible.

5.2 *Limit Telephotography*

Limit Telephotography as described on Paglen's official website is a series of images of

classified military bases and installations [...] located in some of the remotest parts of the United States, hidden deep in western deserts and buffered by dozens of miles of restricted land. Many of these sites are so remote, in fact, that there is nowhere on Earth where a civilian might be able to see them with an unaided eye.¹³²

Paglen explains the challenges of seeing, of the photographic visualisation of something so far away as follows:

Limit telephotography most closely resembles astrophotography, a technique that astronomers use to photograph objects that might be trillions of miles from earth. In some ways, however, it is easier to photograph the depths of the solar system than it is to photograph *the recesses of the military-industrial complex*. Between Earth and Jupiter (500 million miles away), for example, there are about five miles of thick, breathable atmosphere. In contrast, there are upwards of forty miles of thick atmosphere between an observer and the sites depicted in this series.¹³³(my italics)

This astrophysical dimension of the technology which he adapted to visualise 'the recesses of the military-industrial complex' indicates the technical, material contingency of his images: they are made not only at the limits of military-industrial visibility, but at the limits of technological visualisation. There are thus various levels of invisibility happening, and one of these has to do with the techno-scientific limitations (as yet) of the human-machine/cybernetic/biopowered capacity to see over and through space/s. A commercial drone could not be engaged for the *Limit Telephotography* project for obvious reasons, and so recourse had to be had to more traditional technologies of vision: the still, remote, immobile, surreptitious camera. Given that Plexus, in its state-corporate-military incarnation, is ambivalent towards the advanced digital technologies of vision accessible by its own citizens,

there is an ironic satisfaction in the counter-visual challenge "mounted" by way of old-fashioned analogue technology.

In order to produce images of these remote and hidden landscapes, therefore, some unorthodox viewing and imaging techniques are required', such as the fore-mentioned adapted astronomy lens Paglen devised which is normally used for deep space exploration.¹³⁴ Even with this sophisticated equipment, however, there are limits to what can be represented, and as mentioned above, the these images necessarily "withhold" as much as they represent.

Two photographs in this series are particularly striking: *Detachment 3, Air Force Flight Test Center #2, Groom Lake, NV*, 2008 [Figure 5.3], taken from a distance of 26 miles away, and '*White Sands Missile Range, Alamogordo, New Mexico*, 2012 [Figure 5.4], taken from a distance of 35 miles away. Both images have undoubted aesthetic appeal in a deceptively subdued, quiet, way, in the sense that there is actually little to see. But the effect of this "withholding" - a matter too of the practical limitations of the lenses' power of resolution at such a distance - is to pique the viewer into a thirst to know more. Apart from the prefatory text, the captions themselves provide only the barest description of the black site being depicted, its whereabouts (which desert), and the distance away from the site of the image-maker. An internet browse of the first site, the Air Force Flight test centre in Groom Lake (otherwise known by pseudonyms such as Area 51, Dreamland, and Paradise Ranch) (Patton, 1998), reveals that there is a dispute over whether the Nevada site was ever classified or not, or so secret as has been claimed. Conspiracy theories abound as they will, and chief amongst these was that it was a place where the US military were housing/working on alien aircraft - UFOs - and that there were underground tunnels where they were hiding extra-terrestrials (Patton, 1998). According to Adam Curtis in the documentary film

Hypernormalisation (Curtis, 2016), this was an enabling myth for the CIA and the military as it gave the public a ready explanation for that which they preferred to keep secret.¹³⁵ The CIA was finally compelled to “give up” the erstwhile secrecy surrounding the site in July 2013, following a Freedom of Information Act request filed in 2005. It eventually 'publicly acknowledged the existence of the base for the first time, declassifying documents detailing the history and purpose of Area 51'.¹³⁶

However, this does not necessarily mean that there are no longer any secret activities being undertaken there; after all, one assumes that the CIA exploits where it can the adage that “the best place to hide is in plain sight”. The state-military apparatus now had the default benefit of a pretence at public openness, feeding in its own way the handy myth of democratically accountable transparency. Long before Paglen got there though, others were setting their sights on Groom Lake. One learns from Phil Patton in his richly descriptive and fascinating account of his and others’ attempts to find out what was going on there, that Groom Lake, set in 4,742 square miles of restricted airspace and nearly four million acres of bombing range, was set up in the Cold War era as a space to build and test spy planes and stealth fighters. He remarks of the name “Dreamland” that it was an irresistible appellation, as

"Dreamland"[...] was this airspace that made it special, the airspace where strange craft appeared and disappeared like whims and suspicions, where speculations like airships glowed and hovered, then zipped off into the distance. For years it had remained virtually unknown to the public that paid for it, its very existence denied by the government agencies and military contractors that ran it. It was illegal for those who worked inside to speak of it. And fighter pilots flying out of nearby Nellis Air Force Base were forbidden to cross into the Dreamland airspace. They called it "the Box," and if they strayed into it they were interrogated and grounded. (Patton, 1998)

What seems undeniable is that it was and still is highly inaccessible to the general public. It is essential for the viewer to be apprised of these details if she is properly to appreciate what Paglen’s images seek to show. This information both informs - in the above-mentioned tutelary fashion - and impacts upon the scrutiny of Paglen’s images, requiring a highly active and

participatory, if uneasy, viewing; they certainly evoke a sense of the sinister, the dark underbelly of “transparent, accountable” and militarized democracy. And Paglen does not countenance any passivity on the part of the viewer in her confrontation with this "abysmal" reality.

The first image [Figure 5.3] has been taken under cover of night is composed in obedience to the traditional artistic “rule of thirds”; Paglen has situated the orange-yellow glow of lights and the shadowy structures thereby revealed in the not-quite-pitch-black, dispersed-light-haloed landscape and sky at around the bottom third of the frame. Barely hinted in the distant background is what must be a mountain range; vaguely visible, depending on the angle/resolution of one’s monitor. It is a beautiful picture; one which lends persuasive force to the perception of Paglen's imagery as partaking of an aesthetics of the sublime. The colour contrast between the narrow, horizontal, muted candescence of the site and surrounding tenebrism of deep desert is visually appealing, the dim adumbration of a mountain range is romantically compelling, and the sense of silence, of distance, of mystery. If the viewer were not provided with a context, an embedding narrative, she could not be blamed for finding sombre solace in such an aesthetically seductive image.¹³⁷

Paglen, aware of the fascination of this image and the series of which it is a part, insists with apt resonance in respect of the rumours that circulated around this site, that his visual language is the opposite to that of the embedded journalist, saying that it is “more akin to UFO photography” (De Angelus, 2015: 82). He distances his own visual evidence-gathering activity from that of the fact-finding journalist, insisting on its other-worldliness; the image is imbued with a sense of mystery, and Paglen, whilst he wishes to reveal, to expose, to show/ostend to nasty state secrets is clearly reluctant to have his images regarded as denotative

demystifications, pictorial resolutions, as it were. He espouses the precision of thorough investigation and relishes the empirical work that is required to flush out the evidence, to visualise what we are not supposed to see, but not at the cost of fore-closing certainty. In respect of his project of tracking classified satellites (*The Other Night Sky*; more below), he calls this “minoritarian empiricism” (Paglen, 2013). We see below how painstaking is his research on the satellites he visualises; his need to know exactly what is going on is unremitting and the aesthetic and investigatory-journalist impulses and modes of practice seem to be in productive tension with one another in this image. It seems to be a tension that typically accompanies post-photographic image-making. Norfolk, Clark and Barnard too are concerned to create well-composed images (that is, aesthetically compelling, whether they partake of the sublime or not) and at the same time to enlighten and inform viewing publics. Paglen’s theoretical reflections on his image-making praxis will attract further scrutiny below, but for now, we return to his images to contemplate further how they function as strategies of visualisation.

White Sands Missile Range, Alamogordo, New Mexico [Figure 5.4] is even more evocative of the transparency/secretcy, or opacity/visibility paradox in its blinding effulgence, its opaque luculence. The image depicts the palest grey-tinged sky above the White Sands Missile Range (WSMR), in which something we cannot see is hidden in plain sight (that is, within the frame of an image). Looking at this image, what do you see? This photograph barely depicts anything other than haziness; if the digital viewer tilts her computer screen back slightly she may make out an entity of some sort in the centre of the image, with uneven edges. Otherwise a cursory viewing shows just a cataract-milky surface, with a very vague horizontal line transversing the two inchoate halves of the picture. Sand and sky lit up by an atomic explosion? But in respect of this last image, what we can glean, again from an internet search is that Alamogordo is the largest rocket and atomic bomb testing range in the United States, contiguous with the

McGregor Range Complex at Fort Bliss which, spanning an area of 27,173 square miles, is larger than Switzerland.¹³⁸ Paglen had to work with accessible/extant survey maps and other cartographic tools to "draw" by inference the blanked out spots (Paglen, 2009). In other words, he had to map the physical limits of visibility of what he refers to as the military-industrial complex, specifically. Within these geophysical constraints, the question of visibility/transparency, knowledge/illusion thus acquires a supplementary intensity. His "knowledge" of what he sees/visualises is as uncertain as ours; for he sees - as remote witness - only what he hears/imagines he sees. The challenge is one of a telephotographic framing of the *limits* of what can be seen such as both to ostend towards the limits and what lies beyond them, and towards that which can *more easily* be seen, and which comprises the metonymic, public window onto the "whole" black site, and its place within the state-corporate-military mode of Plexus production.

What we *can* "see" in this particular image is either a rocket or a nuclear bomb being tested in the vastness of the desert. One must bear in mind, of course, that most viewers encountering Paglen's work are probably going to do so via the digital interface, and what they see or imagine will also vary to some degree depending upon the focus/pixellation count their viewing platform is capable of. The print photograph exhibited in a museum is also another "platform", and produced at the high resolution required of a gallery may well reveal something yet invisible at a plasma-screened viewing. Notwithstanding this, the image in its digital incarnation is a mysterious one, "revealing" little to the viewer, it seems, apart from distance, public inaccessibility and state-military secrecy. The image proffers little art-documentary "knowledge" as such. In distinct tension with the tutelary narrative he often provides, in respect of this image, Paglen's caption tells us where it is but does not elaborate further as to what it is – if anything – he is imaging. Is it the stratospheric site of past and current missile and bomb

testing, or is it both that and a current testing event taking place; the testing of a new Lockheed Martin/Halliburton/Raytheon/Northrop Grumman-built nuclear device, UAV, jet or rocket? We don't quite know, and this, it seems, is *the point* of the image. In short, Paglen is not *showing* us evidence of open/public secret military activity, but is rather *ostending* (that is, *not pointing*) towards something that we suspect might be "happening" but which we cannot see, do not know about and so cannot prosecute, arraign, protest against, or make a Freedom of Information Act request in respect thereof.

It is a characteristic example of the 'carefully controlled revelation of evidence' of which Dean remarks. The viewer is both invited to look, but to question what she sees, to (en)counter what is visualised, and to enquire further into what is not. Paglen sets up a dialectic of revelation and withholding in his image such that the viewer is compelled to question not only the visual(ised) evidence but to image-ine by way of the (counter) visualisation that which is withheld from the frame. The eventuality of what is taking place in the image/frame is overshadowed, I argue (or rather, over-looked), by the larger Event - in this case, of the inquisitorial power of vision.

We have seen that this kind of strategic visualisation of revelation through withholding is a deliberate, calculated strategy of Paglen's: he has thought about and developed his own aesthetic vocabulary, which he maintains in an interview with Julian Stallabrass is performative of the Adornian negative dialectic. Although he alludes to *The Other Night Sky* (below) it is worth quoting him in full at this point as to how he conceives of his own image-making praxis theoretically/epistemologically:

I tend towards images that manifest this dialectic. Images that (1.) make a truth claim ('here's X secret satellite moving through X constellation', for example); (2) immediately and obviously contradict that truth claim ('you believing that this white streak against a starry backdrop is actually a secret satellite instead of a scratch on the film negative is a matter of belief'); (3) suggest a form of practice that could give rise to such an image ('if it is true that this is a secret satellite, then

there's a whole lot more going on behind this image'); (4) suggest all of the above as an allegory for something about 21st -century images, knowledge, practice, aesthetics and politics [...] its just a loose way I use to think about what it is I am doing. (Stallabrass, 2013:213).

By eliciting self-doubt in the viewer, he is then able to suggest to her that she categorically must not take "the evidence of her senses" at face value; that she must interrogate what she see, how she sees it, and draw her own inferences concerning what she does not see/may be there but concealed/may not be there at all. We see an aesthetic-epistemics at work in such a strategy of visualisation. Paglen seems with his images to perform a Bergeresque lesson of sorts; he invites us to scrutinise and question our own power of vision; to extend our vocabulary for the articulation of "merely" looking (although we know that seeing/looking is never simply passive), into the realm of visualisation "beyond" what can be physically documented, that is, what we re-cognise in (literally as well as figuratively) further and deeper context, perspective, and relations of seeing "outside the frame".

This practice of image-making/viewing involves the viewer in a kind of Freudian *Fort-Da* ("peek-a-boo") game: now you see (me) / now you don't. Freud's psycho-paradigmatic observation of how we come to bear ludically the absence of the (m)Other, and thereby recognise our "self"-hood, is analogous to the strategic visualisation adopted here: Do you see (it) /do you not? Is it there/is it not? The viewer is led into a disorienting questioning of the "evidence of her senses" - what it means to see (something) or not, and what to "make of" this visibility/invisibility. This too is a ludic encounter of sorts, insofar as the aesthetic opposes itself to the workaday, the functional. The aesthetic intervention in our understanding/knowledge of the society in which we live is, of course, nothing new and indeed inheres in much artistic creation; it is the nature of these images though, the sheer scale of the structures, systems and forms of violence to which they ostend, which lends them in my view a very contemporary and urgent edge.

This is not the way indexicality works in the traditional semiotic, socio-linguistic or art historical sense. The shift is a qualitative and conceptual one, and axiomatic to the shift from a notion of visual representation to one of visualisation; that is, from one which is primarily or purely concerned with the image - the "product" - to one which views the image as but one element of the broader activities and modes surrounding of image-making - the "processes". This distinction here is dismantled, or, if you want, visually deconstructed. It is the proposition here that there is, from this perspective, a congruence or contiguity of sorts between the *index as abstract pointer/ostender* in post-photographic image-making and the increasingly *socially abstract nature of power and its forms of violence* in a "war" and Plexus global dispensation.

Image-making practices such as Paglen's are working at the conceptual frontier of this dispensation in which hyperconnectivity, media, "Big Data" and the ever more abstruse financial instruments of corporate power are weaponized by the state and its intelligence and military apparatuses. The question in such studies of the visualisation of twenty-first century power and its forms of violence to be asked is then: how does this "abstract indexicality" theorised here function through the imagery produced by such strategic visualisation? This is the kind of enquiry - problem/question - which it is hoped this thesis can contribute to the emergent debates within critical visual culture and related discourses. The contribution resides in the question, not the/an answer. In other words, by way of co-creative engagement with the projects of Paglen, an attempt is made to update, enhance and nuance the problem-formulation surrounding the visualisation of power and violence.

What is also arguably not without significance in these images is that they ostend towards the contradiction in, and performative paradox of US foreign policies and its surrounding strategic

narratives on the one hand, and the persistence of, for example, a nuclear weapons programme. Are nuclear weapons still being tested at the White Sands Missile Range? (WSMR). Paglen's image subtly plants this question in the mind of the (contemplative) viewer. In their environmental and economic impact report (which makes for fascinating reading), *Border Research* does not indicate definitively whether atomic testing takes place, observing simply that 'Today, WSMR is managed by the US Army as a military research, testing, and support facility with large expanses of land and unlimited top-to-bottom airspace for the testing of the nation's largest military weapons systems (Border Research, 2015: 29). One of the little historical pieces of information it proffers is that the Holloman airbase at WSMR was used to test the nation's most advanced fighter aircraft, to include the F-177A Nighthawk "Stealth" fighters, the product of Lockheed's secret Skunkworks program.' (Border Research, 2015: 28) Paglen, instead of spelling this information out in any accompanying text, seems pointedly, perhaps tactically, to delimit his own visualisation to the register of the sublime, framing his material in alignment with his "more akin to UFO photography" self-characterisation of his image-making practice. This is where oblique ostension rather than a denotative pointing - suggestion rather than constation - is the visual tactic¹³⁹ instantiating a philosophy of abstract indexicality.

The invisibility or abstract nature of aspects of Plexus is mirrored by the visual deficiency of what is (made) visible in our images. Philipp Jeandré writes of Trevor Paglen's visual politics, that he generates an 'oscillation between visibility and invisibility [...] which

[...] paradigmatically problematises the contemporary political significance of making visible [...] the political efficacy of [Paglen's] photographic practices emerges from a *productive uncertainty rather than investigative disclosure*.¹⁴⁰ (my italics)

The 'oscillation between visibility and invisibility', the 'political significance of making visible' (or not) would also, to expand upon this perspective, gesture towards a certain

scepticism regarding transparency and its ideological uses. The lack which can be perceived in the visible visualisation, or the visualisation of the visible is an implicit indictment of the liberal democratic ideology of transparency (Dean, 2016).

In other words, the trick is in finding the “optimum” oscillatory balance in order to do both the aesthetic work and the “visionary” or critical work without imposing a narrative (or indexically framed object/image). This conception of a visual politics puts one in mind, once again, of the postmodern critique of "grand narratives" by Jean-François Lyotard (Lyotard, 1984) who theorised these as pernicious institutional and ideological forms of knowledge which required committed counteracting.

One such way of doing this is to be suggestive, rather than constatory. If transparency is the ideological grand narrative of capitalist democracy (according to Jodi Dean: see Biebricher and Celikates, 2012), then it follows that we must be cautious about the notion of transparency, itself inextricably intertwined with that of semiotic indexicality. As quoted above, ‘What the process of photography renders opaque has much to contribute to the meaning or import of images as what it renders visible. (Wilkinson, 2015) Whilst not having considered social abstraction and indexicality in themselves as central categories as we do here, this statement reflects the general thrust of the current scholarly reception of Paglen's image-making as an ‘oscillation between visibility and invisibility’. It is a fair assessment of the strategies of visualisation at work, and constitutes a productive point of embarkation for further reflection on post-photographic practices in general.

It is an effective strategy of visualisation, for it invites the viewer to look actively, to collaborate with the image/image-maker. Art as aesthetic consolation or awe-inspiring icon is eschewed in

favour of art-documentary as dialogical interface. But if there is one criticism to be made about such a *dispostif*, it reverts to the remark above that Paglen has chosen not to mention certain facts about WSMR. In spite of their relative accessibility to the viewer, the one aspect elided is that of the corporate identities of the military-industrial behemoths who are there on the black sites each day, alongside the military. The relationships are so fused that they have the character of self-evident fact to the concerned/critical viewer. It is self-evident that the arms industry researches, designs and manufactures weapons, but it is one of those self-evident facts that allows the corporate - that is, private - nature of the power at the core of the "perpetual war" of the state to continue lucratively behind the corporate veil. When the US senate votes against joining the UN Arms Trade Treaty (Cox, 2013) designed to regulate the global trade in arms, one can be reasonably sure that this was not "purely" for the stated purpose of upholding the Second Amendment of the US Constitution : for much the same reason that - even with thousands of innocent children dying in America each year as a result of gun violence - no challenge can be brooked to the sporting and highly profitable interests of the National Rifle Association. It is simply not in the interests of government to erode corporate freedom of contract.

We need look no further than DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) which was first set up as ARPA by Eisenhower in 1958 for the purposes of investing in the development of advanced technologies beyond the immediate needs of the military to appreciate the point made above. It is a simple fact that the techno-scientific ambition and breadth of DARPA's myriad projects could not possibly be undertaken without corporate collaboration across the board. The projected budget allocated by US congress for 2018 is \$3.17 billion, up from £2.97 in 2017.¹⁴¹ The bulk of this pays for corporate involvement in all manner of services and activities, hardware and software.¹⁴² After the discussion in Chapter One

concerning complicity and especially reflections upon Arendt's views on this notion, it is not one that will be rolled out again here, but needless to say, what DARPA does as an agency of the US Department of Defense – or the UK government and BAE with its ongoing and highly lucrative arms trade with human rights-violating, Yemen-bombing Saudi Arabia - is not something that can be compartmentalised away from the daily and mundane business of the common realm; it is very much at its heart. There where Home is. There are untold numbers of "ordinary" people, citizens, working directly or indirectly for both the state and the corporate sphere in the delivery of all aspects of these activities and projects. This is where the abstract indexicality of some of Paglen's dissident image-making fails to fulfil its political potential.

Notwithstanding this, if we let what we do know about Alamogordo, and what (we think) we see in Paglen's imagery to encourage us to probe more deeply, we might reflect not only upon the elided corporate "persons" who do the mutually profitable bidding of the state-military, but also how the state-"corporate person"-military triumvirate work in concert to resist or disregard key advisory opinions of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and laws of war and conflict, and weapons law.¹⁴³ For example, the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons (to which no nation state is bound) is blithely ignored by the US in spite of its own foreign policy dictating the complete nuclear disarmament of "rogue" states or those perceived to threaten US interests.(Clapham et al., 2014: 282) With audacious hypocrisy Alamogordo can test any atomic bomb it likes whilst the US administration is asymmetrically admonishing and imposing sanctions on others in respect of their own nuclear capabilities. By Paglen's *Alamagordo* image faintly revealing a trace of nuclear testing, it more significantly ostends towards the this very public/open secret of Plexus, whilst it masquerades as a morally superior democratic hegemon. At least one of

the core ingredients in the glue of this hegemony is corporate personhood, the "coal face" of which is neatly obscured by the corporate veil.

In the light of this it would be fair to find that Paglen's images too have once again "permitted" to escape the companies which occupy the black sites and make the stealth fighters, the nuclear devices, drone swarms and secret satellites. Unlike Norfolk, he is not concerned to name them. But this is tantamount to an unfortunate elision of their role, and the corporate behemoth is thereby afforded by state proxy a species of visual or aesthetic indemnity for its gargantuan role in the increasing militarization and weaponization of space and society, and the "post-political," indiscriminate slaughter of so many. However, an artist cannot be accused of a "dereliction of (civic) duty" in the same way that a journalist might. The tactical retreat into the comfortably open paradigm of the aesthetic ensures that such image-making is also "indemnified", has "limited liability" for what it omits from the frame. It is the "nature" of art. This is not what is challenged here; that is the territory the "traditional" Frankfurt School politics-aesthetics debate as inaugurally articulated by, inter alia, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Bertoldt Brecht. Rather, what is suggested here is that if one as image-maker/user does "speak" directly to power and the public through one's visualisations, then it is only the sorts of challenges here which can broaden the debate and keep the dialogue open. It is in this regard that, where the image-maker occludes, the viewer must assist the image as agent to extend its ostensive power as far as it can ethico-politically go. Again, pursuant to Ritchin, the political viewer has a constitutively co-creative or critically collaborative role to play.

We now turn to the ocean depths and the geostationary belt to see what Paglen's other visualisations tell us about Plexus. Two surveillance topography projects of Paglen's will be critically discussed; one in which the visualisation happens on the sea bed, and other where it

happens many miles above the earth in the so-called geostationary belt. These are, respectively, *What lies beneath* and *The Other Night Sky*.

5.3 *What lies beneath*

In respect of the project dealt with above, *Limit Telephotography*, Paglen had to reappropriate the high-powered telescopic technology used in astrophotography to be able to “see” anything at all in the distant landscape. Nothing could be seen with the naked eye.

In *What lies beneath*, once again nothing can be seen with the naked eye, as it is sequestered on the ocean floor. The actual, rather than metaphorical, invisibility of a crucial enabling part of the NSA/GCHQ surveillance apparatus, its undersea secret fibreoptic cables, is literally and figuratively (in the denotative and connotative senses, respectively) visualised in this work.

But as with the high-powered magnification deployed above, here too some relatively old-fashioned technology is draughted in to overcome the physical resistance of the state to being seen: boat, wetsuit, aqualung and underwater camera. The means of production here are basic, and the approach is that of a submarine forensic investigator or a marine archaeologist. It is no sea burial, shipwreck or marine life that is being investigated, though; it is the intercontinental submarine infrastructure of the internet, and accordingly, the state/intelligence apparatus. Here the medium of distance and secrecy is not cyberspace, it is the sea, more precisely, the seabed and its ancient, fathomless and funereal environs.¹⁴⁴

Like Norfolk, in this project Paglen’s modus operandi involves directing his lens (and his investigative focus) at the technology/communications/arsenal/equipment - the tangible, physical, material structures and means - whereby these activities take place. It is through this watery, material realm that he visualises the opaque im-material one, that is, the invisible,

clandestine or surreptitious surveillance or state-corporate information gathering activities, whether in the ultimate interests of "war" and power, or private commercial profit.

In an interview with Liz Jobey (Jobey, 2015), Paglen tells us that for *What lies beneath*, he excavated around 10 undersea internet cables tapped by the NSA (National Security Agency) and GCHQ (Government Communication Headquarters)¹⁴⁵, locating their "chokepoints," which are 'where internet fibre optic cables are tapped for access to international communications data.'(Jobey, 2015) The project was conceived during Paglen's work as cinematographer for a Laura Poitras film called *CitizenFour*, detailing Snowden's revelations as he made them. As described by Mallonee

Among the many things Snowden disclosed was the fact the NSA and others tap these undersea cables. Paglen spent two years studying the leaked data, cross-checking it with information gleaned from telecom documents, maritime charts, and topographical maps. He also searched FCC filings and other regulatory documents, correlating information with the NSA documents. It required a bit of detective work to sort it all out, because the agency often uses codewords. (Mallonee, 2016)

He painstakingly located these chokepoints, then, with the aid of shipping and other maps, pinpointing the precise areas off the coasts of New York's Long Island, Florida, Hawaii, South America, the middle of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, Guam, and the south coast of England (where the GCHQ chokepoint lies just off Bude)[Figures 5.5 and 5.6].

Watching the video of *What lies beneath* which accompanies the images, it is undeniable that what we see is not in the first instance a figuratively or tropically framed image; it is rather something "actually in the world", figurally (as opposed to figuratively) depicted. Filmed off US and UK coastal waters, the video of the excavation dives is thus somewhat different in style and aesthetic from, say, a Jacques Cousteau or David Attenborough documentary. There is "nothing" to see. The deep seabed-scape is, with the exception of some rather put-upon denuded

corals, drab seaweed and indifferent fish, mostly somewhat dreary. The barnacled cables are located and filmed, the endless miles of them half-buried in the over-dredged, industrialized zones of the world's oceans.

One of the images in the series is a maritime map of the Straits of Florida, on which the viewer sees marked by red spots what appear (within the limitations of an online viewing) to be the chokepoints spoken of by Paglen, which are either on the ocean bed itself or buried under the beach [Figure 5.7]. Layered on these maps, Paglen says, are 'various internal NSA documents from the Snowden archive, corporate documents, additional photographs of the site, and other materials.'¹⁴⁶ The images which adorn the maps are of the above-ground facilities of surveillance; the eerily physical places, the buildings in which the tapped data is sifted through by the NSA. One of the most engaging assemblages to view is one online at *Dis Magazine*. (Paglen, undated; see references). It consists of one map and beside it an image of the beach featured on that map [Figures 5.8 and 5.9]. The map, which is the base document, is a publicly accessible one from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Working ostensibly with Snowden and Wikileaks material, Paglen has provided digital annotations to the overlaid text and images for the online viewer, who is instructed to use the control tab and to mouse-scroll over the blocks for more information. Such an interaction with the image reveals several interesting facts, most significant for our purposes is the direct corporate involvement in state surveillance.

Scrolling over a sand-coloured rectangle around the middle of the image, one learns that the NSA has long partnered with telecommunications companies such as Verizon and AT&T to execute its activities. There is a long list of international telecommunications companies they have used and the names of cables they have tapped. Further, a block to the right of that reveals

that it is an excerpt from an NSA internal document entitled "Where We Are", also 'detailing a list of tapped cables and the NSA's corporate partners, including REMEDY (British Telecom) and DACRON (Verizon Business).' (*Dis*) We also learn that the NSA and GCHQ both launched a cyberattack against a Belgian telecommunications company, Belgacom. Of this, Paglen says, 'the transnational nature of telecommunications infrastructure creates a deterritorialized means through which states may exert power.' (*Dis*) Any critique along the lines of the foregoing in respect of his other works is definitively rejoined by *What lies beneath*. If we didn't already know or suspect the same, these and other annotations leaves the viewer in no doubt as to the transnational corporate involvement in state surveillance and media-corporate user-profiling. In slickly curated contrast is the accompanying picture of Mastic beach on a fair day with little clusters of people in bathing attire sunning themselves, splashing about, enjoying their leisure atop and directly proximate to the "chokepoints" of the surveillance cables of which they (we) are quite oblivious. The *dispositif* is a mordant state-corporate showcase of Plexus.

Part of the *dispositif*, as with *Limit Telephotography*, was also a physical, technical exercise. Paglen learnt how to scuba dive and work with an underwater camera to take photographs and video footage of these cables and their tapping chokepoints (Mallonée, 2016). He also describes the process of realising just how 'material' and 'sited' state surveillance is. Paglen says of his experience of reading NSA documents that he had been able to access, saying

When we're talking about the internet infrastructure people may talk about the 'cloud' or 'cyberspace', but these are literally mystifying metaphors. It seems like the Internet is everywhere and nowhere at the same time - and even though we experience the Internet that way, that is not how it is built; when we look at the NSA documents, they describe an Internet that is very material and very sited in very specific kinds of places (De Angelus, 2015:79).

Paglen, in a seeming contradiction to his own insistence above that his work is 'more akin to UFO photography,' is suspicious of these 'mystifying metaphors' and clearly finds them of little use in the actual "seeing" and attendant understanding how these phenomena work. And

the way they work starts off with how and where they hook into the communications infrastructure, in this case, on the deep ocean floor, spanning seas and continents. He points out that these submarine images of the cables are not the kinds of images normally associated with modern surveillance (Jobey, 2015). The images depart from the habitual "view" of surveillance and show another, less familiar but fundamentally and materially constitutive "face" of surveillance.

This defamiliarization, it is proposed here, is "deployed" as fact or condition of representation rather than a strategy of visualisation *per se*: the collaborative acts of planning, investigation, calculation and journeying into earth's oceans are part of the Rancièrian system of the sensible elements of representation, involving more of the human sensorium than the power of the gaze alone. The *dispositif* is once again an assemblage of performance, activity, process and product decentring sight and undermining an ocularcentric approach to witnessing and evidence. It insists upon a less hierarchical notion of visualisation whereby seeing is but one sensorial means of acquiring critical, self-reflexive, evidence-based visual knowledge of power and its forms of violence. It is a representational style one might – in contrast to an aesthetics of the sublime - call an aesthetics of information, or “data aesthetics,”¹⁴⁷ features of which is shared with that of Edmund Clark and Lisa Barnard (Chapter Six). The project thus shares with more empirically/scientifically or mathematically based disciplines a drive to represent/visualise abstract/complex information visually. The forensic and archaeological nature of the visualisation in *What lies beneath* indexes the very Real but concealed materiality of state-corporate power and its socially abstract forms of violation/violence. There is both literally and figuratively Big Data at stake here, for the surveillance state and for the critical spectator. The project is thus performative of a kind of data aesthetics that summarily ditches the aesthetics of the sublime and instead, ironically, joins forces with techno-science in its strategic

visualisation. It is, as I argue here, a strategically significant instantiation of the post-photographic visualisation of modern power and its forms of violence.

In her review of Nicole Starosielki's book, *The Undersea Network (Sign, Storage, Transmission)*, Nathalie Maréchal quotes the author, who writes

[...] in order to understand the geography of signal traffic, we must move beyond network topology, the observation of the geometric or mathematical distribution of nodes and links, to consider *network topography, the way that infrastructures are embedded into existing natural and cultural environments*. (Maréchal, 2015) (my italics)

Much of Paglen's work heeds the call to attend to topography, not only in respect of networks, but also the militarization and weaponization of space, as we have seen above. These environments are no longer so "natural" as Starosielski implies though; they are "always already,"¹⁴⁸ political through their colonisation by power at least from the advent of telegraphy, with space itself a secret-satellite-strewn "site" of nation-state contestation and very far from neutral. National "airspace" and "territorial waters" have long been transnationally, globally seeded with technologies of surveillance and espionage, and like the amateur "citizen astronomers" around the world of which Greg Roberts (below) is one committed example, Paglen's performative visualisations constitute a theatre of observation in which the viewer is invited to take part. She is enjoined to discover, monitor and visualise for herself the suboptical places of modern globalized warfare, that intractable, attritional state of "perpetual war" which is both at Home and Elsewhere. Post-photographic intervention as a theatre of observation paves the way for the citizen witness to extend her (counter-)visualisation beyond war and power to "war" and Plexus, beyond the raw violence of conflict and social injustice to its less visible or inaccessible, more socially abstract conditions of possibility.

5.4 *The Other Night Sky*

In this work, Paglen does not question the value of making the invisible visible, or rendering yet more transparent that which prefers the crepuscular cover of depth, darkness, or distance. As we shall see in the last part of this chapter though, he does problematise the process. But on the face of it, the explicit aim of *The Other Night Sky*, Paglen's website tell us, is 'to track and photograph classified American satellites, space debris and other obscure objects in Earth orbit.'¹⁴⁹ Apart from telescopic technology and large format cameras, Paglen uses observational data gathered by an international collaborative network of amateur satellite observers - our "citizen astronomers" - to track and visualise these entities.¹⁵⁰ Our attention, our gaze zooms outwards and above in a stratospheric direction, to the traces of "secret moons" in the contemporary night sky. In an interview with Emma De Angelis, Paglen apprises the interested viewer of the aims and capabilities of the US's stealth satellites, which can apparently go around orbit activating and deactivating other countries' satellites without them knowing they are being attacked. (De Angelis, 2015: 79-80) And in respect of the often invisible nature of the "war on terror", he says that 'my job has been to try to generate images that help us learn how to see those invisible wars.' (De Angelis, 2015: 82)

The five images in this series that are available to view on this website are beautiful and mysterious, even with their explanatory text. Of the first image, taken with time lapse photography, we see a series of lines drawn diagonally across a blue-black night sky [Figure 5.10]. These are the traces of the geo-orbital path of the secret satellites. Hovering over the image with the mouse reveals a further narrative about what the lines mean and how they were identified. One of the lines belongs to 'PAN', which could be a reference to the Greek God, to the acronym for its launch patch called "Palladium at Night" or simply, as some have suggested,

to "Pick A Name." ¹⁵¹ In any event, this satellite is, we learn, unique among classified entities because it has not been "claimed" by any intelligence or military agency. It is one of those open secrets that (post-)Cold War espionage satellites continue to exist and to multiply, and amateur watchers have learnt how to identify their likely provenance. This satellite is presumed by the observers most likely to be a CIA satellite.

The other images are as beautiful and even more mysterious as they bear no digital annotation apart from their names, such as *Dead Military Satellite (DMSP 5D-511) Near the Disc of the Moon* [Figure 5.11], which show the crest of the moon against black space, and in an online viewing of which we do not see the dead military satellite. *Keyhole 12-3/IMPROVED CRYSTAL Optical Renaissance Satellite* [Figure 5.12] shows fiery yellow-red-orange cloud-like formations on which is very faintly visible a few specks and a short straight line in the centre, which may be the time-lapse trace of the satellite. In terms of their visuality, they easily impart a sense of the aesthetic sublime. In contrast to *What lies beneath*, these images are highly aestheticised compositions, and as with Norfolk, openly suggestive of the monstrous Sublime.¹⁵² The aesthetic dimension of the images belies their sinister function, and this irony is fitting for what Paglen calls the "unattributable" nature of modern warfare (Paglen, 2013: 207-219) where hostilities are not on a visible battlefield or even airspace, but much more remote, concealed and unquantifiable. Unattributable warfare is represented/representable by, for example, surveillance satellites put into geostationary orbits that are untraceable by radar or telescope because of the stealth design technology. Stealth is pivotal. Ironically, the reason one knows about the stealth is that the state-military investment in the research, design, manufacture and testing of stealthy war machines is not a secret. It is possible to acquire some of information via either DARPA¹⁵³ itself or the various research, defence procurement and military and aerospace technology journals, and related publicity, about these activities.¹⁵⁴

DARPA's website under the 'satellites' tag provides very general and limited information though, primarily about its development of new, reusable and more cost-effective satellite launch vehicles (DARPA, posted 17 September 2013).¹⁵⁵ To go sleuthing around for information about classified satellites one has to, like Paglen, delve into and collaborate with the fore-mentioned global amateur community of secret satellite observers, such as Greg Roberts in Cape Town (Paglen, 2013). Through these space analysts' observations of geostationary satellites (which are thousands of kilometres above the average communications satellite and often launched clandestinely into orbit by states), Paglen learnt that DARPA had for quite some time been developing secret micro-satellites as part of the Micro-Satellite Technology Experiment Program (MiTex) (Paglen, 2013). These were being built to move other bigger (secret) satellites along the geostationary belt that had malfunctioned and posed a danger of orbital drift, thereby, for example, crashing into and destroying a regular communications' satellite, possibly of another state. It seems reading between the lines that they were/are being developed as a kind of pre-emptive measure; to avoid the damage that might be caused by errant secret satellites and thus prevent any conflict that might arise, keeping 'strategic national security advantage' surveillance activities as surreptitious and unobtrusive as possible. What Paglen observes is that if

MiTex were a stealthy satellite designed to crawl through the geostationary ring undetected, capable of stealthily tracking, intercepting, inspecting, and potentially disrupting or disabling other spacecraft in the GEO [geostationary orbit], then it represented the latest chapter towards the military occupation of space.
(Paglen, 2013: 215)

If this is the case, he continues, then the US is once again in flagrant violation of a Cold War era international treaty: the 1967 UN Outer Space Treaty which prohibits the sovereign occupation or weaponization of space. In the adversarial context of USSR-US relations space has long been a space-militarized zone, but it has thus far not been a weaponized one (Paglen, 2013: 215). He explains further that the treaty is, in a “war on terror” and RMA era, now

largely defunct as far as the US is concerned, and a new doctrine to take its place has developed called “Offensive Counterspace Operations” (OCS) (Paglen, 2013: 216).¹⁵⁶ According to this, an adversary’s space capability may be targeted

using a variety of permanent and/or reversible means. The “Five D’s” – deception, disruption, denial, degradation, and destruction – describe the range of desired effects when targeting an adversary’s space systems. (Paglen, 2013: 216)¹⁵⁷

These "Five D's" cannot be regarded in any other light than as belligerent acts, for the law of war and weapons law purposes, and in direct contravention of them (Clapham et al., 2014: 146)¹⁵⁸: this is the invisible warfare that occurs daily and which is not investigated by or reported on in traditional media. And accordingly, neither is it visualised. Paglen identifies (through his collaborator amateur satellite observers) the emergence of a “political geography” and to see, visualise, understand and counter this "unreported" weaponization of space, he has joined forces with the counter-visualisation practice amongst satellite observers of, as mentioned above, what he calls “minoritarian empiricism” (Paglen, 2013: 218) - the countervailing empirical research of the critical, concerned/dissenting, anti-establishment minority : citizen witnesses/observers/astronomers.

This minoritarian empiricism thus harnessed in the production of Paglen's *The Other Night Sky dispositif* lends to the project an empirical edge, which echoes his "experimental geography" (Paglen, 2008) unapologetically dashing any notion of it as an "autonomous" artwork. Once again though, the nature (art) of the visualisations here are less a matter of strategy or aesthetic philosophy as of brute conditions of visibility itself: conditions which are contingent at every point upon what it is we are looking at, trying to visualise and where we are, or aim to be – visually, imaginatively, epistemically.

The optimum technical means of producing factual data (or empirically-backed observation) to be transformed by way of aesthetic visualisation differs, as argued above, to ostension by way of the aesthetic sublime. In respect of the latter, the question of empirical evidence is ancillary and/or superfluous for the purposes of suggestive ostension. Data aesthetics as visualisation strategy relies as it must on very specific choices which optimize visibility. Technically, the deployment of a time lapse mechanism renders movements over space-time visible where high-powered astro-photographic magnification alone fails. So, as with *What lies beneath*, the methods adopted are the ones most appropriate for the nature of the subject matter and the aims of visualisation. Paglen's adaptation of his strategy to his materials and objects is a practice which recognises the need for this kind of contingency planning, this conceptual-epistemic-technological guerrilla fluidity - no one template of image-making practice is going to be useful for the myriad manifestations of power and its forms of violence. The image-making process attends from the outset to the objects/subjects he is seeking to image and the differential/contingent or aleatory conditions of their visibility. As he emphatically enjoins, 'forget methodology; listen to the materials you're working with and they'll suggest their own ways of being researched.' (Dear, 2011: 23)¹⁵⁹

Beyond the function of the imagery to make visible what usually cannot be seen by the naked eye, Paglen's forensic and scholarly approach to this material leads him to probe more deeply beyond the image-making practice itself and the realm of visibility. His textual interpolations attend to what will always remain invisible in the structures, systems, relations and processes of Plexus; the full force of the text-image visualisations as pieces of evidence is best felt in attention to other elements of his system of the sensible, such as his interviews, essays, talks and books. Paglen says that he's 'trying to figure out ways to support and sustain formally and methodologically experimental scholarly and creative practices.' (Dear, 2011: 25) Photography

and image-making is thus not used by Paglen as an aesthetic end in itself. The transdisciplinary nature of his work delivers assemblages whose levels gradually unfold the more the viewer pursues an engagement with it. This image-text-sculpture-action-collaboration-research system of visualisation dismantles the images' frame to venture far beyond its representational delimitations and ostend towards the unseen/opaque/invisible. As Jayne Wilkinson, in a theoretical nod to Judith Butler's *Frames of War*, writes, Paglen's works bespeak:

a delicate dialectic between visibility and opacity, one that is operative in the revelation and concealment of information through visual means. What the photograph delimits is not contingent, as post-structuralist theory argues, and meanings that press upon the photograph from outside the frame are not arbitrary: *what is external to the photograph must be considered equal to what is visible within the frame.* (Wilkinson, 2015) (my italics)

The epistemological equality, as it were, between the inside and outside of the frame poses a challenge to more traditional ways of concerned visualisation, and the approach is arguably a more politically efficacious one. This insistence upon the merging of image-making with research and scholarship as a strategic means of visualising that which prefers anonymity is a form of art-documentary "enhanced interrogation", if you wish. This is, I argue, one of the ways in which we can distinguish in the emergent concerned/dissident image-making practices of the twenty-first century a distinctly gaze-decentred, cognitive/conceptual *post*-photographic philosophy.

5.6 In Conclusion

Paglen, as we see above, beseeches us to "forget methodology", but it is perhaps "method" that Paglen means, as this injunction belies the deeper philosophical ideas subtending his own approach to image-making, in which a very meticulous, forensic methodology can certainly be espied.

Whatever methods, tactics and strategies Paglen adopts in his image-making, the commitment to a critical questioning of what it is he is looking for, seeing, investigating and finally, visualising is unwavering. In this regard, transparency is an impossibility, a myth. It is arguably this recognition which is most deeply informative not only of Paglen's "way of seeing," but the way in which he conceptualises his projects and strategizes his visualisations. I have referred to transparency as ideological vehicle and enabling fiction of corporatist democracy on a number of occasions in the foregoing, but the critique of this concept was revisited in more detail here in order to understand how it is constitutive, I contend, of Paglen's conception of the (Adornian) negative dialectic.

The paradoxical relations between secrecy and revelation, opacity and transparency, visibility and invisibility is, as we have seen, one of salient themes which threads its way throughout Paglen's work and consequently those who turn a scholarly gaze upon it. As we have seen, Jayne Wilkinson, Pamela M. Lee, Rebecca Solnit, Philipp Jeandrée and Jodi Dean are amongst the growing numbers of scholars who have written in some detail about these notions from both epistemic and political perspectives. They regard the in/visibility, transparency/opacity dichotomy as a pivotal paradox in the visualisation of war and state-military forms of violence, and indeed, in concerned or dissident image-making practices which ostensibly have some political revelatory intent or function. This paradox is a dilemma which persists at the core of attempts such as Paglen's to find ways which meet the multiple challenges of visualising Plexus. This is especially so, I argued, in respect of the more abstract manifestations of power, such as its strategic narratives. For example, the significance of notions like risk and security which underpin the increasing securitization of the socius turns precisely on this labile, somewhat enigmatic in/visibility, opacity/transparency dance of (corporate) veils that must be enacted for it to become normalised, hegemonically naturalised. To make it *no* secret that there

are secrets proffers to the public the visible (open) face of secrecy (security). This "speech act" (Searle et al., 1980) of the state and its media-military-corporate stakeholders serves to legitimise activities which further empower the state-corporate-media-military nexus. Lee calls this open secret "statefare" an 'aesthetic phenomenon'. (Lee, 2011) This resonates with Michael Taussig's anthropological/ethnological studies of "public secrecy" (Taussig, 1999)¹⁶⁰ in which he posits that secrecy in society and in communities functions dialectically as a process of deliberate, partial revelation of what is publicly known but cannot for whatever reason (eg., taboos) be openly articulated. The public secret - for which he provides examples from "primitive" societies in their masking/unmasking rites and rituals - serves both to unmask and to re-enchant. It involves a pretence of not knowing what you know. As an 'ideological contrivance' (Dean, 2016), the art-ifice is demonstrable in the enabling fiction for the public of *existential necessity* (Agamben's "state of exception"),¹⁶¹ and the simultaneous public absolution of guilt for/complicity in the measures that existential necessity "demands".

The open or public secret, or the "transparency myth", is shown in projects such as those of Paglen through forensic investigation of the machinery and technologies of power, Paglen takes on the ideology of public communicational transparency. The strategy of visualisation in part is to perform an immanent critique of the 'ideological contrivance' of transparency. In order to make transparent the ideologically contrived nature of transparency, I argued that Paglen can only but be inveigled into a performative paradox. One way of dealing with this is to ostend self-reflexively towards this ineluctable paradox of exposing transparency. This is achieved by, on the one hand, "revealing" the actual opacity of ideological transparency, and on the other, unsettling the viewer's sense of what is being revealed or concealed in the imagery. The images deliver no resolution; their "truth" is eternally suspended in order to preserve the critical

"moment" immanent to them. This is why such imagery thereby *instantiates* a *negative* dialectic of exposure and concealment.

Both Paglen's aesthetically sublime images and the imagery borne out of a hybrid science-art data aesthetics are, as we have seen in the foregoing, pieces of evidence; documents and images showing something that exists, that is happening, of an "Event." As works of art, they are more/other than documents, but as documents, they are also other/more than works of art. They exceed the sum of their genre and formal parts, their system of sensible elements – *dispositif* - to ostend towards a Truth beyond themselves, outside of their chimeric visual qualities and their formal framing. They are, in my view, aesthetic-epistemic vehicles which provocatively, seductively, both make visible the Event, whilst at the same time refusing to be complicit in "lending" the Event transparency. It is thus also a paradoxical refusal to be either absolved, or to be complicit. Instead, this mode of production of visibility offers a *version of opacity*, a tint of truth in a miasmal expanse of state-corporate-media-militarized space. These visualisations are, in a sense, a "proxy measure" (see Chapter Six) of what remains opaque, unknown, concealed.

Rebecca Solnit writes that 'invisibility is a type of shield, while democracy is founded on visibility.' (Solnit, 2010: 10; cited also in Stallabrass, 2015: 215) One could also argue in the light of the foregoing that transparency and visibility are a type of shield, like the corporate veil which limits its own public liability through the perfectly open vehicle of legislation. Transparency/visibility and the social, political relations surrounding the production of knowledge, in which and through which what we know and what remains hidden, is indeed somewhat analogous to sparring partners each equipped with both shield and sword. The negative dialectical approach lies precisely in recognising the paradox which inheres here; this

is where transparency and visibility are used as swords to hegemonize and secure submissive eye-aversion to what might be unsavoury about the heroic sword-bearer; in this Eventful distraction around its securitization sword-rattling, the "Main Event" is cloaked/shielded/veiled by evental visibility/transparency. To extend the metaphor, Paglen seeks to retrieve the testimonial sword for the viewer in encouraging, through the visibility/opacity chiaroscuro of his images, a critically self-reflexive scrutiny of the image's proposition/s.

The "moment" of understanding for the image-maker/user/viewer in this sense is to see the publicly "withheld" as an ideological decoy of sorts, and to figure out what relation this decoy has to "the Real" secret and how it functions.¹⁶² There is no high resolution denouement of the covert/overt, opaque/transparent, visible/invisible seeming antitheses, or perceived dichotomies; no neo-Hegelian historical "sublation" of the Dilemma of the Open/Public Secret. Strategic visualisation implicates us in a seemingly irresolvable stalemate: that of the simultaneous disarming of power/arming of the viewer through the real threat of visibility, and the concomitant disarming of the viewer/arming of power through "fake" transparency. The *visibility* of the Wikileaks "Collateral Murder" video¹⁶³ resulted in a grand theatrical display of revulsion, shame and scandalised opprobrium, but as much piquing of public political consciousness as there was, this did not result in much or any state-military arraignment or higher-level accountability. The habitual war criminality of the US military and the appallingly gleeful massacre of injured and defenceless civilians was quickly absorbed and transformed by "war" media-military narration and by way of Chelsea Manning and Wikileaks into a nationalist-securitist tale of treason and cyberwar. I submit that the event, in its mediatization, demonstrates the relentless ease with which *visible forms of violence* are "neutralized" through their strategic (re)framing. Making visible/transparent affords no guarantee of democratic accountability. The challenge for our image-making, viewing and using practices - our

strategies of visualisation - as embodied in Paglen's images and projects - is one that, I argue, cleaves closely and critically to the need to go beyond visibility, eventality, towards the elusive "Event Horizon" of Plexus and its forms of violence.

In the next chapter, Edmund Clark and Lisa Barnard leave behind the grand vistas, sidereal heights and digital depths of "war" and Plexus, and lead us instead into those more murky, local, targeted and highly specific spaces of state violence and the corporate execution (as it were) thereof.

CHAPTER SIX

The Cadastral, and the Proxy Measure: Towards a Visual Forensics of "War" and Plexus

6.1 Introduction

In the visualisation of "war" and Plexus, this chapter departs definitively from (an/neo-)iconicity and the aesthetic of the sublime, to bring us emphatically back down to tawdry earth, as it were, and thereby also transport us into closer proximity with the human. However, once again, there are (almost - see Barnard below) no depictions of people. The imagery as before engages the non/inhuman aspects of "war" and Plexus, but whilst the previous two chapters focused on the sophisticated technologies and grand, awe-inspiring Evental spaces of Plexus, in this chapter it is largely the *geolocal* topography of state-corporate-military power and its forms of violence which is the substantive emphasis. The imagery examined here immerses us in the micro-mapping or "cadastral" visualisation of Plexus, in which the traces or haunting absences of people lend a quotidian humanity to the imagery, an aesthetic which, whilst in no deliberate way proffering an "anti-aesthetic," is in its focus - especially in the case of Clark - quietly determined to bore into the deceptively workaday nature of the less visible violence of "war" and Plexus (that is, in its state-corporate-military-media-entertainment-security-surveillance-techno-scientific configuration). The reason why I have re-appropriated or repurposed the term "cadastral" rather than simply deploying the conventional notions of cartography or topography (although these are also relevant) is explained in the course of the arguments below.

First, a foundational place to set out would be the map, and its burgeoning significance for arts and humanities scholarship and creativity. Lize Mogel observes that

Maps have become part of a pop-culture kit-of-parts within the cultural sphere, used as a form, an aesthetic, or as a methodology. The rising number of college-level art, architecture, and design courses that teach "mapping" is a testament to this, as is the number of art exhibitions about maps concentrated in the last few years. (Mogel, 2011:187)

The map as methodological tool in the arts and humanities, she goes on to write, is due to a shift in the way we think about representation and space, itself largely as a result of the radical evolution of the way we communicate and obtain/understand information; that is, digitally, virtually. She writes that 'for artists and designers, maps are a highly aesthetic form, able to articulate and spatialize complexity.' (Mogel, 2011:187) She points towards recent attempts to 'unleash the political aspects of the map', in which various cultural projects have undertaken 'different artistic and cartographic strategies for political education.' (Mogel, 2011:187) One of the most eminent pioneers of mapping as an aesthetic or methodological tool, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, is Fredric Jameson. Within the context of (neo) Marxist debates on a new global postmodern epoch and its representation, he devised the term "cognitive mapping" (Jameson, 1988). This can be defined as a process whereby the individual situates herself within a vast, diffuse, unrepresentable "social totality"; such as Plexus. To reiterate the foregoing, the systemic and ideological workings of the state-corporate-military-media-entertainment-security-surveillance nexus and its less visible or more socially abstract forms of violence are not, literally, comprehensible, and certainly not cognitively or theoretically containable by any one formulation or single image. No sum of discrete parts or infinite array of images either could ever succeed in mapping the intrinsically unrepresentable "totality" of power and its forms of violence. Wark provides a trenchant summary of what Jameson's cognitive mapping seeks to achieve:

In Jameson's periodization, such a mapping was possible in the early days of capitalism (see Balzac, for example) but becomes almost impossible in the age of imperialism. The geographic parts are too separate, and the separation loaded with cultural baggage, to enable anyone to chart across the divides and *see capital whole* [...] this gets even harder in the 'postmodern' age, when production itself becomes all but invisible within the space of the old metropolitan centers. Meanwhile in the peripheries *the effects of capital are all too readable, but not their source*. (Wark, 2015) (my italics)

Given the global and imperialist reach of corporate-capitalist culture, Jameson's "cognitive mapping" proffers a spatial, geographical or topographical way of seeing and conceptualising the social totality which maps culture and ideology onto political economy. It is also, as Jameson conceives of it, an essentially aesthetic act, addressing as it does questions of representation, figuration. He writes, 'For me "representation" is [...] the synonym of "figuration" itself [...] all forms of aesthetic production consist in one way or another in the struggle with and for representation.' (Jameson, 1988: 348) For reasons discussed in the introduction, I prefer the term *visualisation* to representation in the discussion of (post-photographic) efforts, techniques and strategies for the imag(in)ing of less visible or non/inhuman, systemic or socially abstract power and its forms of violence. It is just such a use of the word "figuration" here by Jameson that, I submit, gestures towards a similar reservation in respect of the word representation, to capture just what it is that is being attempted in the impossible "representation" of corporate-capitalist space. Figuration, like visualisation is ostensive in that it attends deeply to the experiential, sensory, phenomenological level/s of seeing, experiencing, understanding, making sense of "the Real". Such an ostensive re-appropriation of cognitive mapping could prove to be a pre-eminently useful tool in the *configuration*, as it were, of state-corporate-military-media-information-entertainment-security-surveillance-techno-scientific power and forms of violence/violation. This is where spatial analysis - to which we owe salient ideas in postmodern/poststructuralist critical theory - acquires its distinctive power (See, inter alia, Foucault, 1986; Deleuze and Guattari, 2003[1988], Lefebvre, 1991; Burgin, 1996). Spaces of being, of power, of capital are

experienced, not only (or not even primarily, "seen"). Here, that (Real and virtual) space of vision and experience is riven through with "war", which is where the notion of cognitive mapping for the purposes of this chapter departs from that of Jameson. Whatever its problems and deficiencies, however, Jameson's term retains relevance - indeed, its relevance is only enhanced - in the digitally hypernetworked dispensation of twenty-first century neoliberal global corporatization.¹⁶⁴

The aesthetic or cognitive mapping (topography/cartography) debate or discourse is a well-established one and could provide theoretical fuel for an entire thesis on its own, so the intricacies of the critique and recent scholarship thereon shall not be taken up here, suffice to observe that maps as both an aesthetic form and a means of political tutelage is highly significant here. I aver that the critically-reformulated use of such a topography-cartography framework for the understanding and co-creation of strategies of visualisation of "war" and Plexus builds upon emergent theoretical vocabularies in this regard, to which I here proffer a contribution by way of the "cadastral".

It is not proposed that Clark and Barnard set out with deliberation to deploy such a methodology in their image-making; whatever their artistic intentions are (and we make reference to these too), this does not attenuate the heteronomous capacity of the imagery to yield meanings or suggest ostensibly other than the original contexts of their conceptualisation (Harris, 2006:170). In this introduction some relevant scholarly background, themes and questions are set out before the exploration of the work of Clark and Barnard is embarked upon.

It is the confluence of aesthetics, politics and data/information in these cognitive mapping projects that is of chief interest here. In this sense, there is a resonance with the discussion in

the last chapter concerning the data aesthetics of some of Paglen's image-making. We saw how Paglen too maps the night sky and the earth's oceans for secret satellites and tapping chokepoints respectively, for which he made use of astronomical and flight data, ordnance survey maps, navigational and maritime charts, in the same way that Clark and Barnard make use of building plans, city maps, house layouts and aerial triangulation. Indeed, Mogel examines the mapping project of Trevor Paglen and John Emerson using the data gleaned about the CIA extraordinary rendition flights for his "torture taxis" project (Mogel, 2011: 192-194). The work, entitled *CIA Rendition Flights 2001-2006*¹⁶⁵ [Figure 6.1] (which was also produced in large billboard format and eventually installed on a major Los Angeles boulevard)¹⁶⁶ shows the continents, all shaded black in a grey ocean, criss-crossed by thin orange lines representing the flights between cities over a good two thirds of the globe. The Visual Complexity book selling site claims that Paglen and Emerson obtained the information they used from flight data provided by the Federal Aviation Administration and Eurocontrol. It further states that

The map is a visualization of the movements of aircraft owned or operated by known CIA front companies. The project illustrates some of the more obscure relationships that have been forged between the United States and other countries over the course of the war on terror.¹⁶⁷

This would have been a useful addendum to Clark's *Negative Publicity* project, as this is chiefly concerned with these extrajudicial, "extraordinary rendition" flights: we see below that Clark's series of photographs took him deep into, amongst other places, Eastern Europe. Paglen's map provides us with the overall, geopolitical, migratory bird's-eye view of these activities, whilst Clark's diagrams show us what is happening at nitty-gritty, ground level.

In the context to which Mogel refers, the point about this cross-reference to Paglen is that image-makers have turned increasingly since the emergent postmodern mapping ambitions of the 1980s to the spatial visualisation of socially abstract power and its forms of violence in response, not least, to the sheer complexity of the hyperconnected realm of Plexus in which we

now live. Indispensable to the perpetual war aims of state-corporate-military power is the involvement ("complicity") of so many actants: principals and agents, executive and ancillary, to encompass all those in the socio-economic theatre of "war" such as aerospace, military and media-tech CEOs, arms manufacturers, engineers, technicians, software specialists, pilots, drivers, caterers, internet service providers and social media, broadcasters, bloggers, cleaners, logistics personnel, etc; the list is *ad infinitum* and encompasses myriad sectors of civil-commercial society.

The invisibility/secrecy, transparency/opacity dialectic spoken of in the last chapter presents an additional challenge for this mode of visualisation/figuration. Indeed, it is not only art-documentary image-makers, but also those operating in newer disciplines like forensic architecture and experimental geography that topographic/cartographic means of conveying information have been used to great effect. The Forensic Architecture team, an independent research agency based at Goldsmiths college of the University of London to investigate human rights abuses, is an inspiring case in point. Its website tells us that it is 'an interdisciplinary team of investigators [which] includes architects, scholars, artists, filmmakers, coders, investigative journalists, archaeologists, lawyers, and scientists.'¹⁶⁸ An example of the work it does is its spatial representation of the Israeli military targeting of Rafah in the southern Gaza strip (where there is a Palestinian refugee camp). A satellite image is overlaid with red circles showing the documented sites of bombardment of the city [Figure 6.2]. This is but one paradigmatic or archetypal example of the aesthetic and forensic use of satellite and surveillance data in the citizen witnessing of habitual and systemic forms of violence. In this case, it is documented. We see further on the relevance of this project for the work of Barnard, who focuses on the less visible/less documented forms of violence of "war" and Plexus.

The "cadastral", originally a legal, administrative and town-planning term is deployed by me as both technical and evocative tool for the analysis of the spatial and visual mapping undertaken by Clark and Barnard of "war on terror" activities. Why use an abstruse and old-fashioned administrative-legal concept to discuss the contemporary post-photographic visual mapping of state-corporate-military violence, rather than simply use a well-worn and broadly accessible concept like those of cartography/topography/mapping, which seem perfectly fit for purpose?

The first answer to this question is that there is something further/other contained in the concept of a "cadastre" that is neither evoked nor specifically "spelt out" by the others. "War"/Plexus and its forms of violence are certainly *conceivable* (there is no shortage of scholarship and critical journalism/documentation undertaken on the military-industrial complex or the state-corporate-military nexus, but whilst war/conflict in its brute eventality might be mappable, "war" as a diffuse, systemic Plexus Event is not measurable, and its "audit trail" is often invisible. It poses an immense challenge to visual apprehension.

Secondly, the cadastral has a Derridean excess, if you will; even taken out of its land/property-related context and re-appropriated here, one cannot ignore the punctilious bureaucratic demand for the precise measurement of space for purposes of legal ownership and valuation; especially in respect of commercial real estate. Further, the cadastral brings with it mathematical triangulation towards the thorough convergence of state-corporate interests: the CIA could do nothing without its business or corporate partners - the private security and military contractors (PMSCs) - in the rendition flights, the detention, torture or targeted killings of designated enemies of the state. Corporate lobbying of government has long been a feature

of politics and power but the emergence of the media-tech giants such as Google and Amazon have entailed an increasing "corporate capture" of governments, with states mimicking corporate models of governance.¹⁶⁹ A cadastral visualisation, I argue, places more of a pointed emphasis on the state-*corporate-managerial*-military contiguity of space, place and being at even the most geolocal levels of society. It is, of course, also a state-*corporate-bureaucratic*-military tool of information and control. Both the state and its enabling corporate service providers require the apolitical/amoral function of bureaucracy for their ends, whatever they may be. No black site of rendition could co-ordinate its territorial or neighbourhood designation and concealment without a detailed, quantity-surveyor-produced cadastral map. The Registers of Scotland: Cadastral Mapping Overview defines such a map as follows:

[it is a map] showing all registered geospatial data relating to registered plots. The cadastral map consists of cadastral units, each of which represents a single registered plot of land. *The cadastral map is not limited to defining ownership boundaries, but includes geospatial references for other rights or burdens that affect the registered plots of land.*¹⁷⁰ (my italics)

The 'ownership boundaries' and the 'geospatial references' here indicate the kind of quantity surveying empirical precision which the more vague concept of cartography/topography does not automatically suggest. The legal rights and burdens all have to do with how the space is used and who is entitled to use it. Beyond that, it is either a commercial, a public or a private space, subject - or not - to varying levels of policing or surveillance. Cartography/topography lack the legal, bureaucratic, quotidian quality of the cadastral, which is considered here to be a more forensically, heuristically and hermeneutically productive tool for the discussion of works which, in this chapter, show some very particular, geolocally sited places of violence or of "war". One definition, once again from that open source of distributed sensibility, Wikipedia, tells us the following:

Thanks to Geographic Information Systems (GIS), cadastral maps are commonplace. *When overlaid with data that represent various forms of environmental risk and vulnerability from nuclear, chemical, or biological accidents, these maps acquire a prominent added value.*¹⁷¹ (my italics)

Clearly, the last sentence is particularly relevant here. It mentions 'risk' and 'accidents', which renders conspicuous in its absence elsewhere any descriptions of the cadastre in combination with data relating to deliberate or accidental killing such as corporate manslaughter or, indeed, extrajudicial acts of states against individuals, or against other states/communities in contravention of international laws of war, treaties, conventions or UN resolutions. It is precisely the sort of use to which a cadastral map could be put by the Forensic Architecture team, and no doubt by those forensically-minded visual artists and art-documentary image-makers such as Norfolk, Paglen, Clark and Barnard.

But whilst these physical spaces can be precisely triangulated and cadastrally mapped, modern warfare can only be approximated. One can only *speculate* on the extents, depth and complexity of networks, systems and relations through the use of extant maps, surveys, registers, official/(de)classified information or otherwise obtained data, and algorithmic/mathematical models. Such empirical quantitative research can provide any amount of information, but what it cannot do *on its own* is *visualise* how something looks or works experientially, or its plethora of unquantifiable cultural and political meanings, implications, functions and uses. Just as topography and de/re-territorialization as conceptual tools to map, challenge or resist globalized neoliberal capitalist hegemony and post-colonial transnational corporate imperialism are insufficient terms, so too is the alternative proposed here, *the cadastral*. It is as blunt an instrument as Plexus in the attempt imaginatively to visually map "war" and Plexus. Just as Plexus too is (albeit self-reflexively) insufficient to its own task - a performative failure in-itself - it nonetheless has a distinct, bespoke use value here. The cadastral, likewise, as insufficient as it is to *measure* the extent, the magnitude of Plexus, is also a bespoke tool with a limited but significant "use value" for the visualisation of modern warfare and its expressions of violence. Whilst the cadastral is the central star in the conceptual

and forensic constellation deployed here, I have found for it a lesser but no less operative moon: in close partnership with the cadastral in the tactics of "war" and Plexus figuration is the somewhat technical or mathematical-sounding "proxy measure," which is also elucidated, in visual context, below.

6.2 Edmund Clark and *Negative Publicity*

Edmund Clark's *Negative Publicity* series is a project undertaken in collaboration with the counterterrorism investigator Crofton Black, which 'comprises photographs and documents that confront the nature of contemporary warfare and the invisible mechanisms of state control.'¹⁷²The work concerns itself with the Bush-Blair era between 2001 and 2008 and the "war on terror." The website description further describes the work as 'a paper trail' showing state-corporate-military

activities via the weak points of business accountability: invoices, documents of incorporation, and billing reconciliations produced by the small-town American businesses enlisted in prisoner transportation. In conjunction with photographs of former detention sites, detainees' homes, companies and government locations this work recreates the network that links CIA 'black sites,' and evokes ideas of opacity, surface, and testimony in relation to this process: *a system hidden in plain sight.*¹⁷³(my italics)

The quotation provides direct insight into our commercial-quotidian enmeshment, as articulated above, with its references to 'small-town American businesses', 'companies (and government) locations' and 'documents of incorporation.' The excerpt tells us how the stuff and spaces of the 'CIA 'black sites' are right there under our noses : 'a system hidden in plain sight.' These are rather different sequestered black sites to the grandiose and majestic desert, sky and sea-scapes in which they are visualised by Paglen, or the austere and cinematic sci-fi technologies captured to thrillingly sublime effect by Norfolk. Clark distinguishes his approach from their's by way of emphatic contrast, explaining that they "are linked by their shared use

of the aesthetics of the sublime in their work - the artistic framing and presentation of the horrors they seek to represent,” whilst his work is more about providing a glimpse for the viewer into their own “everyday implication in this war on terror”(Barsdorf-Liebchen/Clark: interview, October 2016; all the ensuing quotations harvested from this interview).¹⁷⁴

He is concerned above all to show how the control order houses or scenes of rendition may well be (have been) in your very own neighbourhood; how the runway at the airport on which your plane en-route to your holiday destination takes off or lands is the very same runway which an unmarked aircraft carrying a shackled detainee uses to refuel for further extraordinary rendition purposes. He says it is the sheer “mundanity” and even “domesticity” of these processes and activities, and our “shared experience” of them that is the heart of what he seeks in his projects to visualise, to find new ways of visualising such activities of modern warfare.

Clark thus seeks to present these hidden, clandestine activities and largely invisible structures and processes in a way that is “relevant to us as individuals.” Clark avers that the activities, relations and networks of the state-corporate-military nexus do not require any aestheticisation for them to be “grasped”, and he disagrees unequivocally that “the horror” of state-corporate-military forms of violence are *not* representable; in fact, quite the opposite : he insists that "it" must at all costs be represented, whatever the medium and the means.¹⁷⁵ This view, whilst seemingly at odds with the preceding discussion of the "unrepresentability" of the "social totality" (of Plexus) is, in my view, a productive contrast; one which is not necessarily incompatible with a more ostensive definition of the visualisation of "war" in its cadastral *configuration*.

The images shown here of the *Negative Publicity* project bring into vernacular, everyday focus some aspects of the workings of Plexus in just this way. But they also show documents which

are not usually accessible to the public, and whilst they constitute examples of the "everyday" workings of "war on terror" activities, the most heavily redacted of them, consisting of just consecutive black blocks (which puts one in mind of Malevich's *Black Square*, 2015) [Figure 6.3] are actually at least obliquely suggestive of the monstrous sublime.¹⁷⁶ This early twentieth century image shall be returned to below, but for now, we will take a very specific angle in our approach to these images, and leave behind the discourse of the Military Sublime.

The first two images we consider [Figures 6.4 and 6.5] show "topographies of terror"; they are images of maps. The first of a town or city where there is an ordinary-looking neighbourhood in which there is a "black site." This is a site very far from US soil, but one commandeered by the CIA. On the property is a house which is used for the interrogation and torture of those subject to extraordinary rendition: a "control order house." There is a hand-drawn sketch of the interior of such a residence amongst whose inhabitants were the prisoner/s (and/or the security contractors retained to detain and/or interrogate/torture). These images, apart from revealing something otherwise invisible to the neighbourhood, are also a cadastral and "proxy measure" of the workings of "war": the closest approximation of what is concealed beyond the images, outside the frame. A "proxy measurement", a term more commonly used in statistics, information science or data analytics, is basically a method of predicting probable results when you cannot measure the exact value because it is unknown/unknowable, unpredictable, or because there is insufficient information.¹⁷⁷ Proxy measure is used here more than metaphorically: it is a figural, forensic and cadastral approximation of the spatial and Real coordinates of the violence of "war."

To elucidate by way of example, the first image is not a photograph, as such: it is a reproduction, a copy of a document. Presumably drawn by a town planning draftsman, shows an area of a

fairly large city, judging by what appears to be an extensive railway network to the left of the image. The cadastral measurements are given as conforming to a scale of 1:2000 (although what exact unit of measurement; miles, kilometres, etc., is not clear from this reproduction). To extract more from the image than is evident from the bare and uncommentaried presentation afforded by Clark, the viewer must supplement the viewing with her own further research. Upon feeding the title of the plan into an internet browser, one discovers that it originates from Romania and it is then easy to confirm that the language seen at the top of the image is Romanian.¹⁷⁸ The city, if one peers more closely at the very faint names of buildings and streets, is the capital, Bucharest. So the information the image provides is in the starkest (albeit faintest) way denotative, that is indicative/indexical. We can infer from the fact that the map was part of a file of declassified information obtained by Clark and Black, that it probably represents the site of an act or acts of extraordinary rendition. In fact, further research reveals the "meaning" of this map is confirmed by a press report of the Open Society Foundations advising of the fact that on 29 June 2016, the Strasbourg court held a public hearing in the case of Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, a Saudi national currently (at the time of writing) held at US military prison at Guantánamo Bay. He has alleged that the Romanian government allowed his incommunicado detention and torture at a secret CIA base in the Romanian capital, Bucharest.¹⁷⁹ They further advise that

Despite a report from the Council of Europe identifying Romania as hosting one of the CIA's so-called "black site" secret prisons, the Romanian government has persistently denied any knowledge of these operations. Romania was one of over 50 governments around the world that supported a program of secret rendition and torture launched by the CIA after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.¹⁸⁰

The Open Society Foundations are joined by the investigatory efforts of the Associated Press and German media, who too discovered that extraordinary rendition had taken place in Bucharest.¹⁸¹ The building in which prisoners (including, incidentally, Khaled Sheikh Mohammed, who confessed under torture to organising the 9/11 attacks) were held and tortured

was owned by Romania's National Registry Office for Classified Information (ORNISS). The building also stores classified information from the EU and NATO.

If one regards at least one role of the image as a tutelary one; to instigate/inspire a desire in the viewer to know more and leading to further research then, I suggest, by processes of both deduction and induction, the viewer mops up the forensic "excess" of the image. She pieces together a story about the involvement of one city in the "war on terror," a city far from Washington, in which Nicolae Ceausescu long ago established many interrogation and torture facilities used by the communist regime and now by the CIA, and which at least since the "war on terror" is right in the very heart of globalized state-corporate-military power and its forms of violence.

The map is thus regarded a cadastral one, encompassing the proprietorial, technical, bureaucratic and legal facets denoted by (and delineated in) this administrative instrument. It is re-framed and re-(con)figured by Clark in the first instance, and by the viewer as "secondary witness" in her act of viewing and re-viewing the image as evidence. This image and its image-maker/viewer collaboration is part of the post-photographic torture *dispositif*, as it were. It is one of a system of (re)distributed elements which go to make up rendition, itself a state-corporate torture assemblage. Critically and dissentingly reconfigured through this, it enacts a "decadastration." It *locates* the torture: sites it in a particular city, and central rail transport hub of that city, not too far from government buildings.

In other words, the visual deconstruction of the "war on terror" occurs through an interactive and dialectical nexus of image (re)production, image (re)viewing, and visual data (re)configuration. It also shatters the proprietorial integrity and respectable legal codification

of the public/private allocation of property, exposing the brute impropriety of the uses to which transnational, state-corporate, cadastrated space is put.

By the logic of extrapolation, we are invited to take our own proxy measure of what we do *not* know from what the image can "tell" us. Viewed as part of the series, embedded in amongst the images of anonymous places, of rooms, boundary walls, redacted documents, house interior layout, a long low building in the woods, a swanky swimming pool, pixelated objects/subjects, a blurry aeroplane taking off from somewhere, and so forth, we "realise" the global convergence of state and commercial activities, public and secret spaces, state-corporate and civilian activities [Figures 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9].

The second, hand-drawn sketch imaged in Clark's series is on an A4 page of block-lined notepaper, and is the interior floorplan of parts of a house, labelled in the German language [Figure 6.5]. What we deduce is that the person who drew the floorplan was or spoke German, which is not enough, however, to tell us whether that person was an agent of the state or security contractor retained, or the "detainee", or someone else altogether. Clark does not disclose this, but he does reveal that he spent time with and interviewed ex-detainees. We are left to surmise what we will. Regardless of the source of the sketch, however, is the fact that an event took place, symptomatic in its concrete of the (Main) Event ("war"/Plexus). Again, the vague topography of the image nudges the viewer further into a kind of cadastral decoding of sorts; the location of the bed in relation to the interrogation area, for example. The bathroom and where the prisoner may have been placed whilst undergoing torture. Slowly the denotative significance of the layout evokes in the mind's-eye a compulsion to visualise what has happened and who was involved. Was the PMSC of German or Austrian nationality? Had the prisoner been resident in a German-speaking country before he was detained and subjected to

rendition? Did the ex-detainee find his way to Germany and seek asylum? We do not learn any of this from either Clark or the image. The image of this (reproduced/photocopied) sketch thus acts as our proxy measure of what we do not know. What we *do* know is that constitutive events of the Main Event ("war"/Plexus) happen in very precise places and locations; and yet, they are nowhere to be seen/found (out), except in post-evental reconstruction: declassified documents, scribbles on paper or photographic audit trails showing the "measure of things"; such as these maps. The subjection of the map to a forensic and cadastral gaze both (con)figures and ostends towards an event and its Evental conditions of possibility, respectively. A simple line sketch, represented as an "image", devoid of what one would formally or conventionally regard as aesthetic qualities, nonetheless becomes through this co-creative, dynamic image-maker/image/viewer-oriented strategy of visualisation an ineffably poignant visualisation of "war"/Plexus, and indeed, of the damaged Other.

The next set of images we look at are textual in nature and so, literally, more revealing of the nature of the event that very probably took place within the walls of the control order house and its particular location, which can be identified in Bucharest town hall's cadastral map of an ordinary urban area of the city.

The images of the (photocopied) contracts for rendition and interrogation services or declassified but still heavily redacted Top Secret CIA documents¹⁸² relating to such counterterrorism activities like those discussed above quite manifestly - denotatively/literally - make reference to instruments of torture such as power drills or shackles. When it comes to torture one is hardly required as viewer (nor minded) to "interpret" such matter other than literally,¹⁸³ but as images, re-framed (or repurposed) on the image-maker's website, they are visualisations. As above, but in a non-topographical sense, each document in itself has a

cadastral value; a "boundary" delimiting what is "owned/owed", and what not [Figures 6.10, 6.11, 6.12, 6.13].

Figure 6.10 shows the front page of the "CIA Special Review on the [redacted] Counterterrorism Detention and Interrogation Activities (September 2001 – October 2003)," dated 7 May 2004. It is a report largely devoted to torture guidelines and their efficacy. Clark gives us a glimpse of a few pages in that report; the wholly redacted image of a page of which I earlier compared to Kasimir Malevich's *Black Square* (2015) [Figure 6.13], a painting that, given the Russian revolutionary and World War 1 context in which it was produced, has generated varied art-historical interpretations. Notwithstanding these, the painting as regarded retrospectively through a post-photographic prism, is to my mind an *aniconic but sublime* representation of the failure of representation. It is itself, in the absolute sense, non-representational; it refuses the figural, even the abstract figural, in favour of "pure" abstraction. It is a response to the arising of a radical rupture (in the Badiou-Žižek sense) of the socio-political Event Horizon and an overwhelmed inability to visualise beyond. This is the meaning of the work that became the overriding one after World War 2. Philip Shaw writes that Malevich's 'black abstraction was taken up in American art by the likes of Robert Motherwell, Ad Reinhardt and Mark Rothko', and that within image-making practices we now 'see a related preoccupation with the fraught relations between darkness and perception, with the obfuscation of vision as a principle of sublime incomprehension.' (Shaw, 2013) In representing just as they are the declassified heavily redacted documents, Clark enacts a similar 'obfuscation of vision', but the significant difference (apart from historical context, naturally) is that the original obfuscation is not Clark's, but the state's. It does not represent any clouding of vision as 'a principal of *sublime incomprehension*', but rather the reverse: the black blocks of redaction sharpen the viewer's gaze to a critical point of *concrete comprehension* that if the

state is compelled to conceal its activities from its citizens, then those activities are most certainly worthy of considerable interest, investigation, and public disclosure. There is no philosophical impasse or existential confusion to be considered in the face of state redaction; rather, it is the political question of one's role or capacity as citizen witness/observer that is brought into sharp relief. It is a sober swatting away of the sublime and a resolute return to a properly *Realpolitik* engagement with "war" via piecemeal patches of visual evidence. The urgent micro-politics of visualisation dare not indulge too egregiously sublime contemplation.

In showing a completely redacted page [Figure 6.13] of the same photocopied document, we see only the declassified, crossed-through words at the top and bottom of the page: "Top Secret." It denotes visibly not only the simple fact of the state secret, but also, as Lee shrewdly remarks in respect of redaction in general, the words CLASSIFIED or SECRET and the redacted black blocks are themselves an 'iconic representation of that which is withheld from view' (Lee, 2011). The sublime aniconicity of Malevich's *Black Square* in this context of redaction becomes ironically the iconic symbolism of state secrecy. But in both we reach the limits of visibility.

Black Square ostends towards a philosophical incomprehension/failure of representation, whilst Figure 6.13 could be seen - to retrieve a theme of the last chapter - as an ironic comment upon the visibility of the open/public secret of secrecy. Behind this ironic "visibility" though, the challenge is to visualise materially the secret's contents. In this, the next image provides us with the representational hook, the data-wherewithal to peek behind the black blocks for what we might find.

Figure 6.12 in the series, which appears to be an index to the torture guidelines, is also partially

redacted. It is abominably fascinating in what it divulges: that is, the use of a handgun and power drill in torture, waterboarding, mock execution, and so forth. If the state considers this information innocuous enough to disclose, to declassify, this all the more troublingly begs the horrifying question as to what *remains* redacted, what is so heinous that it is rendered literally opaque. The reproduction of this redacted document (which is already a photocopy) as an image removes it as evidence thrice or more (we see it on a computer screen or again, as a further reproduction) from the "scene" of its creation. These levels of remoteness inhere in the image and in this sense it also ostends in abstract fashion towards its own creation and (re)productive function. Its function as a reproduction/reproductive function is to provide us with our closest proxy measure of this particularly vicious aspect of "war." For the image-maker and viewer, the political and aesthetic "use value" of the image lies precisely in what remains redacted in the original document. We see the Event Horizon of where it is our eyes are permitted to roam, and we see what is subtracted from that "space," of which we can never take the full measure, in spite of Clark's honourable ambitions.

However, the point is not just to stop at a proxy measure and then turn away, eyes averted, in a resigned slump. As with the Bucharest map, a little further effort is required to apprise oneself as amnesia-challenging, re-historicising, concerned viewer of the macabre bureaucracy of torture these redacted documents literally point (as opposed to ostend) towards. Here I refer specifically to Figure 6.13. We already know from extant witness testimony, investigative journalism and the Abu Ghraib trophy photographs that other forms of torture aside from those involving mock execution, waterboarding and power drills were used. As alluded to earlier, what has been kept redacted was presumably considered not "in the public interest" to reveal. We can speculate, but we can also deduce on the basis of the above that these forms of torture involved social taboo of sorts, both in a liberal Western and other contexts; namely the use of

sexual torture.¹⁸⁴ The sexual and moral degradation of prisoners such as the use of menstrual blood, urine and excrement, genital torture and electrocution, forcing prisoners to perform sex acts on each other, to include anal rape. (Koenig, 2017; The Conversation, 2014)¹⁸⁵ The further effort of the viewer takes her once again to the Open Society Foundations' press release referred to above. We know the torture was taking place in Bucharest. We know that extensive global state-corporate alliances were forged to undertake rendition, and that at least the Council of Europe found that Romania had assisted the CIA to transfer al-Nashiri in and out of Bucharest, and permitted his secret detention in the Bucharest CIA prison.¹⁸⁶ It would seem at least very likely that there, perhaps in the hand-drawn room, the following occurred:

In May 2004, during his detention in Bucharest, the Senate report confirms that al-Nashiri was subjected to “rectal feeding” after an attempt at launching a hunger strike. He was forced to lie facing upwards with his head below his torso as CIA operatives infused a nutrition drink, *Ensure*, into him through his rectum. The Senate report refers to the practice of rectal rehydration as one that was imposed “without evidence of medical necessity,” that CIA medical officers discussed as a “means of behavior control.” Al-Nashiri was also subjected to abusive CIA conditions of confinement while held in Romania, including solitary incommunicado detention, blindfolding or hooding, continuous noise, continuous light, leg shackling and forced shaving. During the first month of detention there, prisoners were subjected to sleep deprivation, water dousing, slapping and forcible standing in painful positions. (Open Society Foundations)¹⁸⁷

This is where we depart definitively from the “shared experience,” the mundane and workaday aspect in our visualisations that Clark spoke of in his interview with me when articulating his aims in image-making. But whilst we are not there in the house, in those rooms, we are somewhere there; the airport, the train station, the road, the neighbourhood, the pharmacy (online perhaps) that stocks funnels and rubber tubes, the grocery supplier (online perhaps) that stocks *Ensure*.

In any event, none of these documents show any such image of torture.¹⁸⁸ We are required to imagine the nature of the event. We are required to visualise also the burgeoning security business of the ex-combatant, or the superannuated CIA agent reinvigorated by his top secret

instruction from the highest echelons. We can visualise the comfortable homes and happy children of PMSC personnel, or perhaps the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) operative who liaised with the CIA on the rendition. We can imagine the commercial aviator or proudly-lapelled, honourably demobbed F-35 Lockheed Martin Lightning II stealth fighter pilot touching down on a landing strip designated for "unusual" cargo at an airport somewhere in Eastern Europe. We can also imagine ourselves, back in 2004, having disembarked from a plane at said airport - as the above-mentioned pilot with her unusual cargo was landing - looking forward to our little summer conference in a city visited for the first time. Resting thus one's gaze on Figures 6.9 and 6.13, we can visualise richly the dastardly events/Event of twenty-first century "war" and our perblind encounters with them/it.

Figure 6.11 is a page of a transcript of the cross-examination of a PMSC employee/agent. The underlying trial was not a humanitarian matter, but a strictly commercial legal one. There had been a contractual dispute between the provider and the principal, the identity of which is not disclosed by Clark, but it could have been either an intelligence agency or another contractor/subcontractor. The image - of a Real event - literally invokes the queasily Hollywood-clichéd vocabulary of a lawyer conducting a cross-examination of a hapless PMSC employee concerning the rendition activities:

“A bad guy. A bank robber, or something else?” To which the response is presumably “terrorists”, but in a darkly humorous typographical mistake on the part of the stenographer or transcriber, "terrorists" has been erroneously recorded as “theorists.”

Further on, the lawyer continues to refer to the “bad guys”, neutering the impact of the word “terrorist” to keep the matter contained within the amoral register of commercial legal discourse (in a different way here, also a form of corporate veiling). In terms of a visualisation of "war"/Plexus, the bizarre banality of the “war on terror” for the everyday business of the

judicial enforcement of contracts is a paradigmatically perfect instance: it is performative, allegorical, synecdochal and the *de facto* Real all at once. Once again, we see how the power of the image itself - as far from the aesthetic sublime or “art” as one could conceive - resides in a combination of its post-photographic decontextualization/reframing, and its content (process and product), the interwoven assemblage of which affords the work its critical impact. Methodologically, it is again one of those instances which defies the recent call in visual culture studies, like that of David Campbell (Campbell, 2013) to focus on the process *rather than* the product. In this instance it would be "throwing the baby out with the bathwater" and robbing the visualisation of its conceptual Realisation.

Further, as above, a little more probing on the part of the concerned viewer facilitates a co-creative/collaborative intervention in the work’s meaning/impact. Once one has realised that the respondent to the cross-examination (representative of either the accused/defendant or the plaintiff/claimant) in the trial is a private military and security contractor, it remains for the viewer to understand the place of the PMSC under the regulatory aegis of the law of armed conflict. In a percipient sketch of the military-contractual interface of twenty-first century "war", James Cockayne writes that PMSCs

[...] sit in a conceptual and physical position vis-a-vis the battlefield precisely where lines of accountability are weakened by jurisdictional barriers and contractual and informal – rather than command and control – relations. Figuring out how international law can be applied to these highly de-territorialized, networked commercial actors will remain a crucial task in the years ahead.¹⁸⁹ (Cockayne, 2012:655)

We understand that the state-corporate-military nexus cannot do just what it wants; there are, as toothless as they may often prove to be, certain globally consensual checks and balances in the international laws of war to ensure that situations where a ‘PMSC might itself become responsible for violations of international law by becoming a non-state party to a non-

international armed conflict' are avoided as far as possible (Cockayne, 2012: 654). The larger point I am arguing here, however, is that "war" is not only thoroughly mediatized, but it is ontologically corporatized. "War" is no longer "politics by other means", but business-as-usual. Like space exploration, "war" is an evental but systemic, geopolitical and geolocal means of maintaining the (Evental) rights of corporate personhood to prevail over human rights.

The state-corporate, mercenary role in sectarian conflict is yet another aspect of Plexus whereby corporate "persons" demonstrate their ability to venture where even governments alone dare not. United by freedom of contract though, the state, the military and the defence/security industry are positioned to assume legally-entrenched limited liability for their "post-ideological" commercially motivated "war." Whilst not supposed to be operative in cases of white collar crime such as money-laundering, fraud, or corporate manslaughter, the defence and security industry is nonetheless able to rely upon the customary legal mechanisms of its corporate advent to profit from (and instigate/perpetuate) conflict. Clark's re-presentation of this excerpt of a cross-examination transcript in a trial involving a PMSC yields to the co-creative visualiser an understanding which reaches well beyond the narrative frame of the image. This is one of this imagery's aims (pursuant to a Mitchellian provocative ascription of agency to the image), and in this, Clark has compellingly succeeded in developing a strategy of visualisation which constitutes the viewer as willing - "aiding and abetting" - collaborator in the forensic (de)cadastration of "war".

6.3 Lisa Barnard and *Whiplash Transition*

Lisa Barnard too takes a topographical/forensic architectural approach in some of her projects. Notably, for our purposes, two quite different projects: under the rubric of the *Whiplash*

Transition category, they are *AUVS*¹ – the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International, and *Mapping the Territory*. The former is an arms manufacturer conference which she attended and at which her interactions with other delegates were apparently tracked and recorded on a Wescam MX-25 Thermal Imaging System (which she describes on her website, some Vimeo footage of which is also accessible there).

Barnard shows us images on her website of the conference floorplan; where a veritable rogue's gallery of weapons and weapons systems, surveillance, security and related industry players, from the behemoth to the modest, exhibited their wares [Figures 6.14, 6.15]. As we ascertain, and as would be expected, the bigger the corporation, the more capacious the stall, and vice versa. Boeing's stall is about 10 times larger than the Argon corporation, three or four times larger than Grifon Aerospace, but only marginally more commodious than General Dynamics Robotic Systems.¹⁹⁰ In any event, the wealth and attendant political lobbying power of any global arms industry player is hardly a secret. It is this apparent transparency, however, openly and in business-like fashion represented in the conference floorplan which belies itself through Barnard's simple reproduction of it. This act of re-presentation shows us what we see, and *what* we see is once more a proxy measure of the sheer magnitude of what we are *not* permitted to see. In this "showcase" of Barnard's, what we may see, and where she is afforded access (albeit under surveillance)¹⁹¹ is something we already know. But it is made "transparent". And thereby, we are afforded the proxy measure, the cadastral excess hidden in plain sight, of what we cannot see, where we may not tread, what we dare not "triangulate."

In this sense, Barnard is not actually revealing anything, or visualising anything we cannot do ourselves via, for example, the simple and seemingly banal act of keeping abreast of financial capital markets and the websites themselves of defence/aeronautical/aviation/naval industries.

Here it is more a taxonomic, librarian-like filing away (or rather, archival uploading) of the tedious administrative and logistical minutiae of an assiduous Corporate Event planner. But it is also an almost mimetic act, or performance, of cadastral precision: she is presenting us with images of documentation, like Clark does, but in which the level of seeming transparency and mundanity is of a sort that almost renders one "care-less." What is this, the viewer may ask, and why should one be at all interested in these images? They are not, on the face of it, aestheticisations. They are also not "just" documentary in nature. But this, it is submitted, is why these images and the act of their (re)production so compellingly ostend. The performance, as art-conceptually laconic as it is, can only lay claim to an approximate "weighing up of the evidence". As with Clark, it behoves us as viewers (and image-makers) to continue to imagine/visualise/investigate beyond the image's frame in order to track "war" and Plexus "at work" in its executive suit and tie. The AUVSI defence and security industry trade fair is the paradigmatic showcase for the State-Corporate Exception which normalises "war" whilst operating under the corporate veil of limited liability for the tally of "collateral losses" against its profits.

In *Mapping the Territory*, Barnard does something different. In the first link in this series of images, she makes her foray into the emerging field of image-making and scholarship signalled by the use of terms such as "drone vision" or "drone aesthetics,"¹⁹² where the likes of Omer Fast, Harun Farocki and Trevor Paglen, to name just a few of the better known purveyors of the art shall no doubt take their places in the (post-photographic) artistic canon.¹⁹³

As has been discussed above, visual culture and cultural studies has for some time been engaging with issues of topography, experimental geography and forensic architecture. For example, remote or automatic target recognition as topic of research is generating a significant amount of scholarship. In much of this literature, reference is made to the concept of the "scopic

regime”¹⁹⁴ and which has also been mentioned or alluded to earlier in this thesis. In this chapter though, the gaze of the drone and the viewer is decentred: the images are approached once again along the lines of the cadastral, and viewer proxy measurement, of the invisible aspects of Plexus.

Barnard prefaces her series of *Mapping the Territory* images [Figures 6.16, 6.17, 6.18] with an informative text on the technology that has been developed to enable drone vision. She, like Norfolk, also refers directly by name to the commercial enterprises engaged in building drones ; here it is General Atomics. She describes the Multi-Spectral Targeting System (MTS) aboard an MQ-1B Predator drone and the details of how it is operated, to include the biotechnical dynamics of the human crew and the sensors, etc.¹⁹⁵ She states that ‘aerial mapping or photographic reconnaissance has been used by air forces since the early twentieth century, overlapping a number of photographs to form a large photomosaic of the area.’¹⁹⁶

The visual feedback from the drone works on similar geometric/triangulating principles, and we see in the coloured, geometric line figures that Barnard superimposes on the black and white photographic collages the flight patterns of the drones whilst obtaining visual data for the purposes of target identification.

The base or underlying photograph in the series of images on which these drone flight patterns are superimposed are ostensibly taken from *Jane’s pocket book of remotely piloted vehicles: robot aircraft today* (Taylor, 1977), and Barnard, in the layer between the base image and coloured line flight pattern has superimposed other, smaller-format photographs of a variety of objects, to include groups of watching men and boys, military, sandy or stony landscapes, and an image containing metal monitors with rows of dials in what appears to be an abandoned military lookout post of sorts.

In one image [Figure 6.16] a small square appears to have been cut into the top layer of the earth to reveal another separate earth beneath - a kind of subterranean basement. Barnard cites Allan Sekula on *Jane's pocket book*, who wrote that, 'as sources of military intelligence, these pictures carried an almost wholly denotative significance'(Barnard, website).¹⁹⁷ Sekula is speaking of the base images before Barnard palimpsested them, but the words have a lingering relevance for the collages too. As denotative pointers, Barnard's imagery here is indicative enough in its visual vocabulary to tell us that something very wrong has taken/is taking place. She has striated the surfaces of the images, and in respect of Figure 6.16, has "intervened" in the appearance of the earth by lodging within and atop it a fragment of torn or sliced metal, suggestive of exploded ordnance, a missile or bomb. Beyond denotation though, here too it is an ostensive "politics of metonymy" at work. The aerial *hunt* of the (absent) drone armed with vision, automatic target recognition and killing power is ostended to by the sleek and precise geometry of the superimposed lines, and the eviscerated, mutilated (absent) bodies are rhetorically ostended to by the metal tear in the fabric of an earth that was Home to the defenceless victims, who may literally have "not seen it coming." Their corpses themselves would have been grossly excess to brute requirement in viewing the means and "moment" of their violent death. Instead, their corporate-collateral murders are memorialised by the geometry and genetic algorithms of "war."

There is only image here that contains the human figure [Figure 6.17]. The figures too are a site of potential violence, representing a vulnerable fleshy spot on the flight pattern "map," linked only to their remote killer by the indifferent drone whose geometric patterns in the air eventually find only one cadastral co-ordinate below: *there* where the target will cease to be. The use of archival imagery and the collage technique of juxtaposition and overlay is one that is reminiscent of the method adopted by Broomberg and Chanarin in their *Holy Bible and War*

Primer 2 [see Figure 6.19] referred to briefly in that chapter. Here too, Barnard eschews the direct imaging of state killing, and, whilst discreetly reminding the viewer of the human point of the images by the inclusion of people, the inhabitants of the area, she is intent upon inviting the viewer, as in the above image, to focus her gaze upon the sinister flight patterns of the areas under surveillance.

As mentioned, these appear as perfectly-shaped brightly-coloured spherical, elliptical, hexagonal or similar geometric patterns, suggesting the pre-programmed surveillance moves that drones make in their aerial reconnaissance and surveillance activities [Figures 6.16, 6.17, 6.18, 6.19]. The machine-learning or genetic algorithms whereby the drones “automatically” hone in on their targets do not “see”: drone *vision* is a performative paradox. The drone “senses” through sensors. The scopic is but a regime that becomes almost entirely incidental to the act of killing. “Whites of the eyes” are not required in modern warfare targeted killing, because the combatant with the “overview” has no vision. That sense has been delegated to an assemblage of maps, sensors, circuit boards, nanotechnology, digitised metal, and ultimately, algorithmic calculations: the weaponized drone, AI-primed for automatic target recognition. It is a categorical mistake of the grimmest order to think that by endowing this assemblage with the faculty of sight, one has safely secured for modern warfare the moral imagination of vision. Kathrin Maurer posits three dimensions of the 'scopic regime' of the armed drone: 'hypervisibility, visual immersion, and invisibility'. (Maurer, 2016: 141) Whilst it is not difficult to grasp how the first two function in their fullness, invisibility is not simply a matter of the eagle-eyed, furtive silence of the out-of-line-of-vision, high-hovering drone: it is also the abstract invisibility of the very conditions of possibility of its automatic target recognition capacities. These conditions of possibility required to equip the drone to learn and to recognise reside - ontologically, as it were - in the genetic algorithms which provide the

computational means of its operations. The "act" of computation is not unfolding physically, writ large on a screen somewhere or microscopically embedded in some silicon chip. The computations - freed from their inaugural human development and "training" exercises (see Rostami, 2016, in Conclusion) - happen autonomously, abstractly, invisibly.

Trevor Paglen describes succinctly the operation of such computation as follows: 'All computer vision systems produce mathematical abstractions from the images they're analyzing, and the qualities of those abstractions are guided by the kind of metadata the algorithm is trying to read [...]' (Paglen, 2016). In this case, you see the source of the "metadata" in Barnard's sombre image of a huddle of men [Figure 6.17]: these are the individuals, one (or more) of whom may or may not be the object-subject of a drone strike. The abstract invisibility of the machine's algorithmic operations may sanitise war by reducing collateral damage from a quantitative or numerical perspective, but it does not avoid discrimination: it is "trained" by its original programmers precisely to discriminate. Politically expedient numbers do not translate into an ideologically exonerable *jus ad bellum*. As Wilcox, Amoore and Raley soberly observe, 'Through the intermediation of algorithmic, visual, and affective modes of embodiment, drone warfare reproduces *gendered and racialized bodies* that enable a necropolitics of massacre'. (Wilcox et al., 2017). It is rather a new politics of military murder that emerges out of the computationally abstract process of machine-learning and our sanitary devolution of the act of targeted (or mass) murder to metal, sensors and genetic algorithms. It is what is now being called "data-driven warfare" (Daniel Rothenberg, 2015: 441-462), which is 'seen most clearly in the use of signature strikes, which illustrate a newly invasive form of projecting lethal force linking substantive advances in information collection and analysis with remote killing.' (Bergen and Rotherberg, 2015: 5)

Barnard's geometric drone flight paths superimposed on besieged lands and enemy "flesh

spots" ostend, in my reading, towards what appears to be the profound amorality of this 'data-driven' 'scopic regime' of the state-corporate-military nexus. But technology - and certainly digital technology - is not necessarily to be thought of as amoral at all. As that sci-fi luminary, Arthur C. Clark, once said, "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."¹⁹⁸ And it is in my view this auratic magic of the algorithmic or digital abstraction which is ontologically constitutive of our very means of communication, data gathering and transmission, and so much more, that makes it especially dangerous. It *is* magic - in that the workings of which cannot be perceived or understood. If there is a socially abstract heart to data-driven twenty-first century state-corporate-media-military warfare, it sits coldly nestled in the implacable algorithmic logic of evolutionary computation.

Barnard's drone flight path imagery collaboratively "co-created" in this way can thus be regarded performatively paradoxical ostensions, as the imagery ostends simultaneously back towards the gaze of its viewer, suggesting to her a critical and counter-visual way of seeing that resists and dissents from the 'amoral' algorithmic 'necropolitics of massacre' and its ever so silent ideological legitimation through the instrumental reification of (meta)data (See further in Conclusion).

In respect of the legal paradigm for targeted killing, Finkelstein et al write that it has shown itself to be

a crucial if not the crucial, issue of military ethics of our day. It is a lens through which to study the core aspects of modern warfare, such as the safety of high-level technology in selective killing operations to eliminate enemies who are at the very least intermingled with the civilian population, if not properly considered civilians themselves. (Finkelstein et al., 2013: viii)

In Barnard's series of images, no distinction is made between the combatant and the civilian. The image, unlike the algorithm, resolutely "chooses" not to make this invidious

determination. In "reality", the person who has the sole discretion to decide upon whether someone is a combatant or civilian is the US President (military commanders by delegation); so established under the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) rules which came into existence after 9/11 (Maxwell, 2013: 38). This became the legal paradigm for the "war on terror", one in which it is entirely permissible to inflict 'death on enemy personnel *irrespective of the actual risk they represent*' (Maxwell, 2013: 38) (my italics). We encounter below the cold calculations, via the cadastral, of a state-corporate-military alliance whereby the death of 'enemy personnel' is cynically "factored into" the limited liability State-Corporate "War" Exception.

How is Barnard's approach to visualisation here cadastral rather than cartographic/topographic? The distinction lies in the forensic attention to the cold geometry of aerial reconnaissance and its *methods of measurement*. Landscapes are cadastrated by the state aggressor as potential sites harbouring threats/targets. The measured "mapping" of the landscape is focused on only one thing, and that is the geometric fixing of what I refer to here as a "variable vector"; the random trajectory of the target. The variable vector is a concept in interactive mathematics, meaning simply that the vector - the line in a space-time forcefield - can change both direction and magnitude over time.¹⁹⁹ The hapless *object* of military reconnaissance and terminal *subject* of the UAV payload is just such a variable vector: the randomly moving human being. She is also the paradoxical object of state-corporate-military "use value." Without her and her random movements, the Predator or Reaper drone does not exist. She is established as the reason for its development, its capitalo-ontic necessity. As aleatory as she is as a vectoral quantity, she figures more predictably and profitably in the contractual calculations of General Atomics, Northrop Grumman, Textron and Boeing, who between them manufacture around 66% of military drones in global use (Peck, 2016). In an

inversion of the above, her *certain* death figures in the profit, rather than the loss column of their audited accounts. This algorithmic/geometric/contractual/accounting drone cadastration is a kind of direful *decadastration*, a legal/commercial/humanitarian “abuse of process,” if you want. It is the strategic pretence of security/defence in which the protagonists in this theatre of (perpetual) "war" hunker comfortably down behind the corporate veil.

The tropological language here is not simply a literary device deployed for rhetorical or polemical impact. It has too a denotative intent and, I contend, a material verity. What we at first perceive as a socially abstract form of violence has its forensically traceable objective correlative in "real abstraction" - crudely-speaking, the money-commodity/money-labour equivalence. As collaborative viewer in flushing out the 'dark workings of the state,' (Broomberg; supra) it behoves us not to neglect matters of capital, contract, law, and the dry-eyed financialisation of "war." Such "territory" is not the exclusive domain of historical materialism, or forensic accounting, or the archaeology and political economy of war. This kind of cadastration exercise could be critically serviceable for the discourse of visual culture too, in the (data-aesthetic) visualisation of the invisible, socially abstract but relentlessly systemic violence we see, and we don't. Through its visual vocabulary, its aesthetic strategizing, Barnard's imagery lends itself, in my readings, to such forensically collaborative post-production.

What I have attempted to build here via my readings is a cadastral construct, or methodology, which reveals, and insistently reinstates, the human being at the centre of the non/inhuman "war" landscape. This also flushes out from their deep corporate embedding the (perfectly legal) commercial contracts for supply of military goods and services, ostending a morally arraigning finger towards the neoliberal State-Corporate Exception at the heart of the

imperialist cadastration of Others, then, now and - it is to be surmised - for a long while to come.

In summary, Barnard's title for the latter series - *Mapping the Territory* - overtly draws our attention as viewers towards the topographical/cartographic: her geometric shapes literally overlay the besieged lands with a mathematical/computational language which, in tandem with its terror(ist)-triangulation, quietly ostends towards the corporatist-financial accounting which has been "figured" into the "war" cadastration of the land. This is a co-creative image-concept composition which constructs a cadastral *dispositif* of state-corporate-military terror.

Whilst the state seeks to develop ever more enhanced targeting capabilities in accordance with its legitimising humanitarian narrative of the *elimination* of "collateral casualties", what is problematically subsumed by this is, as ever it was, the ever-useful ideological construction of the enemy. The hyperconnected accretion of our "way of seeing" Others, (our)selves, war and power paradoxically converges, I argue, with a collective, complicit, post-ideological forfeiting of the "power of distinction" between forms of violence we have "democratically" chosen, and those which have been insinuated into existence by corporate power.

If strategies of visualisation such as that adopted here by Barnard are to pique the viewer into re-visioning her powers of distinction, they have perforce to be diligently attended to: it is not enough to appraise the work, to apply once again scholarly or art-world criteria of success/failure, or hermeneutic determinations as to meaning or insist, pursuant to Campbell et al that the adoption of a theoretical distinction between product and process will achieve frame-busting wonders. Barnard and the other image-makers whose work has been examined here all adopt viewer-inclusive strategies of visualisation which insist on something essentially practical: for the image viewer/user to continue to enquire into, to investigate what it is they

(think) they are viewing. This is a kind of *sine qua non* for the post-photographic visualisation of "war" as an essentially critical and/or dissenting activity which reaches beyond the fusty confines of academe or the cerebral stillness of the gallery. The viewer ought to be prepared to act collaboratively both within and beyond the "moment" of the work's production, within and outwith its frame, curation and contexts. The piecemeal, guerrilla decadastration of "war" and Plexus occurs in daily acts of strategic visualisation, not only of art-documentary works, but of power-violence-person-image-text assemblages that we piece together through our vigilance as concerned citizen observers.

6.4 In Conclusion: a Visual Forensics of (De)cadastral Mapping

We tend to think less about the sky above us being "triangulated," but it is no less subject to colonization, territorialization, militarization and weaponization than the earth and its inhabitants. A land law principle operative in most parts of the world is that property owners have rights not only to the plot of land itself, but also to the air above it, the heavens. In England, this is known as the *ad coelum* doctrine (which dates back to the 13th century) and is still the basis of modern land law, if not quite to the feudal extent it was then.²⁰⁰ I argue that the weaponization of the sky and of space is in a sense an *ad coelum* total possession of the heavens by power: an anthropocentric (and "capitalocenic")²⁰¹ cadastration of the heavens; the imposition of stratospheric delimitations and biospheric boundaries, with the geopolitical, social, economic, cultural and environmental effects which attend such arrogation.

What Clark and Barnard's post-photographic intervention does in part is to attempt to "take the measure" of such "war"/Plexus arrogation, not only of the heavens, but of all lived-in,

existential, collective and (inter)subjective spaces, wherever. It is the use of the art(fulness) of imagery to attempt a proxy measure of an infinite and extensive tangle of relations, structures, institutions, organisations, networks, systems and activities which, rather than being "evil", are simply amoral in their legal, managerial, commercial and administrative operations. However, whilst the algorithms so fundamental to data-driven drone warfare are certainly "amoral", their "handlers" are far from it.

Naturally, the image will always fail to "take the measure" of "war" or Plexus, but it is the aesthetic imperative of, pursuant to Mitchell, the image as agent that it hews as closely as possible to the "delimitations" or "boundaries" - the vanishing point - of its critical object in order to provide that proxy measure of it. The image thereby brings the viewer into closer proximity with its "target"; an ever-elusive one because it cannot be calculated.

The cadastral challenge of the image is to see just how close the proxy measure can get. Once we have derived what we can from denotation, the post-photographic image as performative of a proxy measure thus has an immanently ostensive, as opposed to representative, function. It does not represent something, but gestures both ineffably and eloquently at the same time, towards something other it "sees". When we follow the image's gaze, as it were, what we see is an alternating chiaroscuro: the luminosity of evidence or the mephitic gloom of its lack. In either case, I argue, the strategy of visualisation for the *witness/viewer* is actively and co-creatively to follow *both* the light and the lack with forensic, investigative vigour.

Conclusion

In this thesis I set out to explore theoretically, critically and creatively the witnessing and visualisation of power and its forms of violence: not of the direct, "raw" violence of war, but of its indirect, "refined," systemic or socially abstract, in/visible forms of violence in which we are all daily immersed and in which we perform, on some level, participate. In particular, I enquired the following:

What strategies of visualisation are being deployed by contemporary image-makers to represent twenty-first century power and its systemic and socially abstract violence forms of violence (in particular, war)? The question was also inverted, enquiring how can power and its systemic and socially abstract forms of violence - as the point of departure in themselves - be witnessed, that is, visualised? In other words, what new strategies and vocabularies of visualisation can be developed or deployed in the challenge more effectively "to see" "war" and "Plexus"?

The questions were formulated broadly, as the areas of enquiry or debate engaged here ranged in trans/interdisciplinary fashion over multiple and interrelated discourses, giving rise to a plethora of potential perspectives on the topic as it was formulated here. The approach was predominantly conceptual/theoretical, although the generalising and abstract nature of the exploration belied the interstitial and highly particular unfurling of a hybrid, collaborative or co-creative, forensic or quasi-empirical engagement with the imagery, especially in later chapters. Ultimately, its methodology was both theoretical and performative, and to this extent the thesis diverged from the standard conventions of academic scholarship and attempted in

somewhat experimental fashion to contribute towards a fresh "way of seeing" power and its forms of violence, and ways of engaging as a scholar with contemporary image-making practices. To this end I constructed a theoretical/conceptual scaffolding held together by the nuts and bolts of my conception of "war" and Plexus, elucidated in detail in the introduction (and summarised below). The thesis was structured in such a way that, whilst each chapter dealt with its own specific concerns and themes, there was an overall narrative arc which saw the concepts, ideas and themes overlapping, contesting and resonating with one another. The conceptual constellation/s consisting of extant and "found" terms, both typical and atypical of visual culture research, provided the bespoke methodological tools for the exploration, analysis and critical discussion. Central to this experiment was the attempt to develop thought-provoking and potentially useful and (re)politicised vocabulary for critical visual culture/media/cultural studies.

The thesis traced a narrative and theoretical arc through various overlapping conceptual constellations in the exploration and critical discussion of the topic. The journey began with the much-debated question of complicity in the representation and (secondary) witnessing of war in Chapter One; Chapter Two explored examples of what I considered to be aniconic post-photographic re-presentations of traditional war imagery; Chapter Three followed the controversial, Brechtian theatre-of-the-absurd post-photographic embedding performance by Broomberg and Chanarin; Chapter Four on Norfolk's work saw the provisional suspension of complicity, the turn to grand technologies and an aesthetics of the Military Sublime in the visualisation of modern corporatized warfare; Paglen's projects in Chapter Five showcased his canny aesthetico-politics of in/visibility in the shrewd dance of concealment and revelation he engaged in with his investigatory image-making; and Chapter Six on the work of Clark and

Barnard returned us by way of the "war on terror" to the eloquently absent human beings at the centre of the most violent depredations of Plexus.

It was from Chapter Four onwards that arguably one of the most significant points of departure for the thesis from the current visual culture scholarship surrounding "war" was enacted with the emphasis on "corporate personhood" and the "corporate veil." This pair of concepts I brought to bear in my "readings", or deployed as tools in pursuit of a collaborative effort to carry forward the images' powers of intervention (and to optimise their desiring agency, as it were). Situating corporatisation at the heart of power and its forms of violence permitted the articulation of a "State-Corporate Exception", a re-appropriation of Agamben's "state of exception" which expands its remit to emphasise the in/visible role of the corporate person in "war" and Plexus. The Paglen chapter also paid detailed attention to the public/open secret of Plexus, exploring the paradox of transparency/visibility and opacity/invisibility as a strategy of *both* power (for ideological purposes) and Paglen's post-photographic visualisation (as a self-reflexive means of exposure/dissent/resistance to power). Chapter Six's re-appropriation of the concepts of the "cadastral", the "proxy measure" and the "variable vector" served then to enhance and theoretically extend the cartographic/topographic and essentially forensic nature of Clark and Barnard's approach to the visualisation of "war" (and Plexus). Once again, a co-creative, collaborative approach was explored and performed, as it were, in the course of the readings, conceptualisation and argumentation.

In general, war was referred to throughout as "war" to capture and place emphasis on the twenty-first century layered complexity of war and our virtual, digitally mediated encounter with war and conflict at Home, its strategic narrative and media-military framing

("mediatization"), and the post-911 diffuse evolution of war into new forms of warfare which are no longer localised in any particular theatre of war Elsewhere.

The notion of "Plexus" was proposed as shorthand for the diffuse and all-pervasive state-corporate-media-information-entertainment-military-security-surveillance-(etc.) expansion of "war" onto and beyond our screens and into our civil, commercial, private and public spaces. To "encapsulate" this state of affairs, neither the "military-industrial complex" nor MIME-NET and similar terms were found to suffice as they overlooked the significance of the corporate entity as a seemingly post-ideological/post-political corporatist organisational principle (and principal) of power and its forms of violence. Plexus was designed both to gesture towards the conceptual impossibility of grasping this situation/phenomenon in its "social totality" and the often socially abstract nature of such power and forms of violence which, whilst utterly brute and concrete in its material effects, "appears" invisible, intangible, immaterial at the level of systemic, asymmetrical social leverage.

The thesis thus identified global corporatization (a condition of possibility for digital hyperconnectivity too) as centripetal to Plexus and "war." My argument was that the corporatized/financialized, militarized, mediatized and securitized socius of our daily experience is productive of a distinctive twenty-first century social ontology to which even an *ad hoc* term like Plexus signally fails to do conceptual justice. I thus proposed it as a term which also ostends immanently towards its own insufficiency. Notwithstanding this, "Plexus" sought to play a strategic role in the concerned or dissenting, co-creative and collaborative viewing and visualisation of twenty-first century power and its forms of violence, globally, and "geolocally.

Further, it was significant for this thesis, pursuant to Allan, Cottle, Kennedy, Hoskins and O'Loughlin respectively, that an epoch of mediatized, citizen-witnessed, perpetual and Diffused/Arrested War was (is) also the framework/context and condition of emergence of what is now being termed post-documentary or post-photography practices of image-making. It is as if, for example, "Diffused War" (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010) was the enabling catalyst for the emergence of new concerned/dissident post-photographic ways of seeing. If there was a digitally-triggered, image-fare wobble for the traditional media-military axis, it was a wobble that only gave added impetus and direction to both critical citizen participation in the visualisation of war/"war," and to post-photographic/post-documentary strategic visualisation. In particular, it is post-photographic art-documentary image-makers who have "responded" to the new media ecology with scintillating, inventive and politically reinvigorating ways of visualising the in/visible, in/nonhuman or socially abstract aspects of war/ "war" and power/Plexus.

There is a growing convergence in what these image-makers are doing and what current media, visual culture and critical visibility studies demands: image-makers are gesturing with their images to that intractable "Real" beyond the confines of the frame to the processes and conditions of possibility of the image. This is the current "structure of feeling" (Raymond Williams)²⁰² now permeating visualisation practices and scholarship in respect of the witnessing of "war" and state-corporate-military forms of violence. "Arrested War" (O'Loughlin and Hoskins, 2015) has only served to consolidate this post-photographic tendency, and indeed, provided it with a renewed critical urgency to visualise the unseen, the invisible, the unattended to, or the (ideologically) "transparent" opacity of state-corporate violence.

A particular point worth reiteration is that in this thesis I signally did not accept the call to focus primarily on the *processes* of visualisation: it may not be fashionable to approach images with the traditional methodologies of art history/visual culture such as semiotics, iconology and psychoanalysis, but here the interdisciplinary field of visual culture studies is an eminently open one, and its conceptual or methodological tools are to be exploited in the interests of both "productive" and "processive" readings. This, it is contended, is the more interesting and critically useful way of considering what it means to visualise war/power now. The "un-disciplined" nature of such an approach should not be an epistemological or methodological disqualification; indeed, it is a hallmark of trans/interdisciplinary research that it runs various, sometimes conflicting or incongruous voices together. If new and expanded vocabularies for the visualisation of war and power is what we are after, then reductive recipes for visualisation are scarcely likely to be able to offer any insights of probative, scholarly value.

As Jayne Wilkinson vigorously enquires, ‘How can we visualize subjects as wide ranging as border policing, surveillance systems, drone attacks, economic inequality, environmental catastrophe, late capitalism, global finance?’ She opines that this is ‘the overarching question’ with which image-makers

concern themselves, in projects that interrogate the limits of photography and representation during a contemporary moment where the definition of photography, as a medium, a practice, and a process, is in continual flux (Wilkinson, 2015).

The assertion here that image-makers are now interrogating the limits of photography and representation ‘as a medium, a practice, and a process’ is brought into direct alignment with the subject matter whereby or through which this limit-testing visualisation is taking place. It is at the harrowing macrolevel of global corporatization and

(mediatized/perpetual/diffused/arrested) "war." However, I pointed out that the image-makers whose selected works were explored, although clearly attempting to represent what is referred to here as "war," were not necessarily trying to represent "Plexus" in the way it has here been formulated, or even "corporate personhood" as such. These aspects of the visualisations have through my viewing/reading and further "co-creation" been drawn out of the images as agents, as autonomously, polyvalently and ostensibly "yielding" to the viewer and context/s of reception, their further "meanings" and significance. The treatment does not, for the most part, "read"/co-create the images "against the grain": the exploration of the strategies of visualisation remains true to the dissident ethos and political concerns of the image-makers themselves. The image-makers are, after all, all critically conscious, for example, of the role of corporate power in the perpetuation of "war." Analysis of their deliberate and artful strategies of visualisation suggested this, as I sought to articulate what often remained inchoate or "subtextual" in the imagery itself.

Significantly, in engaging with this imagery, I sought to demonstrate *performatively* how the "universal spectator" (Azoulay, 2008) could exercise her forensic imagination to collaborate in *producing* further evidence, significance, and truth - or "probative value" - of or for the imagery. In so doing, these post-photographic strategies of visualisation have been seen to proffer to the (hypothetical) viewer enhanced or enriching possibilities not only for interpretation, but for co-creative collaboration in the dissident visualisation of modern power and its seemingly abstract forms of violence.

I shall now discuss in further detail the aims/objectives, findings and contributions to visual culture research within the context of each chapter.

Chapter One set out the terms of an initial point of embarkation for the thesis trajectory. It was a more general and philosophical investigation, briefly and selectively revisiting of some of the key ethical (and historical) terms, issues and debates of the last century in relation especially to the question of complicity in the visual representation of the violence of war, and the violence of the representation of violence (war) itself. I considered the question of complicity in the witnessing, creation and viewing of violent imagery (referred to as secondary witnessing in this thesis, pursuant to Felman (1992) and LaCapra (1998, 2001) anew with specific reference to some significant contexts of its use: the Shoah, Judeo-Christian theology and Freudo-Lacanian psychoanalysis. I did this by way of further theoretical and philosophical concepts germane to the topic, namely, Judeo-Christian guilt, "Vergangenheitsbewältigung," "gegenwältige Bewältigung", the Lacanian "Gaze," and the Levinasian "face" as the condition of possibility for an ethical relation to the "Other."

The discussion of the ethico-political and philosophical implications of social attitudes towards the question of complicity as a subject *in-itself* was enriched with reference to the ideas of Hannah Arendt. I comparatively pitted her conviction that a collective *mea culpa* in the face of atrocities such as the Shoah acts as a cover for and absolve of the real perpetrators, against the idea of the collective ineluctability of complicity as the very condition of possibility for politically-motivated activism or cultural resistance. In relation to this, the issue which arose with non/inhuman imagery of power was that, by eliding or occluding the human figure/face, such imagery thereby simultaneously denied an ethical relation to the Other. Pursuant to Levinas, the face - and the gaze - features (as it were) as intersubjective condition of possibility for an inaugurally ethical relation to the Other. That is, the face "figures" as the pre-semiotic - meant here in the sense in which Julia Kristeva conceives of it (Kristeva, 1984) - condition for

an *affective* relation to others.²⁰³ By inference, if we remember Benjamin's declared ambivalence in relation to the proto-abstract/surrealist photography of the early twentieth century, '*photography cannot do without people*' (Benjamin, 1972[1931]:21), the post-photographic non/inhuman disengagement of an affective, intersubjective register could be argued as ineluctably undermining its claims of dissenting concern. However, the view I argued for is that it is an irresolvable dichotomy, the "negative dialectical" suspension of which is strategically and/or theoretically appropriate in respect of the concept itself, and those victims of violence or atrocity in the name of whom we "agonise" over in the first instance.

The extant terms in German, - "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" (coming to terms with the past) and "gegenwärtige Bewältigung" (coming to terms with the present) were invoked in this chapter to suggest that, far from a process that occurs in relation only to past trauma and historical memory (of war), the visualisation in the present of (past/present) war/"war" is a continuous and open-ended one, always containing (in both senses of the word) the past, which cannot be contained by any single act of commemoration or memorialisation. In Chapter Two I argued how post-photographic intervention in the visualisation of "war" illustrates this through its aesthetic forms and its chosen content, both that preoccupied with understanding the present (eg., the Military Sublime), and that of a semi-archival, past-oriented nature (eg., Haddock's visual palimpsest and Broomberg and Chanarin's *Belfast Troubles* series or *War Primer 2*). Both contribute to an Other kind of "war" memorialisation. I proposed that the concept of a "gegenwärtige Bewältigung" could serve in its extension beyond the context of atrocity as a very specific avenue for further research, that of memory studies. How is violence in its more abstract forms to be collectively witnessed and memorialised in the impossible mnemonic matrix of the past-present war/"war"/trauma? I argued that the hypernetworked nature of our social reality/virtuality may be the very (paradoxical/ironic) condition of

possibility for the development of a (re)politicised visual literacy able, finally, to cope with the open-ended, inconclusive nature of social abstraction. It seems to me that this has potential to be a highly fertile area of investigation which brings into conceptual constellation memory, the present, virtual reality (the "Digital Sublime") and the visualisation of social abstraction.

In terms of post-photographic strategies of visualisation in **Chapter Two**, this "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" was poignantly showcased by Alfredo Jaar's powerful "post-traumatic" work (Chow, 2012), such as his little, sealed memorial boxes housing the images and details of the victims of "ethnic cleansing," but (ostensibly, which I questioned) preserving their dignity post-mortem by refusing the further violation of public re-presentation. Another such iconic example discussed was Nick Ut's *The Terror of War* (1972), showing horrifically scorched and terrified, fleeing human figures. John Haddock's post-photographic reworking of it by way of digital suppression of these figures, leaving an empty, hazy, lugubrious landscape, suggestive of nothing less than genocide. It thereby subverts the original's fraught iconicity in an "aniconic" act of erasure. Alfredo Jaar's aniconic act in respect of Carter's controversial, troubling image was not erasure as such, but rather a deep and excoriating probing of collective witnessing and the becoming iconic of death and atrocity. This subject matter - genocide - a very direct form of violence, I thus reframed in such a way that indicated an update of the current scholarly or analytical paradigm of commemoration/memorialisation was overdue, and that alternative strategies of visualisation ought to be harnessed and further developed in the interests of a more nuanced treatment of war/"war" (and, indeed, collective "memory" thereof).

Both Chapters One and Two marked a departure from and expansion of the terms of the (Arendt/Sontag et al-inspired) debate in war photography/visual culture scholarship, on the complicity of the secondary witness in viewing images of human suffering, trauma and death

as a result of war and conflict. Here complicity was recontextualised in relation to the aesthetics, ethics and politics of what I referred to as "aniconic" (as opposed to iconoclastic)²⁰⁴ strategies of visualisation, subjecting to scrutiny the absurdist, paradoxical performance by Broomberg and Chanarin in Chapter Three. *The Day Nobody Died* showcased how, for all their dissenting impact and significance, an "escape" from the quintessentially Judeo-Christian moral trope of complicity is by no means assured. In these first chapters I identified an unexamined assumption amongst those considering the ethics of post-photographic visualisation (such as Anderson and Möller, 2015), that it was more or less irrelevant to the post-photographic representation of war and conflict. Amongst other things, these chapters sought fruitfully to address this almost wilful neglect of/misrecognition of the complexity of the notion of complicity in relation to the visualisation of social abstraction or systemic and indirect forms of violence. My objective in respect of this point was to engender a more theoretically rigorous approach to the ethico-politics of the contemporary "post-photographic" representation of war/"war."

Chapter Three recounted Broomberg and Chanarin's mock-embedding in the Helmand province with the UK army in 2008. We saw that it was an absurdist strategy of visualisation - or rather, given its fundamentally performative and audaciously *ad hoc* nature - an absurdist "tactics of visualisation." I posed the question as to whether it was a conceptually abstruse, aesthetically vacuous and ethico-politically barren exercise, or if it "succeeded" in exposing the travesty of "objective" or "neutrally" fact-finding and informative media reportage from photojournalist-embedding in conflict zones. The question itself was contingent upon the expectations and presuppositions the viewer/scholar has concerning not only the nature of an embedding, but more significantly for this thesis, the overlapping but differential roles of traditional media and art-documentary visualisation. Notwithstanding the various angles the

discussion took, ultimately, my view was that the duo missed a crucial opportunity in "failing" or "refusing" to look sufficiently beyond their own preconceived art-documentary aims, which they began mechanically to carry out prior to the embedding. I argued that although the evidence is that they were self-reflexively conscious of being at the epicentre of mediatized war, they paid scant attention to it. Their defining concern revolved around their lack of access at the *evental* level, not to the *processive* level of mediatization. The media-military dialectic of communication fundamentally constitutive of mediatized war is not only about controlling "public access" to atrocious events. It entails amongst other things also a systemic and dynamic co-narration, co-creation and/or perpetuation of "war" by the media, the military and the viewing/witnessing, voting public. Further, its framing arguably (pursuant to Butler) predetermines what the public, to include both traditional and alternative/independent media, might consider to be newsworthy or in need of critical scrutiny. That is, the definition and delimitation of what war, conflict, violence and violation is, who the enemies and the allies are, and wherein the justification for asymmetrical violence lies is most often heavily preframed and requires conceptual, persistent tactical and strategic attempts at reframing to engender politically *purposive* debate. In view of the gravity of these issues, I was somewhat sympathetic to the critique that *The Day Nobody Died* could justifiably be regarded as a somewhat self-indulgent frolic.

However, this was not to say that the work is without merit: it is both aesthetically noteworthy and makes a valid political point concerning state-military control and censorship of its activities (and thereby the concrete manifestations of US/neoliberal capitalist democracy foreign policy). However, I averred here that the project is at least in one respect a *self-reflexive* performative paradox: Broomberg and Chanarin felt compelled to "perform" the inadequacy of their visual "evidence" by withholding or eliding the tangible, visible, available but

insufficient evidence. In this, *The Day Nobody Died* marks a compelling rhetorical and polemical contribution to strategic renewal in the "representation" of war.

In **Chapter Four**, I explored how Norfolk's "Military Sublime" visualisation of "war"/Plexus by way of its technologies, its hardware and its software both *point* directly, and subtly *ostend*: the images of the supercomputers, for example, point towards the more obvious connections between AI and killing machines/technologies, and ostend towards the more abstract connections between digital communications and mediatized war, the visual rhetoric of power and neo-liberal, global-corporatist "ways of seeing" (and being).

I identified synecdoche, or a Rancièrian "politics of metonymy" as a key strategy in the ostension towards "war"/Plexus. The crowning irony is that it is a visual strategy or rhetoric harnessed by power too. Henri Lefebvre observed in 1991 the metonymic way in which our modern technologies and machinery have become extensions of ourselves, which is in large part driven by the rhetoric of commercial advertising and popular visual culture. (Lefebvre, 1991) As succinctly expressed by Christian Butler, Lefebvre recognised how the modern 'production of space' involves 'processes of social production [which] are heavily dependent on forms of legal violence' (Butler, 2012:58). This thesis operated a strategic focus on the legal fiction of corporate personhood precisely to emphasise the amnesiacal, dehistoricised, normalised (Roberts, 2016) and legally violent nature of the kind of "social production" being visualised here. The sterile and austere technologies so artfully visualised by Norfolk here are the metonymic vehicles of this violent social production; they ostend towards the horror, but cannot capture it ("war"/Plexus) in its "social totality." In this sense, they index what could be called a "micro-politics of metonymy."

In summary, Norfolk's visualisations engage the dense state-corporate-military-media-entertainment nexus subtending the creation and (socio-cultural) appearance of the technologies of killing, mediatized war, and the concomitant militarized gaze of the spectator. His *Military Sublime* series is both productive of these dissenting and critical perspectives via synecdoche but also by way of a self-reflexive and ironic engagement with iconic representation. Amongst other things, the images render the abstract and legal fiction of corporate personhood figurally, in embodied form, resulting in what I have termed a "neo-iconic" (as distinct from either aniconic or iconoclastic) aesthetics of dissent. Above all, Norfolk's imagery of the majestic technologies of twenty-first century "war" and *Plexus* steer us unequivocally in the direction of a self-reflexive encounter with what I call the State-Corporate Exception in Chapter Five.

The overriding concern across all of Paglen's work in **Chapter Five** appears to be at least two-fold: the making visible of what is either deliberately concealed, invisible to the naked eye, or not attended to by the broader public, and to problematise the notions of transparency and visibility. Solnit, Lee, Wilkinson and Dean all critically scrutinise the idea that transparency/revelation is something that is intrinsically, politically desirable, suggesting that transparency is in fact a democratic ideology and used in the disingenuous services of power (and its forms of control/violence). They at least in part take their inspiration from Lefebvre who views both (political/ideological) transparency and opacity as a dual illusion operating in the cynical services of hegemonic power (Lefebvre, 1991). The concept of a public/open secret is inspired by Michael Taussig's notion of public secrecy in connection with his ethnological research (Taussig, 1999). Transparency as enabling myth or democratic ideology is one of the

salient ideas I considered here, and Paglen's strategies of visualisation and his exposure of the open/public secret was discussed in this light.

Transparency as myth or illusion also informs the (Adornian) "negative dialectical" conceptual methodology subtending Paglen's image-making practice. As an 'ideological contrivance' (Dean, 2016), I argued that transparency is paradoxically and seamlessly sutured to the corporate veil whereby "war" is legitimised and perpetuated. The select imagery chosen practically demonstrated some of the characteristic difficulties of the visualisation of "war"/Plexus. It was all taken over vast distances or depths along horizontal and vertical axes, traversing desert terrain, reaching high into the stratosphere and plummeting down into the depths of the world's oceans. The "black world" sites or spaces of weaponized drones, secret CIA satellites and NSA/GCHQ (or other intelligence agencies') fiberoptic cables are productive not only of legal violence. They are also the public secret, transparent/opaque, "state of exception" / "State-Corporate Exception" *face* of Plexus which Paglen makes it his mission, forensically and collaboratively, to discover and visualise. The images - hazy or nebulous, abstract or opaque, quasi-documentary or aesthetically sublime - almost all, as I argued, perform a self-referential or immanent critique of the 'ideological contrivance' of transparency by way of both revealing and concealing simultaneously. My treatment here suggested how Paglen's modus operandi is of a 'carefully controlled revelation of the evidence.' (Dean, 2016)

As post-documentary/post-photographic works of art-documentary, I argued that they are aesthetic-epistemic vehicles which provocatively, seductively, both make visible the Event, whilst at the same time refusing to lend the Event transparency. No critical visual resolution is proffered. Transparency/opacity are held in negative dialectical suspension, neither asserting

the “truth” nor withholding it. The Event as I deploy the term in this thesis (mostly) differs theoretically and historically-speaking from the concept as it is theorised by Badiou and Žižek et al; I do not conceive of it as a spatio-temporally specific revolution or rupture of some kind in the socio-political fabric. It gives it a somewhat Foucauldian spin, positing it rather as marking the ongoing, pervasive and diffuse, real and concrete, systemic and structural, socially abstract but essentially violent conditions of possibility for and of "war." War is an *event*, but "war" is an *Event*. It is an Event we have difficulty in seeing or visualising, because we are immersed in the State-Corporate Exception immanent to Plexus.

In **Chapter Six**, Edmund Clark and Lisa Barnard, in eschewing an aesthetics of the sublime in favour of the less spectacular, more mundane face/s of "war"/Plexus, adopt different visual vocabularies to Norfolk or Paglen. Their imagery more often than not partakes of the register of the human rather than the non/inhuman, despite the imagery featuring no (or hardly any) people. However, there is an overlap in respect of mapping, or cartography/topography. Paglen's maps of internet cables, satellites and black sites provided a bridge to the driving analytical concept of the “cadastral” in this last chapter.

I proposed the cadastral as both a quasi-empirically fitting and a conceptually more evocative term than the usual cartography/topography framework deployed in, inter alia, visual culture and critical visibility studies. I argued that this modification to spatial analytics within the context of the visualisation of power and its forms of violence is eminently suited to the nature of the projects undertaken by Paglen, Clark and Barnard and the resulting imagery. The adoption of such a bureaucratic and technical triangulation or town planning tool is far more likely, I contended, to conduce towards a *purposively* engaged interaction of the viewer with the image. Clark and Barnard’s localised and piecemeal forensic approach to their

objects/subjects of visualisation invites the viewer to look very closely, sedulously, and to unravel the visualisation cadastrally, so as to "figure" out for herself what the event was/the Event is, what is being shown or ostended towards, withheld, or remains resolutely outside any frame. In this sense, their images can be seen to a certain extent as a Foucauldian archeological/micro-political excavation/undoing of state-corporate-military cadastration: an art-documentary *decastration* of the very real, specific and localised, concealed or public spaces of Plexus and its apparently abstract - but effectively brute - forms of violence.

Clark took us into the dark heart of "war on terror" extraordinary rendition and torture, only obliquely gesturing towards the loci of such heinous activities, allowing *room* for the viewer to conduct her own forensic research with the help of his imagery. In any event, this was the challenge that for me inhered in his imagery, and presented an opportunity for some sleuthing. This strategy of viewer involvement conduces towards a more active visualisation of terror than simply viewing, say, an Abu Ghraib trophy picture. The visualisation process as a collaborative effort also implicitly casts doubt on the perception that evidence of war/violence is ever "self-evident." Clark's strategies of visualisation problematise the nature of visual "evidence" or what counts as evidence, how we regard and treat evidence, and how we, for better or worse, co-create evidence.

The imagery selected from Barnard's online oeuvre showed us various maps, topographies of "war", from the layout of the stalls at the arms trade fair to the aerial mapping of the flight/reconnaissance paths of armed drones in Waziristan, simply and geometrically etched onto black and white photographs of the rocky soil in colour-pen lines. This, I argued, is more than vague topographical representation. It is rather a precise visual forensic triangulation of the territory of "war." It is a cadastral measurement and proprietorial identification of who

"owned" those spaces, who and what was responsible for their violence. The imagery also reinstates the otherwise occluded human at their centre, in a powerfully abstract way. I argued that the human is shown cynically for state-corporate-military purposes to be but a "variable vector" in their crude foreign policy-commerciality, "profit and loss" calculations.

Another element, more abstract or abstruse in terms of this cadastral forensics - and perhaps not so much a question of topography at all but rather of abstract invisibility, the invisible spaces of "war" - was the genetic algorithm instrumental in the drone's scopic regime, its lethal data-driven operations. Inspired by inter alia the insights of Trevor Paglen concerning the invisibility of visual culture now, data-driven visualisation and 'invisible imagery' is without a doubt a fertile and significant area for further research. This thesis has tentatively picked up on the theme, but it is one which deserves a thoroughgoing, "universal" treatment, as it were, independent of the particularities of any given case study or aspect of visual culture.

Overall though, perceived or "read" as cadastral visualisations of Plexus, the images examined in this chapter transcend their own "currency" as art-documentary works, and introduce the viewer an the opportunity for actively re-visioning *both* her customary ways of engaging with the visual *per se*, and *making sense*, visually, of power and its concealed, less visible or socially abstract forms of violence.

Paglen, Clark and Barnard, I suggest, all engage in a form of *data aesthetics*.²⁰⁵ The digital-era aestheticisation of data is not unproblematic, but they turn the problem on its head by using/"disabusing" its beauty to ostend towards its horror. In the case of Paglen, it is its "sublime monstrosity," but for Barnard and Clark, it is its cool, calculated banality, or the detached corporate dissemblance thereof, which dictates the strategy of visualisation.

Visualising a hybrid form of culture, of bare life, is a process that is seeded from its "inception" both with crystallisations and uncertainties, (apparent) order and (presumed) chaos. If one is seeking a tangible version of, a paradoxical embodiment of, social abstraction, one could do worse than construe and follow close connections between the abstract algorithmic logic of artificial intelligence and how, as Paglen declares, visual culture 'has become detached from human eyes and has largely become invisible' (Paglen, 2016) - a detachment which arguably echoes, or even reflects, the 'detached corporate dissemblance' of horror, of the socially penetrative depth of "war". If we think for a moment about the history of the humanities and social sciences and their epistemological roots in the ocularcentrism of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, we understand how visuality has been the (in)formative given in our (colonial/imperialist) discourses concerning "society", "civilization", "progress" and so forth. A Mirzoeff-inspired countervisuality, however, can only take us so far in the unprecedented encounter with a twenty-first century invisible visual culture. This is the current situation vis-à-vis (as it were) visuality, as Paglen sees it:

Human visual culture has become a special case of vision, an exception to the rule. The overwhelming majority of images are now made by machines for other machines, with humans rarely in the loop. The advent of machine-to-machine seeing has been barely noticed at large, and poorly understood by those of us who've begun to notice the tectonic shift invisibly taking place before our very eyes. (Paglen, 2016)

Paglen emphasises the autonomy of intermachinic communications, but lest we forget that behind the machine still lurks the human, the Dr Frankenstein in the equation (or algorithm), one ought to bear in mind that there is no algorithm without its first human articulation. And there is no evolutionary computation and machine-learning process without the human "training" of the algorithm on a human, pre-framed, domain-predetermined dataset (see Rostami, 2016). Part of the rationale of this thesis for insisting upon an emphasis on the non/inhuman, socially abstract nature of power and its forms of violence is precisely to

understand how we as humans have *effected* such a biotechnopolitical transformation of twenty-first century lived social experience, right down to the new digital quiddity of global communications, information technologies and even intersubjectivity.

One of the most compelling and obvious routes into the problematic of digital invisibilities and an occluded visibility lies without a doubt *pace* Paglen in close consideration of the algorithmic logic of the elision between the human-machine and the machine-machine. It produces, no less, a new ontology: a way of being and seeing that is both human and nonhuman at one and the same time. This evolution has been occurring, piecemeal, for decades. The points of its culmination continue also, since the evolution is by no means at an end.

My own provisionally concluding thoughts in relation to the visualisation of social abstraction is that if one is seeking paradoxically a visual embodiment of social abstraction, one could do worse than construe and follow the paths and processes from and through "raw data" - facial features, say - to the evolutionary computational application of autodidactic algorithms to "solve the problem" - the solution for which is to be sought in the raw data. In my view, it is the lay person elisional and critical failure to discern the differential roles and natures of raw data, human programmer and algorithmic logos of the digital platform that is the actual "operation" - a deeply ideological and political one - that de-faces visual culture. So when Paglen writes 'Visual culture has changed form. It has become detached from human eyes and has largely become invisible' (Paglen, 2016), he is using metaphorical language to describe the surface appearance of "the problem" as he perceives it. If for argument's sake one regards the use of tropology as an expedient step in the general direction of a more "scientific" articulation of the Real, then what this is effectively saying is that we have as yet no forensic

and epistemological purchase on the disconcerting evanescence of visual culture. If drone warfare is data-driven (Rothenberg, 2015), then so too is perforce our critical attention to "war" (for which modern digital and mediatized warfare is the chief whip) and its attendant forms of violence. Human eyes are no longer *seeing* what is happening; it thus only *appears* that visual culture has changed form. We apprehend this as a matter of fact, since appearances are phenomenologically constitutive of the visual in any event.

Taking the algorithm as marker (if not index) of a paradigm shift in cultural studies and visual culture, we must be mindful of its power as both a literal (or rather, mathematical) tool and as a tropological device in understanding the fresh cast of the critical responsibility and challenge which faces us. The temptation when dealing with abstraction is to forget about the self, the human, in the sterile technoscience of it all. In fact, the most complex of genetic algorithms must first be "trained" and can only "learn" in accordance with its preconfigured, human inputs. The rules upon which the algorithm are based are predefined before the process is started - pre-framed, if you like. Likewise, the "termination criteria" - the measure of whether the goal has been achieved or not - are also pre-determined (Rostami, 2016). Quite simply, machine learning is *not* a scientific process. The machine-machine communications Paglen refers to are not nearly as free of human inputs as Paglen seems to think. At the very least, the traces of their training and their pre-framing live on in their operation; that is, the human haunts the algorithmos as highly ironic ghost in the machine.

The deepest logic of the algorithm is inflected by the human mind and its values, its ways of measuring, its "ways of seeing". In terms of data-driven drone warfare, the drone software has its rules before it starts "learning" how to recognise a target. Its target is the one *we* have

designed for it, the one with a certain skin tone and certain "indigenous" characteristics. As mentioned in relation to the drone imagery of Barnard, 'through the intermediation of algorithmic, visual, and affective modes of embodiment, drone warfare reproduces *gendered and racialized bodies* that enable a necropolitics of massacre' (Wilcox et al., 2017). Quite. The algorithm will reproduce what the human programmer has instructed it to do, and will "diligently" learn whatever code the human sees fit to supply.

To reiterate, in a data-driven world, raw data is key to unlocking machine learning. But that data depends on what your "problem domain" is (Rostami, 2016). As Van Couvering observes, creating an 'algorithmic ecosystem' entails '*human intervention*, institutions and practices [which are] key to the continuing function of these algorithms' (Van Couvering, 2017: 5) (my italics). You, the human, decide your problem domain: recognising precancerous cells, objects on a road, viable mortgage applications, ozone depletion measurements, stock market fluctuations. Or human targets. The bias in the algorithm is built-in from its very inception. Given that the telos of any algorithm is solely to find a solution to a problem, its onto-logic is determined thoroughly by the shape of the problem it is designed to solve, and the pre-framed desired outcomes the solution to the problem it is tasked by the human. The "human" tasking such delivering clearly almost exclusively takes the form of the (R&D investing) *corporation*. In matters of military expenditure and "war", it is naturally the state-corporate-military nexus (to include the extensive and highly *inconspicuous* network of civilian stakeholders for ancillary services and products) which dictates and determines aims and outcomes of machine learning.

Robin K. Hill sounds a note of caution, writing that 'we lack any easy way to indicate that algorithms do not make decisions and are not biased; programmers do, and are.' (Hill, 2018: 12) The focus on the *in/nonhuman* as a strategy to visualise twenty-first century "war"/Plexus in this thesis could, from this perspective, also be regarded as a deployment of performative paradox to make a contrary point: that the digital is only ever human, and representational mimicry of the defacing qualities of its algorithmic calculus belies the violently beating heart of the passions which programme its efficiencies, its deficiencies, and its coolly executed bias. This latter point constitutes for this thesis the most recent post-research recognition for which there no longer remained any time to explore and draw out the implications for the rest of the arguments in this thesis; it promises yet an intriguing avenue of thought to be contemplated in the further work to be done for the purposes of publication.

Returning to the role of tropology then: across these chapters, I argued how a Rancièrian "politics of metonymy" is a constitutive feature of the post-photographic image's power of ostension, and far from the image alone producing radically dissenting insights or positions, it is a *dispositif* of visibility to include tactics, technique and technology, image-maker-viewer-image relations, mediatic contexts and methodology. The current scepticism in contemporary visual culture scholarship as to what the *contents* of images - the *products* - could usefully "tell" us (semiotically, hermeneutically) saw it turning away from iconographic/symbolic readings of cultural/artistic artefacts and turning increasingly to questions concerning both the material and social contexts of visualisation instead - its *processes* - and what perspectives a more detached, conceptual approach to image-making might proffer. As David Campbell implores,

We need to move our analyses on from an emphasis on the products to an appreciation of the process [...]. This is all the more urgent now because [...] we are immersed in a

whole new culture of producing and consuming photos, one in which the *function of photography in advancing social connectivity, cultural interaction and public engagement* comes to the fore. (Campbell, 2013: 267) (my italics)

The purposive harnessing of ‘social connectivity, cultural interaction and public engagement’ via a revised or renewed ecology of photographic practice, is one, as Campbell (and others in the anthology) perceives it, which looks towards ‘processes’ to deliver fresh perspectives, positing at the same time an attenuated (or superannuated) role for the 'products' of image-making themselves. The emphatic distinction seems both a specious and highly abstract one, and I argued that the trend or tendency in some contemporary visual culture scholarship is to be regarded as problematic. Nonetheless, the trend seems to point towards an increased preoccupation with the structures, mechanisms, technologies and broader social and environmental contexts of war and state-corporate-military forms of violence, both of image-makers and scholars. To that extent, the emphasis on process, whilst not "fit" for strictly epistemic purposes, is at the very least an indicator or even symptom of a very real problem in the debates on the visualisation of power and violence.

However, contrary to a prevailing view in visual culture scholarship, in this thesis I resisted any hierarchy of process and product which favoured process. Rather, in “deference” to the Mitchellian “agency” of the image, both process and product were considered to be of equal importance in the co-creative engagement with this imagery and in our further visualisations as we followed their ostensions.

By extrapolation, in terms of further research, Plexus and its (Benjaminian-Adornian) "conceptual constellation" were here proposed as methodological tools for the engagement in visual culture and cultural studies with not only post-photographic "war" imagery, but with all

manner of imagery emanating from the broad spectrum of media in general, both contemporary and archival. In this thesis I have focused upon only a very limited range of art-documentary post-photographic imagery; additional research on other and broader fields of visualisation could, it is submitted, further test the general theoretical viability of Plexus as a methodological tool in visual culture/cultural studies. This is at least one avenue for further scholarly application and research with a view towards developing a more nuanced approach to and vocabulary for the study of the post-photographic within a corporatized, militarized, mediatized and securitized dispensation.

Even contemplating the new so-called "digital humanities": the very contraction of the words "digital" and "humanity" suggests the enmeshment and blurring of problematics conceived in both "fields" as they relate to, map onto, converge or connect with each other. We arguably no longer have, in the (digital) humanities, the comfortable option of turning our backs on whole methodological frameworks for the conception and gathering of evidence: the more empirical (as we conceive of it), the quantitative, or indeed, the algorithmic. An as yet loosely conceived forensic, investigatory and techno-analytical adjunct to our habitual or traditional ways of theorizing within the arts and humanities is essential now. The methodologically transdisciplinary and hybrid approaches to culture with the development of the social sciences too must expand to "accommodate" the in/visible, the socially abstract. The latter is going to become an inevitable part of what it means to visualise power and its forms of violence. This thesis has been a concerted effort to theorise and perform some of the ways in which this approach may be conceived. It is but a modest start which must undergo growth and refinement in the fullness of time.

To reiterate in general: the post-photographic interventions here are productive of projects and imagery which compel viewers - whatever their disciplinary background/s, to assume a critically collaborative attitude towards their engagement with images which seek to show or ostend towards power and its forms of violence. The strategies of visualisation either identified or proposed shift *to and fro* between registers of evidence/information/knowledge, and of aesthetic/visual form.²⁰⁶ In other words, the “aesthetic moment,” as it were, questions and partially negates erstwhile epistemic/evidential requirements but without repudiating/dispensing with them. In fact, the latter requirement is bolstered by the fore-mentioned recognition that it behoves twenty-first century visual culture scholars to attend more assiduously to the particular rigours of techno-scientific frameworks for the analysis and understanding of visual and cultural phenomena. It is especially the "science" of the "invisible image" which in my view holds out much promise in respect of enriching our understanding of the Event - or advent - of a twenty-first century "invisible visual culture". A critical and analytical, multifaceted exploration of what an "image science" might be under these circumstances, and its "application" to an in/visible visuality, would undoubtedly be another intriguing and fertile avenue for co-creative, collaborative, forensically-oriented visual research.

To reiterate: the key terms overall for the visualisation of “war” and Plexus were deployed throughout as theoretical or methodological tools for a critical engagement with these post-photographic strategies of visualisation. “War”, Plexus, corporate personhood, complicity, the aniconic or neo-iconic, the Military Sublime, the public/open secret, the transparency myth, Event, the State-Corporate Exception, the cadastral and the proxy measure are concepts or phrases that were devised, deployed, or re-appropriated here as a bespoke conceptual constellation for the critical visualisation of “war” and Plexus.

Perhaps one of the most significant re-appropriations is the Event. Both the aesthetically sublime imagery and the imagery borne out of a hybrid science-art data aesthetics are evidence of an "Event." To reiterate, Badiou, Žižek, et al conceptualise the Event in neo-Marxist fashion as a kind of radical historical rupture with the hegemonic order; in the most obvious case, a revolution. I conceive of the Event *not* as a happening, a rupture or revolution, but rather its opposite: the systemic molecular violence whereby neoliberal corporatist-militarist hegemony is maintained, recalibrated, and ever-resiliently adapts to the microlevel (but also violent, atrocious) order of "events": war, conflict, the making of mass refugee movements, socio-economic exploitation and injustice, dispossession and inequality, grave environmental and habitat depredation, deep social and political discontent, and so forth.

The crucial point here is that the Main Event does not lie, I argued, in eventality, but in the "amnesiacal, dehistoricising, normalising", flattening out of events that *ought to* rupture a naturalised "social ontology" (Roberts, 2014). Roberts despairs of the role of post-photographic visualisation in this context, referring to what he considers to be 'the atemporality of the postphotography photograph', and tersely enquires, 'has photography ceded [...] all its previous interrogatory functions?'(Roberts, 2014: 110/1). He is sceptical of photography's truth claims, evincing a suspicion of the visual shared by many continental theorists of the late twentieth century such as Sontag and Debord, as efficiently detailed by Linfield in *The Cruel Radiance* (Linfield, 2010). Whilst relying on certain useful and apt formulations of Roberts', I "spoke" to the imagery in this thesis, staging or performing *their* disagreement with Roberts' perspective on the post-photographic "moment"; at least, where the visualisations are concerned with power and its forms of violence. Far from being 'atemporal,' the imagery here is in my view

veritably refulgent with precise temporality and spatiality; space-time events, the temporal, spatial, (il)legal²⁰⁷, cultural, political, social and economic/corporate co-ordinates of which can be visualised, forensically discovered, ostended towards. This is as close to "truth" - in the sense here of empirical fact/historical or forensic probity, that is - that one can aspire to in a *visual cultural confrontation* with "war" and Plexus. The philosophical or epistemological question of Truth (or the Real) is, to be sure, another matter, but this too cannot be divorced from the banal, quotidian, bureaucratic, State-Corporate Exception in the perpetuation of "war" without becoming a somewhat pointless metaphysics.

By way of conclusion, I submitted that any further research with the objective of responding to the challenge of the above questions, problems, issues and debates can only meaningfully do so through a blurred boundary image-maker/viewer/image immersion; one which keeps both "product" and "process" in dialectical animation, without foreclosing the critical power of any element in the strategic visualisation of "war" and Plexus. This "personal gaze"-decentred, *dispositif* releases the scopic and disciplinary brake on the visualisation of social abstraction.

The blurring of boundaries between the artefact/image, the image-maker and the viewer/audience/scholar, or between the professional image-maker/photojournalist and the networked citizen witness (Allan, 2013; 2013a; 2014) heralds an era of the potential *repoliticisation* or renewal of art-documentary (here it is the post-photographic) with *increasing* rather than decreasing potential 'to link image-making and the making of meaning to the forces of social abstraction' (Roberts, 2014: 167/8). The thesis sought to demonstrate performatively that a co-creative or co-productive and forensic approach to contemporary post-photographic visualisations of "war" and Plexus can succeed in linking meaning to real and concrete instances of systemic, socially abstract violence. The linkages, when joined up, proffer

it is hoped a tiny springboard to an 'engaged visual art as [inter alia] a tool for normative renewal in international human rights' (Brems and Van Gelder, 2014).

The journey of this thesis began with complicity and it ended with the cadastral, taking us from World War 2, Sudan and Vietnam, Rwanda and Afghanistan, through supercomputers, secret satellites and military "black sites" in the Nevada and Mojave deserts, to the exhibition spaces of an arms trade fair and a "control order house" of torture in a quiet neighbourhood of Bucharest. It was a journey which embraced at its heart an emancipatory ethos, but one which was compelled to negotiate a tricky, open-ended and sometimes speculative path towards its proposed contribution.

Appendix One

Ed Clark Interview: Saturday, 15 October 2016, 10.02am to 10.44 am.

[Note: this "transcript" is composed from hand-written notes taken during the interview. The quoted phrases are verbatim utterances by Clark I was able to record as he spoke.]

EC [Edmund Clark] says he has an affinity with TP [Trevor Paglen] [...]. Both working in similar ways on similar projects [...]. The main difference is that TP does so from a great distance whilst EC does so close up. TP's photography more conceptual and has more technological elements/challenges to its production [...] but both seek to represent "invisible" or "unknown" "processes" of contemporary war/conflict.

TP more at a remove, more conceptual and impersonal whilst EC actively seeks out the "ordinariness, the mundanity of the bureaucracy" and "normality" of the "material, infrastructural details of how the war is conducted" and how we as individuals are "unknowingly" or imperceptibly implicated in these processes in our everyday lives.

EC's main link to TP: representation of structures and processes that remain largely invisible, hidden, unrecognised. SN [Simon Norfolk] and TP are linked by their shared use of the "aesthetics of the sublime in their work - the artistic framing and presentation of the horrors they seek to represent" [...]. Also the kinds of projects both are involved in, eg., SN's

photographing of nuclear submarine testing sites off the coast of Scotland or his images of US and UK state/military satellite bases [Ascension Island] are akin to TP's telephotography images of armed drones being tested in the Nevada desert and his photographing of CIA or secret satellite activities. They both look from a distance towards sites which are publicly inaccessible/unknown about. Especially TP, many miles away. TP "even specially developed new types of telephoto lenses to take images from many miles away" such as the image of the US secret "black site" military base in the [...] desert or of the Predator drone [at Indiana Springs ?]. But SN's photography of the Balkan burial sites, eg., the site of the Srebrenica massacre [...] is more "atrocities" photography. SN's "aftermath" photos are unlike EC's, where the activities are investigated, as with TP, not of the past but of ongoing activities related to conflict.

EC does not do his work covertly. He obtains permission to access key sites used in the conducting of the "war on terror" [forgot to ask him how he did this...]. He has been to Guantanamo Bay and he has spoken to and interacted with detainees, with those who have undergone extraordinary rendition and to those subject to control orders. He has, in collaboration with others, such as Crofton Black [counter-terrorism investigator] for *Negative Publicity*, obtained vast amounts of declassified but redacted paperwork relating to the contracts between the government/military and private security/surveillance firms regarding these activities.

EC says that whilst SN and TP's work is more about "revelation of state secrets through artistic means such as the aesthetic sublime", his work is more about providing "a glimpse"

for the viewer into their own "everyday implication in this war on terror"; in your very own neighbourhood or public spaces you visit.

He says it is the sheer "mundanity" and even "domesticity" of these processes and activities, and our "shared experience" of them that is the heart of what he seeks in his projects to represent, to find new ways of representing such "activities and processes" [in a situation of war/conflict, of globalisation etc]. EC seeks to bring these hidden activities and invisible processes down to a level that is "relevant to us as individuals". In this his approach differs from both SN and TP; he has no desire to engage with the "aesthetics of the sublime" saying "horror does not require aestheticisation" for it to be grasped, and he insists emphatically it is *not unrepresentable*, but rather quite the opposite. It must at all costs be represented, whatever the medium and the means. EC is "more interested in revealing the ordinariness" of the processes of contemporary war and conflict and "these activities and processes and how they reflect [...] the mundanity of how terror works."

EC aims to provide viewers "with the conceptual tools to think in more depth about the responses which our governments have claimed are necessary"[to external/internal national threats] and which implicate ordinary people, using civilians to actively engage in the "war on terror"[...]. EC explains that he means "the bureaucracy, the paperwork is the structure of this war; the invoicing, the flight scheduling, etc."

EC sees his photographic imagery as providing opportunities for people to "have the space to work out what it is they're looking at and what it might be saying", for the viewer to realise that they know something they did not previously know.

EC has little time for "theoretical categories" now being used to describe contemporary war and conflict photography, such as "aftermath" or "post-photography"[...]. He does not consider himself as fitting into any one of these categories. But he acknowledges that his rendition series, for example, may be classified as a type of aftermath photography – events that took place in the past for which there has still been no state accountability – but stresses that his visualisations are still very much about contemporary warfare, which is "incredibly present and ongoing."

EC: "There are new kinds of battle spaces with new legal definitions of these battle spaces being created [by governments] to justify forms of technology such as unmanned weapons [...] have created a battle space we don't see."

EC sees the challenge to the visual artist as one of responding appropriately to contemporary warfare; responding in ways that are necessarily different to how visual artists responded before[...] "politically, culturally different processes, changing moral, legal, ethical norms[...]" . "Detention without trial was unthinkable less than two decades ago". EC seeks to "decontextualize propaganda [...] to make people rethink contexts, to remember, reconfigure" [what they have been told/led to believe].

EC thinks that new aesthetic forms such as the kinds of visual projects he, SN and TP are engaged in can help to bring into the open these "hidden, invisible networks which structure our daily experience" and to counter the narratives that are created to "blind" us to the real interests of power, the bureaucracy of the war on terror.

TC insists that both words and images are crucial and need to be used together, explaining each other, offering different perspectives[...] Imperative to relate the visual to the textual: "the photograph on its own is limiting."

He mentions the trophy photos taken in Abu Ghraib: put to use by the state, once they became public, to suggest that what they depicted was "an exception, the acts of a few bad apples and not reflective of official policy".

EC referred to his work *Letters to Omaha* (2010): scanned images created by [...] representing the processes of abuse and degradation and control in the armed forces [...]

EC suggests I read Eyal Weizman's "Material Infrastructure of the Secret" in the Afterword to his book.

Appendix Two

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From *Whiplash Transition - Mapping the Territory*. 2011
- 6.20: Broomberg, A and Chanarin, O. From *War Primer 2*. 2011



Figure 0.1. *Jardins de Versailles*. 1910. Eugene Atget



Figure 0.2. *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*. 1855. Roger Fenton

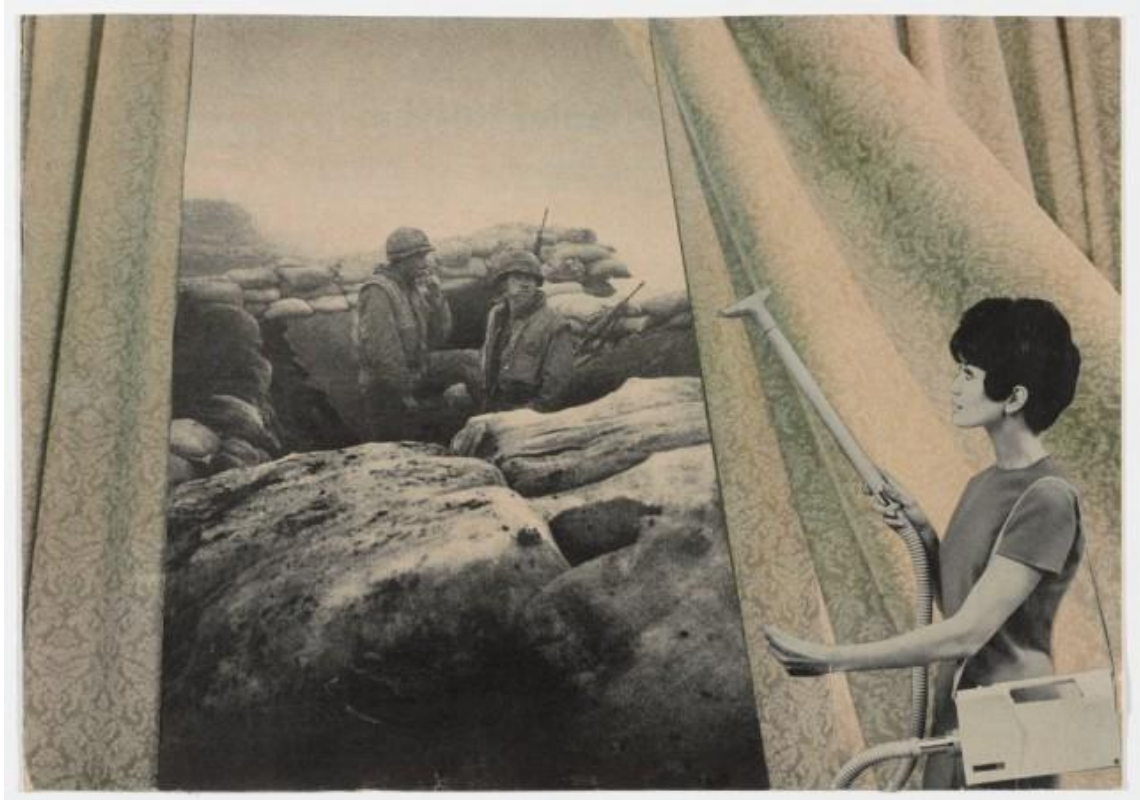


Figure 0.3. *Cleaning the drapes: Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful, 1968 - 72*
Martha Rosler



Figure 1.1. *TERA-1: The Supercomputers: 'I'm sorry Dave, I can't do that.'* Undated.
Simon Norfolk



Figure 1.2. *Reaper Drone (Indian Springs, NV Distance - 2 miles). 2010.*

Trevor Paglen



Figure 1.3. *Primitive Pieces: Whiplash Transition*. 2011. Lisa Barnard



Figure 2.1. *The Terror of War*. 1972. Nick Ut



Figure 2.2. *Children Fleeing Napalm Strike, Modified-1972, Huynh Cong "Nick" Ut, 2000.*

John Haddock



Figure 2.3. *Taliban, 2001*. Luc Delahaye



Figure. 2. 4. *The Sound of Silence*. Installation view.

MCA: Chicago. 2006.

Alfredo Jaar



Figure 2.5. *S-21: The Kmer Rouge Killing Machine*. 2003. Screenshot.

Rithy Panh



Figure 2.6. *Real Pictures*. Exhibition view. Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995.

Alfredo Jaar



Figure 3.1. *People in Trouble Laughing Pushed to the Ground*. 2011. Exhibition view. Tate Gallery. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin

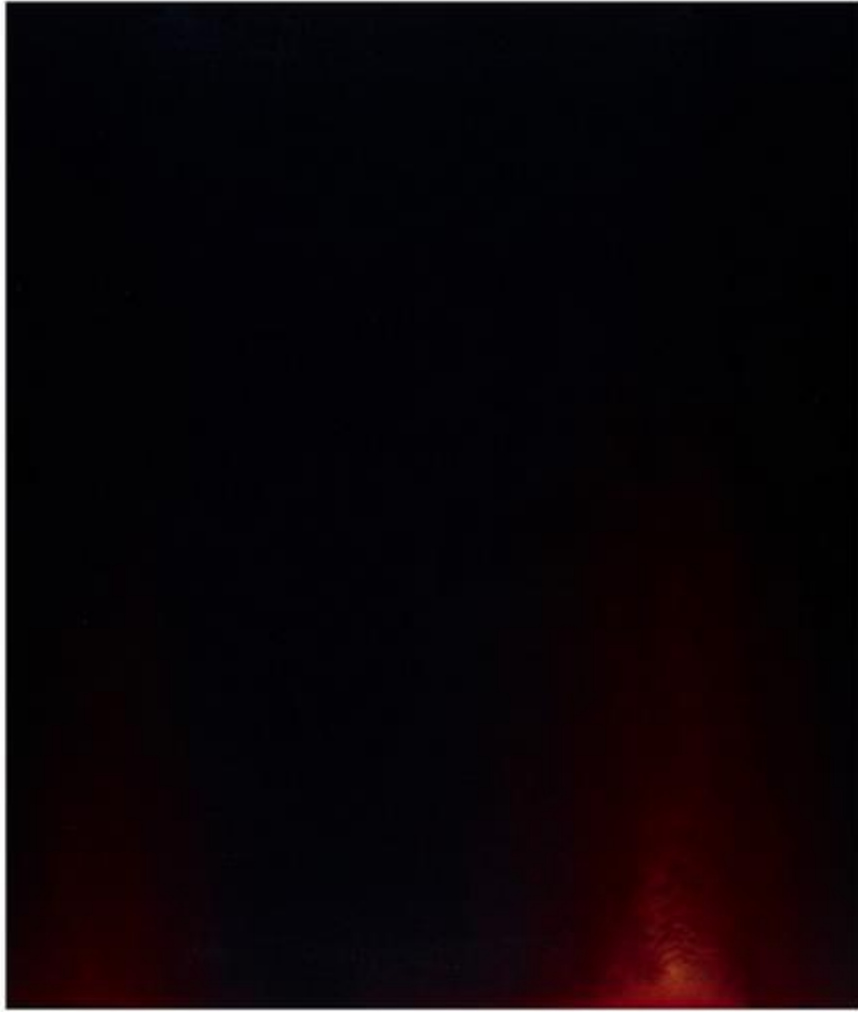


Figure 3.2. *The Day Nobody Died, June 10, 2008*. Detail.
Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin

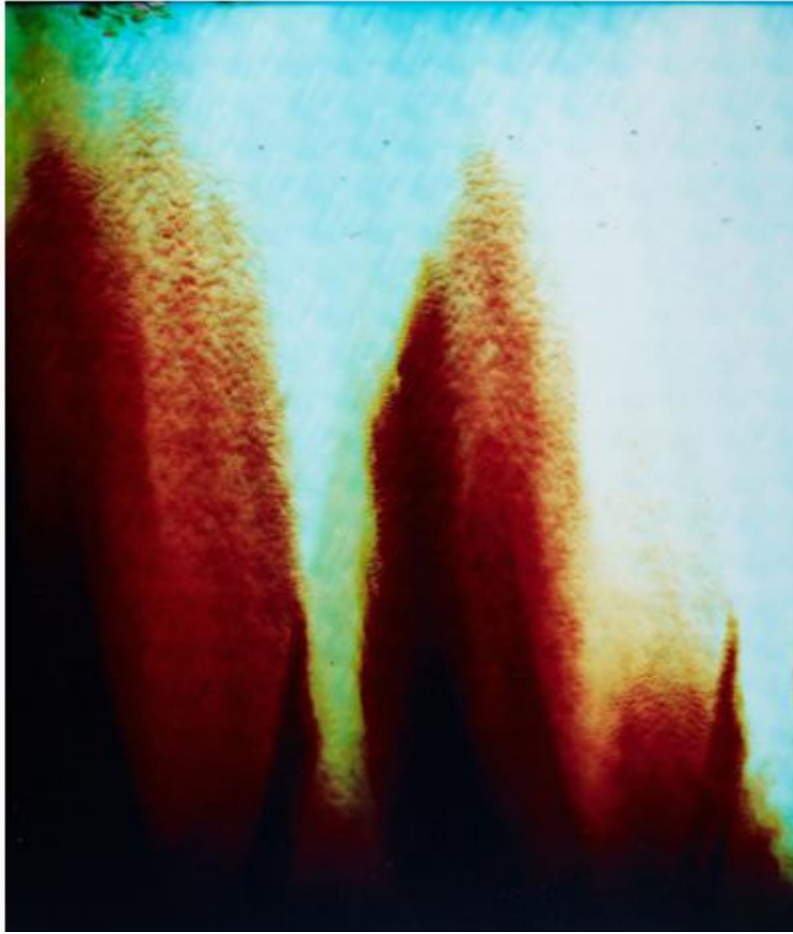


Figure 3.2a. *The Day Nobody Died, June 10, 2008*. Detail.
Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin



Figure 3.3. *The Repatriation, June 18, 2008*. Detail.
Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin



Figure 3.4. *The Fixer's Execution, June 7, 2008*. Detail.
Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin

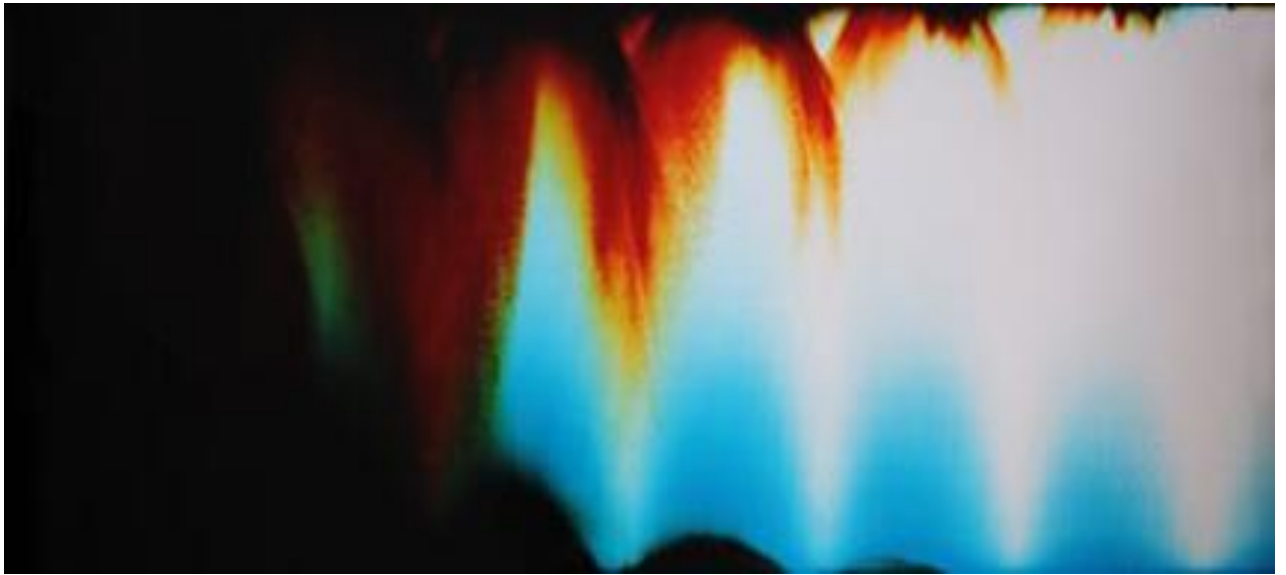


Figure 3.5. *The Press Conference, June 9, 2008*. Detail.

Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin

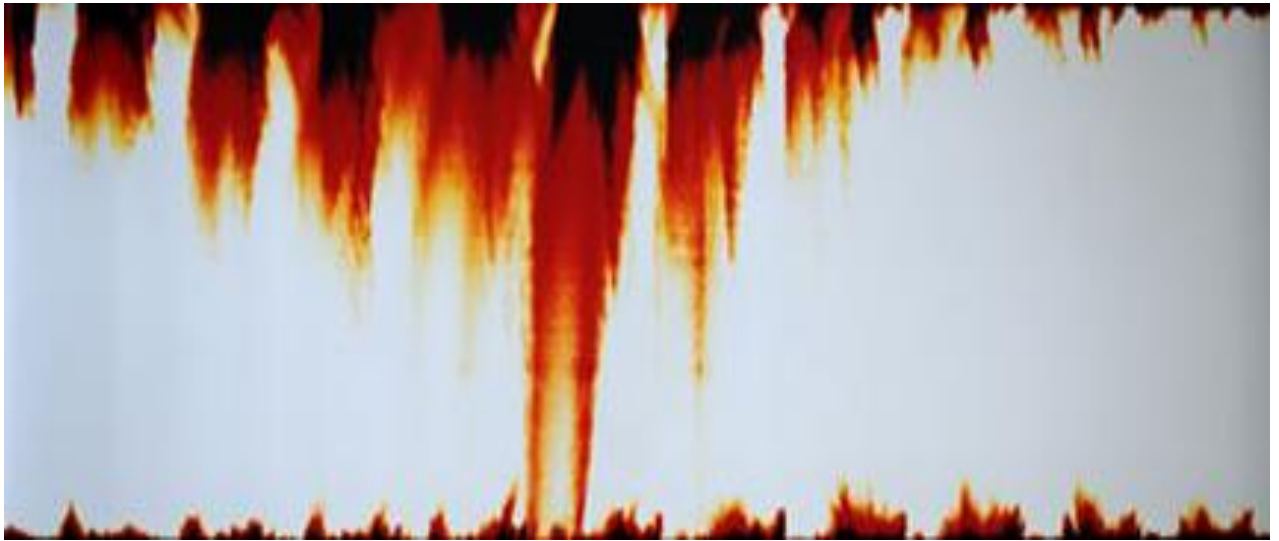


Figure 3.6. *The Jailbreak*, June 12, 2008. Detail.

Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin



Figure 3.7. *The Day Nobody Died*. 2008. Installation view with video.
Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin



Figure 3.8. *The Day Nobody Died*. 2008. Screenshot.
Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin



Figure 3.9. *The Day Nobody Died*. 2008. Screenshot, cropped.
Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin



Figure 4.1. *IBM BladeCenter HS20 Cluster. Xeon EM64T 3.2 GHz Gig-Ethernet: The Supercomputers: 'I'm sorry Dave, I can't do that.'* Undated.

Simon Norfolk



Figure 4.2. *IBM BlueGene L: The Supercomputers: 'I'm sorry Dave, I can't do that.'*
Undated.

Simon Norfolk



Figure 4.3. *Staircase at Auschwitz. 2008.*

Simon Norfolk



Figure 1.1. *TERA-1: The Supercomputers: 'I'm sorry Dave, I can't do that.'* Undated.

Simon Norfolk

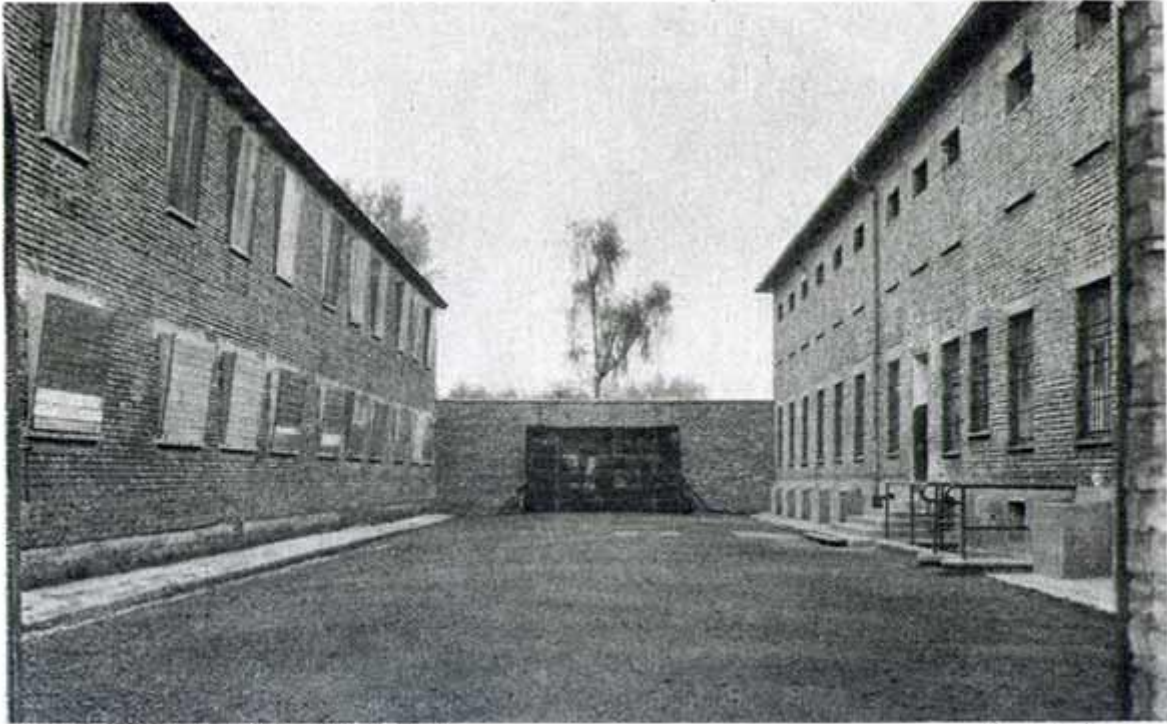


Figure 4.4. *Modelling physics inside and exploding nuclear warhead: The Supercomputers: 'I'm sorry Dave, I can't do that.'* Undated.

Simon Norfolk



Figure 4.5. *Auschwitz II*. Undated. Mike Paschos



ОШВІЄСІМ АУШВИЦ АУСШВИТЗ

Phot. St. Mucha

Figure 4.6. *Execution yard of block II - Auschwitz II-Birkenau.* Undated. "Brisray".



Figure 4.7. *MareNostrum*. Undated. Simon Norfolk



Figure 4.8. *BSC MareNostrum*. Website photograph. Barcelona Supercomputing Centre



Figure 4.9. *Astra 3B*. Undated. Simon Norfolk



Figure 4.10. *Astra 3B*. Undated. Simon Norfolk

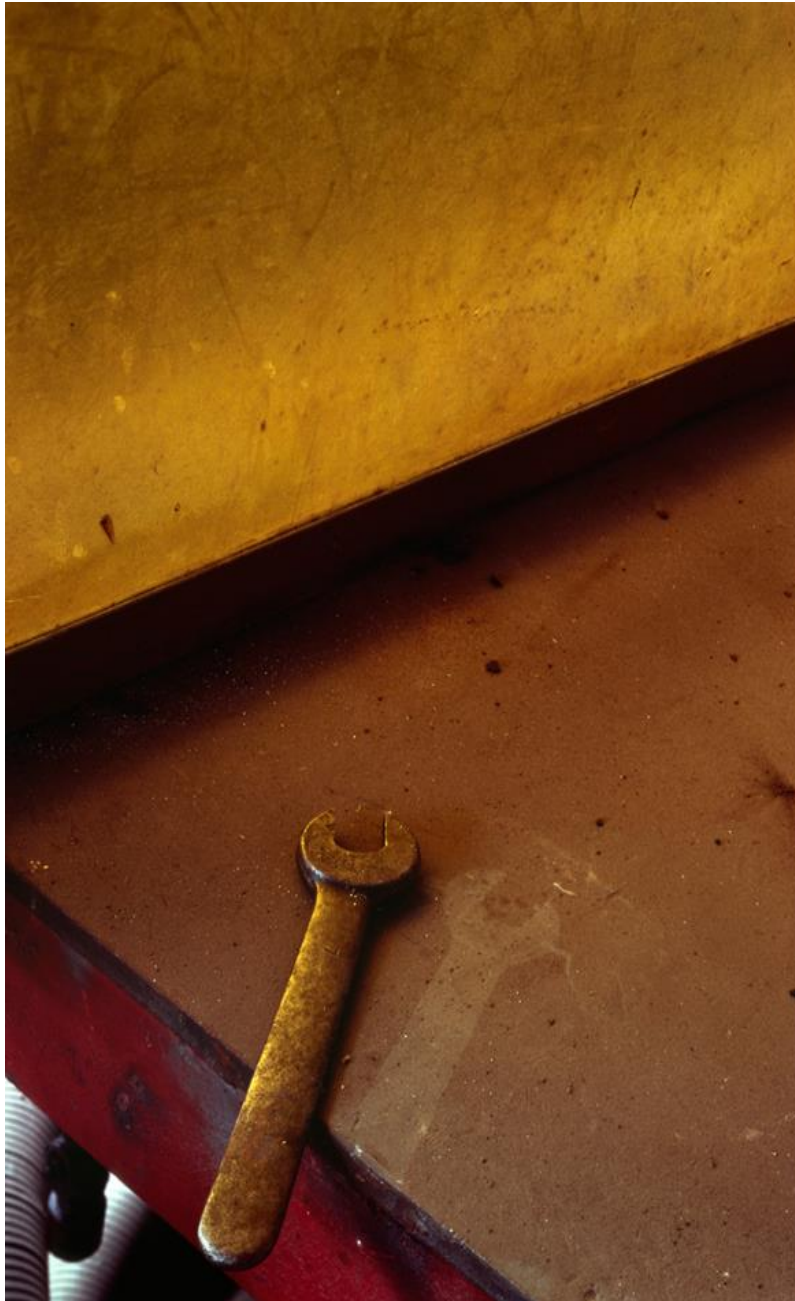


Figure 4.11. *Welder's booth in bankrupt Todd Shipyard. Two years after closing.
Los Angeles harbour, San Pedro, California, July 1991. Allan Sekula*



Figure 5.1. *Five fabric patches, framed, from Five Classified Aircraft. 2007. Trevor Paglen*



Figure 5.2. *Gustatus Similus Pullus Patch*. 2006. Trevor Paglen



Figure 5.3. *Detachment 3, Air Force Flight Test Center #2, Groom Lake, NV, Distance ~26 Miles. 2008.*

Trevor Paglen

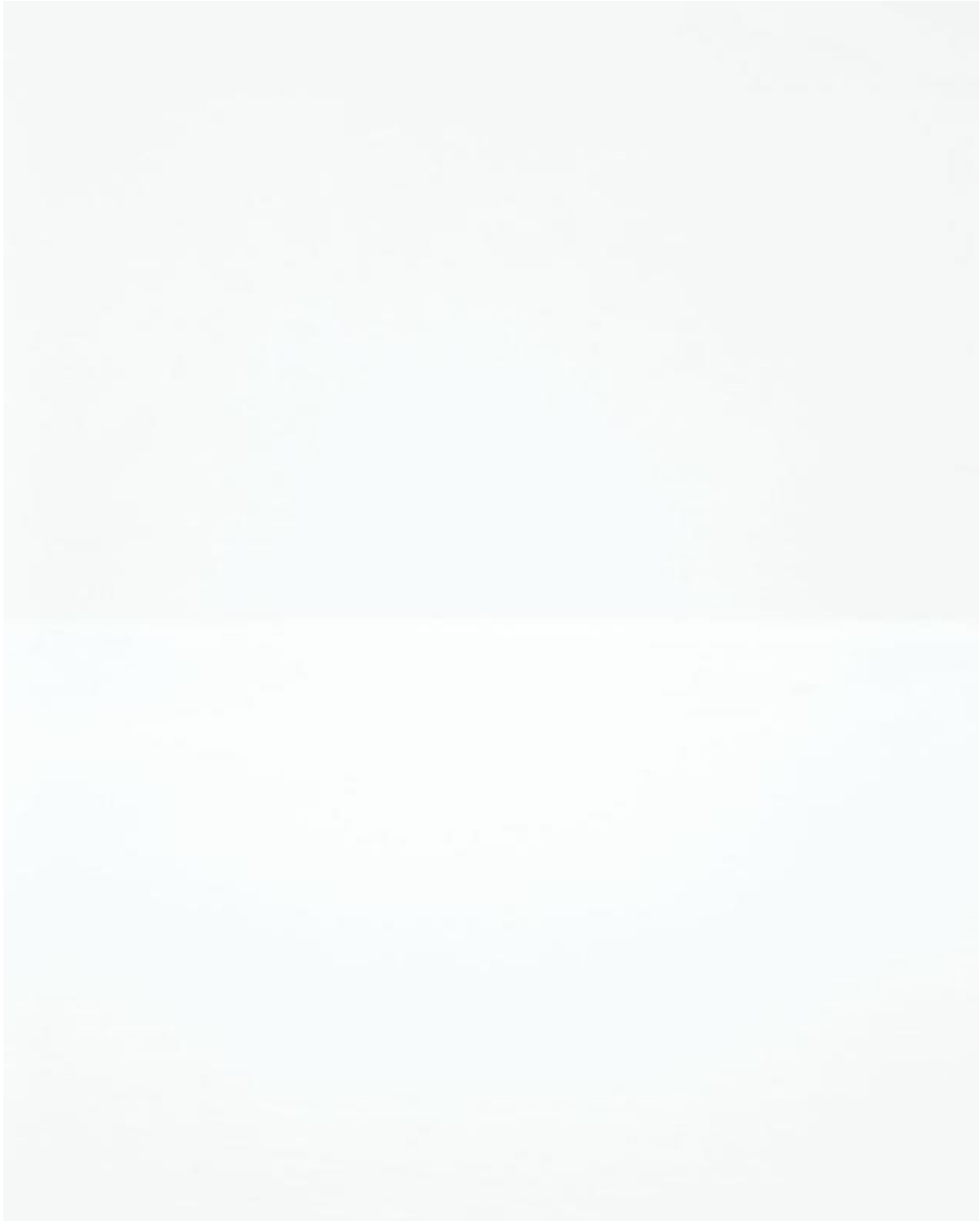


Figure 5.4. *White Sands Missile Range, Alamogordo, New Mexico, Distance ~ 35 miles.*
2012.

Trevor Paglen

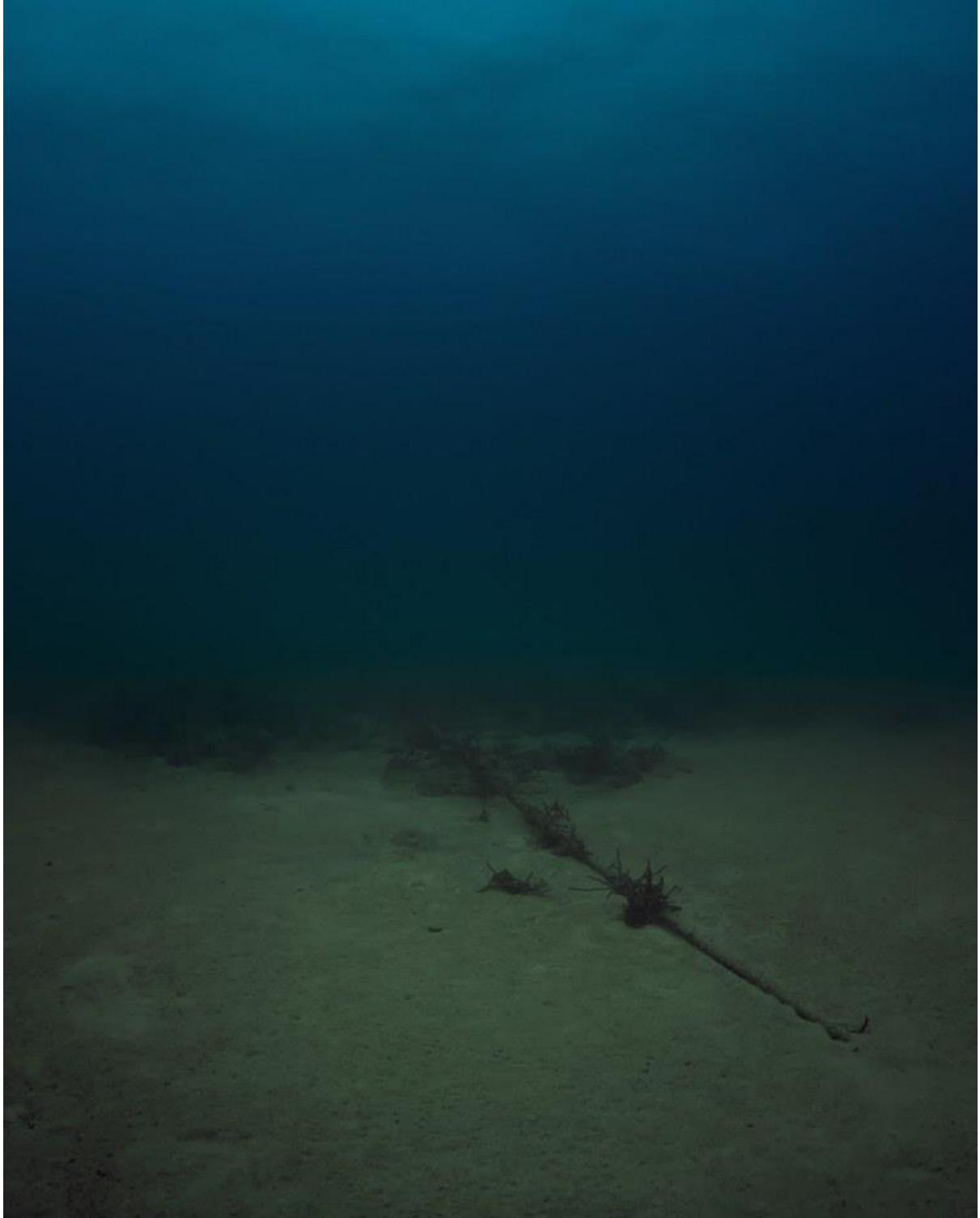


Figure 5.5. "An undersea cable off Miami": *What lies beneath*. 2015.

Trevor Paglen

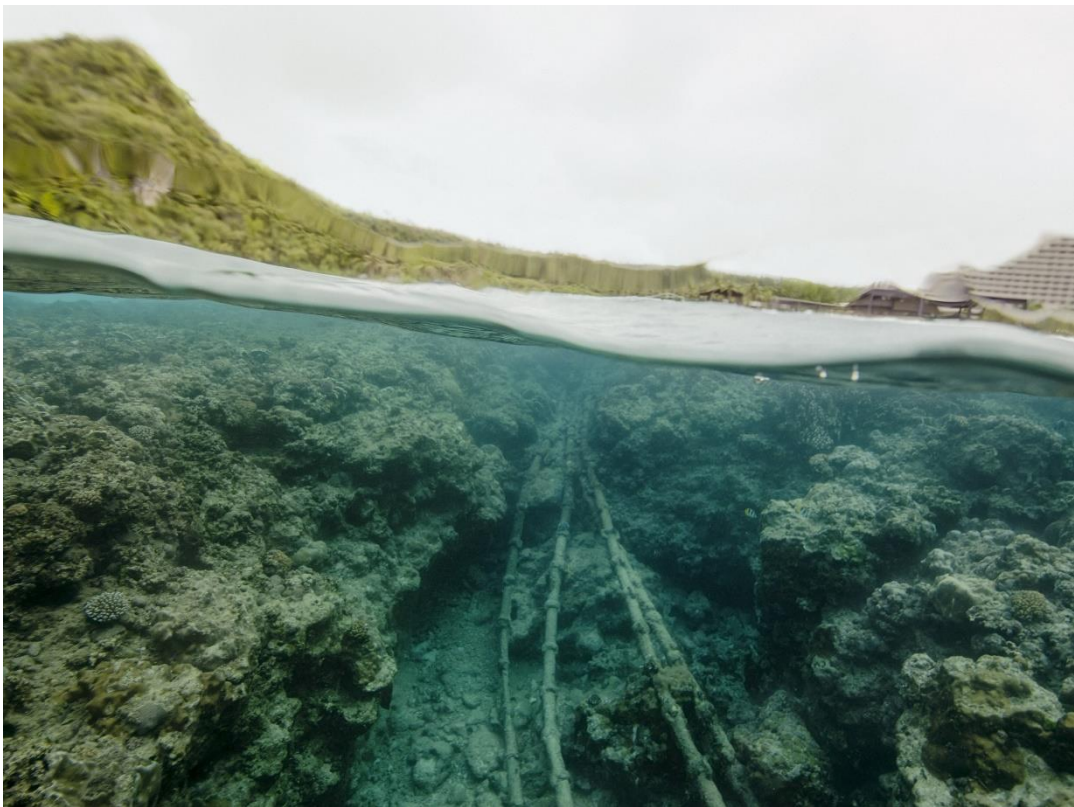


Figure 5.6. "Under the Beach (Tumon Bay, Guam)": *What lies beneath*. 2016.

Trevor Paglen

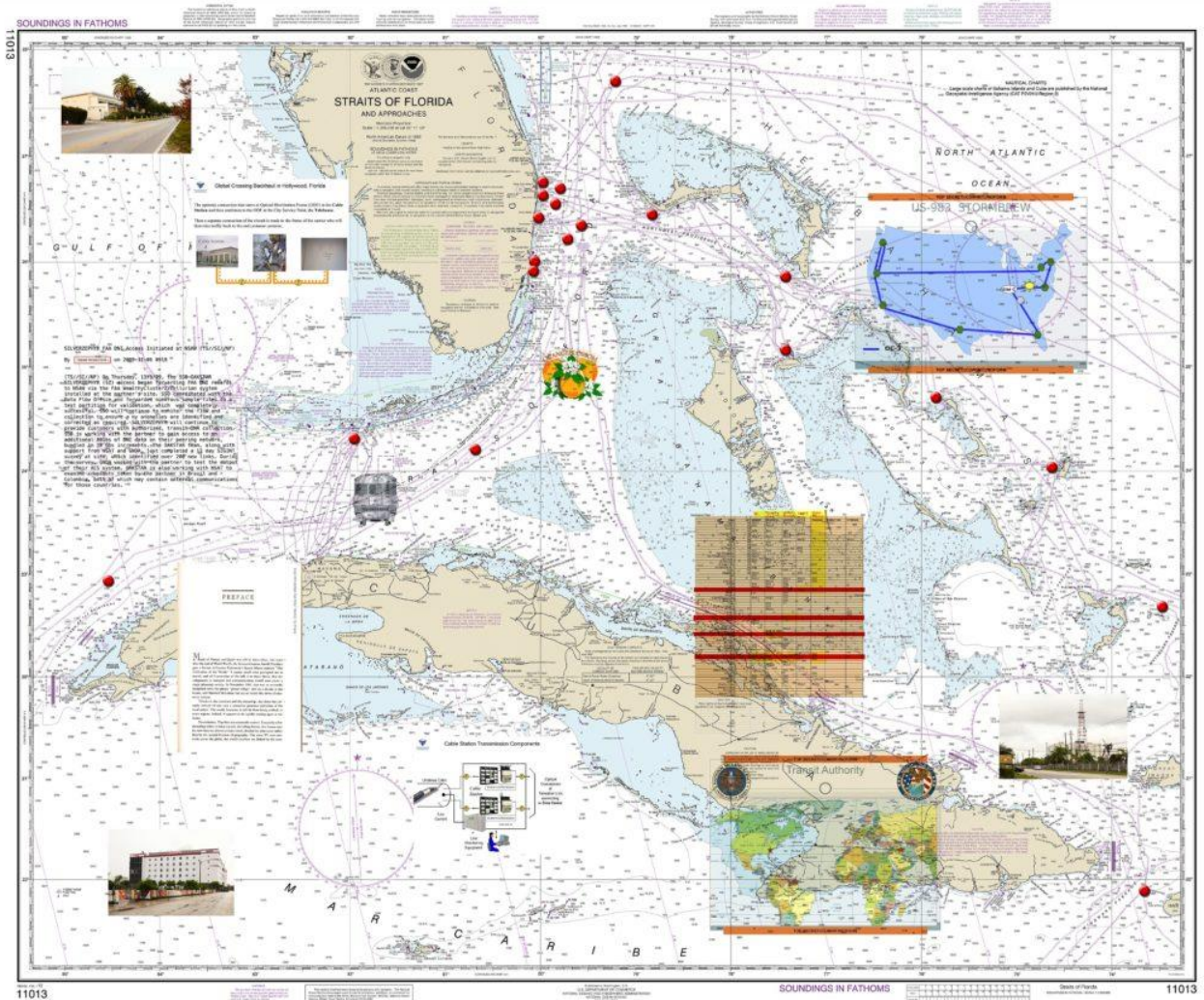


Figure 5.7. "Miami Beach, Florida": *What lies beneath.* 2015.

Trevor Paglen



Figure 5.8. "Mastic Beach, New York": *What lies beneath*. 2014.

Trevor Paglen

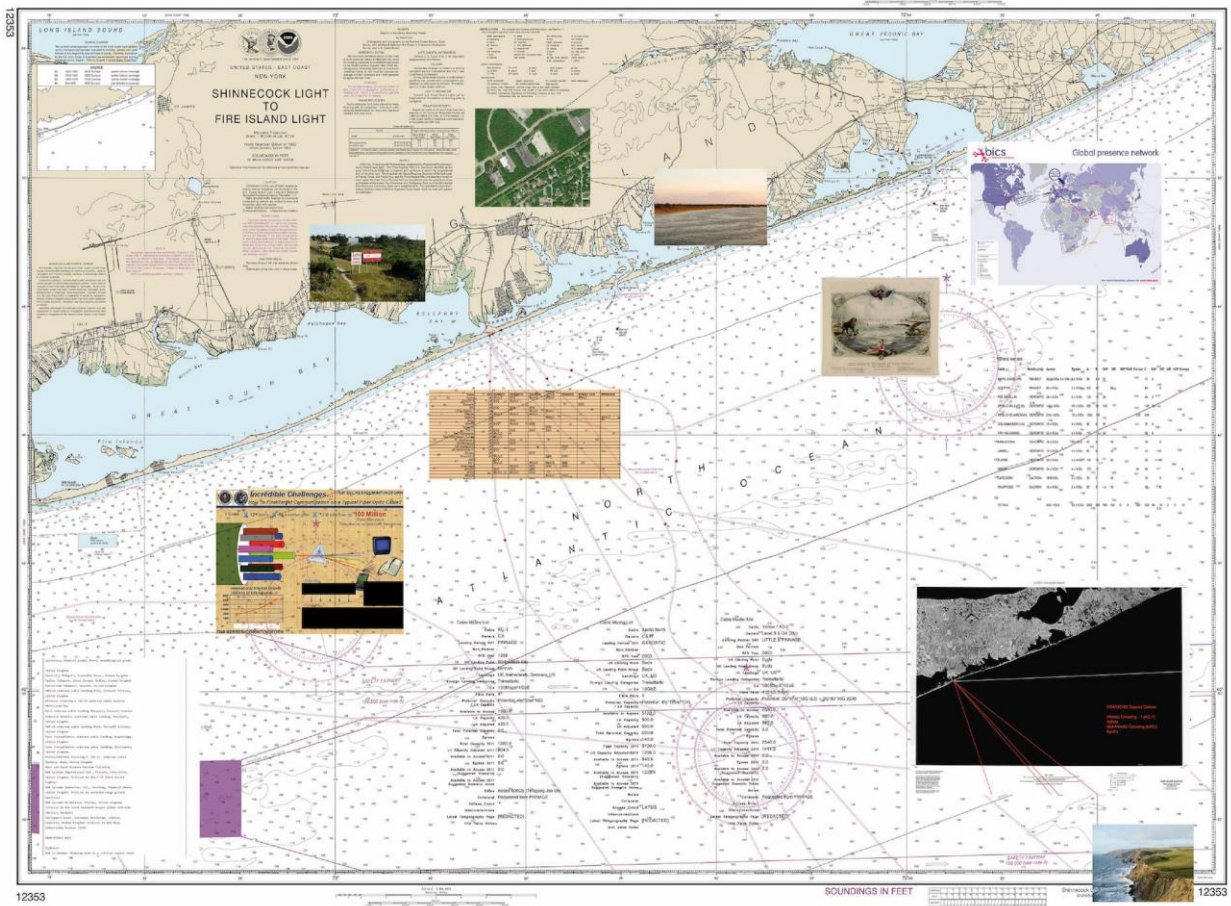


Figure 5.9. "Shinnecock Light to Fire Island Light": *What lies beneath*. 2014.

Trevor Paglen



Figure 5.10. *PAN (Unknown; USA-207), 2010-2011: The Other Night Sky.*

Trevor Paglen



Figure 5.11. *Dead Military Satellite (DMSP 5D-511) Near the Disc of the Moon, 2010:*
The Other Night Sky. Trevor Paglen

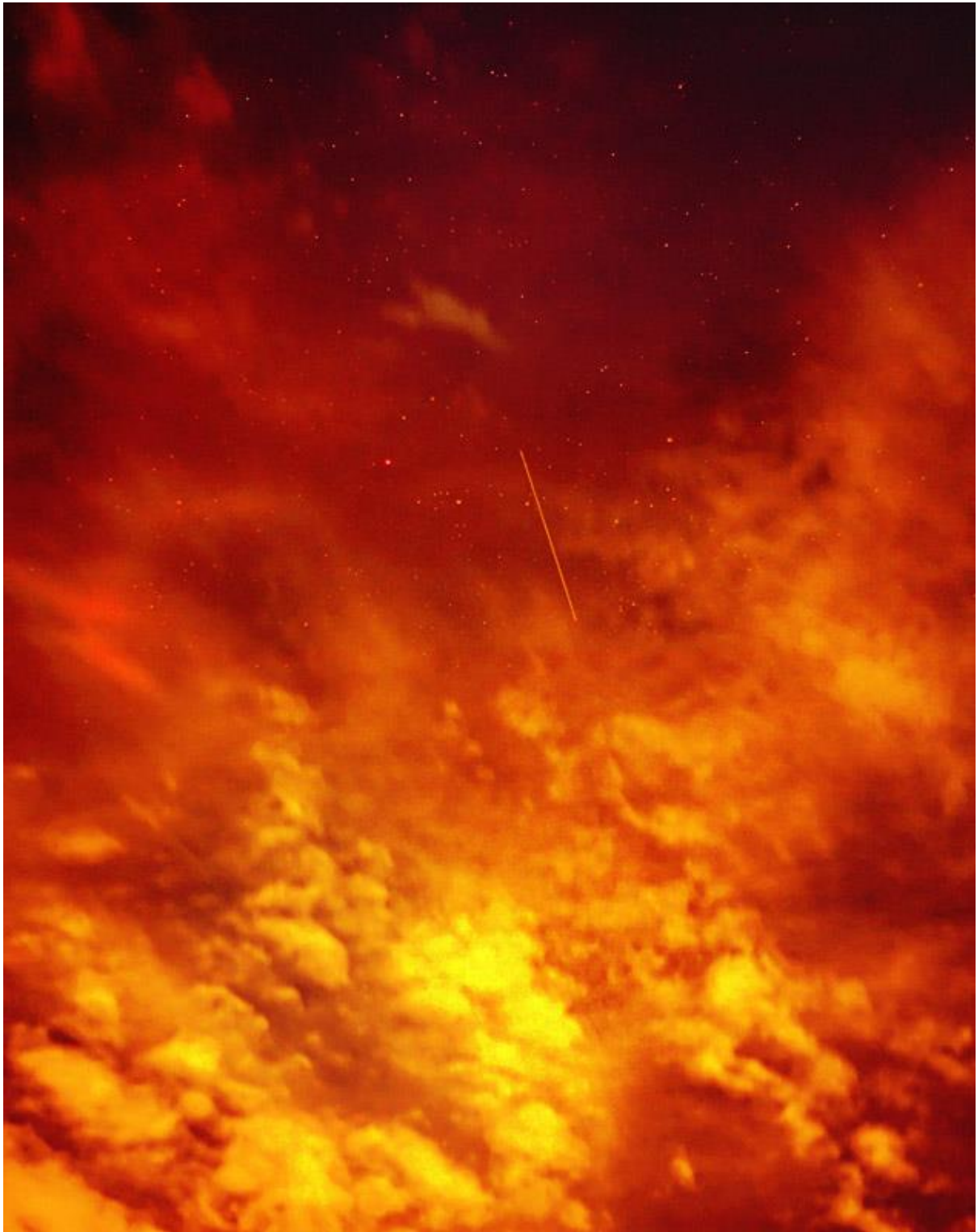


Figure 5.12. *KEYHOLE 12-3/IMPROVED CRYSTAL Optical Reconnaissance Satellite Near Scorpio (USA 129), 2007: The Other Night Sky.* Trevor Paglen

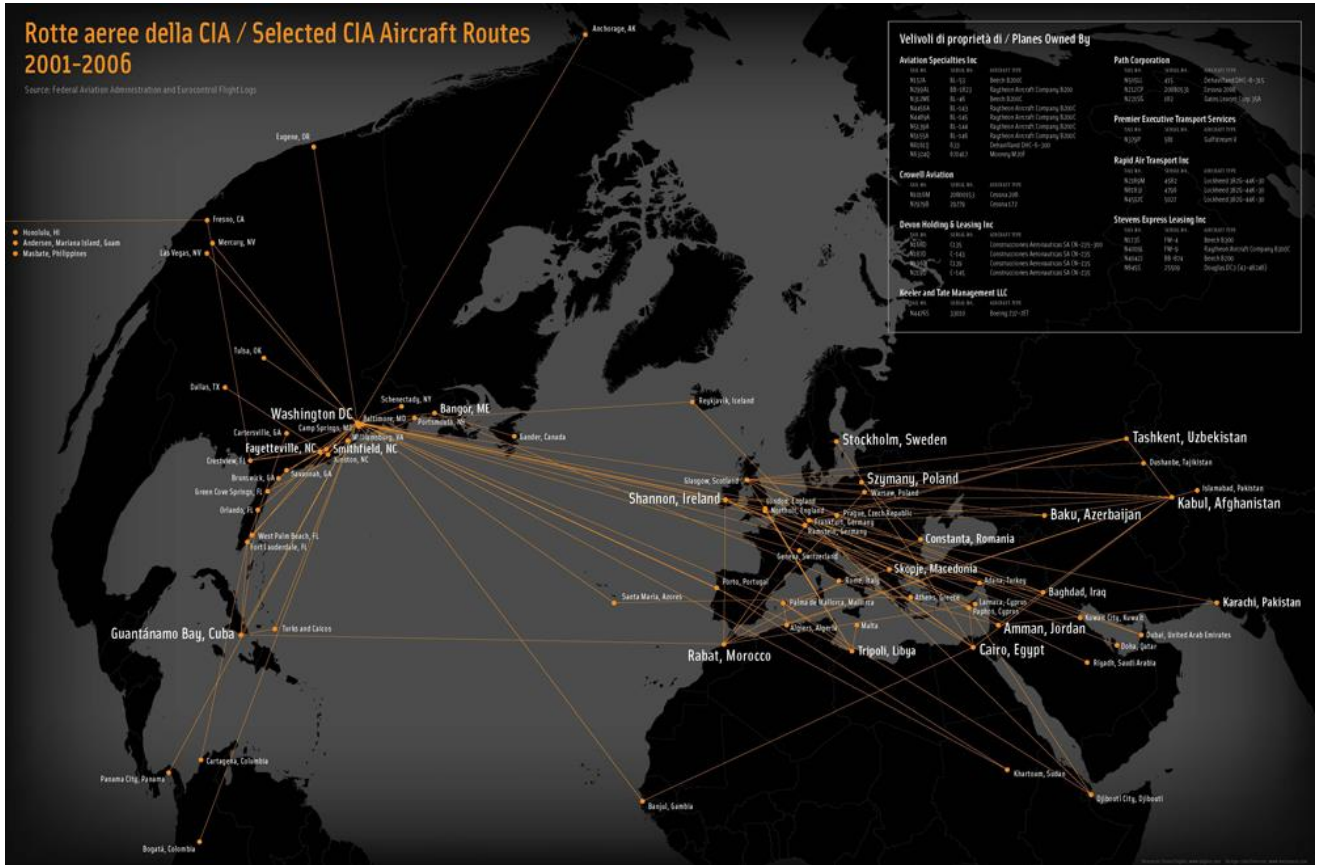


Figure 6.1. Selected CIA Aircraft Routes 2001-2006. 2006.

John Emerson / Trevor Paglen

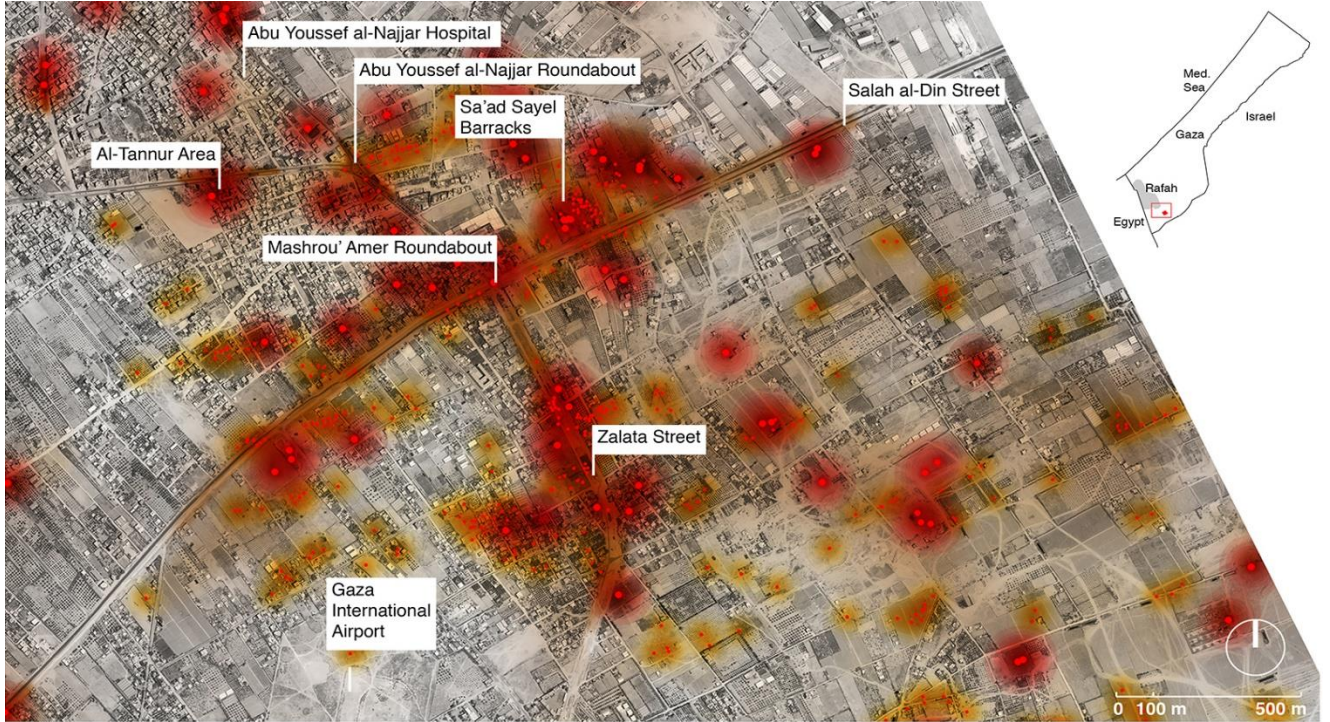


Figure 6.2. A Pléiades satellite image of eastern Rafah, taken on 14 August 2014 at 11.50am. © CNES 2014, Distribution AIRBUS DS, all rights reserved.

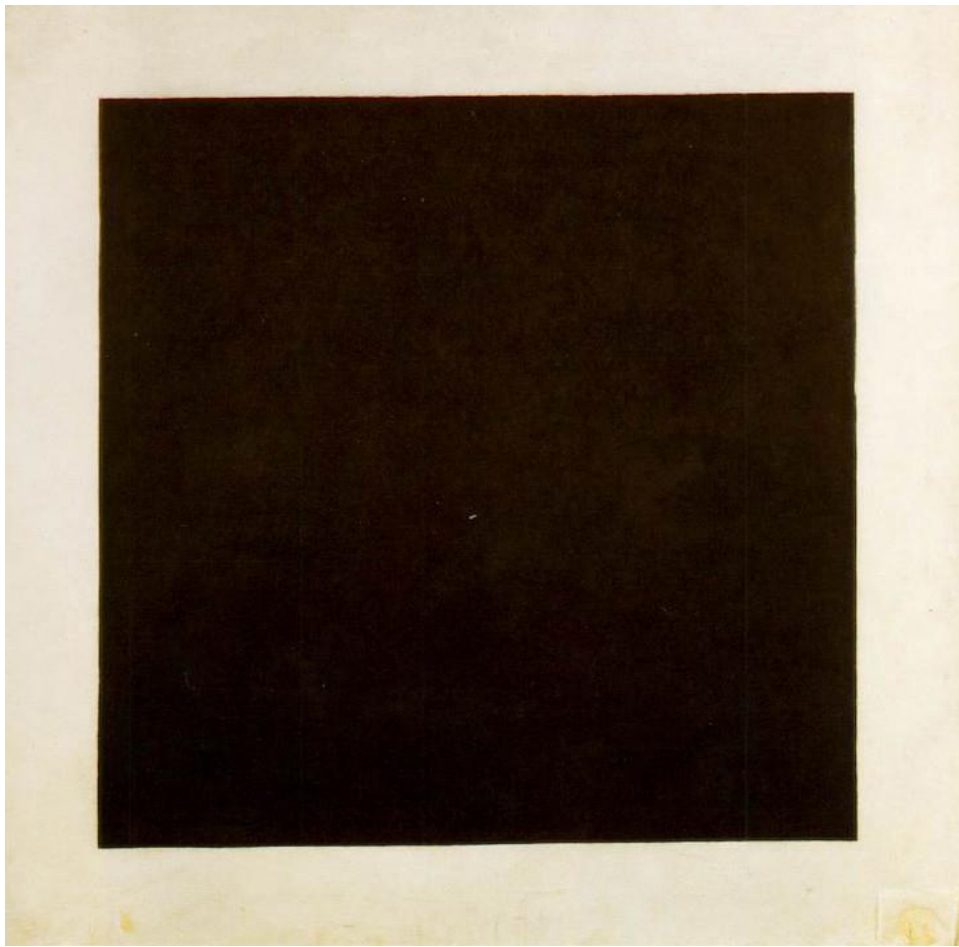


Figure 6.3. *Black Square*. 1915. Kasimir Malevich.

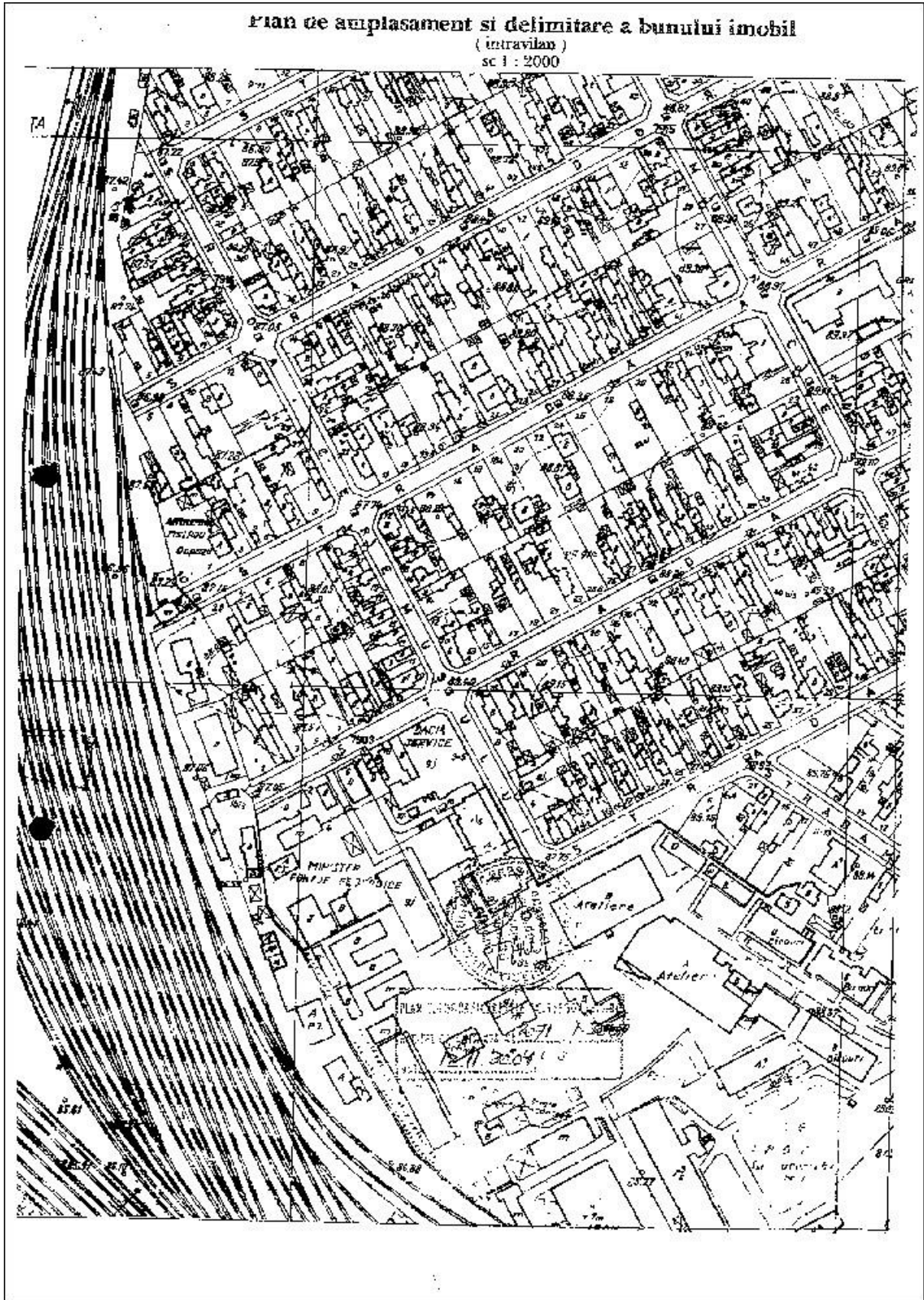


Figure 6.4. *Negative Publicity*. 2011-2016. Edmund Clark

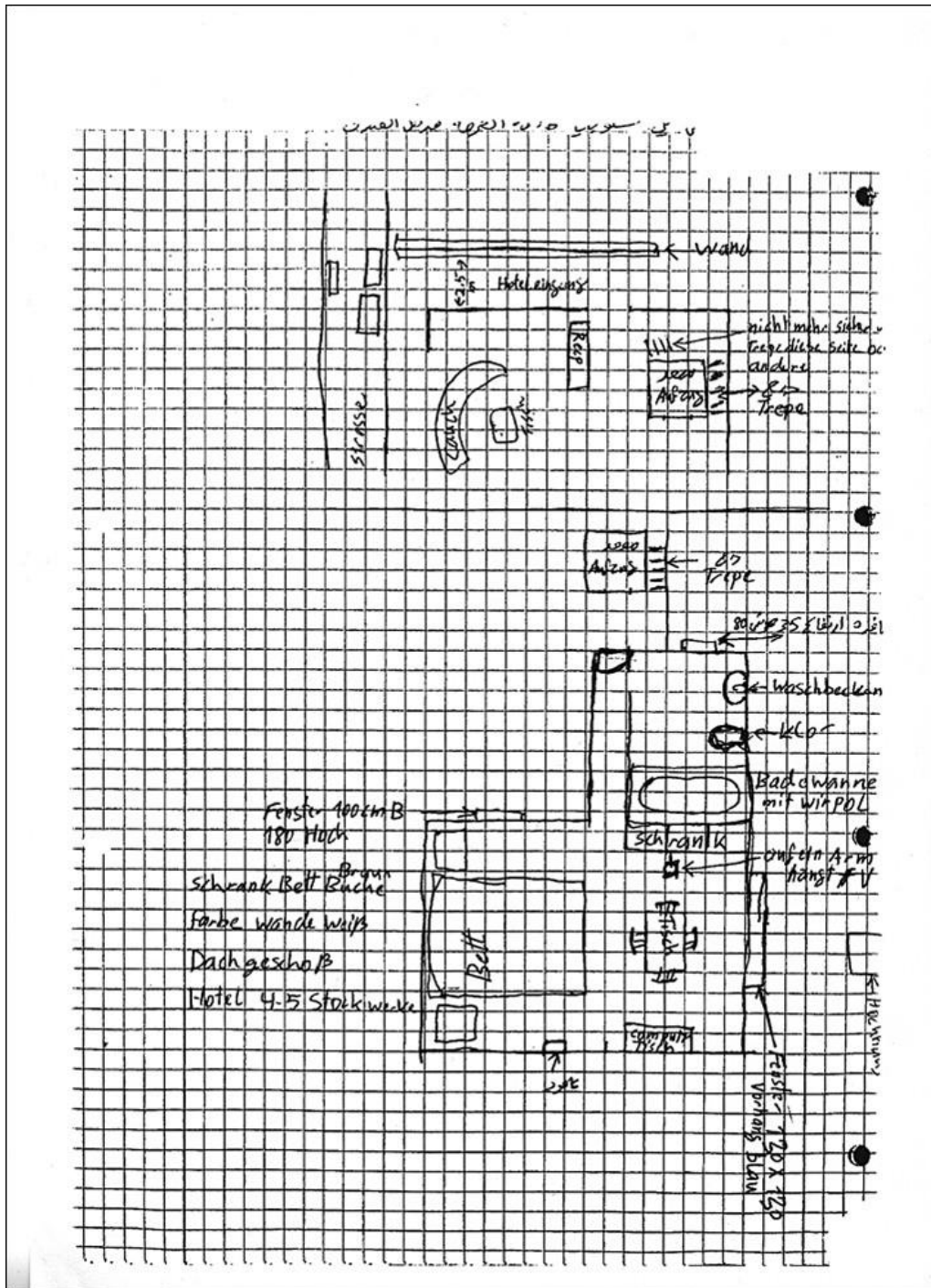


Figure 6.5. Negative Publicity. 2011-2016. Edmund Clark



Figure 6.6. *Negative Publicity*. 2011-2016. Edmund Clark



Figure 6.7. *Negative Publicity*. 2011-2016. Edmund Clark



Figure 6.8: *Negative Publicity*. 2011-2016. Edmund Clark



Figure 6.9. *Negative Publicity*. 2011-2016. Edmund Clark

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CIA LOAN COPY
DO NOT COPY

Central Intelligence Agency
Inspector General

SPECIAL REVIEW



(S) [REDACTED] COUNTERTERRORISM DETENTION AND
INTERROGATION ACTIVITIES
(SEPTEMBER 2001 - OCTOBER 2003)
(2003-7123-IG)

7 May 2004

Copy 43

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Figure 6.10. *Negative Publicity*. 2011-2016. Edmund Clark

(CROSS-MR. HELLER - MAHLON RICHARDS)

- 80
- 1 A. I guess it's a flight where the government
 2 thinks there's a bad guy and they pick him up.
- 3 Q. A bad guy. A bank robber, or something else?
 4 A. ~~Theorists~~ Terrorists.
- 5 Q. And do you know where the aircraft in question
 6 was flying from May of '02 through November of
 7 '02? Where was this airplane traveling
 8 primarily?
- 9 You say terrorists. If it took off
 10 from New York, where would it go?
- 11 A. Well, it would go anyplace in the world.
- 12 Q. Where did it go?
- 13 A. It went to Italy, to Rome, Afghanistan, to
 14 every place.
- 15 Q. A rendition flight, you say bad guys. They
 16 would go to Rome, and they would just pick up
 17 any bad guy, or any particular bad guy?
- 18 A. We had no information on who they were flying
 19 or who they were picking up.
- 20 Q. Where did the plane go after it left Europe?
 21 Would it go to Guantanamo Bay?
- 22 A. Sometimes it would go from Washington to
 23 Guantanamo, yes.
- 24 Q. If it went from Washington to Guantanamo Bay,
 25 did it ever go from Europe to Guantanamo Bay?

2011_000220

Figure 6.11. *Negative Publicity*. 2011-2016. Edmund Clark

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	39
Guidance Prior to DCI Guidelines	40
Specific Unauthorized or Undocumented Techniques.....	41
Handgun and Power Drill	41
Threats	42
Smoke.....	43
Stress Positions	44
Stiff Brush and Shackles.....	44
Waterboard Technique.....	44
[REDACTED]	46
[REDACTED]	47
[REDACTED]	48
[REDACTED]	48
[REDACTED]	50
[REDACTED]	54
[REDACTED]	57
[REDACTED]	58
[REDACTED]	61
[REDACTED]	65
[REDACTED]	67
Specific Unauthorized or Undocumented Techniques	69
Pressure Points	69
Mock Executions	70
Use of Smoke	72
Use of Cold.....	73
Water Dousing.....	76
Hard Takedown	77

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Figure 6.12. *Negative Publicity*. 2011-2016. Edmund Clark

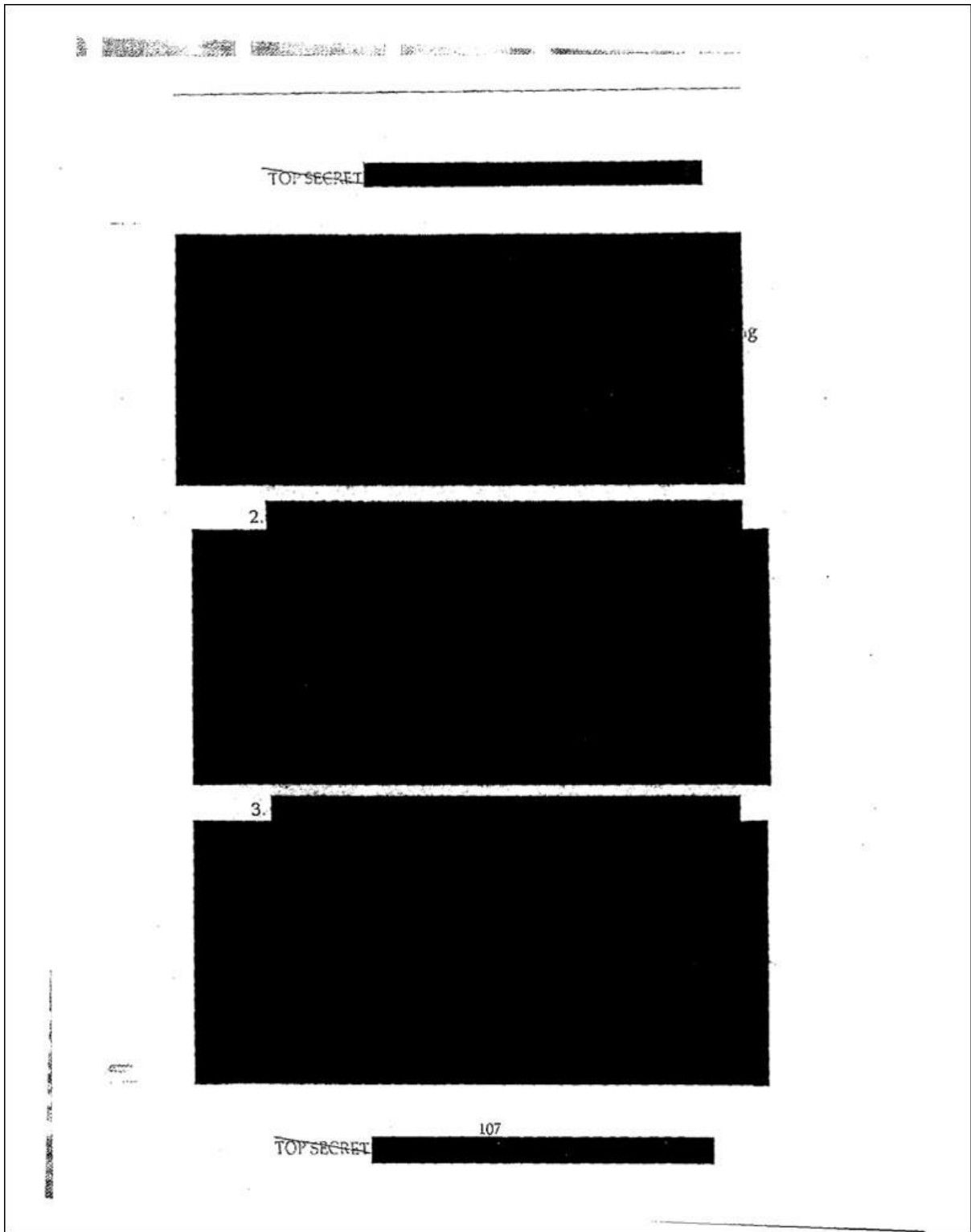


Figure 6.13. *Negative Publicity*. 2011-2016. Edmund Clark

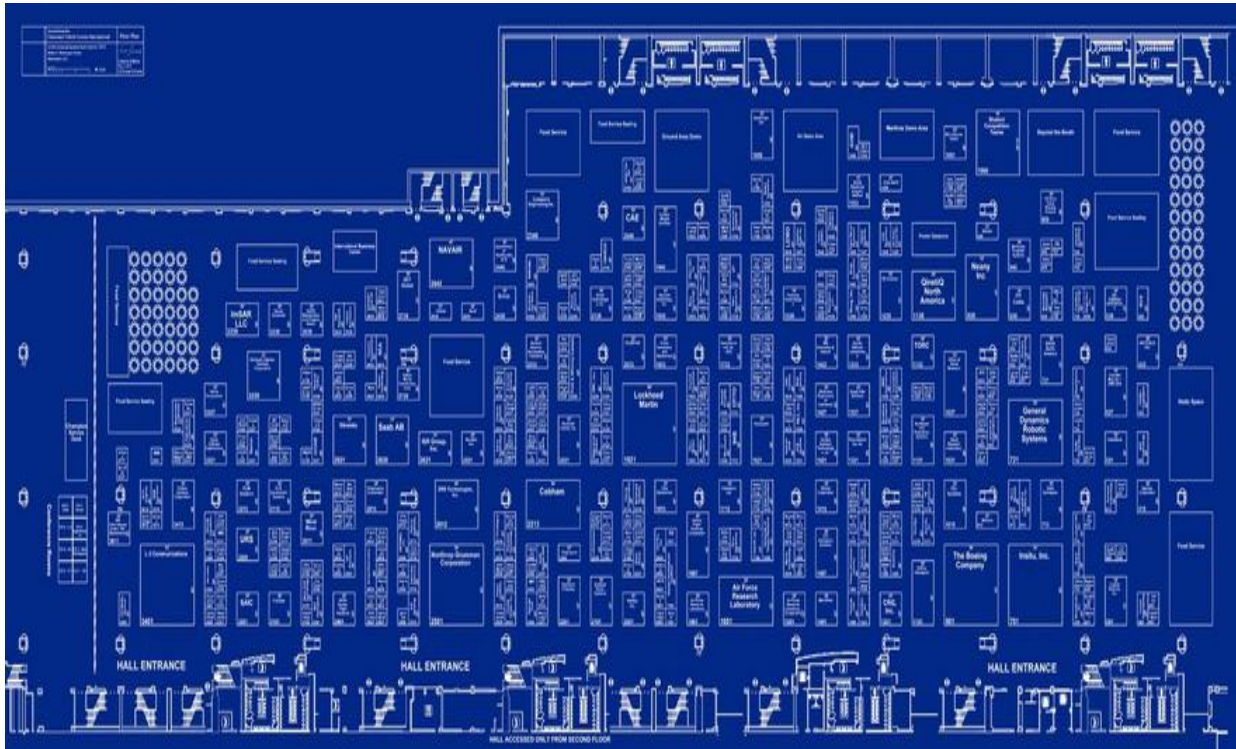


Figure 6.14. AU VSI: Whiplash Transition. Undated. Lisa Barnard

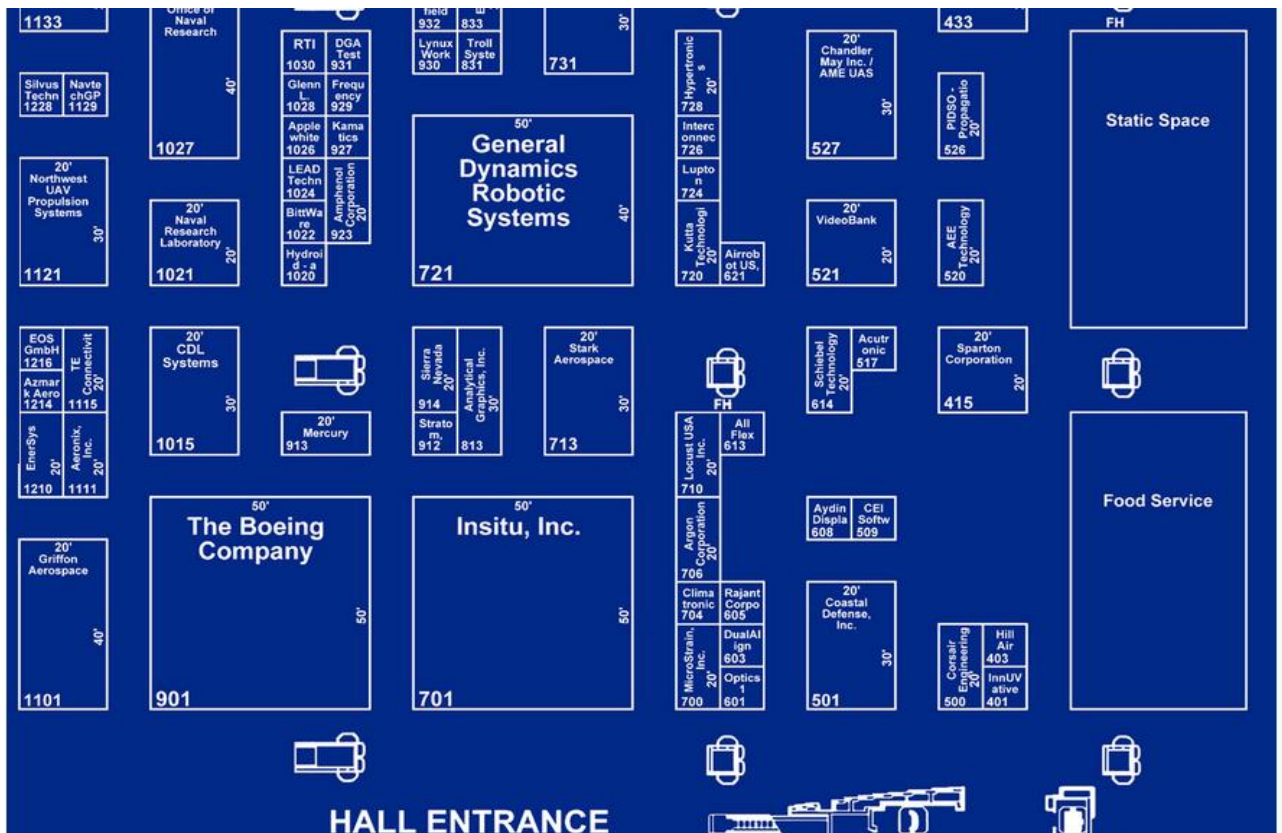


Figure 6.15. AU/VI : Whiplash Transition. Detail. Undated. Lisa Barnard

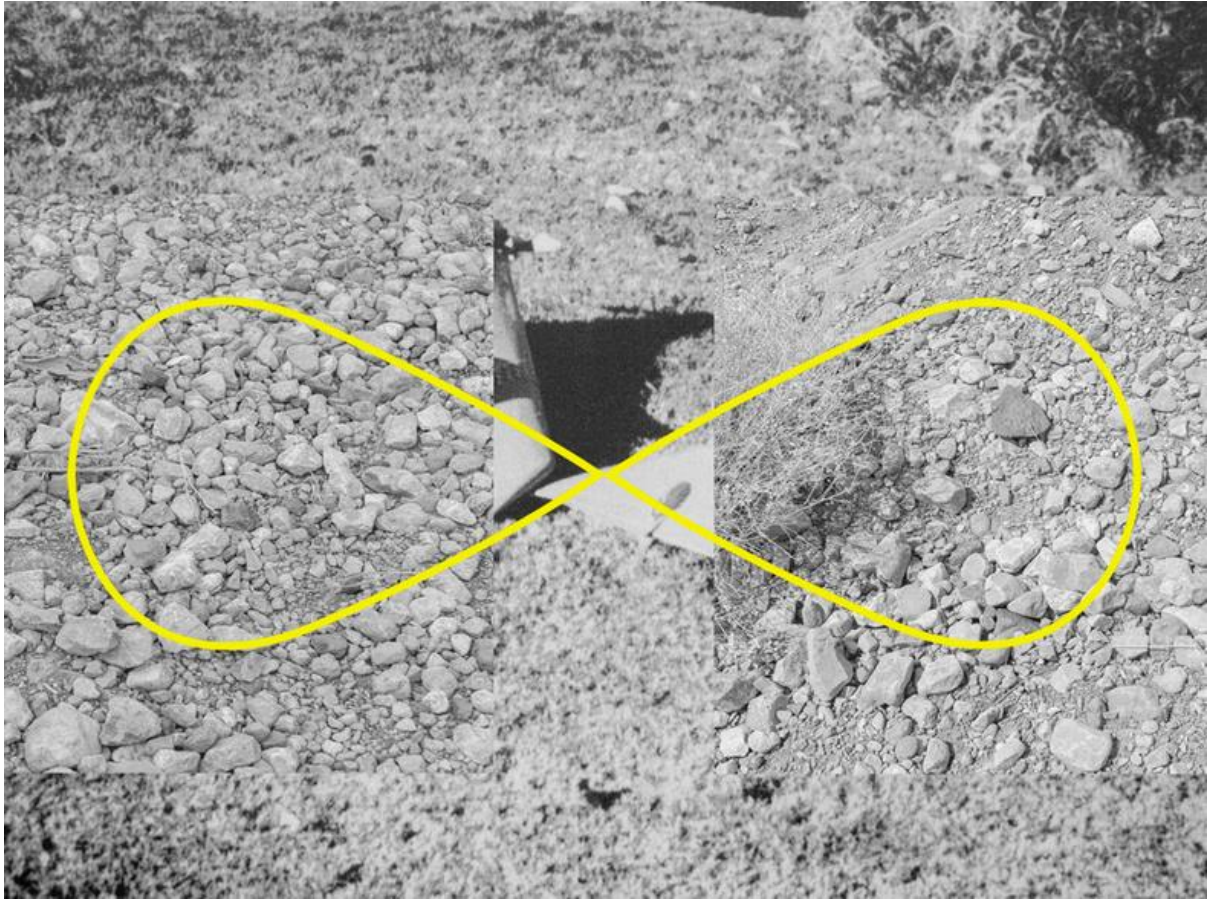


Figure 6.16. *Bowtie*. From *Whiplash Transition: Mapping the Territory*. 2011. Lisa Barnard



Figure 6.17. *Split*. From *Whiplash Transition: Mapping the Territory*. 2011. Lisa Barnard

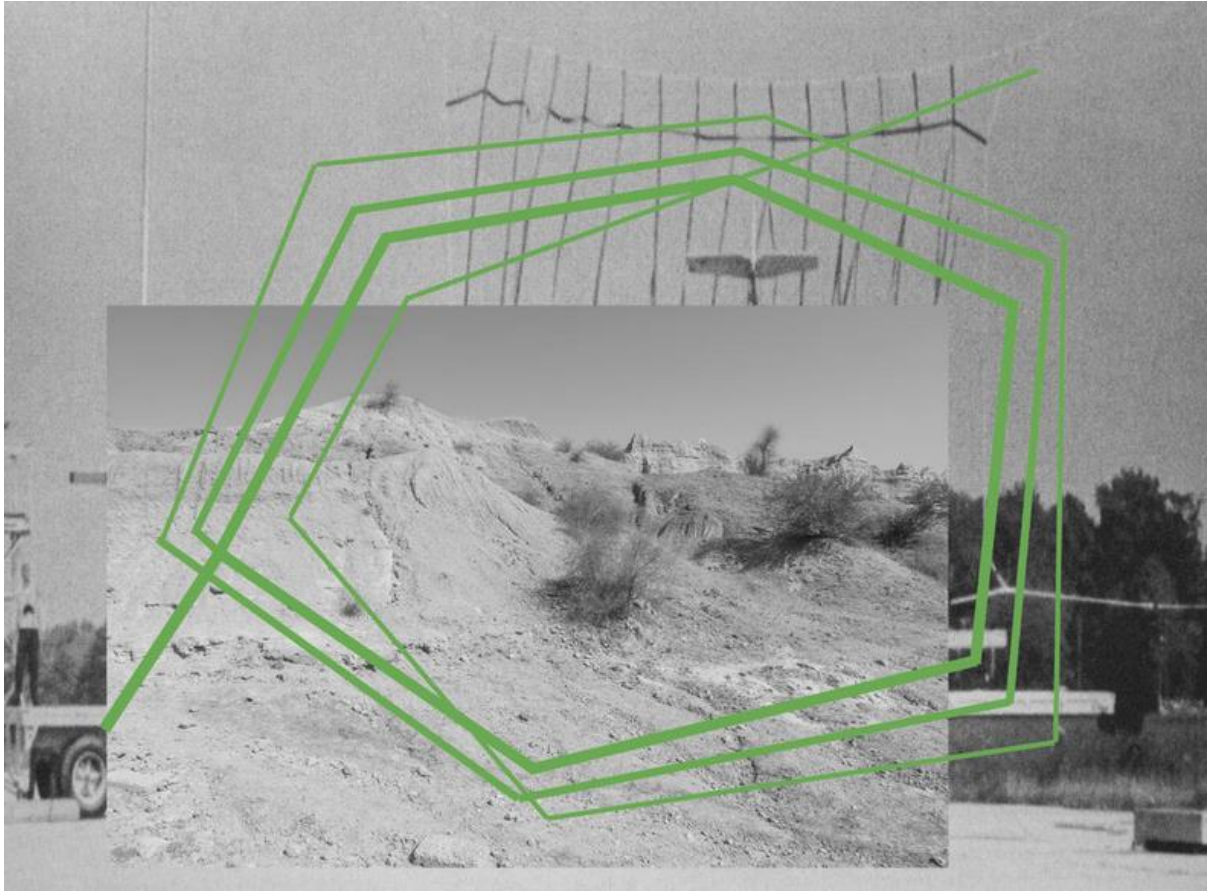


Figure 6.18. *Hexagonal*. From *Whiplash Transition: Mapping the Territory*. 2011. Lisa Barnard

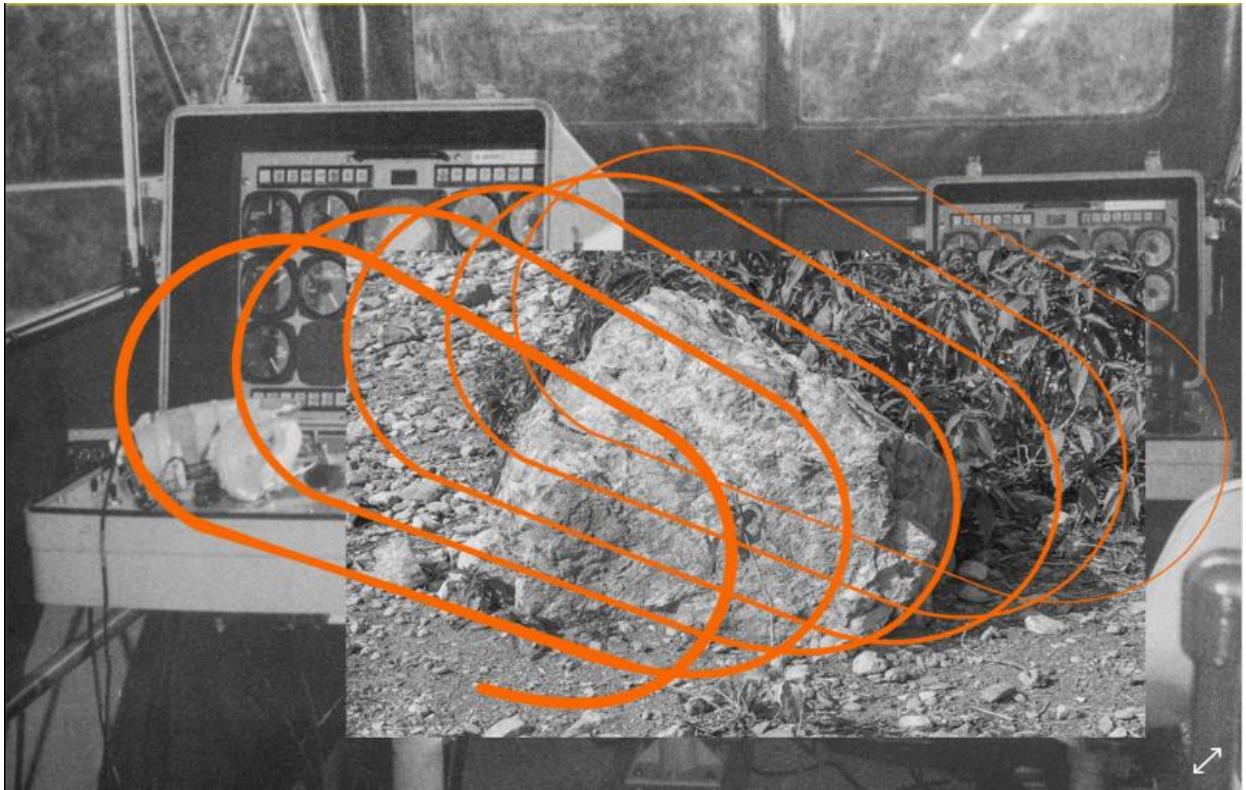


Figure 6.19. *Racetrack*. From *Whiplash Transition*. 2011. Lisa Barnard.

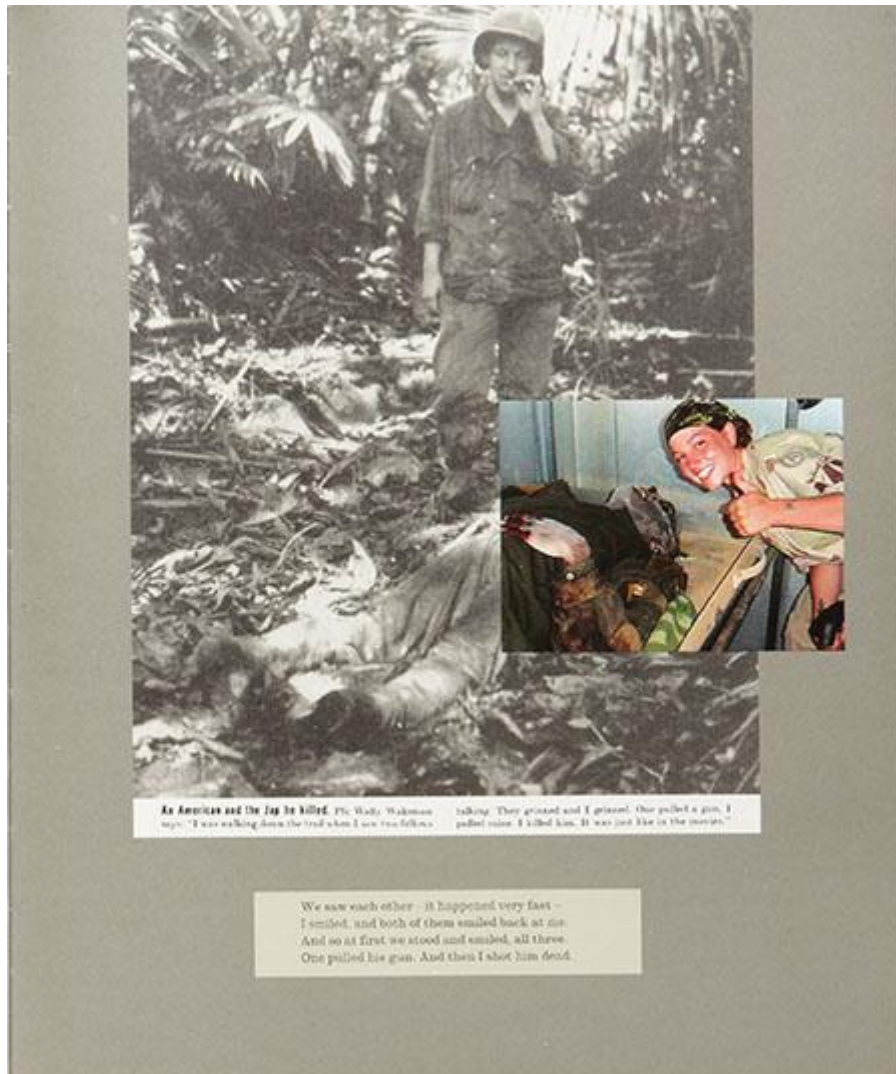


Figure 6.20. From *War Primer 2*. 2011. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin

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S-21: The Kmer Rouge Killing Machine. Dir. Rithy Panh. 2003. Art-documentary film.

Night and Fog (Nuit et Brouillard). Dir. Alain Resnais. Argos Films, 1956. Short war film.

¹ The erstwhile, conventional (perceived) distinctions between photography as it has been used in photojournalistic, artistic and documentary witnessing and visualisation practices have become increasingly frayed at their disciplinary edges in the "un-disciplined" digital era of rampant image production across platforms and genres. This "blurring of the boundaries" between the professional photojournalist and the smart phone equipped "citizen witness" (Allan, 2013), for example, is one such development at the digital heart of the contemporary visual representation of "news", war and conflict. To describe contemporary art-documentary practices - that is, what it is those who engage in visual representation are doing - with any degree of accuracy now requires alternative terms, since a term like "photographer" has been rendered somewhat anachronistic/inappropriate through these evolving practices and channels of witnessing and visualisation. In addition, there are now myriad unconventional and hybrid ways of "doing" photography that do not necessarily entail picking up a camera and aiming the lens at someone/thing: the use of archival imagery, the digital palimpsest of iconic imagery, the forensic deployment of extant imagery, and an investigative approach in general. It is for these reasons that the terms "image-maker" and "image-user" is the favoured nomenclature in this thesis.

² In/visible here is a simple form of shorthand for both less visible (not entirely invisible; perhaps unseen) and opaque or literally invisible - an intangible system, relation, structure of abstraction.

³ See Walton, 1984 for an interesting (pre-digital) philosophical discussion of photographic realism.

⁴ "Mediatized conflict" is used in the sense propounded by Simon Cottle (2006) He identifies the fact that the media and the military have developed an alliance whereby the real-time reporting of conflicts sees a performative aspect to its reporting emerging - mediatized conflict; the media is no longer "passively" observing conflicts but also (re-)enacting or co-creating them. The media-military virtual/digital feedback loops establish a dialectical dynamic whereby the way conflict is reported also has a direct bearing on the shape/consequences of that conflict, or its further perpetuation.

⁵ It is important to note here that Roberts also refers to 'real abstraction'. He derives his usage from the Marxist notion (it has been taken up exhaustively in Marxian theory, of course, by the likes of Georg Simmel, Alfred Sohn-Rethel, and Alberto Toscano, to name but a few). Roberts' sense of real abstraction seems to refer to it as the value form itself, the abstract emptiness of money, of the exchange mechanism which imposes an abstract or artificial equivalence between money and commodities/labour. It is not used to refer to the ideal reflections of money/labour/commodities in ideology, but rather, constitutes the very root of social abstraction, or its condition of possibility. It is thus also at the root of what is meant here by social abstraction, and indeed, immanently relevant to the phenomenon of corporate personhood as well. However, it is a notion very specific to a Marxist paradigm and is not within the theoretical remit or capabilities of this thesis. Whilst it is deeply embedded

within social abstraction (by way especially of "real abstraction" - the money=labour/commodity equivalence), *for the purposes of this thesis*, I contend that it is not necessary to refer to it beyond social abstraction in order to conceptualise and analyse the visualisation of power and its forms of violence.

⁶ A classic example being Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* (1988). Other pioneering works in this vein which implicitly inform the conceptual framework here are, inter alia Castells, 1996, 2011; Postman, 2000; Entman, 2004; and Mattelart, 2010.

⁷ Much has been written in media and cultural studies concerning the radical impact on news culture of "hyperconnectivity", and apart from a few exceptions in this thesis, this raft of scholarship will not be engaged in any sustained fashion here, save to mention one effect pertinent to the phenomenon of mediatization. Broadly-speaking, (as alluded to in fn 1 above) multinational news corporations, professional and "citizen journalists" or "citizen witnesses" everywhere now actively participate in the making of news, "blurring boundaries" which once strictly separated professional/commercial news reportage from grassroots or amateur forays. "Citizen journalists/witnesses" no longer passively consume news: they co-narrate, thus co-create, events, and in dealing with this demotic onslaught of competing sources of information/perspectives, the mainstream press has had to struggle under its traditional value-mantle of fair, just and balanced/objective news reporting to redefine its role (See Allan, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2013a).

⁸ At <http://www.simonnorfolk.com/site/>. Last accessed 21 April 2018.

⁹ See <http://www.susanmeiselas.com/latin-america/nicaragua/#id=exhibitions>. Accessed 12 July 2017.

¹⁰ One is tempted to use the word "canonised", but this would risk setting up a straw man only to have to beat him down again, as the "field" - ever-expanding in a transdisciplinary manner as it is - features many works and scholars of note for contributions which have either generated considerable secondary literatures, or have successfully "intervened" in a way that has the potential to create the same, or has opened up fresh debates.

¹¹ Rose's introduction provides a comprehensive and useful overview of the various methodologies typically adopted in visual culture studies, such as semiotics, iconology, discourse analysis and psychoanalysis.

¹² He refers to key visual culture texts which have emerged dealing with "war on terror" imagery, such as Mitchell's *Cloning Terror: The War of Images 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* (2010)

¹³ Mirzoeff is not alone in his mission; preceding him in fields other than the visual (such as literary criticism) in their accounts of and/or opposition to colonial-imperialist domination/oppression and discourses/narratives are, to select some well-known examples, Said, (2008, 2012); Spivak (1988); Bhabha (1984; 2013) and Fanon (2008[1963]).

¹⁴ A term the provenance of which I am uncertain but which is being used in many diverse contexts; e.g., anything from theology (Kaplan, Leonard, and Ken Koltun-Fromm (eds.). *Imagining the Jewish God*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books, 2016: 417) through to computational intelligence (Kacprzyk, Janusz, Vassil Sgurev, Ronald R Yager, Krassimir T Atanassov (eds.). *Recent Contributions in Intelligent Systems*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017: 320.

¹⁵ See <http://en.bab.la/dictionary/french-english/dispositif>. Accessed 8 Aug. 2017.

¹⁶ See Visual Culture - The Visual Turn, Visuality, Historical Emergence Of The Field Of Vision As A Site Of Power And Social Control - JRank Articles <http://science.jrank.org/pages/8145/Visual-Culture.html#ixzz5RkvIENhI>. Accessed 15 September 2018.

¹⁷ Butler's oft-cited critical discussion of Sontag's views on the photograph/text or image/narrative relation is not taken up here, as it is regarded as a bit of a straw man. The view here is that Butler fails to recognise the subtlety of Sontag's views, which stresses above all the *haunting* nature of the photographic image, irrespective of the role of narrative.

¹⁸ Linfield's position here seems to be a generally acknowledged one common to the bulk of scholars writing about this subject matter, having been at the time she wrote quite a controversial proposition. It is a position that is assumed from the outset here, albeit more or less implicitly, since the thesis topic deals almost exclusively with non-human imagery in which the agonistics of eye-aversion does not particularly feature, or at all. It is only around the Andersen and Moeller/complicity debate (as I have presented it) referred to above that the position has substantive bearing.

¹⁹ For more on this topic see <http://www.ideelart.com/module/csblog/post/256-1-abstract-photography.html>.

²⁰ It ought to be mentioned that this photograph appears in two versions; one with the cannonballs strewn on the road, one without. The obvious question for scholars of visual culture has been why the terrain was manipulated in this way, and its visual-cultural, political/ideological the implications. See Grant, 2005, at <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/terrible-beauty>. Accessed 5 January 2018.

²¹ This word "demotic" is chosen carefully; it means popular/colloquial speech/expression (extended here to visual representation) but not necessarily "democratic"; the thesis is mindful of not conflating the two.

²² See <http://www.army-technology.com/features/featurenew-solutions-situational-awareness-battlefield/>. Accessed May 2014.

²³ Major General Israel Putnam was alleged to have shouted to his men "Do not fire until you see the whites of their eyes!" at the Battle of Bunker Hill during the American Revolutionary War. See <https://allthingsliberty.com/2013/06/the-whites-of-their-eyes/>. Accessed July 2015.

²⁴ And, unsurprisingly, the US is by a considerable margin the biggest spender of all, accounting for some 36% of all global arms trade in 2016 (Statista, 2018).

²⁵ For more background on this, see Appendix 1 for an extended note on the development of visual culture as a discipline and the distinctions between visual culture, visual studies and critical visuality.

²⁶ This thesis alludes to the participative nature of digital media consumption in its reference to the co-creative, collaborative "requirement" of post-photographic visualisation, but it does not engage directly with the debate on the blurring or polarization of the "mainstream" and the "new" media in this precise respect. It is envisaged, however, that a more thorough and detailed engagement with these particular issues in relation *specifically* to post-photographic visuality ought to be undertaken in further research to prepare this thesis for publication.

²⁷ This is not only a situation which pertains in respect of US or Western aggression; it is also the symbolic context, for example, of Jihadist propaganda, a notorious recent example being the gruesome beheadings published by ISIS on social media. In addition, whilst it is not power's symbolism which is the focus here, it is constitutive of the rhetorical fabric which subtends and maintains the systemic and socially abstract nature of power.

²⁸ With the exception of some of the discussion in the early chapters, this thesis does not engage with traditional war photojournalism and it is also beyond its remit to expound or propound upon the geopolitically specific causes or circumstances of war and conflict *itself* and as a field of study. Proxy and civil wars, sectarian strife, insurgencies and counterinsurgencies, hybrid wars and the like in their historical and international relations specificity is beyond the remit of this thesis, and is to be distinguished from what it is meant by "war" here.

²⁹ This is the full speech: <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/ike.htm>. Accessed 29 August 2017. For a selection of some of the literature consulted in the quest to find a term that encompassed more than that of "military-industrial complex", see Eisenhower, 1987; Hartung, 2010; Byrne, 2010; Ledbetter, 2011; Ottosen, 2009 and Weber, 2001.

³⁰ Habermas used this term to describe the theoretical aporia of post-structuralist discourse in his scathing critique of it in the 1980s. See Habermas, 2015[1985].

³¹ Hypostasization: to treat abstractions and relations as if they were actually existing objects; also known as reification, abstractionism or substantialization. See http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g9781405106795_chunk_g97814051067959_ss1-105. Accessed 21 December 2017. In a sense, for this thesis, power does the precise opposite: it treats Real violence as in-significant abstraction, thereby preserving legitimacy, maintaining hegemony and avoiding accountability.

³² The Oxford English Dictionary defines plexus as 'a network of nerves or vessels in the body (anatomy)', or 'an intricate network or web-like formation'. Solar plexus is defined as 'a complex of ganglia and radiating nerves of the sympathetic system at the pit of the stomach'. Nexus is defined as 'a connection or series of connections linking two or more things: the nexus between industry and political power, or a connected group or series: a nexus of ideas, or a central or focal point: the nexus of any government in this country is No.10.' Etymologically, it is not difficult to see the suggestive relevance of and relations between the structural nexus and the systemic plexus of state-corporate-military-media-entertainment-security-surveillance-etc. power. Available at <http://www.oed.com/>.

³³ The "Event horizon" is taken up in the later chapters of this thesis.

³⁴ *Prest v Petrodel Resources Limited*, Trinity Term [2013] UKSC 34, at <https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2013-0004-judgment.pdf>,. Accessed 31 August 2017.

³⁵ I prefer the term "late modern" to postmodern, as the latter comes with a certain theoretical/philosophical baggage which, for one, tends to emphasize discontinuity and rupture over historical pattern and continuity. There is no discontinuity without continuity; this thesis finds a steady dialectical (or negative dialectical) approach to remain useful in the theorisation and critique of society and (visual) culture.

³⁶ In his seminal introduction of ideological and repressive state apparatuses (ISAs and RSAs), Althusser describes a mimetic process whereby individuals through their social interactions recognise themselves (and each other) as if seeing themselves in a mirror. This is Althusser's take on the Lacanian developmental "mirror stage" at the collective social level whereby individuals are ideologically inducted into society and its norms, structures and institutions. The ideology which grounds and perpetuates the ISA and RSA is, according to Althusser, constitutive of the very nature of (inter) subjective identity.

³⁷ See Grumley, 2016[1989]. Available at <https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=xhDeCwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT10&dq=Grumley,+John.>

History+and+totality:+Radical+historicism+from+Hegel+to+Foucault.+Routledge,+2016.&ots=1JS9BtLDNH&sig=QsxI45gGpdr5Ycbu7R6hftUcyTI#v=onepage&q=subjective%20atomisation&f=false. Accessed 12 Dec. 2017.

³⁸ Post-structuralist theories of textual and visual representation had already introduced notions such as polysemy or polyvalency, the "slippage of the signifier" and the contingent or aleatory and political/colonial/contextual nature of meaning ascription and interpretation; it can also thus be argued that current perspectives on digital representation and visualisation "owe" their theoretical heft to the perspicacity and prescience of continental interdisciplinary post-structuralism. These ideas have become all the more forcefully embodied or instantiated in a digital/virtual reality epoch, in which erstwhile or "traditional" notions of (epistemological, philosophical) meaning and "truth" are undergoing radical recalibration, transforming their "home" disciplines from the outside and the inside simultaneously; that is, in intra- and interdisciplinary fashion. This thesis acknowledges the implicit influence of some salient ideas emanating from this discourse.

³⁹ See Adorno, 1986 [1970]; Mitchell, 2013 and Rancière, 2009, 2014.

⁴⁰ For some background information, see <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/c/collage>.

⁴¹ See <http://wrongwrong.net/article/thomas-hirschhorn-pixel-collage>.

⁴² Which Rosler has followed up with a new series *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*, New Series, 2004-2008. See <http://www.martharosler.net/> Accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

⁴³ Otherwise colloquially known as "Napalm Girl" or "The Accidental Napalm Attack"; see Chapter Two.

⁴⁴ The computer is the first in an ever more sophisticated series of supercomputers built under the aegis of the Military Applications Department (DAM) of the French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) in partnership with the BULL corporation. The goal is a long-term one, of 'procuring the necessary simulation systems to enable nuclear weapons to be designed and guaranteed without performing real-life tests.' <http://www-hpc.cea.fr/en/complexe/tera.htm>. Accessed 17 Nov. 2017.

⁴⁵ Griselda Pollock writes about his "story" in poignant, harrowing detail. See Pollock, 2012: 65-78.

⁴⁶ "The Gaze", having become somewhat of an axiomatic interdisciplinary theoretical tool which - assumes varied incarnations in contemporary literatures and discourses: as the gaze of the Other, the panoptic gaze, the imperial or (post-) colonial gaze, the male gaze, the feminine gaze, the medical gaze, the tourist gaze, and so forth. For some excellent introductory and also discipline-specific texts on, see especially Sturken and Cartwright, 2009; Rose, 2016; Mirzoeff, 2011, 2013; Mulvey, 1989; Kaplan, 1997; Bhabha, 1997; Mitchell, 2002; Terry, 1990; Urry, 1992 and Manlove, 2007.

⁴⁷ Of course, it is to be noted that there are many other studies of complicity relating to subjects such as international and criminal law, human rights abuses, medicine and public health policy, the pharmaceutical industry, feminism and feminist critical theory, post-colonial and orientalist discourse, studies of corporate globalisation, international relations and governmentality, art, literature, love, and so forth. For a general and thematically broad-ranging introduction to various forms of complicity, see Afxentiou, Dunford, and Neu, 2017. The Holocaust and genocide dominates the literature on the representation of trauma and atrocity, to include the complicity of the witness; for example, Felman and Laub, 1992; White & Friedlander, 1992; LaCapra, 1998; Apel, 2002; Didi-Huberman, 2008; Zelizer, 1998, 2010; Hirsh, 2008 and Pettitt, 2016. One of the very few to "name" complicity in the titles here is a non-visual studies text: see Jones, 2004; Sanyal, 2015. There are, however, surprisingly few texts which are directly relevant to the study of complicity and *visual* witnessing. Wendy Kozol counts as one recent exception (Kozol, 2012, 2014).

⁴⁸ The "subject/object" of visualisation refers to both the image as "object" of analysis, but also, pursuant to Mitchell, the image as agent and ostensive "leader" (subject) of the forensic enquiry beyond the frame. In another sense and more simply viewed, the "object" represented in or by the image is also the "subject" of a broader enquiry.

⁴⁹ The debates surrounding *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in Germany are complex and controversial, with writers and intellectuals taking up varying and opposing positions on what it means and whether it is a "good" thing or not. Obviously, the literature on this topic abounds, some of which - such as Arendt - has become seminal in the field of trauma and memory studies. See especially Levy and Sznajder, 2002 and Reichel, 2001.

⁵⁰ Such as ZDF-Kultur, ZDF-Geschichte (history)[German public service television broadcasters], 3-Sat, Phoenix, Arte, count amongst the cluster of TV channels which repeatedly screen material concerned with all facets of German, Nazi history and collective "*Vergangenheitsverarbeitung*." These channels are amongst the more "serious" ones aimed at the "educated" middle classes.

⁵¹ See Pollock and Silverman's (2014) fascinating and insightful writing on this film in respect of the cinematic "*Vergangenheitsverarbeitung*."

⁵² It must be remembered that the issue of choice or ineluctability, structural or contingent complicity is explored in this thesis for its particular significance with reference to *post-photographic* visualisation; the brilliant scholarship of Sontag, Butler, Azoulay, Linfield, et al., is not under any sustained scrutiny here

precisely for this reason, although, quite naturally, their salient ideas are still relevant and referred to where appropriate.

⁵³ The Gaze has "traditionally", or from a feminist perspective, been examined in relation to desire.

⁵⁴ Kaufmann focuses in particular on literary studies, but it is submitted here that the points he makes are as relevant for visual, cultural and media studies.

⁵⁵ I acknowledge Siegel and Berry (1997: 194) for drawing my attention to this excerpt, and for further insight I am indebted to Michael J. Shapiro who makes intriguing reference to this quote in relation to trauma and to Foucault's medical gaze (2015: 84). See also Jacques Lacan, 1977[1964].

⁵⁶ To put this in structural terms, there is a subject-object dialectic at work – both a simultaneous passivity and activity in looking and being looked at, whether the One looking at you sees you or not, or is even in a position to return your gaze. The sardine can here can be read as a metaphor for the objectifying/subordinating power of the (Western) gaze, which in Lacan's case is also metonymically linked to the fishermen as objects of the gaze who themselves perform a synecdochal function as (de)ciphers of an unjust socio-economic dispensation.

⁵⁷ Aside from "collateral/damage/murder" there is now strong evidence obtained through clinical studies of US aircrew revealing that these remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) operators do, in fact, suffer from symptoms of post-traumatic stress. See Chappelle et al, 2014.

⁵⁸ Speculation used here in the double sense of scrutiny/the specular, and mundane usage or gain – be it reputational or commercial.

⁵⁹ It ought to be noted that iconicity as an art-historical term and as a type of image composition is too rich and multi-faceted a concept to treat of in much detail here: in this chapter, it is examined for one very specific purpose only. That is, to revisit it purely in the context of the "post-photographic" visualisation of war, and ultimately, "war".

⁶⁰ See <https://www.mixcloud.com/OpenEyeGallery/simon-norfolk-prof-andrew-hoskins-in-conversation-art-memory-landscape-genocide/>. Accessed 16 August 2017

⁶¹ For Hicks, see <https://www.nytimes.com/by/tyler-hicks>. Accessed 16 July 2017. There is something a little disingenuous about this particular criticism though, for Norfolk too has been twice a recipient of a raft of awards, inter alia, an award won by Nachtwey too - the World Press Award – and those presented too by multinational corporate entities such as the Sony World Photography Award. See <https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/2012/portraits/simon-norfolk>, <http://www.simonnorfolk.com/text/cv.html> and <http://rps.org/news/2015/april/simon-norfolk-wins-swpa-award>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

⁶² See Burchardt, M. and Gal Kirn. (eds.) 2017. *Beyond Neoliberalism: Social Analysis after 1989*. Palgrave MacMillan.

⁶³ Hyperconnectivity is a term invented by Canadian social scientists Anabel Quan-Haase and Barry Wellman, emerging out of their research into person-to-person and person-to-machine communication across multiple platforms in networked societies, taking as their case studies high-tech forms and what they call computer-mediated communities. See also Marin and Wellman, 2011.

⁶⁴ "Soft power" is a term which I have borrowed from the disciplines of Politics and International Relations. I am cognisant of the fact that there are several theoretical approaches in these disciplines such as Realist, Liberal and Constructivist, which are beyond the parameters of this thesis to discuss. The theoretical implications of the arguments presented in this thesis are positioned somewhere between "Critical" and "Constructivist" perspectives (Slaughter, 2011); possibly partaking of what is being called "post-constructivism", an approach which seeks to move beyond the erstwhile social construction/realism dichotomy. In any event, my view is that "Soft power" as (re)appropriated here is not inconsistent with my use of the term "power" (or Plexus). It is a distinct, ideologically central facet of Plexus. Qualifying the following with the insertion of the italicised word, I would aver that a 'neutral or descriptive meaning of power cannot be found, since the meaning of power is always embedded in [...] theoretical *and practical* context[s]' (Guzzini, 2005: 495): likewise, "soft power".

⁶⁵ For those who have informed the ideas here, see: Hariman and Lucaites, 2007; Hirsch, 2012; Batchen et al, 2012; Zelizer, 1998; Chouliaraki, 2013; Linfield, 2010.

⁶⁶ Otherwise known variously as "Napalm Girl" (Alimurung, 2014; Time Magazine, 2016) or "Accidental Napalm"/"Accidental Napalm Attack" (Hariman and Lucaites, 2003, 2007; Westwell, 2009). See <http://www.apimages.com/Collection/Landing/Photographer-Nick-Ut-The-Napalm-Girl-/ebfc0a860aa946ba9e77eb786d46207e> and <http://time.com/4485344/napalm-girl-war-photo-facebook/>. Both accessed 16 July 2017.

⁶⁷ See CNN. "Vietnam Napalm Attack." 22 June 2015. Accessed 16 July 2017.

⁶⁸ In Batchen et al, 2013.

⁶⁹ In spite of the gender problematisation of Kim Phuc as "foregrounded" proxy for a troubled American conscience, Kim Phuc has "taken control" of her image in the aftermath. She is now the "subject" of the image,

rather than the (secondary and tertiary violated) politicised object thereof. She has a personhood and identity apart from her excruciatingly traumatic history, and has also found some form of healing in founding an international organisation to aid children harmed by war, and in serving as a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations (Hariman and Lucaites, 2007: 179). Ut himself has become almost like an uncle to her (2007: 183). Needless to say, she is very unusual in this respect.

⁷⁰ A term Kozol borrows from Hesford, 2005.

⁷¹ Full title: *Children Fleeing Napalm Strike, Modified-1972, Huynh Cong "Nick" Ut*, 2000

⁷² At least, the American viewer of a certain age; to be fair, Kozol does acknowledge the national and age coordinates of the prospective viewer of Haddock's image when she writes further, 'The signifying power of Haddock's image [...] depends on the viewer's historical memory and imaginative ability'(Kozol, 2014: 174).

⁷³ As mentioned in previous chapters, three directly pertinent anthologies in this topic are Stallabrass, 2013; Kennedy and Patrick, 2014; Batchen et al, 2012.

⁷⁴ For this "event", see <https://techcrunch.com/2016/04/22/mit-creates-a-control-algorithm-for-drone-swarms/>, and <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/google-robot-army-military-drone-swarms-uavs-may-replace-people-theatre-war-1496615>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

⁷⁵ The notion of the Event as theorised by Derrida, Badiou and Žižek are examined in a later chapter.

⁷⁶ Marlene Dumas is a painter who also uses photographic imagery (mainstream media-derived) to "post-photographically" re-present, amongst other things, corpses, such as that of a strangled/hanged Ulrike Meinhof, a lifeless Jesus, a drowned African refugee washed up on a beach on which many white Europeans still happily sun themselves.

⁷⁷ See an eponymously titled book written by two of Carter's colleagues and members of the collective, Marinovich, Greg, and Joao Silva. *The Bang-Bang Club, movie tie-in: Snapshots From a Hidden War* (2011).

⁷⁸ I have chosen not to reproduce this harrowing image here, but it is widely available on the internet.

⁷⁹ See MacLeod, 2015. At <http://www.thisisyesterday.com/ints/KCarter.html>.

⁸⁰ This work and that of Panh discussed below are part of a moving image installation, from which screenshots have been taken here to illustrate the arguments made concerning the post-documentary nature of their visualisations.

⁸¹ Translation of "dispositif": device, system, plan, contrivance. See <http://en.bab.la/dictionary/french-english/dispositif>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

⁸² Chouliaraki : 'a configuration of popular practices of representation through which war is imagined as a constitutive dimension of our public morality' (2013 : 316).

⁸³Anon, 2008: 37.

⁸⁴ Ibid. See also Stallabrass, 2008, 2013.

⁸⁵This description also appears on the Tate website: <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/points-memory-broomberg-and-chanarin>.

⁸⁶ Rather than 'non-figurative', they presumably mean non-figural, because if the images were non-figurative, they would be non-metaphorical/tropical, in other words, they would be literal. It is not an insignificant point.

⁸⁷ Again, we have the possible confusion between 'figurative' here, and figural. If they failed to show the new figuratively, it means they failed to show it by way of visual tropes. That would entail they showed it "literally" (realistically), which clearly, they do not, nor had any intention of doing. So, the view here is that Chanarin means "figural" rather than "figurative".

⁸⁸ <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/the-day-nobody-died-1-1/>.

⁸⁹ He goes on to make a broader point about photography in general saying that *The Day Nobody Died* is also concerned with unsettling the operations that are invisible in all photography [...] camera-made images usually "erase the marks of their making." Photography's violence then would seem to be embedded in, and monitored by, its very mechanisms.' (Innes, 2014) The article draws on the ideas of Barthes, Butler, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe to make some rarefied points about the medium and the ontology of the image, but this is beyond the remit here for now.

⁹⁰ See Hoskins and Tulloch, 2016 for an undaunted, complex and sharply perceptive theoretical exploration of, inter alia, the links between ("postscarcity") digital media/media ecology and the ways in which crises and conflicts are reported/mediatized, and the global (neoliberal "scarcity") economy, issues of risk and security.

⁹¹ <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/the-day-nobody-died-1-1/>.

⁹² However, it must be pointed out that the creation of hybrid and cross-platform "private" visual vocabularies and frames in an era of "hyperconnectivity" is possibly another potential topic for further visual culture research, and to that extent, the work is undoubtedly a provocative and interesting one.

⁹³ <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/the-day-nobody-died-1-1/>.

⁹⁴ This is achieved to good effect in many of their other works regarding war and conflict, most especially in the photoarchive-based palimpsestic strategies of visualisation to be found in *War Primer 2* and *Holy Bible*, which

works have not been chosen for analysis here as they involve numerous representations of the human in extremis.

⁹⁵ Developed by the French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA). See "Tera." Available at <http://www-hpc.cea.fr/en/complexe/tera.htm>.

⁹⁶ All works referred to appear in the new online archive, which, if not accessible at <http://www.simonnorfolk.com/pop.html>, should be available at <http://www.simonnorfolk.com/technologies>.

⁹⁷ Which Roberts calls 'the lost or diminished spectator of photography'. (Roberts, 2014:109)

⁹⁸ It is telling how they have all since been superceded; *IBM BlueGene L* has been superceded by the "Sequoia", and *MareNostrum* by "MareNostrum 4". See <http://www.zdnet.com/pictures/a-look-at-ibms-sequoia-the-worlds-fastest-supercomputer-photos/>, and <https://www.bsc.es/news/bsc-news/marenostrum-4-begins-operation>.

⁹⁹ For a discussion of Norfolk's late or aftermath projects, see Lisle, 2011. Interestingly, Kennedy, like Roberts, sees the Military Sublime pictures as 'a logical extension of his [Norfolk's] interest in landscape aesthetics and ruin, expanding our idea of what constitutes a battlefield.' (Kennedy, 2016: 177)

¹⁰⁰ It is to be recalled here that the very condition of possibility of a state-corporate-military-media-entertainment-surveillance-security nexus of global power in which neoliberal capitalist democracy is the prime mover, is digitalisation: see Mosco, 2005. In its visualisation of "war", Norfolk's imagery examined in this chapter implies just such a recognition.

¹⁰¹ Available at <http://www.simonnorfolk.com/site/> [archive site]. Accessed 18 August 2017.

¹⁰² In *Santa Clara County v Southern Pacific Rail Road*. It was decided in that case that the protections of the 14th Amendment - namely, that 'No state shall [...] deprive any *person* of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor deny to any *person* [...] the equal protection of the laws' - applied equally to corporations, to be regarded as persons. Torres-Spelliscy, 2005, at <https://www.brennancenter.org/blog/hobby-lobby-argument>.

¹⁰³ *Prest v Petrodel Resources Limited*, Trinity Term [2013] UKSC 34.

<https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2013-0004-judgment.pdf>. Accessed 31 August 2017. See also Cotterrell, 1992.

¹⁰⁴To provide some more substantive background to the prevalence and impact of the technologies Norfolk by way of metonym or visual rhetoric seeks to show/expose, it must be noted here that, in respect of Norfolk's broader oeuvre, many military weapons and contexts, such as rockets, etc., appear in the series *Full Spectrum Dominance : Missiles, Rockets, Satellites in America* which is not examined here in particular, but the series is part of what Norfolk calls the Military Sublime. The phrase *Full Spectrum Dominance* is telling, and is indicative of the image-text assemblage or *dispositif* characteristic of Norfolk's work and which is integral to the power and educative function of his projects. The phrase, according to the US Department of Defence's own archived website - quoting itself - is explained as follows: 'Full-spectrum dominance means the ability of US forces, operating alone or with allies, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the range of military operations. While full-spectrum dominance is the goal, the way to get there is to "invest in and develop new military capabilities."' See <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=45289>, accessed 18 August 2017. See also Lendman (2009). He writes of this doctrine that it is 'America's grand strategy, first revealed in the 1998 US Space Command document - Vision for 2020. Later released in 2000 as DOD Joint Vision 2020, it called for "full spectrum dominance" over all land, surface and sub-surface sea, air, space, electromagnetic spectrum and information systems with enough overwhelming power to fight and win global wars against any adversary, including with nuclear weapons pre-emptively'.

¹⁰⁵ See https://www-03.ibm.com/ibm/history/history/decade_1940.html. Accessed 2 February 2017

¹⁰⁶ Stroppa, 2010. Available at <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20101109006034/en/Bull-Tera-100-Europe%E2%80%99s-Supercomputer-Break-Petaflops>.

¹⁰⁷ This somewhat dubious Cold War era threat of "mutually assured destruction" is by no means dead as a policy for asymmetrically dominant powers like the US, contrary to the rumours of its demise over recent years. The West perceives a growing nuclear threat in "rogue" states like North Korea, an ongoing threat from Iran, a re-emergent Russian threat and an emerging threat from China. Above all, however, in a twenty-first century (Trumpian) context of modern warfare, nuclear capability in whatever form must be preserved to secure and perpetuate the lucrative nature of state-corporate-military exception (aggression). See Sokolski, 2004.

¹⁰⁸ It must be pointed out the glowing effect is more apparent when viewing the smaller version of the website image; once one uses the mouse to enlarge it and scroll-view it 3-dimensionally, the impact is somewhat muted. A gallery viewing would again transform the impact. Clearly, the analogical, traditional "vanishing point" mode and the digitally demystifying mode each engender their own formally distinctive inflections.

¹⁰⁹ See <https://www.bsc.es/news/bsc-news/marenostrum-4-supercomputer-be-12-times-more-powerful-marenostrum-3>. Accessed 20 August 2017.

¹¹⁰ See <https://www.bsc.es/innovation-and-services/supercomputers-and-facilities/marenostrum>. Accessed 18 August 2017.

¹¹¹ See <https://www.bsc.es/innovation-and-services/supercomputers-and-facilities/marenostrum>. Accessed 18 August 2017.

¹¹² See <https://www.bsc.es/discover-bsc/the-centre/history>. Accessed 18 August 2017. It is possible that their website images of the machine do indeed originate from Norfolk, but this is not confirmed by him on his own website.

¹¹³ See <http://www.simonnorfolk.com/site/> [archive site].

¹¹⁴ See <https://www.bsc.es/news/bsc-news/marenostrum-4-supercomputer-be-12-times-more-powerful-marenostrum-3>. Accessed 18 August 2017

¹¹⁵ See <http://www.simonnorfolk.com/site/> [archive site].

¹¹⁶ <http://www.simonnorfolk.com/site/> [archive site].

¹¹⁷ Norfolk honoured his commission ostensibly in good faith and was no doubt reasonably remunerated for the same. As he was concerned to emphasise to me via email that he has to sell his photography for a living. Email exchange of 7 July 2016.

¹¹⁸ See Simon Norfolk's website, Menu page, *Et in Arcadia Ego* at <http://www.simonnorfolk.com/site/> [archive site].

¹¹⁹ Thrift also uses the term "atomic structure" to signify "the basic forms of positioning and juxtapositioning which make up [...] contemporary Euro-American Life." (Thrift, 2004: 75) My concept of Plexus as "pivoting on" global corporatization at the socially abstract and structural "molecular" (see page 272 above) level bears some affinities with Thrift's ideas.

¹²⁰ See <https://www.ses.com/>. Accessed 18 August 2017.

¹²¹ It ought to be noted here that the bulk of this thesis, its major hypotheses, etc., was researched and formulated well in advance of the "Trump era". This US presidency is not accounted for or considered in the engagement with media, or media-military relations, "war," foreign policy, or, indeed, Plexus. The surprise election of Donald Trump and the effect this is having on US foreign policy and the geopolitical landscape may have ushered in a new era of destabilization/de-arrestation for mainstream media, but it is beyond the current parameters of this thesis to explore what this means for international relations and the current media ecology. In any event, all the works examined here were created prior to recent events. The critical or dissident visualisation of these recent developments must be earmarked for future research.

¹²² The last sentence perhaps gives a clue as to why it was so easy for Broomberg and Chanarin to persuade the British Army to allow them to embed with them, and lends some force to the argument in that chapter of a "missed opportunity."

¹²³ The appropriation of this insight for this thesis is thus quite a general one and, it must be noted, O'Loughlin's and Hoskin's broader discussion is substantively more detailed than is here suggested, or than can be directly treated within the current discursive and visualisation parameters.

¹²⁴ For the purposes of the argument here, and in confirmation of its fundamental relevance, O'Loughlin and Hoskin's theory is also borne out by Broomberg and Chanarin's remarks in Chapter Three above, pertaining to the way the Associated Press now relies predominantly on local citizen journalists to supply them with real-time imagery and footage as being both cheaper, less dangerous for their employees and incomparably powerful in its immediacy. For that matter, O'Loughlin and Hoskin's idea is also relevant to the criticism made in that chapter of Broomberg and Chanarin's "missed opportunity".

¹²⁵ *Astra 3B* too bears a relation by association with the phenomenon of the secret military satellite (which is discussed in the Paglen chapter)

¹²⁶ Neoteny is the 'biological retention of juvenile traits into the adult stage'. See <https://primevector.wordpress.com/2008/06/24/cultural-neoteny/>. For a polemical example of its usage, see the following blog: <http://www.turbulenceahead.com/2010/12/cultural-neoteny.html>. Accessed February 2018.

¹²⁷ See *Adams v Cape Industries plc* [1990] Ch 433 (i.e., a Chancery Division report) which dealt with, inter alia, the legal personality of the corporation. This is where the phrase "piercing the corporate veil" was apparently first used.

¹²⁸ A term borrowed from Katherine Harrison, *Terror-Democracy: An Iconology*, an unpublished doctoral dissertation submitted through the Institute for Cultural Research, Lancaster University, July 2008.

¹²⁹ For example, his work titled *Ascension Island: The Panopticon*, which shows images of parts of a 'global, computerised electronic surveillance system' which is operated by the NSA in the US, and by GCHQ in Europe (out of Cheltenham). See <http://www.simonnorfolk.com/site/> [archive site].

¹³⁰ This is a reference to extraordinary rendition flights, a topic investigated by Paglen in his book. See Paglen and Thompson, 2007.

¹³¹ There have been increased murmurings within mainstream media of a decline in the influence of American foreign policy recently, but critical visual culture scholarship, such as that of Liam Kennedy, still works within a paradigm of American dominance in respect of international affairs. See, for example, Zakaria, 2017.

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- ¹³² See <http://www.paglen.com/?l=work&s=limit&i=4>. Accessed 23 August 2017.
- ¹³³ See <http://www.paglen.com/?l=work&s=limit&i=4>. Accessed 23 August 2017.
- ¹³⁴ See <http://www.paglen.com/?l=work&s=limit>. Accessed 23 August 2017.
- ¹³⁵ For an informative review of the film, see Brandon, 2016.
- ¹³⁶ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Area_51, accessed 1 November 2016, for an intriguing and seemingly accurate account.
- ¹³⁷ It is to be noted here once again that the large-scale C-print photograph in high resolution and curatorial framing will clearly be far more "seductive" to the viewer than the online or small-scale image encountered here in a bespoke academic context.
- ¹³⁸ See Border Research, 2015. Available at <http://www.bliss.army.mil/DPW/Environmental/documents/SNMEP%20JLUS%20Economic%20Impact%20Study.pdf>. Accessed 24 August 2017.
- ¹³⁹ "Tactic" here is inclusive of strategy, and goes practically beyond image-internal, compositional strategy of visualisation.
- ¹⁴⁰ Jeandré, 2017. At http://www.criticalstudies.org.uk/uploads/2/6/0/7/26079602/jeandree_csv2.pdf. Accessed 21 August 2017.
- ¹⁴¹ See <https://www.darpa.mil/about-us/budget>. Accessed November 2017
- ¹⁴² Central to the Congress advisory structure is The Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee which, as described on the DARPA website 'is responsible for overseeing counter-terrorism programs and initiatives and counter proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Additionally, this subcommittee oversees US Special Operations Forces, DARPA, information technology and programs, force protection policy and oversight, and related intelligence support. It makes sure that our nation is protected against terrorist attacks and unconventional threats.' See <https://armedservices.house.gov/subcommittees/emerging-threats-capabilities>. Accessed November 2017.
- ¹⁴³ The US has not ratified any international human rights treaties since 2002, to include the Mine Ban Treaty (1997), the Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008), The Convention against Enforced Disappearance (2006), and the Original Protocol to the Convention against Torture (2002). See <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/07/24/united-states-ratification-international-human-rights-treaties>. Accessed December 2017.
- ¹⁴⁴ Trevor Paglen is only one of several artists based in the US and New Zealand have ventured into the "suboptic" visualisation of submarine telecommunications and internet cables from around the post-WORLD WAR 2 to the present. Others include Taryn Simon, mentioned in the Wilkinson article quoted in this chapter. For an interesting and informative overview of this work, see Holloway-Smith, 2016.
- ¹⁴⁵ See <https://www.nsa.gov/> and <https://www.gchq.gov.uk/>. Accessed December 2016 (Needless to say, if one searches the NSA site by typing into the search bar "chokepoints," no results are found).
- ¹⁴⁶ See Paglen, *Dis Magazine*. At <http://dismagazine.com/dystopia/73110/trevor-paglen-nsa-tapped-fiber-optic-cable-landing-site-%E2%80%A8mastic-beach-new-york-united-states/>. Accessed 23 August 2017.
- ¹⁴⁷ See The Waag Society, 2016 at <https://waag.org/en/project/data-aesthetics>. Accessed December 2017.
- ¹⁴⁸ For a useful discussion of the phrase in the context of theoretical postmodernism, Derridean deconstruction and memory work, see "bartges", 2013, a *WordPress.com* blog at <https://postmodernictionary.wordpress.com/2013/02/15/always-already/>. Accessed December 2017.
- ¹⁴⁹ See <http://www.paglen.com/?l=work&s=othernightsky>. Accessed 24 August 2017.
- ¹⁵⁰ See <http://www.paglen.com/?l=work&s=othernightsky>. Accessed October 2016.
- ¹⁵¹ See <http://www.paglen.com/?l=work&s=othernightsky>. Accessed 25 August 2017
- ¹⁵² See Edmund Clark's view on this in chapter 7. In short, he regards Paglen and Norfolk as engaging in a self-conscious practice of "the aesthetics of the sublime" in their representation of war, unlike his own strategies of visualisation, which focus on the banality/mundanity and small-town bureaucracy of much of what constitutes the structural and eventual backbone of war machine/Plexus activities. However, in spite of what he says, what Norfolk, Paglen and Clark all share is an interest in the materiality of war/power; the technological, mechanical, electronic, digital, logistic and bureaucratic (and extrajudicial) wherewithal of war, of the state-corporate-military complex.
- ¹⁵³ Available at <https://www.darpa.mil/>. One sees amongst its public relations activities that the public is invited to take part in various development and recruitment programs, such as hackathons or "hackfests" using free and open-source software (FOSS).
- ¹⁵⁴ See, for example, <http://www.militaryaerospace.com/index.html>. <http://www.monch.com/mpg/publications/military-technology>. <https://www.defenceprocurementinternational.com/>. <http://www.militarysystems-tech.com/>.

and <http://www.janes.com/defence> for just a handful of such publications, accessed intermittently from 2011 to 2017.

¹⁵⁵ See <https://www.darpa.mil/news-events/2013-09-17>. Accessed 24 August 2017. It also tells us about its Experimental Spaceplane program called XS-1, to develop a reusable unmanned vehicle to provide aircraft-like access to space.

¹⁵⁶ Which also runs counter to the recent UN resolution adopted in 2000 titled “Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space”. It was adopted by a 163-0 majority, with, unsurprisingly, the US, Israel (and peculiarly, the Federated States of Micronesia) abstaining. (Paglen, 2013:215)

¹⁵⁷ Quoted by Paglen from National Reconnaissance Office Director Peter B. Teet’s 2004 *Revision of Air Force Counterspace Doctrine*.

¹⁵⁸ See the concept of “belligerent rights” in the Hague Conventions of 1907. Clapham et al explain that weapons law has a long, established history. There was an ancient ban on the use of poison in warfare, for example. Modern warfare means that this is now an area of special interest in the judicial/humanitarian legal community. See also Haines, 2014: 273.

¹⁵⁹ His inspiration for this “anti-methodology,” he tells us here, is the geographer Allan Pred. I am sceptical in respect of Paglen’s claim that he has no methodology, when he openly refers to the negative dialectic as a conceptual strategy.

¹⁶⁰ In support of his thesis, he draws on the ideas of, inter alia, Walter Benjamin, Georges Bataille and Elias Cannetti.

¹⁶¹ See Agamben, 2005. To reiterate very briefly/crudely, this is where the state accrues to itself powers far beyond what has been legally sanctioned before; that is, it acts *ultra vires* and extrajudicially, outside of a normative constitutional framework and concomitantly, frequently in violation of established civil liberties; eg. Hitler and the Third Reich, George W. Bush and his “war on terror” militarist measures.

¹⁶² Certain terms, like “the Real”, “Plexus”, or the “Main Event”, are necessarily capitalised to lend them a rhetorical, critical and creative energy distinguishing them from the “ordinary” - or theoretical, such as “event” - meanings they otherwise bear. “The Real”, for example, also retains its capitalisation as it alludes implicitly to the Lacanian categories of the Real and the Symbolic, thereby drawing for some of its critical and theoretical force on the idea of the abstract inaccessibility of reality to the human order of language. Invisibility and social abstraction are very much a part of the Real; the Real materiality of violence can reside in anything from an F-35 Fighter jet through to a corporate tax-saving structured derivative to evolutionary computation and the next generation of genetic algorithms in the service of military engineering optimisation. But violence, however abstract, is always very real. It is this deeper sense of the Real that this thesis is striving by its less formal or conventional style to convey.

¹⁶³ For a thought-provoking discussion of the release of the video and its further debate within both the mainstream and activist social media and in critical scholarship, see Christensen, 2014.

¹⁶⁴ The subject of representing the social totality has also been critically taken up more recently by Toscano and Kinkle (2015), where they enquire what a Marxist aesthetic that tries to map social totality might look like.

¹⁶⁵ See <http://www.visualcomplexity.com/vc/project.cfm?id=450>. Accessed 28 August 2017.

¹⁶⁶ Part of a public art project commissioned by the organization Clockshop, presenting critical perspectives and images of the effects of the “war on terror.”

¹⁶⁷ <http://www.visualcomplexity.com/vc/project.cfm?id=450>. Accessed 28 August 2017.

¹⁶⁸ See <http://www.forensic-architecture.org/>. Accessed 28 August 2017.

¹⁶⁹ See Miller and Harkins, 2010, and ESCR-Net. “Corporate Capture Project”. Available at <https://www.escr-net.org/corporateaccountability/corporatecapture>. Accessed 10 February 2018.

¹⁷⁰ See <https://www.ros.gov.uk/services/registration/land-register/faqs/cadastral-mapping-overview>. Accessed 28 August 2017.

¹⁷¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadastre>. Accessed 1 November 2015. Etymologically, the word “cadastre” came into English through French from the Latin “capitastrum”, a register of the poll tax, and the from the Greek “katastikhon”, meaning a list or register. See <http://www.innovateus.net/earth-matters/what-cadastral-map>. Further, the cadastre or cadaster is also sometimes used to refer to the land survey authority itself, which would be the Land Registry in the UK. The French also use the term decadastration to refer to the procedure of ‘decadastration’; again, my neologistic appropriation. See http://www.yverdon-les-bains.ch/fileadmin/documents/Conseil_communal/Rapports/2014_rapports/PR14.24RA_Decadastration_Parcels_5410_et_5140.pdf. Accessed 15 December 2016.

¹⁷² See <http://www.edmundclark.com/works/negative-publicity/#5>. Accessed 16 October 2016

¹⁷³ See <http://www.edmundclark.com/works/negative-publicity/#5>. Accessed 16 October 2016.

¹⁷⁴ Barsdorf-Liebchen, Nicolette. Interview with Edmund Clark. 15 October 2016 [See Appendix 3]. All following quotations from Clark are taken from this interview. It ought to be noted that what he says here is not

necessarily true for Norfolk and Paglen's whole oeuvre to date; for example, Paglen's early work on CIA and military patches has little to do with the aesthetic representation of the sublime.

¹⁷⁵ In this, Clark also takes issue with a tendency in some visual culture scholarship which insists upon the unrepresentability of atrocity. It must be noted that Norfolk and Paglen's use of the aesthetics of the sublime does not in their case mean that they share the scholastic view concerning such (un)representability: in their case it is precisely the aesthetic mode of the visualisation that affords image-makers and viewers closer proximity to that which is (de)coily concealed behind the veil of the state-corporate-military open/public secret.

¹⁷⁶ Some of the redacted declassified documentation of this project was only obtained after repeated, persistent Freedom of Information (FOI) requests by Clark and Black.

¹⁷⁷ See <http://legalbeagle.com/7621616-definition-proxy-measures.html>. Accessed 15 December 2016. It has also been described on a governance website, somewhat obfuscatingly, as follows: 'A proxy is an indirect measure of the desired outcome which is itself strongly correlated to that outcome. It is commonly used when direct measures of the outcome are unobservable and/or unavailable. An organization should use a proxy measure when there is little or no data available about the program being implemented, but the outcome the program is designed to influence has an existing and commonly accepted proxy.' See <https://centerforgov.gitbooks.io/benchmarking/content/Proxy.html>. Accessed December 2016.

¹⁷⁸ See http://www.avocatnet.ro/content/forum%7CdisplayTopicPage/topicID_424904/Plan-de-amplasament-si-delimitare-a-bunului-imobil.html. Accessed 9 January 2016.

¹⁷⁹ See <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/press-releases/romaniacs-role-cia-torture-and-rendition-comes-european-court>. Accessed 28 August 2017.

¹⁸⁰ They refer here to their Justice Initiative Report; see Singh, 2013.

¹⁸¹ See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-16093106>. Accessed 28 August 2017.

¹⁸² Pamela M. Lee has an interesting "take" on redacted documents. She calls the 'thick markers obliterating (and rubber-stamped admonitions)' in large bold type: 'CLASSIFIED or SECRET or SUPPRESSED', that which is censored and what 'we really want to know' a 'paradox and iconic representation of that which is withheld from view'. See Lee, 2011.

¹⁸³ See Barnard's citing of the quote by Allan Sekula below.

¹⁸⁴ See Peace Insight: "Sexual violence in the global war on terror" at

<https://www.peaceinsight.org/blog/2013/08/sexual-violence-war-on-terror>. See also Barsdorf-Liebchen, 2014.

¹⁸⁵ See <http://theconversation.com/rectal-feeding-is-rape-but-dont-expect-the-cia-to-admit-it-35437>. Accessed 16 July 2017.

¹⁸⁶ See <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/press-releases/romaniacs-role-cia-torture-and-rendition-comes-european-court>. Accessed 28 August 2017.

¹⁸⁷ See <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/press-releases/romaniacs-role-cia-torture-and-rendition-comes-european-court>. Accessed 28 August 2017.

¹⁸⁸ Some of the images are pixelated, but these are mostly, I understand, because of the personal risk to Clark and Black should their contents be revealed, rather than for any ethical reason.

¹⁸⁹ Cockayne is alluding to the Swiss-led International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers, and the Sarajevo version, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and other related UN Codes of Conduct.

¹⁹⁰ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-registries/overseas-registries#registries-in-the-united-states-of-america>. Accessed 30 July 2017. Of course, the "worth" of these corporations is largely no secret. But whilst company documentation (including annual audited accounts) has to be lodged centrally at Companies House in the UK, in the US each state has jurisdiction over and discretion as to whether and what documentation is required at all. In some states the disclosure of company documentation is entirely optional, although PLCs - like most multinational weapons manufacturers - will as a matter of course have to register with the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

¹⁹¹ Available at <http://lisabarnard.co.uk/projects/whiplash-transition/>.

¹⁹² See Shinkle, 2014. Accessed 28 August 2017. She harnesses the notion of the technical sublime here, which resonates with the Norfolk and Paglen chapters, but which is not what this chapter will pursue. For other sources of scholarship on drones/drone vision, see Maurer, 2016; Gregory, 2011; Bratchford and Zuev, 2017; Manderson, 2017.

¹⁹³ Such is the fascination with drones in the humanities and social sciences that colleges in the US are now offering degrees in "drone studies" (Tveten, 2015). For an interesting and informative article on Fast and Farocki, see Lange, 2013.

¹⁹⁴ A phrase introduced by Christian Metz in the 1980s following the Lacanian influence on film studies; see Metz and Britton, 2016.

¹⁹⁵ See http://lisabarnard.co.uk/projects/mapping-the-territory/#PHOTO_1. Accessed 14 August 2017.

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- ¹⁹⁶ See <http://lisabarnard.co.uk/projects/mapping-the-territory/>. Accessed 1 August 2017.
- ¹⁹⁷ See http://lisabarnard.co.uk/projects/mapping-the-territory/#PHOTO_1. Accessed 14 August 2017.
- ¹⁹⁸ See <http://health.uottawa.ca/biomech/laws/clarkes.htm>. Accessed 29 August 2018.
- ¹⁹⁹ See <https://www.intmath.com/vectors/9-variable-vectors.php>. Accessed 22 December 2017.
- ²⁰⁰ The full expression in Latin is: '*Cuius est solum, eius est usque ad coelum et ad inferos*', translated as 'Whoever owns the soil, it is theirs all the way up to heaven and all the way to Hell.' More simply put in current legal terminology, it is 'the air above and the ground below'. Available at <http://www.duhaime.org/LegalDictionary/C/CuiusEstSolumEjusestUsqueAdCoelumetadInferos.aspx>.
- ²⁰¹ A term borrowed from Jason Moore, 2016.
- ²⁰² The phrase was coined by the Marxist literary and cultural critic and theorist Raymond Williams to 'characterize the lived experience of the quality of life at a particular time and place' I appropriate it here to refer not only to the "lived experience", but to the less visible or invisible and perhaps unconscious experience of Plexus. See http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/uid=60/tocnode?id=g9780631207535_chunk_g97806312075352_2_ss1-37. Accessed 16 August 2017.
- ²⁰³ For the blind, this too is true; the face does not have to be seen, but it must be intersubjectively "felt."
- ²⁰⁴ Iconoclasm is traditionally understood the destruction of icons for religious or political reasons. In terms of popular culture, it has been secularised and taken on a more stylistic turn, essentially parodic or irreverent in intent. This is clearly not what is meant here by aniconic.
- ²⁰⁵ A fascinating purveyor of a politicised forensic data aesthetics is the late investigatory image-maker, Mark Lombardi, whose work will be a topic for further research.
- ²⁰⁶ See Wilkinson, 2015 for a more detailed analysis of this shift in registers.
- ²⁰⁷ Foucault's theorisation of power too recognised the surreptitious infiltration of 'legality in the field of illegality' (Foucault, 1982: 780) across institutions of power.