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Abstract

This article introduces the special issue 'Field as Archive / Archive as Field': a set of critical reflections on archival research and fieldwork in academic studies focused on space. The special issue asks, how might the experience of carrying out research in the archive and the field, with all its contingencies and errancies, be taken seriously as empirical material in its own right? In other words, rather than reducing the research process to an empirically insignificant instrument through which to access useable data, how could scholars and practitioners of architecture treat this work as the very stuff of the histories, theories, criticisms, and/or practices they produce? In raising these questions that remain relatively underexplored, especially in architectural research, this special issue works from the contemporary historical juncture that is marked by an increasing visibility of rhetorical and physical hostility throughout social and political affairs. Probing how this historical juncture might impact and be impacted by spatial research, contributors to the special issue explore these impacts through the markedly urban and architectural registers in which they take place, including heritage, infrastructure, displacement, housing, and protest. They, moreover, do so through a variety of contexts relevant to the journal's scope: Egypt, Zanzibar, Turkey, Greece, Iran, and Israel/Palestine.

Keywords: heritage, displacement, colonialism, nation-state-building, protest, gatekeeping

This special issue focuses on the experience of carrying out archival work or fieldwork in spatially focused research, including research-led practice. How might this experience, with all its contingencies and errancies, be made into the very stuff of the histories, theories, criticisms, and/or practices resulting from spatially focused research? This question is rendered all the timelier due to recent and ongoing developments across the globe, not least in geographies relevant to IJIA's scope. The fallout from the so-called 'Arab Spring' since 2011 has fuelled social, political, and economic crises and taken an overtly violent turn. Simultaneously, major countries in the region, such as Turkey and Egypt, have introduced restrictions on civil liberties and/or engaged in warfare. Elsewhere, Muslim populations have become

the target of various restrictive measures, including those in China, India, and the United States. The increasing visibility of rhetorical and physical aggression characterizing these developments has been accompanied by a weaponization of environments inhabited or venerated by particular communities, resulting in direct implications for heritage and housing. The supranational spatial scale of the neo-imperial and neo-colonial ambitions reverberating across the globe in recent times has been mirrored by that of their consequences, including forced migration and displacement. Populations marginalized as a result, and those in solidarity with them, have continued to perform their objection in streets and squares, rendering protest a frequent feature of life in the world's metropolises.

The increasing global visibility of political aggression is significant to spatial researchers not only because it has implications for markedly urban and architectural phenomena such as displacement, heritage, housing, and protest. This development is also significant because it impacts researchers directly, for instance by increasing the likelihood of contingencies and errancies affecting archival work and fieldwork central to much of spatially focused research. Whereas such impacts are typically considered empirically irrelevant and written out of research outputs, how might a material and spatial focus at this juncture help write them back into architectural and urban history, theory, criticism, and practice? What might this mean for the ways in which urban and architectural research is conceived and carried out under seemingly 'ordinary' circumstances – those that appear free from contingencies and errancies affecting archival work and fieldwork? How might this historical juncture be repurposed to tune into the experience of archival work and fieldwork in general as empirical material in its own right rather than merely as an empirically insignificant instrument for accessing useable data?

The joint emphasis on fieldwork and archival work that characterizes these questions is deliberate. It pursues a methodological convergence between these two prominent venues of spatial research and practice – field and archive – that conventional wisdom may consider mutually discrete if not antipodal. In fact, when considered spatially, fields and archives have more in common than that which separates them. Access to both is monitored by gatekeepers that may come in the form of humans, paperwork or both. Findings of archival work and fieldwork are then disseminated through academic knowledge production; this is yet another realm characterized by gatekeeping mechanisms, in which case researchers themselves are implicated as gatekeepers. One way of thinking about archives and fields together in spatial terms, then, is to ask exactly what might be at stake in the relationship between the mechanisms of gatekeeping involved in fieldwork, archival work, and knowledge production.

Conventional approaches may limit this question to practicalities; they may categorically celebrate the permission to access archives or fields, and lament being denied entry. Doing so perpetuates received wisdom regarding the epistemic authority of officially sanctioned institutions, methods, and communicative modes as being superior. It also overlooks how this perpetuation hinges on the participation of researchers and interlocutors fixated on procedures and hierarchies that mark conventional archival work and fieldwork. Contrarily, contributions to this special issue adopt a critical and self-reflexive approach by scrutinizing the granting of access as a selective and politically charged phenomenon as well as treating the denial of access as empirical material that requires analysis. Authors' politicization of access to archives and fields hinges on a refusal to participate in conventional fieldwork and archival work hierarchies and procedures. It means to question not only how power structures shape what is accessible and inaccessible but also how researchers themselves might be implicated in gatekeeping knowledge. Out of such questions arise new methodological approaches characterized by self-reflexivity and contextual sensitivity. Contributors to this special issue develop these approaches through a range of geographies, including Zanzibar, Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Iran, and Israel/Palestine.

Gatekeeping Archives and Fields

Thinking about archival work and fieldwork together draws attention to the notion of work common to both. To echo Jane Rendell, the 'work' in architectural fieldwork indicates not just 'labour' but also the psychoanalytic process of 'working through'.¹ This is as relevant to archives as it is to fields. Consider Jacques Derrida's invocation of the well-known psychoanalytic dyad of inside-versus-outside to suggest that '[t]here's no archive without a place of consignation [...] and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside'.² This psychoanalytic notion of outside as the constitutive other of that which is inside has socio-spatial implications, too. Fieldwork in the anthropological sense requires establishing rapport with gatekeepers – individuals controlling entry into the field.³ Similarly, to conduct research in the archive, one must first gain access through various gatekeeping mechanisms including archivists, official letters, application forms, ID cards, stamps, and signatures. Carolyn Steedman has drawn attention to the materialities, affects, and performances involved in these mechanisms, which mean that any archive is also an ethnographic field.⁴ In so doing, Steedman has helped escape the sense of confinement that for Derrida conditions the archive, approaching it as a site of potential emancipation and empowerment rather than just one of oppression and hegemony.

Any spatially focused attempt to think about archives and fields together, then, must attend to the question of gatekeeping. Specifically, it must ask precisely what might be at stake in the relationship between the mechanisms of gatekeeping involved in fieldwork and those involved in archival work. This question resonates with legal historian Cornelia Vismann's interpretation of Franz Kafka's story 'Before the Law', in which a gatekeeper perpetually keeps on hold – albeit without definitively rejecting – a person seeking admission to the law. If gatekeeping's historical centrality to legal institutions is evident in the etymological link between the noun 'chancery' and the verb 'to cancel', for Vismann, Kafka's story helps to further nuance this. Gatekeeping may seem concerned merely with the practical question of access – with whether to let claimants in or not. But Vismann thinks otherwise:

Barriers are porous as well as inaccessible; they emerge and disappear. They provoke indictments without acts, offenses without intent, verdicts without law. They enforce a permanent trial over one's own self.⁵

Therefore, in continually detaining the claimant without necessarily ruling out the possibility of granting this person access in the future, the gatekeeper effectively transforms a simple wait into a form of incarceration. This specifically is a form of incarceration powered by a cyclical, self-referential, and unknowingly voluntary mechanism that uses the impassable gate to make the claimant desire the law's authority and, in turn, employs this authority to justify the gate's impassability. The question of gatekeeping, then, cannot be grasped through a fixation on access – on how to take gates down or to go past them. Grasping gatekeeping, rather, requires being alert to gates' tendency to transform into carceral mechanisms, especially when this transformation involves the unwitting participation of the very actors it incarcerates.

The two concepts of access and participation central to Vismann's question are directly pertinent to spatial theory and practice. To begin unpacking this pertinence with access, consider Ann Stoler's work on archives grounded in imperialist and colonialist histories. Stoler has advocated a shift away from a fixation on denial of access and to focus instead on the processes through which 'epistemic warrant' is regulated whether in being denied or granted.⁶ Modern-day technologies of surveillance and social media constitute another reason why the reduction of archival access to the binary of permission versus restriction may require reconsideration. Much of contemporary life, including its details of a strictly personal and private nature, is now ordinarily recorded and published in a plausibly universally accessible manner.⁷ How, then, might the social exclusion masked by discourses and practices of accessibility be revealed and documented when access at first glance or for certain individuals appears

not to be an issue? How might the racialized, gendered, and class-based mechanisms through which it is regulated be 'critiqued' in Roland Barthes' sense of the word: calling a seemingly unproblematic but deeply troubling situation into crisis?

A second question follows from the first. When access does turn out to be, or is made into, such a crisis, might we exploit it as an opportunity to produce new documents that help break the spell of the symbolic allure of both archives and fields? A second set of issues that derive from Vismann's approach to gatekeeping concerns the concept of participation and pertains to knowledge production more directly than do the questions I have raised thus far. This set of issues may be unpacked by returning to Jane Rendell, who has scrutinized the recent and ongoing wave of interest that spatial theorists and practitioners have shown in anthropological approaches. She has distinguished this wave from earlier such waves and specifically those in the 1960s and 70s. 'While earlier engagements with anthropology emphasized the "users" of architecture as producers of cultural space', Rendell notes, the present one 'shifts the terminology employed to discuss producers and users towards the ethnographic term "participants", thus questioning the line drawn between researcher and researched, and bringing ethical issues concerning researching subjects and their objects of study into the frame'.⁸ Today the validity of Rendell's observation is evident in the myriad architectural practices identified as participatory and the numerous treatises published about them. Some of these treatises have condemned participation as an exploitative process where benefit flows only in one direction: from the so-called participants to the authors.⁹ Others have celebrated participation as an entirely open process where benefit always flows both ways between architects and non-architects such that the distinction between the two is blurred.¹⁰ But might participation as a mechanism involved in fieldwork and archival work be considered beyond this binary opposition between celebration and condemnation? Might we call participation as such into crisis rather than wholly embrace it or do away with it?

There is a final implication of considering archives and/or fields beyond the binary oppositions of denial versus approval of access and of celebratory versus condemnatory understandings of participation. This implication is of particular concern to spatial thinkers and practitioners who wish to rethink conventions of fieldwork and archival work. One such set of conventions concern the ways in which time and temporality are considered in architectural research. This special issue contributes to recent and ongoing scholarly efforts to problematize conventional approaches that associate archival work only with distant history and fieldwork strictly with that which is recent and contemporary.¹¹ It does so by historicizing both archives and fields – in other words, by showing how archives might speak

of the present and how fields might offer novel understandings of the past and by using its spatial focus to that effect.¹² A second set of conventions has to do with scholarship itself. Scrutinizing issues affecting fieldwork and archival work critically and self-reflexively – that is, beyond such categorical oppositions as permission versus rejection or compliance versus refusal – requires approaching spatial research as not just the product of the various issues affecting archival work and fieldwork but also their generator. How might spatial researchers prevent their own research and the knowledge produced through it from turning into carceral mechanisms for their interlocutors, whether it appears accessible to the latter or not? The imperative, then, is to account not only for how power structures the production of archival or fieldwork-based knowledge but also for how spatial theory and practice are implicated in this structuring.¹³

Outline of the Special Issue

Contributors to this special issue engage with these critical analytical objectives and questions in light of their archival work and/or fieldwork in a wide range of contexts and on an equally wide-ranging set of topics.

The first article is by Taushif Kara. Writing about Stone Town, Zanzibar's urban centre and a UNESCO World Heritage site, Kara problematizes the prison house that archival work can become for architectural historians regardless of whether they are granted or denied access to archives. For him, the foremost reason why archives can become carceral has to do with researchers' failure to question long-established tendencies to reduce architecture to a sign, metaphor, or illustration of histories that are assumed to be authoritative and/or resident in the archive. In the case his paper explores, Kara suggests that the mainstream approach has been to use archival material and architectureas-archive to substantiate an image of Stone Town's past as a cosmopolitan port city in order to promote social progress. But doing so has, in a somewhat self-defeating manner, masked the racism and violence that in fact shaped the very past now imagined as a cosmopolitan one. There have been critical responses to this image but they have methodologically mirrored the object of their criticism, invoking a cosmopolitanism albeit of a different, Islamic character and reducing architecture to a set of formal features through which to celebrate Zanzibar's unique and cosmopolitan Islamism. Kara's search for an approach to archives that considers architecture generative of new histories rather than just illustrative of existing ones takes him to contemporary artist Zarina Bhimji's filmic and photographic work. The author finds in Bhimji a methodology profoundly grounded in archival research even as it turns its back on the archive at the stage of production. This methodology, argues Kara, uses architecture to meld

archives with fields but does so by approaching temporality in a way that differs radically from the approach used in producing assumedly clear-cut historiographies determined prior to any archival research and/or fieldwork. The difference concerns Bhimji's repudiation of the obsession with convergence and synthesis at work in the reduction of architecture to evidence for such predetermined historiographies.

In his article, William Carruthers discusses the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia led by UNESCO in the 1960s and 1970s, among whose outcomes was the formation of architectural and archaeological archives in the two then-nascent states of Egypt and Sudan that each incorporated a part of Nubian lands. The avowed aim of the campaign appeared to be universally laudable: to record Nubia's architecture and archaeology ahead of the region's submergence due to the construction of the Aswan Dam on the Nile. But the campaign's politics was much more specific than this avowedly universalist aim. It was a colonially grounded one at that, as the campaign overlooked contemporary Nubian life by condemning Nubia to the annals of history. Yet, for Carruthers, limiting one's response to these archives to a critique of their confinement of Nubia to the past is to fail the imperative of ethical historiography. The author argues for the possibility of repurposing the archive to acknowledge not only what Nubians made of the campaign but, crucially, also the labour they put into it. He does so especially in light of his encounter with a particular set of images that show one of the sites flooded by the dam, Kalabsha, whose ancient artefacts were transferred to a purpose-built new site. Carruthers shows that the continuities characterizing archival and archaeological methodologies throughout transitions from colonial to postcolonial rule may call this posteriority into question. The author then projects this question back to conventional heritage discourses and practices. He argues that the work of decolonizing in this respect requires peoples like the Nubians themselves to be allowed to shape the conventions involved, insofar as they find this a socio-politically worthwhile endeavour.

Kalliopi Amygdalou's article reflects on encountering the same photograph in different archives in Turkey, Greece, and the United States. Those who see knowledge's relationship to archives as the former being resident in the latter might not find much meaning in such encounters. But Amygdalou thinks otherwise as she wishes to consider each archival encounter or reencounter with an ethnographic sensibility. She asks what archival reencounters might mean as they take place not only on either side of the border between two states whose nation-building projects coincided with and shaped one another, but also in the archives of a third state that purported to adopt the neutral stance of a witness as the nation-states in question were built. Indeed, the photographs Amygdalou discusses pertain to an event that constituted a most devastating milestone in the history of Turkish and Greek nation-state-building: the 1922 Fire of Smyrna (now İzmir, Turkey's third largest city). The author argues that repeated encounters of the sort she has experienced with a particular set of photographs of the Smyrna Fire offer significant opportunities to reflect on the omissions characterizing the ways troubling episodes of nation-state-building are covered, if at all, in the archives of states built as a result and of those that were their contentious witnesses.

In her article, Pinar Aykaç also explores a case involving Turkey, this time from Istanbul: the city's world-famous historic peninsula. She reflects on her repeated and failed endeavours to seek permission from various governmental bodies and state institutions to access their archives where documents pertaining to some of the historic peninsula's best-known edifices are housed. It might be tempting to interpret such adamant blocking of access as evidence of a certain secrecy through which the state protects its archives from diverse research agendas. But this sort of an interpretation, warns Aykaç, would effectively reproduce the long-established charisma of the modern institution of the archive as the single most authoritative source of historical knowledge. Instead, the author sees the denial of access as an attempt to mask – by bolstering just such a charisma – the fragmentations, limitations, and insufficiencies that mark state archives. This attempt becomes ever more salient, argues Aykaç, in a context like contemporary Turkey, which has recently seen heated struggles over sociopolitical power – including the power to determine what constitutes history – but also at a historical juncture like today when conventional discourses and practices of heritage are increasingly disputed across the world.

Yael Allweil and Keren Ben Hilell's article discusses questions pertinent to those carrying out research on settler colonialism in Israel/Palestine. Recalling Aykaç's case, they chart a recent and ongoing process where attempts to research settlements in planning archives are met with stricter restrictions at every turn. In response, researchers have increasingly turned towards the built environment itself, suggest Allweil and Ben Hilell, rather than archival records of it. Research has, in other words, come to attempt at documenting and analysing settlements simultaneously with their materialization and sprawl. This turn has engendered unconventional methodological endeavours to which the authors aim to contribute by studying non-archival material emanating from pre-authorized planning, real-estate marketing, and settler-produced videography. This helps Allweil and Ben Hilell not only to avoid a fixation on restrictions imposed by gatekeepers of archives and fields, but also to trace the ways in which recent and ongoing settler practice infringing on Palestinian land has come to permeate certain practices within Israel itself.

The first of the two Design in Practice essays is by Samaneh Moafi, who discusses the Islamic Republic of Iran's largest welfare housing project. She pursues a methodology that might allow for sensitivity towards what might be overlooked by other methodologies – especially quantitatively oriented ones – employed widely in studying housing in contemporary statist contexts such as Iran. Moafi does so by not only showing the gendered and class-based impacts of housing but also attending to how those negatively impacted endeavour to subvert, repurpose, and appropriate the environments in which they dwell. Moving away from a focus on housing to one on domesticity, thanks especially to a visually charged ethnographic sensibility, helps the author avoid scholarly tendencies to either celebrate or condemn welfare housing. Welfare housing is made, unmade, and continually remade by those who inhabit it, suggests Moafi, but appraising this aspect of it requires researchers to reconsider their own methodologies that reduce inhabitants to numbers and statistics, or deprive them of socio-political and spatial agency.

The special issue closes with Elif Çiğdem Artan's essay on an architectural activist enterprise that took place in the run-up to and aftermath of the 2013 Taksim Square and Gezi Park protests in Turkey. The enterprise in question was the work of a specific collective comprising architects, urban planners, designers, and sociologists. The collective organized public events prior to the protests to raise awareness about the authorities' plans to open Gezi Park to construction activity. Once Istanbulites took to the park in objection to the same construction plans, the collective endeavoured to contribute to the protests using what they considered their own expertise: spatial practice. However, says Artan, they soon realized that design and architecture were already being practiced by the protesters. This led the collective to direct their efforts towards documenting the outcome of the protesters' practice rather than endeavouring to produce such outcomes on their own. Considering this a case of archiving the field, Artan asks what it might mean for the politics of architectural activism when an activist collective shifts focus away from designing environments to documenting them and does so simultaneously with their production by non-architects. She concludes that this shift enables architectural activism to not only intervene in the struggle over information, which underpins much of the political contestation that marks contexts like the Taksim Square and Gezi Park protests. It also enables architectural activists, argues Artan, to tune into questions around authenticity, authorship, accessibility, and security that become salient in such contexts and to pose them back to conventional archival practice.

Taken together, the contributions ground the contemporary historical moment in longerstanding and geographically differentiated processes of nation-state-building (Kara, Carruthers, Amygdalou, Aykaç, Moafi), colonialism (Kara, Carruthers, Allweil and Hilell), imperialist nostalgia (Aykaç and Artan), and patriarchy (Moafi). They, moreover, attend to the contestations and challenges with which these processes have been met (Kara, Moafi, Artan). Any attempt to synthesize the entire special issue into a single coherent argument is bound to fail due to the empirical, theoretical, methodological, and contextual particularities of each article. But suffice it to conclude here by highlighting a point that becomes increasingly salient from one article to the next. The point is that historical junctures when the visibility of hostile rhetoric and practice grows may precisely be the moment to unsettle the epistemic and methodological conventions that hold seemingly peaceful times in place. And, central to those conventions is the assumption that the political effects and historical truths accessible through architecture are singularly and discretely attributable to any one of the actors (e.g., designers, users, critics, or theorists) or artefacts (e.g., the built environment or images of it) involved in architectural production - an assumption that evades the political question of power that structures the relations between these actors and artefacts, albeit in ever-changing ways. Contributors to this special issue demonstrate that archival work and fieldwork have not only been complicit in institutionalizing this assumption, but can also be employed to subvert it. They do so by refusing to privilege certain actors or artefacts involved in architectural production; instead, contributors emphasize that the extent to which truths and effects accessible through architecture may foster social justice and egalitarianism hinges on political work. The part of that work that takes place in archives and/or fields involves prioritizing methodological self-reflection over heroization, and historical and/or socio-political contextualization over exceptionalism. Such a prioritization, which characterizes the articles below, might be just the necessary approach for spatial research that seeks to not only cope with but also change the environments in which hostile rhetoric and practice become salient.

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Contributor Details

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Endnotes

1. Jane Rendell, 'Afterword', in Architecture and Field/Work, ed. Suzanne Ewing, Jeremie Michael McGowan, Chris Speed, and Victoria Clare Bernie (London: Routledge, 2011).

2. Jacques Derrida, Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 11. Also relating to the sense of confinement highlighted by Derrida is Arlette Farge's problematization of how archives condition historians to ask questions that only the archive can answer, and Randall Jimerson's comparison – discussed further in Elif Çiğdem Artan's contribution to this special issue – between archives and prisons. See, respectively, Arlette Farge, The Allure of the Archives (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013) and Randall Jimerson, 'Archives for All: Professional Responsibility and Social Justice', The American Archivist 70.2 (2007): 256. Achille Mbembe has echoed Derrida in highlighting the architectural overtones of archives' oppressive epistemological authority and Farge in attending to the imperative of thinking beyond 'archivability'. See Achille Mbembe, 'The Power of the Archive and Its Limits', in Refiguring the Archive, ed. Carolyn Hamilton (Berlin: Springer, 2002). Further discussion of Mbembe and Farge alongside Derrida is offered in Taushif Kara's contribution to this special issue.

3. Karen O'Reilly, Key Concepts in Ethnography (London: Sage, 2009), 132–37.

4. Carolyn Steedman, Dust (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

5. Cornelia Vismann, Files: Law and Media Technology (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 21.

6. Ann Laura Stoler, Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 43. For further discussion of this aspect of Stoler's work, see articles by Taushif Kara, William Carruthers, and Pınar Aykaç in this special issue.

7. Wolfgang Ernst, Digital Memory and the Archive (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

8. Rendell, 'Afterword', 175.

9. For a critique of design and architecture's contemporary fascination with participation for idealizing consensus and shunning dissensus, see Markus Miessen, The Nightmare of Participation (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011). Such critique of participation resonates with recent problematizations of political projects whose horizon is limited to short-term participatory activism. See Jodi Dean, Crowds and Party (London: Verso, 2016) and Jacques Rancière, Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics (London: Continuum, 2010).

Charlotte Skene Catling, 'The Naked Truth: Architecture or Revolution', Architectural Review
236.1412 (2014); Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia, Tactical Urbanism: Short Term Actions for Long-Term
Change (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2015).

11. Most recent examples of such problematizations that also engage with contexts relevant to this journal's scope include (with a focus on archiving the field) Huda Tayob, 'Subaltern Architectures: Can Drawing "Tell" a Different Story?', Architecture and Culture 6.1 (2018): 203–22, and (with a focus on doing an ethnography of the archive) Timur Hammond, 'Papering, Arranging, and Depositing: Learning from Working with an Istanbul Archive', Area, online version before inclusion in regular issue (2019): 1–9, https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12578.

12. In making this point, I follow Eric Hirsch and Charles Stewart's distinction between history, historicity, and historicization. For Hirsch and Stewart, while history is characterized by western-centric

modernity's divorcing the present from the past, 'historicity' concerns the way historical time is experienced and 'historicization' entails the process of negotiating historicity; see Eric Hirsch and Charles Stewart, 'Introduction: Ethnographies of Historicity', History and Anthropology 16.3 (2005): 261– 74. On the broader question of modernity's western-centric linearization of temporality and the challenges with which it has been met, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts', Economic and Political Weekly 33.9 (1998): 473–79; Charles Stewart, Dreaming and Historical Consciousness in Island Greece (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

13. Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshal, John Mepham, and Kate Sober (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 63–77.