

Dictionary of Now

Joseph Vogl, Allen Feldman & Sinan Antoon: Fear

DE → EN

WELCOME

Bernd Scherer,

Director Haus der Kulturen der Welt

EN → DE

TALK & READING

Monstrum Arabicus

Sinan Antoon

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LECTURE

Appearing Under Erasure:

Of Phobogenic Disappearance

Allen Feldman

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LECTURE

Fear

Joseph Vogl

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DISCUSSION AND Q & A

Moderated by Bernd Scherer



The event will be held in English and German with simultaneous translation.
Headphones are available from the foyer of the Lecture Hall.
The Hirschfeld Bar will be open from 6pm on.

Fears are indicators of how one relates to the world. Fear of losing control, fear of the incomprehensible, and fear of the irrational have emerged with the modern individual. But fears are more than a subjective emotional condition: they are culturally coded, working as affective commons at the interindividual level. In contemporary societies these processes are often consciously exploited as part of political strategies to implement and justify states of emergency. How do fears shift from the subjective to the collective level and how do these processes affect the relationship between threat, security, and freedom? Which cognitive patterns does the politics of fear use to manipulate discourses, images, and concepts? The seventh edition of *Dictionary of Now* discusses the global interconnections of fear, terror, and language against the backdrop of the increasing normalization of collective states of fear.

The literary and cultural scholar Joseph Vogl analyzes the origins of modern economies of fear through a critical reflection on the history of ideas. In doing so, he examines how the formation of the modern subject is related to contemporary practices of governance. The anthropologist Allen Feldman has developed a visual ethnography of violence which shows how controlling someone's perception can become a weapon and how the (de)visualization of violence and terror can generate a constant and latent state of fear. The author, poet, and scholar Sinan Antoon shows through his own literary works how fear is related to language and terror.

Monstrum Arabicus

Sinan Antoon

Rather than understanding 9/11 and its genealogy through the prisms of geopolitics and history, the “clash of civilization” discourse was re-invoked and invested with new energies as it was parroted through corporate megaphones. A monolithic Arab/Islamic culture was demarcated as the site that produced the terrorists and their attack. Unprecedented interest ensued, but for all the wrong reasons. It was mostly “forensic” interest motivated by the misconception that the answers about terrorism were to be sought and found in the realm of culture. The criminalization of the lingua franca of the monolith: Arabic, was inevitable. And it intensifies as the permanent war on terror produces more terror. What effect does the practice of the criminalization of a language have on literature and poetry? How does the

raised relation of terror and language feed an extended form of cultural essentialism and what role does translation play in this constellation?

SINAN ANTOON is a poet, novelist, scholar, and translator. He is an associate professor at New York University and Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Berlin 2016/17. Antoon holds a doctorate in Arabic literature from Harvard University and has published two collections of poetry and four novels. His works have been translated into twelve languages. His translation of his novel, *The Corpse Washer (Wahdaha Shajarat al-Rumman)*, won the 2014 Saif Ghobash Prize for Literary Translation and was longlisted for the International Prize for Foreign Fiction. His third novel, *Ya Maryam*, was shortlisted for the Arabic Booker Prize. His scholarly works include *The Poetics of the Obscene: Ibn al-Hajjaj and Sukhf* (2014) and essays on Mahmoud Darwish, Sargon Boulus, and Saadi Youssef. His latest work is *The Baghdad Eucharist* (2017). He is co-founder and co-editor of the multilingual e-zine *Jadiliyya*.

Appearing Under Erasure:
Of Phobogenic Disappearance
Allen Feldman

In his lecture Allen Feldman explores politically motivated disappearances as acts of state cannibalism, a concept that was first used by Thomas Hobbes' in his description of civil war as "intestine discord". The state devours internal aliens out of fear of being consumed by difference in an act of xenophobic anthropophagy. As in genocide, regimes of disappearance deny "others" the right to appear on the earth and to cohabitation. These regimes often orchestrate disappearances as unmotivated, random accidents and in doing so foreclose legal accountability and *habeas corpus*. This disavowing executive power is committed to the *disappearance of disappearance* by which both the missing and the act of vanishment appear under erasure (*sous rature*); that is as an *acausal mishap*. A regime of disappearance simulates the counter-time of the accident (*contretemps or unzeit*) in order to interdict the collective capacity to catch its causality in the act. The executive power implants its silent/silencing disappearance of persons and force, in order to magnify fear through the expansion of its powers of self-virtualization.

ALLEN FELDMAN, political, cultural, and medical anthropologist, is the author of three books including *Archives of the Insensible: Of War, Photopolitics and Dead Memory* (2016) and *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (1991). He has published articles on political embodiment, the sensorium of terror, and the photopolitics of war. Feldman conducted ethnographic research in Northern Ireland, on the South African truth commission, and currently writes on the visual culture and media archaeology of "the war on terror." He is Professor of visual culture and philosophy of media at New York University New York City, and has taught at the Central European University, Budapest, Lunds Universitet, Sweden, the Australian National University in Canberra, and École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris.

Fear
Joseph Vogl

From the nineteenth century on, the fields of philosophy and the humanities have not only turned fear into a defining category for the determination and problematization of the subject. In public and political discourse, fear has also become the point where scenarios of threat, affective potentialities, and the need for security crystallize in contemporary "risk" and "prevention" societies.

The continuous political exploitation of fear and the highly differentiated management of today's fear economy create a helix of fear: increasing security measures produce new fears and lead to an autocatalysis of existing ones. It is in this context that Vogl discusses the tension between the political instrumentalization of fear on the one hand and the subject's imminent loss of control on the other.

JOSEPH VOGL is Professor for German literature, cultural theory, and media studies at Humboldt University Berlin. He also holds a permanent visiting professorship at Princeton University, New Jersey. His most recent works include *Der Souveränitätseffekt* (2015), *Das Gespenst des Kapitals (The Specter of Capital)* (2010), *Soll und Haben. Fernsehgespräche* (with Alexander Kluge, 2009), *Über das Zaudern (On Tarrying)* (2007), and *Kalkül und Leidenschaft. Poetik des ökonomischen Menschen* (2002).

Over the last hundred years the sciences—and the technologies they have generated—have shaped our conception of reality, our thought, and our language. In the context of *100 Years of Now*, *Dictionary of Now* reflects on language's capacity to both depict and create reality. The dictionary focuses on omnipresent terms that are central to the description of the deep-rooted changes of the present—but which in their current usage are no longer able to grasp them.

Which varieties and shifts of meaning lie at the root of these terms, which readings and subtexts do they harbor? Which social, political, and cultural processes of transformation can be read from them? And how can they be sharpened and adjusted in order to generate scope for linguistic action? In a series of twelve discussions from 2015 to 2018, distinguished representatives from the sciences and the arts, from theory and praxis, question the established meanings of selected terms, updating them against the background of their respective expertise.

A publication to be released in 2018 will bring together the key words and participants from the individual discussions in the series, establishing connections and allowing for new constellations of knowledge.

→ hkw.de/dictionary

→ #100YrsofNow

Part of *100 Years of Now*



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Haus der Kulturen der Welt is funded by



Federal Government Commissioner
for Culture and the Media



Federal Foreign Office