ARCHIVES AND THE EVENT OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

A Case Study of the English Defence League

By

Emma Sturgeon

A Master’s Essay submitted to
The Department of Religious Studies
in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

August, 2012

Copyright © Emma Sturgeon, 2012
Abstract

Islamophobia, a term increasingly found in contemporary discourse at both the academic and popular level, has been studied from a variety of stances. Whether political, economic, psychological, anthropological or otherwise, emerging research on Islamophobia has proliferated with a focus on public perceptions of Islam in a post-9/11 era. While these studies on Islamophobia have been empirical in nature throughout this relatively short history, they lack a methodological avenue that has yet to be explored. It is in this context that my MA Essay fills a significant gap in previous scholarship by offering a new theoretical framework through the lens of French philosopher Michel Foucault.

This essay will use Foucault’s two conceptual tools, i.e., genealogy and archive, in order to provide a methodology that can better characterize the phenomenon of Islamophobia. To this end, an analysis of Foucauldian terms, i.e., genealogy, archive and event, will be provided in order to show their importance in the construction of knowledge, as well as the implications of these constructions in relation to Islamophobia. In particular, I will focus on how modern social media has transformed the way knowledge is archived, and as a result, also shifted societal systems of power. Based on this theoretical framework, my essay will examine an anti-Islamic group, Britain’s English Defence League (EDL) as a case study.

In examining this case, I will first review the treatment of Muslims and attitudes toward Islam in England, prior to and after the EDL’s formation, in order to assess the impact of the EDL on the archives of Islamophobia. The impact of the EDL will be measured by looking at polls concerning Islam, as well as mentions and activity of the EDL within social media outlets. This essay will then look at the cycle of disruption within the archive and the EDL’s role in this cycle, questioning whether or not they have impacted the archive, and what their potential impact means for the future of Islam and England.

My MA Essay proposes Foucault’s concepts genealogy and archive in understanding the role of the EDL as an archive event, one that has influenced the recording of history. This proposition not only applies to the anti-Islamic EDL movement in particular, but also to Islamophobia in general. Employing Foucault’s concept of the archive to discuss the manufacture of Islamophobia will be an important methodological project since it shows the impact of fringe groups on the modification of the archive.
Dedicated to

My parents

For their love and endless support
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Mehmet Karabela, for his effort and passion during the completion of this Master’s Essay. His tireless commitment to my research has been an invaluable asset. I am indebted to Dr. Ariel Salzmann for her thoughtful comments during the completion of this project. I would also like to thank the entire Queen’s Religious Studies Department for their support. Without dedicated professors and support staff this project would not have been possible.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... 2
Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ 4
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 6

Chapter 1: A Genealogy of the Term ................................................................. 8
   The Term: Islamophobia .......................................................................................... 8
   The Use of the Term in Recent Scholarship: Studies on British Islamophobia ....... 15

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework ................................................................. 17
   Foucault: Genealogy, Archive and the Event ......................................................... 17
   Archaeology & the Statement ................................................................................. 18
   Archive .................................................................................................................... 19
   Genealogy ............................................................................................................... 21
   Power & the Archive .............................................................................................. 24
   Mike Featherstone’s Interpretation of Foucault .................................................... 25
   David Galston’s Use of Foucault .......................................................................... 28
   Using Foucault and the Archive Today .................................................................. 32

Chapter 3: The Case: The English Defence League (EDL) .............................. 37
   Islamophobia and the EDL ..................................................................................... 37
   Islamophobia in England before the EDL ............................................................. 38
   Muslims in England Before the EDL ..................................................................... 39
   The EDL’s Mission Statement .............................................................................. 40
   Englishness ............................................................................................................ 42
   Segregation and Othering ..................................................................................... 45
   Terrorism and Government Response ................................................................. 48
   Public Response and Counter Movements .......................................................... 49
   English Future in Question ................................................................................... 50

Chapter 4: Conclusion and Implications .......................................................... 52
   Islamophobia as an Archive Event ..................................................................... 52

Endnotes .................................................................................................................... 56

Bibliography ............................................................................................................. 59
Introduction

The year 2009 saw the emergence of an anti-Muslim activist organization called the English Defence League (EDL). This English organization has gained popularity and attention by actively defending English rights and identity, seeing Islam as the major threat to England’s future. Today, the EDL is working at both the political and popular level to stop what they see as the increase in Muslim extremist activity within England, and preserve a threatened national identity. The EDL deems Islam highly incompatible with Western notions of democracy and civility, and hopes to reduce the Muslim presence and influence in England.

I argue that the EDL and their impact on popular conceptions of Islam can be better understood and recent anti-Muslim sentiment can be re-contextualized by implementing the theoretical lens of Michel Foucault, particularly his concepts of genealogy and archive. Grassroots movements, such as the EDL, can be seen as having an active role in the manipulation of the archive, shaping the way Islam is understood and recorded within said archive.

To this end, the first chapter of this essay will examine Islamophobia, providing a brief genealogy of the term itself, as well as an examination of recent studies and reports on Islamophobia, particularly in the British context. The second chapter will discuss Michel Foucault and define a number of his terms pertinent to this study such as genealogy, archive, event and statement, in order to establish a framework for
understanding the EDL. This chapter also discusses several scholars, addressing their interpretations of Foucault’s concept of archive, ending with a discussion of the contemporary relevance of Foucault’s archive. The next chapter examines the EDL as a core sample of Islamophobia in England, and examines this case in relation to archive formation and social media. The fourth and final chapter of this essay will bring together the previous sections into discussion by suggesting the phenomenon of Islamophobia as an archive event, as well as the implications of using Foucault to understand this event (Islamophobia).
Chapter 1

A Genealogy of the Term

The Term: Islamophobia

The term Islamophobia has become increasingly common in both academic and public discourse. The genealogy of the term Islamophobia has been documented at length in countless books and reports. The Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnic Studies entry on Islamophobia, written by Elizabeth Poole, addresses the historical context of the term throughout relatively recent history. She discusses the definition of Islamophobia provided by the Runnymede Trust, a think tank dedicated to race issues in the United Kingdom¹ (“an outlook or world-view involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims, which results in practices of exclusion and discrimination”) and elaborates that the Trust’s 1997 report Islamophobia: A challenge for us all “gave the term its currency although, as the authors argued, it already had a presence in the British Muslim community due to Muslim experiences of discrimination.”² Poole goes on to describe the original usage of the term, which “in the USA was in 1991, when Insight (February 4, 1991) used it in relation to Russia’s activities in Afghanistan”.³ The relatively recent use of the term, and the increase in its visibility shows the extent of public concern with Islam. Poole locates the emergence of Islam as a new threat after the fall of communism. Islam, particularly political Islam, became the category onto which the West pushed its anxieties about global affairs and public safety.
The Runnymede Report remains an extremely influential publication in discussions of Islamophobia. Chris Allen, whose studies focus on British Islamophobia, explains that since its publication in October 1997, the Runnymede Report “became a landmark in the establishment and development of Islamophobia both as a phenomenon and a concept. In the contemporary socio-political setting, it is a publication that has influenced not only British ways of thinking about Islamophobia but also those from Europe and beyond”. Allen highlights the importance of the report not only in Britain, but internationally as well.

Chris Allen of the University of Birmingham has written extensively on Islamophobia. In his book *Islamophobia*, Allen describes two different camps that the term encompasses:

On the one hand are the loosely veiled attacks on Muslims and Islam… In the political spaces, high ranking voices describe Muslims as 'whining maniacs' while others in France, the Netherlands and Switzerland initiate debates about the extent to which the niqab face veil and other visible aspects of Islam are barriers to integration and whether minarets should be allowed to punctuate European skylines… On the more extreme fringes of the political mainstream, there exist those who claim that Muslims intend to establish an Islamic republic in London by 2025 - citing the 'super-mosque' being built in East London as evidence of this duly followed by the eventual overthrow of Christian Europe. Elsewhere, those such as Silvio Berlusconi openly differentiate between the superiority of 'Western civilisations' over and above 'Islamic civilisations’.

This quotation in particular demonstrates the spectrum of the term’s usage. There is no single definition of what form this discrimination takes. Allen comments in his work about the confusion and debate surrounding this highly controversial term as he
writes, “[T]here remains a distinct lack of clarity about what Islamophobia is - and is not”.

According to Allen, Islamophobia can be divided into two groups: (a) more radically anti-Muslim individuals on the one hand, and (b) more temperate and calculated critical groups on the other. As Allen points out, there are political anti-Muslim sentiments, as well as extreme fringe individuals/groups; though politically located anti-Muslim attitudes are expressed often by political and public figures. In an interview in September of 2011, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper named Islamicism as the number one threat to Canadian identity and security, an example of the formal and public manner in which these sentiments are often expressed. Though Harper was commenting on terrorist threats from a variety of sources, he still named Islamic terrorism, or ‘Islamicism’ the top threat to Canadian security. More severe anti-Muslim sentiments can be found in groups such as the English Defence League (EDL). The EDL is a British organization that formed around the belief that Islam is the most volatile threat to British society. Though this essay does not focus solely on the history of the term Islamophobia, nor discuss the problem in its definition at length, it is nonetheless important to highlight the spectrum of ideologies contained within the term, and that it must always be used with an awareness of its complexity.

Western awareness of Islam and Muslims has grown and changed over the last twenty years. Polls are beginning to reflect this interest. Traditionally, states have used polls as a means of gathering data regarding the populace and religion. Prior to the end of the 1980s, Muslims were not polled as a distinct category in many nations. They were instead defined culturally or ethnically, as opposed to religiosity, often being
grouped into a mass category named ‘Asian’ in English national polls. The new
categorization of Muslims in recent decades highlights the increased public interest in
the Muslim population in England as a potential source of concern and challenge. While
this focus on statistics is important, there are other factors indicating an increased
awareness of Muslims. Salman Rushdie published *The Satanic Verses* in September
1988, sparking outrage and later offence within some parts of the Muslim community,
resulting in a *fatwa* from Ayatollah Khomeini shortly after. The Rushdie affair of 1989
unified Muslims from different communities. The First Gulf War then began, unifying
many Muslims once again and causing the loyalty of Muslim immigrants to be
questioned at the political level by some state bodies. Other events, including 9/11, the
Iraq War, the 7/7 bombings, the 2006 cartoon debates surrounding Prophet Muhammad,
and the still raging debate surrounding the wearing of veils have drawn attention to
Muslims around the world. Events such as these received global attention, often
polarized the views of non-Muslims toward Muslims and have for many, pushed Islam
further into the category of ‘Other’.

Increasing media attention directed towards Muslim communities, and an
increased perception of Islam as a comparatively violent religion has led to a fear of
Islam in Western countries. A noted Middle East historian and an Orientalist, Bernard
Lewis has published books such as *What Went Wrong?* and *The Crisis of Islam*,
addressing this increasing anxiety surrounding Islam. For Lewis, Islam is a violent
religion, one increasingly responsible for acts of terror and the proliferation of anti-
modern ideologies. Sam Harris, a neuroscientist and neo-atheist, challenges all
organized religion (excluding Eastern practices), emphasizing Islam’s violent and
threatening nature in greater detail than the brutalities of Judaism or Christianity. Harris has been particularly vocal when it comes to Islam and Muslim fundamentalisms, largely due to his experiences as an American in post 9/11 society. Lewis and Harris are two examples of many scholars who see Islam as a threat to what is in their own view, a modern, civilized, Western society.

Islam has taken on the identity of the Orient in much contemporary Western discourse. With the proliferation of violent extremism, whether politically motivated or otherwise, Islam has been increasingly associated with violence, danger, and the estranged. Edward Said’s foundational text, *Orientalism*, cannot be ignored in discussions of orientalism and its implications. Although the text is often criticized for being too focused on Islam and the Middle East as the locale of the orientalized and subaltern, such focus suits this paper and thus, Said’s arguments resonate here (though arguably they would resonate regardless). Said’s popular definition of the Orient is cited by J.J. Clarke when he writes, “‘the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences’ (1978: 1). It constitutes ‘the other,’ that which stand opposite to us as strange and alien, and it is this very otherness which confirms our own self-image and defines our own self-identity”.

It is through the Western construction of the East, that we arrive at this dichotomy, one that locates Islam in a subjugated role in relation to the West. This othering is often seen as the foundation on which the discourse surrounding Islamophobia stands. Poole addresses the context of Orientalism in her discussion of Islamophobia:
Islamophobia is often seen to have its origins in Orientalism, an ideological process by which, according to Edward Said, eastern cultures have been constructed as Other by the West allowing for their domination (see Said’s *Orientalism*, Penguin, 1978). The institutional reproduction of this discourse has resulted in its naturalization. However, we should not see Islamophobia as part of an unbroken history of incompatibility: aspects of Orientalism have been reworked and reinvested with new significance at different historical moments and for different functional reasons. While there are continuities with historical anti-Muslim feelings, Islamophobia is not just an extension of previous forms.15

Through this disclaimer, Poole works to break the link that contemporary scholarship makes between orientalism and Islamophobia. Though Poole may be correct in her attempt to debunk a connection between these two ideological settings, there is nonetheless a need to acknowledge some element of colonial spirit within the context of contemporary Islamophobia.

In his essay “Colonialism,” professor of comparative religion, David Chidester writes, “in the political economy of colonialism, cultural forms of knowledge and power, discourse and practices, techniques and strategies, played an integral role in the formation of colonial situations.”16 Chidester cites from Hegel, who frames the colonizer and colonized relationship in a child/parent framework. The colonized become “permanent children” in this sense “who were allegedly incapable of developing the maturity of civilization”.17 The essay later refers to religion and its link to the colonial project. Chidester writes, “under colonial conditions, the primary categories of the study of religion—“religion” and “religions”—emerged as potent signs of identity and difference”.18 This quotation outlines the interest in religion as a field of study and inquiry in the colonial era, echoed in the recent public interest in Islam. In the face of a
‘threat’, some governments have a vested interest in clarifying and solidifying who holds which religious beliefs, and more specifically in recent years, who holds Islamic religious beliefs.

Historically, Islam has had largely colonial connotations in nations such as England. Although a Muslim presence has existed in some form in Britain since the eighth century, according to Clive D. Field’s “Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain: The Evidence of the Opinion Polls, 1988-2006”, it was only after the Second World War that Islam had a major social and cultural presence. There has been a strong association between Muslim immigration and British overseas trade and colonization since that time. Muslims originally came to England as slaves during the early colonial period, and arguably have remained associated with this social status in some aspect of British colonial memory.¹⁹ Islam has the same colonial roots in the Americas, as Muslims settled in ‘the New World’ as part of European colonial projects.²⁰ Muslim identity in North, South, and Central America thus also has its foundations in colonial ideologies.²¹

This orientalist sentiment echoes back to the colonial period and has continued into recent discourse. One text that spurred the notion of Islam as a threat to the West is Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*. Originally an essay and later a book, Huntington painted a bleak and limiting view of the future of humanity. Scholars such as Huntington deemed that future human conflict was inevitable. Huntington essentially proposed that with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the communist ‘threat,’ new battle lines would be drawn, this time based on cultural divisions. Huntington saw an impending void in the West, one that would need to be filled by a new threat. He then explicitly named Islam along with Confucianism as the next major threat to the West
locating it, at least for Huntington, in the role of the threatening Other; a dangerous and imminent source of conflict.  

Edward Said has been highly critical of Huntington’s Orientalist thesis. In 2001, he wrote an article for *The Nation* entitled “The Clash of Ignorance.” In it, Said wrote:

> The basic paradigm of West versus the rest (the Cold War opposition reformulated) remained untouched, and this is what has persisted, often insidiously and implicitly, in discussion since the terrible events of September 11. The carefully planned and horrendous, pathologically motivated suicide attack and mass slaughter by a small group of deranged militants has been turned into proof of Huntington’s thesis.

Said challenged Huntington’s essentializing and narrow scholarship. Said does not see acts of violence such as 9/11 as proof of Huntington’s thesis, rather as the particular actions of a handful of individuals. While these actions are “horrendous” for Said, they do not necessitate a new world order based on cultural conflict. Although Huntington’s text was published in 1996, its impact on discourse surrounding the demonization of Islam still merits attention and analysis.

### The Use of the Term in Recent Scholarship: Studies on British Islamophobia

Though the Runnymede Report remains extremely pertinent to contemporary discussions of Islamophobia, later scholarship has been conducted since influential global events such as 9/11, which placed Islam centrally in discourse.

One such study titled, *Perceptions of Discrimination and Islamophobia - Voices from members of Muslim Communities in the European Union*, was published in 2006. The goal of this more recent document is to discuss what is seen as the increasingly
dangerous environment in which Muslims now find themselves. The foreword reads, “evidence gathered by the EUMC over the last few years indicates that since the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington in 2001, European Muslims have been seriously affected by an increasingly hostile social climate”.24 The study noted that some interviewees felt the impact of Islamophobia, even from those who felt they were being kind and accommodating. Some within the study reported experiencing the sentiment that Islam should evolve the way Christianity did, from a place of barbarity and violence to a place of civility. This comment appears benevolent, but explicitly favors a Western-Christian worldview, deeming it the measure of civility.25

Though the use of Islamophobia within public discourse is a relatively new phenomenon, the recent impact of the term cannot be ignored, as feelings toward Muslims as alien culturally and inferior in terms of their civic rights have increased. An increase in negative perceptions of Islam on a global scale has come to light through recent reports and polls, and has been studied extensively at the empirical and sociological level. However, more theoretical analysis of Islamophobia has yet to be thoroughly conducted. There is a necessity in scholarship for theoretical threads to be tugged, in order to gain better insight into the implications of contemporary challenges such as Islamophobia. One thinker in particular, whose scholarship on power and archive is extremely versatile and relevant, is Michel Foucault. By applying Foucault’s concepts to discussions of Islamophobia, a better understanding of power structures and Islam can be discerned.
Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

Michel Foucault: Genealogy, Archive, and Event

Michel Foucault had an astounding impact on intellectual and academic discourse of the twentieth century. His work has been used in countless academic frameworks, dealing with a variety of subjects and eras. Foucault’s theories, both powerful and elusive, have been applied particularly to processes historically linked with institutionalized religion such as knowledge, power, and the organization of history. Archive and genealogy are essential terms in Foucault’s work and will be the focus of this chapter, though they are often not made central to the modern study of Foucault. This chapter will use Foucault’s terms to provide insight into the increase in technology and social media, and the role these advances play in the construction of history and discourse, highlighting the continued relevance of Foucault’s work and laying the groundwork for a later discussion of the EDL. An analysis of these terms will be provided in this chapter, showing their importance in the construction of knowledge and history and the implications of these structures in a more contemporary framework, with a particular focus on how modernity and social media have shifted the way knowledge is archived resulting in shifted societal systems of power.
Archaeology & the Statement

Though this essay’s primary focus is on the terms ‘genealogy’ and ‘archive’, others must first be defined in order to provide a broader context for their role in understanding the relationship between them. Foucault’s concepts are largely interconnected and thus some time must be spent building a framework of terminology before application of the terms themselves can begin. Foucault’s process of identifying the statement through a process of linguistic investigation is referred to as archaeology. Statement can refer both to a group of statements or a singular unit. The statement can be an object or an event. Statements tell us about a thing, but are not the thing itself.26 René Magritte’s famous painting ‘ceci n’est pas une pipe’ exemplifies this distinction perfectly (the painting shows the image of a pipe, with text reading ‘this is not a pipe’ highlighting the difference between the thing and an image of the thing). The painting is of a pipe, but it is not itself a pipe, just as a map is not the terrain it represents. Foucault was so influenced by this image that in 1968 he named one of his texts after this piece.

Foucault uses the language of language itself to discern whether the statement is comparable to the sentence or a speech act, as has traditionally been understood. Foucault goes on to question whether the statement should be equated with such clearly defined linguistic elements, particularly the sentence.27 Foucault writes, “with so broad - - and, in a sense, so lax -- a definition of the sentence, it is difficult to see how one is to recognize sentences that are not statements, or statements that are not sentences.”28 There are, as Foucault points out, many statements that are not sentences. Foucault uses the examples of acronyms, graphs, charts, tables and images. These items may have accompanying sentences, which provide content and description, but the figures
themselves are statements on their own. After dissecting the sentence as a possible equal to the statement, Foucault concludes that the two cannot be equated. The statement is, instead, better defined in relation to the act. The statement and the act are in a reciprocal relationship. Each act is embodied in a statement and each statement contains an act. Another way of looking at the statement is to see it as a function as opposed to a unit, an action as opposed to an item. The statement is a structure that reveals possible unities in time and space. Foucault establishes this definition through the archaeological process of statement-defining. Statements made about Islam and Islamophobia can be identified as statements, which once assembled, make up the archive. Once archaeology has been conducted, and statements have been identified, the statements can be grouped: this creates the archive.

*Archive*

‘Archive’ is one of many technical terms that Foucault uses in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. The term is not ever clearly defined in a concise manner; rather, Foucault outlines what the archive is *not*. Archive designates the collection of material evidence left behind by a particular historical period. In examining these traces one can see the historical a priori of a given period in time. The term archive refers to systems of statements; to the collection of material evidence. The archive is not merely a holding area for memories and ideologies to be stored for the culture’s later use, rather it is the collection of all systems of statements, but it does not merely accumulate as a mass of information. While the archive is organized it does not maintain a linear order of the
statements within it; it does however, maintain organization in non-linear ways.

Foucault writes:

[B]ut [the things said] are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities; that which determines that they do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars…

Foucault’s definition can be simplified. The archive is an interconnected web of context. It is organized though without order. A tangible and contemporary example of this is Wikipedia, an organized system of content that is non-linear in its organization. The archive functions much the same way. The archive is not merely a safe house for what is said, it is an interconnected web of meaning that is constantly being modified.

Foucault writes:

It [the archive] does not have the weight of tradition; and it does not constitute the library of all libraries, outside time and place; nor is it the welcoming oblivion that opens up to all new speech the operational field of its freedom; between tradition and oblivion, it reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is the general system of the formation and transformation of statements.\(^{33}\)

Foucault acknowledges the difficulty in defining the archive in any concrete way, particularly when trying to define the archive of another era, civilization, or culture. This ambiguity is reflected in the complicated manner in which statements about Islam are documented. In addition, Foucault emphasizes the impossibility in defining one’s own archive, though this process of definition is made easier with our increased distance from the archive. Essentially, we can define events and statements more clearly the farther removed from them we are.\(^{34}\) The archive cannot be used to
create a sketch of the future; its location outside of both our linguistic and discursive practices prohibits that.\(^{35}\)

As Foucault made clear from the outset, the archive is non-linear, and thus cannot be seen as a timeline of events, nor be used as a means of calculating future archive events. The archive can only be understood after it has been modified.\(^{36}\) The order of the archive is revealed and expressed through the statement.\(^{37}\) The statement can relocate archive events into different locations and different archival purposes. Statements can bring areas of archival space into conflict with one another, as events cross into different archival frames of meaning.\(^{38}\) This tension is particularly evident when competing views of Islam or Islamophobia are brought into comparison. These statements compete within space discerning where power lies within the social fabric. The process of discerning the power relations in the archive is called genealogy.

**Genealogy**

Genealogy builds from the archive and all that is included within it (i.e., the collection of statements derived through the process of archaeology). Genealogy deals with precisely the same substrata of knowledge and culture, but Foucault now describes it as a level where the grounds of the true and the false come to be distinguished via mechanisms of power. Genealogy allows Foucault to discern where events emerge in the archive and when they are considered truth. Foucault tries to avoid the use of universalized truths where possible and focus more on localized forms of truth. Critics of Foucault however, point out that he makes use of truth in his theory on many occasions. While this may be true, Foucault is working towards the abandonment of
universalization and essentialization of groups and histories and attempting to explore the complexity of power structures within a variety of groups. For Foucault, the way that knowledge has historically been recorded and categorized reveals a great deal about the power structures of a given society. Claims to knowledge are an attempt by one group to assert power within the societal structure. Through the control of knowledge one has access to power. Richard King cites Jeremy Carrette and defines Foucault’s concept of genealogy in his work “Orientalism and the study of religions.” He writes that genealogy of knowledge, “involves an examination of the socio-historical roots of an ideology or institution in order to highlight the ways in which certain groups within society have constructed discourses which have promoted their own authority (Carrette 1999).” Foucault sees the process of genealogy as a means to discerning power as knowledge is not simply a player in the establishment of power, it is power. What humanity refers to as knowledge is merely a manifestation of the power structure of a given society, according to Foucault.

Talal Asad has theorized the concept of genealogy in great detail. In his book *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, Asad argues that so called secular understandings of society are deeply steeped in Christian discourse. Asad feels that this Christian historical context has an impact on the way Islam is understood and contextualized. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing the link between liberalism, class, and imperialism. In relation to Foucault, Asad sees the power structure of the archive as entrenched within Christianity. Those involved in the process of archiving events are so deeply rooted within Christianity that this Christian framework forces all other groups to be defined in relation to the West’s
archival material. In addition, Asad sees the West’s construction of Islam as beyond a mere caricature, but as a statement about and for the West.\textsuperscript{41} Imperialism and politics have a continued influence on the shape and contents of the archive and many scholars have applied Asad’s theory to their own discussions of the archive and the manufacturing of history as well as identity.

In his more recent work on secularism and modernity, \textit{Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity}, Asad discusses European identity formation and the place of Islam in this project. He writes:

> Muslims are clearly present in a secular Europe and yet in an important sense absent from it. The problem of understanding Islam in Europe is primarily, so I claim, a matter of understanding how “Europe” is conceptualized by Europeans. Europe (and the nation-states of which it is constituted) is ideologically constructed in such a way Muslims immigrants cannot be satisfactorily represented in it.\textsuperscript{42}

Asad then goes on to discuss the reason for the exclusion of Islam within European self definition. For Asad, the exclusion of Islam is not based on faith, but rather on European notions of culture, civility, and modernity. Asad finds a certain form of anxiety in Western Europe particularly troubling. For Asad, European anxiety is focused more on Islam within Europe, as opposed to Islam in other nations. Islam, for many Western Europeans, is a local concern.\textsuperscript{43} According to Asad, Muslims in Europe are also seen as unwilling to part with Islam, making them incompatible with certain notions of the modern, Western state.\textsuperscript{44} This scholarship addresses the tension surrounding Western notions of what Islam is and highlights the Western European tendency to categorize and define the boundaries of otherness.
Power & the Archive

Foucault and those who use his theory address the state of conflict within the archive and the processes surrounding altering the archive. For Foucault, power is not a negative force: it causes change to occur and is thus considered to be a force of good. Within the context of the archive, power is a mechanism which allows one form of expression to flourish, while constricting another. Elements of the archive are constantly in conflict in this sense, each seeking out positions of power. This struggle for power is inescapable and within the very structure of the archive. This power struggle can be seen played out through history, as ideological systems struggle against the pre-existing archive material to disrupt the norm and gain power.

For Foucault, power is about “horizons and restrictions,”45 about both ending cycles of ideology and making way for new ones. Instability is the state of the archive. It is fated to rest in a state of turmoil between systems of knowledge, struggling against one another for power and supremacy. Events either support what is considered ‘credible’ and part of the archive, or oppose it and are seen as ‘un-credible’. Reason is not the central component in discerning the trajectory of power structures. Power dictates which systems will be abandoned and which will be taken up. Groups either disrupt or legitimize the content of the archive.46 When considering contemporary Islam and tension surrounding it, power and its location become particularly pertinent topics of discussion. Statements made about Islam either disrupt or support the pre-existing systems of power within the archive.
The concept of archive is a fascinating one, but one rarely tackled in research, whereas his discussions of power and the Panopticon are more popular sources of study. Some contemporary theorists are finding ways to modernize and make Foucault’s work relevant to current challenges. Mike Featherstone is one such scholar, working to make the inaccessible, accessible.

**Featherstone’s Interpretation of Foucault**

Mike Featherstone is a professor of sociology at Nottingham Trent University and is director of the Theory, Culture & Society Center, as well as editor of the Theory, Culture & Society Journal. In 2006, Featherstone contributed an essay to this journal entitled ‘Archive,’ which explored the concept as a tangible historical record, rather than as a theoretical concept (which is nonetheless inescapable).

Featherstone defines archive as “the storehouse for the material from which national memories were constructed.” The archive, in this sense, became the location of cultural memory. The archive is also described as the source from which all academic discourse is drawn, including Foucault’s own work. Featherstone highlights that Foucault both studied and used the cyclical nature of the archive. As he repeatedly points out, Foucault saw no order to the archive or the construction of human history.

Featherstone links archive with colonial discourse in his essay, echoing Asad’s work. Featherstone discusses the colonial roots of archive formation, examining the political realities, which necessitated the consolidation of history. Featherstone refers to
the British Empire as an example. Statistical data used for administrative purposes was
gathered, as was local knowledge of the colonized area. An institution was not enough
to gather and encapsulate this data; an entirely new epistemological system was needed:
an archive. The archive can be seen as an imperial construction for regulating and
exercising power over colonial populations. This data was a source of information and
strategic power in the colonial context, as data about rival colonial powers was often
gathered and categorized here. Knowledge in the colonial hub was often based solely on
data from the archive.48 Scholars had the ability to specialize in a certain field, using
only archival materials as their guide.

In a more contemporary, and perhaps somewhat paranoid context, the archive
has become a means of monitoring populations. Political powers have the ability to
gather and store data regarding citizens and access this data at their leisure. This
archived material becomes vital in the creation of cultural memory by later generations
who access the archive to construct and identify cultural narratives.49 Scholars have
accessed and made use of this archival material. Much like the research in this essay,
students and scholars access information from within the archive, making cultural
assumptions based on the data. Some scholars, like Edward Said himself, used the
archive and Foucault’s theory to address the issue of Orientalism, though many, Ibn
Warraq for example, have critiqued Said’s negativity toward the West and his inability
to remove the East-West binary as a limiting means of categorization. Both of these
scholars have made use of the archive to discuss the role of Islam within global culture.

Featherstone discusses the seemingly haphazard manner in which Foucault used
the tangible archive. Foucault made use of the British and French national libraries while conducting his research. He used material from a vast range of subjects, eras, and cultures. By using the archive in this vast and somewhat disorganized manner, Foucault revealed connections and developed theories that provoked a reanalysis of our knowledge of knowledge itself. Featherstone sees the process of creating the archive as not exclusively academic, but also something which takes place at the individual level. However vast Foucault’s scholarly reach may have been, he was nonetheless writing from a Western perspective, drawing largely from a Western-centric pool of knowledge. The archive may be moving toward production at the individual level, though power may still be rooted in Western, elitist individuals. His work fails to access the global elements of this discussion. Featherstone does not address the Western-centric elements of Foucault’s work, but makes use of his theory nonetheless. Like many scholars who use Foucault, he is working with the theory in a relatively skeletal way, not fully acknowledging the depth of the theory itself. The use of Foucault in this simplified manner ensures the versatility and longevity of the concepts.

Featherstone acknowledges the role of the individual in simple acts of preserving documents, photographs and recordings in their own personal archives. Featherstone sees this link to the production of memory by “post–national imagined communities,” a term he takes from Arjun Appadurai’s essay, “Archive and Aspiration.” Diasporic and migrant groups (according to Featherstone) can use archive as a means of cultural creation and preservation. Featherstone’s inclusion of the discussion of communities and their formation echoes the work of Benedict Anderson, a scholar of international
studies, who addresses the creation of national bodies, seeing the nation as an imagined community. In this context of history and archive, Anderson also emphasizes the importance of recording events, seeing them as imagined only until they are documented and become an archive event.52

Featherstone makes use of Foucault’s theory, as so many academics do, though he grounds the archive in more concrete examples and is far less abstract in his use of the term overall. He is applying Foucault rather than defining him. While it is questionable whether these concrete examples are entirely what Foucault had in mind when he discussed archive, Featherstone’s work offers access to this theoretical concept in a way that proves both interesting and relevant to contemporary discourse. Similarly, David Galston is a scholar who applies the concept of archive within a new context.

David Galston’s Use of Foucault

David Galston’s 2011 book, Archives and the Event of God: The Impact of Michel Foucault on Philosophical Theology makes use of Foucault’s concepts and applies them to contemporary philosophical theology. He employs Foucault’s methodological framework, focusing primarily on archive. Galston draws on material from Foucault’s two major works The Archaeology of Knowledge and Discipline and Punish, both of which were published in the later period of his career. Mehmet Karabela highlights the unique nature of Galston’s work, writing, “David Galston’s Archives and the Event of God distinguishes itself by concentrating on a single concept: the “archive.” Galston attempts to apply Foucault’s concept of “archive” to theology and it is this
attempt which makes the book so innovative and unique in terms of its approach to religion”.

Karabela highlights the central argument of Galston’s work, and focuses on only one element of Foucault’s vast pool of terminology. Galston’s work is focused in a similar way, giving both a detailed analysis of the term and a thorough application of it in the context of theology. Galston’s central aim is to apply Foucault’s theory to his own analysis of the history of religion.

The first section of Galston’s book defines Foucault’s terms (specifically genealogy, archaeology, and archive) in great detail, as well as exploring the implications of the archive and the definition of the statement. He then moves past this preliminary and largely descriptive function to the more interesting project of applying Foucault’s theory.

First, Galston places Foucault’s concept of archive into the context of philosophical theology, namely the philosophical contemplation of questions of God’s existence and other theological concerns. Arguably for Galston, theology is not distinct from philosophy in a pre-Kantian framework. After Kant, philosophical theology took two diverging paths: the positivistic and the hermeneutic approach. Within the positivistic approach, both logical and social scientific approaches existed, whereas in a logical approach, Kant’s ability to dismantle the Aristotelian notions of God is examined. Within the social scientific approach, psychology if often implemented to discern whether or not God is merely an element of human cognitive processes originating from our early existence.
Within the hermeneutical approach, there are two further opposing paths: the idealistic approach and the negative approach. The idealistic leans towards the phenomenological, studying and reflecting upon religious symbols as a form of expression. The second, more negative, hermeneutical approach uses philosophical analysis as a means of destroying false gods, and freeing human minds from the delusion of religion. These approaches outline several possible avenues of philosophical theology and form the context in which Galston writes.

After establishing a context of philosophical theology, Galston places Foucault into this framework. Galston positions Foucault in a hermeneutical context, discussing his analysis of language and how it relates to the archive. Foucault saw the layers of language as the primary matter making up the archive, while archaeology and genealogy were the two main tools that Foucault used to enter the archive and study its components. Entering the archive was a means of studying linguistic elements and events and through this process of archival analysis Foucault concluded that knowledge is a form of production and distribution, form and order, knowledge as power.

Once language is framed via Foucault’s concept of archive, one can either take a positivistic approach to the role of religion, or a hermeneutical stance. If one chooses to analyze the power of language as positivistic, then religion can be viewed as a linguistic element and expression of humanity. On the other hand, a hermeneutical stance would frame religion as a linguistic creation of humanity. For Galston, Foucault blurs the line between these two opposing paths, but Galston himself applies a hermeneutical reading.
Galston applies the term archive to theology, creating his own term, ‘archival theology;’ an inquiry into God as a concept, and as a product of the archive, linked to power. Truth and credibility are sought out within the archive, making a discussion of God as an archive event extremely interesting and perhaps controversial for some. Galston outlines some possible approaches within the field of archival theology and presents what he calls ‘archaeological theology’ and ‘genealogical theology’ as two possible paths within the larger category of archival theology. Archaeological theology involves looking back at theology as a series of systems of God. Genealogical theology on the other hand is forward looking, problematizing theological activities at the present moment.

God is seen as a concept, an event within the archive, and the institution of theology is brought into question. Through the process of archaeological theology, Galston brings forward the question of whether theology should accept its definition as merely a product of archival forces. If theology accepts this argument, then an entirely new context must be formed and Galston feels that theology must accept an entirely new system of mythology for itself in light of its new location as an archival product.  

Galston critiques revelation, seeing it as something external or additional to human experience, rather as a free expression of the processes of human imagination. This is perhaps a challenging element of Galston’s use of Foucault, particularly for those within the field of theology, or those who hold personal beliefs. Galston’s interpretation of God as an archive event eliminates the transcendent qualities of God, rendering it merely a fabrication through the process of human discourse. This stance eliminates any
semblance of God as a transcendent being, creating what Galston calls a sense of “outsidelessness.” Those who find this interpretation and application of Foucault problematic may take another theological stance, one which maintains their own personal sense of truth and divinity, while framing other religious systems as archive events. This theological argument allows some systems of faith to exist outside of the language of the archive: this alludes to James’ infamous ‘something more.’

Galston’s application of the concept of archive to theology is not only innovative, giving new life to Foucault’s theory, but also has implications outside of its original use. This theological application can be transferred to other traditions very easily. Galston’s discussion also brings the archive back into contemporary academic discourse, allowing this concept to be reconfigured in our current framework.

**Using Foucault and the Archive Today**

The use of Foucault’s theory in a contemporary context is a challenging process. For Galston, Foucault can never be ‘advanced’ *per se*, it can only be reconfigured. Galston writes, “Foucault does not advance but rather happens or disperses itself only to be subject again to disruption, exclusion, recombination, and re-formation.” In this sense, Featherstone, Galston, and other figures (Butler, Said, Asad etc.) have modified but in no way advanced Foucault. Foucault’s theory merely ‘happens.’

The more practical and contemporary uses of the archive, as seen by Featherstone and Galston are a starting point from which to apply Foucault’s concept to
more contemporary contexts. The archive is a topic of increasing concern, particularly as individual citizens begin to have further control in the formation of history and archive events. Twitter is one contemporary technological example of how the archive has the potential to be reshaped by the individual. Through the process of open and free communication, individuals can contribute to the formation of history in a virtually hands-on manner. Humans have access to agency through certain technological mediums and are able to exercise this agency in the creation of the archive.

In 2010, the United States Library of Congress announced that it would begin the process of saving all tweets in the national archive. Global tweets are numbered at approximately 55 million per day. Steve Lohr of the New York Times commented on this development, acknowledging the impact on academia and the historical record. Academic researchers are pleased to see a shift in power in terms of who participates in the historical record. The historical record has tended to be elitist, with only the upper crust of society having any significant impact on documenting historical events. Matt Raymond, the library’s director of communications cited Twitter’s “immense impact on culture and history,” and its use as a communications tool in revolutions and political situations. This inclusion of Twitter in the archive is part of the larger, ambitious “Web capture” project at the national library. The project works to assemble Web pages, online news articles and documents, largely concerning significant events. Lohr writes, “the Web capture project already has stored 167 terabytes of digital material, far more than the equivalent of the text of the 21 million books in the library’s collection”.

The mass amounts of data being stored in this archive are changing the make-up
of the archive drastically. The personal voices and viewpoints of individual citizens can now be heard and recorded within cultural memory. Paul Saffo, a visiting scholar at Stanford specializing in technology’s effect on society commented saying, “your indiscretions will be able to be seen by generations and generations of graduate students.” Saffo’s remark is amusing, but makes a comment on the role this archive information could potentially play in future academic study, particularly in the implementation of Foucault’s archive.

In his essay “Religion, media and cultures of everyday life,” Gordon Lynch discusses the role of technology on religion and the way cultures interact in discourse. Lynch comments that traditional religious authorities and structures have been undermined with the advent of the Internet. Religious communities, for example, become less bound by geography, as they are able to flourish in a virtual setting. These alternative spiritual settings change the environment of expression of religious traditions, and can thus be linked to the notion of archiving knowledge, history, and ultimately power.

Foucault saw the archive as something only visible in retrospect, as something that could not be analyzed from within a group itself. Only after a modification to the archive was complete could changes in archive events be observed. Arguably, with accelerated modernization and technological advancement, the rules surrounding the archive have changed. Foucault died in 1984, not living to see many technological discoveries and the shift in the way humans interact with one another and with the structures of power. With technology, the individual has acquired a tremendous amount
of power in recent years, a shift unforeseen by Foucault and his contemporaries. Twitter for example, has increased the proliferation of the voice of the individual and the voice of the masses, as have an increasing number of blogs and forums. With this power lies the potential to manipulate and create shifts within the archive.

Arguably, archive events are not exclusively relegated to the location of retrospect, but can in fact be modified as they are being created. Humanity can now witness the production of archive events, on a huge scale. Individuals have the ability to impact the archive, sometimes on a minute-by-minute basis and as such, the rules surrounding the construction of knowledge within the archive have changed dramatically since Foucault first conceived them. His theories undoubtedly provide a framework and base of terminology with which to discuss these issues, but the framework must be adapted to account for the rapidity with which the individual has gained power of expression. For better or worse, each individual today has a hand in archiving knowledge and history.

Citizens have always had a role in the production of history, but never before at the same rate of interconnectedness with or awareness of one another, sometimes transglobally and even translinguistically. Within this global reality new forms of knowledge are needed. Featherstone speaks to this in his essay “Genealogies of the Global,” where he writes:

The rationale of much previous thinking on humanity in the social sciences has been to assume a linear process of social integration, as more and more people are drawn into a widening circle of interdependencies in the movement to larger units, but the new forms
of binding together of social life necessitate the development of new forms of global knowledge which go beyond the old classifications.  

Featherstone speaks to the issue at hand. Within a global context the archive and the formation of history must be explored and understood differently.  

Archive as a concept may seem initially vague and complex. As for Foucault, it lies somewhere between tradition and oblivion. Galston, Featherstone, and others have made Foucault’s term increasingly accessible and engaging, and made room for future scholarship to emerge surrounding this concept. The concept of archive can be applied in a theological context, as Galston demonstrates in his book. This application can also be translated into other religious discourses, being used to study the theological interworkings of other religions.  

Islamophobia can be connected to Foucault’s concepts, particularly the archive. With an increase in discussions of Islamophobia and Islam, often by individuals and small-scale groups, the impact of fringe movements are archive formation must be addressed. The archive can be disrupted or supported by the power structures which function in society. If Islamophobia is seen as an archive event, then the English Defence League, a fringe anti-Muslims organization, can be seen as upholding this archival material.
Chapter 3

The Case: The English Defence League

Islamophobia and the English Defence League

Now that the context of Islamophobia has been established, and Foucault’s idea of the archive brought forward, an exploration of these ideas in practice can commence. In England, the English Defence League (EDL) has contributed to the discourse surrounding Islamophobia in two ways: 1) the symbolism and language that dichotomizes and segregates the Muslim community from British society, which tends to equate the religion, Islam, with a kind of “counter” culture, and 2) the political messages of nationalism, militarism, and patriotism, reflected in the structure and ideology of the EDL. Through the rhetorical tools of segregation and homogenization, the EDL both has polarized a diversity of groups, frequently using violence, and called for a new brand of British unity. This chapter examines the dichotomous and nationalistic idioms simultaneously used by the EDL, and will then locate this ideological rhetoric in English colonial memory. This example will demonstrate the impact that even a small movement can have on archive formation. Not only does the EDL work to disrupt the established archive within England, but also seeks ultimately to create a new archive based on exclusion and prejudice toward Islam. As will be seen in the following pages, this exclusionary archive is the project of the EDL.
Islamophobia in England Before the EDL

In March 2009, anti-war declarations were made toward a soldiers’ homecoming parade in Luton, England. About a dozen anti-war protesters shouted "terrorists" as roughly 200 Iraq war soldiers made their procession. This protest was not unique as there were countless other anti-war protests in the 2000s, however, it was the catalyst for the formation of an anti-Muslim, English nationalist movement known as the English Defence League.

Before the creation of the EDL, there were other nationalist, anti-Islamic groups functioning in Britain, such as Combat 18 and the White Wolves. The White Wolves are an explicitly racist organization, openly targeting visible minorities in the UK. Among other acts, they claimed responsibility for the 1999 bombings in Brixton. The White Wolves are an offshoot of the UK’s most well known neo-Nazi group, Combat-18. Combat-18 has also claimed responsibility for many bombings and countless acts of racist violence. Though these groups predate the EDL by only a decade, the EDL differs in several ways.

The EDL differs from these other organizations in both the success and speed with which it has grown in the nearly three years since its creation, attracting many more members than these preceding groups. In addition, groups such as The White Wolves and Combat-18 are explicitly racist. The EDL, on the other hand, veils its racism as democracy, comradery, and nation-building and is less explicit in its declarations of intolerance. The EDL has also aligned itself with the British National Party (BNP) a political party with similar values. This political alliance was not made by other groups. The EDL claims to be merely against Muslim extremism, though their actions
are directed at predominantly moderate Muslims in Britain. The EDL also claims to be accepting of Jews, and other non-Christian religious groups, whereas other groups are explicitly anti-religious in their ideology; this rhetoric of acceptance and nationality probably accounts for the EDL’s success in attracting supporters.

The Luton protests of 2009 came on the tail of the highly politicized 7/7 bombings in London and the earlier 9/11 attacks in the United States, both of which created a social environment in Britain in which Muslims are increasingly cast in a demonized role. In light of these events, questions surrounding British identity grew and the EDL has emerged as a new voice in the debate.

**Muslims in England before the EDL**

Before delving into the ideology of the EDL, some information about Muslims in England is helpful in establishing a context in which to place this nationalist movement. Public opinions polls are often taken following a crisis point in British history. Between 1998 and 2006, 104 of these polls have been conducted. The majority (90 in total) took place since 2001, highlighting the increased interest in public opinion, especially concerning Muslims. With immigration and birth rates on the rise, the Muslim population in Britain has increased dramatically. In the late 1980s, the British Muslim population was numbered at roughly 1,000,000 individuals. Polls now project that by 2013 Britain’s Muslim population will be between 5,000,000 and 6,000,000.

While this data has been gathered from surveys that explicitly identify the Muslim population of Britain, polls did not always address this group explicitly. Prior to the end of the 1980s, Muslims were not counted in a distinct category. They were
instead defined culturally or ethnically as opposed to religiously, often being grouped under the label ‘Asian.’ This new categorization of Muslims highlights the increased public interest in the Muslim population of England as its own category: the suggestion being that this group is a likely source of concern and challenge.

The EDL’s Mission Statement

The EDL’s formation in the wake of the Luton protests mirrored a state of high tension and emotion between Muslims and non-Muslims. The EDL, started by Tommy Robinson, began on a relatively small scale but now has over 12,000 active members on their website. The EDL has a detailed mission statement on their homepage which outlines their priorities concerning English identity and the threats it faces. Their five main tenants are:

1. Human Rights
2. Democracy and the Rule of Law
3. Public Education
4. Respecting Tradition
5. International Outlook

These five main arguments are articulated with vigor. A brief explanation of each should illuminate the concerns of the EDL and the style with which they communicate their message. This detailed review of the EDL’s mission statement is necessary in trying to capture the ideological agenda of this group and place their actions in a larger context.
1. Human Rights: Protecting And Promoting Human Rights
The EDL sees it as their responsibility to defend and protect English freedom against radical Islamism. The EDL acknowledges in this the victimization of many Muslims at the hand of extremists, and feels that these Muslims deserve protection from the government in a joint effort to expel radical Muslims. The EDL feels that human rights and freedoms (though not those of many Muslims) need to be protected from external threats.

The EDL is extremely concerned and angered by the proposition of Sharia Law in Britain. Sharia is seen as incompatible with democracy and as a great threat to the concept of justice. The EDL sees the accommodations made towards Muslim customs and religious rights as a burden on British democracy and an insult. Sharia is the epitome of this accommodation and offence for the EDL.

3. Public Education: Ensuring That The Public Get A Balanced Picture Of Islam
The EDL sees education of the public as of the utmost importance. They feel that the British education system provides only a sanitized representation of Islam and is not showing the ‘true’ nature of the religion. They advocate for the elimination of ‘Islamophobia’, but highlight the need for critical discussion surrounding Islam. They
see their organization as a source of truth about what they feel is ‘true’ Islam, and see it as part of their mission to educate the masses about the threat of radical Islam.

4. Respecting Tradition: Promoting The Traditions And Culture Of England While At The Same Time Being Open To Embrace The Best That Other Cultures Can Offer

The EDL believes that English culture should be a primary concern in English society. The EDL feels that English culture is being threatened and needs to be preserved. Also, they feel that Britons should not be forced to adapt to foreign cultures and customs. Too much multiculturalism and accommodation is seen as a threat to the foundations of English identity.

5. International Outlook: Working In Solidarity With Others Around The World

The EDL sees the issues surfacing in England as global problems. They look for alliances and solidarity with other groups also facing the same pressures of Sharia and other cultural threats. For them they are fighting “a truly global jihad.” Within this stance of solidarity, the EDL seeks to gain support from the global community, ultimately strengthening their foundations.

**Englishness**

A concept mentioned repeatedly in the mission statement is that of Englishness: it is a concept perceived to be under threat. England and Englishness are topics of increasing interest for citizens of the United Kingdom. British identity is being
questioned as the United Kingdom faces potential disunity. The British newspaper, The Guardian, has conducted an entire series on British unity. This identity crisis and the surrounding discussions were in part brought on by Scotland’s move to seek independence. This looming fragmentation of the United Kingdom has caused some to question what national identity in Britain really means. A contributor to The Guardian, Severin Carrell, writes, “[I]n each part of the UK, notions of nationhood and Britishness are changing and, arguably, the links are weakening.” As the United Kingdom faces a potential fracture in unification, each separate piece of this political body faces a period of self-reflection and questioning. These weakening links are part of the political and cultural backdrop of the EDL’s formation.

The EDL’s stance on Englishness is problematic. Resting on tensions surrounding Englishness and unity in the UK, the EDL expresses anxiety about the future of English identity and nationality. The nation as a concept itself is called into question in discussions of such nationalism. Many have argued that the concept of ‘nation’ is a hollow signifier. Marxist theory argues that the concept of the nation is not real so much as it is something imposed on the masses. Jungian psychology similarly sees the nation as a construction, but in this case, as a construction of the psyche. While the discourse on this concept is vast, and will not be addressed in great detail here, it is nonetheless a significant element of the ideological construction of the nation, and thus, of the EDL definition of nationality.

In addition to the Runnymede Report on Islamophobia, the trust has also conducted a report on the future of multi-ethnic Britain more generally, which addresses the concept of Englishness. Though its supporters have deemed the later report to be
influential, there are undoubtedly those who see the report as unrepresentative and damaging. The document, which attempts to outline what Islamophobia is, what impact it has had on British life, and what can be done on political and social levels to improve the treatment of Muslims in Britain, has been interpreted by some as an attack on British identity itself. Samir Shah, when chairman of the Runnymede Trust, commented on the misunderstood nature of the report:

> The meaning embedded in words often lags behind reality. The report was pointing this out and encouraging the process by which the word “British” could evoke a set of images that includes all the cultures and peoples who have made this country their home.\(^{78}\)

Shah goes on to critique those who cling to a concrete notion of Englishness, seeing the many complications with such a claim to a unified concept. Shah emphasizes the constant shifts taking place in the construction of national identity and history. For Shah, a nation's identity is continually being rewritten and redefined, and Britain is no exception. The Runnymede Report addressing these challenges seeks to broaden the definition of Englishness and create a climate of increased awareness and respect for diversity.\(^{79}\)

Though the controversy surrounding this report continued throughout the early 2000s, almost a decade before the formation of the EDL, the tension surrounding the idea of Englishness is nonetheless present here and the EDL's anxiety can be located in these early discussions of ethnicity in Britain.
Segregation and Othering

Within the EDL’s very name lies an implication of conflict and segregation. The need for England to maintain a stance of ‘defence’ implies an external threat, and the need for national identity to be preserved. It implies that there is something to defend England and Englishness from. This places the nation and those who supposedly threaten it, in a conflict-oriented binary. The EDL uses the language of defence to evoke a militaristic sensibility and an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy is manufactured, segregating the ‘good’ from the ‘bad’ and the ‘heroic’ from the ‘dangerous.’

The language of segregation is evident from the EDL’s mission statement. The EDL opposes those within the Muslim community, who, in their eyes, are barbaric and intolerant, promoting human rights violations. They claim to be defending English culture, though they target Islam specifically in their critiques. The EDL seems to take issue specifically with Islam, rather than critiquing immigration and loss of English culture generally. Through this segregation, the EDL frames Islam as a counter culture, threatening Englishness.

The EDL repeatedly refers to democracy and human rights, veiling their anti-Muslim attitudes within the discourse of unity and nationhood. The democracy they uphold as the epitome of Western society and civility is violated in their segregation of a huge portion of the English population: Muslim immigrants, and British-born Muslims. As Judith Butler has stated regarding Israel-Palestine, democracy is not democracy when it rests atop the destruction and control of another group. A democracy gained by oppressing a group is, by its very act of oppression, undemocratic. Butler’s argument highlights the contradiction between oppression and freedom present in the EDL’s view
of Islam and English freedom. Seeking to limit and control one group so that others may function freely, without being challenged or confronted by difference, is contrary to democracy.

In addition to opposition towards Islamic groups, the EDL also allies itself strongly with Israel. This alliance further proliferates segregation between the EDL and Islam. This public support of Israel sends a strong signal to many Muslims in the UK. The EDL not only supports Israel, but also sees them as a symbol of hope. EDL leader Tommy Robinson released a statement saying, “If Israel falls, we all fall. This is what our movement has been built on for two years.” The EDL site also reads, “Whilst the EDL’s focus will always remain on defending England from Sharia Law and the erosion of our rights and freedoms, we will also remain unwavering in our support of Israel and in our opposition to antisemitism.”

This public declaration only adds to the negative relations between Muslims and the EDL, as it highlights the alliance with Israel as ideologically central to the movement. This alliance is a prime example of how the EDL’s claim to promote unity, while proliferating divisive and confrontational political views.

Through the techniques and ideologies listed above, Islam has been framed as a counter culture, which exists in opposition to English culture, and which threatens the very survival of Englishness as non-English cultures are critiqued and seen as suspect. Within the EDL itself, widespread and violent racism and intolerance toward non-English groups has been reported, but in spite of this racism, the EDL espouses messages of preserving British identity and national pride. The group also emphasizes culture as sacred and in need of protection. They state that:
The EDL believes that English Culture has the right to exist and prosper in England. We recognise that culture is not static, that over time changes take place naturally… However, this does not give license to policy-makers to deliberately undermine our culture and impose non-English cultures on the English people in their own land.\textsuperscript{85}

What the EDL considers outside the parameters of English culture is not included. This counter-culture is seen as detrimental to the formation and preservation of national identity. Not only does the EDL see Islam as a new religion to Britain (ignoring the history of Islam in Europe and the United Kingdom), but also see it as a damaging force.

Oscar Handlin was famously quoted in 1951 explaining “once I thought to write a history of immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history.”\textsuperscript{86} The sentiment of which can be echoed in the context of Britain and Islam. The history of Britain involves Islam, whether or not the EDL chooses to acknowledge this historical link. For the EDL, Englishness is completely removed from Muslim community identity. The EDL are unwilling to entertain the idea that British Muslims are and will continue to define Englishness.

Interestingly, though the EDL segregates and alienates the Muslim community generally, not all Muslims want to be divided from this far right movement, but rather look to engage with those who oppose Islam, seeking dialogue and understanding. One Muslim correspondent for \textit{The Guardian} commented on the prevention of the EDL from voicing their views in a protest in Britain:

For Muslims citizens who wish to understand far right ideology, the EDL’s militaristic and unified stance makes them appear somewhat closed off to dialogue and discourse with both Muslim and non-Muslim communities who seek exchange.\textsuperscript{87}
Though the sentiment may not be mutual, the EDL seeks to establish Islam as a problematic element of counter-culture.

**Terrorism and Government Response**

The EDL frames their message as one of peaceful protest and solidarity. Though the group is said by some to be a fringe movement with few followers, their protests often draw substantial crowds. The EDL plans and carries out attacks against Muslims, other non-white groups, and left-wing organizations in direct contravention of the peaceful image they work to manufacture. For example, they made repeated claims that they would attack the London ‘Occupy’ protesters outside St. Paul’s Cathedral, showing their frustration with British leftists. Bans against radical Islamic groups have been made public and while similar statements of disapproval have been made toward the EDL, there has been no ban.

British Prime Minister, David Cameron, called members of the EDL ‘sick people’ in the House of Commons, though he has not made a clear statement about banning the group. Cameron’s willingness to condemn Muslims extremist groups is stunted when it comes to making a decisive statement about the EDL. Though these two groups represent entirely opposing platforms, both are ‘extremist organizations.’ This double standard in the PM’s treatment of extremism undoubtedly has an impact on the public perception of Islam in Britain.

There are those who critique the government not only for seemingly failing to implement policy, but also for enabling far-right activism and violence. A 2011 report
from Chatham House (a think tank on international affairs) by Matthew Goodwin addresses these issues. The report, entitled *Right Response Understanding and Countering Populist Extremism in Europe*, warns of the impact of both career politicians and the fall of grassroots activists, and how this has left a vacuum across Britain and Europe for anti-establishment groups, who are now reaping mass appeal.  

As the government fails to provide what are deemed by the public to be sufficient solutions to these issues, activism (or as members would say vigilantism) becomes a more appealing alternative for some members of the populace. The EDL is a movement which provides such an outlet. For many, the government has become overly mechanized, impersonal, and businesslike and they feel alienated from governmental bodies. Goodwin argues that in this space of alienation lies the opportunity for far-right movements to attract citizens to their cause, taking on the concerns of citizens who are dissatisfied with the government.

**Public Response & Counter Movements**

Though government response has not been overly decisive in dealing with the EDL, many groups have emerged in protest against the EDL’s messages. Hope Not Hate and EDL News are some examples of English grassroots movements speaking out against the actions of the EDL. Hope Not Hate was formed in 2005 and is a direct counter movement to the EDL and the BNP. It is explicitly anti-racist and anti-fascist and works with new sources such as the Daily Mirror newspaper to counter racist movements in England. EDL News is an organization completely devoted to dismantling the EDL. Members feel the EDL misrepresents itself, hiding its sinister and
dangerous views behind false democratic values. EDL News states that they are proudly British and proudly anti-racist, seeing the EDL as a major source of hate and fascism in the UK. These two organizations are amongst many other grassroots movements which provide the counter argument to the EDL, giving voice to a large segment of the British populace who do not agree with the ideology of the EDL.

The EDL’s brand of racism is often seen as a unique project only of the extreme far right. Talal Asad disagrees with this categorization and calls attention to the leftist anxiety surrounding Islam. Asad notes that liberals tend to equate racism with the far right, who deem certain groups and religion incompatible with Western Enlightenment ideals. For Asad, the left also shows apprehension in the face of a growing Muslim presence in Europe, questioning the role of Islam in the West.

**Future in Question**

An English future is not only seen as in question from external threats (i.e. Islam), but also from homegrown terrorism and internal civil unrest. EDL leader Tommy Robinson has expressed his concern regarding what he calls “English lads:” non-Muslim British citizens turning to violence out of sheer frustration with the political systems who refuse to do anything to stop extremism and Islamism. Robinson’s use of the word ‘lads’ emphasizes a sense of comradery and kinship, implying that this violence and extremism could happen anywhere, to anyone, by anyone. The violence is framed within the discourse of disease and contagions, seen as something with the potential to spread through groups. This tactical use of fear helps create an environment in which the EDL may be able to convince the public of the future peril
they see as imminent. They could then gain potential access to increasing political as well as cultural influence, including, as will be discussed in the last chapter of this essay, the ability to shape the archive.

There are those who claim the EDL is merely a fringe movement, a movement composed of primarily “football hooligans, far-right activists, and pub racists.” But however fringe the EDL may appear to be, their rhetoric and ideologies warrant close analysis. Through the simultaneous projects of othering and creating unity, the EDL is an important group for identity formation in England, both in Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The group differs from other far-right organizations in the success and speed with which it has gained popularity and attention, and for better or worse, its high profile and often violent events draw media and political attention. Analysis of such extreme groups does not compose a complete picture by any means, but it begins to examine an, often volatile, component of society. The EDL has the potential to gain increased political and cultural influence and thus, warrants the attention of both the individual and the collective.

The seemingly small-scale group has the potential to impact the archive by upholding the power structures and statements which have been established. By understanding Islamophobia as an archive event, the possibility of the event being shifted and challenged becomes clear. This framework shows the potential frailty of the EDL’s ideological model, allowing a potential dismantling of this model to be seen.
Chapter 4

Conclusion and Implications

Islamophobia as an Archive Event

The history of Islamophobia, including the actions of the EDL, has placed anti-Muslim attitudes and norms into the archive. In this sense, Islamophobia can be framed as an archive event, and the actions of the EDL seen as a reinforcement of this archival material. Now that Islamophobia has become a reality of the archive, discriminatory groups such as the EDL can strengthen and preserve these existing archival attitudes through their messages and actions.

As discussed previously, the archive is complex; while it is on one hand the collection of all systems of statements, it also ensures that this collection does not merely accumulate as a mass of information, but is instead organized in a seemingly disorganized manner (without a linear order of the statements within it). The statements made about Islam by the EDL and other such movements have entered Islamophobia into the archive. Through the repetition of statements, Islamophobia has become a part of the larger archive.99

The disorganized nature of the archive is important to consider when discussing both negative and positive statements made about Islam. Statements are created rapidly, through a variety of mediums, containing a variety of sentiments concerning Islam. Social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and the publicly accessible and modifiable Wikipedia are all examples of this instantaneous global network of communication and
access to information. The non-linear nature of the archive is seen through the overwhelming amount of statements produced concerning Islam and the equally overwhelmingly complex task of trying to categorize these statements into the archive.¹⁰⁰

Using Foucault’s concept of the archive is important in discussions of racism, particularly at the grassroots level. Foucault’s conception of the archive emphasizes the importance of the statement and, despite its size, remains an extremely significant element of the creation of history. The statement and the impact it has on the archive as a whole is no better encapsulated than through the activities of individuals and small-scale movements. Fringe movements once exiled for altering the archive, arguably have more power now, in a contemporary context in which the archive is more easily influenced by the masses.

Genealogy can be included in this examination. Genealogy builds off of the archive and all that is included within it (i.e., the collection of statements derived through the process of archaeology). During the process of genealogy, power is discerned through an examination of statements. Truth and power are sought out during this process. By examining the statements made about Islam in Britain, the EDL can be seen as a location of power regarding the archive and decreeing which statements are considered to be true.¹⁰¹

For Foucault, the way knowledge has historically been recorded and categorized reveals a great deal about the power structures of a given society. Knowledge can now be recorded and modified at the individual level with much more impact. Power has arguably been given to the individual, who has the ability to shape the archive and
influence recorded history. As discussed above, for Foucault, claims to knowledge are on group’s attempt to assert power within the societal structure.

The modern notion of the archive can be applied to the more contemporary challenges facing increasing multicultural nations. The increasing role of the masses in the production and classification of history also shows the changing nature of the archive, which provides a worthy opportunity for scholars to investigate the future relationship between the archive and the individual in discussions of power, politics, and religion.

The EDL is an example of this assertion of power within the social fabric. Islamophobia is an archive event, composed of statements made about Islam, and the EDL assert power in the formation and maintenance of this archive event. Groups such as the EDL, which once had limited power, are now able to impact the archive in substantial and immediate ways. Social media has increased the ease with which individuals and groups, however fringe their ideologies, can impact the public record concerning particular issues, just as Twitter and other Internet outlets show how the archive has the potential to be reshaped by the individual. Through this process of open communication, individuals can contribute to the formation of history in a virtually hands on manner. Humans have access to agency through certain technological mediums and are able to exercise this agency in the creation of the archive. Members of the EDL, for example, can reinforce the archive and work to maintain the Islamophobic ideals now encapsulated within the archive as an event.

By using Foucault’s concepts in a discussion of Islamophobia, the impact of individual statements can be seen on the larger event within the archive. The archive
event of Islamophobia can also be identified along with the increasing need for a
disruption to occur within the archive. Power is constantly being fought for within the
archive and statements either support or challenge the status quo. A movement as
initially small and liminal as the EDL has influenced and supported Islamophobia within
the archive, contributing and aligning itself with the power structures at work.

In addition, the archive and its definition must be understood as a two way street. The archive of the West and the archive of Islam are coming into conflict. Two different
discussions are taking place and two bodies of archival material are in question.
Arguably, the EDL seeks to maintain the archive event Islamophobia, disrupting the
archive of Islam itself. The EDL can be seen as a disruptive force, pushing Western
leftists to continually doubt Islam. The EDL, however successfully or unsuccessfully,
also seeks to disrupt the archive of Islam itself, changing the way Islam is perceived and
understood from the outside. The EDL want to redefine what English identity is, using a
foundation of racist and anti-Muslim sentiments.

Within this context, this essay contributes to scholarship on Islamophobia by
providing a new framework of analysis which allows Islamophobia to be studied anew
through the lens of Foucault and his philosophical legacy.
Endnotes

1 (Runnymede, 2012)
2 (Cashmore, 2004, 215)
3 (Cashmore, 2004, 215)
4 (Allen 2010, 54)
5 (Allen 2010, 3–4)
6 (Allen 2010, 4)
7 (CBC 2011)
8 (Allen 2010, 93)
9 (Field 2007, 449)
10 (Field 2007, 448)
11 (Field 2007, 450)
12 (Lewis 2003, 137)
13 (Harris 2004)
14 (Clarke 1994, 14)
15 (Cashmore, 2004, 215)
16 (Chidester 2000, 424)
17 (Chidester 2000, 425)
18 (Chidester 2000, 427)
19 (Field 2007, 447)
20 (Ghanem Bassiri, 2010)
21 (Gomez, 2005)
22 (Huntington, 1997)
23 (Said, 2001)
24 (EUMC, 2006, 3)
25 (EUMC, 2006, 43)
26 (Galston 2011, 20)
27 (Foucault, Defining the Statement 1972, 81)
28 (Foucault, Defining the Statement 1972, 82)
29 (Foucault, Defining the Statement 1972, 82)
30 (Foucault, Defining the Statement 1972, 83)
31 (Foucault, Defining the Statement 1972, 87)
32 (Foucault 1972, 128)
33 (Foucault 1972, 130)
34 (Foucault 1972, 130)
35 (Foucault 1972, 131)
36 (Foucault 1972, 131)
37 (Galston 2011, 31)
38 (Galston 2011, 32)
39 (King 2010, 293)
40 (King 2010, 293)
41 (Herzfeld 1994)
(GhaneaBassiri 2010)
(Takolia 2011)
(The English Defence League 2011)
(BBC 2012)
(Laville 2011)
(Mulholland 2011)
(Goodwin 2011)
(Meikle 2011)
(Hope Not Hate 2011)
(EDL News 2012)
(Asad, 2003, 160)
(Robinson 2011)
(Collins 2011)
(Foucault 1972, 130)
(Foucault 1972, 130)
(King 2010, 293)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


