

Media Studies: Archives & Repertoires

Mariam Ghani / Spring 2016

COURSE READER

- Michel Foucault, "The historical a priori and the archive" from *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1971)
- Giorgio Agamben, "The Archive and Testimony" from *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1989)
- Giorgio Agamben, "The Witness" from *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1989)
- Mariam Ghani, "Field notes for 'What we left unfinished': The Artist and the Archive" (Ibraaz, 2014) * recommended
- Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression" (Diacritics, 1995)
- Alan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive" (October, 1986)
- Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1937)
- Alan Sekula, "Reading an Archive" from *The Photography Reader* (1983)
*recommended
- Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse" (October, 2007) *recommended
- Okwui Enwezor, "Archive Fever: Photography Between History & the Monument" (2007) * recommended
- Matthew Reason, "Archive or Memory? The Detritus of Live Performance" (New Theatre Quarterly, 2003)
- Xavier LeRoy, "500 Words" (Artforum, 2014)
- "Bird of a Feather: Jennifer Monson's Live Dancing Archive" (Brooklyn Rail, 2014)
- Gia Kourlas, "Q&A with Sarah Michelson" (Time Out NY, 2014)
- Gillian Young, "Trusting Clifford Owens: *Anthology* at MoMA/PS1" (E-misférica, 2012)
- "The Body as Object of Interference: Q&A with Jeff Kolar" (Rhizome, 2014) *rec
- *Anthology* roundtable from the *Radical Presence* catalogue (2015) *rec
- Pad.ma, "10 Theses on the Archive" (2010)
- Ann Cvetkovich, "The Queer Art of the Counter-Archive" from *Cruising the Archive* (2014)
- Diana Taylor, "Performance and/as History" (T:DR, 2006)
- Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image" (e-flux journal, 2009)
- Hito Steyerl, "Politics of the archive: translations in film" (Transversal, 2008)
- Paul Soulellis, "Digital Publishing, Unzipped" (Rhizome, 2015)
- Ben Lerner, "The Custodians" (The New Yorker, 2016)
- MoMA Inside/Out, Media Conservation series
http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/category/media-conservation
- Mariam Ghani, "Divining the Question: An Unscientific Methodology for the Collection of Warm Data" (Viralnet, 2006)
- Akram Zaatari, "Photography as Apparatus" (Ibraaz, 2013) *recommended
- Diana Taylor, "Save As" (E-misférica, 2012) *recommended

RESOURCES

E-Misférica 9.1-9.2, On the Subject of Archives

<http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/e-misferica-91/hirschtaylor>

Essays and artist projects about archives in transit in the Americas (2012)

Ibraaz Platform 006, Archival Dissonance

<http://www.ibraaz.org/platforms/6>

Essays and artist projects about the role of the archive in constructing visual culture and historical narratives in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (2013-14)

Radical Archives

<http://www.nyu-apastudies.org/2012/radical-archives-resources>

Video & audio recordings, PDF program, Storify & photos from the international conference at NYU (2014), which brought together archivists, activists, artists, and theorists. See also radicalarchives.net

Approaches to the Archive: Fictional Histories?

Essays on the positions of archival artworks in museums (2013)

<http://post.at.moma.org/themes/6-approaches-to-the-archive-fictional-histories>

The Archival Impulse: Collecting and Conserving the Moving Image in Asia

Videos from the 2015 conference at MoMA

http://post.at.moma.org/content_items/705-the-archival-impulse-collecting-and-conserving-the-moving-image-in-asia

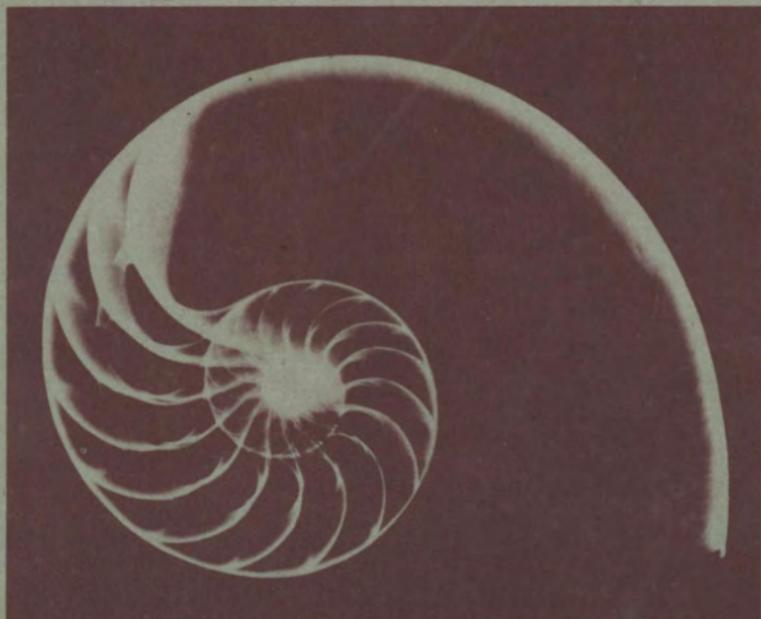
Time-Based Media Conservation

Templates and notes from the Guggenheim's pioneering work in the field

<http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/conservation/time-based-media>

FOUCAULT
MICHEL

**THE ARCHAEOLOGY
OF KNOWLEDGE**



& THE DISCOURSE ON LANGUAGE

excerpts from
MICHEL FOUCAULT
THE ARCHAEOLOGY
OF KNOWLEDGE
AND
THE DISCOURSE ON LANGUAGE
published in 1971

THE HISTORICAL A PRIORI AND THE ARCHIVE

The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they 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, some that seem close to us shining brightly from afar off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale. The archive is not that which, despite its immediate escape, safeguards the event of the statement, and preserves, for future memories, its status as an escapee; it is that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset *the system of its enunciability*. Nor is the archive that which collects the dust of statements that have become inert once more, and which may make possible the miracle of their resurrection; it is that which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement-thing; it is *the system of its functioning*. Far from being that which unifies everything that has been said in the great confused murmur of a discourse, far from being only that which ensures that we exist in the midst of preserved discourse, it is that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration.

Between the *language (langue)* that defines the system of constructing possible sentences, and the *corpus* that passively collects the words that are spoken, the *archive* defines a particular level: that of a practice that causes a multiplicity of statements to emerge as so many regular events, as so many things to be dealt with and manipulated. It 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*.

It is obvious that the archive of a society, a culture, or a civilization cannot be described exhaustively; or even, no doubt, the archive of a whole period. On the other hand, it is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say – and to itself, the object of our discourse – its modes of appearance, its forms of existence and coexistence, its system of accumulation, historicity, and disappearance. The archive cannot be described in its totality; and in its presence it is unavoidable. It emerges in fragments, regions, and levels, more fully, no doubt, and with greater sharpness, the greater the time that separates us from it: at most, were it not for the rarity of the documents, the greater chronological distance would be necessary to analyse it. And yet could this description of the archive be justified, could it elucidate that which makes it possible, map out the place where it speaks, control its rights and duties, test and develop its concepts – at least at this stage of the search, when it can define its possibilities only in the moment of their realization – if it persisted in describing only the most distant horizons? Should it not approach as close as possible to the positivity that governs it and the archive system that makes it possible today to speak of the archive in general? Should it not illuminate, if only in an oblique way, that enunciative field of which it is itself a part? The analysis of the archive, then, involves a privileged region: at once close to us, and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates it in its otherness; it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us. The description of the archive deploys its possibilities (and the mastery of its possibilities) on the basis of the very discourses that have just ceased to be ours; its threshold of existence is established by the discontinuity that separates us from what we can no longer say, and from that which falls

outside our discursive practice; it begins with the outside of our own language (*langage*); its locus is the gap between our own discursive practices. In this sense, it is valid for our diagnosis. Not because it would enable us to draw up a table of our distinctive features, and to sketch out in advance the face that we will have in the future. But it deprives us of our continuities; it dissipates that temporal identity in which we are pleased to look at ourselves when we wish to exorcise the discontinuities of history; it breaks the thread of transcendental teleologies; and where anthropological thought once questioned man's being or subjectivity, it now bursts open the other, and the outside. In this sense, the diagnosis does not establish the fact of our identity by the play of distinctions. It establishes that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks. That difference, far from being the forgotten and recovered origin, is this dispersion that we are and make.

The never completed, never wholly achieved uncovering of the archive forms the general horizon to which the description of discursive formations, the analysis of positivities, the mapping of the enunciative field belong. The right of words – which is not that of the philologists – authorizes, therefore, the use of the term *archaeology* to describe all these searches. This term does not imply the search for a beginning; it does not relate analysis to geological excavation. It designates the general theme of a description that questions the already-said at the level of its existence: of the enunciative function that operates within it, of the discursive formation, and the general archive system to which it belongs. Archaeology describes discourses as practices specified in the element of the archive.

Giorgio Agamben

The Archive and Testimony//1989

[...] Foucault gives the name 'archive' to the positive dimension that corresponds to the plane of enunciation, 'the general system of the formation and transformation of statements' (Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, 1972, 130). How are we to conceive of this dimension, if it corresponds neither to the archive in the strict sense – that is, the storehouse that catalogues the traces of what has been said, to consign them to future memory – nor to the Babelic library that gathers the dust of statements and allows for their resurrection under the historian's gaze?

As the set of rules that define the events of discourse, the archive is situated between *langue*, as the system of construction of possible sentences – that is, of possibilities of speaking – and the *corpus* that unites the set of what has been said, the things actually uttered or written. The archive is thus the mass of the non-semantic inscribed in every meaningful discourse as a function of its enunciation; it is the dark margin encircling and limiting every concrete act of speech. Between the obsessive memory of tradition, which knows only what has been said, and the exaggerated thoughtlessness of oblivion, which cares only for what was never said, the archive is the unsaid or sayable inscribed in everything said by virtue of being enunciated; it is the fragment of memory that is always forgotten in the act of saying 'I'. It is in this 'historical *a priori*', suspended between *langue* and *parole*, that Foucault establishes his construction site and founds archaeology as 'the general theme of a description that questions the already-said at the level of its existence' (*ibid.*, 131) – that is, as the system of relations between the unsaid and the said in every act of speech, between the enunciative function and the discourse in which it exerts itself, between the outside and the inside of language.

Let us now attempt to repeat Foucault's operation, sliding it towards language (*langue*), thus displacing the site that he had established between *langue* and the acts of speech, to relocate it in the difference between language (*langue*) and archive: that is, not between discourse and its taking place, between what is said and the enunciation that exerts itself in it, but rather between *langue* and its taking place, between a pure possibility of speaking and its existence as such. If enunciation in some way lies suspended between *langue* and *parole*, it will then be a matter of considering statements not from the point of view of actual discourse, but rather from that of language (*langue*); it will be a question of looking from the site of enunciation not towards an act of speech,

but towards *langue* as such: that is, of articulating an inside and an outside not only in the plane of language and actual discourse, but also in the plane of language as potentiality of speech.

In opposition to the *archive*, which designates the system of relations between the unsaid and the said, we give the name *testimony* to the system of relations between the inside and the outside of *langue*, between the sayable and the unsayable in every language – that is, between a potentiality of speech and its existence, between a possibility and an impossibility of speech. To think a potentiality in act as *potentiality*, to think enunciation on the plane of *langue* is to inscribe a caesura in possibility, a caesura that divides it into a possibility and an impossibility, into a potentiality and an impotentiality; and it is to situate a subject in this very caesura. The archive's constitution presupposed the bracketing of the subject, who was reduced to a simple function or an empty position; it was founded on the subject's disappearance into the anonymous murmur of statements. In testimony, by contrast, the empty place of the subject becomes the decisive question. It is not a question, of course, of returning to the old problem that Foucault had sought to eliminate, namely, 'How can a subject's freedom be inserted into the rules of a language?' Rather, it is a matter of situating the subject in the disjunction between a possibility and an impossibility of speech, asking, 'How can something like a statement exist in the site of *langue*? In what way can a possibility of speech realize itself as such?' Precisely because testimony is the relation between a possibility of speech and its taking place, it can exist only through a relation to an impossibility of speech – that is, only as *contingency*, as a capacity not to be. This contingency, this occurrence of language in a subject, is different from actual discourse's utterance or non-utterance, its speaking or not speaking, its production or non-production as a statement. It concerns the subject's capacity to have or not to have language. The subject is thus the possibility that language does not exist, does not take place – or, better, that it takes place only through its possibility of not being there, its contingency. The human being is the speaking being, the living being who has language, because the human being is capable of *not having* language, because it is capable of its own infancy. Contingency is not one modality among others, alongside possibility, impossibility, and necessity: it is the actual giving of a possibility, the way in which a potentiality exists as such. It is an event (*contingit*) of a potentiality as the giving of a caesura between a capacity to be and a capacity not to be. In language, this giving has the form of subjectivity. Contingency is possibility put to the test of a subject.

In the relation between what is said and its taking place, it was possible to bracket the subject of enunciation, since speech had already taken place. But the relation between language and its existence, between *langue* and the archive,

demands subjectivity as that which, in its very possibility of speech, bears witness to an impossibility of speech. This is why subjectivity appears as *witness*; this is why it can speak for those who cannot speak. Testimony is a potentiality that becomes actual through an impotentiality of speech; it is, moreover, an impossibility that gives itself existence through a possibility of speaking. These two movements cannot be identified either with a subject or with a consciousness; yet they cannot be divided into two incommunicable substances. Their inseparable intimacy is testimony. [...]

Giorgio Agamben, 'The Archive and Testimony', *Quel che resta di Auschwitz* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1989); trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Remnants of Auschwitz* (New York: Zone Books, 1999) 143-6.

Susan Hiller

Working Through Objects//1994

Working in the Freud Museum has been one of the most interesting things I've been involved in for a long time. Most spaces that one is allowed to inhabit temporarily as an artist are either 'neutral' spaces designated for art and thus marginalized in some way, or – particularly in Europe – derelict spaces: dead factories or abandoned warehouses. The Freud Museum, of course, is quite different. This is a space which was a family home and has become a museum – or a shrine, depending on how you look at it – and which itself houses the collection of the original inhabitant. So it has layers and layers and layers of meaning in the present, as well as a very significant past.

Now my own experience here has been intense, probably because working here has made me think again about issues I thought I had resolved and look at a set of histories I thought I had already rejected. I felt I was constrained to confine my intervention to the room where you now see the installation; this may have been partially an imagined constraint, but nevertheless I felt that my work in the space would be bounded geographically by that room. I also felt that in order to use that room I had only two options: using or not using the existing large vitrine. And if I had not used it, I would have had to block off an entire wall, transform the entire architecture of the room, and in a sense falsify the proposition that the room was offering. Therefore it became a vitrine piece, but my series of boxes was begun quite a while before the vitrine itself became a possibility; when I was first informed of the vitrine I knew immediately that this location would help me to finish the piece of work that had begun long ago in my mind and which I thought might go on for ever.

The limitation of confining my installation to an oversize vitrine in fact became a great opportunity, because I have discovered that when things are condensed or constrained like this, people will involve themselves in a more careful, slow, and intimate way than they do when they come into a space to see an art installation which perhaps has spread itself out in a large room where it is perfectly possible to stand in the doorway and take a mental snapshot of the geography of the space and not get at all involved with the items positioned within it. In fact, and perhaps unconsciously, some artists now make installations that can be summarized quite easily in a snapshot view. The situation here is very different. We are all well trained to go image by image or item by item through a museum case, and people seem to keep this habit of careful viewing when they come to see my collection. So I have had very full

Homo Sacer III

Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen

Remnants of Auschwitz
The Witness and the Archive

Giorgio Agamben

ZONE BOOKS · NEW YORK

1999

111

In memoriam

Bianca Casalini Agamben

“To be exposed to everything is to be capable of everything.”

To Andrea, Daniel, and Guido who, in discussing these pages
with me, allowed them to come to light.

And then it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

The remnant shall be saved, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.

Isaiah 10: 20-22

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace . . . and so all Israel shall be saved.

Romans 11: 5-26

Preface

Thanks to a series of increasingly wide-ranging and rigorous studies — among which Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* occupies a special place — the problem of the historical, material, technical, bureaucratic, and legal circumstances in which the extermination of the Jews took place has been sufficiently clarified. Future studies may shed new light on particular aspects of the events that took place in the concentration camps, but a general framework has already been established.

The same cannot be said for the ethical and political significance of the extermination, or even for a human understanding of what happened there — that is, for its contemporary relevance. Not only do we lack anything close to a complete understanding; even the sense and reasons for the behavior of the executioners and the victims, indeed very often their very words, still seem profoundly enigmatic. This can only encourage the opinion of those who would like Auschwitz to remain forever incomprehensible.

From a historical perspective, we know, for example, the most minute details of how the final phase of the extermination was executed, how the deportees were led to the gas chambers by a squad of their fellow inmates (the so-called *Sonderkommando*), who then saw to it that the corpses were dragged out and washed, that

their hair and gold teeth were salvaged, and that their bodies, finally, were placed in the crematoria. We can enumerate and describe each of these events, but they remain singularly opaque when we truly seek to understand them. This discrepancy and unease has perhaps never been described more directly than by Zelman Lewental, a member of the *Sonderkommando* who entrusted his testimony to a few sheets of paper buried under crematorium III, which came to light seventeen years after the liberation of Auschwitz. "Just as the events that took place there cannot be imagined by any human being," Lewental writes in Yiddish, "so is it unimaginable that anyone could exactly recount how our experiences took place.... we, the small group of obscure people who will not give historians much work to do."

What is at issue here is not, of course, the difficulty we face whenever we try to communicate our most intimate experiences to others. The discrepancy in question concerns the very structure of testimony. On the one hand, what happened in the camps appears to the survivors as the only true thing and, as such, absolutely unforgettable; on the other hand, this truth is to the same degree unimaginable, that is, irreducible to the real elements that constitute it. Facts so real that, by comparison, nothing is truer; a reality that necessarily exceeds its factual elements — such is the aporia of Auschwitz. As Lewental writes, "the complete truth is far more tragic, far more frightening...." More tragic, more frightening than what?

Lewental had it wrong on at least one point. There is no doubt that "the small group of obscure people" ("obscure" here is to be understood in the literal sense as invisible, that which cannot be perceived) will continue to give historians work to do. The aporia of Auschwitz is, indeed, the very aporia of historical knowledge: a non-coincidence between facts and truth, between verification and comprehension.

Some want to understand too much and too quickly; they have explanations for everything. Others refuse to understand; they offer only cheap mystifications. The only way forward lies in investigating the space between these two options. Moreover, a further difficulty must be considered, one which is particularly important for anyone who studies literary or philosophical texts. Many testimonies — both of executioners and victims — come from ordinary people, the "obscure" people who clearly comprised the great majority of camp inhabitants. One of the lessons of Auschwitz is that it is infinitely harder to grasp the mind of an ordinary person than to understand the mind of a Spinoza or Dante. (Hannah Arendt's discussion of the "banality of evil," so often misunderstood, must also be understood in this sense.)

Some readers may be disappointed to find that there is little in this book that cannot already be found in the testimonies of survivors. In its form, this book is a kind of perpetual commentary on testimony. It did not seem possible to proceed otherwise. At a certain point, it became clear that testimony contained at its core an essential lacuna; in other words, the survivors bore witness to something it is impossible to bear witness to. As a consequence, commenting on survivors' testimony necessarily meant interrogating this lacuna or, more precisely, attempting to listen to it. Listening to something absent did not prove fruitless work for this author. Above all, it made it necessary to clear away almost all the doctrines that, since Auschwitz, have been advanced in the name of ethics. As we shall see, almost none of the ethical principles our age believed it could recognize as valid have stood the decisive test, that of an *Ethica more Auschwitz demonstrata*. For my own part, I will consider myself content with my work if, in attempting to locate the place and theme of testimony, I have erected some signposts allowing future cartographers of the new ethical territory to orient themselves. Indeed, I will be satisfied if

this book succeeds only in correcting some of the terms with which we register the decisive lesson of the century and if this book makes it possible for certain words to be left behind and others to be understood in a different sense. This is also a way – perhaps the only way – to listen to what is unsaid.

CHAPTER ONE

The Witness

1. 1 In the camp, one of the reasons that can drive a prisoner to survive is the idea of becoming a witness. “I firmly decided that, despite everything that might happen to me, I would not take my own life . . . since I did not want to suppress the witness that I could become” (Langbein 1988: 186). Of course, not all deportees, indeed only a small fraction of them, give this reason. A reason for survival can be a matter of convenience: “He would like to survive for this or that reason, for this or that end, and he finds hundreds of pretexts. The truth is that he wants to live at whatever cost” (Lewental 1972: 148). Or it can simply be a matter of revenge: “Naturally I could have run and thrown myself onto the fence, because you can always do that. But I want to live. And what if the miracle happens we’re all waiting for? Maybe we’ll be liberated, today or tomorrow. Then I’ll have my revenge, then I’ll tell the whole world what happened here – inside there” (Sofsky 1997: 340). To justify one’s survival is not easy – least of all in the camp. Then there are some survivors who prefer to be silent. “Some of my friends, very dear friends of mine, never speak of Auschwitz” (Levi 1997: 224). Yet, for others, the only reason to live is to ensure that the witness does not perish. “Others, on the other hand, speak of it incessantly, and I am one of them” (*ibid.*).

1.2 Primo Levi is a perfect example of the witness. When he returns home, he tirelessly recounts his experience to everyone. He behaves like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner:

You remember the scene: the Ancient Mariner accosts the wedding guests, who are thinking of the wedding and not paying attention to him, and he forces them to listen to his tale. Well, when I first returned from the concentration camp I did just that. I felt an unrestrainable need to tell my story to anyone and everyone!... Every situation was an occasion to tell my story to anyone and everyone: to tell it to the factory director as well as to the worker, even if they had other things to do. I was reduced to the state of the Ancient Mariner. Then I began to write on my typewriter at night... Every night I would write, and this was considered even crazier! (Levi 1997: 224–25)

But Levi does not consider himself a writer; he becomes a writer so that he can bear witness. In a sense, he never became a writer. In 1963, after publishing two novels and many short stories, he responds unhesitatingly to the question of whether he considers himself a writer or a chemist: "A chemist, of course, let there be no mistake" (Levi 1997: 102). Levi was profoundly uneasy with the fact that as time passed, and almost in spite of himself, he ended up a writer, composing books that had nothing to do with his testimony: "Then I wrote... I acquired the vice of writing" (Levi 1997: 258). "In my latest book, *La Chiave a stella*, I stripped myself completely of my status as a witness... This is not to deny anything; I have not ceased to be an ex-deportee, a witness..." (*ibid.*: 167)

Levi had this unease about him when I saw him at meetings at the Italian publisher, Einaudi. He could feel guilty for having sur-

vived, but not for having borne witness. "I am at peace with myself because I bore witness" (*ibid.*: p. 219).

1.3 In Latin there are two words for "witness." The first word, *testis*, from which our word "testimony" derives, etymologically signifies the person who, in a trial or lawsuit between two rival parties, is in the position of a third party (**terstis*). The second word, *superstes*, designates a person who has lived through something, who has experienced an event from beginning to end and can therefore bear witness to it. It is obvious that Levi is not a third party; he is a survivor [*superstite*] in every sense. But this also means that his testimony has nothing to do with the acquisition of facts for a trial (he is not neutral enough for this, he is not a *testis*). In the final analysis, it is not judgment that matters to him, let alone pardon. "I never appear as judge"; "I do not have the authority to grant pardon... I am without authority" (*ibid.*: 77, 236). It seems, in fact, that the only thing that interests him is what makes judgment impossible: the gray zone in which victims become executioners and executioners become victims. It is about this above all that the survivors are in agreement: "No group was more human than any other" (*ibid.*: 232). "Victim and executioner are equally ignoble; the lesson of the camps is brotherhood in abjection" (Rousset, cf. Levi 1997: 216).

Not that a judgment cannot or must not be made. "If I had had Eichmann before me, I would have condemned him to death" (*ibid.*: 144). "If they have committed a crime, then they must pay" (*ibid.*: 236). The decisive point is simply that the two things not be blurred, that law not presume to exhaust the question. A non-judicial element of truth exists such that the *quaestio facti* can never be reduced to the *quaestio iuris*. This is precisely what concerns the survivor: everything that places a human action beyond the law, radically withdrawing it from the Trial. "Each of us can

be tried, condemned and punished without even knowing why” (*ibid.*: 75).

1.4 One of the most common mistakes – which is not only made in discussions of the camp – is the tacit confusion of ethical categories and juridical categories (or, worse, of juridical categories and theological categories, which gives rise to a new theodicy). Almost all the categories that we use in moral and religious judgments are in some way contaminated by law: guilt, responsibility, innocence, judgment, pardon. . . . This makes it difficult to invoke them without particular caution. As jurists well know, law is not directed toward the establishment of justice. Nor is it directed toward the verification of truth. Law is solely directed toward judgment, independent of truth and justice. This is shown beyond doubt by the *force of judgment* that even an unjust sentence carries with it. The ultimate aim of law is the production of a *res judicata*, in which the sentence becomes the substitute for the true and the just, being held as true despite its falsity and injustice. Law finds peace in this hybrid creature, of which it is impossible to say if it is fact or rule; once law has produced its *res judicata*, it cannot go any further.

In 1983, the publisher Einaudi asked Levi to translate Kafka’s *The Trial*. Infinite interpretations of *The Trial* have been offered; some underline the novel’s prophetic political character (modern bureaucracy as absolute evil) or its theological dimension (the court as the unknown God) or its biographical meaning (condemnation as the illness from which Kafka believed himself to suffer). It has been rarely noted that this book, in which law appears solely in the form of a trial, contains a profound insight into the nature of law, which, contrary to common belief, is not so much rule as it is judgment and, therefore, trial. But if the essence of the law – of every law – is the trial, if all right (and morality that

is contaminated by it) is only tribunal right, then execution and transgression, innocence and guilt, obedience and disobedience all become indistinct and lose their importance. “The court wants nothing from you. It welcomes you when you come; it releases you when you go.” The ultimate end of the juridical regulation is to produce judgment; but judgment aims neither to punish nor to extol, neither to establish justice nor to prove the truth. Judgment is in itself the end and this, it has been said, constitutes its mystery, the mystery of the trial.

One of the consequences that can be drawn from this self-referential nature of judgment – and Sebastiano Satta, a great Italian jurist, has done so – is that punishment does not follow from judgment, but rather that judgment is itself punishment (*nullum iudicium sine poena*). “One can even say that the whole punishment is in the judgment, that the action characteristic of the punishment – incarceration, execution – matters only insofar as it is, so to speak, the carrying out of the judgment” (Satta 1994: 26). This also means that “the sentence of acquittal is the confession of a judicial error,” that “everyone is inwardly innocent,” but that the only truly innocent person “is not the one who is acquitted, but rather the one who goes through life without judgment” (*ibid.*: 27).

I. 5 If this is true – and the survivor knows that it is true – then it is possible that the trials (the twelve trials at Nuremberg, and the others that took place in and outside German borders, including those in Jerusalem in 1961 that ended with the hanging of Eichmann) are responsible for the conceptual confusion that, for decades, has made it impossible to think through Auschwitz. Despite the necessity of the trials and despite their evident insufficiency (they involved only a few hundred people), they helped to spread the idea that the problem of Auschwitz had been overcome. The judgments had been passed, the proofs of guilt definitively established.

With the exception of occasional moments of lucidity, it has taken almost half a century to understand that law did not exhaust the problem, but rather that the very problem was so enormous as to call into question law itself, dragging it to its own ruin.

The confusion between law and morality and between theology and law has had illustrious victims. Hans Jonas, the philosopher and student of Heidegger who specialized in ethical problems, is one of them. In 1984, when he received the Lucas Award in Tübingen, he reflected on the question of Auschwitz by preparing for a new theodicy, asking, that is, how it was possible for God to tolerate Auschwitz. A theodicy is a trial that seeks to establish the responsibility *not of men, but of God*. Like all theodicies, Jonas's ends in an acquittal. The justification for the sentence is something like this: "The infinite (God) stripped himself completely, in the finite, of his omnipotence. Creating the world, God gave it His own fate and became powerless. Thus, having emptied himself entirely in the world, he no longer has anything to offer us; it is now man's turn to give. Man can do this by taking care that it never happens, or rarely happens, that God regrets his decision to have let the world be."

The conciliatory vice of every theodicy is particularly clear here. Not only does this theodicy tell us nothing about Auschwitz, either about its victims or executioners; it does not even manage to avoid a happy ending. Behind the powerlessness of God peeps the powerlessness of men, who continue to cry "May that never happen again!" when it is clear that "that" is, by now, everywhere.

1.6 The concept of responsibility is also irremediably contaminated by law. Anyone who has tried to make use of it outside the juridical sphere knows this. And yet ethics, politics, and religion have been able to define themselves only by seizing terrain from

juridical responsibility — not in order to assume another kind of responsibility, but to articulate zones of non-responsibility. This does not, of course, mean impunity. Rather, it signifies — at least for ethics — a confrontation with a responsibility that is infinitely greater than any we could ever assume. At the most, we can be faithful to it, that is, assert its unassumability.

The unprecedented discovery made by Levi at Auschwitz concerns an area that is independent of every establishment of responsibility, an area in which Levi succeeded in isolating something like a new ethical element. Levi calls it the "gray zone." It is the zone in which the "long chain of conjunction between victim and executioner" comes loose, where the oppressed becomes oppressor and the executioner in turn appears as victim. A gray, incessant alchemy in which good and evil and, along with them, all the metals of traditional ethics reach their point of fusion.

What is at issue here, therefore, is a zone of irresponsibility and "*impotentia judicandi*" (Levi 1989: 60) that is situated not *beyond* good and evil but rather, so to speak, *before* them. With a gesture that is symmetrically opposed to that of Nietzsche, Levi places ethics before the area in which we are accustomed to consider it. And, without our being able to say why, we sense that this "before" is more important than any "beyond" — that the "underman" must matter to us more than the "overman." This infamous zone of irresponsibility is our First Circle, from which no confession of responsibility will remove us and in which what is spelled out, minute by minute, is the lesson of the "terrifying, unsayable and unimaginable banality of evil" (Arendt 1992: 252).

1.7 The Latin verb *spondeo*, which is the origin of our term "responsibility," means "to become the guarantor of something for someone (or for oneself) with respect to someone." Thus, in the promise of marriage, the father would utter the formula

spondeo to express his commitment to giving his daughter as wife to a suitor (after which she was then called a *sponsa*) or to guarantee compensation if this did not take place. In archaic Roman law, in fact, the custom was that a free man could consign himself as a hostage — that is, in a state of imprisonment, from which the term *obligatio* derives — to guarantee the compensation of a wrong or the fulfillment of an obligation. (The term *sponsor* indicated the person who substituted himself for the *reus*, promising, in the case of a breach of contract, to furnish the required service.)

The gesture of assuming responsibility is therefore genuinely juridical and not ethical. It expresses nothing noble or luminous, but rather simply obligation, the act by which one consigned oneself as a prisoner to guarantee a debt in a context in which the legal bond was considered to inhere in the body of the person responsible. As such, responsibility is closely intertwined with the concept of *culpa* that, in a broad sense, indicates the imputability of damage. (This is why the Romans denied that there could be guilt with respect to oneself: *quod quis ex culpa sua damnum sentit, non intelligitur damnum sentire*: the damage that one causes to oneself by one's own fault is not juridically relevant.)

Responsibility and guilt thus express simply two aspects of legal imputability; only later were they interiorized and moved outside law. Hence the insufficiency and opacity of every ethical doctrine that claims to be founded on these two concepts. (This holds both for Jonas, who claimed to formulate a genuine “principle of responsibility” and for Lévinas, who, in a much more complex fashion, transformed the gesture of the *sponsor* into the ethical gesture par excellence.) This insufficiency and opacity emerges clearly every time the borders that separate ethics from law are traced. Let us consider two examples, which are very far from each other as to the gravity of the facts they concern but which coincide with respect to the *distinguo* they imply.

During the Jerusalem trial, Eichmann's constant line of defense was clearly expressed by his lawyer, Robert Serviatius, with these words: “Eichmann feels himself guilty before God, not the law.” Eichmann (whose implication in the extermination of the Jews was well documented, even if his role was probably different from that which was argued by the prosecution) actually went so far as to declare that he wanted “to hang himself in public” in order to “liberate young Germans from the weight of guilt.” Yet, until the end, he continued to maintain that his guilt before God (who was for him only a *höherer Sinnesträger*, a higher bearer of meaning) could not be legally prosecuted. The only possible explanation for this insistence is that, whereas the assumption of moral guilt seemed ethically noble to the defendant, he was unwilling to assume any legal guilt (although, from an ethical point of view, legal guilt should have been less serious than moral guilt).

Recently, a group of people who once had belonged to a political organization of the extreme Left published a communiqué in a newspaper, declaring political and moral responsibility for the murder of a police officer committed twenty years ago. “Nevertheless, such responsibility,” the document stated, “cannot be transformed . . . into a responsibility of penal character.” It must be recalled that the assumption of moral responsibility has value only if one is ready to assume the relevant legal consequences. The authors of the communiqué seem to suspect this in some way, when, in a significant passage, they assume a responsibility that sounds unmistakably juridical, stating that they contributed to “creating a climate that led to murder.” (But the offense in question, the instigation to commit a crime, is of course wiped out.) In every age, the gesture of assuming a juridical responsibility when one is innocent has been considered noble; the assumption of political or moral responsibility without the assumption of the corresponding legal consequences, on the other hand, has

always characterized the arrogance of the mighty (consider Mussolini's behavior, for example, with respect to the case of Giacomo Matteotti, the member of the Italian parliament who was assassinated by unknown killers in 1924). But today in Italy these models have been reversed and the contrite assumption of moral responsibilities is invoked at every occasion as an exemption from the responsibilities demanded by law.

Here the confusion between ethical categories and juridical categories (with the logic of repentance implied) is absolute. This confusion lies at the origin of the many suicides committed to escape trial (not only those of Nazi criminals), in which the tacit assumption of moral guilt attempts to compensate for legal guilt. It is worth remembering that the primary responsibility for this confusion lies not in Catholic doctrine, which includes a sacrament whose function is to free the sinner of guilt, but rather in secular ethics (in its well-meaning and dominant version). After having raised juridical categories to the status of supreme ethical categories and thereby irredeemably confusing the fields of law ethics, secular ethics still wants to play out its *distinguo*. But ethics is the sphere that recognizes neither guilt nor responsibility; it is, as Spinoza knew, the doctrine of the happy life. To assume guilt and responsibility — which can, at times, be necessary — is to leave the territory of ethics and enter that of law. Whoever has made this difficult step cannot presume to return through the door he just closed behind him.

1.8 The extreme figure of the “gray zone” is the *Sonderkommando*. The SS used the euphemism “special team” to refer to this group of deportees responsible for managing the gas chambers and crematoria. Their task was to lead naked prisoners to their death in the gas chambers and maintain order among them; they then had to drag out the corpses, stained pink and green by the

cyanotic acid, and wash them with water; make sure that no valuable objects were hidden in the orifices of the bodies; extract gold teeth from the corpses' jaws; cut the women's hair and wash it with ammonia chloride; bring the corpses into the crematoria and oversee their incineration; and, finally, empty out the ovens of the ash that remained. Levi writes:

Concerning these squads, vague and mangled rumors already circulated among us during our imprisonment and were confirmed afterward. . . . But the intrinsic horror of this human condition has imposed a sort of reserve on all the testimony, so that even today it is difficult to conjure up an image of “what it meant” to be forced to exercise this trade for months. . . . One of them declared: “Doing this work, one either goes crazy the first day or gets accustomed to it.” Another, though: “Certainly, I could have killed myself or got myself killed; but I wanted to survive, to avenge myself and bear witness. You mustn't think that we are monsters; we are the same as you, only much more unhappy.”. . . One cannot expect from men who have known such extreme destitution a deposition in the juridical sense, but something that is at once a lament, a curse, an expiation, an attempt to justify and rehabilitate oneself. . . . Conceiving and organizing the squads was National Socialism's most demonic crime (Levi 1989: 52–3).

And yet Levi recalls that a witness, Miklos Nyszli, one of the very few who survived the last “special team” of Auschwitz, recounted that during a “work” break he took part in a soccer match between the SS and representatives of the *Sonderkommando*. “Other men of the SS and the rest of the squad are present at the game; they take sides, bet, applaud, urge the players on as if, rather than at the gates of hell, the game were taking place on the village green” (Levi 1989: 55).

This match might strike someone as a brief pause of humanity in the middle of an infinite horror. I, like the witnesses, instead view this match, this moment of normalcy, as the true horror of the camp. For we can perhaps think that the massacres are over — even if here and there they are repeated, not so far away from us. But that match is never over; it continues as if uninterrupted. It is the perfect and eternal cipher of the “gray zone,” which knows no time and is in every place. Hence the anguish and shame of the survivors, “the anguish inscribed in everyone of the ‘tohu-bohu,’ of a deserted and empty universe crushed under the spirit of God but from which the spirit of man is absent: not yet born or already extinguished” (Levi 1989: 85). But also hence our shame, the shame of those who did not know the camps and yet, without knowing how, are spectators of that match, which repeats itself in every match in our stadiums, in every television broadcast, in the normalcy of everyday life. If we do not succeed in understanding that match, in stopping it, there will never be hope.

1.9 In Greek the word for witness is *martis*, martyr. The first Church Fathers coined the word *martirium* from *martis* to indicate the death of persecuted Christians, who thus bore witness to their faith. What happened in the camps has little to do with martyrdom. The survivors are unanimous about this. “By calling the victims of the Nazis ‘martyrs,’ we falsify their fate” (Bettelheim 1979: 92). Nevertheless, the concepts of “witnessing” and “martyrdom” can be linked in two ways. The first concerns the Greek term itself, derived as it is from the verb meaning “to remember.” The survivor’s vocation is to remember; he cannot *not* remember. “The memories of my imprisonment are much more vivid and detailed than those of anything else that happened to me before or after” (Levi 1997: 225). “I still have a visual and acoustic memory of the experiences there that I cannot explain. . . . sentences in

languages I do not know have remained etched in my memory, like on a magnetic tape; I have repeated them to Poles and Hungarians and have been told that the sentences are meaningful. For some reason that I cannot explain, something anomalous happened to me, I would say almost an unconscious preparation for bearing witness” (*ibid.*: 220).

The second point of connection is even more profound, more instructive. The study of the first Christian texts on martyrdom — for example, Tertullian’s *Scorpiacus* — reveals some unexpected teachings. The Church Fathers were confronted by heretical groups that rejected martyrdom because, in their eyes, it constituted a wholly senseless death (*perire sine causa*). What meaning could be found in professing one’s faith before men — persecutors and executioners — who would understand nothing of this undertaking? God could not desire something without meaning. “Must innocents suffer these things? . . . Once and for all Christ immolated himself for us; once and for all he was killed, precisely so that we would not be killed. If he asks for the same in return, is it perhaps because he too expects salvation in my death? Or should one perhaps think that God demands the blood of men even while he disdains that of bulls and goats? How could God ever desire the death of someone who is not a sinner?” The doctrine of martyrdom therefore justifies the scandal of a meaningless death, of an execution that could only appear as absurd. Confronted with the spectacle of a death that was apparently *sine causa*, the reference to Luke 12: 8–9 and to Matthew 10: 32–33 (“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven”) made it possible to interpret martyrdom as a divine command and, thus, to find a reason for the irrational.

But this has very much to do with the camps. For what appears

in the camps is an extermination for which it may be possible to find precedents, but whose forms make it absolutely senseless. Survivors are also in agreement on this. “Even to us, what we had to tell would start to seem *unimaginable*” (Antelme 1992: 3). “All the attempts at clarification . . . failed ridiculously” (Améry 1980: vii). “I am irritated by the attempts of some religious extremists to interpret the extermination according to the manner of the prophets: as a punishment for our sins. No! I do not accept this. What is terrifying is that it was senseless . . .” (Levi 1997: 219).

The unfortunate term “holocaust” (usually with a capital “H”) arises from this unconscious demand to justify a death that is *sine causa* — to give meaning back to what seemed incomprehensible. “Please excuse me, I use this term ‘Holocaust’ reluctantly because I do not like it. But I use it to be understood. Philologically, it is a mistake . . .” (*ibid.*: 243). “It is a term that, when it first arose, gave me a lot of trouble; then I learned that it was Wiesel himself who had coined it, then regretted it and wanted to take it back” (*ibid.*: 219).

1.10 The history of an incorrect term can also prove instructive. “Holocaust” is the scholarly transcription of the Latin *holocaustum* which, in turn, is a translation of the Greek term *holocaustos* (which is, however, an adjective, and which means “completely burned”; the corresponding Greek noun is *holocaustōma*). The semantic history of the term is essentially Christian, since the Church Fathers used it to translate — in fact with neither rigour nor coherence — the complex sacrificial doctrine of the Bible (in particular, of Leviticus and Deuteronomy). Leviticus reduces all sacrifices to four fundamental types: *olah*, *hattat*, *shelamin*, *minha*. As Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert write in “The Nature and Function of Sacrifice,”

The names of two of these are significant. The *hattat* was the sacrifice employed especially to expiate the sin called *hattat* or *hataah*, the definition of which given in Leviticus is unfortunately extremely vague. The *shelamin* is a communion sacrifice, a sacrifice of thanksgiving, of alliance, of vows. As for the terms *olah* and *minha*, they are purely descriptive. Each recalls one of the special operations of sacrifice: the latter, the presentation of the victim, if it is of vegetable matter, the former, the dispatch of the offering to the divinity (Mauss and Hubert 1964: 16).

The Vulgate usually translates *olah* by *holocaustum* (*holocausti oblatio*); *hattat* by *oblatio*; *shelamin* by *hostia pacificorum*; *minha* by *hostia pro peccato*. The term *holocaustum* is transmitted from the Vulgate to the Latin Fathers, who used it primarily in the many commentaries of the Holy Writ to indicate the sacrifices of the Hebrews. (Thus in Hilarius, *In Psalmata*, 65, 23: *holocausta sunt integra hostiarum corpora, quia tota ad ignem sacrificii deferebantur, holocausta sunt nuncupata*.) Two points are particularly important here. First, early on, the Church Fathers used the term in its literal sense as a polemical weapon against the Jews, to condemn the uselessness of bloody sacrifices (Tertullian’s text, which refers to Marcion, is exemplary: *Quid stultius . . . quam sacrificiorum cruentorum et holocaustorum nidorosorum a deo exactio?* “What is more foolish than a god who demands bloody sacrifices and holocausts that smell of burnt remains?” *Adversus Marcionem* 5, 5; cf. also Augustine, *C. Faustum*, 19, 4). Second, the term “holocaustum” is extended as a metaphor to include Christian martyrs, such that their torture is equated with sacrifice (Hilarius, *In Psalmata*, 65, 23: *Martyres in fidei testimonium corpora sua holocausta voverunt*). Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is thus ultimately defined as a holocaust (Augustine, *In Evang. Joah.*, 41, 5: *se in holocaustum obtulerit in cruce Iesus*; Rufinus,

Origines in Leviticum, 1, 4: holocaustum. . . . carnis eius per lignum crucis oblatum).

Thus begins the semantic migration by which the term “holocaust” in vernacular languages gradually acquires the meaning of the “supreme sacrifice in the sphere of a complete devotion to sacred and superior motives.” In English, the term appears in its literal sense in Tindale (*Mark* xii. 33: “A greater thyng than all holocaustes and sacrificises”) and H. More (*Apocal. Apoc.* 101: “In the latter part thereof stands the altar of Holocausts”). The term appears in its metaphorical sense in Bp. Alcock (*Mons Perfect C iija*: “Very true obedience is an holocauste of martyrdom made to Cryste”), J. Beaumont (*Psyche* xxiv. cxciv: “The perfect holocaust of generous love”) and Milton, where it signifies a complete consumption by fire (*Samson* 1702: “Like that self-begotten bird In the Arabian woods embost, That no second knows nor third, And lay erewhile a Holocaust”). It is repeated, over and over again, through to the twentieth century (for example, *Hansard Commons* 6 March, 1940: “the general holocaust of civilized standards”) (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1989: 315).

But the term’s usage in polemics against the Jews also has a history, even if it is a secret one not recorded by dictionaries. In the course of my research on sovereignty, I happened upon a passage by a medieval chronicler that constitutes, to my knowledge, the first use of *holocaust* with reference to a massacre of Jews, in this case in a violently anti-Semitic fashion. Richard of Duizes testifies that on the day of the coronation of Richard I (1189), the inhabitants of London engaged in a particularly bloody pogrom: “The very day of the coronation of the king, at about the hour in which the Son was burnt for the Father, they began in London to burn the Jews for their father the demon (*incoeptum est in civitate Londoniae immolare judaeos patri suo diabolo*); and the celebration of this mystery lasted so long that the holocaust could not be

completed before the next day. And the other cities and towns of the region imitated the faith of the inhabitants of London and, with the same devotion, sent their bloodsuckers to hell (*pari devotione suas sanguisugas cum sanguine transmiserunt ad inferos*)” (Cardini 1994: 131).

Insofar as it implies the substitution of a literal expression with an attenuated or altered expression for something that one does not actually want to hear mentioned, the formation of a euphemism always involves ambiguities. In this case, however, the ambiguity is intolerable. The Jews also use a euphemism to indicate the extermination. They use the term *so’ah*, which means “devastation, catastrophe” and, in the Bible, often implies the idea of a divine punishment (as in Isaiah 10:3: “What will you do in the day of punishment, when the *so’ah* will come from afar?”). Even if Levi probably refers to this term when he speaks of the attempt to interpret the extermination as a punishment for our sins, his use of the euphemism contains no mockery. In the case of the term “holocaust,” by contrast, the attempt to establish a connection, however distant, between Auschwitz and the Biblical *olah* and between death in the gas chamber and the “complete devotion to sacred and superior motives” cannot but sound like a jest. Not only does the term imply an unacceptable equation between crematoria and altars; it also continues a semantic heredity that is from its inception anti-Semitic. This is why we will never make use of this term.

1.11 Several years ago, when I published an article on the concentration camps in a French newspaper, someone wrote a letter to the editor in which, among other crimes, I was accused of having sought to “ruin the unique and unsayable character of Auschwitz.” I have often asked myself what the author of the letter could have had in mind. The phenomenon of Auschwitz is unique

(certainly in the past, and we can only hope for the future). As Levi points out: “Up to the moment of this writing, and notwithstanding the horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the shame of the Gulags, the useless and bloody Vietnam war, the Cambodian self-genocide, the *desaparecidos* in Argentina, and the many atrocious and stupid wars we have seen since, the Nazi concentration camp still remains an *unicum*, both in its extent and its quality” (Levi 1989: 21). But why unsayable? Why confer on extermination the prestige of the mystical?

In the year 386 of our era, in Antioch, John Chrysostom composed his treatise *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*. He opposed those who maintained that God’s essence could be understood, on the grounds that “everything that He knows of Himself we can also easily find in ourselves.” Vigorously arguing against his adversaries in affirming the incomprehensibility of God, who is “unsayable” (*arrētos*), “unspeakable” (*anekdiēgētos*), and “unwritable” (*anepigraptos*), John well knew that this was precisely the best way to glorify (*doxan didonai*) and adore (*proskuein*) Him. Even for the angels, after all, God is incomprehensible; but because of this they can glorify and adore Him, offering Him their mystical songs. John contrasts the angelic hosts with those seeking in vain to understand God: “those ones [the angels] glorify, these ones seek to understand; those ones adore in silence, these ones give themselves work to do; those ones divert their gaze, these ones are not ashamed to stare into unsayable glory” (Chrysostom 1970). The verb that we have translated “to adore in silence” is, in the Greek text, *euphemein*. *Euphemein*, which originally means “to observe religious silence,” is the origin of the modern word “euphemism,” which denotes those terms that are substituted for other terms that cannot be uttered for reasons of modesty or civility. To say that Auschwitz is “unsayable” or “incomprehensible” is equivalent to *euphemein*, to adoring in silence, as one

does with a god. Regardless of one’s intentions, this contributes to its glory. We, however, “are not ashamed of staring into the unsayable” – even at the risk of discovering that what evil knows of itself, we can also easily find in ourselves.

1.12 Testimony, however, contains a lacuna. The survivors agree about this. “There is another lacuna in every testimony: witnesses are by definition survivors and so all, to some degree, enjoyed a privilege. . . . No one has told the destiny of the common prisoner, since it was not materially possible for him to survive. . . . I have also described the common prisoner when I speak of ‘Muslims’; but the Muslims did not speak” (Levi 1997: 215–16). “Those who have not lived through the experience will never know; those who have will never tell; not really, not completely. . . . The past belongs to the dead. . . .” (Wiesel 1975: 314).

It is worth reflecting upon this lacuna, which calls into question the very meaning of testimony and, along with it, the identity and reliability of the witnesses. “I must repeat: we, the survivors, are not the true witnesses. . . . We survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute, but they are the Muslims, the submerged, the complete witnesses, the ones whose deposition would have a general significance. They are the rule, we are the exception. . . . We who were favored by fate tried, with more or less wisdom, to recount not only our fate but also that of the others, indeed of the drowned; but this was a discourse ‘on behalf of third parties,’ the story of things seen at close hand, not experienced personally. The destruction brought to an end, the job completed, was not told by anyone, just as no one ever returned to describe his own death. Even if they had paper and

pen, the drowned would not have testified because their death had begun before that of their body. Weeks and months before being snuffed out, they had already lost the ability to observe, to remember, to compare and express themselves. We speak in their stead, by proxy" (Levi 1989: 83–4).

The witness usually testifies in the name of justice and truth and as such his or her speech draws consistency and fullness. Yet here the value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks; at its center it contains something that cannot be borne witness to and that discharges the survivors of authority. The "true" witnesses, the "complete witnesses," are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness. They are those who "touched bottom": the Muslims, the drowned. The survivors speak in their stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witnesses; they bear witness to a missing testimony. And yet to speak here of a proxy makes no sense; the drowned have nothing to say, nor do they have instructions or memories to be transmitted. They have no "story" (Levi 1986: 90), no "face," and even less do they have "thought" (*ibid.*). Whoever assumes the charge of bearing witness in their name knows that he or she must bear witness in the name of the impossibility of bearing witness. But this alters the value of testimony in a definitive way; it makes it necessary to look for its meaning in an unexpected area.

1.13 It has already been observed that, in testimony, there is something like an impossibility of bearing witness. In 1983, Jean-François Lyotard published *The Differend*, which, ironically repeating the recent claims of revisionists, opens with a logical paradox:

You are informed that human beings endowed with language were placed in a situation such that none of them is now able to tell about it. Most of them disappeared then, and the survivors rarely speak

about it. When they do speak about it, their testimony bears only upon a minute part of this situation. How can you know that the situation itself existed? That it is not the fruit of your informant's imagination? Either the situation did not exist as such. Or else it did exist, in which case your informant's testimony is false, either because he or she should have disappeared, or else because he or she should remain silent. . . . To have "really seen with his own eyes" a gas chamber would be the condition which gives one the authority to say that it exists and to persuade the unbeliever. Yet it is still necessary to prove that the gas chamber was used to kill at the time it was seen. The only acceptable proof that it was used to kill is that one died from it. But if one is dead, one cannot testify that it is on account of the gas chamber (Lyotard 1988: 3).

A few years later, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub elaborated the notion of the Shoah as an "event without witnesses." In 1990, one of the authors further developed this concept in the form of a commentary on Claude Lanzmann's film. The Shoah is an event without witnesses in the double sense that it is impossible to bear witness to it from the inside — since no one can bear witness from the inside of death, and there is no voice for the disappearance of voice — and from the outside — since the "outsider" is by definition excluded from the event:

It is not really possible to *tell the truth*, to testify, from the outside. Neither is it possible, as we have seen, to testify from the inside. I would suggest that the impossible position and the testimonial effort of the film as a whole is to be, precisely, neither simply inside nor simply outside, but paradoxically, *both inside and outside*: to create a *connection* that did not exist during the war and does not exist today *between the inside and the outside* — to set them both in motion and in dialogue with one another (Felman and Laub 1992: 232).

This threshold of indistinction between inside and outside (which, as we shall see, is anything but a “connection” or a “dialogue”) could have led to a comprehension of the structure of testimony; yet it is precisely this threshold that Felman fails to interrogate. Instead of developing her pertinent analysis, the author derives an aesthetic possibility from a logical impossibility, through recourse to the metaphor of song:

What makes the power of the testimony in the film and what constitutes in general the impact of the film is not the words but the equivocal, puzzling relation between words and voice, the interaction, that is, between words, voice, rhythm, melody, images, writing, and silence. Each testimony speaks to us beyond its words, beyond its melody, like the unique performance of a singing (*ibid.*: 277–78).

To explain the paradox of testimony through the *deus ex machina* of song is to aestheticize testimony – something that Lanzmann is careful to avoid. Neither the poem nor the song can intervene to save impossible testimony; on the contrary, it is testimony, if anything, that founds the possibility of the poem.

1.14 The incomprehension of an honest mind is often instructive. Primo Levi, who did not like obscure authors, was attracted to the poetry of Paul Celan, even if he did not truly succeed in understanding it. In a brief essay, entitled “On Obscure Writing,” he distinguishes Celan from those who write obscurely out of contempt for the reader or lack of expressivity. The obscurity of Celan’s poetics makes Levi think instead of a “pre-suicide, a not-wanting-to-be, a flight from the world for which a willed death appears as completion.” The extraordinary operation accomplished by Celan on the German language, which has so fascinated Celan’s

readers, is compared by Levi – for reasons worth reflecting on – to an inarticulate babble or the gasps of a dying man. “This darkness that grows from page to page until the last inarticulate babble fills one with consternation like the gasps of a dying man; indeed, it is just that. It enralls us as whirlpools enrall us, but at the same time it robs us of what was supposed to be said but was not said, thus frustrating and distancing us. I think that Celan the poet must be considered and mourned rather than imitated. If his is a message, it is lost in the ‘background noise.’ It is not communication; it is not a language, or at the most it is a dark and maimed language, precisely that of someone who is about to die and is alone, as we will all be at the moment of death” (Levi 1990: 637).

In Auschwitz, Levi had already attempted to listen to and interpret an inarticulate babble, something like a non-language or a dark and maimed language. It was in the days that followed the liberation of the camp, when the Russians moved the survivors from Buna to the “big camp” of Auschwitz. Here Levi’s attention was immediately drawn to a child the deportees called Hurbinek:

Hurbinek was a nobody, a child of death, a child of Auschwitz. He looked about three years old, no one knew anything of him, he could not speak and had no name; that curious name, Hurbinek, had been given to him by us, perhaps by one of the women who had interpreted with those syllables one of the inarticulate sounds that the baby let out now and again. He was paralyzed from the waist down, with atrophied legs, as thin as sticks; but his eyes, lost in his triangular and wasted face, flashed terribly alive, full of demand, assertion, of the will to break loose, to shatter the tomb of his dumbness. The speech he lacked, which no one had bothered to teach him, the need of speech charged his stare with explosive urgency (Levi 1986: 191).

Now at a certain point Hurbinek begins to repeat a word over and over again, a word that no one in the camp can understand and that Levi doubtfully transcribes as *mass-klo* or *matisklo*. “During the night we listened carefully: it was true, from Hurbinek’s corner there occasionally came a sound, a word. It was not, admittedly, always exactly the same word, but it was certainly an articulated word; or better, several slightly different articulated words, experimental variations of a theme, on a root, perhaps even on a name” (Levi 1986: 192). They all listen and try to decipher that sound, that emerging vocabulary; but, despite the presence of all the languages of Europe in the camp, Hurbinek’s word remains obstinately secret. “No, it was certainly not a message, it was not a revelation; perhaps it was his name, if it had ever fallen to his lot to be given a name; perhaps (according to one of our hypotheses) it meant ‘to eat,’ or ‘bread’; or perhaps ‘meat’ in Bohemian, as one of us who knew that language maintained. . . . Hurbinek, the nameless, whose tiny forearm — even his — bore the tattoo of Auschwitz; Hurbinek died in the first days of March 1945, free but not redeemed. Nothing remains of him: he bears witness through these words of mine” (*ibid.*).

Perhaps this was the secret word that Levi discerned in the “background noise” of Celan’s poetry. And yet in Auschwitz, Levi nevertheless attempted to listen to that to which no one has borne witness, to gather the secret word: *mass-klo*, *matisklo*. Perhaps every word, every writing is born, in this sense, as testimony. This is why what is borne witness to cannot already be language or writing. It can only be something to which no one has borne witness. And this is the sound that arises from the lacuna, the non-language that one speaks when one is alone, the non-language to which language answers, in which language is born. It is necessary to reflect on the nature of that to which no one has borne witness, on this non-language.

1.15 Hurbinek cannot bear witness, since he does not have language (the speech that he utters is a sound that is uncertain and meaningless: *mass-klo* or *matisklo*). And yet he “bears witness through these words of mine.” But not even the survivor can bear witness completely, can speak his own lacuna. This means that testimony is the disjunction between two impossibilities of bearing witness; it means that language, in order to bear witness, must give way to a non-language in order to show the impossibility of bearing witness. The language of testimony is a language that no longer signifies and that, in not signifying, advances into what is without language, to the point of taking on a different insignificance — that of the complete witness, that of he who by definition cannot bear witness. To bear witness, it is therefore not enough to bring language to its own non-sense, to the pure undecidability of letters (*m-a-s-s-k-l-o*, *m-a-t-i-s-k-l-o*). It is necessary that this senseless sound be, in turn, the voice of something or someone that, for entirely other reasons, cannot bear witness. It is thus necessary that the impossibility of bearing witness, the “lacuna” that constitutes human language, collapses, giving way to a different impossibility of bearing witness — that which does not have language.

The trace of that to which no one has borne witness, which language believes itself to transcribe, is not the speech of language. The speech of language is born where language is no longer in the beginning, where language falls away from it simply to bear witness: “It was not light, but was sent to bear witness to the light.”

Essays

Field notes for 'What We Left Unfinished'

Dispatch one: the artist and
the archive,
June–September 2013

Mariam Ghani

'Perhaps, like the Library of Alexandria, any archive is founded on disaster (or its threat), pledged against a ruin that it cannot forestall.'
– Hal Foster[1]

I.

It is not simple to work with an archive in a country like Afghanistan, where books, films and monuments are all subject to burning; stupas are looted and statues shattered; and sites sacred for one reason or another are eroded by both natural and human disasters. Understandably, Afghans are wary of anyone who proposes to 'mine' any cultural resource they still possess.



The façade of Afghan Films, the state film institute and archive in Kabul, Afghanistan.

All photographs by the author.

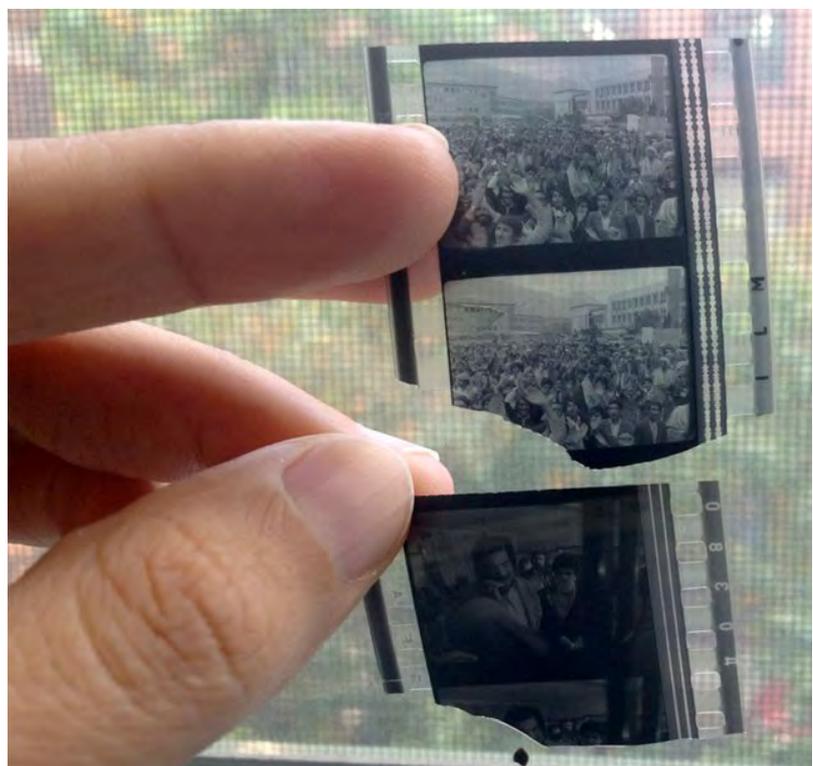
If you want to work with an Afghan archive, therefore, you cannot address your desires to it directly. You must sidle up to it sideways, as if approaching a horse with an uncertain temper. You must turn up your palms and turn out your pockets to demonstrate the purity of your motives. You must persuade it to yield its secrets, slowly and obliquely. Above all, you must try to understand what the archive desires of you. You cannot hope to extract anything from the archive without giving something back.

II.

Archives are not static. Their material reality changes over time – decayed, displaced, reorganized – and their meanings shift as well, depending on the moment and context in which we encounter them. One of the peculiarities of the archive, however, is that it often contains either full copies, partial records, or fragmentary traces of its previous iterations – the past selves it shed on the way to becoming the present archive. In the case of the Afghan Films archive, these records and traces take on several forms: the scraps of burned film-prints still visible in the courtyard, remnants of the

Taliban-era bonfire; the stray frames of film, both negative and positive, found in bins and on floors where damaged splices and leader are being repaired; the handwritten records and labels on the old metal film canisters, gradually being replaced by new plastic canisters with new handwritten labels as films are systematically cleaned, numbered, watched, described and catalogued.

This indexing of the archive is critical, because your first approach to any archive is always through its metadata: not the content, but its descriptors. When you are engaged in a slantwise, shuffling sort of appeal to the archive – three steps forward, two steps back – your approach may be even more removed. First you must address the people who possess or are creating the descriptions, and then you must sort through their often conflicting and overlapping accounts. In short, you must perform some of the functions of the archive, or archivist, yourself. This performance, you hope, can be your contribution to the archive: a history of sorts, which you write as you find it and leave behind when you go.



III.

Archives are more than the sum of their materials. Each archive has its archivists and administrators, janitors and historians, redactors and readers, and others who at various times perform the archive for its public. Each performance refracts the archive through the performer's interpretation, and each is then reflected in the archive, as the interpretation becomes another record, or another path through the records that can be retraced. Some performances alter the archive irrevocably, slashing and burning as they go, like the literal burning of film prints in the Afghan Films courtyard in 1996. Others are delicate insinuations, or daily rituals, whose effects are not visible until viewed from a distance – leaving out certain details while labelling a film canister, for example, because everyone knows those details, until no one is left who knows and the data transmutes from omitted to lost. Or the use of a cheap brand of tape to splice film in lean years, which decades later means that each time those reels run through a projector or telecine apparatus, they may break at the splice point. Or a particular method of cleaning prints with rags, which over the years accumulates as a fretwork of scratches on celluloid.

Your performance, of course, is an interpretation as well as an appeal: a synthesis of these other performances, perhaps even more destructive, perhaps less.

IV.

Some parts of the archive are always more visible than others. The archive has two faces: its public narrative and its private holdings. The public narrative, which is designed to be visible, is usually constructed from only a small portion of the private holdings, which

remain largely invisible. The public narrative can be adapted by the archive's performers to meet the moment, by sampling from different parts of the private holdings to construct the order most likely to match present interests. In every archive, there exists a literal or metaphorical dusty drawer where past archivists have filed the private holdings deemed least likely to ever be of interest to anyone anywhere: unfinished projects, failed experiments, institutional embarrassments. If you are an artist, you probably want to find that drawer and rifle through it.



The Afghan Films archive is, however, a special case, where the entire negative archive and large portions of the print archive were hidden from 1996-2002, with the door to the negative archive completely bricked up and disguised behind a poster of Mullah Omar. In some ways, the whole archive was temporarily filed in the invisible dusty drawer, and only very gradually did it emerge from this position of retreat over the subsequent decade (2002-12).

The systematic re-cataloguing of the Afghan Films archive, then, has both ritual and practical functions. Ritually, it brings every reel of film in the archive out of the drawer and into the light, examining

and re-evaluating each film or fragment relative to the present moment. Practically, many of the prints are literally covered in dust, and need cleaning and checking to see whether they are still viable. The negatives, in their closed chamber, remained more pristine, but are plagued by the aforementioned splices, which need to be marked before any kind of large-scale telecine project can be undertaken. Multiple handwritten catalogues of prints and negatives exist but they are often contradictory or overlapping, and the handwritten labels on the film canisters also sometimes contradict the catalogues, or are inaccurate. This surplus of unreliable indices has produced some uncertainty about which films now (post-bonfire) may exist only as negatives, which may exist only as prints, and which may exist as both negatives and prints. Re-cataloguing will resolve this uncertainty. It also serves to discover which prints may still be useful for soundtrack digitization or circulation of films on film.



Azim Karimi, assistant to the director of Afghan Films and manager of the mobile cinema.

The re-cataloguing process inevitably begins to reveal some of the archive's private holdings, which have never been part of its public

narrative. At Afghan Films, these can be broken down into several groups:

- 1) Foreign films co-produced by Afghan Films, copies of which were deposited with the archive;
- 2) Student films supported by Afghan Films, including some by directors who later became well-known;
- 3) Prints of commercials, animations and industrial films which were distributed by Afghan Films to theatres, but not produced by Afghan Films;
- 4) Unedited rushes shot, but not used, for the Afghan Films weekly newsreels;
- 5) Rushes and scenes from unfinished feature films produced by Afghan Films.

The latter two categories, the unedited newsreel and unfinished feature footage, correspond closely to periods of political turbulence in Afghanistan, notably 1977-79 and 1989-96. 1977-79 includes the end of Daoud's republic, the Afghan Communist coup, the Communist party split, the assassination of Taraki by Amin, and the Soviet invasion. 1989-96 includes the withdrawal of Soviet support from the Afghan government, Najibullah's attempt to reconcile with the mujahidin, the handover of power to the mujahidin coalition government, the split within that government and subsequent civil war, and the Taliban's entry into Kabul. While some short and feature films and a number of newsreels were finished and circulated during both of these periods, a parallel body of material remained unfinished, as the rapid changes of government resulted in projects being cancelled and new projects commissioned in their place; images that read as innocuous one day could become seditious the next.

As the national film institute, Afghan Films was responsible for projecting the image of the state to its citizens – sometimes subtly,

sometimes more overtly. In moments of dramatic and often violent re-imaginings of the state by its politicians, Afghan Films was often caught in a conundrum, whereby its images had to communicate not the reality of the state as it was, but the imaginary of the state as it desired itself to be – the future-possible state, rather than the present state. In its attempt to catch up to this future-possible state, Afghan Films may have had to discard, or put aside, a lot of film that depicted the state as it was and had been, which did not quite match up to the state as desired or imagined.

In the research project *What we left unfinished*, I will be looking for some of these unfinished films and the people who made them, trying to decipher, from the gaps between what was finished and unfinished, some clue to the gaps between how the Afghan Left imagined its re-invention of the state and how that project went so terribly wrong – the gaps between revolution, reconciliation and dissolution.



V.

Archives often presume or present themselves to be keepers of facts, and, moreover, keepers of facts that serve as anchor points

for the larger historical record. Artists prospecting in archives are sometimes suspected by archivists of taking these facts only to weave fictions around them. While this suspicion is not entirely unjustified, it also overlooks the multiple layers of constructed narrative that already surround most archival records – from provenance records, to finding aids, to placement and classification within the archive, to metadata tags, descriptions and annotations. Each of these layers has an individual author and thus allows subjective interpretations, human errors, fictions and inventions to accumulate around, and influence perceptions of, the original records.

At Afghan Films, the question of truth is complicated further still by the 'house style' of mixing fiction and fact within the films produced by the state through Afghan Films in 1967-1996. This tendency encompasses both fiction features, which incorporate documentary footage, and documentary films, which incorporate fictional elements. The first variant appears as early as *Manand Waqob (Like the Eagle)*, the 1967 feature that wraps a fictional story of a young girl's journey around actual footage of the 1966 Independence Day celebrations, and as late as *Ouruji (Ascension)*, the 1993 feature about mujahidin that features actual fighters from Masoud's group as extras, complete with their real weapons. The second variant pops up sporadically in earlier years – as in the tourism-promotion film *Afghanistan: Land of Hospitality and Beauty* (produced by the Ministry of Culture in the early 1960s, before the official launch of Afghan Films, but included in the archive), where anthropologists Louis and Nancy Hatch Dupree play the 'tourists' traveling around Afghanistan, snapping pictures. The tendency becomes pronounced, however, during the Parcham years (1979-89), when Soviet-style propaganda films were produced in place of, or supplemented, the weekly newsreels distributed to cinemas. In order to disentangle fact from fiction within the original records, and particularly to decode whether the original audience would have

perceived a given film as fact, fiction, or both, you must first understand the historical context of that film and the overlapping – but not necessarily identical – cultures of the producing institution, the commissioning government and the viewing audience.



VI.

What are the ethics of the archive?

An archive cannot be separated from its interpreters and past interpretations. They impose their orders upon the archive, and those orders bend the archive toward construction or destruction, preservation or projection, the vault or the network, or sometimes, paradoxically, all these things at once. We cannot evaluate the materials in the archive along some sort of moral axis unless we take into account the structures through which we receive them, which have been produced by the archive's performers and performances.

Is it possible, however, to imagine some kind of ethics of archival research?

The media archive collective Pad.ma suggested in *Ten theses on the archive* that we approach the archive with intellectual propriety, rather than rigid notions of intellectual property.[2] I interpret this to mean that, as researchers, we should be sensitive to the origins and contexts of archival material, especially when considering how to deploy it within a new artwork. 'Fair use' is a legal doctrine but also an apt phrase: is your use of an existing work fair to the original creator?

In the case of the unfinished films in the Afghan Films archive, the copyright resides with the archive, which therefore controls the intellectual property. Permission to use the footage can be granted by the archive, and licensing fees are paid to the archive. Intellectual propriety, however, would require that the original creators be sought out and consulted about their original intentions for the films, not only as a matter of intellectual curiosity, but also as an ethical prerequisite for taking their unfinished work and re-contextualizing it within a new artwork – especially when the work being appropriated was never made public in its original form.



Louis Dupree playing a tourist in the documentary *Afghanistan, Land of Hospitality and Beauty*.

Ultimately, intellectual propriety might even require that the new artwork become a work of facilitation rather than a work of appropriation – that is, after consulting the original creators, it may appear more appropriate or desirable to create a system whereby they can finish their own unfinished work (with the interest coming from the gap between the moment of making and the moment of finishing), rather than subsuming their unfinished work into a new artwork.

VII.

A film archive is a cabinet of *memento mori*, full of flickering images of things and people long lost. When the film is projected, that which was lost lives again, for a frame or a second, a minute or an hour. The film is projected, not only onto the screen, but also from the deep storage of the archive into the more accessible (if more frangible) memory of a present-day viewing audience. But every time the film is run, the filmstrip risks destruction: the reel may burn or break, the celluloid acquires scratches and spots.



When a film is digitized, it is translated from frames to fields, light to bytes, intermittent to continuous. It loses its specific materiality, but

gains the ability to be transmitted to larger audiences. Effectively, it can migrate from the archive-as-vault to the archive-as-network. It can be re-contextualized, re-used, re-mixed. The physical archive may be dispersed, or even destroyed, while the digital archive lives on, copies of copies proliferating across time and space.

In a country like Afghanistan, where iconoclasm is a very real and seemingly perpetual threat, preservation of cultural resources like the Afghan Films archive may best be achieved not by panicked moves to protect assets, but rather by a move to project those assets. That is, locking the films away for another decade in another dusty drawer would be less effective than digitizing the archive as quickly as possible and disseminating films as widely as possible, including placing copies of master files on servers both inside and outside the country. Broad dissemination would also allow a critical discourse to grow around the films, ultimately making an even stronger argument for their preservation.

Perhaps every archive is, like Afghan Films, scrambling to avert its own destruction, whether that arrives through catastrophe, obsolescence, the inevitable decay of materials or the inexorable sway of entropy over order. When a collection becomes an archive, the linguistic shift registers a transformation from a group of objects that are, to a group of objects that were (the same, connected, part of a set, parts of a whole). In this sense, the archive is founded on a moment of passing into the past, a kind of death, and the impulse to archive is connected (as Derrida said, following Freud) to the death drive.[3] The need to archive is connected to the fear of loss; but to archive something, it must be fixed in time, like a butterfly pinned in a glass case, and thus to archive is also to kill the very thing you feared to lose.

At the same time, the archive constantly engages in attempts to resuscitate its holdings, bringing them back to life in the present:

translations to new formats; circulation to new audiences; new interpretations, orders, edits, narratives. If the archive is both founded on and pledged against disaster, we can interpret that founding moment as the archive's original attempt to preserve something that might otherwise be lost, and that pledge as the archive's continuing efforts to countermand the static nature of preservation by projecting its past memories into the present and the future.

Walter Benjamin described the task of the historian as seizing hold of the past as it flashes up into the present at 'a moment of danger',[4] and the task of the translator as producing a new text in harmony with the original[5] – that is, more faithful to the original's spirit than its letters, and generated to some extent by the productive tensions between the language of the original and the language of the translation. What, then, is the task of an artist in an archive, as she balances between the roles of archivist, historian, translator and narrator? Perhaps it is to understand which of the archive's preserved pasts relate to the present moment of danger, and find a way to translate and narrate that past into the present, not casually, not haphazardly, and not nostalgically, but just when and where it is most needed.

[1] Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse' in *October*, Vol. 110 (Autumn 2004), p. 5.

[2] Thesis 9: 'Archives are governed by the Laws of Intellectual Propriety as opposed to Property'. *Ten Theses on the Archive*, texts. pad.ma, April 2010.

[3] Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,' trans. Eric Prenowitz, in *Diacritics*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Summer 1995), p. 14.

[4] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1937) in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, Schocken, New York, 1968, p. 255.

[5] Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator' (1923) in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968, p. 76.

About the author

Mariam Ghani

Mariam Ghani's research-based practice spans video, installation, performance, photography, and text. Her exhibitions and screenings include the Rotterdam, transmediale, and CPH:DOX film festivals, dOCUMENTA (13) in Kabul and Kassel, MoMA in New York, the National Gallery in DC, and the Sharjah Biennials 10 and 9. Recent texts have been published by Filmmaker, Foreign Policy, Mousse, the Radical History Review, Triple Canopy, Creative Time Reports, and the New York Review of Books blog. Ongoing collaborations include the experimental archive Index of the Disappeared (with Chitra Ganesh), the video series Performed Places (with choreographer Erin Kelly), and the Afghan Films online archive (with pad.ma). Ghani has been awarded the NYFA, Soros and Freund Fellowships, grants from the Graham Foundation, CEC ArtsLink, the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation and the Experimental Television Center, and residencies at LMCC, Eyebeam Atelier, Smack Mellon and the Akademie Schloss Solitude. Ghani holds a B.A. in Comparative Literature from NYU and an MFA from SVA. She currently teaches at Pratt and is an artist in residence at the Asian/Pacific/American Institute at NYU.

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WALTER BENJAMIN

Illuminations

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TRANSLATED BY HARRY ZOHN

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Theses on the Philosophy of History

I

The story is told of an automaton constructed in such a way that it could play a winning game of chess, answering each move of an opponent with a countermove. A puppet in Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent from all sides. Actually, a little hunchback who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophical counterpart to this device. The puppet called "historical materialism" is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight.

II

"One of the most remarkable characteristics of human nature," writes Lotze, "is, alongside so much selfishness in specific instances, the freedom from envy which the present displays toward the future." Reflection shows us that our image of happi-

ness is thoroughly colored by the time to which the course of our own existence has assigned us. The kind of happiness that could arouse envy in us exists only in the air we have breathed, among people we could have talked to, women who could have given themselves to us. In other words, our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption. The same applies to our view of the past, which is the concern of history. The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of that.

III

A chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history. To be sure, only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past—which is to say, only for a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its moments. Each moment it has lived becomes a *citation à l'ordre du jour*—and that day is Judgment Day.

IV

*Seek for food and clothing first, then
the Kingdom of God shall be added unto you.*
—Hegel, 1807

The class struggle, which is always present to a historian influenced by Marx, is a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist. Nevertheless, it is not in the form of the spoils which fall to the victor that the latter make their presence felt in the class struggle. They

manifest themselves in this struggle as courage, humor, cunning, and fortitude. They have retroactive force and will constantly call in question every victory, past and present, of the rulers. As flowers turn toward the sun, by dint of a secret heliotropism the past strives to turn toward that sun which is rising in the sky of history. A historical materialist must be aware of this most inconspicuous of all transformations.

v

The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again. "The truth will not run away from us": in the historical outlook of historicism these words of Gottfried Keller mark the exact point where historical materialism cuts through historicism. For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably. (The good tidings which the historian of the past brings with throbbing heart may be lost in a void the very moment he opens his mouth.)

VI

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer, he comes as the subduer of Antichrist. Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.

VII

*Consider the darkness and the great cold
In this vale which resounds with misery.*

—Brecht, THE THREEPENNY OPERA

To historians who wish to relive an era, Fustel de Coulanges recommends that they blot out everything they know about the later course of history. There is no better way of characterizing the method with which historical materialism has broken. It is a process of empathy whose origin is the indolence of the heart, *acedia*, which despairs of grasping and holding the genuine historical image as it flares up briefly. Among medieval theologians it was regarded as the root cause of sadness. Flaubert, who was familiar with it, wrote: "*Peu de gens devineront combien il a fallu être triste pour ressusciter Carthage.*"* The nature of this sadness stands out more clearly if one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize. The answer is inevitable: with the victor. And all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists know what that means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissoci-

* "Few will be able to guess how sad one had to be in order to resuscitate Carthage."

ates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.

VIII

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism. One reason why Fascism has a chance is that in the name of progress its opponents treat it as a historical norm. The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are "still" possible in the twentieth century is *not* philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge—unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable.

IX

*Mein Flügel ist zum Schwung bereit,
ich kehrte gern zurück,
denn blieb ich auch lebendige Zeit,
ich hätte wenig Glück.*

—Gerhard Scholem, "Gruss vom Angelus"*

A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has

* *My wing is ready for flight,
I would like to turn back.
If I stayed timeless time,
I would have little luck.*

got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

x

The themes which monastic discipline assigned to friars for meditation were designed to turn them away from the world and its affairs. The thoughts which we are developing here originate from similar considerations. At a moment when the politicians in whom the opponents of Fascism had placed their hopes are prostrate and confirm their defeat by betraying their own cause, these observations are intended to disentangle the political worldlings from the snares in which the traitors have entrapped them. Our consideration proceeds from the insight that the politicians' stubborn faith in progress, their confidence in their "mass basis," and, finally, their servile integration in an uncontrollable apparatus have been three aspects of the same thing. It seeks to convey an idea of the high price our accustomed thinking will have to pay for a conception of history that avoids any complicity with the thinking to which these politicians continue to adhere.

x i

The conformism which has been part and parcel of Social Democracy from the beginning attaches not only to its political tactics but to its economic views as well. It is one reason for its later breakdown. Nothing has corrupted the German working class so much as the notion that it was moving with the current. It regarded technological developments as the fall of the stream with which it thought it was moving. From there it was but a step to the illusion that the factory work which was supposed to tend toward technological progress constituted a political achievement. The old Protestant ethics of work was resurrected among

German workers in secularized form. The Gotha Program* already bears traces of this confusion, defining labor as "the source of all wealth and all culture." Smelling a rat, Marx countered that "... the man who possesses no other property than his labor power" must of necessity become "the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners. . . ." However, the confusion spread, and soon thereafter Josef Dietzgen proclaimed: "The savior of modern times is called work. The . . . improvement . . . of labor constitutes the wealth which is now able to accomplish what no redeemer has ever been able to do." This vulgar-Marxist conception of the nature of labor bypasses the question of how its products might benefit the workers while still not being at their disposal. It recognizes only the progress in the mastery of nature, not the retrogression of society; it already displays the technocratic features later encountered in Fascism. Among these is a conception of nature which differs ominously from the one in the Socialist utopias before the 1848 revolution. The new conception of labor amounts to the exploitation of nature, which with naïve complacency is contrasted with the exploitation of the proletariat. Compared with this positivistic conception, Fourier's fantasies, which have so often been ridiculed, prove to be surprisingly sound. According to Fourier, as a result of efficient cooperative labor, four moons would illuminate the earthly night, the ice would recede from the poles, sea water would no longer taste salty, and beasts of prey would do man's bidding. All this illustrates a kind of labor which, far from exploiting nature, is capable of delivering her of the creations which lie dormant in her womb as potentials. Nature, which, as Dietzgen puts it, "exists gratis," is a complement to the corrupted conception of labor.

* The Gotha Congress of 1875 united the two German Socialist parties, one led by Ferdinand Lassalle, the other by Karl Marx and Wilhelm Liebknecht. The program, drafted by Liebknecht and Lassalle, was severely attacked by Marx in London. See his "Critique of the Gotha Program."

XII

*We need history, but not the way a spoiled loafer
in the garden of knowledge needs it.*

—Nietzsche, OF THE USE AND ABUSE OF HISTORY

Not man or men but the struggling, oppressed class itself is the depository of historical knowledge. In Marx it appears as the last enslaved class, as the avenger that completes the task of liberation in the name of generations of the downtrodden. This conviction, which had a brief resurgence in the Spartacist group,* has always been objectionable to Social Democrats. Within three decades they managed virtually to erase the name of Blanqui, though it had been the rallying sound that had reverberated through the preceding century. Social Democracy thought fit to assign to the working class the role of the redeemer of future generations, in this way cutting the sinews of its greatest strength. This training made the working class forget both its hatred and its spirit of sacrifice, for both are nourished by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than that of liberated grandchildren.

XIII

Every day our cause becomes clearer and people get smarter.

—Wilhelm Dietzgen, DIE RELIGION DER SOZIALDEMOKRATIE

Social Democratic theory, and even more its practice, have been formed by a conception of progress which did not adhere to reality but made dogmatic claims. Progress as pictured in the minds of Social Democrats was, first of all, the progress of mankind itself (and not just advances in men's ability and knowledge). Secondly, it was something boundless, in keeping with the infinite perfectibility of mankind. Thirdly, progress was regarded as irresistible, something that automatically pursued a straight or spiral course. Each of these predicates is controversial and open

* Leftist group, founded by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg at the beginning of World War I in opposition to the pro-war policies of the German Socialist party, later absorbed by the Communist party.

to criticism. However, when the chips are down, criticism must penetrate beyond these predicates and focus on something that they have in common. The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself.

XIV

Origin is the goal.

—Karl Kraus, WORTE IN VERSEN, Vol. I

History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*].* Thus, to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past. This jump, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the commands. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical one, which is how Marx understood the revolution.

XV

The awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode is characteristic of the revolutionary classes at the moment of their action. The great revolution introduced a new calendar. The initial day of a calendar serves as a historical time-lapse camera. And, basically, it is the same day that keeps recurring in the guise of holidays, which are days of remembrance. Thus the calendars do not measure time as clocks do; they are

* Benjamin says "*Jetztzeit*" and indicates by the quotation marks that he does not simply mean an equivalent to *Gegenwart*, that is, present. He clearly is thinking of the mystical *minc stans*.

Illuminations

monuments of a historical consciousness of which not the slightest trace has been apparent in Europe in the past hundred years. In the July revolution an incident occurred which showed this consciousness still alive. On the first evening of fighting it turned out that the clocks in towers were being fired on simultaneously and independently from several places in Paris. An eye-witness, who may have owed his insight to the rhyme, wrote as follows:

Qui le croirait! on dit, qu'irrités contre l'heure
De nouveaux Josués au pied de chaque tour,
Tiraient sur les cadrans pour arrêter le jour.*

XVI

A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. For this notion defines the present in which he himself is writing history. Historicism gives the "eternal" image of the past; historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past. The historical materialist leaves it to others to be drained by the whore called "Once upon a time" in historicism's bordello. He remains in control of his powers, man enough to blast open the continuum of history.

XVII

Historicism rightly culminates in universal history. Materialistic historiography differs from it as to method more clearly than from any other kind. Universal history has no theoretical armature. Its method is additive; it musters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time. Materialistic historiography, on the other hand, is based on a constructive principle. Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystal-

* Who would have believed it! we are told that new Joshuas at the foot of every tower, as though irritated with time itself, fired at the dials in order to stop the day.

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lizes into a monad. A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history—blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework. As a result of this method the lifework is preserved in this work and at the same time canceled*; in the lifework, the era; and in the era, the entire course of history. The nourishing fruit of the historically understood contains time as a precious but tasteless seed.

XVIII

"In relation to the history of organic life on earth," writes a modern biologist, "the paltry fifty millennia of *homo sapiens* constitute something like two seconds at the close of a twenty-four-hour day. On this scale, the history of civilized mankind would fill one-fifth of the last second of the last hour." The present, which, as a model of Messianic time, comprises the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgment, coincides exactly with the stature which the history of mankind has in the universe.

A

Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the "time of the now" which is shot through with chips of Messianic time.

* The Hegelian term *aufheben* in its threefold meaning: to preserve, to elevate, to cancel.

Illuminations

B

The soothsayers who found out from time what it had in store certainly did not experience time as either homogeneous or empty. Anyone who keeps this in mind will perhaps get an idea of how past times were experienced in remembrance—namely, in just the same way. We know that the Jews were prohibited from investigating the future. The Torah and the prayers instruct them in remembrance, however. This stripped the future of its magic, to which all those succumb who turn to the soothsayers for enlightenment. This does not imply, however, that for the Jews the future turned into homogeneous, empty time. For every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter.



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ARCHIVE FEVER

A FREUDIAN IMPRESSION

JACQUES DERRIDA

Let us not begin at the beginning, nor even at the archive.

But rather at the word "archive"—and with the archive of so familiar a word. *Arkhe* we recall, names at once the *commencement* and the *commandment*. This name apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, *there* where things *commence*—physical, historical, or ontological principle—but also the principle according to the law, *there* where men and gods *command*, *there* where authority, social order are exercised, *in this place* from which *order* is given—nomological principle.

There, we said, and *in this place*. How are we to think of *there*? And this *taking place* or this *having a place*, this *taking the place one has* of the *arkhē*?

We have *there* two orders of order: *sequential* and *jussive*. From this point on, a series of cleavages will incessantly divide every atom of our lexicon. Already in the *arkhē* of the commencement, I alluded to the commencement according to nature *or* according to history, introducing surreptitiously a chain of belated and problematic oppositions between *physis* and its others, *thesis*, *tekhnē*, *nomos*, etc., which are found to be at work in the other principle, the nomological principle of the *arkhē*, the principle of the commandment. All would be simple if there were one principle or two principles. All would be simple if the *physis* and each one of its others were one or two. As we have suspected for a long time, it is nothing of the sort, yet we are forever forgetting this. There is always more than one—and more or less than two. In the order of the commencement as well as in the order of the commandment.

The concept of the archive shelters in itself, of course, this memory of the name *arkhē*. But it also *shelters* itself from this memory which it shelters: which comes down to saying also that it forgets it. There is nothing accidental or surprising about this. Contrary to the impression one often has, such a concept is not easy to archive. One has trouble, and for essential reasons, establishing it and interpreting it in the document it delivers to us, here in the word which names it, that is the "archive." In a way, the term indeed refers, as one would correctly believe, to the *arkhē* in the *physical, historical, or ontological* sense, which is to say to the originary, the first, the principial, the primitive, in short to the commencement. But even more, and *even earlier*, "archive" refers to the *arkhē* in the *nomological* sense, to the *arkhē* of the commandment. As is the case for the Latin *archivum* or *archium* (a word that is used in the singular, as was the French "archive," formerly employed as a masculine singular: "un archive"), the meaning of "archive," its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to

Lecture given on 5 June 1994 in London during an international conference entitled *Memory: The Question of Archives*. Organized at the initiative of René Major and Elisabeth Roudinesco, this conference was held under the auspices of the Société Internationale d'Histoire de la Psychiatrie et de la Psychanalyse, of the Freud Museum, and of the Courtauld Institute of Art.

The initial title of this lecture, "The Concept of the Archive: A Freudian Impression," was modified after the fact. The French title is "Mal d'archive: Une impression freudienne."

possess the right to make or to represent the law. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that *place* which is their house (private house, family house, or employee's house), that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect state the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law. To be guarded thus, in the jurisdiction of this *stating the law*, they needed at once a guardian and a localization. Even in their guardianship or their hermeneutic tradition, the archives could neither do without substrate nor without residence.

It is thus, in this *domiciliation*, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret. (It is what is happening, right here, when a house, the Freuds' last house, becomes a museum: the passage from one institution to another.) With such a status, the documents, which are not always discursive writings, are only kept and classified under the title of the archive by virtue of a privileged *topology*. They inhabit this unusual place, this place of election where law and singularity intersect in *privilege*. At the intersection of the topological and the nomological, of the place and the law, of the substrate and the authority, a scene of domiciliation becomes at once visible and invisible. I stress this point for reasons which will, I hope, appear more clearly later. They all have to do with this *topo-nomology*, with this archontic dimension of domiciliation, with this archic, in truth patriarchic, function, without which no archive would ever come into play or appear as such. To shelter itself and sheltered, to conceal itself. This archontic function is not solely topo-nomological. It does not only require that the archive be deposited somewhere, on a stable substrate, and at the disposition of a legitimate hermeneutic authority. The archontic power, which also gathers the functions of unification, of identification, of classification, must be paired with what we will call the power of *consignation*. By consignation, we do not only mean, in the ordinary sense of the word, the act of assigning residence or of entrusting so as to put into reserve (to consign, to deposit), in a place and on a substrate, but here the act of *consigning through gathering together signs*. It is not only the traditional *consignatio*, that is, the written proof, but what all *consignatio* begins by presupposing. *Consignation* aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration. In an archive, there should not be any absolute dissociation, any heterogeneity or *secret* which could separate (*secernere*), or partition, in an absolute manner. The archontic principle of the archive is also a principle of consignation, that is, of gathering together.

It goes without saying from now on that wherever one could attempt, and in particular in Freudian psychoanalysis, to rethink the place and the law according to which the archontic becomes instituted, wherever one could interrogate or contest, directly or indirectly, this archontic principle, its authority, its titles, and its genealogy, the right that it commands, the legality or the legitimacy that depends on it, wherever secrets and heterogeneity would seem to menace even the possibility of *consignation*, this can only have grave consequences for a theory of the archive, as well as for its institutional implementation. A science of the archive must include the theory of this institutionalization, that is to say, at once of the law which begins by inscribing itself there and of the right which authorizes it. This right imposes or supposes a bundle of limits which have a history, a deconstructable history, and to the deconstruction of which psychoanalysis has not been foreign, to say the least. This deconstruction in progress concerns, as always, the institution of limits declared to be insurmountable,¹ whether they involve family or state

1. Of course, the question of a politics of the archive is our permanent orientation here, even if the time of a lecture does not permit us to treat this directly and with examples. This question will

law, the relations between the secret and the nonsecret, or, and this is not the same thing, between the private and the public, whether they involve property or access rights, publication or reproduction rights, whether they involve classification and putting *into order*: What comes under theory or under private correspondence, for example? What comes under system? under biography or autobiography? under personal or intellectual anamnesis? In works said to be *theoretical*, what is worthy of this name and what is not? Should one rely on what Freud says about this to classify his works? Should one for example take him at his word when he presents his *Moses* as a “historical novel”? In each of these cases, the limits, the borders, and the distinctions have been shaken by an earthquake from which no classificational concept and no implementation of the archive can be sheltered. Order is no longer assured.

I dream now of having the time to submit for your discussion more than one thesis, three at least. This time will never be given to me. Above all, I will never have the right to take your time so as to impose upon you, rapid-fire, these three + n essays. Submitted to the test of your discussion, these theses thus remain, for the time being, hypotheses. Incapable of supporting their demonstration, constrained to posit them along the way in a mode which will appear at times dogmatic, I will recall them in a more critical and formal manner in conclusion.

The hypotheses have a common trait. They all concern the *impression* left, in my opinion, by the *Freudian signature* on its own archive, on the concept of the archive and of archivization, that is to say also, inversely and as an indirect consequence, on historiography. Not only on historiography in general, not only on the history of the concept of the archive, but perhaps also on the history of the formation of a *concept in general*. We are saying for the time being *Freudian signature* so as not to have to decide yet between Sigmund Freud, the proper name, on the one hand, and, on the other, the invention of psychoanalysis: project of knowledge, of practice and of institution, community, family, domiciliation, consignment, “house” or “museum,” in the present state of its archivization. What is in question is situated precisely *between the two*.

Having thus announced my intentions, and promised to collect them so as to conclude in a more organized fashion, I ask your permission to take the time and the liberty to enter upon several lengthy preliminary excursions.

never be determined as one political question among others. It runs through the whole of the field and in truth determines politics from top to bottom as res publica. There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation. A contrario, the breaches of democracy can be measured by what a recent and in so many ways remarkable work entitles Forbidden Archives (Archives interdites: Les peurs françaises face à l'histoire contemporaine). Under this title, which we cite as the metonymy of all that is important here, Sonia Combe does not only gather a considerable collection of material, to illuminate and interpret it; she asks numerous essential questions about the writing of history, about the “repression” of the archive [318], about the “‘repressed’ archive” as “power . . . of the state over the historian” [321]. Among all of these questions, and in referring the reader to this book, let us isolate here the one that is consonant, in a way, with the low tone of our hypothesis, even if this fundamental note, the patriarchal, never covers all the others. As if in passing, Sonia Combe asks in effect: “I hope to be pardoned for granting some credit to the following observation, but it does not seem to me to be due to pure chance that the corporation of well-known historians of contemporary France is essentially, apart from a few exceptions, masculine. . . . But I hope to be understood also . . .” [315].

EXERGUE

According to a proven convention, the *exergue* plays with citation. To cite before beginning is to give the key through the resonance of a few words, the meaning or form of which ought to set the stage. In other words, the *exergue* consists in capitalizing on an ellipsis. In accumulating capital in advance and in preparing the surplus value of an archive. An *exergue* serves to stock in anticipation and to prearchive a lexicon which, from there on, ought to lay down the law and *give the order*, even if this means contenting itself with naming the problem, that is, the subject. In this way, the *exergue* has at once an institutive and a conservative function: the violence of a power (*Gewalt*) which at once posits and conserves the law, as the Benjamin of *Zur Kritik der Gewalt* would say. What is at issue here, starting with the *exergue*, is the violence of the archive itself, *as archive*, *as archival violence*.

It is thus the first figure of an archive, because *every* archive, we will draw some inferences from this, is at once *institutive* and *conservative*. Revolutionary and traditional. An *eco-nomic* archive in this double sense: it keeps, it puts in reserve, it saves, but in an unnatural fashion, that is to say in making the law (*nomos*) or in making people respect the law. A moment ago we called it nomological. It has the force of law, of a law which is the law of the house (*oikos*), of the house as place, domicile, family, lineage, or institution. Having become a museum, Freud's house takes in all these powers of economy.

Two citations will exercise in themselves, in their *exergue* form, such a function of archival economy. But in making reference to such an economy, an explicit and implicit reference, they will also have this function as theme or as object. These citations concern and bind between themselves, perhaps secretly, two places of *inscription*: *printing* and *circumcision*.

1

The *first of these exergues* is the more typographical. The archive seems here to conform better to its concept. Because it is entrusted to the outside, to an *external* substrate and not, as the sign of the covenant in circumcision, to an *intimate* mark, *right on* the so-called body proper. But where does the outside commence? This question is the question of the archive. There are undoubtedly no others.

At the beginning of chapter 6 of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929–30), Freud pretends to worry. Is he not investing in useless expenditure? Is he not in the process of mobilizing a ponderous archiving machine (press, printing, ink, paper) to record something which in the end does not merit such expense? Is what he is preparing to deliver to the printers not so trivial as to be available everywhere? The Freudian lexicon here indeed stresses a certain "printing" technology of archivization (*Eindruck, Druck, drücken*), but only so as to feign the faulty economic calculation. Freud also entrusts to us the "impression" (*Empfindung*), the feeling inspired by this excessive and ultimately gratuitous investment in a perhaps useless archive:

In none of my previous writings have I had so strong a feeling [Empfindung] as now that what I am describing is common knowledge [allgemein Bekanntes] and that I am using up paper and ink [Papier und Tinte] and, in due course, the compositor's and printer's work and material [Setzerarbeit und Druckerschwärze aufbieten] in order to expound things which are, in fact, self-evident [um eigentlich selbstverständliche Dinge zu erzählen]. [SE 21: 117]

In sum, this is a lot of ink and paper for nothing, an entire typographical volume, in short, a material substrate which is out of all proportion, in the last analysis, to “recount” (*erzählen*) stories that everyone knows. But the movement of this rhetoric leads elsewhere. Because Freud draws another inference, in the retrospective logic of a future perfect: *he will have to have invented* an original proposition which will make the investment profitable. In other words, he will have to have found something new *in* psychoanalysis: a mutation or a break within his own theoretical institution. And he will have not only to have announced some news, but also to have archived it: to have put it, as it were, *to the press*:

For that reason I should be glad to seize the point if it were to appear that the recognition of a special, independent aggressive instinct [eines besonderen, selbständigen Aggressionstriebes] means an alteration of the psycho-analytic theory of the instincts. [SE 21: 117]

The rhetoric and the logic of this paragraph are vertiginously cunning. All the more wily because they feign disarmed naïveté. In what can also be read as a staging of archivization, Freud seems at first to perform a courteous *captatio benevolentiae*, a bit like the one I owe you here: in the end I have nothing new to say. Why detain you with these worn-out stories? Why this wasted time? Why archive this? Why these investments in paper, in ink, in characters? Why mobilize so much space and so much work, so much typographic composition? Does this merit printing? Aren't these stories to be had everywhere?

If it is not without perversity, this *captatio benevolentiae* turns out to be *itself* a useless expenditure, the fiction of a sort of “rhetorical question.” Immediately afterward, Freud suggests in effect that this archivization would not be so vain, and a *pure loss*, in the hypothesis that it would cause to appear what in fact he already knows he will make appear, and thus this is not a hypothesis for him, a hypothesis submitted for discussion, but rather an irresistible thesis, namely the possibility of a radical perversion, indeed, a diabolical death drive, an aggression or a destruction drive: a drive, thus, of loss. The rest of the chapter recalls everything which had already, since *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), more than ten years earlier, introduced this destruction drive in the psychic economy, or rather the psychic aneconomy, in the accursed share of this pure loss expenditure. Freud draws the conclusion here with respect to civilization, and indeed to its discontents, while at the same time giving himself over to a sort of autobiographical, theoretical, and institutional anamnesis. In the course of this recapitulation, he stresses above all the resistances that this death drive incites, *everywhere*, outside as much as inside, as it were, and in psychoanalytic circles as well as in himself:

I remember my own defensive attitude [meiner eigenen Abwehr] when the idea of an instinct of destruction first emerged in psycho-analytic literature, and how long it took before I became receptive to it. [SE 21: 120]

He had previously made two remarks, as if in passing, of which we must not fail to take note. First of all, since overcoming this resistance, he can no longer think otherwise (*Ich nicht mehr anders denken kann*). For Sigmund Freud himself, the destruction drive is no longer a debatable hypothesis. Even if this speculation never takes the form of a fixed thesis, even if it is never posited, it is another name for *Anankē*, invincible necessity. It is as if Freud could no longer resist, henceforth, the irreducible and originary perversity of this drive which he names here sometimes death drive, sometimes aggression drive, sometimes destruction drive, as if these three words were in this case synonyms. Second, this three-named drive is mute (*stumm*). It is at work, but since it always operates in

silence, it never leaves any archives of its own. It destroys in advance its own archive, as if that were in truth the very motivation of its most proper movement. It works *to destroy the archive: on the condition of effacing* but also *with a view to effacing* its own “proper” traces—which consequently cannot properly be called “proper.” It devours it even before producing it on the outside. This drive, from then on, seems not only to be anarchic, anarchotic (we must not forget that the death drive, originary though it may be, is not a principle, as are the pleasure and reality principles): the death drive is above all *anarchivic*, one could say, or *archiviolithic*. It will always have been archive-destroying, by silent vocation.

Allowing for exceptions. But what are exceptions in this case?

Even when it takes the form of an interior desire, the anarchy drive eludes perception, to be sure, save exception: that is, Freud says, except if it disguises itself, except if it tints itself, makes itself up or paints itself (*gefärbt ist*) in some erotic color. This impression of erogenous color draws a mask right on the skin. In other words, the archiviolithic drive is never present in person, neither in itself nor in its effects. It leaves no monument, it bequeaths no document of its own. As inheritance, it leaves only its erotic simulacrum, its pseudonym in painting, its sexual idols, its masks of seduction: lovely impressions. These impressions are perhaps the very origin of what is so obscurely called the beauty of the beautiful. As memories of death.

But, the point must be stressed, this archiviolithic force leaves nothing of its own behind. As the death drive is also, according to the most striking words of Freud himself, an aggression and a destruction (*Destruktion*) drive, it not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory, as *mnēmē* or *anamnēsis*, but also commands the radical effacement, in truth the eradication, of that which can never be reduced to *mnēmē* or to *anamnēsis*, that is, the archive, consignation, the documentary or monumental apparatus as *hypomnēma*, mnemotechnical supplement or representative, auxiliary or memorandum. Because the archive, if this word or this figure can be stabilized so as to take on a signification, will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory.

There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside.

Let us never forget this Greek distinction between *mnēmē* or *anamnēsis* on the one hand, and *hypomnēma* on the other. The archive is hypomnesic. And let us note in passing a decisive paradox to which we will not have the time to return, but which undoubtedly conditions the whole of these remarks: if there is no archive without consignation in an *external place* which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, or of reimpression, then we must also remember that repetition itself, the logic of repetition, indeed the repetition compulsion, remains, according to Freud, indissociable from the death drive. And thus from destruction. Consequence: right on what permits and conditions archivization, we will never find anything other than what exposes to destruction, in truth what menaces with destruction introducing, *a priori*, forgetfulness and the archiviolithic into the heart of the monument. Into the “by heart” itself. The archive always works, and *a priori*, against itself.

The death drive tends thus to destroy the hypomnesic archive, except if it can be disguised, made up, painted, printed, represented as the idol of its truth in painting. Another economy is thus at work, the transaction between this death drive and the pleasure principle, between Thanatos and Eros, but also between the death drive and this seeming dual opposition of principles, of *arkhai*, for example the reality principle and the pleasure principle. The death drive is not a principle. It even threatens every principality, every archontic primacy, every archival desire. It is what we will call, later on, *le mal d'archive*, *archive fever*.

Such is the scene, at once within and beyond every staging: Freud can only justify the apparently useless expenditure of paper, ink, and typographic printing, in other words, the laborious investment in the archive, by putting forward the novelty of his discovery, the very one which provokes so much resistance, and first of all in himself, and precisely because its silent vocation is to burn the archive and to incite amnesia, the thing refuting the economic principle of the archive, aiming to ruin the archive as accumulation and capitalization of memory on some substrate and in an exterior place.

What, in general, can this substrate consist of? Exterior to what? What does "exterior" mean? Is a circumcision, for example, an exterior mark? Is it an archive?

It *seems* always to be possible, however, to compensate for the aneconomy of this annihilating force allied to the diabolical death drive. This is at least an appearance. Freud, in passing, gives a striking example. At the time of *Discontents* (1929–30), such an example is all the more significant, in its historical and political import. We do not like to be reminded, Freud notes, of the undeniable existence of an evil which seems to contradict the sovereign goodness of God. But if this Devil—another proper name for the three-named drive—seems, then, in the eyes of Christians, for "Christian science" (in English in the text), irreconcilable with God, we see now that it can also exculpate God: evil for evil's sake, diabolical evil, the existence of the Devil can serve as an excuse (*Entschuldigung*) for God, because *exterior* to him, *anarchic angel and dissident*, in rebellion against him, just as, and this is the polemical trait of analogy, the Jew can play the analogous role of relief or economic exoneration (*die selbe ökonomisch entlastende Rolle*) assigned to him by the world of the Aryan ideal. In other words, the radical destruction can again be *reinvested* in another logic, in the inexhaustible *economistic* resource of an archive which capitalizes everything, even that which ruins it or radically contests its power: radical evil can be of service, infinite destruction can be reinvested in a theodicy, the devil can also serve to *justify*—thus is the destination of the Jew in the Aryan ideal. (Earlier in the same text, Freud proposes an interesting critique of nationalisms and of anti-Semitism on which we ought to meditate today, but which we cannot possibly enter into here [SE 21:120].)

In a preliminary fashion, and still limiting ourselves to this archivization of the Freudian archive, we ought to pay attention also to a date. Let us consider the technical model of the machine tool, intended, in Freud's eyes, to *represent on the outside* memory as *internal* archivization, namely the *Magic Mystic Pad* (*der Wunderblock*). This model was also described, analyzed, presented after *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, this book where Freud admits to playing "*the devil's advocate*." The description includes several allusions to that which in the functioning of this *Magic Mystic Pad* is conditioned by the earlier description, in *Beyond*, of the structure of the psychic apparatus. In translating and questioning this strange *Notiz über den Wunderblock*, I attempted long ago to analyze, as closely as possible, the relationships between the model of archivization, technicality, time and death. I tried to delimit the thinking this text engendered from within the metaphysical assurances in which, it seems to me, it is held. Without recalling here the questions I formulated at the time (in particular concerning the "Freudian concept of the hereditary mnemonic trace" [*Writing and Difference* 197; *L'écriture* 294]), I would simply like to cite a remark. It sketched, by anticipation, the horizon I hope to follow more closely and differently tonight. To represent the functioning of the psychic apparatus in an *exterior* technical model, Freud did not have at his disposition the resources provided today by archival machines of which one could hardly have dreamt in the first quarter of this century. Do these new archival machines change anything? Do they affect the essentials of Freud's discourse? In 1966, I noted the following (forgive me for this long citation, I will not allow myself any others):

[T]he Mystic Pad, separated from psychical responsibility, a representation abandoned to itself, still participates in Cartesian space and mechanics: natural wax, exteriority of the memory aid.

All that Freud had thought about the unity of life and death, however, should have led him to ask other questions here. And to ask them explicitly. Freud does not explicitly examine the status of the “materialized” supplement which is necessary to the alleged spontaneity of memory, even if that spontaneity were differentiated in itself, thwarted by a censorship or repression which, moreover, could not act on a perfectly spontaneous memory. Far from the machine being a pure absence of spontaneity, its resemblance to the psychical apparatus, its existence and its necessity bear witness to the finitude of the mnemonic spontaneity which is thus supplemented. The machine—and, consequently, representation—is death and finitude within the psyche. Nor does Freud examine the possibility of this machine, which, in the world, has at least begun to resemble memory, and increasingly resembles it more closely. Its resemblance to memory is closer than that of the innocent Mystic Pad: the latter is no doubt infinitely more complex than slate or paper, less archaic than a palimpsest; but, compared to other machines for storing archives, it is a child’s toy. [Writing and Difference 227–28; *L’écriture* 336–37]

What is at issue here is nothing less than the *future*, if there is such a thing: the future of psychoanalysis in its relationship to the future of science. As techno-science, science, in its very movement, can only consist in a transformation of the techniques of archivization, of printing, of inscription, of reproduction, of formalization, of ciphering, and of translating marks.

The questions which now arise are of at least *two orders*.

1. Those of the first engage the *theoretical exposition* of psychoanalysis. They would concern its *object*, and in particular all that is invested in the representational models of the psychic apparatus as an apparatus for perception, for printing, for recording, for topic distribution of places of inscription, of ciphering, of repression, of displacement, of condensation. These are our names for as many places of reading and interpretation, needless to say—and this is why the field of these questions is not properly a field. It can no longer be delimited. Independently of the reservations I had formulated in “Freud and the Scene of Writing” about the presuppositions of modeling itself (reservations I will not return to here), it is at least possible to ask whether, *concerning the essentials, and beyond the extrinsic details*, the structure of the psychic apparatus, this system, at once mnemonic and hypomnesic, which Freud wanted to describe with the “mystic pad,” resists the evolution of archival techno-science or not. Is the psychic apparatus *better represented* or is it *affected differently* by all the technical mechanisms for archivization and for reproduction, for prostheses of so-called live memory, for simulacrum of living things which already are, and will increasingly be, more refined, complicated, powerful than the “mystic pad” (microcomputing, electronization, computerization, etc.)?

Neither of these hypotheses can be reduced to the other. Because if the upheavals in progress affected the very structures of the psychic apparatus, for example in their spatial architecture and in their economy of speed, in their processing of spacing and of temporalization, it would no longer be a question of simple continuous progress in representation, in the *representative* value of the model, but rather of an entirely different logic.

2. Other related questions, but of another order: they no longer concern only the theoretical object of psychoanalysis in its exposition, but rather the archivization of

psychoanalysis itself, of its "life," if you will, of its "acts," of its private and public procedures, those which are secret or manifest, provisionally or definitively encrypted; they concern the archivization of its institutional and clinical practice, of the academic, scientific, and juridico-editorial aspect of the immense problems of publication or of translation with which we are acquainted. The word "acts" can designate here at once the content of what is to be archived *and* the archive itself, the archivable and the archiving of the archive: the printed and the printing of impression. Whether it is a question of the private or public life of Freud, of his partners or of his inheritors, sometimes also of his patients, of the personal or scientific exchanges, of the letters, deliberations, or politico-institutional decisions, of the practices and of their rules (for example, those of the so-called "analytic situation," the place and the length of the sessions, association which is free, oral, in person, and in the presence of the analyst, without technical recording), in what way has the whole of this field been determined by a state of the technology of communication and of archivization? One can dream or speculate about the geo-technological shocks which would have made the landscape of the psychoanalytic archive unrecognizable for the past century if, to limit myself to these indications, Freud, his contemporaries, collaborators and immediate disciples, instead of writing thousands of letters by hand, had had access to MCI or ATT telephonic credit cards, portable tape recorders, computers, printers, faxes, televisions, teleconferences, and above all E-mail.

I would have liked to devote my whole lecture to this retrospective science fiction. I would have liked to imagine with you the scene of that other archive after the earthquake and after the "*après-coups*" of its aftershocks. This is indeed where we are. As I am not able to do this, on account of the ever archaic organization of our colloquia, of the time and the space at our disposal, I will limit myself to a mechanical remark: this archival earthquake would not have limited its effects to the *secondary recording*, to the printing and to the conservation of the history of psychoanalysis. It would have transformed this history from top to bottom and in the most initial inside of its production, in its very *events*. This is another way of saying that the archive, as printing, writing, prosthesis, or hypomnesic technique in general is not only the place for stocking and for conserving an archivable content *of the past* which would exist in any case, such as, without the archive, one still believes it was or will have been. No, the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event. This is also our political experience of the so-called news media.

This means that *in the past*, psychoanalysis would not have been what it was (no more than so many other things) if E-mail, for example, had existed. And *in the future* it will no longer be what Freud and so many psychoanalysts have anticipated, from the moment E-mail, for example, became possible. One could find many clues other than E-mail. As a postal technology, this example undoubtedly merits some privilege. First of all because of the major and exceptional role (exceptional in the history of scientific projects) played at the center of the psychoanalytic archive by a handwritten correspondence. We have yet to finish discovering and processing this immense corpus, in part unpublished, in part secret, and perhaps in part radically and irreversibly destroyed—for example by Freud himself. Who knows? One must consider the historical and nonaccidental reasons which have tied such an institution, in its theoretical and practical dimensions, to postal communication and to this particular form of mail, to its substrates, to its average speed: a handwritten letter takes so many days to arrive in another European city, and nothing is ever independent of this delay. Everything remains on its scale.

But the example of E-mail is privileged in my opinion for a more important and obvious reason: because electronic mail today, and even more than the fax, is on the way to transforming the entire public and private space of humanity, and first of all the limit between the private, the secret (private or public), and the public or the phenomenal. This

is not only a technique, in the ordinary and limited sense of the term: at an unprecedented rhythm, in quasi-instantaneous fashion, this instrumental possibility of production, of printing, of conservation, and of destruction of the archive must inevitably be accompanied by juridical and thus political transformations. These affect nothing less than property rights, publishing and reproduction rights. In regard to and in keeping with the dimension of these transformations under way, these radical and interminable turbulences, we must take stock today of the classical works which continue in the beehive of Freudian studies—concerning the manuscripts of Freud and of his intimates, the published and still-unpublished correspondence, the publications or republications, the drafts and the sketches, the accessible and the inaccessible, the notorious filterings of the Library of Congress, etc. These classical and extraordinary works move away from us at great speed, in a continually accelerated fashion. They burrow into the past at a distance which is more and more comparable to that which separates us from archaeological digs (that bizarre activity talked about by the author of *Gradiva*, to which we will be turning shortly), from biblical philology, from the translations of the Bible, from Luther to Rozenweig or to Buber, or from the establishing of the hypomnesic writings of Plato or of Aristotle by medieval copyists. This is another way to say that it takes nothing away from the admirable nobility, from the indisputable necessity and from the incontestable legitimacy of this classical philology which is so much more than philology. But this should not close our eyes to the unlimited upheaval under way in archival technology. This should above all remind us that the said archival technology no longer determines, will never have determined, merely the moment of the conservational recording, but rather the very institution of the archivable event. It conditions not only the form or the structure which prints, but the printed content of the printing: the *pressure* of the *printing*, the *impression*, before the division between the printed and the printer. This archival technique has commanded that which even in the past instituted and constituted whatever there was as anticipation of the future.

And as wager [*gageure*]. The archive has always been a *pledge*, and like every pledge [*gage*], a token of the future. To put it more trivially: what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way. Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives. It begins with the printer.

We shall leave these questions suspended for the moment. Let us simply remark, and this is the same archival concern, a dating: this “mystic pad,” this *exterior*, thus archival, model of the *psychic* recording and memorization apparatus, does not only integrate the inaugural concepts of psychoanalysis, from the *Sketches* up to the articles of the *Metapsychology*, by way of the *Traumdeutung*, in particular all those which concern for example repression, censorship, recording (*Niederschrift*) in the two systems (UCS and PCS), the three points of view (topic, dynamic, and economic). Taking into account the multiplicity of regions in the psychic apparatus, it also integrates the necessity, inside the *psyche* itself, of a certain outside, of certain borders between insides and outsides. And with this *domestic outside*, that is to say also with the hypothesis of an *internal* substrate, surface, or space without which there is neither consignation, registration, or impression nor suppression, censorship, or repression, it prepares the idea of a psychic archive distinct from spontaneous memory, of a *hypomnēsis* distinct from *mnēmē* and from *anamnēsis*: the institution, in sum, of a *prosthesis of the inside*. We have said “institution” (one could say “erection”) so as to mark, right from the originary threshold of this prosthesis, a rupture which is just as originary with nature. The theory of psychoanalysis, then, becomes a theory of the archive and not only a theory of memory. This does not prevent the Freudian discourse from remaining heterogeneous, as I tried to show in “Freud and the Scene of Writing”: an antagonistic and traditional motif continues in this discourse to oppose a metaphysics to the rigorous consequence of this prosthetics, that is, of a logic of hypomnesis.

The model of this singular "*mystic pad*" also incorporates what may seem, in the form of a destruction drive, to contradict even the conservation drive, what we could call here the *archive drive*. It is what I called earlier, and in view of this internal contradiction, *archive fever*. There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression. Above all, and this is the most serious, beyond or within this simple limit called finiteness or finitude, there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive, this aggression and destruction drive. This threat is *in-finite*, it sweeps away the logic of finitude and the simple factual limits, the transcendental aesthetics, one might say, the spatio-temporal conditions of conservation. Let us rather say that it abuses them. Such an abuse opens the ethico-political dimension of the problem. There is not one *mal d'archive*, one limit or one suffering of memory among others: enlisting the in-finite, archive fever verges on radical evil.

2

Let us encrust a second citation in the exergue. Less typographical than the first, as we said, it nonetheless still maintains a reference to the *graphic* mark and to repetition, indeed to printing of the *typical* sort. Recurrent and iterable, it carries literal singularity into figurality. Again inscribing inscription, it commemorates in its way, effectively, a circumcision. A very singular monument, it is also the document of an archive. In a reiterated manner, it leaves the trace of an incision *right on* the skin: more than one skin, at more than one age. To the letter or by figure. The foliaceous stratification, the pellicular superimposition of these cutaneous marks seems to defy analysis. It accumulates so many sedimented archives, some of which are written right on the epidermis of a body proper, others on the substrate of an "exterior" body. Each layer here seems to gape slightly, as the lips of a wound, permitting glimpses of the abyssal possibility of another depth destined for archaeological excavation.

It has, in appearance, primarily to do with a *private inscription*. This is the title of a first problem concerning the question of its belonging to an archive: which archive? that of Sigmund Freud? that of the psychoanalytic institution or science? Where does one draw the limit? What is this new science of which the institutional and theoretical archive ought by rights to comprise the most private documents, sometimes secret? beginning with those of its presumed founder, its arch-father, its patriarch, Freud? Indeed, of the arch-patriarch, Sigmund's father, Jakob? This brings us to the question, which is always open, of what the title "Freud's house" means, the Freud Museum as a "House of Freud," the *arkheion* of which we are the guests, *in* which we speak, *from* which we speak. *To* which we speak, I might also say: addressing it. The archive of the singular private inscription I will speak of has been in the public domain for several years. One can have access to it in several languages, beginning with its original in Hebrew. Public, and offered for interpretation, this document is henceforth accompanied, indissociably, by an extraordinary exegetical or hermeneutic apparatus.

It is an inscription in the form of a dedication. It was written by the hand of Jakob, son of R. Shelomoh Freud, the arch-patriarch, the grandfather of psychoanalysis, and addressed to his son, Shelomoh Sigmund Freud, on the day of his thirty-fifth birthday, in Vienna, the sixth of May, 1891 (29 Nisan 5651).

A gift *carried* this inscription. What the father gives to the son is at once a writing and its substrate. The substrate, in a sense, was the Bible itself, the "Book of books," a Philippsohn Bible Sigmund had studied in his youth. His father restores it to him, after having made a present of it to him, he restitutes it as a gift, with a new leather binding. To bind anew: this is an act of love. Of paternal love. It is no less important than the text in

melitzah, these biblical, liturgical, or rabbinical fragments, which compose the long dedication and carry in turn the thoughts of the father. On this subject he speaks of a “new skin,” as the English translation of the Hebrew says.

Like some of you, I suppose, I discovered the treasure of this archive, illuminated by a new translation and by an original interpretation, in Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi’s handsome book *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*. This book left a strong impression on me. My recent discovery of it gave me much to think about, more than I could say here, and it has accompanied the preparation of this lecture. This will thus naturally be dedicated, if he will allow it, to Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi.² For a reason that will perhaps become clear later, I will dare to dedicate it at the same time to my sons—and even to the memory of my father, who was also called, as is life itself, Hayim.

Here is the archived dedication which the grandfather or the arch-patriarch of psychoanalysis, Jakob Freud, inscribed on the Bible he gave, but in truth returned, *sous peau neuve*, as they say in French, to his son, that is, to the father or the patriarch of psychoanalysis. Yerushalmi cites it with dramatic effect, as a *coup de théâtre*, at the end of his book, just before the other dramatic effect of an audacious fiction, this extraordinary “Monologue with Freud,” to which I will return at length. He sees in this dedication “one crucial episode” and he speaks of “the one canonical text of Jakob Freud at our disposal” [70].

This is not, thus, just any archive and just any moment in the history of the archive. Later, beyond this exergue, we shall see how Yerushalmi presents the character, to his eyes properly inaugural, of the discovery, of the reading, and of the establishment of this “crucial” archive of which he is in sum the first guardian, the first reader, the first doctor, indeed the only legitimate archon.

In the body of this inscription, we must at least underline all the words which point, indeed, toward the institution and the tradition of the law (“lawmakers”), that is to say, toward that archontic dimension without which one could not have archives, but also, more directly, toward the logic and the semantics of the archive, of memory and of the memorial, of conservation and of inscription which put into reserve (“store”), accumulate, capitalize, stock a quasi-infinity of layers, of archival strata which are at once superimposed, overprinted, and enveloped in each other. To read, in this case, requires working at geological or archaeological excavations, on substrates or under surfaces, old or new skins, the hypermnesic and hypomnesic epidermises of books or penises—and the very first sentence recalls, at least by figure,³ the circumcision of the father of psychoanalysis, “in the seventh in the days of the years of your life.” I will cite the translation given by Yerushalmi while underlining a few words, and then I will abandon this exergue, to which I will return later:

Son who is dear to me, Shelomoh. In the seventh in the days of the years of your life the Spirit of the Lord began to move you and spoke within you: Go, read my

2. Yerushalmi, who participated in this conference, was to have been at this lecture. As he was sick, he could not be present, and his own contribution was read by someone else the next day.

3. I decided I should make this prudent addition (“at least by figure”) after a friendly talk with Yerushalmi, who, several months later in New York, correctly warned me against a reading which would seem to identify here a literal or direct reference to the dated event of a circumcision. I see it as he does and am more clearly aware of it today thanks to him. This is yet another reason for my gratitude. As it seems nonetheless difficult to contest that this dedication in *melitzah* gathers all its signs and makes all its figures (beginning with that of the “new skin”) converge toward the moment of a covenant, in truth of a renewed covenant, is it improper to read here an anniversary recall, by a father to a son, of circumcision? That is, of the very figure of the covenant, in its typical moment, in the type of an incisive inscription, in its character, at once inaugural and recurrent, regularly renewed?

Book that I have written and there will burst open for you the wellsprings of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. Behold, it is the Book of Books, from which sages have excavated and lawmakers learned knowledge and judgement. A vision of the Almighty did you see; you heard and strove to do, and you soared on the wings of the Spirit.

Since then the book has been stored like the fragments of the tablets in an ark with me. For the day on which your years were filled to five and thirty I have put upon it a cover of new skin and have called it: "Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it!" And I have presented it to you as a memorial and as a reminder [a memorial and a reminder, the one and the other at once, the one in the other, and we have, perhaps, in the economy of these two words the whole of archival law: anamnēsis, mnēmē, hypomnēma] of love from your father, who loves you with everlasting love.

*Jakob son of R. Shelomoh Freid [sic]
In the capital city Vienna 29 Nisan [5]651 6 May [1]891 [71]⁴*

4. *The arc stays with the father of the father of psychoanalysis. Stay with me, Jahveh had said to Moses, send them to their tents [vv. 30–31]. Shortly after the reminder of the Covenant Arc figures the order to circumcise the foreskin of the heart [10: 16].*

PREAMBLE

I undoubtedly owe you, at the beginning of this preamble, a first explication concerning the word *impression*, which risks, in my title, being somewhat enigmatic. I became aware of this afterward: when Elisabeth Roudinesco asked me on the telephone for a provisional title, so as indeed to send the program of this conference to press, almost a year before inscribing and printing on my computer the first word of what I am saying to you here, the response I then improvised ended up in effect imposing the word *impression*.

And in an instant, it was as if *three meanings* had condensed themselves and overprinted each other from the back of my memory. Which were they?

Without waiting, I have spoken to you of my computer, of the little portable Macintosh on which I have begun to write. Because it has not only been the first substrate to support all of these words. On a beautiful morning in California a few weeks ago, I asked myself a certain question, among so many others. Without being able to find a response, while reading on the one hand Freud, on the other Yerushalmi, and while tinkling away on my computer. I asked myself what is the moment *proper* to the archive, if there is such a thing, the instant of archivization strictly speaking, which is not, and I will come back to this, so-called live or spontaneous memory (*mnēmē* or *anamnēsis*), but rather a certain hypomnesic and prosthetic experience of the technical substrate. Was it not at this very instant that, having written something or other on the screen, the letters remaining as if suspended and floating yet at the surface of a liquid element, I pushed a certain key to “save” a text undamaged, in a hard and lasting way, to protect marks from being erased, so as thus to ensure salvation and *indemnity*, to stock, to accumulate, and, in what is at once the same thing and something else, to make the sentence thus available for printing and for reprinting, for reproduction? Does it change anything that Freud did not know about the computer? And where should the moment of suppression or of repression be situated in these new models of recording and impression, or printing?

This condensation of three meanings of the word “impression” was only able to imprint itself in me in a single stroke, apparently in an instant of no duration, after much work, discontinuous though it may have been, with Freud’s texts, with certain of his writings, but also with themes, with figures, with conceptual schemes which are familiar to me to the point of obsession and yet remain no less secret, young and still to come for me: thus writing, the trace, inscription, on an exterior substrate or on the so-called body proper, as for example, and this is not just any example for me, that singular and immemorial archive called *circumcision*, and which, though never leaving you, nonetheless has come about, and is no less exterior, *exterior right on your body proper*.

So what are these *three meanings* which, in a single instant, condensed themselves and overprinted each other, that is to say overdetermined each other, in the word “impression” and the phrase “Freudian impression”? And above all, of course, in their relationship to that re-producible, iterable, and conservative production of memory, to that objectivizable storage called the archive?

1. The first impression is *scriptural* or *typographic*: that of an inscription (*Niederschrift*, says Freud throughout his works) which leaves a mark at the surface or in the thickness of a substrate. And in any case, directly or indirectly, this concept—or rather this *figure* of the substrate—marks the properly *fundamental* assignation of our problem, the problem of the fundamental. Can one imagine an archive without foundation, without substrate, without substance, without subjectile? And if it were impossible, what of the history of substrates? What of the future of the substrate in its relationship to the history of psychoanalysis? From the *Sketches* up to *Beyond*, to the *Mystic Pad* and beyond, there is no limit to this problematic of impression, that is, of inscription which leaves a mark right on the substrate. This then becomes a place of consignation, of “inscription” or of

“recording,” as the *Metapsychology* frequently says (“*Niederlassung oder Niederschrift*,” “installation,” “location or registration”) when it recalls, for example in *The Unconscious*, at least three things:

a. the topological hypothesis of several psychological systems (“two or three”)—thus what permits to justify the distinction between memory and archive—explains why psychoanalysis was spoken of, and in part incorrectly, as a “depth psychology” or an “abyssal psychology” (*Tiefenpsychologie*) [SE 14: 173];

b. this topic has nothing to do, for the moment, at this time, “*for the present*” (underlined by Freud), with an anatomical point of view on cerebral localizations. By stressing in italics “*for the present*” (*vorläufig*), Freud clearly wants to leave room for what the future of science may teach us about this;

c. lastly, these hypotheses are nothing other, and nothing more than intuitive representations, (*Veranschaulichungen*), “graphic illustrations” according to the English translation. They “set out to be no more than graphic illustrations” [SE 14: 175]

This problematic of impression is discouraging for those who might wish to find in it a privileged entrance. Because it becomes confused with the whole corpus of Freud’s works, whether it has to do with collective or individual memory, with censorship or repression, with dynamic, with topic, or with economy, with the UCS or PCS systems, with perception, with mnemonic trace.

It is undoubtedly because I had already privileged it, in many other texts, that this typographic figure of the press, of printing, or of the imprint imposed itself so quickly on me over the telephone with the word “impression.” This word capitalizes on a double advantage, above all in a country of English-speaking culture. In the first place, it reawakens the code of English empiricism: the concepts of sensible “impression” and of copy play a major role there in the genealogy of ideas; and is not the copy of an impression already a sort of archive? In the second place the word “impression” reminds us that no tunnel in history will ever align the two translations of “*Verdrängung*”: “repression” in English, as in Spanish, a word that belongs to the same family as “impression” (the *Verdrängung* always represses an impression), and “*refoulement*” in French, a word that is not allied to the semantic family of the “impression,” as is the word “*répression*,” which we reserve in French for the translation of “*Unterdrückung*,” most often translated in English, as in Spanish and Portuguese, by “suppression.”

The stakes of this conceptual difference between *Verdrängung* and *Unterdrückung* are not limited to nominal questions of translation, of rhetoric or of semantics, although they also accumulate there. They directly concern the structures of archivization. Because they touch on the topic differences and thus on the location of the substrates of traces, on the subjectile of consignment (*Niederschrift*), from one system to the other. Unlike repression (*Verdrängung*), which remains unconscious in its operation and in its result, suppression (*Unterdrückung*) effects what Freud calls a “second censorship”—between the conscious and the preconscious—or rather affects the affect, which is to say, that which *can never* be repressed in the unconscious but only suppressed and displaced in another affect.

It is one of the numerous questions we will not be able to treat here. In their epistemology, in their historiography, in their operations as well as in their object, what should the classical archivists or historians make of this distinction between “repression” and “*répression*,” between “*Verdrängung*” and “*Unterdrückung*,” between “repression” and “suppression”? If this distinction has any relevance, it will be enough to disrupt the tranquil landscape of all historical knowledge, of all historiography, and even of all self-consistent “scholarship.” Who could say that this has only begun to happen? And even among the historians of psychoanalysis, who nevertheless ought to be the first to rework their axiomatics and their methodology, even assuming that the classical concept of historical science and of “scholarship” still resists and rides out this mutation intact?

2. This orients us toward the second valence of this word, "impression." It no doubt seems less immediately necessary and obvious. "Impression," "Freudian impression": this no doubt made something else be felt in anticipation. What?

Well, concerning the archive, Freud never managed to form anything that deserves to be called a concept. Neither have we, by the way. We have no concept, only an impression, a series of impressions associated with a word. To the rigor of the *concept*, I am opposing here the vagueness or the open imprecision, the relative indetermination of such a *notion*. "Archive" is only a *notion*, an impression associated with a word and for which, together with Freud, we do not have a concept. We only have an impression, an insistent impression through the unstable feeling of a shifting figure, of a schema, or of an in-finite or indefinite process. Unlike what a classical philosopher or scholar would be tempted to do, I do not consider this impression, or the notion of this impression, to be a subconcept, the feebleness of a blurred and subjective preknowledge, destined for I know not what sin of nominalism, but to the contrary, I will explain myself later, I consider it to be the possibility and the very future of the concept, to be the very concept of the future, if there is such a thing and if, as I believe, the idea of the archive depends on it. This is one of the theses: there are essential reasons for which a concept in the process of being formed always remains inadequate relative to what it ought to be, divided, disjointed between two forces. And this disjointedness has a necessary relationship with the structure of archivization.

It follows, certainly, that Freudian psychoanalysis proposes a new theory of the archive; it takes into account a topic and a death drive without which there would not in effect be any desire or any possibility for the archive. But at the same time, at once for strategic reasons and because the conditions of archivization implicate all the tensions, contradictions, or aporias we are trying to formalize here, notably those which make of it a movement of the promise and of the future no less than of recording the past, the concept of the archive must inevitably carry in itself, as does every concept, an unknowable weight. The presupposition of this weight also takes on the *figures* of "repression" and "suppression," even if it can not necessarily be reduced to these. This double presupposition leaves an imprint. It inscribes an impression in language and in discourse. The unknowable weight which imprints itself thus does not weigh only as a negative charge. It involves the history of the concept, it inflects archive desire or fever, their opening on the future, their dependency with respect to what will come, in short, all that ties knowledge and memory to the promise.

3. "Freudian impression" also has a third meaning, unless this is the first: the impression *left* by Sigmund Freud, beginning with the impression *left* in him, inscribed in him, from his birth and his covenant, from his circumcision, through all the manifest or secret history of psychoanalysis, of the institution and of the works, by way of the public and private correspondence, including this letter from Jakob Shelomoh Freid to Shelomoh Sigmund Freud in memory of the signs or tokens of the covenant and to accompany the "new skin" of a Bible. I wish to speak of the *impression left* by Freud, by the event which carries this family name, the nearly unforgettable and incontestable, undeniable *impression* (even and above all for those who deny it) that Sigmund Freud will have *made* on anyone, after him, who speaks *of him* or speaks *to him*, and who must then, accepting it or not, knowing it or not, be thus marked: in his or her culture and discipline, whatever it may be, in particular philosophy, medicine, psychiatry, and more precisely here, because we are speaking of memory and of archive, the history of texts and of discourses, political history, legal history, the history of ideas or of culture, the history of religion and religion itself, the history of institutions and of sciences, in particular the history of this institutional and scientific project called psychoanalysis. Not to mention the history of history, the history of historiography. In any given discipline, one can no longer, one

should no longer be able to, thus one no longer has the right or the means to claim to speak of this without having been marked in advance, in one way or another, by this Freudian impression. It is impossible and illegitimate to do so without having integrated, well or badly, in an important way or not, recognizing it or denying it, what is called here the *Freudian impression*. If one is under the impression that it is possible not to take this into account, forgetting it, effacing it, crossing it out or objecting to it, one has already confirmed, we could even say countersigned (thus archived), a “repression” or a “suppression.” This, then, is perhaps what I heard without hearing, what I understood without understanding, what I wanted obscurely to overhear, allowing these words to dictate to me over the telephone, in “Freudian impression.”

FOREWORD

It is thus our impression that we can no longer ask the question of the concept, of the history of the concept, and notably of the concept of the archive. No longer, at least, in a temporal or historical modality dominated by the present or by the past. We no longer feel we have the right to ask questions whose form, grammar, and lexicon nonetheless seem so legitimate, sometimes so neutral. We no longer find assured meaning in questions such as these: do we *already* have at our disposition a concept of the archive? a concept of the archive which deserves this name? which is one and whose unity is assured? Have we ever been assured of the homogeneity, of the consistency, of the univocal relationship of any concept to a term or to such a word as “archive”?

In their form and in their grammar, these questions are all turned toward the past: they ask if we *already* have at our disposal such a concept and if we have ever had any assurance in this regard. To have a concept at one’s disposal, to have assurances with regard to it, this presupposes a closed heritage and the guarantee which is sealed, in some sense, by this heritage. And the word and the notion of the archive seem at first, admittedly, to point toward the past, to refer to the signs of consigned memory, to recall faithfulness to tradition. If we have attempted to underline the past in these questions from the outset, it is also to indicate the direction of another problematic. As much as and more than a thing of the past, before such a thing, the archive should *call into question* the coming of the future. And if we still do not have a viable, unified, given concept of the archive, this is undoubtedly not because of a purely conceptual, theoretical, epistemological insufficiency on the level of multiple and specific disciplines; it is perhaps not due to lack of sufficient elucidation in certain circumscribed domains: archaeology, documentography, bibliography, philology, historiography.

Let us imagine in effect a project of general archiviology, a word that does not exist but that could designate a general and interdisciplinary science of the archive. Such a discipline must in effect risk being paralyzed in a preliminary aporia. It would have to *either* (1) include psychoanalysis, a scientific project which, as one could easily show, wants to be a general science of the archive, of everything that can happen to the economy of memory and to its substrates, traces, documents, in their supposedly psychical or techno-prosthetic forms (internal or external: the mystic pads of the past or of the future, what they represent and what they supplement), *or* (2) on the contrary, place itself under the *critical* authority (in the Kantian sense) of psychoanalysis, continue to dispute it, of course, but after having integrated its logic, its concepts, its metapsychology, its economy, its topic, etc., as Freud repeats them again in such precise fashion in the third part of his *Moses*, when he treats at length the “difficulties,” the archival problems of oral narrative and public property, of mnesic traces, of archaic and transgenerational heritage, and of everything that can happen to an “impression” in these at once “topic” (*topisch*) and “genetic” (*genetisch*) processes. He repeats here that this topic has nothing to do with the anatomy of the brain, and this is enough to complicate the phylogenetic dimension which he judges to be in effect irreducible, but which he is far from simplifying in its Lamarckian schemas (he is often accused of this, by Yerushalmi also), or even its Darwinian ones. The adherence to a biological doctrine of acquired characters—of the biological archive, in sum—cannot be made to agree in a simple and immediate way with all Freud acknowledges otherwise: the memory of the experience of previous generations, the time of the formation of languages and of a symbolicity which transcends the given languages and discursivity as such. Freud is more careful. He knows and recognizes explicitly “the present attitude of biological science, which refuses to hear of the inheritance of acquired characters by succeeding generations” [*Moses and Monotheism*, SE 23: 100].⁵ And if he

5. Yerushalmi takes these texts into account. He is well aware that Freud was well aware of it: the inheritance of acquired characters was contested by science. To explain a nonetheless

admits that it is difficult for him to do without a reference to biological evolution (and who could seriously reproach him for it, in principle and absolutely? in the name of what?), he shows himself in this regard to be more reserved and more circumspect than is usually acknowledged, distinguishing notably between the acquired characters ("which are hard to grasp") and the "memory-traces of external events" [SE 23: 100]. These characters and these traces could well follow (Freud would certainly not say it here in this form) quite complicated linguistic, cultural, cipherable, and in general ciphered transgenerational and transindividual relays, transiting thus through an archive, the science of which is not at a standstill. This does not necessarily bring us back to Lamarck or to Darwin, even if it obliges us to articulate the history of genetic programs and ciphers on all the symbolic and individual archives differently. All that Freud says is that we are receptive to an analogy between the two types of transgenerational memory or archive (the memory of an ancestral experience or the so-called biologically acquired character) and that "we cannot imagine [*vorstellen*] one without the other" [SE 23: 100]. Without the irrepressible, that is to say, only suppressible and repressible, force and authority of this transgenerational memory, the problems of which we speak would be dissolved and resolved in advance. There would no longer be any essential history of culture, there would no longer be any question of memory and of archive, of patriarchive or of matriarchive, and one would no longer even understand how an ancestor can speak within us, nor what sense there might be in us to speak to him or her, to speak in such an "unheimlich," "uncanny" fashion, to his or her ghost. *With it.*

We have already encountered this alternative, we will return to it again: must one apply to what will have been predefined as the Freudian or psychoanalytic archive in general schemas of reading, of interpretation, of classification which have been received and reflected out of this corpus whose unity is thus presupposed? or rather, has one on the contrary the right to treat the said psychoanalytico-Freudian archive according to a logic or a method, a historiography or a hermeneutic which are independent from Freudian psychoanalysis, indeed anterior even to the very name of Freud, while presupposing in another manner the closure and the identity of this corpus? This independence can take numerous forms, pre- or postpsychoanalytic, with or without an explicit project: to integrate and to formalize what we called a minute ago the Freudian impression. This is an experience that is familiar to a number of those who are participating in this conference or who share this concern, and not only, here or there, to the most eminent historians of psychoanalysis.

In an enigmatic sense which will clarify itself *perhaps* (perhaps, because nothing should be sure here, for essential reasons), the question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past. This is not the question of a concept dealing with the past which might *already* be at our disposal or not at our disposal, *an archivable concept of the archive*. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what this will have meant, we will only know in the times to come. Perhaps. Not tomorrow but in the times to come, later on or perhaps never. A spectral messianicity is at work in the concept of the archive and ties it, like religion, like history, like science

obstinate predilection for Lamarckism, he evokes the precious works of Ilse Grubrich-Simitis on this subject, then asks himself if Lamarckism (without of course being something "Jewish") did not tempt the Jew in Freud. "Deconstructed into Jewish terms," does Lamarckism not signify that the Jew cannot cease being Jewish "because one's fate in being Jewish was determined long ago by the Fathers, and that often what one feels most deeply and obscurely is a trilling wire in the blood" [31]? A letter from Freud to Zweig speaks the same language, in effect, concerning the land of Israel and the heritage that centuries of inhabitation have perhaps left in "our blood and nerves" [qtd. in Yerushalmi 31]. Yerushalmi also cites Edelheit in a note: for Freud, in effect, "although human evolution is 'Darwinian via the genes' it is 'Lamarckian via language and culture'" [31n44].

itself, to a very singular experience of the promise. And we are never far from Freud in saying this. Messianicity does not mean messianism. Having explained myself on this elsewhere, in *Specters of Marx*, and even if this distinction remains fragile and enigmatic, allow me to treat it as established, in order to save time.

Later, we ought, perhaps, to formulate the concept and the formal law of this messianic hypothesis. For the moment, allow me to illustrate it while evoking again one of the most striking moments in the scene, if I may say it in front of him, which Yerushalmi has with Freud, at the end of his book, in what he calls his “Monologue with Freud.” We must come to the moment where Yerushalmi seems to suspend everything, in particular everything he has said and done up to this point, from the thread of a discrete sentence. One could be tempted to take this thread to be the umbilical cord of the book. Everything seems to be suspended from this umbilical cord—by the umbilical cord of the event which such a book as this represents. Because on the last page of a work which is entirely devoted to memory and to the archive, a sentence says the future. It says, in future tense: “Much will depend, of course, on how the very terms *Jewish* and *science* are to be defined” [100]. This sentence followed an allusion to “much future work” and it aggravated the opening of this future, enlarging it accordingly, in which the *very possibility of knowledge* remained suspended in the conditional:

Professor Freud, at this point I find it futile to ask whether, genetically or structurally, psychoanalysis is really a Jewish science; that we shall know, if it is at all knowable, only when much future work has been done. Much will depend, of course, on how the very terms Jewish and science are to be defined. [100, my emphasis]

This is a dramatic turn, a stroke of theater, a *coup de théâtre* within a *coup de théâtre*. In an instant which dislocates the linear order of presents, a second *coup de théâtre* illuminates the first. It is also the thunderbolt of a love at first sight, a *coup de foudre* (love and transference) which, in a flash, transfixes with light the memory of the first. With *another light*. One no longer knows very well what the *time*, what the *tense* of this theater will have been, the first stroke of *theater*, the first *stroke*, the *first*. The first period.

The question of the archive remains the same: what comes first? Even better: Who comes first? And second?

At the end of the preceding chapter, the first *coup de théâtre* involving a “crucial episode” and a “canonical text”: Yerushalmi had established the extraordinary archive we inscribed in the exergue. He had given his readers the unique copy given, but first of all returned, by the arch-patriarch to the patriarch, by Jakob to Sigmund, and yet, right on the substrate of its “new skin,” the *figurative* reminder of a circumcision, the impression left on his body by the archive of a dissymmetrical covenant without contract, of a heteronomic covenant to which Sigmund Shelomoh subscribed before even knowing how to sign—much less countersign—his name. In the bottomless thickness of this inscription *en abyme*, in the instant of the archio-nomological event, under the new skin of a book which consigns the new skin, wounded and blessed, of a newborn, there resonated already the words intended for the newborn of a God speaking to him in him (“within you”) even before he could speak, giving him to understand, to hear, in truth to read or to decipher: “Go, read my Book that I have written.”

Giving us this archive to read, offering it to us in the course of a masterly decipherment, Yerushalmi, in turn, means less to *give* than to *give back*. He acts a bit like Jakob who does not give Sigmund his Bible but rather gives it back to him. Returns it to him. In giving us this document to read, this true scholar wants also to give back to Freud his own competence, his own capacity to receive and thus to read the Hebrew inscription. He wants above all to make him confess it. Because Freud, and this is the declared aim

of Yerushalmi's demonstration, must have known, from a young age, how to read the dedication. He ought, in consequence, to have confessed belonging, thus making his Hebrew culture public or more clearly than he did. Yerushalmi recalled all Freud's denials on this subject, concerning his own family or himself (all emancipated *Aufklärer*! he claimed, all Voltairians! and who retained little of Jewish culture!). Like Freud's father, the scholar wants to call Sigmund Shelomoh back to the covenant by establishing, that is to say, by restoring the covenant. The scholar repeats, in a way, the gesture of the father. He recalls or he repeats the circumcision, even if the one and the other can only do it, of course, *by figure*.

After the first, a second *coup de théâtre*: it is the moment where Professor Yerushalmi, with the incontestable authority of the scholar, but in an apparently more filial position, addresses himself or rather pretends to address himself directly to Professor Freud, in truth to Freud's ghost. That the position then is more filial, that it manifests the love and the respect of a son, in no way contradicts the repetition of the paternal gesture. It is quite possible that this confirms it and relaunches it *en abyme*. When a scholar addresses himself to a phantom, this recalls irresistibly the opening of *Hamlet*. At the spectral apparition of the dead father, Marcellus implores Horatio: "Thou art a Scholler, speake to it, Horatio." I tried to show elsewhere that though the classical scholar did not believe in phantoms and would not in truth know how to speak to them, forbidding himself even, it is quite possible that Marcellus had anticipated the coming of a *scholar of the future*, of a scholar who, in the future and so as to conceive of the future, would dare to speak to the phantom. Of a scholar who would dare to admit that he knows how to speak *to* the phantom, even claiming that not only does this neither contradict nor limit his scholarship, but will in truth have conditioned it, at the price of some still-inconceivable complication which may yet prove the other one, that is, the phantom, to be correct. And perhaps always the paternal phantom, that is, who is in a position to be correct, to be proven correct—and to have the last word.

"Dear and most highly esteemed Professor Freud," thus begins this letter. An intensely filial and respectful letter, indeed, but all the more bitter, cutting, merciless in the reproach, one would say murderous in the quibbling, if the other were not dead, and thus infinitely inaccessible in his all-powerful vulnerability.

These thirty-odd pages are not only to be classed as fiction, which would already be a break with the language which had dominated up to this point in the book, that is, the discourse of scholarship, the discourse of a historian, of a philologist, of an expert on the history of Judaism, of a Biblical scholar, as they say, claiming to speak in all objectivity while basing himself on ancient or new archives—and the wealth of these novelties has to do in particular with the fact that certain of these documents, up until now hardly visible or inaccessible, secret or private, have been newly interpreted, newly translated, newly illuminated from historical or philological viewpoints.

No, this fiction has another originality which sets the fictionality of the "Monologue" as if *en abyme*: the apostrophe is addressed to a dead person, to the historian's object become spectral subject, the virtual addressee or interlocutor of a sort of open letter. Another archive effect. In its very fiction, this apostrophe enriches the corpus that it claims to treat but that it enlarges and of which in truth it is henceforth a part. At the end of a tight discussion with the phantom, according to the intersected rules of psychoanalysis and of the Talmud, "in the spirit of *le-didakh*," the signatory of the book and of the letter ends by interrogating the specter of Freud.

We will come to this. For the moment, we say the "book" and the "letter," because if the letter is apparently a part of the book, if this "Monologue with Freud" resembles a last chapter of the book, one can also note two other structural singularities about its relationship to the book which, at least according to the editorial convention of its bibliographic archivization, contains it within itself. In the first place, this fictitious

"Monologue" is heterogeneous to the book, in its status, in its project, in its form; it is thus by pure juridical fiction that one binds in effect such a fiction in the same book signed by the same author, and that one classifies it under eight "scientific" rubrics (nonfictional: neither poetic nor novelistic nor literary) in the bibliographic catalogue whose classical categories are all found at the beginning of the work. In the second place, this postscript of sorts retrospectively determines what precedes it. It does it in a decisive fashion, marking it indeed with an essential indecision, namely the umbilical opening of the future which makes the words "Jew" and "science" indeterminate at the very least—or in any case accedes to their indetermination. Thus one can just as well say that the entire book is in advance contained, as if carried away, drawn in, engulfed by the abysmal element of the "Monologue," for which it constitutes a kind of long preface, an exergue, a preamble, or a foreword. The true title of the book, its most appropriate title, its truth, would indeed be *Monologue with Freud*. Let us note this at least on account of the archive: to recall that there could be no archiving without titles (thus without names and without the archontic principle of legitimization, without laws, without criteria of classification and of hierarchization, without order and without order, in the double sense of the word). In the course of this tête-à-tête discussion, but in the presence of the reader that *we* are (or God knows who) as *terstis*, third party or witness, Freud is no longer treated as a third person represented by his written works (public and private writings, clinical, theoretical, or autobiographical, institutional or not, psychoanalytic and political, scientific or "novelistic"—because Yerushalmi's entire book turns around a book by Freud which he himself wanted to present as a *fiction*, *Der Mann Moses, ein historischer Roman*, while aiming at a new concept of truth, that is, under the name of "historical truth," a truth which scholarship, historiography, and perhaps philosophy have some difficulty thinking through). Freud is thus no longer treated as a witness in the third person (*terstis*), he finds himself *called to witness* as a second person. A gesture which is in principle incompatible with the norms of classical scientific discourse, in particular with those of history or of philology which had presided over the same book up to this point. In addition, the signatory of this monological letter all of a sudden proposes to this second person who is at first addressed as "you" and not "he," to speak in terms of "we." And as he recognizes that this other does not have a true right of reply, he responds for him: "In what is at issue here, indeed has been so all along, we both have, as Jews, an equal stake. Therefore in speaking of the Jews I shall not say 'they.' I shall say 'we.' The distinction is familiar to you" [81].

By definition, because he is dead and thus incapable of responding, Freud can only acquiesce. He cannot refuse this community at once proposed and imposed. He can only say "yes" to this covenant into which he must enter *one more time*. Because he will have had to enter it, already, seven or eight days after his birth. *Mutatis mutandis*, this is the situation of absolute dissymmetry and heteronomy in which a son finds himself on being circumcised after the seventh day and on being made to enter into a covenant at a moment when it is out of the question that he respond, sign, or countersign. Here again, the archive marked once in his body, Freud hears himself recalled to the indestructible covenant which this extraordinary performative engages: "*I shall say 'we,'*" when it is addressed to a phantom or a newborn.

(Let us note this at least in parentheses: the violence of this *communal* dissymmetry remains at once extraordinary and, precisely, most *common*. It is the origin of the *common*, happening each time we address ourselves to someone, each time we call them while *supposing*, that is to say while *imposing* a "we," and thus while inscribing the other person in this situation of an at once spectral and patriarchic nursling.)

Everything happens here as if Yerushalmi had decided in turn to circumcise Freud, as if he felt an obligation yet to come ("I shall say 'we'") to recircumcise him by figure while confirming the covenant, as if he felt the duty, in truth, to repeat Jakob Freud's

gesture when, in an inscription at once outside and inside the book, *right on the Book*, in *melitzah*, he reminded Shelomoh “In the seventh in the days of the years of your life the Spirit of the Lord began to move you and spoke within you: Go, read in my Book that I have written . . .” [71].

(The memory without memory of a mark returns everywhere, about which we ought to debate with Freud, concerning his many rapid statements on this subject: it is clearly the question of the singular archive named “circumcision.” Although he speaks of it here and there from Freud’s or from Jones’s point of view, Yerushalmi does not place this mark, at least in its literalness, at the center of his book⁶—and the enigma of circumcision, notably in the great war between Judaism and Christianity, is quite often that of its literalness and of all that depends on this. Although I believe this question to be irreducible, in particular in the rereading of Freud, irreducible, notably, to that of castration, I must put it aside here, not without some regret, along with that of the phylacteries, those archives of skin or of parchment covered with writing that Jewish men, here too, and not Jewish women, carry right close to the body, on the arm and on the forehead: *right on the body* [*à même le corps*], like the sign of circumcision, but with a *being-right-on* [*être-à-même*] which this time does not exclude the detachment and the untying of the ligament, of the substrate and of the text at once.)

In this deliberately filial scene which Yerushalmi has with the patriarch of psychoanalysis, the apostrophe is launched from the position of the father, of the father of the dead father. The other speaks. It is often thus in scenes the son has with the father. Speech comes back to the grandfather. Speech *returns*, in French *la parole revient*: as act of speaking and as right to speech. Why is this monologue clearly not a monologue or a soliloquy? Because it plays on the irony of presenting itself as a “Monologue with . . .”? Because more than one person speaks? Undoubtedly, but there is more than the number. There is the order. Because if the signatory of the monologue is not alone in signing, far from it, he is above all the *first* to do so. He speaks *from* the position of the other: he carries in himself, this mouthpiece, he bears the voice which could be that of Jakob Freud, namely the arch-patriarch of psychoanalysis. And thus, in the name of Jakob, the voice of all the arch-patriarchs in history, in Jewish history in particular, for example those who not only inscribe their sons in the covenant at the moment of circumcision, and do it more than once, literally or by figure, but who do not cease to be surprised and to remain skeptical about the possibility that a daughter could speak in her own name.

I have just alluded to the last request which the signatory of this monologue without response addresses to Freud’s phantom. This request is carried in a question; we must distinguish between the one and the other here; the request questions on the subject of Anna Freud: “your Antigone,” says Yerushalmi in passing, Yerushalmi, who, clearly thus identifying Freud, his ghost, with Oedipus, thinks perhaps—*perhaps*—that this will suffice to deoedipalize his own relationship with Freud, as if there were no possibility of ever becoming Oedipus’s Oedipus. In 1977, Anna Freud was invited by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to inaugurate an endowed chair carrying the name of her—long dead—father. Unable to go—she too—she sends, she too, a written statement. In this other archive document which Yerushalmi passionately invests, Anna declares, among other things, that the accusation according to which psychoanalysis is a “Jewish science,” “under present circumstances, can serve as a title of honour” [100].

Yerushalmi asks himself whether this sentence *written* by Anna is indeed *signed* by Anna. Asking himself this, he asks his spectral interlocutor (he asks himself (of) his

6. The theme of circumcision is, however, taken up from several points of view in Moses. From a historical point of view, it is a “conducting fossil” (Leitfossil) for investigating memory and interpreting the Israelites’ relations with the servitude in and the exodus from Egypt (where circumcision was an indigenous practice). From a more structural point of view, circumcision is the symbolic substitute of the castration of the son by the primitive father.

specter who would first have asked himself this) if his daughter spoke in her own name: as if he doubted that a daughter, above all the daughter of Freud, could speak in her own name, almost thirty years after the father's death, and above all as if he wished, still secretly (a secret which he says he wants to keep, that is to say, to share with Freud, to be alone in sharing with Freud), that she had always spoken in the name of her father, in the name of the father:

In fact, I will limit myself even further and be content if you answer only one question: When your daughter conveyed those words to the congress in Jerusalem, was she speaking in your name?

Please tell me, Professor. I promise I won't reveal your answer to anyone.

[100]

These are the last words of the book. Everything seems to be sealed by this ultimate signature in the form of a promise. Secretly but visibly, sheltered by a secret he wants manifest, by a secret he is anxious to make public, Yerushalmi wishes that Anna-Antigone had only been the living spokesperson, the faithful interpreter, the voice bearer come to support her dead father and to represent his word, his name, his belonging, his thesis, and even his faith. What, according to Yerushalmi, did she say then? That in spite of all Freud's strategic denials, in spite of all the political precautions he expressed throughout his life concerning the universal (non-Jewish) essence of psychoanalysis, it ought to honor itself for being Jewish, for being a fundamentally, essentially, radically Jewish science, Jewish in a different sense from the anti-Semitic allegation, while revealing the "historical truth" of anti-Semitism.

It seems to me that Yerushalmi's thesis advances here while withdrawing itself. But it is a thesis with a rather particular status—and a paradoxical movement: it posits not so much what *is* as what *will have been* and *ought to* or *should be in the future*, namely that psychoanalysis should in the future have been a Jewish science (I will return in a moment to this temporal modality), in a sense, admittedly, which is radically different from that of the anti-Semitic denunciation, but which would bring to light, one more time, and according to a very Freudian gesture in its style and tradition, the truth that could be carried by the anti-Semitic unconscious.

We will return to this question in another form momentarily. For the time being, I will pull from this web a single interpretative thread, the one that concerns the archive. What happens to the status of the archive in this situation? Well, the day when in an absolutely exceptional, unprecedented, unique, and inaugural fashion, indeed one that is incompatible with the tradition and the very idea of science, of *ēpistēmē*, of *historia*, or of *theoria*, indeed of philosophy in the West, the day, and from the moment when a science presenting itself as such and under this name binds itself intrinsically not only to the history of a proper name, of a filiation, and of a house, here Freud's house, but to the name and to the law of a nation, of a people, or of a religion, here psychoanalysis as Jewish science, this would have the consequence, among others, of radically transforming the relationship of such a science to its own archive. And in the same stroke, having kept an essential account of the singularity of an *arkheion*, this would transform the concept of science and the concept of the archive. In the *classical* structure of their concept, a science, a philosophy, a theory, a theorem are or should be *intrinsically* independent of the singular archive of their history. We know well that these things (science, philosophy, theory, etc.) have a history, a rich and complex history which carries them and produces them in a thousand ways. We know well that in diverse and complicated ways, proper names and signatures count. But the structure of the theoretical, philosophical, scientific statement, and even when it concerns history, does not have, should not in principle have an intrinsic and essential need for the archive, and for what binds the archive in all its forms to some proper

name or to some body proper, to some (familial or national) filiation, to covenants, to secrets. It has no such need, in any case, in its relationship or in its claim to truth—in the classical sense of the term. But as soon as one speaks of a Jewish science, whatever one's understanding of this word (and I will come back to this in an instant), the archive becomes a founding moment for science as such: not only the history and the memory of singular events, of exemplary proper names, languages and filiations, but the deposition in an *arkheion* (which can be an arc or a temple), the consignment in a place of relative exteriority, whether it has to do with writings, documents, or ritualized marks on the body proper (for example, phylacteries or circumcision). At issue here is nothing less than taking seriously the question as to whether a science can depend on something like a circumcision. We are deliberately saying "something like a circumcision" to designate the place of this problem, a place which is itself problematic, between the figure and literalness. Can one be satisfied with Freud's many statements on circumcision, always quickly tied to castration or to the threat of castration? To explain the genesis of anti-Semitism, namely, the jealousy with regard to a people which presented itself, he says, as the favored eldest son of God, Freud evokes in his *Moses* the circumscribed isolation of the Jews, the isolation which cuts them off from the world, the solitude of their exclusion by a circumcision which, according to him, always recalls dreaded castration. This seems less interesting, in any case here, or less convincing, than the manner in which Freud characterizes the *impression* which circumcision leaves on those who are uncircumcised: "a disagreeable, uncanny [*unheimlich*] impression"⁷ [SE 23: 91]. (I have attempted elsewhere to show, and cannot go into it here, that each time the word "*unheimlich*" appears in Freud's text—and not only in the essay of this title, *Das Unheimliche*—one can localize an uncontrollable undecidability in the axiomatics, the epistemology, the logic, the order of the discourse and of the thetic or theoretic statements; and the same is true, in just as significant a way, of Heidegger.)

Yerushalmi undoubtedly thinks, and his book seems in any case to aim at demonstrating, that psychoanalysis is a Jewish science. It seems to aim for it in an original sense. Proposing a rigorous and "scientific" renewal of reading, he bases himself on an archive which is sometimes archaic (the oldest biblical or talmudic tradition), sometimes recently published. In any case he leaves his own demonstration suspended at the point where it might seem to be conclusive. The fundamental question remains without response. Without response on Freud's part. Yerushalmi clearly wants this to come from *Freud's mouth*. Freud must also say, in his own name, that he avows and proclaims, in an irreducible performative, that psychoanalysis should honor itself for being a Jewish science. A performative by which he would as much determine science, psychoanalytic science, as the essence of Jewishness, if not of Judaism.

It goes without saying, if one could put it this way, that Freud's phantom does not respond. That is at least how things appear. But can this be trusted? In promising secrecy for a virtual response which keeps us waiting, which will always keep us waiting, the signatory of this monologue lets it be understood that Freud would never say in public, for example in a book and in what is destined to become public archive, what he thinks in truth secretly, like the monologist who says "we," namely, that, yes, psychoanalysis is indeed a Jewish science. Is this not incidentally what he has *already*, in private, so often suggested? Is this not what he has *already* murmured in remarks, entrusted to letters, consigned in a thousand signs which Yerushalmi has inventoried, classed, put in order, interpreted with unprecedented vigilance and jubilation? But at the end of the book, the monologist who says "we" says he is ready to respect the secret, to keep for his personal archives the response which the phantom, with its own mouth, could murmur in his ear in private.

7. "Ferner hat unter den Sitten, durch die sich die Juden absonderten, die der Beschneidung einen unliebsamen, unheimlichen Eindruck gemacht."

Nothing seems to me more serious than what is in play in this conclusion, in the very secret of its opening, in the fiction of its suspense. For a large number of reasons. Some of them seem to be turned toward the past, others toward the future of the archive.

A. Concerning the former, those which look toward the past, I will say only a word. It will go in the direction of what, in Freud's eyes, and in particular in *The Rat Man*, ties the progress of science and of reason to the advent of the patriarchy. In a note which I do not have the time to read here and will comment on elsewhere, Freud makes three mistakes, with Lichtenberg, whose support he seeks. He makes a mistake in affirming that there can be no doubt about the identity of the mother, insofar as it depends on the witness of the senses, while the identity of the father always remains doubtful for it depends, and it alone, on a rational inference, as that "legal fiction" of which Stephen speaks in Joyce's *Ulysses*. However, better than ever today, if only with the possibility of surrogate mothers, prosthetic maternities, sperm banks, and all the artificial inseminations, as they are secured for us already and will be secured still more for us in the future by bio-genetic techno-science, we know that maternity is as inferred, constructed, and interpreted as paternity. And as paternal law. In truth, it has always been thus, for the one and for the other. Freud makes a second mistake in believing with Lichtenberg that paternity, *and it alone*, is as uncertain as the question of whether the moon is inhabited: we know today, in all objective certainty, that the moon is uninhabited, and conversely, it is easier to see and to touch that satellite's soil than the certain identity of a mother. He makes a third mistake in drawing from all these errors, illusions, or phantasms a phallogocentric conclusion: because of this presumed call to reason in the assignation of paternity, beyond the "witness of the senses," the passage to patriarchy marked the civilizing triumph of reason over sensibility, of science over perception.

In doubting that Anna-Antigone had spoken, from London to Jerusalem, in her own name, in visibly hoping that she had spoken in the name of the father—of her dead father—what does the signatory of the "Monologue with Freud" aim to overprint in the "we" of this unilateral contract and of this covenant, in this recircumcision of Freud? Well, he perhaps inscribes, perhaps (I am indeed saying *perhaps*), as if he were signing his name, a discreet but energetic and inefaceable virility: *we* the fathers, *we* the archons, *we* the patriarchs, guardians of the archive and of the law. I say *perhaps*, because all these questions remain as suspended as the future to which I now turn.

I am indeed saying "perhaps," as Yerushalmi says "perhaps" at one of the most decisive moments of his suspended conclusions ("Absurd? Possibly. But *tomēr dokh*—perhaps, after all . . . ?" [99]). What is at issue here is coming to a conclusion on the subject of Freud's secret, of his dissimulated or unavowable thought according to which psychoanalysis would be a Judaism without God; or according to which, concerning the future of Laius and of Oedipus or the future of religion, there would be no hope. "[Y]ou may very well be right," says Yerushalmi, who sees in the closure of the future, in hopelessness, in the nonpromise, more than in the atheism, what is least Jewish, most un-Jewish, in Freud; such that Jewishness here, if not Judaism, comes down, in its minimal essence, but as science itself, to the openness of the future. "But it is on this question of hope or hopelessness," Yerushalmi will say to Freud, "even more than on God or godlessness, that your teaching may be at its most un-Jewish" [95].⁸ I stress this essential modality of the *perhaps*, as I am always tempted to do. It seems to me to be irreducible.

8. Yerushalmi indeed distinguishes, and we will come back to this later, between Jewishness and Judaism. Judaism can be "terminable" and finite, as religion, tradition, or culture; Jewishness is not. One cannot translate "at its most un-Jewish" by "the furthest away from Judaism [la plus éloignée du judaïsme]," as the French translation does, without risking to betray or to miss the very thesis of this book.

Nietzsche claimed to recognize the thinkers of the future by their courage to say *perhaps*. I emphasize “perhaps” for yet another reason, while alluding to this patriarchal filiation of elders into which Yerushalmi seems to inscribe himself, at least by one of his gestures. Because he also asks Professor Freud a remarkable question about the identity of the mother, in his oedipal schema, perhaps a non-sensible identity, shielded perhaps from the witness of the senses, like the “legal fiction” of the father and even more than this because this time the woman would be the law itself:

the Torah, the Teaching, the revelation, the Torah which in Hebrew is grammatically feminine and which is midrashically compared to a bride. It is over possession of her that Christianity, the younger son, came to challenge, not so much the Father as Judaism, the elder son. For this struggle “sibling rivalry” is perhaps too tame a phrase. Psychologically (and alas, all too often even historically) we are talking about fratricide. [92]⁹

B. Yes, let us rather speak of the future. Just before asking his question of the phantom of the patriarch, of the archontic specter of psychoanalysis, at the moment he promises to keep the secret, above all if he confirms that psychoanalysis is indeed a Jewish science, Yerushalmi takes the risk of making a decisive gesture. In a stroke, in a single paragraph, he overturns the entire epistemological axiomatic which had seemed up to this point to be a presupposition of his discourse. To describe this gesture I will select, once again, only what concerns the archive. First of all, it seems that in private, and I stress this point, in a *private letter*, Freud had already given, in the essentials, the very response that Yerushalmi seems to be waiting for or pretends to be waiting for, by promising to keep it to himself, as if he wanted to have for himself in secret, here, for his very own self, Josef Hayim Yerushalmi, the principle of an equally private response which Freud had *already* given (65 years earlier!) to Enrico Morselli. As if he wanted to share with Freud, all alone, a secret that Freud had already confided to someone else, before Yerushalmi was even born: “In 1926,” Yerushalmi writes, “you wrote privately to Enrico Morselli that you were not sure that his notion that psychoanalysis is a direct product of the Jewish mind is correct, but that if it is, you ‘wouldn’t be ashamed’” [100].

After having cited this private document, Yerushalmi adds a remark. It displaces in one stroke the whole question of the equation between Judaism and psychoanalysis. The two terms of such an equation become equally unknown, indeterminate, yet to be determined, totally given over to the future. Let us read this declaration, on the last page of the “Monologue”:

Professor Freud, at this point I find it futile to ask whether, genetically or structurally, psychoanalysis is really a Jewish science; that we shall know, if it is at all knowable, only when much future work has been done. Much will depend, of course, on how the very terms Jewish and science are to be defined. Right now, leaving the semantic and epistemological questions aside, I want only to know whether you ultimately came to believe it to be so. [100]

Yerushalmi underlines *you*: what is important is not so much the content of what Freud would say, Freud, moreover, who has already acknowledged it in a way, as the fact that he should say it, *him* (“you”), with his mouth, and sign it henceforth with his name,

9. On this question of the brother, between Judaism and Christianity and in particular in the institution of psychoanalysis, permit me to refer you to *Politiques de l’amitié*, notably 310 ff. Devoting fine pages to this question of fratricide, Yerushalmi puts forth the hypothesis according to which the figure of Cain offers an explanation which is “as potent” as that of Oedipus.

and sign it as one subscribes to a belief: “whether *you* ultimately came to believe it to be so.” This is *only* what he *wants to know*: “I want only to know whether *you* ultimately came to believe it to be so.” Time and age count. Yerushalmi knows, and he was the first to recall it, that Freud *believed* this, at least 65 years earlier. If he asks it of him again, if he asks for more, if he seems to ask a new confirmation of him, it is as if he wanted the last word, the last will, the ultimate signature (“ultimately”) of a dying father—and to be even more sure, of an already dead father. He wants an ultimate repetition, at the last minute; he asks for an ineffaceable countersignature, of what Freud said 65 years earlier and on quite a few other occasions. This last engagement ought to be irreversible, by definition. Engaging a dead person, it would no longer be subject to the strategic calculations, to the denials of the living Freud, and to the retractions of the founder of a psychoanalysis exposed to all the anti-Semitic violences.

This declaration seems to change all the signs. It is this, this alone, it seems to me, which can carry and justify the book’s subtitle, *Judaism Terminable and Interminable*. Now it leaves not only the definition, thus the determinability as much as the terminability, of Judaism open to the future, but also those of psychoanalysis. Up to here, in any case up to the opening of this fictive monologue, Yerushalmi had measured his discourse—for the bulk of what, in theory, was shown and demonstrated—on the classical norms of knowledge, of scholarship, and of the epistemology which dominate in every scientific community: here, the objectivity of the historian, of the archivist, of the sociologist, of the philologist, the reference to stable themes and concepts, the relative exteriority in relation to the object, particularly in relation to an archive determined as *already given, in the past* or in any case only *incomplete*, determinable and thus terminable in a future itself determinable as future present, domination of the constative over the performative, etc. This is how one can interpret the remark, made “in passing,” concerning the discovery and the unexpected publication, in 1980, of the private archive of Sabina Spielrein. “This discovery,” Yerushalmi notes, “should also serve to remind us of how incomplete and tentative any conclusions must be in our reconstructions of the history of psychoanalysis, until the mounds of materials still unpublished or deliberately restricted are made available” [44]. An incompleteness of the archive, and thus a certain determinability of the future, should be taken into consideration by the historian in any “reconstructions of the history of psychoanalysis.” Now this incompleteness is of an entirely different order from that of the future which is in question at the end of the “Monologue.” In the middle of the book, what was in question was still an incompleteness and a future which belong to the normal time of scientific progress. Without a doubt, at the end of the “Monologue,” Yerushalmi again alludes to the future of some “future work.” But the future of which he then speaks, and above all when it concerns the concepts of science and of Jewishness, is not of the order of such a relative incompleteness. It is no longer only the provisional indetermination which opens the ordinary field of a scientific work in progress and always unfinished, in particular because new archives can still be discovered, come out of secrecy or the private sphere, so as to undergo new interpretations. It is no longer a question of the same time, of the same field and of the same relationship to the archive. At the moment when the historian declares to the patriarch that it would be “futile to ask whether, genetically or structurally, psychoanalysis is really a Jewish science,” and when he adds: “that we shall know, *if it is at all knowable* [my emphasis], only when much future work has been done. Much will depend, of course, on how the very terms *Jewish* and *science* are to be defined,” at this moment he changes registers and times entirely. In a stroke, he suspends all the axiomatic assurances, norms, and rules which had served him until now in organizing the scientific work, notably historiographic criticism, and in particular its relationship to the known and unknown archive. The very order of knowledge, at least of classical knowledge, is suspended. At issue is another concept of the future, to which we will return.

Since the questions which dominate the whole book, up to this "Monologue," concern the relationships between Judaism and science, notably that science which psychoanalysis has wanted to be, Yerushalmi the scholar presumed continuously the knowledge of what "science" and "Judaism" meant. When an evaluation of the scientific character of psychoanalysis was in question, the historian often showed himself to be very severe and without appeal, concerning what he calls, in this book as in *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Freud's Lamarckism or "psycho-Lamarckism" [109]:¹⁰ it is an antiquity condemned by the state of science, of a science which is not Yerushalmi's science and of which he invokes the results, in sum, from the exterior, as would a historian, who would content himself to record the results which are validated, at a particular moment, by a scientific community in which he does not actively participate and of which he does not share the competencies. On the other hand, Yerushalmi accepts, we can suppose, that he belongs to the scientific community of historians or of sociologists of culture, in particular of Jewish culture (he is professor of "Jewish History, Culture, and Society"). He shares actively and brilliantly in its productions, he increases and refines its abilities. But in what has to do with the genetics or the history of life, he accepts the role of neutral observer and in the end of doxographer. He must know that in this domain things are more turbulent and more open to the future than ever, more than anywhere else, and not without some relationship to the future status of archivization. The epistemological status that he claims for his discourse would thus merit a thorough study. We shall only set up the cartography of the borders he assigns himself. This is not so easy, given the mobility of such limits. It seems that in the quasi-totality of the work, and up to the threshold of the "Monologue," the author presents himself as a historian who claims to hold himself deliberately exterior to his object. The historian, the subject of this historical knowledge, does not then present himself either as a Jew or as a psychoanalyst, as such. He treats the psychoanalytic archive as data, the right of access to which, the intelligibility, the evaluation of which are not properly the affair either of the Jew or of the psychoanalyst. On many occasions, Yerushalmi claims this distance as the very condition for the history he intends to write. He does it, for example, by putting these words of Philippe Ariès in the exergue of his last chapter, just before the "Monologue"—words that for my part (and as is often the case for what Ariès says and does in general) I find more than problematic:

One can make an attempt at the history of behavior, that is to say, at a psychological history, without being oneself either a psychologist or a psychoanalyst and while keeping oneself at a distance from the theories, the vocabulary and even the methods of modern psychology, and nevertheless to engage these very psychologists on their terrain. If one is born a historian one becomes a psychologist in one's own fashion. [57]

To express briefly my perplexity on this point, and why I do not share Yerushalmi's confidence when he cites such a remark, finding in it some backing no doubt, I wonder what it could mean to be "born a historian" ("Si on naît historien . . .") and to base one's authority on this from an epistemological point of view. And above all, *concesso non dato*, supposing that, in such conditions, one could do a psychological history, this would not suffice to do a history of psychology, even less of psychoanalysis; and above all not at this point where this science, this *project* for a science at least, which is called psychoanalysis, claims to transform the very status of the historian's object, the structure of the archive, the concept of "historical truth," indeed of science in general, the methods of deciphering the archive, the implication of the subject in the space he claims to objectivize, and notably the topology of all the internal/external partitions which structure this subject and make of him a place for archives in relation to which no objectivization is pure, nor in truth

¹⁰ In a postscript of 1987 which does not appear in the first edition.

rigorously possible, which is to say, complete and terminable. Even a classical historian of science should know from the inside the content of the sciences of which he does the history. And if this content concerns in fact historiography, there is no good method or good epistemology for authorizing oneself to put it into parentheses. One deprives oneself in this case of the elementary conditions, of the minimal semantic stability and almost of the grammar which would allow one to speak about that of which one speaks. To want to speak about psychoanalysis, to claim to do the history of psychoanalysis from a purely apsychoanalytic point of view, purified of all psychoanalysis, to the point of believing one could erase the traces of any Freudian impression, this is as if one claimed the right to speak without knowing what one's speaking about, without even wanting to hear anything about it. This structure is not only valid for the history of psychoanalysis, or for any discourse on psychoanalysis, it is valid at least for all the so-called social or human sciences, but it receives a singular inflection here which we shall examine a bit more closely.

In fact Yerushalmi knows that he cannot have this exteriority. He knows it too well. To liberate his discourse of all Freudian preimpression is not only impossible, it would be illegitimate. But since he neither wants to renounce this alleged constative and theoretical neutrality which the classical scholar or historian claims as his norm, the position of his discourse here, in any case in the better part of his book and before the "Monologue," is double, equivocal, unstable, I would even say exquisitely tormented. Doomed to denial, sometimes avowed in its very denial. At once persecuted and translated by the symptoms which call irresistibly for a postscript, namely, this "Monologue with Freud," which resembles—or pretends to resemble—the beginning of an analysis and the declared confession of a transfer. Whether it resembles or pretends to resemble, this postscript undoubtedly carries, in truth, in its very fiction, the truth of the book. This is marked in particular in the trembling of a gesture and the instability of a status: the historian refuses to be a psychoanalyst but also refrains from *not* being a psychoanalyst.

We shall take only two examples, precisely where they affect a double relationship to the archive.

The first, the *arch-example*, shows us the desire of an admirable historian who wants in sum to be the first archivist, the first to discover the archive, the archaeologist and perhaps the archon of the archive. The first archivist institutes the archive as it should be, that is to say, not only in exhibiting the document, but in *establishing* it. He reads it, interprets it, classes it. In this case, what is in play is all the more serious, as the document turns out to keep this inscription in the form of a dedication which accompanies a reiterated gift, the second present, the restitution of the Philippsohn Bible by the arch-patriarch to the patriarch of psychoanalysis, the present which Jakob son of R. Shelomoh Freid gives to Shelomoh Sigmund Freud, thirty-five years after a circumcision which it begins by recalling to him in naming the Covenant Arc and the Tablets of the Law. Yerushalmi announces in sum that he will be the first (*after Freud*), indeed the only person (*after Freud*) to open, if not to hold, the archive of what he calls "one crucial episode." He would like, as we will see, to be the first here: the first *after Freud*, the first second, an eldest son, the first second and thus for a moment alone with Freud, alone in sharing a secret. (He is certainly not the only one nor the first to want to be the first *after Freud* and thus alone with Freud; we have several others in France, in that French lineage from which Yerushalmi seems to want to shield himself—but why?—as from the plague.)

This being the case, for what reason does he still hesitate? Why is he so embarrassed about the question as to whether he proceeds in the manner of those who he will later call "ordinary historians" [86], or already in the manner of a psychoanalyst historian, in other words, in some sense, in the manner of an inheritor in the lineage of the patriarchs or arch-patriarchs whose archive he deciphers for the first time, and "properly"? He says "properly" two times. And he claims to be *neither an analyst nor a non-analyst*, denying

the two hypotheses at once, thus not denying either one, successively or simultaneously. The passage is as follows:

There is one crucial episode involving Jakob and Sigmund Freud which has not yet been properly assessed [my emphasis], not least because it involves a Hebrew text which has never been properly transcribed [again my emphasis] (the handwriting is admittedly difficult), let alone adequately glossed⁴⁵ [my emphasis]. But it is, in effect, the one canonical text of Jakob Freud at our disposal. In what follows I neither presume to dignify my reconstruction as “psychoanalytic” (though it is no less so than others that pretend to be) [this will be a magnificent and luminous reading] nor, given the limitations of a single text, do I claim more than a partial insight. [70]¹¹

Here now is the *following* example, the example also of *that which follows*, a *second* example of primo-secondariness, the example of this eldest son, of this second eldest son of Jakob Freud, of this double status of a historian who refuses without wanting to refuse to be without being a psychoanalyst. Yerushalmi says to us in the conditional tense what he would say, and thus what he says, if he were to permit himself what he thus permits himself, namely, “the luxury of a technical psychoanalytic term—an example of ‘deferred obedience’”: “should I finally allow myself the luxury of a technical psychoanalytic term—an example of ‘deferred obedience’” [77]. At issue here is the deferred obedience of Freud to his father, of the patriarch to the arch-patriarch. (One has a hard time halting the sequence and the scene: in a few minutes, we will perhaps speak of Yerushalmi’s “deferred obedience” to each of these figures—and draw from this some conclusions.)

A precious documentary question, once again, of archaeological excavation and of the detection of the archive. It concerns a single sentence in a sort of intellectual autobiography.¹² Freud added this sentence, as an expression of remorse, only in 1935, one year after the first sketch of *Moses*. It is important to know that this sentence was omitted, “accidentally,” the *Standard Edition* says, in the *Gesammelte Werke* of 1948; and it is also absent, and for good reason, from the French translation of Marie Bonaparte, which dates from 1928. But this omission was maintained in later editions, at least until 1950. One could add this small philological remark to the file Freud himself investigates in chapter 6 of the second essay of his *Moses* [SE 23: 41 ff.], in the course of those rich pages on archivization, the oral tradition and the written tradition, biblical exegesis, historiography, and all the *Entstellungen*, all the deformations of a text which he compares to murders. I now cite the sentence added by Freud in 1935, as it is cited by Yerushalmi:

My deep engrossment in the Bible story (almost as soon as I had learned the art of reading) had, as I recognized much later, an enduring effect upon the direction of my interest. [SE 20: 8; qtd. in Yerushalmi 77]

Yerushalmi interprets the document which this addition constitutes, ten years after the first edition:

Significantly, the last sentence did not appear in the first edition. It was added only in 1935, the year after the completion of the manuscript draft of

11. I recommend note 45 [133–34] to those who may be further interested in Yerushalmi’s concern to mark at once the priority and the exclusive propriety of this reading, what is appropriate about it and what remains proper to it. This note concerns the competition of two other transcriptions, translations, and analyses.

12. The text, *Selbstdarstellungen*, first published in *Die Medizin der Gegenwart* (1925), appeared in English as *An Autobiographical Study* [SE 20: 7–70].

Moses. *Only now, in retrospect, did Freud realize the full impact of the study of the Bible on his life, and only now did he fully acknowledge it. In this sense Moses and Monotheism represents, at last, a fulfillment of Jakob Freud's mandate or—should I finally allow myself the luxury of a technical psychoanalytic term—an example of “deferred obedience.”* [77]

What should we think of this “deferred obedience”? (I will note first in parentheses that the little sentence on the “deep engrossment in the Bible” was immediately followed by another, which Yerushalmi does not cite. Judging it to be legitimately beyond the domain of his remarks, he cuts just before it. From the first edition on, this sentence declared the admiring and fascinated hope which Freud had very early for what “Darwin’s theories”—he does not name Lamarck here—were able to promise at the time for the future of science.)

In this concept of “deferred obedience,” one can be tempted to recognize one of the keys or, if you prefer, one of the seals of this *arkheion*, I mean of this book by Yerushalmi, at least as an archival book on the archive. In fact, the key or the seal, what signs and offers to be read is less a concept, the Freudian concept of “deferred obedience,” than its implementation by Yerushalmi. This implementation takes the concept without taking it, uses it without using it: it “mentions” more than “uses” it, as a *speech acts* theorist would say; it makes a concept (*Begriff*) out of it which in turn grasps without grasping, comprehends without taking. And this double gesture of someone who intends at once to assume and not to assume the theoretico-scientific responsibility of such a concept, this is precisely the scene of “luxury” which the conditional coquetry describes: “should I finally allow myself the luxury of a technical psychoanalytic term—an example of ‘deferred obedience.’” The play of this luxury is at the joint between truth and fiction. It assures the unity of the book, it seems to me, insofar as it articulates together four chapters of “scholarship” which see themselves as conforming to the traditional norms of scientificity, and a last chapter of fictive monologue—with a specter who, at least apparently, no longer responds. But the last chapter, the most fictive, is certainly not the least true. In its own way, even if it does not say it, it *makes* the truth, in the sense in which Augustine could say this of confession. It inspires something else in us about the truth of the truth: about the history of the truth, as about the truth of the enigmatic difference Freud wanted to mark between “material truth” and “historical truth.” I cannot imagine a better introduction to the question of the archive, today, than the very stakes of this vertiginous difference.

How does the “luxury” of this “deferred obedience” join, according to me, the two periods of this book? The history of this concept (*nachträgliche Gehorsam*, “docility after the fact”), as Yerushalmi retraces it in a few lines, goes back to *Totem and Taboo*.¹³ Freud notes there that “The dead father became stronger than the living one. . . . in accordance with the psychological procedure so familiar to us in psycho-analyses under the name of ‘deferred obedience’” [SE 13: 143].

From this very convincing staging, Yerushalmi draws all the consequences. Coming from *Totem and Taboo*, the “technical” concept of “deferred obedience” is borrowed and transferred, here too with the required delay, onto Freud himself, Freud the author of *Moses*. The deferred docility here becomes that of Sigmund to Jakob, his father:

In writing Moses and Monotheism he belatedly obeys the father and fulfills his mandate by returning to the intensive study of the Bible, but at the same time he maintains his independence from his father through his interpretation. He

13. It is a passage that I attempted to interpret previously, in its relationship to the origin of the law and with reference to Kafka's *Vor dem Gesetz*. Cf. “*Préjugés: Devant la loi.*”

rejects the “material truth” of the biblical narrative but rejoices in his discovery of its “historical truth.” [78]

“Where does this leave us?” Yerushalmi asks before praising Lou Andreas-Salomé, who says she read a new form of the “return of the repressed” in *Moses*, this time not in the form of “phantoms out of the past” but rather of what one could call a “triumph of life.” The afterlife of survival no longer means death and the return of the ghost, but the surviving of an excess of life which resists annihilation (“the survival of the most triumphant vital elements of the past”) [78].

Two pages later, at the beginning of the “Monologue with Freud,” Yerushalmi dares to address himself to Freud. Thus he himself speaks to one of these “phantoms out of the past.” This new “scholar” seems to have come straight from *Hamlet*: “Thou art a Scholler; speake to it, Horatio.” He apostrophizes the paternal specter of Professor Freud. This is an uncommon and perhaps unprecedented scene in the history of psychoanalysis. Though I would like to, I cannot do justice either to the veiled richness or to the bottomless irony of this extraordinary “Monologue,” during which a historian has dared to cross a limit before which “ordinary historians” [86] have always been intimidated. I shall hold myself, once again, to the instance of the archive. And I shall undoubtedly teach nothing to the author of this great “Monologue with Freud” as I take the risk of a few remarks which, obedient in turn, I will group under the title of “deferred obedience.”

Which one? No longer (1) the obedience “after the fact” Freud speaks of in *Totem and Taboo*, no longer (2) the one Yerushalmi speaks of (that of Sigmund to Jakob, his father), but indeed (3) the deferred docility of Yerushalmi with respect to Freud.

Let us describe this time of repetition with the words Yerushalmi reserves for Freud:

1. Yerushalmi in turn addresses himself at last and “belatedly” to Freud’s phantom with filial respect.

2. He returns in turn to the “intensive study of the Bible.”

3. He “maintains his independence.” Mimicking a doubly fictitious parricide, he argues bitterly with a master whose psychoanalytic rules and premises he accepts. He also interiorizes the discourse of the patriarch, at least in respecting the “according to you” of the *le-didakh*, talmudic *terminus technicus*. All these signs remind us that Yerushalmi also “belatedly obeys the father,” whether he wants to or not. He identifies with him while interiorizing him like a phantom who speaks in him before him. He offers him hospitality and goes so far as to confess to him not without fervor: “you are real and, for me, curiously present” [81].

Now let us not forget, this is also the ghost of an expert in ghosts. The expert had even stressed that what is most interesting in repression is what one does not manage to repress. The phantom thus makes the law—even, and more than ever, when one contests him. Like the father of Hamlet behind his visor, and by virtue of a *visor effect*, the specter sees without being seen. He thus reestablishes the heteronomy. He finds himself confirmed and repeated in the very protest one claims to oppose to him. He dictates even the words of the person who addresses him, for example the strange word “engrossment”: after having used it to translate Freud’s belated confession about his impregnation by biblical culture, Yerushalmi applies it now to himself, deliberately or not, to describe his own investment in this archive of Freud which has become a sort of Bible for him, a spectral Bible. He speaks of his “engrossment”: by or in Freud’s corpus. With a gesture in which it is impossible to discern between love and hate, but also between their simulacral doubles, Yerushalmi painfully, laboriously justifies himself to Freud, one would almost say in asking for his forgiveness. He even recalls, if one must believe him, that, unlike other inheritors and wayward sons, he has not looked for the secrets or the weaknesses of the master, of the one who remains, like Goethe, through the “autobiographical records, a careful concealer”:

I have not rummaged through your life in search of flaws. Those uncovered by others in recent years have not affected my engrossment in your uncommon achievement, which continues to pursue me "like an unlaid ghost." [82]

Naturally, by all appearances, we believe we know that *the phantom does not respond*. He will never again respond, Yerushalmi knows it. On the strength of more than one reason, Freud will never again speak.

1. He will never again respond in the future because he had *already* responded, and even with what Yerushalmi wants to hear from his lips—to Morselli for example, more than half a century earlier.

2. He will never again respond because he will have been in a position to have, *already, always* responded.

3. He will never again respond because it is a ghost, thus a dead person.

4. He will never again respond because it is the ghost of an analyst; and perhaps because the analyst should withdraw to this spectral position, the place of the dead person, from which, leaving one to speak, he makes one speak, never responding except to silence himself, only being silent to let the patient speak, long enough to transfer, to interpret, to work.

So here is what we *believe we know* at least, here is the appearance: the other will never again respond. Now in spite of these necessities, these obvious facts and these substantiated certitudes, in spite of all the reassuring assurances which such a knowing or such a believing-to-know dispenses to us, through them, the phantom continues to speak. Perhaps he does not respond, but he speaks. A phantom speaks. What does this mean? In the first place or in a preliminary way, this means that without responding it disposes of a response, a bit like the answering machine whose voice outlives its moment of recording: you call, the other person is dead, now, whether you know it or not, and the voice responds to you, in a very precise fashion, sometimes cheerfully, it instructs you, it can even give you instructions, make declarations to you, address you requests, prayers, promises, injunctions. Supposing, *concesso non dato*, that a living being ever responds in an absolutely living and infinitely well-adjusted manner, without the least automatism, without ever having an archival technique overflow the singularity of an event, we know in any case that a spectral response (thus informed by a *technē* and inscribed in an archive) is always possible. There would be neither history nor tradition nor culture without that possibility. It is this that we are speaking of here. It is this, in truth, that we must answer for.

We cannot reconstitute here the *virtual* exchange of questions and answers set in motion in such a "Monologue" on the subject of the very *content* of *Moses*. This entire talmudico-psychoanalytic discussion is fascinating and passionate. But can one not then say that *a priori* it shows Freud to be right? Can one not claim that the very structure of this scene, the formal logic of the arguments, the topology and the strategy of the interlocutors (living or spectral) show Freud *to be right*, even and, perhaps, above all where he is wrong, from the point of view of "material truth"? Even where the dead person may be put to death again, Freud like so many others, from Laius to Moses? Even where he is accused of so many shortcomings by the one who proceeds while *repeating* "I repeat: I do not blame you" [98]?

"To do justice." Yet again, I would like to but cannot *do justice* to the intense and rich discussion staged by this final "Monologue." If I should fail to do it, which seems to me unfortunately inevitable, it is not due only to some limit or another (personal, factual, alas real), it is not due even to the lack of time. This fatal "injustice" is due to the necessity of *showing, a priori*, the person occupying the *position* of Freud here *to be right*. This is the strange violence I would like to speak of (also out of concern for justice, because I shall no doubt be unjust out of concern for justice) while making myself in turn guilty of it *a priori*.

Simultaneously fictive and effective, taut, dramatic, as generous as it is implacable, this “Monologue” does not deprive the other of his right to speak. Not without injustice can one say that Freud has no chance to speak. He is the first to speak, in a certain sense, and the last word is offered to him. The right to speak is *left, given or lent* to him. I would need hours to justify any one of these three words. What interests me here, in the first place, is the nearly *formal* fatality of a performative effect.

(I must limit myself to this formality, renouncing the detailed discussion of the content of the analyses. But before returning to this structural fatality, I would like to give an example, at least in parentheses and only as an indication, of what this discussion could be. At the beginning of the “Monologue with Freud,” basing himself on certain citations of the Midrash, Yerushalmi proposes a first conclusion to “Professor Freud”:

If Moses had actually been killed by our forefathers, not only would the murder not have been repressed but—on the contrary—it would have been remembered and recorded [i.e., archived], eagerly and implacably, in the most vivid detail, the quintessential and ultimate exemplum of the sin of Israel’s disobedience.
[85]

This, in my opinion, is the sinews of the argument in this book. Now to affirm this, Yerushalmi must again suppose that the contradiction between the act of memory or of archivization on the one hand and repression on the other remains irreducible. As if one could not, precisely, recall and archive the very thing one represses, archive it while repressing it (because repression is an archivization), that is to say, to archive *otherwise*, to repress the archive while archiving the repression; *otherwise*, of course, and that is the whole problem, than according to the current, conscious, patent modes of archivization; *otherwise*, that is to say, according to the paths which have called to psychoanalytic deciphering, in truth to psychoanalysis itself. How can Yerushalmi be sure that the murder in question has not been abundantly recalled and archived (“remembered and recorded”) in the memory of Israel? How can he claim to *prove* an absence of archive? How does one prove in general an absence of archive, if not in relying on classical norms (presence/absence of literal and explicit reference to this or to that, to a this or to a that which one supposes to be identical to themselves, and simply absent, *actually* absent, if they are not simply present, *actually* present; how can one not, and why not take into account *unconscious*, and more generally *virtual* archives)? Now Yerushalmi knows very well that Freud’s intention is to analyze, across the apparent absence of memory and of archive, all kinds of symptoms, signs, figures, metaphors, and metonymies which attest, at least virtually, an archival documentation where the “ordinary historian” identifies none. Whether one goes along with him or not in his demonstration, Freud claimed that the murder of Moses *effectively* left archives, documents, symptoms in the Jewish memory and even in the memory of humanity. Only the texts of this archive are not readable according to the paths of “ordinary history” and this is the very relevance of psychoanalysis, if it has one.

Let us go further, keeping close to the example chosen by Yerushalmi, who has the courage and the merit, the temerity even, to cite not only the Bible but “rabbis in the Midrash” who are still more “explicit” than the Bible in testifying *at least about an attempted murder*:

And the entire community threatened to stone them with stones (Numbers 14:10). And who were they? Moses and Aaron. [But the verse continues] when the glory of the Lord appeared [in the tent of meeting unto all the children of Israel]. This teaches us that they [the Israelites] were throwing stones and the Cloud [of the Lord’s Glory] would intercept them. [85]

Yerushalmi seems to conclude—and to want to convince Professor Freud—that if in fact they wanted to kill Moses (and Aaron), and if this intention has indeed remained in the memory and in the archive, what counts is that the Israelites did not “actually” kill him. This conclusion appears to be doubly fragile. And even from the Midrash point of view in question. First, without needing to convoke psychoanalysis yet, one should recognize that if the murder did not take place, if it remained virtual, if it only almost took place, *the intention to kill was effective, actual, and in truth accomplished*. There was acting out, the stones were thrown *in fact*, they continued to be thrown while only divine intervention intercepted them. The crime was not interrupted at any moment by the Israelites themselves, who got no further than their suspended intention, or renounced in the face of the sin. There was thus not only *intention* but *attempt* to murder, *effective, actual attempt*, which only an exterior cause (a jurist would say an accident) diverted. Second, and this time taking into account a psychoanalytic logic, what difference is there between a murder and an intention to murder (above all if it is acted out, but even if it is not murder, even if the intention does not become attempt to murder)? Murder begins with the intention to kill. The unconscious does not know the difference here between the virtual and the actual, the intention and the action (a certain Judaism also, by the way), or at least does not model itself on the manner in which the conscious (as well as the law or the morals accorded to it) distributes the relations of the virtual, of the intentional, and of the actual. We will never have finished, we have not in truth begun, drawing all the ethico-juridical consequences from this. In any case, the unconscious may have kept the memory and the archive of the intention to kill, of the acting out of this desire to kill (as it is attested by the texts Yerushalmi himself cites, in particular this singular *Midrash*)—even if there has been repression; because a repression also archives that of which it dissimulates or encrypts the archives. What is more, we see well that the repression was not all that efficient: the will to kill, the acting out and the attempt to murder are avowed, they are literally inscribed in the archive. If Moses was not killed, it is only thanks to God. Left to themselves, the Israelites, who wanted to kill Moses, would have killed him: they did everything to kill him.

Earlier, Yerushalmi declared: “The vital question remains whether, if Moses had been murdered in the wilderness, *this* would have been forgotten or concealed” [84]. And everything in his text responds *no*. Now instead of signifying, as he believes he can claim, that if the murder did not leave any archives this is because it did not take place, it suffices to read the texts he himself cites to conclude the contrary: the intention to kill was effective, the acting out also, this left an archive, and even if there had not been acting out of the desire, the unconscious would have been able to keep the archive of the pure criminal intention, of its suspension or of its repression. We can say this, it would seem, without having to take sides (which I am not doing), but on the logical reading of the whole of this argumentation alone. And to extend the problematic field of an *archive of the virtual*, in its greatest generality, throughout and beyond psychoanalysis. The topology and the nomology we have analyzed up to now were able to necessitate, as an absolutely indispensable condition, the *full and effective actuality* of the taking-place, the reality, as they say, of the archived event. What will become of this when we will indeed have to remove the concept of virtuality from the couple which opposes it to actuality, to effectivity, or to reality? Will we be obliged to continue thinking that there is not a thinkable archive for the virtual? For what happens in virtual space and time? It is hardly probable, this mutation is in progress, but it will be necessary, to keep a rigorous account of this other virtuality, to abandon or restructure from top to bottom our inherited concept of the archive. The moment has come to accept a great stirring in our conceptual archive, and in it to cross a “logic of the unconscious” with a way of thinking of the virtual which is no longer limited by the traditional philosophical opposition between act and power.)

Let us return now to what we called a moment ago the fatal and *formal* constraint of a performative effect. This effect is due to what the "Monologue"'s signatory *does*, in the scene he thinks he can organize, while playing or assuming a certain role in it. This effect seems to show the phantom to be right, in the very place where he could, perhaps, be wrong and lose in the conflict of arguments. Because the scene effectively repeats, and it could not be more obvious, everything Freud says both about the return of phantoms and, to use the words of Yerushalmi, about the "tense agon of Father and son" [95]. One could show this in detail. Such a repetition attests that "historical truth" which no breach of "material truth" will ever weaken. What confirms or demonstrates a certain truth of Freud's *Moses* is not Freud's book, or the arguments deployed there with more or less pertinence. It is not the contents of this "historical novel"; it is rather the scene of reading it provokes and in which the reader is inscribed in advance. For example in a fictive monologue which, in reading, contesting, or in calling to Freud, repeats in an exemplary fashion the logic of the event whose specter was described and whose structure was "performed" by the historical novel. The Freud of this *Freud's Moses* is indeed Yerushalmi's Moses. The strange result of this performative repetition, the irrepressible effectuation of this *enactment*, in any case what it unavoidably demonstrates, is that the interpretation of the archive (here, for example, Yerushalmi's book) can only illuminate, read, interpret, establish its object, namely a given inheritance, by inscribing itself in it, that is to say by opening it and by enriching it enough to have a rightful place in it. There is no meta-archive. Yerushalmi's book, including its fictive monologue, henceforth belongs to the corpus of Freud (and of Moses, etc.), whose name it also *carries*. The fact that this corpus and this name also remain spectral is perhaps a general structure of every archive. By incorporating the knowledge which is deployed in reference to it, the archive augments itself, engrosses itself, it gains in *auctoritas*. But in the same stroke it loses the absolute and meta-textual authority it might claim to have. One will never be able to objectivize it while leaving no remainder. The archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future.

How can we think about this fatal repetition, about repetition in general in its relationship to memory and the archive? It is easy to perceive, if not to interpret, the necessity of such a relationship, at least if one associates the archive, as naturally one is always tempted to do, with repetition, and repetition with the past. But it is the future which is at issue here, and the archive as an irreducible experience of the future.

And if there is a single trait about which Yerushalmi remains intractable, if there is an affirmation shielded from all discussion (psychoanalytic or talmudic), an unconditional affirmation, it is the affirmation of the future *to come* (in French, I prefer saying this with the *to-come* of the *avenir* rather than the *futur* so as to point toward the coming of an event rather than toward some future present).

The affirmation of the future *to come*: this is not a positive thesis. It is nothing other than the affirmation itself, the "yes," insofar as it is the condition of all promises or of all hope, of all awaiting, of all performativity, of all opening toward the future, whatever it may be, for science or for religion. I am prepared to subscribe without reserve to this reaffirmation made by Yerushalmi. With a speck of anxiety, in the back of my mind, a single speck of anxiety about a solitary point which is not just any point. I will specify it with more precision in a moment. This unique point can be reduced, indeed, to the Unique, to the unity of the One and of the Unique.

The same affirmation of the future to come is repeated several times. It comes back at least according to three modalities, which also establish three places of opening. Let us give them the name of *doors*.

The three doors of the future to come resemble each other to the point of confusion, indeed, but they differ between themselves: at least in that they regularly turn on their hinges to open, one onto the other. Their topo-logic thus remains properly *disorienting*.

One continually has the feeling of getting lost while retracing one's steps. What is a door doing when it opens onto a door? And above all onto a door one has *already* passed through, in the *passage* of what comes to pass, in the *passage* to come?

In naming these doors, I think or rather I dream of Walter Benjamin. In his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, he designates the "narrow door" for the passage of the Messiah, "at each second." And he recalls also that, "for the Jews the future to come nonetheless does not become a homogeneous and empty time" [1: 2.702]. What could he have meant? Or, at least for the time being, what can we understand in this remark or make it say, this remark about the door of a future to come whose time would not be homogeneous?

Allow me thus to localize and identify what I call the three doors of the future to come, as I believe I can count them in the "Monologue with Freud."

The *last door* opens, of course, at the last sentence of the book. A remarkable and necessary location, decisive precisely where nothing is decided. It is not by chance that this last door takes the form of a promise, the promise of a secret kept secret. What happens when a historian promises to keep secret on the subject of an archive which is yet to be established? Who does this? Is this still a historian? To whom does he promise? Before whom? Before what law? Before what specter and before what witness does Yerushalmi pretend to commit himself for the future to keep Freud's response secret when he declares to him in the last words of the book: "Please tell me, Professor. I promise I won't reveal your answer to anyone."

How could the person who promises a secret to a ghost still dare to say he is a historian? We would not believe him, even if he pretended to address the Professor as a colleague or a master. The historian speaks only of the past, Yerushalmi says this himself at the end of the first of his texts which I read, a text about the Marranos, with whom I have always secretly identified (but don't tell anyone) and whose crypto-Judaic history greatly resembles that of psychoanalysis after all. Regarding the "last Marranos," Yerushalmi writes:

But are they really [the last]? History, as we have recently seen, is not always rational, it is rarely foreseeable. The future, in spite of the appearances, always remains open. The historian's task, luckily, is to try to understand the past. It is time for the historian to step aside to let the images speak. [Brenner and Yerushalmi 44, my emphasis]

At the date of this text on the Marranos (and Yerushalmi always dates twice at the moment of signing or archiving his works, according to two calendars, the Jewish one and the other one), what is at issue for him is letting the images speak in a book of photographs, that is, another species of archive. But each time a historian as such decides to "step aside and let . . . speak," for example to let a photographic specter or Freud's phantom in the monologue speak, it is the sign of a respect before the future to come of the future to come. Thus he is no longer a historian. Good sense tells us there is no history or archive of the future to come. A historian as such never looks to the future, which in the end does not concern him. But meaning something else altogether, is there a historian of the promise, a historian of the first door?

The *second door* leaves a double definition open to the future: both that of Jewishness and that of science. Definition open to a future radically *to come*, which is to say indeterminate, determined only by this opening of the future to come. Indetermination forcefully and doubly potentialized, indetermination *en abyme*.

In effect, *on the one hand*, it indeterminates one indetermination by the other (Jewishness by science and science by Jewishness). I cite this essential passage a second time:

Professor Freud, at this point I find it futile to ask whether, genetically or structurally, psychoanalysis is really a Jewish science; that we shall know, if it is at all knowable [my emphasis], only when much future work has been done. Much will depend, of course, on how the very terms Jewish and science are to be defined.

This remark followed an allusion to “much future work” and it opened to infinity the gaping of the future in which the very possibility of knowledge remained conditional (“if it is at all knowable”). In other words, the definition of the two terms depends on the future. In this equation with two unknowns, only the future of science, in particular that of psychoanalysis, will say whether this science is Jewish, because it will tell us what science is and what Jewishness is. But only the future of Judaism (or rather of interminable Jewishness) will be able to guide and precede a science of Judaism (or rather of Jewishness), indeed a Jewish science. Now since the future of science can thus be correlative to Jewishness, there is every risk, or every chance, that in this logical aporia, the question is destined to remain without response; without response in any case in the form of theoretical knowledge or of *epistēmē*.

Hence, *on the other hand*, a second force of indetermination. It is readable in the several suspensive words which leave a possibility open: that this double question which binds Jewishness and science *does not come within the province of knowledge* and is heterogeneous to all theoretical statement: “that we shall know, *if it is at all knowable.*” Having arrived at these last lines of the book, we still cannot say anything pertinent about what binds science and Jewishness, about what stabilizes and guarantees these concepts (and thus those of the archives which are dependent on them). Nothing that seems scientifically relevant. I will say in passing that this is what neutralizes or perhaps invalidates all that Yerushalmi had wanted to demonstrate up to this point. This is what threatens it, at least in its theoretic value if not in its dramatic effect or its performative richness.

But there is something more serious and perhaps better: in the future, it is very possible that the solution to this equation with two unknowns will not come within the domain of theoretical knowledge, that is to say, of a declarative theorem. This is what is suggested by “if it is at all knowable.” This epochal suspense gathers in an act all the energy of thought, an energy of virtuality, for once (*energeia* of a *dynamis*). The intensity of this suspension is vertiginous—and it gives vertigo while giving the only condition on which the future to come remains what it is: it is to come. The condition on which the future remains to come is not only that it not be known, but that it not be *knowable as such*. Its determination should no longer come under the order of knowledge or of a horizon of preknowledge but rather a coming or an event which one *allows* or *incites* to come (without *seeing* anything come) in an experience which is heterogeneous to all taking note, as to any horizon of waiting as such: that is to say, to all stabilizable theorems as such. It is a question of this performative to come whose archive no longer has any relation to the record of what is, to the record of the presence of what is or will have been *actually* present. I call this the *messianic*, and I distinguish it radically from all messianism.

The *third door* is also the first, and we have already passed through it. A few pages earlier, Yerushalmi had deployed the question of the future or the immortality of Oedipus. And what he had held in opposition to Freud, finally, is an experience of the future or of hopefulness which seems to him to be at once irreducible to oedipal repetition and irreducibly, *uniquely, exclusively Jewish, proper* to “Jewishness” if not to “Judaism.” The subtitle of his book says “Judaism Terminable and Interminable.” But Yerushalmi clearly marks that if Judaism is terminable, Jewishness is interminable [90]. It can survive Judaism. It can survive it as a heritage, which is to say, in a sense, *not without archive*, even

if this archive should remain without substrate and without actuality. For Yerushalmi, there is indeed a determining and irreducible essence of Jewishness; it is already given and does not await the future. And this essence of Jewishness should not be mistaken as merging with Judaism, or with religion, or even with the belief in God. Now the Jewishness that does not await the future is precisely the waiting for the future, the opening of a relation to the future, the experience of the future. This is what would be proper to the “Jew” and to him alone: not only hope, not only a “hope for the future,” but “the anticipation of a specific hope for the future” [95].

And this is where, in the name of the opening to the future, the discussion with Freud seems to be closed, even while in the last lines of the book, it is the word “Jewish” (which can be the adjective for Jewishness as well as for Judaism) that Yerushalmi says remains to be defined in the future. Here is one of the passages that are most important to us here on this subject. I shall emphasize certain phrases:

Indeed, the charm of it all is that Oedipus is far from alien to the Bible itself, where the entire relationship between God and Man and especially between God and Israel is always the tense agon of Father and son. The dramatic difference lies not in the perception of past and present, but in the anticipation of a specific hope for the future. There is a remarkable verse in the last of the prophets (Malachi 3: 24) [this is my emphasis, and here is one of the archives which attest to that “anticipation of a specific hope for the future”—an archive, according to the archivist, which would be “unique”—the word is very serious] which expresses a unique vision [my emphasis] that is not to be found—at least not explicitly [I also emphasize this concession which opens onto the abyss which it denies]—in the messianic prophecies of any of his predecessors. All the others, we might say, posit an ultimate resolution of the Oedipal conflict between Israel and God; Malachi does so also on the level of the purely human: “Ve-heshiv lev avot ‘al banim ve-lev banim ‘al avotam” (He shall reconcile the heart of fathers with sons and the heart of sons with their fathers). [95]

More confident than I would be about the meaning here in all rigor of “unique,” “explicitly” and “purely human,” Yerushalmi continues—and this is the point of rupture:

Le-didakh. Let it be according to you that religion, the great illusion, has no future. But what is the future of Laius and Oedipus? We read to the end of your Moses, and you do not say [thus, once again, Yerushalmi records a silence of Freud, who he will nonetheless make speak, virtually, not explicitly, in the conditional, in the very next sentence]. But should you tell me that, indeed, they have no hope, I shall simply reply—you may very well be right. But it is on this question of hope or hopelessness, even more than on God or godlessness, that your teaching may be at its most un-Jewish. [95, my emphasis]

What would be the least Jewish, the most “un-Jewish,” the most heterogeneous to Jewishness, would not be a lack of *Judaism*, a *distancing*, as the French translation says, *with respect to Judaism* (religion, belief in God, Israel’s election), but the nonbelief in the future—that is to say, in what constitutes Jewishness *beyond all Judaism*.

Beyond the precautions and the conditions, we have here an affirmation which is excluded from all discussion to come, an unconditional affirmation: the link between Jewishness, if not Judaism, and hope in the future. This affirmation is unconditional, first of all, in its form: it is intractable and excludes itself, for what ties it to Jewishness, from all discussion. But it is again unconditional in its content, as should be every affirmation of this type. It is in effect nothing other than the affirmation of affirmation, the “yes” to

the originary “yes,” the inaugural engagement of a promise or of an anticipation which wagers, *a priori*, the very future. The necessity of affirming affirmation, the affirmation of affirmation, must be at once tautological and heterological. Yerushalmi is ready to make concessions on everything, including on the existence of God and on the future of religion, on everything except on this trait which links Jewishness and the opening toward the future. And, still more radically, on *the absolute uniqueness of this trait*. The uniqueness of the trait is first of all an *ineffaceable* hyphen, *trait d’union*, between Jewishness and (future) to come. The being-Jewish and the being-open-toward-the-future would be the same thing, the same unique thing, the same thing as uniqueness—and they would not be dissociable the one from the other. To be open toward the future would be to be Jewish. And vice versa. And in *exemplary* fashion. It would not be only to have a future, to be capable of anticipation, etc., a shared aptitude whose universality could appear to be indisputable, but to be in relation to the future *as such*, and to hold one’s identity, reflect it, declare it, announce it to oneself, only out of what comes from the future to come. Thus would be the trait, the *exemplary* uniqueness of the *trait d’union*.

Without risking myself in the logical abyss of this affirmation and in the aporias of exemplarity which I have tried to describe elsewhere, and indeed on the subject of Jewish exemplarity, I must once again content myself with pointing to the archive. Precisely where we see one door open or close upon another. Because in the last analysis, this unconditional affirmation, which presents itself, I said, as *ineffaceable*, bases its authority, in the first place, on the precedence of an archive—for example, as we just saw, a verse of the last of the prophets, as it is interpreted by the archivist. But the authority of the same unconditional affirmation is above all based on what could resemble another unique trait of Jewishness according to Yerushalmi, and which undoubtedly repeats the first as if it came down to the same thing. This time it has to do not only with opening toward the future, but with *historicity* and with the obligation of *memory*, or better, with the *obligation of the archive*. I am referring now to another of Yerushalmi’s books, as beautiful and as rightly celebrated, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. If, in the passage of *Freud’s Moses* we were just reading, Yerushalmi named the *drama* of a “dramatic difference” on the subject of the *future* as something Jewish, here he speaks again of *drama*, of “dramatic evidence” (dramatic proof or signs, dramatic testimony, in the broad sense of the word “testimony,” one could even say archives) on the subject of the *past* as something Jewish and *uniquely, exclusively, only Jewish*:

No more dramatic evidence is needed for the dominant place of history in ancient Israel than the overriding fact that even God is known only insofar as he reveals himself “historically.” [9]

And after several citations meant to support this affirmation in quotes, we find ourselves before this extraordinary attribution: the injunction of memory falls to Israel, and to Israel alone. Now a minute ago, already, we had the same attribution, the same assignation without any sharing. It was a question then of “the anticipation of a specific hope for the future.” Two exclusivities, indeed two exclusions. Two solitudes and two responsibilities, two assignations in the absolute privilege of election. As if Yerushalmi were ready to renounce everything in Judaism (terminable) which was not Jewishness (interminable), everything, the belief in the existence of God, the religion, the culture, etc., except that archived trait of Jewishness which is something that at least *resembles* election even if it is not to be confused with it: the absolute privilege, the absolute uniqueness in the experience of the promise (the future) and the injunction of memory (the past). But the two are not added or juxtaposed: the one is founded on the other. It is because there has been an archived event, because the injunction or the law has already presented and *inscribed* itself in historical memory as an injunction of memory, with or without

substrate, that the two absolute privileges are bound the one to the other. As if God had inscribed only one thing in the memory of one *single people* and of an *entire people*: in the future, remember to remember the future. And as if the word “people,” in this sentence, could only be conceived of out of the unprecedented uniqueness of this archive injunction. Here is what I call the extraordinary attribution, on the subject of which I will keep a large number of grave questions in reserve. Some of them would have an ethical or political dimension, but they are not the only ones, in spite of their obvious urgency. I would have liked to spend hours, in truth an eternity, meditating while trembling before this sentence:

Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people. [9]

How can one not tremble before this sentence?

I wonder if it is true, if it is fair, if it is just. Who could ever be assured, by what archive, that it is just, this sentence? Just with the justice which Yerushalmi suggests so profoundly elsewhere could indeed be the opposite of forgetting? I feel myself to be very close to what he says then in this direction, and incidentally, in the form of a question.¹⁴ At the end of the postscript of *Zakhor*, the same question in effect resonates. “Is it possible that the antonym of ‘forgetting’ is not ‘remembering’, but *justice*?” [117].

Thinking about this justice, I wonder, while trembling, if they are just, the sentences which reserve for Israel *both* the future *and* the past *as such*, *both* hope (“the anticipation of a specific hope for the future”) *and* the duty of memory (“the injunction to remember”), assignation which would be felt by Israel *alone*, Israel as a *people* and Israel in its *totality* (“only in Israel and nowhere else” “as a religious imperative to an entire people”).

Unless, in the logic of this election, one were to call by the *unique* name of Israel all the places and all the peoples who would be ready to recognize themselves in this anticipation and in this injunction—and then this would no longer only be a vertiginous problem of semantics or of rhetoric. Like the question of the proper name, the question of exemplarity, which I put aside earlier, situates here the place of all the violences. Because if it is just to remember the future and the injunction to remember, namely the archontic injunction to guard and to gather the archive, it is no less just to remember the others, the other others and the others in oneself, and that the other peoples could say the same thing—in another way. And that *tout autre est tout autre*, as we can say in French: every other is every other other, is altogether other.

Formalizing too quickly so as to gain time, let us go straight to the reason for which one can be dumbfounded with dread before the virtual injustice one risks committing in the name of justice itself. Let us formulate the argument dryly in a mode which in a certain sense crosses psychoanalysis with deconstruction, a certain “psychoanalysis” and a certain “deconstruction.” When I say that *I* tremble, I mean that *one* trembles, the “one” or the “*on*” trembles, whoever it is trembles: because the injustice of this justice can concentrate its violence in the very constitution of the *One* and of the *Unique*. Right where it can affect everyone, everyone and anyone, whoever. In the sentences I just cited, the words which make (me) tremble are only those which say the One, the difference of the One in the form of uniqueness (“dramatic difference,” “unique vision,” “specific hope,” “Only in Israel and nowhere else”) and the One in the figure of totalizing assemblage (“to an entire people”). The gathering into itself of the One is never without violence, nor is the self-affirmation of the Unique, the law of the archontic, the law of *consignation* which orders the archive. Consignation is never without that excessive pressure (impression,

14. *I have, for my part, notably in Force de loi and Specters of Marx, tried to situate justice, the justice which exceeds but also requires the law, on the side of the act of memory, of resistance to forgetting, whether this be of the injunction in general or of its place of assignation: other people, living or dead.*

repression, suppression) of which repression (*Verdrängung* or *Urverdrängung*) and suppression (*Unterdrückung*) are at least figures.

Because it is not perhaps necessary to give psychoanalytic names to this violence. Neither necessary nor assured. Nor primordial. Is it not sufficient to recognize this violence at work in the archontic constitution of the One and of the Unique for Freud to find an automatic or structural justification for his “historical novel”? Does the necessity of this archontic violence not give meaning to his *Moses*, and even an undeniable truth, a “historical truth” if not a “material truth”? To *his* “Moses,” to his father Jakob, in short to Freud, whose Moses was also the Moses of Yerushalmi? To the son as grandfather (to whomever, to any “one,” to someone who says “I,” to myself, for example, Jakob or Elie, I who have not only a father named Hayim, but also, as if by chance, a grandfather named Moses. And another, Abraham)?

As soon as there is the One, there is murder, wounding, traumatism. *L'Un se garde de l'autre*. The One guards against/keeps some of the other. It protects *itself* from the other, but, in the movement of this jealous violence, it comprises in itself, thus guarding it, the self-otherness or self-difference (the difference from within oneself) which makes it One. The “One differing, deferring from itself.” The One as the Other. At once, at the same time, but in a same time which is out of joint, the One forgets to remember itself to itself, it keeps and erases the archive of this injustice that it is. Of this violence that it does. *L'Un se fait violence*. The One makes itself violence. It violates and does violence to itself but it also institutes itself as violence. It becomes what it is, the very violence—that it does to itself. Self-determination as violence. *L'Un se garde de l'autre pour se faire violence* (because it makes itself violence and so as to make itself violence). Only in French can this be said and thus archived in such an *economical* fashion.¹⁵

Now it is necessary that this repeat itself. It is Necessity itself, *Anankē*. The One, as self-repetition, can only repeat and recall this instituting violence. It can only affirm itself and engage itself in this repetition. This is even what ties in depth the injunction of memory with the anticipation of the future to come. The injunction, even when it summons memory or the safeguard of the archive, turns incontestably toward the future to come. It orders to promise, but it orders repetition, and first of all self-repetition, self-confirmation in a *yes, yes*. If repetition is thus inscribed at the heart of the future to come, one must also import there, *in the same stroke*, the death drive, the violence of forgetting, *superrepression* (suppression and repression), the anarchive, in short, the possibility of putting to death the very thing, whatever its name, which *carries the law in its tradition*: the archon of the archive, the table, *what carries the table and who carries the table*, the subjectile, the substrate, and the subject of the law.

15. At the end of this lecture, not without irony, I imagine, with as much depth as astonishment but, as always, with an intractable lucidity, Geoffrey Bennington remarked to me that by underlining, and first by bringing into play, such an untranslatability, I risked repeating the gesture I seemed to put into question in the hands of the other, namely, the affirmation of the unique or of the idiom.

To clarify here the response I gave him then, I will briefly say three things:

1. I did not talk of absolute untranslatability or idiomaticity, but of a larger economy (it was a question of my saying in very few French words, in this case, in this occurrence, what can by all means be translated in any language, if only one uses more); which suffices to change the political sense of this gesture.

2. I believe that the affirmation of a certain idiomaticity, of a certain uniqueness, as of a certain differing, deferring, that is to say, impure, unity is irreducible and necessary—and I wanted thus to demonstrate it practically. What one does next, both with this affirmation, and with this impurity, is precisely where all of politics comes in.

3. Let us say at last that I wanted to exercise, in another political gesture, my own right to irony and, exposing myself to it thus in my language, to give an example of this fatal necessity and of its risks.

This is why Freud might not have accepted in this form the alternative between the future and the past of Oedipus, or between “hope” and “hopelessness,” the Jew and the non-Jew, the future and repetition. The one is alas, or happily, the condition of the other. And the Other is the condition for the One. In order to say that the decisive and for the moment undecidable question would involve knowing, if at least it is a matter of knowledge (“if it is at all knowable”), what the words “Judaism” and “science” mean, and that this remains open toward the future, one must give oneself at least a preunderstanding of what “to come” means. Now it is in the structure of the future to come that it can only posit itself while welcoming repetition, as much in the respect for faithfulness—to others and to oneself—as in the violent re-positioning of the One. The answer to the question (“what is the future?”) seems thus to be presupposed by Yerushalmi. It is prior to the affirmation according to which the future will say how to define “science” and “Jew” and “Jewish science.”

With respect to this presupposition or this preunderstanding, we find ourselves here before an aporia. I have attempted to struggle with this elsewhere and I shall say only a word about it, from the point of view of the archive: does one base one’s thinking of the future on an archived event—with or without substrate, with or without actuality—for example on a divine injunction or on a messianic covenant? Or else, on the contrary, can an *experience*, an *existence*, in general, only receive and record, only archive such an event to the extent that the structure of this existence and of its temporalization makes this archivization possible? In other words, does one need a first archive in order to conceive of ordinary archivability? Or vice versa? This is the whole question of the relation between the event of the religious revelation (*Offenbarung*) and a revealability (*Offenbarkeit*), a possibility of manifestation, the prior thought of what opens toward the arrival or toward the coming of such an event. Is it not true that the logic of the after-the-fact (*Nachträglichkeit*), which is not only at the heart of psychoanalysis, but even, literally, the sinews of all “deferred” (*nachträglich*) obedience, turns out to disrupt, disturb, entangle forever the reassuring distinction between the two terms of this alternative, as between the past and the future, that is to say, between the three actual presents, which would be the past present, the present present, and the future present?

In any case, there would be no future without repetition. And thus, as Freud perhaps would say (this would be his thesis), there is no future without the specter of the oedipal violence which inscribes the superrepression in the archontic institution of the archive, in the position, the auto-position or the hetero-position of the One and of the Unique, in the nomological *arkhē*. And the death drive. Without this evil, which is also *archive fever*, the desire and the disorder of the archive, there would be neither assignation nor consignation. Because assignation is a consignation. And when one says nomological *arkhē*, one says *nomos*, one says the law, but also *thesis* or *themis*. The law of institution (*nomos*, *thesis*, or *themis*) is the *thesis*. *Thesis* and *themis* are sometimes, not always, in tension with the originary *physis*, with what one translates commonly as “nature.”

It is thus that, with the thesis, the supplement of theses which were to follow these *Exergue*, *Preamble*, and *Foreword* has insinuated itself *already and in advance*. That is, not to resist the desire of a postscript, a prosthesis on Freud’s theses.¹⁶ Which is advanced at the pace of other ghosts.

¹⁶ Freud does not hesitate to speak of a prosthesis of repression. Certain “adjuvant and substitutive technologies” prove that “the fulfillment of repression in its regular form comes up against difficulties.” But this sign of failure also permits to better “illuminate,” right on the prosthesis, the “end” and the “technique” of repression. All of this concerns the event itself, the coming of what arrives—or not. There is nothing fortuitous in that one of these prostheses serves the ungeschehenmachen, the “making it not have happened,” even though it has happened. It is thus to “treat an event as ‘not happened’” (in French in the text: “non arrivé”) [see “Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety,” 20: 77].

THESES

Vienna, 6 December 1896

... I have now adorned my room with plaster casts of Florentine statues. It was a source of extraordinary invigoration for me. I am thinking of getting rich, in order to be able to repeat these trips. A congress on Italian soil! (Naples, Pompeii).

Most cordial greetings to you all,
Your
Sigm.¹⁷

A young archaeologist, Norbert Hanold, had discovered in a museum of antiquities in Rome a relief which had so immensely attracted him that he was greatly pleased at obtaining an excellent plaster cast of it which he could hang in his study. . . .¹⁸

I have long grown used to being dead.¹⁹

Let us pretend to recapitulate—where a *recapitulation* seems impossible, when nothing any longer can reunite itself right in close to the head, to the principle, to the *arkhē* or to the archive. Let us thus recall the idiomatic formulas which we claimed could only print themselves so economically in the French language. They express archive fever. *L'Un se garde de l'autre*, we said. And *l'Un se fait violence*. *L'Un se garde de l'autre pour se faire violence* (the One keeps (from) the other for making itself violence): because it makes itself violence and so as to make itself violence.

In another language altogether, is this not what Freud would perhaps have replied? Is this not, in substance, what Freud's ghost for which no one here wants to be substituted would perhaps have declared to Yerushalmi? So the father of psychoanalysis—and of Anna—did not take into consideration the question concerning what his daughter in effect wrote, in his name or in her name (the content of the response to such a question was already archived, at least in the letter to Enrico Morselli, as early as 1926). But he did perhaps respond in sort, in the form of an ellipsis, to the question of the *future to come* of an illusion, in sum. The question of the future of the ghost or the ghost of the future, of the future as *ghost*.

Who wants to substitute him- or herself for Freud's phantom? How can one not want to, as well? The moment has perhaps come to risk, in a few telegrams, a thesis on the subject of Freud's theses. The thesis would say in the first place this: all the Freudian theses are cleft, divided, contradictory, as are the concepts, beginning with that of the archive. Thus it is for every concept: always dislocating itself because it is never one with itself. It is the same with the thesis which posits and arranges the concepts, the history of concepts, their formation as much as their archivization.

17. Letter to Wilhelm Fliess (6 December 1896) [Complete Letters 214]. These words conclude a long letter in which Freud defines the relations of topographic, archaeological, or archival "stratification" among several types of "recording" ("three and probably more," he thinks then). This letter prefigures the "Note on the 'Mystic Writing-Pad,'" at times in the details [SE 19: 227–32].

18. Freud, Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's "Gradiva" (1906–07) [SE 9: 10]. We will quote this translation henceforth, occasionally modifying it.

19. "Ich habe mich schon lange daran gewöhnt, tot zu sein." Jensen, Gradiva, cited by Freud [SE 9: 85].

Why stress spectrality here? Because Yerushalmi dared to address Freud's phantom? Because he had the audacity to ask him for a confidential response whose archive he would never unveil? Undoubtedly, but in the first place because the structure of the archive is *spectral*. It is spectral *a priori*: neither present nor absent "in the flesh," neither visible nor invisible, a trace always referring to another whose eyes can never be met, no more than those of Hamlet's father, thanks to the possibility of a visor. Also, the spectral motif stages this disseminating fission from which the archontic principle, and the concept of the archive, and the concept in general suffer, from the principle on.

It is known that Freud did everything possible to not neglect the experience of haunting, spectrality, phantoms, ghosts. He tried to account for them. Courageously, in as scientific, critical, and positive a fashion as possible. But in this way, he also tried to conjure them. Like Marx. His scientific positivism was put to the service of his declared hauntedness and of his unavowed fear. Let us take only one example. I shall choose it from in close to archive desire, from in close to an impossible archaeology of this nostalgia, of this painful desire for a return to the authentic and singular origin, and for a return concerned to account for the desire to return: for itself. This example calls me back close to Naples and to Pompeii, in the landscape of Gradiva, where I wrote these pages some ten days ago.

In his reading of Jensen's *Gradiva*, Freud avows being himself haunted. He denies it without denying it, he defends himself without defending himself. He fends himself, if you will, at the moment he wants to account for the last evolution of Hanold's insanity (*Wahn*), the haunted insanity of someone else—and of someone else as a character in fiction. The latter thinks that he speaks for a whole hour with Gradiva, with his "mid-day ghost" (*Mittagsgespens*), though she has been buried since the catastrophe of 79. He *monologues with Gradiva's ghost* for an hour, then the latter regains her tomb, and Hanold, the archaeologist, remains alone. But he also remains duped by the hallucination.

What will Freud do? He had first clearly posed the classical problem of the phantom. And of the phantom in literature. The "character" is not the only one to be ill at ease or to suffer from a "tension" (*Spannung*). Before the "apparition of Gradiva," we ask ourselves in the first place, we the readers, *who it is*, for we have first seen her in the form of a stone statue, and then of a fantastical image (*Phantasiebild*). The hesitation does not oscillate simply between the phantom and reality, effective reality (*wirkliche*). Putting it in quotation marks, Freud speaks of a "real" phantom (*ein "wirliches" Gespens*): "Is she a hallucination of our hero, led astray by his delusions? Is she a 'real' ghost? or a living person [*leibhaftige Person*]?" [17]. To ask oneself these questions, Freud notes, one does not need to "believe in ghosts." The question and the "tension" it engenders are only more inevitable in that Jensen, the author of what he himself calls a "fantastic fiction" (*Phantasiestück*), has not yet explained to us whether he wanted to leave us in our prosaic mode or if he wanted to "transport us into another and imaginary world, in which spirits and ghosts [*Geister und Gespenster*] are given reality [*Wirklichkeit*]" [17, my emphasis]. We are prepared to "follow" the author of fiction as in "the examples of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*."

Let us never forget it: at midday, at the "hour of ghosts" (*Geisterstunde*), Gradiva, the "mid-day ghost," appears for us in an experience of *reading*, but also, for the hero of the novel, in an experience the *language* of which, indeed the multiplicity of languages, cannot be abstracted away to leave naked pure perception or even a purely perceptive hallucination. Hanold also addresses himself to Gradiva in Greek to see if the spectral existence (*Scheindasein*) has retained the power to speak (*Sprachvermögen*). Without response, he then addresses her in Latin. She smiles and asks him to speak in his own proper idiom, German: "If you want to speak to me, you must do it in German." A phantom can thus be sensitive to idiom. Welcoming to this one, allergic to that one. One does not address it in just any language. It is a law of economy, once again, a law of the *oikos*, of

the transaction of signs and values, but also of some familial domesticity: haunting implies places, a habitation, and always a haunted house.

This economy is no longer separated from questions of “effectivity,” thus in quotations: is a phantom “real” (*wirklich*) or not? But also of “truth.” What about the truth for Freud, faced with these specters? What, in his eyes, is the share, the allowance, the part of truth? Because he believes in something like a *part* of the truth. He tells us that under analysis, under psychoanalytic examination, this delusion’s lack of verisimilitude (*die Unwahrscheinlichkeit dieses Wahnes*) seems to dissipate (*scheint . . . zu zergehen*), at least to a large extent: “the greater part [*zum grosseren Teile*]” [70].

So here is a lack of verisimilitude which seems to dissipate with explication, *at least in large part!* What is this part? What is it due to, this piece which resists explanation? Why this insistence on the part, the parting, the partition, the piece? And what does this partition have to do with the truth?

We know the Freudian explanation. Announced by this strange protocol, it mobilizes the whole etiological machinery of psychoanalysis, beginning, obviously, with the mechanisms of repression. But we should not forget that if the psychoanalytic explanation of delusion, of hauntedness, of hallucination, if the psychoanalytic theory of ghosts, in sum, leaves a part, a share of nonverisimilitude unexplained or rather *verisimilar*, carrying truth, this is because, and Freud recognizes it himself a bit further on, there is a *truth of delusion*, a truth of insanity or of hauntedness. Analogous to that “historical truth” which Freud distinguishes, notably in *Moses*, from the “material truth,” this truth is repressed or suppressed. But it resists and *returns*, as such, as the spectral truth of delusion or of hauntedness. It *returns*, it belongs, it comes down to spectral truth. Delusion or insanity, hauntedness is not only haunted by this or that ghost, Gradiva for example, but by the specter of the truth which has been thus repressed. The truth is spectral, and this is its part of truth which is irreducible by explanation.

A bit further on, Freud attempts again to allow for, to account for this part in the hallucinatory haunting of the archaeologist:

If a patient believes in his delusion so firmly, this is not because [so geschieht das nicht] his faculty of judgement has been overturned and does not arise from what is false [irrig ist] in the delusion. On the contrary, there is a grain of truth concealed in every delusion [Sondern in jedem Wahn steckt auch ein Körnchen Wahrheit], there is something in it that really deserves belief [es ist etwas an ihm, was wirklich den Glauben verdient], and this is the source [die Quelle] of the patient’s conviction, which is therefore to that extent justified [der also so weit berechtigten Überzeugung des Kranken]. This true element [dieses Wahre, this truth, the truth’s seed of truth], however, has long been repressed [war lange Zeit verdrängt]. If eventually it is able to penetrate into consciousness, this time in a distorted form [in entstellter Form], the sense of conviction attaching to it is over-intensified as though by way of compensation and is now attached to the distorted substitute of the repressed truth [am Entstellungsersatz des verdrängten Wahren]. [80]

To decipher the archive of this score, to read its truth right on the monument of this portion, one must take into account a *prosthesis*, this “distorted substitute.” But a part of truth remains, a piece or a grain of truth breathes at the heart of the delusion, of the illusion, of the hallucination, of the hauntedness. This is a figure we find again literally in *Moses*, precisely when Freud distinguishes “historical” truth from “material” truth. For example: if Moses was the first Messiah, and Christ was his *prosthetic substitute* (*Ersatzmann*), his representative and his successor, in this case, Saint Paul was in a certain sense justified to address himself as he did to the nations (*konnte auch Paulus mit einer gewissen*

historischen Berechtigung den Völkern zuzurufen) to tell them that the Messiah had in effect come (*wirklich gekommen*) and that he was put to death “before your eyes” (*vor Euren Augen*). “Then, too,” Freud says, “there is an element of historical truth in Christ’s resurrection [literally, a piece of historical truth: *ein Stück historischer Wahrheit*], for he was the resurrected Moses and behind him the returned primal father [*Urvater*] of the primitive horde, transfigured and, as the son, put in the place of the father” [90].

After having thus accounted for the part of truth, taken care to isolate the seed of truth in the hallucination of the archaeologist who is prey to the “mid-day ghost,” Freud means to confirm this truth of revisitation. He wants to demonstrate while illustrating. With the art of manipulating its suspense, like a narrator or like the author of a fiction, he tells us, in turn, a story. But as if it were the history of someone else, a case. Not the case of a patient, but the case of a doctor. “I know of a doctor,” he says [SE 9: 71]. The doctor had *seen* a ghost. He had witnessed the spectral return of a dead person and he could, in sum, bear witness to it. Freud had just noted that the belief in spirits, in ghosts, and in returning souls (*der Glaube an Geister und Gespenster und wiederkehrende Seelen*) should not be taken as a survival, a simple residue of religion and of childhood. The experience of meeting or of being visited by ghosts remains indestructible and undeniable. The most cultivated, the most reasonable, the most nonbelieving people easily reconcile a certain spiritualism with reason. We know about the Freudian intrigue on the subject of telepathy. I tried to discuss this elsewhere, in a more or less fictional fashion, and I will not go back into it. What is at issue here is an analogous problematic. Freud wants to teach with the aid of an example: “*Ich weiss von einem Arzt*,” “I know a doctor . . .” And he tells us, as if it had to do with someone else, the misadventure of a colleague. The latter reproached himself for a professional imprudence: it may have led to the death of one of his patients. Many years later, he sees a young girl enter his office. He recognizes the dead person. He tells himself then that it is “true [*wahr*] that the dead can come back [*dass die Toten wiederkommen können*]” [71]. His hallucination had been helped, it was lucky, if you will: the ghost presented itself as the sister of the deceased woman and also suffered from Graves’ disease.

Here is the *coup de théâtre*, the dramatic twist. Freud pretended to speak of someone else, of a colleague. (If I were to be immodest to such a point, doubly immodest, I would say that he did what I am doing in speaking of a colleague, Yerushalmi, while I am speaking of myself.) Freud presents himself, he says, in sum “here I am”: “*Der Arzt aber, dem sich dies ereignet, war ich selbst . . .*,” “The doctor to whom this occurred was, however, none other than myself . . .” [72]. And he does not fail to draw a conclusion: he is in a good position not to refuse Harold the archaeologist the *clinical possibility* of a brief delusion, but also the *right* to a furtive hallucination. As soon as a semi-ghost appears, it is also the right of manifestation of a certain truth (which is a bit spectral, *in part* spectral) in the person of a sort of *species* of “real phantom.” The *species*, the *aspect*, the *specter*, this is what remains to be seen with the truth, what is needed to speculate with the true of that truth.

In the end, Yerushalmi is right. He has managed to allow for truth’s part. Freud had his ghosts, he confesses it on occasion. He lets us partake in his truth. He had his, and he obeyed them (Jakob Shelomoh, Moses, and a few others), as does Yerushalmi (Jakob Shelomoh, Sigmund Shelomoh, his Moses, and a few others), and I myself (Jakob, Hayim, my grandfathers Moses and Abraham, and a few others).

Freud’s discourse on the archive, and here is the thesis of the theses, seems thus to be divided. As does his concept of the archive. It takes two contradictory forms. That is why we say, and this declaration can always translate an avowal, *archive fever*. One should be able to find traces of this contradiction in all Freud’s works. This contradiction is not negative, it modulates and conditions the very formation of the concept of the archive and of the concept in general—right where they bear the contradiction.

If Freud suffered from *mal d'archive*, if his case stems from a *trouble de l'archive*, he is not without his place, simultaneously, in the archive fever or disorder which we are experiencing today, concerning its lightest symptoms or the great holocaustic tragedies of our modern history and historiography: concerning all the detestable revisionisms, as well as the most legitimate, necessary, and courageous rewritings of history. Before gathering and formalizing the double Freudian postulation about the archive, I would like to justify the French expressions I just used: the *trouble de l'archive* and the *mal d'archive*.

Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word "archive." And not only because of the two orders of the *arkhē* we distinguished at the beginning. Nothing is more troubled and more troubling. The trouble with what is troubling here is undoubtedly what troubles and muddles our vision (as they say in French), what inhibits sight and knowledge, but also the trouble of troubled and troubling affairs (as they also say in French), the trouble of secrets, of plots, of clandestineness, of half-private, half-public conjurations, always at the unstable limit between public and private, between the family, the society, and the State, between the family and an intimacy even more private than the family, between oneself and oneself. I thus name the *trouble*, or what is called in English the "trouble," of these visions and of these affairs in a French idiom which is again untranslatable, to recall at least that the archive always holds a problem for translation. With the irreplaceable singularity of a document to interpret, to repeat, to reproduce, but each time in its original uniqueness, an archive ought to be idiomatic, and thus at once offered and unavailable for translation, open to and shielded from technical iteration and reproduction.

Nothing is thus more troubled and more troubling today than the concept archived in this word "archive." What is more probable, on the other hand, and more clear, is that psychoanalysis is not without responsibility in this trouble. It wants to analyze it, but it also heightens it. In naming psychoanalysis here, one refers already, in any case, to the archive which is classified, at least provisionally, under the name of "psychoanalysis," of "Freud," and of a few others. In other words, if we no longer know very well what we are saying when we say "archive," "Freud" is undoubtedly not without responsibility. But the name of Freud, the name of the Freuds, as we have seen, itself becomes plural, thus problematic.

The *trouble de l'archive* stems from a *mal d'archive*. We are *en mal d'archive*: in need of archives. Listening to the French idiom, and in it the attribute "*en mal de*," to be *en mal d'archive* can mean something else than to suffer from a sickness, from a trouble or from what the noun "*mal*" might name. It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it, right where something in it archives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement. No desire, no passion, no drive, no compulsion, indeed no repetition compulsion, no "*mal-de*" can arise for a person who is not already, in one way or another, *en mal d'archive*. Now the principle of the internal division of the Freudian gesture, and thus of the Freudian concept of the archive, is that at the moment when psychoanalysis formalizes the conditions of archive fever and of the archive itself, it repeats the very thing it resists or which it makes its object. It raises the stakes. Such is the case with the *three plus one* theses (or prostheses). Three of them have to do with the concept of the archive, one other with the concept of the concept.

1. *First thesis and first surenchère (higher bid)*

On the one hand, in effect, with the single but decisive conception of a topic of the psychic apparatus (and thus of repression or of suppression, according to the places of inscription,

both inside and outside), Freud made possible the idea of an archive properly speaking, of a hypomnesic or technical archive, of the substrate or the subjectile (material or virtual) which, in what is already a psychic *spacing*, cannot be reduced to memory: neither to memory as conscious reserve, nor to memory as remembrance, as act of recalling. The psychic archive comes neither under *mnēmē* nor under *anamnēsis*.

But on the other hand, as I tried to show in "Freud and the Scene of Writing," this does not stop Freud, as classical metaphysician, from holding the technical prosthesis to be a secondary and accessory exteriority. In spite of resorting to what he holds to be a model of auxiliary representation, he invariably maintains a primacy of live memory and of anamnesis in their originary temporalization. From which we have the archaeological outbidding by which psychoanalysis, in its archive fever, always attempts to return to the live origin of that which the archive loses while keeping it in a multiplicity of places. As we have noted all along, there is an incessant tension here between the archive and archaeology. They will always be close the one to the other, resembling each other, hardly discernible in their co-implication, and yet radically incompatible, *heterogeneous*, that is to say, *different with regard to the origin*, in *divorce with regard to the archē*. Now Freud was incessantly tempted to redirect the original interest he had for the psychic archive toward archaeology (the word "*archiv*," by the way, appears already in the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) [SE 2]).²⁰ The scene of excavation, the theater of archaeological digs are the preferred places of this brother to Hanold. Each time he wants to teach the topology of the archives, that is to say, of what ought to exclude or forbid the return to the origin, this lover of stone figurines proposes archaeological parables. The most remarkable and the most precocious of them is well known, in the study of hysteria of 1896. We must once again underline a few words in this work to mark what is to my eyes the most acute moment. A moment and not a process, this instant does not belong to the laborious deciphering of the archive. It is the nearly ecstatic instant Freud dreams of, when the very success of the dig must sign the effacement of the archivist: *the origin then speaks by itself*. The *archē* appears in the nude, without archive. It presents itself and comments on itself by itself. "Stones talk!" In the present. *Anamnēsis* without *hypomnēsis*! The archaeologist has succeeded in making the archive no longer serve any function. It *comes to efface itself*, it becomes transparent or unessential so as to let the *origin* present itself in person. Live, without mediation and without delay. Without even the memory of a translation, once the intense work of translation has succeeded. And this would be the "advance" of an "anamnesis." The time Freud consecrates to this long voyage in a field of excavations also says something of a voluptuous pleasure. He would like it to be interminable, he prolongs it under the pretext of pedagogy or rhetoric:

But in order to explain the relationship between the method which we have to employ for this purpose and the older method of anamnestic enquiry, I should like to bring before you an analogy taken from an advance that has in fact been made in another field of work.

Imagine that an explorer arrives in a little-known region where his interest is aroused by an expanse of ruins, with remains of walls, fragments of columns, and tablets with half-effaced and unreadable inscriptions. He may content himself with inspecting what lies exposed to view, with questioning the inhabitants—perhaps semi-barbaric people—who live in the vicinity, about what tradition tells them of the history and meaning of these archaeological remains, and with noting down what they tell him—and he may then proceed on his journey. But he may act differently. He may have brought picks, shovels and

20. As I was reminded after the lecture by Dany Nobus, who I thank, the same word also appears in *Zum psychischen Mechanismus des Vergesslichkeit* (1898).

spades with him, and he may set the inhabitants to work with these implements. Together with them he may start upon the ruins, clear away the rubbish, and, beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried. If his work is crowned with success, the discoveries are self-explanatory: the ruined walls are part of the ramparts of a palace or a treasure-house; the fragments of columns can be filled out into a temple; the numerous inscriptions, which, by good luck, may be bilingual, reveal an alphabet and a language, and, when they have been deciphered and translated, yield undreamed-of information about the events of the remote past, to commemorate which the monuments were built. Saxa loquuntur! ["The Aetiology of Hysteria" (1896), SE 3: 192, my emphasis]²¹

2. Second thesis or second *surenchère* (higher bid)

On the one hand, the archive is made possible by the death, aggression, and destruction drive, that is to say also by originary finitude and expropriation. But beyond finitude as limit, there is, as we said above, this properly *in-finite* movement of radical destruction without which no archive desire or fever would happen. All the texts in the family and of the period of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* explain in the end why there is archivization and why anarchiving destruction belongs to the process of archivization and produces the very thing it reduces, on occasion to ashes, and beyond.

But on the other hand, in the same moment, as classical metaphysician and as positivist *Aufklärer*, as critical scientist of a past epoch, as a "scholar" who does not want to speak with ghosts, Freud claims not to believe in death and above all in the virtual existence of the spectral space which he nonetheless takes into account. He takes it into account so as to account for it, and he intends to account for it or prove it right only while reducing it to something other than himself, that is to say, to something other than the other. He wants to explain and reduce the belief in ghosts. He wants to think through the grain of truth of this belief, but he believes that one cannot not believe in them and that one ought not to believe in them. Belief, the radical phenomenon of believing, the only relationship possible to the other as other, does not in the end have any possible place, any irreducible status in Freudian psychoanalysis. Which it nonetheless makes possible. From which we have the archaeological outbidding of a return to the reality, here to the originary effectivity of a base of immediate perception. A more profound and safer base than that of Harold the archaeologist. Even more archaeological. The paradox takes on a striking, properly hallucinatory, form at the moment Freud sees himself obliged to let the phantoms speak for the duration of the archaeological digs but finishes by exorcising them in the moment he at last says, the work having been terminated (or supposed to have been), "Stones talk!" He believes he has exorcised them in the instant he lets them talk, provided that these specters talk, he believes, in the figurative. Like stones, nothing but that . . .

3. Third thesis and third *surenchère* (higher bid)

On the one hand, no one has illuminated better than Freud what we have called the archontic principle of the archive, which in itself presupposes not the originary *arkhē*, but the nomological *arkhē* of the law, of institution, of domiciliation, of filiation. No one has analyzed, that is also to say, deconstructed, the authority of the archontic principle better than he. No one has shown how this archontic, that is, paternal and patriarchic, principle

21. Further on, the parable becomes a "comparison . . . with the excavation of a stratified ruined site" [3: 198].

only posited itself to repeat itself and returned to re-posit itself only in the parricide. It amounts to the repressed or suppressed parricide, in the name of the father as dead father. The archontic is at best the takeover of the archive by the brothers. The equality and the liberty of brothers. A certain, still vivacious idea of democracy.

But *on the other hand*, in life as in his works, in his theoretical theses as in the compulsion of his institutionalizing strategy, Freud repeated the patriarchal logic. He declared, notably in *The Rat Man*, that patriarchal right (*Vaterrecht*) marked the civilizing progress of reason. He even added to it in a patriarchic higher bid, even where all his inheritors, the psychoanalysts of all countries, have united themselves as a single man to follow him and to raise the stakes. To the point that certain people can wonder if, decades after his death, his sons, so many brothers, can yet speak in their own name. Or if his daughter ever came to life (*zōē*), was ever anything other than a phantasm or a ghost, a *Gradiva rediviva*, a *Gradiva-Zoe-Bertgang* passing through at Berggasse 19.

POSTSCRIPT

By chance, I wrote these last words on the edge of Vesuvius, right near Pompeii, less than eight days ago. Each time I return to Naples, since more than twenty years ago, I think of her.

Who better than Gradiva, I said to myself this time, the *Gradiva* of Jensen and of Freud, could illustrate this outbidding in the *mal d'archive*? Illustrate it where it is no longer proper to Freud and to this concept of the archive, where it marks in its very structure (and this is a last *supplementary thesis*) the formation of every concept, the very history of conception?

When he wants to explain the haunting of the archaeologist with a logic of repression, at the very moment in which he specifies that he wants to recognize in it a germ or a parcel of truth, Freud claims again to bring to light a more originary origin than that of the ghost. In the outbidding, he wants to be an archivist who is more of an archaeologist than the archaeologist. And, of course, closer to the ultimate cause, a better etiologist than his novelist. He wants to exhume a more archaic *impression*, he wants to exhibit a more archaic *imprint* than the one around which the other archaeologists of all kinds bustle, those of literature and those of classical objective science, an imprint which each time is singular, an impression which is almost no longer an archive but which almost confuses itself with the pressure of the footstep which leaves its still-living mark on a substrate, a surface, a place of origin. When the step is still one with the subjectile. In the instant when the printed archive is yet to be detached from the primary impression in its singular, irreproducible, and archaic origin. In the instant when the imprint is yet to be left, abandoned by the pressure of the impression. In the instant of the pure auto-affection, in the indistinction of the active and the passive, of a touching and the touched. An archive which would in sum confuse itself with the *arkhē*, with the origin of which it is only the *type*, the *typos*, the iterable letter or character. An archive without archive, where, suddenly indiscernible from the impression of its imprint, Gradiva's footstep speaks by itself! Now this is exactly what Hanold dreamed of in his disenchanting archaeologist's desire, in the moment when he awaited the coming of the "mid-day ghost."

Hanold suffers from archive fever. He has exhausted the science of archaeology. He had, the novel says, become a master in the art of deciphering the most indecipherable, the most enigmatic graffiti (*in der Entzifferung schwer enträtselbarer graffiti*). But he had had enough of his science and of his abilities. His impatient desire rebelled against their positivity as if before death. This science itself was of the past. What it taught, he said to himself, is a lifeless archaeological intuition (*eine leblose archäologische Anschauung*). And in the moment when Pompeii comes back to life, when the dead awake (*die Toten wachen auf, und Pompeji fing an, wieder zu leben*), Hanold understands everything. He understands why he had traveled through Rome and Naples. He begins to *know* (*wissen*) what he did not then know, namely his "intimate drive" or "impulse." And this knowledge, this comprehension, this deciphering of the interior desire to decipher which drove him on to Pompeii, all of this comes back to him in an act of memory (*Erinnerung*). He recalls that he came to see if he could find her traces, the traces of Gradiva's footsteps (*ob er hier Spuren von ihr auffinden könne*).

Now here is a point which is never taken into account, neither in Jensen's reading nor in Freud's, and this point confounds more than it distinguishes: Hanold has come to search for these traces in the literal sense (*im wörtlichen Sinne*). He dreams of bringing back to life. He dreams rather of reliving. But of reliving the other. Of reliving the singular pressure or impression which Gradiva's step [*pas*], the step itself, the step of Gradiva herself, that very day, at that time, on that date, in what was inimitable about it, must have left in the ashes. He dreams this irreplaceable place, the very ashes, where the singular imprint, like a signature, barely distinguishes itself from the impression. And this is the

condition of singularity, the idiom, the secret, testimony. It is the condition for the uniqueness of the printer-printed, of the impression and the imprint, of the pressure and its trace in the unique *instant* where they are not yet distinguished the one from the other, forming in an *instant* a single body of Gradiva's step, of her gait, of her pace (*Gangart*), and of the ground which carries them. The trace no longer distinguishes itself from its substrate. No longer distinguishing *between themselves*, this pressure and this imprint differ henceforth *from all other* impressions, from all other imprints, and from all other archives. At least that imprint (*Abdruck*), distinct from all the others, must be rediscovered—but this presupposes *both* memory *and* the archive, the one and the other as the same, *right on the same* subjectile in the field of excavations. It must be resuscitated right where, in an absolutely safe location, in an irreplaceable place, it still holds, right on the ash, not yet having detached itself, the pressure of Gradiva's so singular step.

This is what Hanold the archaeologist means in a literal sense by the *literal sense*. "In the literal sense" (*im wörtlichen Sinne*), the story says:

Something "came into his consciousness for the first time [zum ersten mal]: without being aware himself of the impulse within him, he had come to Italy and had traveled on to Pompeii, without stopping in Rome or Naples, in order to see whether he could find any traces of her. And 'traces' in the literal sense [im wörtlichen Sinne]; for with her peculiar gait she must have left behind an imprint [Abdruck] of her toes in the ashes distinct from all the rest." [SE 9: 65, trans. modified]²²

This uniqueness does not resist. Its price is infinite. But infinite in the immense, incommensurable extent to which it remains unfindable. The possibility of the archiving trace, this simple *possibility*, can only divide the uniqueness. Separating the impression from the imprint. Because this uniqueness is not even a past present. It would have been possible, one can dream of it after the fact, only insofar as its iterability, that is to say, its immanent divisibility, the possibility of its fission, haunted it from the origin. The faithful memory of such a singularity can only be given over to the ghost.

Is fiction outdone here? Does it lack knowledge? Did Jensen know less about this than Freud?²³ And Hanold?

One can always dream or speculate around this secret account. Speculation begins there—and belief. But of the secret itself, there can be no archive, by definition. The secret is the very ash of the archive, the place where it no longer even makes sense to say "the very ash [*la cendre même*]" or "right on the ash [*à même la cendre*]." There is no sense

22. "... *im wörtlichen Sinne, denn bei ihrer besonderen Gangart musste sie in der Asche einen von allen übrigen sich unterscheidenden Abdruck der Zehen hinterlassen haben.*"

23. *It is known that Freud did not fail to take up this question. With a strategy which is at times disconcerting, he does justice to it in its general form on more than one occasion, but also with this example here in his text on Jensen's Gradiva. Because Jensen, as he notes, proposes an etiology and a genealogy of Hanold's "delusion." Do they hold up in the face of science? After having proposed, in a provocative and deliberately surprising fashion, to reverse the terms (it is science which does not hold up in the face of fiction), Freud complicates things. He proposes to ally himself, as the scholar of a new science, and much better armed, with the novelist. The latter will not be alone if "I may count my own works as part of science," Freud says, and if he can leave his provisional isolation. A note from 1912 remarks that this isolation is coming to an end: "... the 'psycho-analytic movement' started by me has become widely extended, and it is constantly growing" [SE 9: 53]. The same question is set out from another point of view in chapter 4, which ends at the edge of an obvious fact forgotten along the way: "But we must stop here, or we may really forget that Hanold and Gradiva are only creatures of their author's mind" [SE 9: 93]. Elsewhere, from another point of view, we will take up these texts and these questions of metainterpretative outbidding.*

in searching for the secret of what anyone may have known. *A fortiori* a character, Hanold the archaeologist.

That is what this literature attests. So here is a singular testimony, literature itself, an inheritor escaped—or emancipated—from the Scriptures. Here is what it gives us to think: the inviolable secret of *Gradiva*, of Hanold, of Jensen, and then of Freud—and of a few others. Beyond every possible and necessary inquiry, we will always wonder what Freud (for example), what every “careful concealer” may have wanted to keep secret. We will wonder what he may have kept of his unconditional right to secrecy, while at the same time burning with the desire to know, to make known, and to archive the very thing he concealed forever. What was concealed? What did he conceal even beyond the intention to conceal, to lie, or to perjure?

We will always wonder what, in this *mal d'archive*, he may have burned. We will always wonder, sharing with compassion in this archive fever, what may have burned of his secret passions, of his correspondence, or of his “life.” Burned without him, without remains and without knowledge. With no possible response, be it spectral or not, short of or beyond a suppression, on the other edge of repression, originary or secondary, without a name, without the least symptom, and without even an ash.

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Translated by Eric Prenowitz

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**The
Photography
Reader**

Edited by

Liz Wells

techno-ideological project of renaissance picturing systems that has governed Western thought ever since. Perspective remains the order of Photoshop as much as it does the camera obscura, discovered so long before photography. Education then, should retain a critical distance to, and awareness of these functions and fluctuations in image culture.

Notes

- 1 Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, London: Hogarth Press, 1992, p. 125.
- 2 'Culture' for Williams means the 'whole way of life'. See his *Culture and Society*, Penguin, 1979.
- 3 This is Lyotard's definition of postmodernism in *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester University Press, 1986, p. 79.
- 4 See Roland Barthes, 'That Old Thing, Art . . .' *The Responsibility of Forms*, translated by Richard Howard, University of California Press, 1991.
- 5 Peter Wollen, 'Photography and Aesthetics', *Screen*, vol. 19, no. 4, winter 1978–79.
- 6 The internal differences within conceptual art and between artists is here less important than their collective distinction from 'art photography' and photographers. The anathema directed towards the 'fine print' of the former was only equalled by the hostility to the 'anti-aesthetic' by the latter.
- 7 Victor Burgin (ed.) *Thinking Photography*, Macmillan, 1982, p. 2.
- 8 A.L. Rees and F. Borzollo, (eds) *The New Art History*, Camden Press, 1986.
- 9 Victor Burgin, *The End of Art Theory*, Macmillan, 1986, p. 204. Author's emphasis.
- 10 Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, Semiotext(e), 1991.
- 11 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, Fontana, 1980, pp. 227–8.
- 12 Wollen, 'Photography and Aesthetics' *Screen*, vol. 19, no. 4, winter 1978–79, p. 17.
- 13 Mary Kelly, 'Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism' *Art after Modernism*, ed. B. Wallis, New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984, p. 97.
- 14 Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, Paris: Gallimard, 1980, p. 98. (My emphasis.)

Allan Sekula

READING AN ARCHIVE

Photography between labour and capital

Every image of the past that is not recognised by the present as one of its own threatens to disappear irretrievably.

Walter Benjamin¹

The invention of photography. For whom? Against whom?

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin²

HERE IS YET ANOTHER BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHS. All were made in the industrial and coal-mining regions of Cape Breton in the two decades between 1948 and 1968. All were made by one man, a commercial photographer named Leslie Shedden. At first glance, the economics of this work seem simple and common enough: proprietor of the biggest and only successful photographic studio in the town of Glace Bay, Shedden produced pictures on demand for a variety of clients. Thus in the range of his commissions we discover the limits of economic relations in a coal town. His largest single customer was the coal company. And prominent among the less official customers who walked in the door of Shedden Studio were the coal miners and their families. Somewhere in between the company and the workers were local shopkeepers who, like Shedden himself, depended on the miners' income for their own livelihood and who saw photography as a sensible means of local promotion.

Why stress these economic realities at the outset, as if to flaunt the 'crude thinking' often called for by Bertolt Brecht? Surely our understandings of these photographs cannot be reduced to a knowledge of economic conditions. This latter knowledge is necessary but insufficient; we also need to grasp the way in which photography constructs an imaginary world and passes it off as reality. The aim of this essay, then, is to try to understand something of the relationship between photographic culture and economic life. How does photography serve to legitimate and normalise existing power relationships? How does it serve as the voice of authority,

while simultaneously claiming to constitute a token of exchange between equal partners? What havens and temporary escapes from the realm of necessity are provided by photographic means? What resistances are encouraged and strengthened? How is historical and social memory preserved, transformed, restricted and obliterated by photographs? What futures are promised; what futures are forgotten? In the broadest sense, these questions concern the ways in which photography constructs an *imaginary economy*. From a materialist perspective, these are reasonable questions, well worth pursuing. Certainly they would seem to be unavoidable for an archive such as this one, assembled in answer to commercial and industrial demands in a region persistently suffering from economic troubles.³

Nonetheless, such questions are easily eclipsed, or simply left unasked. To understand this denial of politics, this depoliticisation of photographic meaning, we need to examine some of the underlying problems of photographic culture. Before we can answer the questions just posed, we need to briefly consider what a photographic archive is, and how it might be interpreted, sampled, or reconstructed in a book. The model of the archive, of the quantitative ensemble of images, is a powerful one in photographic discourse. This model exerts a basic influence on the character of the truths and pleasures experienced in looking at photographs, especially today, when photographic books and exhibitions are being assembled from archives at an unprecedented rate. We might even argue that archival ambitions and procedures are intrinsic to photographic practice.

There are all sorts of photographic archives: commercial archives like Shedden's, corporate archives, government archives, museum archives, historical society archives, amateur archives, family archives, artists' archives, private collectors' archives and so on. Archives are property either of individuals or institutions, and their ownership may or may not coincide with authorship. One characteristic of photography is that authorship of individual images and the control and ownership of archives do not commonly reside in the same individual. Photographers are detail workers when they are not artists or leisure-time amateurs, and thus it is not unreasonable for the legal theorist Bernard Edelman to label photographers the 'proletarians of creation.'⁴ Leslie Shedden, for his part, was a combination artisan and small entrepreneur. He contributed to company and family archives while retaining his own file of negatives. As is common with commercial photographers, he included these negatives in the sale of his studio to a younger photographer upon retiring in 1977.

Archives, then, constitute a *territory of images*: the unity of an archive is first and foremost that imposed by ownership. Whether or not the photographs in a particular archive are offered for sale, the general condition of archives involves the subordination of use to the logic of exchange. Thus not only are the pictures in archives often *literally* for sale, but their meanings are up for grabs. New owners are invited, new interpretations are promised. The purchase of reproduction rights under copyright law is also the purchase of a certain semantic licence. This *semantic availability* of pictures in archives exhibits the same abstract logic as that which characterizes goods in the marketplace.

In an archive, the possibility of meaning is 'liberated' from the actual contingencies of use. But this liberation is also a loss, an *abstraction* from the complexity and richness of use, a loss of context. Thus the specificity of 'original' uses and

meanings can be avoided and even made invisible, when photographs are selected from an archive and reproduced in a book. (In reverse fashion, photographs can be removed from books and entered into archives, with a similar loss of specificity.) So new meanings come to supplant old ones, with the archive serving as a kind of 'clearing house' of meaning.

Consider this example: some of the photographs in this book were originally reproduced in the annual reports of the Dominion Steel and Coal Company, others were carried in miners' wallets or framed on the mantelpieces of working-class homes. Imagine two different gazes. Imagine the gaze of a stockholder (who may or may not have ever visited a coal mine) thumbing his way to the table of earnings and lingering for a moment on the picture of a mining machine, presumably the concrete source of the abstract wealth being accounted for in those pages. Imagine the gaze of a miner, or of a miner's spouse, child, parent, sibling, lover or friend drifting to a portrait during breaks or odd moments during the working day. Most mine workers would agree that the investments behind these looks – financial on the one hand, emotional on the other – are not compatible. But in an archive, the difference, the *radical antagonism* between these looks is eclipsed. Instead we have two carefully made negatives available for reproduction in a book in which all their similarities and differences could easily be reduced to 'purely visual' concerns. (And even visual differences can be homogenized out of existence when negatives first printed as industrial glossies and others printed on flat paper and tinted by hand are subjected to a uniform standard of printing for reproduction in a book. Thus the difference between a mode of pictorial address which is primarily 'informational' and one which is 'sentimental' is obscured.) In this sense, archives establish a relation of *abstract visual equivalence* between pictures. Within this regime of the sovereign image, the underlying currents of power are hard to detect, except through the shock of montage, when pictures from antagonistic categories are juxtaposed in a polemical and disorienting way,

Conventional wisdom would have it that photographs transmit immutable truths. But although the very notion of photographic reproduction would seem to suggest that very little is lost in translation, it is clear that photographic meaning depends largely on context. Despite the powerful impression of reality (imparted by the mechanical registration of a moment of reflected light according to the rules of normal perspective), photographs, in themselves, are fragmentary and incomplete utterances. Meaning is always directed by layout, captions, text, and site and mode of presentation. [. . .] Thus, since photographic archives tend to suspend meaning and use, within the archive meaning exists in a state that is both residual and potential. The suggestion of past uses coexists with a plenitude of possibilities. In functional terms, an active archive is like a toolshed, a dormant archive like an abandoned toolshed. (Archives are not like coal mines: meaning is not extracted from nature, but from culture.)

In terms borrowed from linguistics, the archive constitutes the paradigm or iconic system from which photographic 'statements' are constructed. Archival potentials change over time; the keys are appropriated by different disciplines, discourses, 'specialties.' For example, the pictures in photo agency files become available to history when they are no longer useful to topical journalism. Similarly, the new art history of photography at its too prevalent worst rummages through archives of every sort in search of masterpieces to celebrate and sell.

Clearly archives are not neutral: they embody the power inherent in accumulation, collection, and hoarding as well as that power inherent in the command of the lexicon and rules of a language. Within bourgeois culture, the photographic project itself has been identified from the very beginning not only with the dream of a universal language, but also with the establishment of global archives and repositories according to models offered by libraries, encyclopedias, zoological and botanical gardens, museums, police files, and banks. (Reciprocally, photography contributed to the modernization of information flows within most of these institutions.) Any photographic archive, no matter how small, appeals indirectly to these institutions for its authority. Not only the truths, but also the pleasures of photographic archives are linked to those enjoyed in these other sites. As for the truths, their philosophical basis lies in an aggressive empiricism, bent on achieving a universal inventory of appearance. Archival projects typically manifest a compulsive desire for completeness, a faith in an ultimate coherence imposed by the sheer quantity of acquisitions. In practice, knowledge of this sort can only be organized according to bureaucratic means. Thus the archival perspective is closer to that of the capitalist, the professional positivist, the bureaucrat and the engineer – not to mention the connoisseur – than it is to that of the working class. Generally speaking, working-class culture is not built on such high ground.

And so archives are contradictory in character. Within their confines meaning is liberated from use, and yet at a more general level an empiricist model of truth prevails. Pictures are atomized, isolated in one way and homogenized in another. (Alphabet soup comes to mind.) But any archive that is not a complete mess establishes an order of some sort among its contents. Normal orders are either taxonomic or diachronic (sequential); in most archives both methods are used, but at different, often alternating, levels of organization. Taxonomic orders might be based on sponsorship, authorship, genre, technique, iconography, subject matter, and so on, depending on the range of the archive. Diachronic orders follow a chronology of production or acquisition. Anyone who has sorted or simply sifted through a box of family snapshots understands the dilemmas (and perhaps the folly) inherent in these procedures. One is torn between narration and categorization, between chronology and inventory.

What should be recognized here is that photographic books (and exhibitions), frequently cannot help but reproduce these rudimentary ordering schemes, and in so doing implicitly claim a share in both the authority and the illusory neutrality of the archive. Herein lies the 'primitivism' of still photography in relation to the cinema. Unlike a film, a photographic book or exhibition can almost always be dissolved back into its component parts, back into the archive. The ensemble can seem to be both provisional and artless. Thus, within the dominant culture of photography, we find a chain of dodges and denials: at any stage of photographic production the apparatus of selection and interpretation is liable to render itself invisible (or conversely to celebrate its own workings as a kind of moral crusade or creative magic). Photographer, archivist, editor and curator can all claim, when challenged about their interpretations, to be merely passing along a neutral reflection of an already established state of affairs. Underlying this process of professional denial is a commonsensical empiricism. The photograph reflects reality. The archive accurately catalogues the ensemble of reflections, and so on.

Even if one admits – as is common enough nowadays – that the photograph *interprets* reality, it might still follow that the archive accurately catalogues the ensemble of interpretations, and so on again. Songs of the innocence of discovery can be sung at any point. Thus the 'naturalization of the cultural,' seen by Roland Barthes as an essential characteristic of photographic discourse, is repeated and reinforced at virtually every level of the cultural apparatus – unless it is interrupted by criticism.⁵

In short, photographic archives by their very structure maintain a hidden connection between knowledge and power. Any discourse that appeals without scepticism to archival standards of truth might well be viewed with suspicion. But what narratives and inventories might be constructed, were we to interpret an archive such as this one in a normal fashion?

I can imagine two different sorts of books being made from Shedden's photographs, or for that matter from any similar archive of functional photographs. On the one hand, we might regard these pictures as 'historical documents.' We might, on the other hand, treat these photographs as 'aesthetic objects.' Two more or less contradictory choices emerge. Are these photographs to be taken as a transparent means to a knowledge – intimate and detailed even if incomplete – of industrial Cape Breton in the postwar decades? Or are we to look at these pictures 'for their own sake,' as opaque ends-in-themselves? This second question has a corollary. Are these pictures products of an unexpected vernacular authorship: is Leslie Shedden a 'discovery' worthy of a minor seat in an expanding pantheon of photographic artists?

Consider the first option. From the first decade of this century, popular histories and especially schoolbook histories have increasingly relied on photographic reproductions. Mass culture and mass education lean heavily on photographic realism, mixing pedagogy and entertainment in an avalanche of images. The look of the past can be retrieved, preserved and disseminated in an unprecedented fashion. But awareness of history as an *interpretation* of the past succumbs to a faith in history as *representation*. The viewer is confronted, not by *historical-writing*, but by the appearance of *history itself*. Photography would seem to gratify the often quoted desire of that 'master of modern historical scholarship,' Leopold von Ranke, to 'show what actually happened.'⁶ Historical narration becomes a matter of appealing to the silent authority of the archive, of unobtrusively linking incontestable documents in a seamless account. (The very term 'document' entails a notion of legal or official truth, as well as a notion of *proximity to* and verification of an original event.) Historical narratives that rely primarily on photography almost invariably are both positivist and historicist in character. For positivism, the camera provides mechanical and thus 'scientifically' objective evidence or 'data.' Photographs are seen as sources of factual, positive knowledge, and thus are appropriate documents for a history that claims a place among the supposedly objective sciences of human behaviour. For historicism, the archive confirms the existence of a linear progression from past to present, and offers the possibility of an easy and unproblematic retrieval of the past from the transcendent position offered by the present. At their worst, pictorial histories offer an extraordinarily reductive view of historical causality: the First World War 'begins' with a glimpse of an assassination in Sarajevo; the entry of the United States into the Second World War 'begins' with a view of wrecked battleships.

Thus, most visual and pictorial histories reproduce the established patterns of historical thought in bourgeois culture. By doing so in a 'popular' fashion, they extend the hegemony of that culture, while exhibiting a thinly-veiled contempt and disregard for popular literacy. The idea that photography is a 'universal language' contains a persistent element of condescension as well as pedagogical zeal.

The widespread use of photographs as historical illustrations suggests that significant events are those which can be pictured, and thus history takes on the character of *spectacle*.⁷ But this pictorial spectacle is a kind of rerun, since it depends on prior spectacles for its supposedly 'raw' material.⁸ Since the 1920s, the picture press, along with the apparatuses of corporate public relations, publicity, advertising and government propaganda have contributed to a regularized flow of images: of disasters, wars, revolutions, new products, celebrities, political leaders, official ceremonies, public appearances, and so on. For a historian to use such pictures without remarking on these initial uses is naive at best, and cynical at worst. What would it mean to construct a pictorial history of postwar coal mining in Cape Breton by using pictures from a company public relations archive without calling attention to the bias inherent in that source? What present interests might be served by such an oversight?

The viewer of standard pictorial histories loses any ground in the present from which to make critical evaluations. In retrieving a loose succession of fragmentary glimpses of the past, the spectator is flung into a condition of imaginary temporal and geographical mobility. In this dislocated and disoriented state, the only coherence offered is that provided by the constantly shifting position of the camera, which provides the spectator with a kind of powerless omniscience. Thus the spectator comes to identify with the technical apparatus, with the authoritative institution of photography. In the face of this authority, all other forms of telling and remembering begin to fade. But the machine establishes its truth, not by logical argument, but by providing an *experience*. This experience characteristically veers between nostalgia, horror, and an overriding sense of the exoticism of the past, of its irretrievable otherness for the viewer in the present. Ultimately then, when photographs are uncritically presented as historical documents, they are transformed into aesthetic objects. Accordingly, the pretence to historical understanding remains, although that understanding has been replaced by aesthetic experience.⁹

But what of our second option? Suppose we abandoned all pretence to historical explanation, and treated these photographs as artworks of one sort or another. This book would then be an inventory of aesthetic achievement and/or an offering for disinterested aesthetic perusal. The reader may well have been prepared for these likelihoods by the simple fact that this book has been published by a press with a history of exclusive concern with the contemporary vanguard art of the United States and Western Europe (and to a lesser extent, Canada). Further, as I've already suggested, in a more fundamental way the very removal of these photographs from their initial contexts invites aestheticism.

I can imagine two ways of converting these photographs into 'works of art,' both a bit absurd, but neither without ample precedent in the current fever to assimilate photography into the discourse and market of the fine arts. The first path follows the traditional logic of romanticism, in its incessant search for aesthetic origins in a coherent and controlling authorial 'voice.' The second path might be

labelled 'post-romantic' and privileges the subjectivity of the collector, connoisseur, and viewer over that of any specific author. This latter mode of reception treats photographs as 'found objects.' Both strategies can be found in current photographic discourse; often they are intertwined in a single book, exhibition, magazine or journal article. The former tends to predominate, largely because of the continuing need to validate photography as a fine art, which requires an incessant appeal to the myth of authorship in order to wrest photography away from its reputation as a servile and mechanical medium. Photography needs to be won and rewon repeatedly for the ideology of romanticism to take hold.¹⁰

The very fact that this book reproduces photographs by a single author might seem to be an implicit concession to a neo-romantic *auteurism*. But it would be difficult to make a credible argument for Shedden's autonomy as a maker of photographs. Like all commercial photographers, his work involved a negotiation between his own craft and the demands and expectations of his clients. Further, the presentation of his work was entirely beyond his control. One might hypothetically argue that Shedden was a hidden artist, producing an original *oeuvre* under unfavourable conditions. ('Originality' is the essential qualifying condition of genuine art under the terms dictated by romanticism. To the extent that photography was regarded as a copyist's medium by romantic art critics in the nineteenth century, it failed to achieve the status of the fine arts.) The problem with *auteurism*, as with so much else in photographic discourse, lies in its frequent misunderstanding of actual photographic practice. In the wish-fulfilling isolation of the 'author,' one loses sight of the social institutions – corporation, school, family – that are speaking by means of the commercial photographer's craft. One can still respect the craft work of the photographer, the skill inherent in work within a set of formal conventions and economic constraints, while refusing to indulge in romantic hyperbole.

The possible 'post-romantic' or 'post-modern' reception of these photographs is perhaps even more disturbing and more likely. To the extent that photography still occupies an uncertain and problematic position within the fine arts, it becomes possible to displace subjectivity, to find refined aesthetic sensibility not in the maker of images, but in the viewer. Photographs such as these then become the objects of a secondary voyeurism, which preys upon, and claims superiority to, a more naive primary act of looking. The strategy here is akin to that initiated and established by Pop Art in the early nineteen-sixties. The aesthetically informed viewer examines the artifacts of mass or 'popular' culture with a detached, ironic, and even contemptuous air. For Pop Art and its derivatives, the look of the sophisticated viewer is always constructed in relation to the inferior look which preceded it. What disturbs me about this mode of reception is its covert elitism, its implicit claim to the status of 'superior' spectatorship. A patronizing, touristic, and mock-critical attitude toward 'kitsch' serves to authenticate a high culture that is increasingly indistinguishable from mass culture in many of its aspects, especially in its dependence on marketing and publicity and its fascination with stardom. The possibility of this kind of intellectual and aesthetic arrogance needs to be avoided, especially when a book of photographs by a small-town commercial photographer is published by a press that regularly represents the culture of an international and metropolitan avant-garde.

In general, then, the hidden imperatives of photographic culture drag us in two contradictory directions: toward 'science' and a myth of 'objective truth' on the

one hand, and toward 'art' and a cult of 'subjective experience' on the other. This dualism haunts photography, lending a certain goofy inconsistency to most commonplace assertions about the medium. We repeatedly hear the following refrain. Photography is an art. Photography is a science (or at least constitutes a 'scientific' way of seeing). Photography is both an art and a science. In response to these claims, it becomes important to argue that photography is neither art nor science, but is suspended between both the *discourse* of science and that of art, staking its claims to cultural value on both the model of truth upheld by empirical science and the model of pleasure and expressiveness offered by romantic aesthetics. In its own erratic way, photographic discourse has attempted to bridge the extreme philosophical and institutional separation of scientific and artistic practice that has characterized bourgeois society since the late eighteenth century. As a mechanical medium which radically transformed and displaced earlier artisanal and manual modes of visual representation, photography is implicated in a sustained crisis at the very centre of bourgeois culture, a crisis rooted in the emergence of science and technology as seemingly autonomous productive forces. At the heart of this crisis lies the question of the survival and deformation of human creative energies under the impact of mechanization. The institutional promotion of photography as a fine art serves to redeem technology by suggesting that subjectivity and the machine are easily compatible. Especially today, photography contributes to the illusion of a humanized technology, open both to 'democratic' self expression and to the mysterious workings of genius. In this sense, the camera seems the exemplar of the benign machine, preserving a moment of creative autonomy that is systematically denied in the rest of most people's lives. The one-sided lyricism of this view is apparent when we consider the myriad ways in which photography has served as a tool of industrial and bureaucratic power.¹¹

If the position of photography within bourgeois culture is as problematic as I am suggesting here, then we might want to move away from the art-historicist bias that governs most contemporary discussions of the medium. We need to understand how photography works within everyday life in advanced industrial societies: the problem is one of materialist cultural history rather than art history. This is a matter of beginning to figure out how to read the making and reception of ordinary pictures. Leslie Shedden's photographs would seem to allow for an exemplary insight into the diverse and contradictory ways in which photography affects the lives of working people.

Let's begin again by recognizing that we are confronting a curious archive – divided and yet connected elements of an imaginary social mechanism. Pictures that depict fixed moments in an interconnected economy of flows: of coal, money, machines, consumer goods, men, women, children. Pictures that are themselves elements in a unified symbolic economy – a traffic in photographs – a traffic made up of memories, commemorations, celebrations, testimonials, evidence, facts, fantasies. Here are official pictures, matter-of-factly committed to the charting and celebration of progress. A mechanical conveyor replaces a herd of ponies. A mechanical miner replaces ten human miners. A diesel engine replaces a locomotive. Here also are private pictures, personal pictures, family pictures: weddings, graduations, family groups. One is tempted at the outset to distinguish two distinct realisms, the *instrumental realism* of the industrial photograph and the *sentimental realism* of the

family photograph. And yet it would seem clear that these are not mutually exclusive categories. Industrial photographs may well be commissioned, executed, displayed, and viewed in a spirit of calculation and rationality. Such pictures seem to offer unambiguous truths, the useful truths of applied science. But a zone of virtually unacknowledged *affects* can also be reached by photographs such as these, touching on an aesthetics of power, mastery, and control. The public *optimism* that suffuses these pictures is merely a respectable, *sentimentally-acceptable*, and ideologically necessary substitute for deeper feelings – the cloak for an aesthetics of exploitation. In other words, even the blandest pronouncement in words and pictures from an office of corporate public relations has a subtext marked by threats and fear. (After all, under capitalism everyone's job is on the line.) Similarly, no family photograph succeeds in creating a haven of pure sentiment. This is especially true for people who feel the persistent pressures of economic distress, and for whom even the making of a photograph has to be carefully counted as an expense. Granted, there are moments in which the photograph overcomes separation and loss, therein lies much of the emotional power of photography. Especially in a mining community, the life of the emotions is persistently tied to the instrumental workings underground. More than elsewhere, a photograph can become without warning a tragic memento.

One aim of this essay, then, is to provide certain conceptual tools for a unified understanding of the social workings of photography in an industrial environment. This project might take heed of some of Walter Benjamin's last advice, from his argument for a historical materialist alternative to a historicism that inevitably empathized 'with the victors':

There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.¹²

Benjamin's wording here is careful. Neither the contents, nor the forms, nor the many receptions and interpretations of the archive of human achievements can be assumed to be innocent. And further, even the concept of 'human achievements' has to be used with critical emphasis in an age of automation. The archive has to be read from below, from a position of solidarity with those displaced, deformed, silenced or made invisible by the machineries of profit and progress.

Notes

- 1 Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940), in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1969), p.255.
- 2 Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin, *Vent d'Est* (Rome, Paris, Berlin, 1969), film-script published in Jean-Luc Godard, *Weekend/Wind from the East* (New York, 1972), p.179.
- 3 'What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those

- individuals to the real relations its which they live.' Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1969), in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York, 1971), p. 165. Althusser's model of ideology is based in part on Marx and in part on the work of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Without belabouring this lineage, or explaining it further, I would like to refer the Canadian reader especially to a work by Lacan's first English translator and critical interpreter. Anthony Wilden: *The Imaginary Canadian: An Examination for Discovery* (Vancouver, 1980).
- 4 Bernard Edelman, *Le Droit saisi par la photographique* (Paris, 1973), trans. Elizabeth Kingdom. *Ownership of the Image: Elements for a Marxist Theory of Law* (London, 1979), p.45.
 - 5 Roland Barthes, 'Rhétorique de l'image,' *Communications* 4 (1964). in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath New York, 1977), p.51.
 - 6 Leopold von Ranke, preface to *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations from 1494–1514*, in *The Varieties of History*, ed. Fritz Stern (New York, 1972), p.57.
 - 7 See Guy DeBord. *La Société du spectacle* (Paris, 1967), unauthorized translation. *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit, 1970, revised edition, 1977).
 - 8 We might think here of the reliance by the executive branch of the United States government on 'photo opportunities.' For a discussion of an unrelated example see Susan Sontag's dissection of Leni Riefenstahl's alibi that *Triumph of the Will* was merely an innocent documentary of the orchestrated-for-cinema 1934 Nuremberg Rally of the National Socialists. Sontag quotes Riefenstahl: 'Everything is genuine . . . *It is history – pure history.*' Susan Sontag, 'Fascinating Fascism,' *New York Review of Books*, Vol. XXII, No. 1 February 1975), reprinted in *Under the Sign of Saturn*. (New York 1980). p.82.
 - 9 Two recent books counter this prevailing tendency in 'visual history' by directing attention to the power relationships behind the making of pictures: C. Herron. S. Hoffmiltz, W. Roberts, R. Storey, *All That Our Hands Have Done: A Pictorial History of the Hamilton Workers* (Oaksille, Ontario, 1981); and Sarah Graham-Brown *Palestinians and Their Society 1880–1946* (London, 1980).
 - 10 In the first category are books which discover unsung commercial photographers: e.g., Mike Disfarmer, *Disfarmer: The Heber Springs Portraits*, text by Julia Scully (Danbury, New Hampshire, 1976). In the second category are books which testify to the aesthetic sense of the collector: e.g., Sam Wagstaff, *A Book of Photographs from the Collection of Sam Wagstaff* (New York, 1978).
 - 11 This passage restates an argument made in my essay, 'The Traffic in Photographs' *The Art Journal*, Vol. 41, No. I (Spring 1981), pp.15–16.
 - 12 Walter Benjamin. 'Theses on the Philosophy of History,' pp.256–57.

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Consider a temporary display cobbled together out of workday materials like cardboard, aluminum foil, and packing tape, and filled, like a homemade study-shrine, with a chaotic array of images, texts, and testimonials devoted to a radical artist, writer, or philosopher. Or a funky installation that juxtaposes a model of a lost earthwork with slogans from the civil rights movement and/or recordings from the legendary rock concerts of the time. Or, in a more pristine register, a short filmic meditation on the huge acoustic receivers that were built on the Kentish coast between the World Wars, but soon abandoned as outmoded pieces of military technology. However disparate in subject, appearance, and affect, these works—by the Swiss Thomas Hirschhorn, the American Sam Durant, and the Englishwoman Tacita Dean—share a notion of artistic practice as an idiosyncratic probing into particular figures, objects, and events in modern art, philosophy, and history.

The examples could be multiplied many times (a list of other practitioners might begin with the Scotsman Douglas Gordon, the Englishman Liam Gillick, the Irishman Gerard Byrne, the Canadian Stan Douglas, the Frenchmen Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno, the Americans Mark Dion and Renée Green . . .), but these three alone point to an archival impulse at work internationally in contemporary art. This general impulse is hardly new: it was variously active in the prewar period when the repertoire of sources was extended both politically and technologically (e.g., in the photofiles of Alexander Rodchenko and the photomontages of John Heartfield), and it was even more variously active in the postwar period, especially as appropriated images and serial formats became common idioms (e.g., in the pin-board aesthetic of the Independent Group, remediated representations from Robert Rauschenberg through Richard Prince, and the informational structures of Conceptual art, institutional critique, and feminist art). Yet an archival impulse with a distinctive character of its own is again pervasive—enough so to be considered a tendency in its own right, and that much alone is welcome.¹

1. At least it is to my way of thinking at a time when—artistically as much as politically—almost anything goes and almost nothing sticks. (For example, one would hardly know from the recent Whitney Biennial that there was an outrageous war abroad and a political debacle at home.) But this relative

In the first instance archival artists seek to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present. To this end they elaborate on the found image, object, and text, and favor the installation format as they do so. (Frequently they use its nonhierarchical spatiality to advantage—which is rather rare in contemporary art.) Some practitioners, such as Douglas Gordon, gravitate toward “time readymades,” that is, visual narratives that are sampled in image-projections, as in his extreme versions of films by Alfred Hitchcock, Martin Scorsese, and others.² These sources are familiar, drawn from the archives of mass culture, to ensure a legibility that can then be disturbed or *detourné*; but they can also be obscure, retrieved in a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory. Such work will be my focus here.

Sometimes archival samplings push the postmodernist complications of originality and authorship to an extreme. Consider a collaborative project like *No Ghost Just a Shell* (1999–2002), led by Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno: when a Japanese animation company offered to sell some of its minor *manga* characters, they bought one such person-sign, a girl named “AnnLee,” elaborated this glyph in various pieces, and invited other artists to do the same. Here the project became a “chain” of projects, “a dynamic structure that produce[d] forms that are part of it”; it also became “the story of a community that finds itself in an image”—in an image archive in the making.³ French critic Nicolas Bourriaud has championed such art under the rubric of “post-production,” which underscores the secondary manipulations often constitutive of it. Yet the term also suggests a changed status in the work of art in an age of digital information, which is said to follow those of industrial production and mass consumption.⁴ That such a new age exists as such is an ideological assumption; today, however, information does often appear as a virtual readymade, as so much data to be reprocessed and sent on, and many artists do “inventory,” “sample,” and “share” as ways of working.

This last point might imply that the ideal medium of archival art is the mega-archive of the Internet, and over the last decade terms that evoke the electronic network, such as “platforms” and “stations,” have appeared in art parlance, as has the Internet rhetoric of “interactivity.” But in most archival art the actual means applied to these “relational” ends are far more tactile and face-to-face than any Web inter-

disconnection from the present might be a distinctive mode of connection to it: a “whatever” artistic culture in keeping with a “whatever” political culture.

My title echoes Craig Owens, “The Allegorical Impulse: Notes toward a Theory of Postmodernism,” *October* 12 and 13 (Spring and Summer 1980), as well as Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Gerhard Richter’s *Atlas: The Anomic Archive*,” *October* 88 (Spring 1999). Yet the archival impulse here is not quite allegorical à la Owens or anomic à la Buchloh; in some respects it assumes both conditions (more on which below). I want to thank the research group on archives convened by the Getty and the Clark Institutes in 2003–04, as well as audiences in Mexico City, Stanford, Berkeley, and London.

2. Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Interviews*, vol. 1 (Milan: Charta, 2003), p. 322.

3. Philippe Parreno in Obrist, *Interviews*, p. 701. See the discussion of this project by Tom McDonough, as well as the interview with Huyghe by George Baker, in this volume.

4. See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2002).

face.⁵ The archives at issue here are not databases in this sense; they are recalcitrantly material, fragmentary rather than fungible, and as such they call out for human interpretation, not machinic reprocessing.⁶ Although the contents of this art are hardly indiscriminant, they remain indeterminant like the contents of any archive, and often they are presented in this fashion—as so many promissory notes for further elaboration or enigmatic prompts for future scenarios.⁷ In this regard archival art is as much preproduction as it is postproduction: concerned less with absolute origins than with obscure traces (perhaps “anarchival impulse” is the more appropriate phrase), these artists are often drawn to unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects—in art and in history alike—that might offer points of departure again.

If archival art differs from database art, it is also distinct from art focused on the museum. Certainly the figure of the artist-as-archivist follows that of the artist-as-curator, and some archival artists continue to play on the category of the collection. Yet they are not as concerned with critiques of representational totality and institutional integrity: that the museum has been ruined as a coherent system in a public sphere is generally assumed, not triumphally proclaimed or melancholically pondered, and some of these artists suggest other kinds of ordering—within the museum and without. In this respect the orientation of archival art is often more “institutive” than “destructive,” more “legislative” than “transgressive.”⁸

Finally, the work in question is archival since it not only draws on informal archives but produces them as well, and does so in a way that underscores the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private. Further, it often arranges these materials according to a quasi-archival logic, a matrix of citation and juxtaposition, and presents them in a quasi-archival architecture, a complex of texts and objects (again, platforms, stations, kiosks . . .). Thus Dean speaks of her method as “collection,” Durant of his as “combination,” Hirschhorn of his as “ramification”—and much archival art does appear to ramify like a weed or a

5. To take two prominent examples: the 2002 *Documenta*, directed by Okwui Enwezor, was conceived in terms of “platforms” of discussion, scattered around the world (the exhibition in Kassel was only the final such platform). And the 2003 Venice Biennale, directed by Francesco Bonami, featured such sections as “Utopia Station,” which exemplified the archival discursivity of much recent art. “Interactivity” is an aim of “relational aesthetics” as propounded by Bourriaud in his 1998 text of that title. See my “Arty Party,” *London Review of Books*, December 4, 2003, as well as Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” in this volume.

6. Lev Manovich discusses the tension between database and narrative in *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 233–36.

7. I owe the notion of “promissory notes” to Malcolm Bull. Liam Gillick describes his work as “scenario-based”; positioned in “the gap between presentation and narration,” it might also be called archival. See Gillick, *The Woodway* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2002).

8. Jacques Derrida uses the first pair of terms to describe opposed drives at work in the concept of the archive in *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), and Jeff Wall uses the second pair to describe opposed imperatives at work in the history of the avant-garde, in *Jeff Wall* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996). How does the archival impulse relate to “archive fever”? Perhaps, like the Library of Alexandria, any archive is founded on disaster (or its threat), pledged against a ruin that it cannot forestall. Yet for Derrida archive fever is more profound, bound up with repetition-compulsion and a death drive. And sometimes this paradoxical energy of destruction can also be sensed in the work at issue here.

“rhizome” (a Deleuzian trope that others employ as well).⁹ Perhaps all archives develop in this way, through mutations of connection and disconnection, a process that this art also serves to disclose. “Laboratory, storage, studio space, yes,” Hirschhorn remarks, “I want to use these forms in my work to make spaces for the movement and endlessness of thinking. . . .”¹⁰ Such is artistic practice in an archival field.

Archive as Capitalist Garbage Bucket

Sometimes strained in effect, archival art is rarely cynical in intent (another welcome change); on the contrary, these artists often aim to fashion distracted viewers into engaged discussants (here there is nothing passive about the word “archival”).¹¹ In this regard Hirschhorn, who once worked in a Communist collective of graphic designers, sees his makeshift dedications to artists, writers, and philosophers—which partake equally of the obsessive-compulsive Merzbau of Kurt Schwitters and the agitprop kiosks of Gustav Klucis—as a species of passionate pedagogy in which the lessons on offer concern love as much as knowledge.¹² Hirschhorn

9. Dean discusses “collection” in *Tacita Dean* (Barcelona: Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2001), and “bad combination” is the title of a 1995 work by Durant. The classic text on “the rhizome” is, of course, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), where they underscore its “principles of connection and heterogeneity”: “Any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order” (p. 7).

10. Thomas Hirschhorn, “Interview with Okwui Enwezor,” in James Rondeau and Suzanne Ghez, eds., *Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2000), p. 32. Again, many other artists could be considered here as well, and the archival is only one aspect of the work that I do discuss.

11. Indeed, its lively motivation of sources contrasts with the morbid citationality of much post-modern pastiche. See Mario Perniola, *Enigmas: The Egyptian Moment in Society and Art*, trans. Christopher Woodall (London: Verso, 1995).

12. “I can say that I love them and their work unconditionally,” Hirschhorn says of his commemorated figures (*Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake*, p. 30). Benjamin Buchloh provides an incisive genealogy of his work in “Cargo and Cult: The Displays of Thomas Hirschhorn,” *Artforum* (November 2001). Bice Curiger, *Short Guide: Into the Work of Thomas Hirschhorn* (New York: Barbara Gladstone Gallery, 2002), is also helpful.

Thomas Hirschhorn. Tränetisch.
Kunstmuseum, Luzern, 1996.
Courtesy Barbara Gladstone
Gallery, New York.



seeks to “distribute ideas,” “liberate activity,” and “radiate energy” all at once: he wants to expose different audiences to alternative archives of public culture, and to charge this relationship with affect.¹³ In this way his work is not only institutive but also libidinal; at the same time the subject-object relations of advanced capitalism have transformed whatever counts as libido today, and Hirschhorn works to register this transformation too and where possible to reimagine these relations as well.

Hirschhorn produces interventions in “public space” that question how this category might still function today. Most of his projects play on vernacular forms of marginal barter and incidental exchange, such as the street display, the market stall, and the information booth—arrangements that typically feature homemade offerings, refashioned products, improvised pamphlets, and so on.¹⁴ As is well known, he has divided much of his practice into four categories—“direct sculptures,” “altars,” “kiosks,” and “monuments”—all of which manifest an eccentric yet exoteric engagement with archival materials.

The direct sculptures tend to be models placed in interiors, frequently in exhibitions. The first piece was inspired by the spontaneous shrine produced at the spot in Paris where Princess Diana died: as her mourners recoded the monument to liberty already at the site, they transformed an official structure into a “just monument,” according to Hirschhorn, precisely because it “issue[d] from below.” His direct sculptures aim for a related effect: designed for “messages that have nothing to do with the original purpose of the actual support,” they are offered as provisional mediums of *détournement*, for acts of reinscription “signed by the community” (this is one meaning of “direct” here).¹⁵

The altars seem to stem from the direct sculptures. At once modest and outlandish, these motley displays of images and texts commemorate cultural figures of special importance to Hirschhorn; he has dedicated four such pieces—to artists Otto

13. Hirschhorn in Obrist, *Interviews*, pp. 396–99.

14. Of course Hirschhorn is not the only artist to work with these formats: David Hammons, Jimmie Durham, Gabriel Orozco, and Rirkrit Tiravanija, among others, do so as well.

15. Hirschhorn in *Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake*, p. 31.



Hirschhorn. Otto Freundlich altar.
Berlin Biennale, 1998. Courtesy
Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York.

Freundlich and Piet Mondrian, and writers Ingeborg Bachmann and Raymond Carver. Often dotted with kitschy mementoes, votive candles, and other emotive signs of the fan, the altars are placed “in locations where [the honorees] could have died by accident, by chance: on a sidewalk, in the street, in a corner.”¹⁶ Passersby, often accidental in another sense, are invited to witness these homely but heartfelt acts of commemoration—and to be moved by them (or not).

As befits the name, the kiosks are more informational than devotional. Here Hirschhorn was commissioned by the University of Zurich to erect eight works over a four-year period, with each one installed for six months within the Institute of Brain Research and Molecular Biology. Once more the kiosks are concerned with artists and writers, all quite removed from the activities of the Institute: the artists Freundlich (again), Fernand Léger, Emil Nolde, Meret Oppenheim, and Liubov Popova, as well as writers Bachmann (again), Emmanuel Bove, and Robert Walser. Less open to “planned vandalism” than the direct sculptures and the altars, the kiosks are also more archival in appearance.¹⁷ Made of plywood and cardboard nailed and taped together, these structures typically include images, texts, cassettes, and televisions, as well as furniture and other everyday objects—a hybrid of the seminar room and the clubhouse that solicits both discursivity and sociability.

Finally, the monuments, dedicated to philosophers also embraced by Hirschhorn, effectively combine the devotional aspect of the altars and the informational aspect of the kiosks. Three monuments have appeared to date, for Spinoza, Bataille, and Deleuze, and a fourth, for Gramsci, is planned. With the exception of Bataille, each monument was erected in the home country of the philosopher yet placed at a remove from “official” sites. Thus the Spinoza monument

16. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

17. Buchloh, “Cargo and Cult,” p. 114.

*Hirschhorn.
Ingeborg
Bachmann kiosk.
University of Zurich,
Irchal, Zurich,
1999. Courtesy
Barbara Gladstone
Gallery, New York.*





Hirschhorn. Deleuze Monument. 2000.
 Courtesy Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York.

appeared in Amsterdam, but in the red-light district; the Deleuze monument in Avignon, but in a mostly North African quarter; and the Bataille monument in Kassel (during *Documenta XI*), but in a largely Turkish neighborhood. These (dis)placements are fitting: the radical status of the guest philosopher is matched by the minor status of the host community, and the encounter suggests a temporary refunctioning of the monument from a univocal structure that obscures antagonisms (philosophical and political, social and economic) to a counter-hegemonic archive that might be used to articulate such differences.¹⁸

The consistency of these artists, writers, and philosophers is not obvious: although most are modern Europeans, they vary from obscure to canonical and from esoteric to engagé. Among the artists of the altars, the reflexive abstractions

18. I mean "minor" in the sense given the term by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). The minor is an intensive, often vernacular use of a language or form, which disrupts its official or institutional functions. Opposed to the major but not content with the marginal, it invites "collective arrangements of utterance."

of Mondrian and the emotive representations of Freundlich are near antipodal, while the positions represented in the kiosks range from a French Purist who was a Communist (Léger) to a German Expressionist who belonged to the Nazi party (Nolde). However, all the figures propose aesthetic models with political ramifications, and the same is true of the monument philosophers, who encompass such disparate concepts as hegemony (Gramsci) and transgression (Bataille). The consistency of the subjects, then, lies in the very diversity of their transformative commitments: so many visions, however contradictory, to change the world, all connected—indeed cathected—by “the attachment” that Hirschhorn feels for each one. This attachment is both his motive and his method: “To connect what cannot be connected, this is exactly what my work as an artist is.”¹⁹

Hirschhorn announces his signal mix of information and devotion in the terms “kiosk” and “altar”: again, he aims to deploy both the publicity of agitprop à la Klucis and the passion of assemblage à la Schwitters.²⁰ Rather than an academic resolution of an old avant-garde opposition, his purpose is pragmatic: Hirschhorn applies these mixed means to incite his audience to (re)invest in radical practices of art, literature, and philosophy—to produce a cultural cathexis based not on official taste, vanguard literacy, or critical correctness, but on political use-value driven by artistic love-value.²¹ In some ways his project recalls the transformative commitment imagined by Peter Weiss in *Die Aesthetik des Widerstands* (1975–78). Set in Berlin in 1937, the novel tells of a group of engaged workers who coach each other in a skeptical history of European art; in one instance they deconstruct the classical rhetoric of the Pergamon altarpiece in the Altes Museum, whose “chips of stone . . . they gather together and reassemble in their own milieu.”²² Of course Hirschhorn is concerned with an avant-garde past threatened with oblivion, not the classical tradition abused by the Nazis, and his collaborators consist not of motivated members of a political movement, but rather distracted viewers who might range from international art cognoscenti to local merchants, soccer fans, and children. Yet such a shift in address is necessary if an “aesthetics of resistance” is to be made relevant to an amnesiac society dominated by culture industries and sports spectacles. This is why his work, with its throwaway structures, kitschy materials, jumbled references, and fan testimonials, often suggests a grotesquerie of our immersive commodity-media-entertainment

19. Hirschhorn in *Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake*, p. 32, and in Obrist, *Interviews*, p. 399. His chosen writers—the Swiss Walser, the French Bove, the Austrian Bachmann, and the American Carver—also vary widely, though not as widely as the artists: each has elements of “dirty realism” and desperate fantasy, and each met a premature death or (in the case of Walser) madness. Here again are incomplete projects, unfulfilled beginnings.

20. Perhaps of all precedents *The Cathedral of Erotic Misery* of Schwitters is the most telling, for it too was a kind of archive of public debris and private fetishes (that blurred this very distinction). In effect, if Schwitters interiorized the monument (as Leah Dickerman has suggested in an unpublished paper), Hirschhorn exteriorizes it, thus transformed, once again. In another register one might recall the pavilions produced by the Independent Group for such exhibitions as *This Is Tomorrow* (1956), another archival practice in another capitalist moment.

21. Buchloh alludes to “a new type of cultural value” in “Cult and Cargo,” p. 110.

22. This is how Jürgen Habermas glosses the story in “Modernity—An Incomplete Project,” in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983), p. 13.

environment: such are the elements and the energies that exist to be reworked and rechanneled.²³

Sometimes Hirschhorn lines his extroverted archives with runaway growths, often fashioned in foil. Neither human nor natural in appearance, these forms point (again in a grotesque register) to a world in which old distinctions between organic life and inorganic matter, production and waste, and even desire and death no longer apply—a world at once roiled and arrested by information flow and product glut. Hirschhorn calls this sensorium of Junkspace “the capitalist garbage bucket.”²⁴ Yet he insists that, even within this prison pail, radical figures might be recovered and libidinal charges rewired—that this “phenomenology of advanced reification” might still yield an intimation of utopian possibility, or at least a desire for systematic transformation, however damaged or distorted it might be.²⁵ Certainly this move to (re)cathect cultural remnants comes with its own risks: it is also open to reactionary, even atavistic, deployments, most catastrophically with the Nazis. In fact, in the Nazi period evoked by Weiss, Ernst Bloch warned against such Rightist remotivations; at the same time he argued that the Left opts out of this libidinal arena of cultural politics at its own great cost.²⁶ Hirschhorn suggests the same is true today.

Archive as Failed Futuristic Vision

If Hirschhorn recovers radical figures in his archival work, Tacita Dean recalls lost souls in hers, and she does so in a variety of mediums—photographs,

23. Rather than pretend that a clear medium of communicative reason exists today, Hirschhorn works with the clotted nature of mass-cultural languages. (For example, *Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake*, displayed in Chicago in 2000, pays equal homage to Rosa Luxemburg and the Chicago Bulls.) In effect Hirschhorn works to detourn the “celebrity-industrial complex” of advanced capitalism, which he replays in a preposterous key: e.g., Ingeborg Bachmann in lieu of Princess Di, Liubov Popova instead of American Idol. His is a contemporary version of the Dadaist strategy of mimetic exacerbation à la Marx: “petrified social conditions must be made to dance by singing them their own song” (*Early Writings*, ed. T. B. Bottomore [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964], p. 47; trans. modified). On this strategy see my “Dada Mime,” *October* 105 (Summer 2003).

24. See Rem Koolhaas, “Junkspace,” *October* 100 (Spring 2002). *Der kapitalistische Abfallkübel* is the title of a 2000 work by Hirschhorn that consists of a huge wastebasket stuffed with glossy magazines. *Kübel* is also the word for the toilet in a prison cell (thanks to Michael Jennings for this apposite point). In a world of finance-flow and information-capital, reification is hardly opposed to liquefaction. “The sickness that the world manifests today differs from that manifested during the 1920s,” André Breton already remarked over fifty years ago. “The spirit was then threatened by coagulation [*figement*]; today it is threatened by dissolution” (*Entretiens* [Paris, 1952], p. 218). In his manic displays Hirschhorn evokes this paradoxical state of continual de- and re-territorialization.

25. Buchloh, “Cargo and Cult,” p. 109. On the dialectic of “reification and utopia in mass culture,” see the classic text of this title by Fredric Jameson in *Social Text* 1 (Winter 1979); for his recent reflections on the subject see “Politics of Utopia,” *New Left Review* (January/February 2004). In a well-known statement Theodor Adorno once remarked of modernism and mass culture: “Both bear the stigmata of capitalism, both contain elements of change. . . . Both are torn halves of an integral freedom, to which however they do not add up. It would be romantic to sacrifice one to the other . . .” (Letter of March 18, 1936, to Walter Benjamin, in *Aesthetics and Politics* [London: New Left Books, 1977], p. 123). Hirschhorn offers one version of what these maimed halves look like today.

26. See Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, trans. Neville Plaice and Stephen Plaice (Berkeley:

blackboard drawings, sound pieces, and short films and videos often accompanied by narrative “asides.” Often drawn to people, things, and places that are stranded, outmoded, or otherwise sidelined, Dean traces one such case as it rami-fies into an archive as if of its own aleatory accord. Consider *Girl Stowaway* (1994), an eight-minute 16mm film in both color and black and white with a narrative aside. In this



instance Dean happened on a photograph of an Australian girl named Jean Jeinnie who in 1928 stowed away on a ship named *Herzogin Cecilie* bound for England; the ship later wrecked at Starehole Bay on the Cornish coast. From this single document the archive of *Girl Stowaway* forms as a tenuous tissue of coincidences. First Dean loses the photograph when her bag is mishandled at Heathrow (it later turns up in Dublin). Then, as she researches Jean Jeinnie, she hears echoes of her name everywhere—in a conversation about Jean Genet, in the pop song “Jean Genie,” and so on. Finally, when she travels to Starehole Bay to investigate the shipwreck, a girl is murdered on the harbor cliffs on the very night that Dean also spends there.

In an artistic equivalent of the uncertainty principle in scientific experiment, *Girl Stowaway* is an archive that implicates the artist-as-archivist within it. “Her voyage was from Port Lincoln to Falmouth,” Dean writes:

It had a beginning and an end, and exists as a recorded passage of time. My own journey follows no such linear narrative. It started at the moment I found the photograph but has meandered ever since, through unchartered research and to no obvious destination. It has become a passage into history along the line that divides fact from fiction, and is more like a journey through an underworld of chance intervention and epic encounter than any place I recognize. My story is about coincidence, and about what is invited and what is not.²⁷

In a sense her archival work is an allegory of archival work—as sometimes melancholic, often vertiginous, always incomplete. So, too, it suggests an allegory in the strict sense of the literary genre that often features a subject astray in an “underworld” of enigmatic signs that test her. Yet here the subject has nothing but invited

University of California Press, 1991). Bloch might also be an instructive reference here for his concepts of the nonsynchronous and the utopian.

27. *Tacita Dean*, p. 12.

coincidence as a guide: no God or Virgil, no revealed history or stable culture. Even the conventions of her reading have to be made up as she moves along.

In another film-and-text piece Dean tells another lost-and-found story, and it too involves “unchartered research” for protagonist and archivist alike. Donald Crowhurst was a failed businessman from Teignmouth, a coastal town hungry for tourist attention. In 1968 he entered the Golden Globe Race, driven by the desire to be the first sailor to complete a nonstop solo voyage around the world. Yet neither sailor nor boat, a trimaran christened *Teignmouth Electron*, was prepared, and Crowhurst quickly faltered: he faked his log entries (for a time race officials positioned him in the lead), and then broke off radio contact. Soon he “began to suffer from ‘time-madness’”: his incoherent log entries amounted to a “private discourse on God and the Universe.” Eventually, Dean speculates,



Tacita Dean. Facing page: Girl Stowaway. 1994. (Postcard showing the Herzogin Cecilie wrecked in Starehole Bay, May 1936.) Left: Teignmouth Electron. 1999. Courtesy the artist, Frith Street Gallery, London, and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris.

Crowhurst “jumped overboard with his chronometer, just a few hundred miles from the coast of Britain.”²⁸

Dean treats the Crowhurst archive obliquely in three short films. The first two, *Disappearance at Sea I* and *II* (1996 and 1997), were shot at different lighthouses in Berwick and Northumberland. In the first film, blinding images of the lights alternate with blank views onto the horizon; in the second, the camera rotates with the apparatus and so provides a continuous panorama of the sea. In the first film, darkness slowly descends; in the second, there is only void to begin with. In the third film, *Teignmouth Electron* (2000), Dean travels to Cayman Brac in the Caribbean to document the remains of the trimaran. It has “the look of a tank or the carcass of an animal or an exoskeleton left by an arrant creature now extinct,” she writes. “Whichever way, it is at odds with its function, forgotten by its generation and abandoned by its time.”²⁹ In this extended meditation, then, “Crowhurst” is a term that draws others into an archive that points to an ambitious town, a misbegotten race, a metaphysical seasickness, and an enigmatic remnant. And Dean lets this text of traces ramify further. While on Cayman Brac she happens on another derelict structure dubbed the “Bubble House” by locals, and documents this “perfect companion” of the *Teignmouth Electron* in another short film with text (1999). Designed by a Frenchman jailed for embezzlement, the Bubble House is “a vision for perfect hurricane housing, egg-shaped and resistant to wind, extravagant and daring, with its Cinemascope-proportioned windows that look out onto the sea.” Never completed and long deserted, it now sits in ruin “like a statement from another age.”³⁰

Consider, as a final example of a “failed futuristic vision” that Dean recovers archivally, the immense “sound mirrors” built in concrete at Denge by Dungeness in Kent between 1928 and 1930. Conceived as a warning system of air attack from the Continent, these acoustic receivers were doomed from the start: they did not discriminate enough among sounds, and “soon they were abandoned in favour of the radar.” Stranded between World Wars and technological modes, “the mirrors have begun to erode and subside into the mud: their demise now inevitable.”³¹ (In some

28. Ibid., p. 39.

29. Ibid., p. 50.

30. Ibid., p. 52. Her archives recall those probed by Foucault under the rubric “The Life of Infamous Men” (1977), a collection of “archives of confinement, police, petitions to the king and *lettres de cachet*” concerning infamous subjects who became infamous only due to “an encounter with power” during the years 1660–1760. His description is suggestive here: “This is an anthology of existences. Lives of a few lines or of a few pages, countless misfortunes and adventures, gathered together in a handful of words. Brief lives, chanced upon in books and documents. *Exempla*, but—contrary to those that the sages gleaned in the course of their readings—these are examples which furnish not so much lessons to contemplate as brief effects whose force fades almost all at once. The term *nouvelle* would suit me enough to designate them, through the double reference that it indicates: to the rapidity of the narrative and to the reality of the events related; for such is the contraction of things said in these texts that one does not know whether the intensity which traverses them is due more to the vividness of the words or to the violence of the facts which jostle about in them. Singular lives, those which have become, through I know not what accidents, strange poems: that is what I wanted to gather together in a sort of herbarium” (in Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton, eds., *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy* [Sydney: Feral Publications, 1979], pp. 76–91).

31. Ibid., p. 54.

The Body and the Archive

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The Body and the Archive*

ALLAN SEKULA

. . . there must be arranged a comprehensive system of exchanges, so that there might grow up something like a universal currency of these banknotes, or promises to pay in solid substance, which the sun has engraved for the great Bank of Nature.

— Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1859

On the one side we approach more closely to what is good and beautiful; on the other, vice and suffering are shut up within narrower limits; and we have to dread less the monstrosities, physical and moral, which have the power to throw perturbation into the social framework.

— Adolphe Quetelet, 1842

I.

The sheer range and volume of photographic practice offers ample evidence of the paradoxical status of photography within bourgeois culture. The simultaneous threat and promise of the new medium was recognized at a very early date, even before the daguerreotype process had proliferated. For exam-

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ple, following the French government announcement of the daguerreotype in August 1839, a song circulated in London which began with the following verse:

O Mister Daguerre! Sure you're not aware
 Of half the impressions you're making,
 By the sun's potent rays you'll set Thames in a blaze,
 While the National Gallery's breaking.

Initially, photography threatens to overwhelm the citadels of high culture. The somewhat mocking humor of this verse is more pronounced if we consider that the National Gallery had only moved to its new, classical building on Trafalgar Square in 1838, the collection having grown rapidly since the gallery's founding in 1824. I stress this point because this song does not pit photography against a static traditional culture, but rather plays on the possibility of a technological outpacing of *already* expanding cultural institutions. In this context, photography is not the harbinger of modernity, for the world is already modernizing. Rather, photography is modernity run riot. But danger resides not only in the numerical proliferation of images. This is also a premature fantasy of the triumph of a *mass* culture, a fantasy which reverberates with political foreboding. Photography promises an enhanced mastery of nature, but photography also threatens conflagration and anarchy, an incendiary leveling of the existing cultural order.

By the third verse of this song, however, a new *social* order is predicted:

The new Police Act will *take down* each fact
 That occurs in its wide jurisdiction
 And each beggar and thief in the boldest relief
 Will be *giving a color* to fiction.¹

Again, the last line of the verse yields a surplus wit, playing on the figurative ambiguity of "giving a color," which could suggest both the elaboration and unmasking of an untruth, playing further on the obvious monochromatic limitations of the new medium, and on the approximate homophony of *color* and *collar*. But this velvet wit plays about an iron cage which was then in the process of being constructed. Although no "Police Act" had yet embraced photography, the 1820s and '30s had engendered a spate of governmental inquiries and legislation designed to professionalize and standardize police and penal procedures in Britain, the most important of which were the Gaols Act of 1823 and the Metropolitan Police Acts of 1829 and 1839. (The prime instigator of these modernization efforts, Sir Robert Peel, happened to be a major collector of seven-

1. Quoted in Helmut and Alison Gernshiem, *L. J. M. Daguerre*, New York, Dover, 1968, p. 105 (italics in original).



William Henry Fox Talbot. Articles of China, plate III
from *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844.

teenth-century Dutch paintings, and a trustee of the National Gallery.) Directly to the point of the song, however, was a provision in the 1839 act for taking into custody vagrants, the homeless, and other offenders “whose name and residence [could] not be ascertained.”²

Although photographic documentation of prisoners was not at all common until the 1860s, the potential for a new juridical photographic realism was widely recognized in the 1840s, in the general context of these systematic efforts to regulate the growing urban presence of the “dangerous classes,” of a chronically unemployed sub-proletariat. The anonymous lyricist voiced sentiments that were also heard in the higher chambers of the new culture of photography.

Consider that incunabulum in the history of photography, Henry Fox Talbot’s *The Pencil of Nature*. Talbot, the English gentleman-amateur scientist who paralleled Daguerre’s metallic invention with his own paper process, produced a lavish book that was not only the first to be illustrated with photographic prints, but also a compendium of wide-ranging and prescient meditations on the promise of photography. These meditations took the form of brief commentaries on each of the book’s calotype prints. Talbot’s aesthetic ambition was clear: for one austere image of a broom leaning beside an (allegori-

2. The Metropolitan Police Act, 1839, in *Halsbury’s Statutes of England*, vol. 25, London, Butterworth, 1970, p. 250. For a useful summary of parliamentary debates on crime and punishment in the nineteenth century, see *Catalogue of British Parliamentary Papers*, Dublin, Irish University Press, 1977, pp. 58-73. On the history of the National Gallery, see Michael Wilson, *The National Gallery: London*, London, Philip Wilson Publishers.

cally) open door, he claimed the “authority of the Dutch school of art, for taking as subjects of representation scenes of daily and familiar occurrence.”³ But an entirely different order of naturalism emerges in his notes on another quite beautiful calotype depicting several shelves bearing “articles of china.” Here Talbot speculates that “should a thief afterwards purloin the treasures— if the mute testimony of the picture were to be produced against him in court—it would certainly be evidence of a novel kind.”⁴ Talbot lays claim to a new legalistic truth, the truth of an indexical rather than textual inventory. Although this frontal arrangement of objects had its precedents in scientific and technical illustration, a claim is being made here that would not have been made for a drawing or a descriptive list. Only the photograph could begin to claim the legal status of a *visual* document of ownership. Although the calotype was too insensitive to light to record any but the most willing and patient sitters, its evidentiary promise could be explored in this property-conscious variant of the still life.

Both Talbot and the author of the comic homage to Daguerre recognized a new *instrumental* potential in photography: a silence that silences. The protean oral “texts” of the criminal and pauper yield to a “mute testimony” that “takes down” (that diminishes in credibility, that transcribes) and unmasks the disguises, the alibis, the excuses and multiple biographies of those who find or place themselves on the wrong side of the law. This battle between the presumed denotative univocality of the legal image and the multiplicity and presumed duplicity of the criminal voice is played out during the remainder of the nineteenth century. In the course of this battle a new object is defined—the criminal body—and, as a result, a more extensive “social body” is invented.

We are confronting, then, a double system: a system of representation capable of functioning both *honorifically* and *repressively*. This double operation is most evident in the workings of photographic portraiture. On the one hand, the photographic portrait extends, accelerates, popularizes, and degrades a traditional function. This function, which can be said to have taken its early modern form in the seventeenth century, is that of providing for the ceremonial presentation of the bourgeois *self*. Photography subverted the privileges inherent in portraiture, but without any more extensive leveling of social relationships, these privileges could be reconstructed on a new basis. That is, photography could be assigned a proper role within a new hierarchy of taste. Honorific conventions were thus able to proliferate downward.⁵ At the same time,

3. William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844, facsimile edition, New York, Da Capo, 1968, pl. 6, n.p.

4. *Ibid.*, pl. 3.

5. The clearest of the early, optimistic understandings of photography’s role within a new hierarchy of taste, necessitating a restructuring of the portrait labor market along industrial lines, can be found in an unsigned review by Elizabeth Eastlake, “Photography,” *Quarterly Review*, vol. 101, no. 202 (April 1857), pp. 442–468.

photographic portraiture began to perform a role no painted portrait could have performed in the same thorough and rigorous fashion. This role derived, not from any honorific portrait tradition, but from the imperatives of medical and anatomical illustration. Thus photography came to establish and delimit the terrain of the *other*, to define both the *generalized look*—the typology—and the *contingent instance* of deviance and social pathology.

Michel Foucault has argued, quite crucially, that it is a mistake to describe the new regulatory sciences directed at the body in the early nineteenth century as exercises in a wholly negative, repressive power. Rather, social power operates by virtue of a positive therapeutic or reformatory channeling of the body.⁶ Still, we need to understand those modes of instrumental realism that do in fact operate according to a very explicit deterrent or repressive logic. These modes constitute the lower limit or “zero degree” of socially instrumental realism. Criminal identification photographs are a case in point, since they are designed quite literally to facilitate the *arrest* of their referent.⁷ I will argue in the second part of this essay that the semantic refinement and rationalization of precisely this sort of realism was central to the process of defining and regulating the criminal.

But first, what general connections can be charted between the honorific and repressive poles of portrait practice? To the extent that bourgeois order depends upon the systematic defense of social relations based on private property, to the extent that the legal basis of the self lies in the model of property rights, in what has been termed “possessive individualism,” every proper portrait has its lurking, objectifying inverse in the files of the police. In other words, a covert Hobbesian logic links the terrain of the “National Gallery” with that of the “Police Act.”⁸

6. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York, Pantheon, 1977, and, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York, Pantheon, 1978.

7. Any photographs that seek to identify a *target*, such as military reconnaissance photographs, operate according to the same general logic. See my 1975 essay “The Instrumental Image: Steichen at War,” in *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works, 1973–1983*, Halifax, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984.

8. The theoretical ground for the construction of a specifically *bourgeois* subject can be found in Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651). C. B. Macpherson has argued that Hobbes’s axiomatic positing of an essentially competitive individual human “nature” was in fact quite specific to a developing market society, moreover, to a market society in which human labor power increasingly took the form of an alienable commodity. As Hobbes put it, “The *Value* or WORTH of a man, is as of all things, his Price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his Power: and therefore is not absolute; but a thing dependent on the need and judgement of another” (Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968, Chap. 10, pp. 151–152. See Macpherson’s introduction to this edition and his *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, London, Oxford University Press, 1962).

While it would be farfetched to present Hobbes as a theorist of the “bourgeois portrait,” it is interesting to note how he defined individual autonomy and its relinquishment through contractual obligation in terms of dramaturgical metaphors, thus distinguishing between two categories of the

In the mid-nineteenth century, the terms of this linkage between the sphere of culture and that of social regulation were specifically utilitarian.⁹ Many of the early promoters of photography struck up a Benthamite chorus, stressing the medium's promise for a social calculus of pleasure and discipline. Here was a machine for providing small doses of happiness on a mass scale, for contributing to Jeremy Bentham's famous goal: "the greatest happiness of the greatest number."¹⁰ Thus the photographic portrait in particular was welcomed as a socially ameliorative as well as a socially repressive instrument. Jane Welsh Carlyle voiced characteristic hopes in 1859, when she described inexpensive portrait photography as a social palliative:

Blessed be the inventor of photography. I set him even above the inventor of chloroform! It has given more positive pleasure to poor suffering humanity than anything that has been "cast up" in my time . . . — this art, by which even the poor can possess themselves of tolerable likenesses of their absent dear ones.¹¹

In the United States, similar but more extensive utilitarian claims were made by the portrait photographer Marcus Aurelius Root, who was able to articulate the connection between pleasure and discipline, to argue explicitly for a moral economy of the image. Like Carlyle, he stressed the salutary effects of photography on working-class family life. Not only was photography to serve as a means of cultural enlightenment for the working classes, but family photographs sustained sentimental ties in a nation of migrants. This "primal household affection" served a socially cohesive function, Root argued — articulating a nineteenth-century familialism that would survive and become an essential ideo-

person, the "Author" and the "Actor" (*Leviathan*, Chap. 16, pp. 217–218). The analogy between symbolic representation and political-legal representation is central to his thought. (An amusing history of portrait photography could be written on the vicissitudes of the Hobbesian struggle between photographer and sitter, both in the actual portrait encounter and in the subsequent reception of portrait photographs.)

Furthermore, the frontispiece to *Leviathan* took the form of an allegorical portrait. The commonwealth, or state, is literally embodied in the figure of a sovereign, an "artificial man," whose body is itself composed of a multitude of bodies, all of whom have ceded a portion of their individual power to the commonwealth in order to prevent the civil war that would inevitably result from their unchecked pursuit of "natural" appetites. Thus the "body" of the Leviathan is a kind of pressure vessel, containing explosive natural forces. This image is perhaps the first attempt to diagram the social field visually. As such, it has a definite, if usually indirect, resonance in nineteenth-century attempts to construct visual metaphors for the conceptual models of the new social sciences.

9. "The utilitarian doctrine . . . is at bottom only a restatement of the individualist principles which were worked out in the seventeenth century: Bentham built on Hobbes" (C. B. Macpherson, *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, p. 2).

10. Jeremy Bentham, "A Fragment on Government" (1776), in Mary P. Mack, ed., *A Bentham Reader*, New York, Pegasus, 1969, p. 45.

11. Quoted in Helmut Gernsheim, *The History of Photography: From the Camera Obscura to the Beginning of the Modern Era*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1969, p. 239.

logical feature of American mass culture. Furthermore, widely distributed portraits of the great would subject everyday experience to a regular parade of moral exemplars. Root's concern for respectability and order led him to applaud the adoption of photography by the police, arguing that convicted offenders would "not find it easy to resume their criminal careers, while their faces and general aspects are familiar to so many, especially to the keen-sighted detective police."¹² The "so many" is significant here, since it implicitly enlists a wider citizenry in the vigilant work of detection. Thus Root's utilitarianism comes full circle. Beginning with cheaply affordable aesthetic pleasures and moral lessons, he ends up with the photographic extension of that exemplary utilitarian social machine, the Panopticon.¹³

12. Marcus Aurelius Root, *The Camera and the Pencil*, 1864, reprint, Pawlett, Vermont, Helios, 1971, pp. 420-421.

13. The Panopticon, or Inspection House, was Jeremy Bentham's proposal, written in 1787, for an architectural system of social discipline, applicable to prison, factory, workhouse, asylum, and school. The operative principles of the Panopticon were isolation and perpetual surveillance. Inmates were to be held in a ring of individual cells. Unable to see into a central observation tower, they would be forced to assume that they were watched continually. (As Hobbes remarked over a century earlier, "the reputation of Power is Power.") The beneficial effects of this program were trumpeted by Bentham in the famous opening remarks of his proposal: "Morals reformed—health preserved—industry invigorated—instruction diffused—public burdens lightened—Economy seated, as it were, upon a rock—all by a simple idea of architecture" (John Bowring, ed., *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. 4, London, Simpkin, Marshall, 1843, p. 49). With Bentham the principle of supervision takes on an explicit industrial capitalist character: his prisons were to function as profit-making establishments, based on the private contracting-out of convict labor. Bentham was a prototypical efficiency expert. (On these last two points see, respectively, Gertrude Himmelfarb, "The Haunted House of Jeremy Bentham," in *Victorian Minds*, New York, Knopf, 1968, pp. 32-81; and Daniel Bell, "Work and Its Discontents," in *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1960, pp. 227-274.)

For Foucault, "Panopticism" provides the central metaphor for modern disciplinary power based on isolation, individuation, and supervision (*Discipline and Punish*, pp. 195-228). Foucault traces the "birth of the prison" only to the 1840s, just when photography appears with all of its instrumental promise. Given the central optical metaphor in Foucault's work, a reading of the subsequent development of disciplinary systems would need logically to take photography into account. John Tagg has written a Foucauldian account of the "panoptic" character of early police and psychiatric photography in Britain. While I am in frequent agreement with his argument, I disagree with his claim that the "cumbersome architecture" of the Panopticon became redundant with the development of photography ("Power and Photography: Part 1, A Means of Surveillance: The Photograph as Evidence in Law," *Screen Education*, no. 36 [Winter 1980], p. 45). This seems to accord too much power to photography, and to imply that domination operates entirely by the force of visual representation. To suggest that cameras replaced prisons is more than a little hyperbolic. The fact that Bentham's plan was never realized in the form he proposed has perhaps contributed to the confusion; models are more easily transformed into metaphors than are realized projects. Once discourse turns on metaphor, it becomes a simple matter to substitute a photographic metaphor for an architectural one. My main point here is that any history of disciplinary institutions must recognize the multiplicity of material devices involved—some literally concrete—in tracing not only the importance of surveillance, but also the continued importance of confinement. After all, Bentham's proposal was partially realized in the cellular and separate systems of confinement that emerged in the nineteenth century. At least one "genuine" panopticon prison was constructed: the Stateville Penitentiary in Illinois, built between 1916 and 1924. (For works on early prison history, see D. Melossi and M. Pavarini, *The Prison and the Factory*:

Notwithstanding the standard liberal accounts of the history of photography, the new medium did not simply inherit and “democratize” the honorific functions of bourgeois portraiture. Nor did police photography simply function repressively, although it is foolish to argue that the immediate function of police photographs was somehow more ideological or positively instrumental than negatively instrumental. But in a more general, dispersed fashion, in serving to introduce the panoptic principle into daily life, photography welded the honorific and repressive functions together. Every portrait implicitly took its place within a social and moral hierarchy. The *private* moment of sentimental individuation, the look at the frozen gaze-of-the-loved-one, was shadowed by two other more *public* looks: a look up, at one’s “betters,” and a look down, at one’s “inferiors.” Especially in the United States, photography could sustain an imaginary mobility on this vertical scale, thus provoking both ambition and fear, and interpellating, in class terms, a characteristically “petit-bourgeois” subject.

We can speak then of a generalized, inclusive *archive*, a *shadow archive* that encompasses an entire social terrain while positioning individuals within that terrain.¹⁴ This archive contains subordinate, territorialized archives: archives whose semantic interdependence is normally obscured by the “coherence” and “mutual exclusivity” of the social groups registered within each. The general, all-inclusive archive necessarily contains both the traces of the visible bodies of heroes, leaders, moral exemplars, celebrities, and those of the poor, the diseased, the insane, the criminal, the nonwhite, the female, and all other embodiments of the unworthy. The clearest indication of the essential unity of this archive of images of the body lies in the fact that by the mid-nineteenth century a single hermeneutic paradigm had gained widespread prestige. This paradigm had

Origins of the Penitentiary System, trans. Glynis Cousin, London, Macmillan, 1981; David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1971; and Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850*, London, Macmillan, 1978.)

Certainly prison architecture and the spatial positioning of prisons in the larger environment remain matters of crucial importance. Especially in the United States, where economic crisis and Reaganite judicial tough-mindedness have led to record prison populations, these are paramount issues of what is euphemistically called “public policy.” In fact, the current wave of ambitious prison building has led to at least one instance of (postmodern?) return to the model of the Panopticon. The new Montgomery County Detention Center in Virginia was designed by prison architect James Kessler according to a “new” principle of “podular/direct supervision.” In this scaled-down, rumpus-room version of the Panopticon, inmates can see into the central control room from which they are continually observed (see Benjamin Forgey, “Answering the Jail Question,” *The Washington Post*, August 2, 1986, pp. G1-G2).

14. For earlier arguments on the archival paradigm in photography, see Rosalind Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View,” *The Art Journal*, vol. 42, no. 4 (Winter 1982), pp. 311-319; and Allan Sekula, “Photography between Labour and Capital,” in B. Buchloh and R. Wilkie, eds., *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures: Photographs by Leslie Shedden*, Halifax, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983, pp. 193-268.

two tightly entwined branches, physiognomy and phrenology. Both shared the belief that the surface of the body, and especially the face and head, bore the outward signs of inner character.

Accordingly, in reviving and to some extent systematizing physiognomy in the late 1770s, Johann Caspar Lavater argued that the “original language of Nature, written on the face of Man” could be deciphered by a rigorous physiognomic *science*.¹⁵ Physiognomy analytically isolated the profile of the head and the various anatomic features of the head and face, assigning a characterological significance to each element: forehead, eyes, ears, nose, chin, etc. Individual character was judged through the loose concatenation of these readings. In both its analytic and synthetic stages, this interpretive process required that distinctive individual features be read in conformity to type. Phrenology, which emerged in the first decade of the nineteenth century in the researches of the Viennese physician Franz Josef Gall, sought to discern correspondences between the topography of the skull and what were thought to be specific localized mental faculties seated within the brain. This was a crude forerunner of more modern neurological attempts to map out localized cerebral functions.

In general, physiognomy, and more specifically phrenology, linked an everyday nonspecialist empiricism with increasingly authoritative attempts to medicalize the study of the mind. The ambitious effort to construct a materialist science of the self led to the dissection of brains, including those of prominent phrenologists, and to the accumulation of vast collections of skulls. Eventually this effort would lead to a volumetrics of the skull, termed craniometry. But presumably any observant reader of one of the numerous handbooks and manuals of phrenology could master the interpretive codes. The humble origins of phrenological research were described by Gall in these terms:

I assembled a large number of persons at my house, drawn from the lowest classes and engaged in various occupations, such as fiacre driver, street porter and so on. I gained their confidence and induced them to speak frankly by giving them money and having wine and beer distributed to them. When I saw that they were favorably disposed, I urged them to tell me everything they knew about one another, both their good and bad qualities, and I carefully examined their heads. This was the origin of the craniological chart that was seized upon so avidly by the public; even artists took it over and distributed a large number among the public in the form of masks of all kinds.¹⁶

15. John [*sic*] Caspar Lavater, Preface to *Essays on Physiognomy Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, vol. 1, trans. Henry Hunter, London, J. Murray, 1792, n.p.

16. Quoted in Louis Chevalier, *Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Frank Jellineck, London, Routledge, 1973, p. 411.

The broad appeal and influence of these practices on literary and artistic realism, and on the general culture of the mid-nineteenth-century city is well known.¹⁷ And we understand the culture of the photographic portrait only dimly if we fail to recognize the enormous prestige and popularity of a general physiognomic paradigm in the 1840s and 1850s. Especially in the United States, the proliferation of photography and that of phrenology were quite coincident.

Since physiognomy and phrenology were comparative, taxonomic disciplines, they sought to encompass an entire range of human diversity. In this respect, these disciplines were instrumental in constructing the very archive they claimed to interpret. Virtually every manual deployed an array of individual cases and types along a loose set of "moral, intellectual, and animal" continua.¹⁸ Thus zones of genius, virtue, and strength were charted only in relation to zones of idiocy, vice, and weakness. The boundaries between these zones were vaguely demarcated; thus it was possible to speak, for example, of "moral idiocy." Generally, in this pre-evolutionary system of difference, the lower zones shaded off into varieties of animality and pathology.

In the almost exclusive emphasis on the head and face we can discover the idealist secret lurking at the heart of these putatively materialist sciences. These were discourses *of* the head *for* the head. Whatever the tendency of physiognomic or phrenologic thought—whether fatalistic or therapeutic in relation to the inexorable logic of the body's signs, whether uncompromisingly materialist in tone or vaguely spiritualist in relation to certain zones of the organic, whether republican or elitist in pedagogical stance—these disciplines would serve to legitimate on organic grounds the dominion of intellectual over manual labor. Thus physiognomy and phrenology contributed to the ideological hegemony of a capitalism that increasingly relied upon a hierarchical division of labor, a capitalism that applauded its own progress as the outcome of individual cleverness and cunning.

In claiming to provide a means for distinguishing the stigmata of vice from the shining marks of virtue, physiognomy and phrenology offered an essential hermeneutic service to a world of fleeting and often anonymous market transactions. Here was a method for quickly assessing the character of strangers in the dangerous and congested spaces of the nineteenth-century city. Here was a gauge of the intentions and capabilities of the other. In the United States in the 1840s, newspaper advertisements for jobs frequently requested

17. In addition to Chevalier's book just cited, see Walter Benjamin's 1938 essay, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn, London, New Left Books, 1973, pp. 35–66. See also Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in Nineteenth Century Paris*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982. For specific histories of phrenology, see David de Guistino, *Conquest of Mind: Phrenology and Victorian Social Thought*, London, Croom Helm, 1975; and John Davies, *Phrenology: Fad and Science*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1955.

18. Lavater, vol. 1, p. 13.

that applicants submit a phrenological analysis.¹⁹ Thus phrenology delivered the moral and intellectual “facts” that are today delivered in more “refined” and abstract form by psychometricians and polygraph experts.

Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that photography and phrenology should have met formally in 1846 in a book on “criminal jurisprudence.” Here was an opportunity to lend a new organic facticity to the already established medical and psychiatric genre of the case study.²⁰ A phrenologically inclined American penal reformer and matron of the women’s prison at Sing Sing, Eliza Farnham commissioned Mathew Brady to make a series of portraits of inmates at two New York prisons. Engravings based on these photographs were appended to Farnham’s new edition, entitled *Rationale of Crime*, of a previously unillustrated English work by Marmaduke Sampson. Sampson regarded criminal behavior as a form of “moral insanity.” Both he and Farnham subscribed to a variant of phrenology that argued for the possibility of therapeutic modification or enhancement of organically predetermined characteristics. Presumably, good organs could be made to triumph over bad. Farnham’s contribution is distinctive for its unabashed nonspecialist appeal. She sought to speak to “the popular mind of Republican America,” in presenting an argument for the abolition of the death penalty and the establishment of a therapeutic system of treatment.²¹ Her contribution to the book consisted of a polemical introduction, extensive notes, and several appendices, including the illustrated case studies. Farnham was assisted in her selection of case-study subjects by the prominent New York publisher-entrepreneur of phrenology, Lorenzo Fowler, who clearly lent further authority to the sample.

Ten adult prisoners are pictured, evenly divided between men and women. Three are identified as Negro, one as Irish, one as German; one woman is identified as a “Jewess of German birth,” another as a “half-breed Indian and negro.” The remaining three inmates are presumably Anglo-Saxon, but are not identified as such. A series of eight pictures of child inmates is not annotated in racial or ethnic terms, although one child is presumably black. Although Farnham professed a variant of phrenology that was not overtly racist—unlike other pre-Darwinian head analysts who sought conclusive proof of the “separate creation” of the non-Caucasian races—this differential marking of race and ethnicity according to age is significant in other ways. After all, Farnham’s work appeared in an American context—characterized by slavery and the massive immigration of Irish peasants—that was profoundly stratified

19. Davies, p. 38.

20. On the history of the illustrated psychiatric case study, see Sander Gilman, *Seeing the Insane*, New York, J. Wiley, 1982.

21. Eliza Farnham, “Introductory Preface” to Marmaduke Sampson, *Rationale of Crime and its Appropriate Treatment, Being a Treatise on Criminal Jurisprudence Considered in Relation to Cerebral Organization*, New York, Appleton, 1846, p. xiii.

along these lines. By marking children less in racial and ethnic terms, Farnham avoided stigmatizing them. Thus children in general were presented as more malleable figures than adults. Children were also presented as less weighted down by criminal biographies or by the habitual exercise of their worst faculties. Despite the fact that some of these boys were explicitly described as incorrigibles, children provided Farnham with a general figure of moral renewal. Because their potential for "respectability" was greater than that of the adult offenders, they were presented as miniature versions of their potential adult-male-respectable-Anglo-Saxon-proletarian selves. Farnham, Fowler, and Brady can be seen as significant inventors of that privileged figure of social reform discourse: the figure of the child rescued by a paternalistic medicosocial science.²²

Farnham's concerns touch on two of the central issues of nineteenth-century penal discourse: the practical drawing of distinctions between incorrigible and pliant criminals, and the disciplined conversion of the reformable into "useful" proletarians (or at least into useful informers). Thus even though she credited several inmates with "well developed" intellects, and despite the fact that her detractors accused her of Fourierism, her reformist vision had a definite ceiling. This limit was defined quite explicitly by the conclusion of her study. There she underscored the baseness shared by all her criminal subjects by illustrating three "heads of persons possessing superior intellect" (two of which, both male, were treated as classical busts). Her readers were asked to note the "striking contrast."²³

I emphasize this point because it is emblematic of the manner in which the criminal archive came into existence. That is, it was only on the basis of mutual comparison, on the basis of the tentative construction of a larger, "universal" archive, that zones of deviance and respectability could be clearly demarcated. In this instance of the first sustained application of photography to the task of phrenological analysis, it seems clear that the comparative description of the criminal body came first. The book ends with a self-congratulatory mirror held up to the middle-class reader. It is striking that the pictorial labor behind Farnham's criminal sample was that of Brady, who devoted virtually his entire antebellum career to the construction of a massive honorific archive of photographs of "illustrious," celebrated, and would-be celebrated American figures.²⁴

22. For a reading of the emergence of this system in France, see Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York, Pantheon, 1979. Donzelot seems to place inordinate blame on women for the emergence of a "tutelary" mode of social regulation. For a Marxist-feminist critique of Donzelot, see Michelle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, *The Anti-Social Family*, London, New Left Books, 1982.

23. Sampson, p. 175.

24. See Madeline Stern, "Mathew B. Brady and the *Rationale of Crime*," *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, vol. 31, no. 3 (July 1974), pp. 128-135; and Alan Trachtenberg, "Brady's Portraits," *The Yale Review*, vol. 73, no. 2 (Winter 1984), pp. 230-253.

Thus far I have described a number of early attempts, by turns comic, speculative, and practical, to bring the camera to bear upon the body of the criminal. I have also argued, following the general line of investigation charted in the later works of Foucault, that the position assigned the criminal body was a relative one, that the invention of the modern criminal cannot be dissociated from the construction of a law-abiding body — a body that was either bourgeois or subject to the dominion of the bourgeoisie. The law-abiding body recognized its threatening other in the criminal body, recognized its own acquisitive and aggressive impulses unchecked, and sought to reassure itself in two contradictory ways. The first was the invention of an exceptional criminal who was indistinguishable from the bourgeois, save for a conspicuous lack of moral inhibition: herein lay the figure of the criminal genius.²⁵ The second was the in-

25. On this point see Michel Foucault, "Prison Talk," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, New York, Pantheon, 1980, p. 46.



B. F.

B. F. is one of the inmates of the Long Island Farm. He is partially idiotic, and the very imperfect development of the superior portion of the brain, with the small size of the whole, clearly indicates the character of his mental capacities. It affords a striking contrast to the last drawing, R. A., and is in harmony with the actual difference between the minds of the two individuals. B. F. is vicious, cruel, and apparently incapable of any elevated or humane sentiments.

HEADS OF PERSONS POSSESSING SUPERIOR INTELLECT.

The following drawings are introduced for the purpose of showing the striking contrast between the cerebral developments of such persons as we have been describing and those who are endowed with superior powers of intellect and sentiment.



The two heads are taken from the first of portraits so distinguished for ability, though differing widely in character.

From Eliza Farnham, *Appendix to Marmaduke Sampson, Rationale of Crime, 1846.*



Méthode photographique avec le moule minuscule
des grandes archives de classification

From Alphonse Bertillon, *Service d'identification*.
Exposition universelle de Chicago, 1893. (*Album*
collection National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.)

vention of a criminal who was organically distinct from the bourgeois: a *biotype*. The science of criminology emerged from this latter operation.

A physiognomic code of visual interpretation of the body's signs—specifically the signs of the head—and a technique of mechanized visual representation intersected in the 1840s. This unified system of representation and interpretation promised a vast taxonomic ordering of images of the body. This was an archival promise. Its realization would seem to be grounded primarily in the technical refinement of strictly optical means. This turns out not to be the case.

I am especially concerned that exaggerated claims not be made for the powers of optical realism, whether in a celebratory or critical vein. One danger lies in constructing an overly monolithic or unitary model of nineteenth-century realist discourse. Within the rather limited and usually ignored field of instrumental scientific and technical realism, we discover a house divided. Nowhere was this division more pronounced than in the pursuit of the criminal body. If we examine the manner in which photography was made useful by the late-nineteenth-century police, we find plentiful evidence of a crisis of faith in optical empiricism. In short, we need to describe the emergence of a truth-apparatus that cannot be adequately reduced to the optical model provided by the camera. The camera is integrated into a larger ensemble: a bureaucratic-clerical-statistical system of “intelligence.” This system can be described as a sophisticated form of the archive. The central artifact of this system is not the camera but the filing cabinet.

II.

The institution of the photographic archive received its most thorough early articulation in precise conjunction with an increasingly professionalized and technological mode of police work and an emerging social science of criminology. This occurred in the 1880s and 1890s. Why was the model of the archive of such import for these linked disciplines?

In structural terms, the archive is both an abstract paradigmatic entity and a concrete institution. In both senses, the archive is a vast substitution set, providing for a relation of general equivalence between images. This image of the archive as an encyclopedic repository of exchangeable images was articulated most profoundly in the late 1850s by the American physician and essayist Oliver Wendell Holmes when he compared photographs to paper currency.²⁶ The capacity of the archive to reduce all possible sights to a single code of equivalence was grounded in the metrical accuracy of the camera. Here was a medium from which exact mathematical data could be extracted, or as the physicist François Arago put it in 1839, a medium “in which objects preserve mathematically their forms.”²⁷ For nineteenth-century positivists, photography doubly fulfilled the Enlightenment dream of a universal language: the universal mimetic language of the camera yielded up a higher, more cerebral truth, a truth that could be uttered in the universal abstract language of mathematics. For this reason, photography could be accommodated to a Galilean vision of the world as a book “written in the language of mathematics.” Photography promised more than a wealth of detail; it promised to reduce nature to its geometrical essence. Presumably then, the archive could provide a standard physiognomic gauge of the criminal, could assign each criminal body a relative and quantitative position within a larger ensemble.

This archival promise was frustrated, however, both by the messy contingency of the photograph and by the sheer quantity of images. The photographic archive’s components are not conventional lexical units, but rather are subject to the circumstantial character of all that is photographable. Thus it is absurd to imagine a dictionary of photographs, unless one is willing to disregard the specificity of individual images in favor of some model of typicality, such as that underlying the iconography of Vesalian anatomy or of most of the plates accompanying the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d’Alembert. Clearly, one way of “taming” photography is by means of this transformation of the circumstantial and idiosyncratic into the typical and emblematic. This is usually achieved by stylistic or interpretive fiat, or by a sampling of the archive’s offerings for a

26. Oliver Wendell Holmes, “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph,” *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 3, no. 20 (June 1859), p. 748. For a more extensive treatment of this issue, see my 1981 essay, “The Traffic in Photographs,” in *Photography against the Grain*, pp. 96–101.

27. François Arago, letter to Duchâtel, in Gernsheim, *Daguerre*, p. 91.

“representative” instance. Another way is to invent a machine, or rather a clerical apparatus, a filing system, which allows the operator/researcher/editor to retrieve the individual instance from the huge quantity of images contained within the archive. Here the photograph is not regarded as necessarily typical or emblematic of anything, but only as a particular image which has been isolated for purposes of inspection. These two semantic paths are so fundamental to the culture of photographic realism that their very existence is usually ignored.

The difference between these two models of photographic meaning are played out in two different approaches to the photographic representation of the criminal body: the “realist” approach, and by realism here I mean that venerable (medieval) philosophical realism that insists upon the truth of general propositions, on the reality of species and types, and the equally venerable “nominalist” approach, which denies the reality of generic categories as anything other than mental constructs. The first approach can be seen as overtly theoretical and “scientific” in its aims, if more covertly practical. The other can be seen as overtly practical and “technical” in its aims, if only covertly theoretical. Thus the would-be scientists of crime sought a knowledge and mastery of an elusive “criminal type.” And the “technicians” of crime sought knowledge and mastery of individual criminals. Herein lies a terminological distinction, and a division of labor, between “criminology” and “criminalistics.” Criminology hunted “the” criminal body. Criminalistics hunted “this” or “that” criminal body.

Contrary to the commonplace understanding of the “mug shot” as the very exemplar of a powerful, artless, and wholly denotative visual empiricism, these early instrumental uses of photographic realism were systematized on the basis of an acute recognition of the *inadequacies* and limitations of ordinary visual empiricism. Thus two systems of description of the criminal body were deployed in the 1880s; both sought to ground photographic evidence in more abstract *statistical* methods. This merger of optics and statistics was fundamental to a broader integration of the discourses of visual representation and those of the social sciences in the nineteenth century. Despite a common theoretical source, the intersection of photography and statistics led to strikingly different results in the work of two different men: Alphonse Bertillon and Francis Galton.

The Paris police official Alphonse Bertillon invented the first effective modern system of *criminal identification*. His was a bipartite system, positioning a “microscopic” individual record within a “macroscopic” aggregate. First, he combined photographic portraiture, anthropometric description, and highly standardized and abbreviated written notes on a single *fiche*, or card. Second, he organized these cards within a comprehensive, statistically based filing system.

The English statistician and founder of eugenics, Francis Galton, invented a method of composite portraiture. Galton operated on the periphery of criminology. Nonetheless, his interest in heredity and racial “betterment” led

him to join in the search for a biologically determined “criminal type.” Through one of his several applications of composite portraiture, Galton attempted to construct a *purely optical* apparition of the criminal type. This photographic impression of an abstract, statistically defined, and empirically nonexistent criminal face was both the most bizarre and the most sophisticated of many concurrent attempts to marshal photographic evidence in the search for the essence of crime.

The projects of Bertillon and Galton constitute two methodological poles of the positivist attempts to define and regulate social deviance. Bertillon sought to individuate. His aims were practical and operational, a response to the demands of urban police work and the politics of fragmented class struggle during the Third Republic. Galton sought to visualize the generic evidence of hereditarian laws. His aims were theoretical, the result of eclectic but ultimately single-minded curiosities of one of the last Victorian gentleman-amateur scientists. Nonetheless, Bertillon’s work had its own theoretical context and implications, just as Galton’s grimly playful research realized its practical implications in the ideological and political program of the international eugenics movement. Both men were committed to technologies of demographic regulation. Bertillon’s system of criminal identification was integral to the efforts to quarantine permanently a class of habitual or professional criminals. Galton sought to intervene in human reproduction by means of public policy, encouraging the propagation of the “fit,” and discouraging or preventing outright that of the “unfit.”

The idealist proclivities, territorialism, and status consciousness of intellectual history have prevented us from recognizing Bertillon and Galton’s shared ground. While Galton has been considered a proper, if somewhat eccentric, object of the history of science, Bertillon remains an ignored mechanic and clerk, commemorated mostly by anecdotal historians of the police.

In order to explore this terrain shared by a police clerk and gentleman statistician, I need to introduce a third figure. Both Bertillon’s and Galton’s projects were grounded in the emergence and codification of *social statistics* in the 1830s and 1840s. Both relied upon the central conceptual category of social statistics: the notion of the “average man” (*l’homme moyen*). This concept was invented (I will argue shortly that it was actually reinvented) by the Belgian astronomer and statistician Adolphe Quetelet. Although less well remembered than Auguste Comte, Quetelet is the most significant other early architect of sociology. Certainly he laid the foundations of the quantitative paradigm in the social sciences. By seeking statistical regularities in rates of birth, death, and crime, Quetelet hoped to realize the Enlightenment philosopher Condorcet’s proposal for a “social mathematics,” a mathematically exact science that would discover the fundamental laws of social phenomena. Quetelet helped to establish some of the first actuarial tables used in Belgium, and to found in 1853 an international society for the promotion of statistical methods. As the philoso-

pher of science Ian Hacking has suggested, the rise of social statistics in the mid-nineteenth century was crucial to the replacement of strictly mechanistic theories of causality by a more probabilistic paradigm. Quetelet was a determinist, but he invented a determinism based on iron laws of chance. This emergent paradigm would lead eventually to indeterminism.²⁸

Who, or what, was the average man? A less flippant query would be, *how* was the average man? Quetelet introduced this composite character in his 1835 treatise *Sur l'homme*. Quetelet argued that large aggregates of social data revealed a regularity of occurrence that could only be taken as evidence of determinate social laws. This regularity had political and moral as well as epistemological implications:

The greater the number of individuals observed, the more do individual peculiarities, whether physical or moral, become effaced, and leave in a prominent point of view the general facts, by virtue of which society exists and is preserved.²⁹

Quetelet sought to move from the mathematicization of individual bodies to that of society in general. In *Sur l'homme* he charted various quantitative biographies of the productive and reproductive powers of the average man and woman. For example, he calculated the fluctuation of fecundity with respect to female age. Using data from dynamometer studies, he charted the average muscular power of men and women of different ages. At the level of the social aggregate, life history read as a graphic curve. (Here was prefiguration, in extreme form, of Zola's naturalism: a subliterary, quantitative narrative of the generalized social organism.)

Just as Quetelet's early statistical contributions to the life insurance industry can be seen as crucial to the regularization of that organized form of gambling known as finance capital, so also his charting of the waxing and waning of human energies can be seen as an attempt to conceptualize that Hercules of industrial capitalism, termed by Marx the "average worker," the abstract embodiment of labor power in the aggregate.³⁰ And outside the sphere of waged work, Quetelet invented but did not name the figure of the average mother, crucial to the new demographic sciences which sought nervously to chart the relative numeric strengths of class against class and nation against nation.

For Quetelet the most emphatic demonstration of the regularity of social

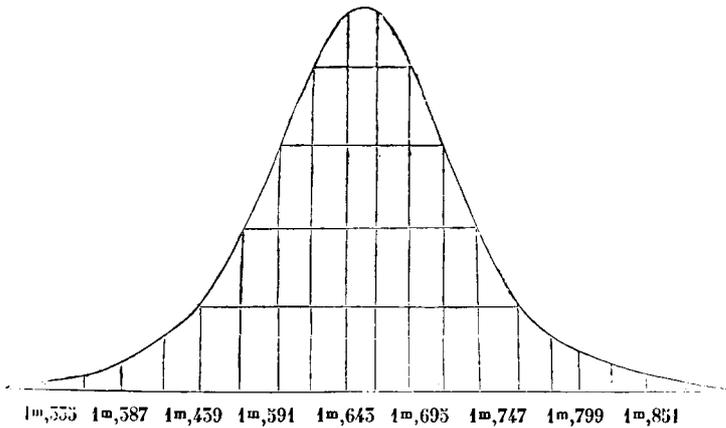
28. See Ian Hacking, "How Should We Do the History of Statistics?" *Ideology and Consciousness*, no. 8 (Spring 1981), pp. 15-26; and "Biopower and the Avalanche of Printed Numbers," *Humanities and Society*, vol. 5, nos. 3-4 (Summer and Fall 1982), pp. 279-295.

29. Adolphe Quetelet, *A Treatise on Man and the Development of His Faculties*, trans. R. Knox, Edinburgh, Chambers, 1842, p. 6.

30. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, London, New Left Books, vol. 1, 1976, pp. 440-441.

phenomena was given by crime statistics. “Moral statistics” provided the linchpin for his construction of a “social physics” that would demolish the prestige of moral paradigms grounded in free will. The criminal was no more than an agent of determining social forces. Furthermore, crime statistics provided the synecdochic basis for a broader description of the social field. As Louis Chevalier has argued, Quetelet inaugurated a “quantitative description which took criminal statistics as the starting point for a description of urban living as a whole.”³¹ Chevalier has argued further that criminal statistics contributed thus to a pervasive bourgeois conception of the essentially *pathological* character of metropolitan life, especially in the Paris of the July Monarchy. Quetelet’s terminological

Talles des Belges de 18 à 20 ans.



From Adolphe Quetelet, *Physique sociale, ou Essai sur le développement des facultés de l'homme*, 1869.

contribution to this medicalization of the social field is evident in his reference to the statistical study of crime as a form of “moral anatomy.”

Quetelet refined his notion of the “average man” with conceptual tools borrowed from astronomy and probability theory. He observed that large aggregates of social data— notably anthropometric data— fell into a pattern corresponding to the bell-shaped curve derived by Gauss in 1809 in an attempt to determine accurate astronomical measurements from the distribution of random errors around a central mean. Quetelet came to regard this symmetrical bino-

31. Chevalier, p. 10.

mial curve as the mathematical expression of fundamental social law. While he admitted that the average man was a statistical fiction, this fiction lived within the abstract configuration of the binomial distribution. In an extraordinary metaphoric conflation of individual difference with mathematical error, Quetelet defined the central portion of the curve, that large number of measurements clustered around the mean, as a zone of normality. Divergent measurements tended toward darker regions of monstrosity and biosocial pathology.³²

Thus conceived, the “average man” constituted an ideal, not only of social health, but of social stability and of beauty. In interesting metaphors, revealing both the astronomical sources and aesthetico-political ambitions inherent in Quetelet’s “social physics,” he defined the social norm as a “center of gravity,” and the average man as “the type of all which is beautiful—of all which is good.”³³ Crime constituted a “perturbing force,” acting to throw the delicate balance of this implicitly republican social mechanism into disarray. Although Quetelet was constructing a quantitative model of civil society and only indirectly describing the contours of an ideal commonwealth, his model of a gravitational social order bears striking similarity to Hobbes’s *Leviathan*.³⁴

Like Hobbes, Quetelet began with atomized individual bodies and returned to the image of the body in describing the social aggregate. Quetelet worked, however, in a climate of physiognomic and phrenologic enthusiasm, and indeed early social statistics can be regarded as a variant of physiognomy writ large. For example, Quetelet accepted, despite his republicanism, the late-eighteenth-century notion of the *cranial angle*, which, as George Mosse has argued, emerges from the appropriation by preevolutionary Enlightenment anthropology of the classicist idealism of Wincklemann.³⁵ Based in part on the art-historical evidence of noble Grecian foreheads, this racist geometrical fiction defined a descending hierarchy of head types, with presumably upright Caucasian brows approaching this lost ideal more closely than did the presumably apelike brows of Africans. For his part, Quetelet was less interested in a broadly racist physical anthropology than in detecting within European society patterns of bodily evidence of deviation from “normality.” It is understandable that he would be drawn to those variants of physiognomic thought which sought to systematize the body’s signs in terms of a quantifying geometrical

32. Adolphe Quetelet, *Lettres sur la théorie des probabilités*, Brussels, Académie Royale, 1846. (*Letters on the Theory of Probability*, trans. O. G. Downes, London, Layton, 1849). See also Georges Canguilhem, *On the Normal and the Pathological*, trans. Carolyn Fawcett, Boston, Reidel, 1978, pp. 86–104.

33. Quetelet, *Treatise on Man*, p. 100.

34. See note 8. Of course, Quetelet’s extreme determinist view of the social field was diametrically opposed to the contractual model of human relations advanced by Hobbes.

35. See George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*, New York, Fertig, 1978, pp. 17–34.

schema. From Quetelet on, biosocial statisticians became increasingly absorbed with *anthropometrical* researches, focusing both on the skeletal proportions of the body and upon the volume and configuration of the head.³⁶ The inherited idealist fascination with the upright forehead can be detected even in Quetelet's model of an ideal society: he argued that social progress would lead to a diminished number of defective and inferior cases, thus increasing the zone of normality. If we consider what this utopian projection meant in terms of the binomial curve, we have to imagine an increasingly peaked, erect configuration: a classical ideal to a fault.

Certainly physiognomy provided a discursive terrain upon which art and the emerging bio-social sciences met during the middle of the nineteenth century. Quetelet's explicitly stated enthusiasm for the model of artistic practice is understandable in this context, but the matter is more complicated. Despite the abstract character of his procedures, Quetelet possessed the aesthetic ambition to compare his project to Dürer's studies of human bodily proportion. The statistician argued that his "aim had been, not only to go once more through the task of Albert [*sic*] Dürer, but to execute it also on an extended scale."³⁷ Thus visual empiricism retained its prestige in the face of a new object—society—which could in no way be effectively or comprehensively visualized.³⁸

36. See Adolphe Quetelet, *Anthropométrie, ou mesure des différents facultés de l'homme*, Brussels, Muquardt, 1871. Quetelet suffered from aphasia after 1855, and his later works tend to be repetitious and incoherent (see Frank H. Hankins, *Adolphe Quetelet as Statistician*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1908, pp. 31–32). On the intersection of anthropometry and race science, see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, New York, Norton, 1981.

37. Quetelet, *Treatise on Man*, p. v.

38. Here are some ways in which Quetelet's position in relation to idealist aesthetic theory become very curious. The "average man" can be regarded as a bastard child of Kant. In the "Critique of Aesthetical Judgement" Kant describes the psychological basis of the construction of the empirically based "normal Idea" of human beauty, arguing that "the Imagination can, in all probability, actually though unconsciously let one image glide into another, and thus by the concurrence of several of the same kind come by an average, which serves as the common measure of all. Every one has seen a thousand full-grown men. Now if you wish to judge of the normal size, estimating it by means of comparison, the Imagination (as I think) allows a great number of images (perhaps the whole thousand) to fall on one another. If I am allowed here the analogy of optical presentation, it is the space where most of them are combined and inside the contour, where the place is illuminated with the most vivid colors, that the *average size* is cognizable; which, both in height and breadth, is equally far removed from the extreme bounds of the greatest and smallest stature. And this is the stature of a beautiful man" (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. H. Bernard, London, Macmillan, 1914, pp. 87–88). This passage prefigures not only Quetelet but also—as we shall see—Galton. However, Kant was careful to respect differences between normal Ideas of beauty appropriate to different races. On an empirical level, he constructed no hierarchy. Furthermore, he distinguished between the empirically based normal Idea, and the "Ideal of beauty," which is constructed in conformity with a concept of morality. Quetelet can be accused of unwittingly collapsing Kant's distinction between the normal Idea and the Ideal, and thus fusing aesthetics and morality on a purely quantitative basis, preparing thus the ground for Galton's plan for the engineering of human reproduction.

Although Kant's more general proposal for a science of the human species based on the model of the natural sciences was known to Comte, Quetelet, "a stranger to all philosophical

By the end of the nineteenth century, this essentially *organismic* model of a *visible* social field was in crisis. The terms of Quetelet's honorific linkage of an emergent statistics to a venerable optical paradigm were explicitly reversed. The French sociologist Gabriel Tarde argued in 1883 that "a statistical bureau might be compared to an eye or ear," claiming further that "each of our senses gives us, in its own way and from its special point of view, the statistics of the external world. Their characteristic sensations are in a certain way their special graphical tables. Every sensation . . . is only a number."³⁹ Here the transition is made from the prestige of the visual and the organic to the prestige of institutionalized, bureaucratic abstraction.

Tarde was a central figure, not only in the demise of organismic models of society, but also in the development of a French school of criminological thought during the 1880s. Tarde was a magistrate during his early career, and by 1894 became the head of the Bureau of Statistics within the Department of Justice in Paris, which made him the abstract overseer of the quantitative ebbs and flows of a regulated criminality. His background in legal theory and practice led him to attempt a criticism and modification of Quetelet's extreme determinism, which had absolved the criminal of all responsibility. After all, classical legal theory was not about to abandon its ideological capacity to uphold the state's right to punish criminals for their deeds. In 1890, Tarde advanced a notion of "criminal responsibility" based upon the continuity of individual identity within a shared social milieu, a milieu of "social similarity." Tarde's psychological model of individuality assumed an essential internal nar-

speculation," seems never to have read Kant (Joseph Lottin, *Quetelet, statisticien et sociologue*, Louvain, Institut supérieur de philosophie, 1912, p. 367).

Quetelet's persistent likening of his project to the work of the visual artist can certainly be taken as emblematic of the fusion of idealist aesthetics with Enlightenment theories of social perfection. More specifically, however, Quetelet's evocations of art history—which extended to the measurement of classical sculpture and to long chronological tables of artists who had dealt with problems of bodily proportion—can be seen as a legitimating maneuver to ward off accusations that his strict determinism obliterated the possibility of a human creativity based on the exercise of free will. (It was also an attempt to compare the average bodily types of "ancients" and "moderns.") Thus Quetelet colors his gray determinism with a self-justifying hint of romanticism. But this maneuver also converts the visual artist into a protoscientist, linking Quetelet to the emerging discourse of artistic realism. (See his *Anthropométrie*, pp. 61–169. In this work Quetelet constructed a visual diagram of the biographical course of an average body type from infancy to old age, based on anthropometrical data.)

39. Gabriel Tarde, "Archaeology and Statistics," in *The Laws of Imitation*, trans. Elsie Parsons, New York, Henry Holt, 1903, pp. 134–135 (this essay first appeared in the *Revue philosophique*, October 1883). In an extraordinary passage of the same essay Tarde compares the graphical curve for criminal recidivism with the "curve traced on [the] retina by the flight of [a] swallow," metaphorically linking within the same epistemological paradigm the work of Bertillon with that of the physiologist Etienne Jules Marey, chronophotographer of human and animal locomotion (*ibid.*, p. 133).

rative coherence of the self: "Identity is the permanence of the person, it is the personality looked at from the point of view of its duration."⁴⁰

Tarde's rather nominalist approach to the philosophy of crime and punishment paralleled a more practical formulation by Alphonse Bertillon, director of the Identification Bureau of the Paris Prefecture of Police. In 1893, Bertillon offered the following introduction to his system, then in use for ten years, known variously as "Bertillonage" and the "signaletic notice":

In prison practice the signaletic notice accompanies every reception and every delivery of a human individuality; this register guards the trace of the real, actual presence of the person sought by the administrative or judicial document. . . . [The] task is always the same: to preserve a sufficient record of a personality to be able to *identify* the present description with one which may be presented at some future time. From this point of view signalment is the best instrument for the *proof of recidivation*, which necessarily implies the *proof of identity*.⁴¹

In effect, then, Bertillon's police archive functioned as a complex biographical machine which produced presumably simple and unambiguous results. He sought to identify repeat offenders, that is, criminals who were liable to be considered "habitual" or "professional" in their deviant behavior. The concern with recidivism was of profound social importance in the 1880s. Bertillon, however, professed no theory of a criminal type, nor of the psychic continuities or discontinuities that might differentiate "responsible" criminals from "irresponsible" criminals. He was sensitive to the status hierarchy between his Identification Bureau and the more "theoretical" mission of the Bureau of Statistics. (Bertillon was the son of a prominent anthropometrician, Louis Adolphe Bertillon, and seems to have labored mightily to vindicate himself after an inauspicious start as a mere police clerk.) He was more a social engineer, an inventive clerk-technician, than a criminologist. He sought to ground police work in scientific principles, while recognizing that most police operatives were unfamiliar with consistent and rigorous empirical procedures. Part of his ambition was to accelerate the work of processing criminals and to employ effectively the labors of unskilled clerks. He resembles in many respects his American contemporary, Frederick Winslow Taylor, the inventor of scientific management, the first system of modern factory discipline. Bertillon can be seen, like Taylor, as a prophet of rationalization. Here is Bertillon describing the rapidity of his process: "Four pairs of police officers suffice, at Paris, for the measurement, every

40. Gabriel Tarde, *Penal Philosophy*, trans. Rapelje Howell, Boston, Little, Brown, 1912, p. 116.

41. Alphonse Bertillon, *Identification anthropométrique; instructions signaletiques*, Paris, Melun, 1893, p. xiii. I have modified the translation given in the American edition, *Signaletic Instructions*, trans. R. W. McLaughry, Chicago, Werner, 1896.



From Alphonse Bertillon, *Service d'identification*. *Classification cabinets, Paris Prefecture of Police*. Exposition universelle de Chicago, 1893.

morning between nine o'clock and noon, of from 100 to 150 men who were arrested the day before."⁴² Ultimately, this was not fast enough, and therein lay a principal reason for the demise, some thirty years later, of the Bertillon system.

How did the Bertillon system work? The problems with prior attempts at criminal identification were many. The early promise of photography had faded in the face of a massive and chaotic archive of images. The problem of *classification* was paramount:

The collection of criminal portraits has already attained a size so considerable that it has become physically impossible to discover among them the likeness of an individual who has assumed a false name. It goes for nothing that in the past ten years the Paris police have collected more than 100,000 photographs. Does the reader believe it practicable to compare successively each of these with each one of the 100 individuals who are arrested daily in Paris? When this was attempted in the case of a criminal particularly easy to identify, the search demanded more than a week of application, not to speak of the errors and oversights which a task so fatiguing to the eye could

42. Alphonse Bertillon, "The Bertillon System of Identification," *Forum*, vol. 11, no. 3 (May 1891), p. 335.



Display of apparatus, Chicago Exposition.

not fail to occasion. There was a need for a method of elimination analogous to that in use in botany and zoology; that is to say, one based on the characteristic elements of individuality.⁴³

Despite the last part of this remark, Bertillon sought not to relate individual to species, but to extract the individual from the species. Thus he invented a classifying scheme that was based less upon a taxonomic categorization of types than upon an ordering of individual cases within a segmented aggregate. He had failed miserably in an earlier attempt to classify police photographs according to the genre of offense, for obvious reasons.⁴⁴ Criminals may have constituted a “professional type,” as Tarde argued, but they did not necessarily observe a narrow specialization in their work.

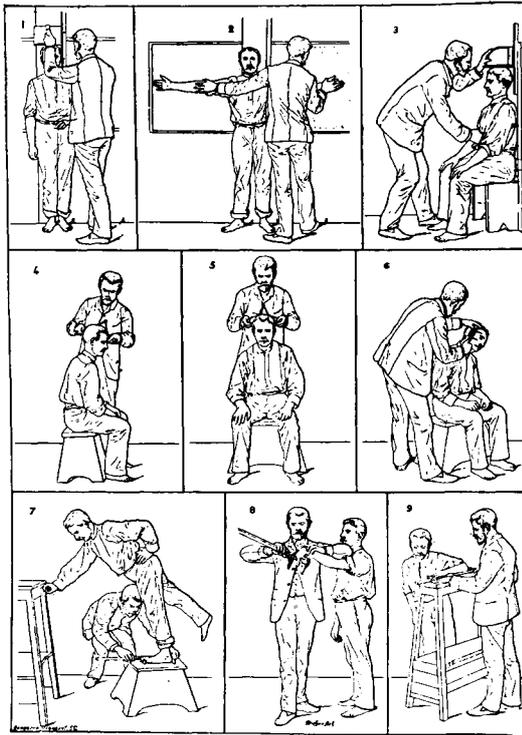
Bertillon sought to break the professional criminal’s mastery of disguises, false identities, multiple biographies, and alibis. He did this by yoking anthropometrics, the optical precision of the camera, a refined physiognomic vocabulary, and statistics.

First Bertillon calculated, without a very sophisticated grasp of the calculus of probabilities, that the chance that two individuals might share the same series of eleven bodily measurements ran on the order of one in four

43. *Ibid.*, p. 331.

44. Alphonse Bertillon, *L’identité des récidivistes et la loi de relégation*, Paris, Masson, 1883, p. 11.

RELEVÉ
DU
SIGNALEMENT ANTHROPOMÉTRIQUE



1. Taille. — 2. Envergure. — 3. Buste. —
4. Longueur de la tête. — 5. Largeur de la tête. — 6. Oreille droite. —
7. Pied gauche. — 8. Médius gauche. — 9. Coudée gauche.

Frontispiece (left) and figures (right) from Alphonse Bertillon, Identification anthropométrique, 1893.

million.⁴⁵ He regarded these eleven measurements as constant in any adult body. His signaletic notice linked this “anthropometrical signalment,” recorded as a numerical series, with a shorthand verbal description of distinguishing marks, and a pair of photographic portraits, both frontal and profile views.

Bertillon’s second problem was the organization of individual cards in a comprehensive system from which records could be retrieved in short order. To this end, Bertillon enlisted the prodigious rationalizing energies of Quetelet’s “average man.” By organizing his measurements into successive subdivisions, each based on a tripartite separation of below-average, average, and above-average figures, Bertillon was able to file 100,000 records into a grid of file drawers, with the smallest subset within any one drawer consisting of approximately a dozen identification cards. Having thus separately processed 100,000

45. Bertillon, *Identification anthropométrique*, pp. xvii–xviii.

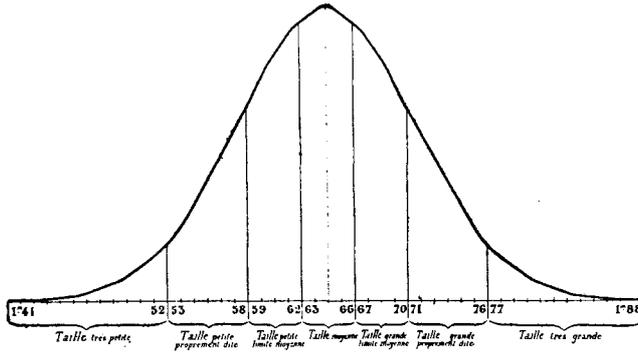


Fig. 4. — COURBE BINOMIALE DE LA TAILLE SUR LAQUELLE ON A SEPARÉ PAR DES VERTICALES L'EMPLACEMENT DES SEPT CATEGORIES DE TAILLE.

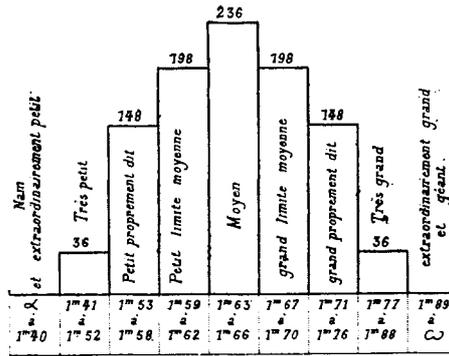


Fig. 5. — DIAGRAMME DE LA TAILLE indiquant par la hauteur proportionnelle des colonnes le nombre des sujets ressortissant à chacune des sept catégories de taille indiquées sur la courbe binomiale (Fig. 4).

male and 20,000 female prisoners over the decade between 1883 and 1893, Bertillon felt confident in boasting that his system was “infallible.” He had in the process “infallibly” identified 4,564 recidivists.⁴⁶

Bertillon can be said to have realized the binomial curve as office furniture. He is one of the first users of photographic documents to comprehend fully the fundamental problem of the archive, the problem of volume. Given his recourse to statistical method, what semantic value did he find in photographs? He clearly saw the photograph as the final conclusive sign in the process of identification. Ultimately, it was the photographed face pulled from the file that had to match the rephotographed face of the suspect, even if this final “photographic” proof was dependent upon a series of more abstract steps.

Bertillon was critical of the inconsistent photography practiced by earlier

46. *Ibid.*, pp. xxi-xxiii, lxxiv.

police technicians and jobbers. He argued at length for an aesthetically neutral standard of representation:

In commercial and artistic portraits, questions of fashion and taste are all important. Judicial photography, liberated from these considerations, allows us to look at the problem from a more simple point of view: which pose is theoretically the best for such and such a case?⁴⁷

Bertillon insisted on a standard focal length, even and consistent lighting, and a fixed distance between the camera and the unwilling sitter. The profile view served to cancel the contingency of expression; the contour of the head remained consistent with time. The frontal view provided a face that was more likely to be recognizable within the other, less systematized departments of police work. These latter photographs served better in the search for suspects who had not yet been arrested, whose faces were to be recognized by detectives on the street.

Just as Bertillon sought to classify the photograph by means of the Vitruvian register of the anthropometrical signalment and the binomial curve, so also he sought to translate the signs offered by the photograph itself into another, verbal register. Thus he was engaged in a two-sided, internal and external, taming of the contingency of the photograph. His invention of the *portrait-parlé*—the “speaking likeness” or verbal portrait—was an attempt to overcome the inadequacies of a purely visual empiricism. He organized voluminous taxonomic grids of the features of the male human head, using sectional photographs. He devoted particular attention to the morphology of the ear, repeating a physiognomic fascination with that organ that extended back to Lavater.⁴⁸ But on the basis of this comparative anatomy, Bertillon sought to reinvent physiognomy in precise nonmetaphysical, ethnographic terms. Through the construction of a strictly denotative signaletic vocabulary, this project aimed for the precise and unambiguous translation of appearance into words.

For Bertillon, the criminal body expressed nothing. No characterological secrets were hidden beneath the surface of this body. Rather, the surface and the skeleton were indices of a more strictly material sort. The anthropometrical signalment was the register of the morphological constancy of the adult

47. Alphonse Bertillon, *La photographie judiciaire*, Paris, Gauthier-Villars, 1890, p. 2 (my translation).

48. In 1872, O. G. Rejlander suggested that photographs of ears be used to identify criminals (“Hints Concerning the Photographing of Criminals,” *British Journal Photographic Almanac*, 1872, pp. 116–117). Carlo Ginzburg has noted the coincidence of Bertillon’s attention to the “individuality” of the ear and Giovanni Morelli’s attempt to construct a model of art-historical authentication based on the careful examination of the rendering of the ear by different painters (“Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method,” *History Workshop*, no. 9 [Spring 1980], pp. 5–29).

Forme générale de la tête vue de profil.



1. Nègre à prognathisme moyen.



2. Type d'Européen prognathe.



3. Prognathisme limité aux os de la base du nez. (prognathisme nasal).



4. Prognathisme accentuée avec prééminence du menton.



5. Type d'orthognathe.



6. Profil fronto-nasal rectiligne.



7. Tête en bonnet à poils (acrocéphale).



8. Tête en carène (scaphocéphale).



9. Tête en besace. (cymbocéphale).

Planche 56

Tableau récapitulatif des formes sériées les plus caractéristiques
à signaler pour la fièvre en tout état de cause



Cléber Dugast et Félix Geoffroy

skeleton, thus the key to biographical identity. Likewise, scars and other deformations of the flesh were clues, not to any innate propensity for crime, but to the body's physical history: its trades, occupations, calamities.

For Bertillon, the mastery of the criminal body necessitated a massive campaign of *inscription*, a transformation of the body's signs into a *text*, a text that pared verbal description down to a denotative shorthand, which was then linked to a numerical series. Thus Bertillon arrested the criminal body, determined its identity as a body that had *already* been defined as criminal, by means that subordinated the image—which remained necessary but insufficient—to verbal text and numerical series. This was not merely a self-contained archival project. We can understand another, more global, imperative if we remember that one problem for the late-nineteenth-century police was the telegraphic transmission of information regarding suspects. The police were competing with opponents who availed themselves of the devices of modernity as well, including the railroad.

Why was the issue of recidivism so important in France during the 1880s? Robert Nye has argued recently that the issue emerged on the political agenda of Gambettist Republicans during the Third Republic, leading to the passage of the Relegation Law of 1885, which established a Draconian policy of colonial transport for repeat offenders. The bill worked out a variable quota of misdemeanors and felonies, including vagabondage, that could lead to permanent exile in Guyana or New Caledonia. The French agricultural crisis had led to a renewed massive urban influx of displaced peasants during the 1880s. The recidivism debate focused on the social danger posed by the vagrant, while also seeing the milieu of the chronically unemployed urban poor as a source of increased criminality. Not least in provoking the fears of the defenders of order was the evidence of renewed working-class militancy in the strike wave of 1881, after a decade of peace purchased by the slaughter of the Communards. At its most extreme, the debate on recidivism combined the vagabond, the anarchist, and recidivist into a single composite figure of social menace.⁴⁹

Bertillon himself promoted his system within the context of this debate. Having only succeeded in identifying his first recidivist in February of 1883, he quickly argued that his binomial classification system would be essential to the application of any law of relegation. He described a Parisian working-class milieu that was undergoing what might facetiously be called a "crisis of identity." During the Commune, all city records prior to 1859 had been burned; any Parisian over twenty-two years old was at liberty to invent and reinvent an

49. See Robert Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, pp. 49–96. Although Nye mentions Bertillon's project only in passing, I have relied upon his social history for an understanding of the politics of French criminology during the late nineteenth century. A more directly relevant study of Bertillon, Christian Pheline's *L'image accusatrice* (Paris, Cahiers de la Photographie, 1985), unfortunately came to my attention only after this essay was going to press.

entirely bogus nativity. Furthermore, Bertillon claimed that there was an extraordinary traffic in false documents, citing the testimony of foremen at the more “insalubrious” industrial establishment—white lead and fertilizer factories, for example—that job applicants frequently reappeared two weeks after being rejected with entirely new papers and different names.⁵⁰ In effect, Bertillon sought to reregister a social field that had exploded into multiplicity.

One curious aspect of Bertillon’s reputation lies in the way in which his method, which runs counter to any metaphysical or essentialist doctrine of the self, could be regarded as a triumph of humanism. One biographer put it this way: “A man of his type inevitably found a kind of romance in a technique the aim of which was to individualize human beings.”⁵¹ Bertillon himself contributed to this “humane” reading of his project: “Is it not at bottom a problem of this sort that forms the basis of the everlasting popular melodrama about lost, exchanged, and recovered children?”⁵² But in more technical and theoretical contexts, the degree to which Bertillonage actually eroded the “uniqueness” of the self became clear. Writing with a coauthor in 1909, Bertillon noted that according to the logic of the binomial curve, “each observation or each group of observations is to be defined, not by its absolute value, but by its deviation from the arithmetic mean.”⁵³ Thus even the nominalist Bertillon was forced to recognize the higher reality of the “average man.” The individual could only be identified by invoking the powers of this genie. And the individual only existed *as an individual* by being identified. Individuality as such had no meaning. Viewed “objectively,” the self occupied a position that was wholly relative.

The Bertillon system proliferated widely, receiving an enthusiastic reception especially in the United States and contributing to the internationalization and standardization of police methods. The anthropometric system faced competition from the fingerprint system, a more radically synecdochic procedure, invented in part by Francis Galton, who had interests in identification as well as typology. With the advent of fingerprinting, it became evident that the body did not have to be “circumscribed” in order to be identified. Rather, the key to identity could be found in the merest trace of the body’s tactile presence in the world. Furthermore, fingerprinting was more promising in a Taylorist sense, since it could be properly executed by less-skilled clerks. By the late nineteenthens, the Bertillon system had begun to yield to this more efficient and less cumbersome method, although hybrid systems operated for some years.⁵⁴

50. Bertillon, *L'identité des récidivistes*, pp. 2, 5.

51. Henry Rhodes, *Alphonse Bertillon: Father of Scientific Detection*, London, Abelard-Schuman, 1956, p. 83.

52. Bertillon, “The Bertillon System of Identification,” p. 330.

53. A. Bertillon and A. Chervin, *Anthropologie métrique*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1909, p. 51 (my translation). The same text drolly likens the shape of the binomial curve to that of a “gendarme’s hat.”

54. Bertillon noted that his system was adopted by 1893 in the United States, Belgium,

Bertillon card, 1913.

POLICE DEPARTMENT, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA											
Height	1 m	52.0	Head length	15.0	L. Foot	23.5	Color of Eye	Class	Age	24	
Stretch	1 m	57.0	Head width	15.5	L. Mid F	10.3		Areola	Apparent Age		
Trunk		37.0	Cheek width	13.1	L. Lit F	8.0		Periph	Nativity	Rumania	
Curve			R. Ear length	8.9	L. Cubit	42.4		Pecul	Occup	Labourer	
Eng. Height		5.3	Remarks relative to Measurements								
Forehead	Inc.	I	Profile	Bridge	R.	B. Foot	L. Att.	Hair			Black.
	Height	M		Nose	Bl.			Root	M	Complexion	
Width	DIMENSIONS			Height	Projection	Length	Teeth	Weight			112
	M	P	M	G	Good.	Build			P		
Pecul.	Pecul.			Chin			Beard			Black.	
				Ball.							
Weight				14	A	Examined				1-17-13.	
Self				22	A	By				Gabrielson.	

Switzerland, Russia, much of South America, Tunisia, the British West Indies, and Rumania (*Identification anthropométrique*, p. lxxxii). Translations of Bertillon's manuals of signalethic instructions appeared in Germany, Switzerland, England, and Peru, as well as the United States. On the enthusiastic American reception of the Bertillon system, see Donald Dilworth, ed., *Identification Wanted: Development of the American Criminal Identification System, 1893-1943*, Gaithersburg, Maryland, International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1977. The IACP promoted the general adoption of Bertillonage by the geographically dispersed and municipally autonomous police forces of the United States and Canada, and the establishment of a National Identification Bureau in Washington, D.C. This office was absorbed into the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1924. (Canada adopted Bertillonage with the Criminal Identification Act of 1898.) Starting in 1898, a quasi-official monthly publication of the IACP, called *The Detective*, carried Bertillon measurements and photographs of wanted criminals. This publication provides a reasonable gauge of the ratio of reliance by American police on the Bertillon and fingerprint systems over the next twenty-five years. The British resisted Bertillon's method, largely because the fingerprint system



From *Yawman and Erbe Mfg. Co., Criminal Identification by "Y and E": Bertillon and Finger Print Systems, 1913.*

was of British origin. Nonetheless, regulations were established in 1896 under the Penal Servitude Act of 1891 for the photographing, fingerprinting, and Bertillon measurement of criminal prisoners (Great Britain, *Statutory Rules and Orders*, London, H. M. Stationary Office, 1896, no. 762, pp. 364-365). By 1901, however, the anthropometric signalment was abandoned.

Bertillon and Galton traded jibes at their respective systems. Bertillon faulted Galton for the difficulties encountered in classifying fingerprints ("The Bertillon System of Identification," p. 331). Galton faulted Bertillon for his failure to recognize that bodily measurements were correlated and not independent variables, thus grossly underestimating the probability of duplicate measurements (Francis Galton, *Memories of My Life*, London, Methuen, 1908, p. 251; see also his "Personal Identification and Description," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, vol. 18 [May 29, 1888], pp. 177-191).

The two men's obsession with authorship may have been a bit misplaced, however. In "Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes" (cited in note 48, above), Carlo Ginzburg has suggested that the whole enterprise of rationalized criminal identification rested on the *theft* of a more popular, conjectural form of empiricism, grounded in hunting and divining. Sir William Herschel had appropriated fingerprinting in 1860 from a usage customary among Bengali peasants under his colonial administration. The source of police methods in what Ginzburg describes as "low intuition" was obliquely acknowledged by Bertillon in a passage in which he argues for a rigorously *scientific* policing, while invoking at the same time the distinctly *premodern* image of the hunter: "Anthropology, by definition, is nothing but the natural history of man. Have not hunters in all times been interested in natural history? And, on the other hand, have not naturalists something of the hunter in them? No doubt the police of the future will apply to their particular form of the chase the rules of anthropology and psychology, just as the engineers of our locomotives are putting in practice the laws of mechanics and thermodynamics" ("The Bertillon System of Identification," p. 341). Ginzburg has proposed a model of observation and description that is more open to multiplicity and resistance than that advanced by John Tagg, who subsumes all documentary within the paradigm of the Panopticon (Tagg, "Power and Photography," p. 55).

For Bertillon, the type existed only as a means for refining the description of individuality. Detectives could not afford not to be nominalists. Bertillon was not alone in this understanding of the peculiarities of the policeman's search for the specificity of crime. For example, the New York City detective chief Thomas Byrnes published in 1886 a lavish "rogues' gallery" entitled *Professional Criminals of America*. Although Byrnes practiced a less systematic mode of photography than did Bertillon, he clearly articulated the position that classical physiognomic typing was of no value whatsoever in the hunt for the "higher and more dangerous order" of criminals, who "carried no suggestion of their calling about them."⁵⁵ In Bertillon's case, the resistance to the theory of a *biologically given* criminal type was also in keeping with the general drift of late-nineteenth-century French criminological theory, which stressed the importance of environmental factors in determining criminal behavior. Thus the "French school," notably Gabriel Tarde and Alexandre Lacassagne, opposed the biological determinism of the "Italian school" of criminal anthropology, which centered on the anatomist-craniometrician Cesare Lombroso's quasi-Darwinian theory of the criminal as an "atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals."⁵⁶ Against this line of reasoning, Lacassagne argued that "the social milieu is the mother culture of criminality; the microbe is the criminal."⁵⁷ (In this context, it is worth noting the mutual admiration that passed between Pasteur, the microbe-hunter, and Bertillon, the hunter of recidivists.⁵⁸) The French were able to medicalize crime while simultaneously pointing to environmental factors. A range of positions emerged, some more medical, some more sociological in emphasis. Tarde insisted that crime was a profession that proliferated through channels of imitative behavior. Others argued that the criminal was a "degenerate type," suffering more than noncriminals from the bad environmental effects of urbanism.⁵⁹

Despite the acute differences between the warring factions of the emerging criminological profession, a common enthusiasm for photographic illustration of the criminal type was shared by almost all of the practitioners, with the notable exception of Tarde, who shunned the lowly empiricism of the case study for more lofty, even if nominalist, meditations on the problem of crime. Before looking at Francis Galton's peculiar contribution to the search for a criminal type, I will note that during the 1890s in particular, a profusion of texts ap-

55. Thomas Byrnes, "Why Thieves are Photographed," in *Professional Criminals of America*, New York, Cassell, 1886, p. 53.

56. Cesare Lombroso, "Introduction," to Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, *Criminal Man*, New York, Putnam, 1911, p. xxv.

57. Quoted by Nye, p. 104.

58. Rhodes, p. 190.

59. See Nye, pp. 97-131.

115



ELLEN CLEGG,
ALIAS ELLEN LEE.
SHOP LIFTER AND PICKPOCKET

116



MARY HOEY,
ALIAS MOLLY HOLLBROOK
PICKPOCKET.

117



MARGRET BROWN,
ALIAS OLD MOTHER HUBBARD
PICKPOCKET AND SATCHEL WORKER.

118



CHRISTENE MAYER,
ALIAS RED GLOVE ROSEY
SHOP LIFTER.

119



LENA KLEINSCHMIDT,
ALIAS RICE & BLACK LENA.
SHOP LIFTER.

120



MARY DONNELLY,
ALIAS IRVING
PICKPOCKET AND SHOP LIFTER.

FIG. 110. — *Clayes.*FIG. 111. — *Clayes.*

(Photographies prises 1/4 d'heure après la décapitation).

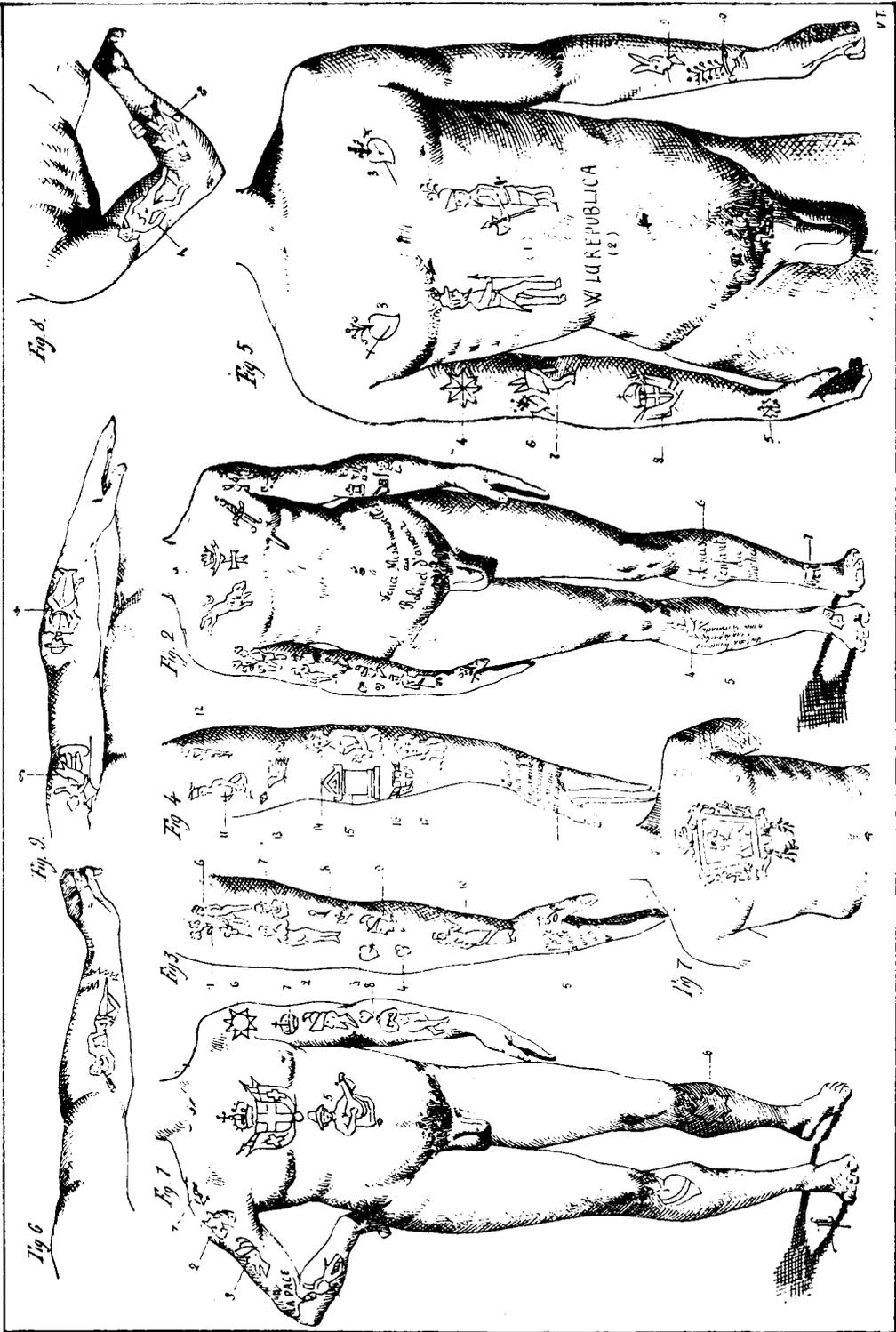
FIG. 112. — *Degroot.*FIG. 113. — *Degroot.*

peared in France and Italy offering photographic evidence of basic criminal types. Although the authors were frequently at odds with one another over the "atavistic" or "degenerate" nature of the criminal, on a more fundamental level they shared a common battle. This was a war of representations. The photograph operated as the *image* of scientific truth, even in the face of Bertillon's demonstration of the inadequacies of the medium. Photographs and technical illustrations were deployed, not only against the body of the representative criminal, but also against that body as a bearer and producer of its own, inferior representations. These texts can be seen as a battle between the camera and the tattoo, the erotic drawing, and the graffiti of a prison subculture. For Lombroso, tattooing was a particular mark of atavism, since criminals shared the practice with presumably less evolved tribal peoples. But even works which sought to demolish Lombroso's dogmatic biologism established a similar hierarchy. Scientific rationalism *looked down* at the visual products of a *primitive* criminality. This was a quasi-ethnologic discourse. Consider, for example, a work which argued against atavism and for degeneracy, Charles Marie Debierre's typologically titled *Le crâne des criminels*. This book contained an illustrated chapter treating "les beaux-arts dans les prisons" as subject matter for the psychological study of the criminal. A subsequent chapter offered a set of photographs of the severed heads of convicts, "taken one quarter of an hour after decapitation." Faced with these specimens of degeneracy, this physiognomist of the guillotine remarked: "Degroote and Clayes . . . their dull faces and wild eyes reveal that beneath their skulls there is no place for pity." Works of this sort depended upon an extreme form of statistical inference: basing physiognomic generalizations on very limited samples.⁶⁰

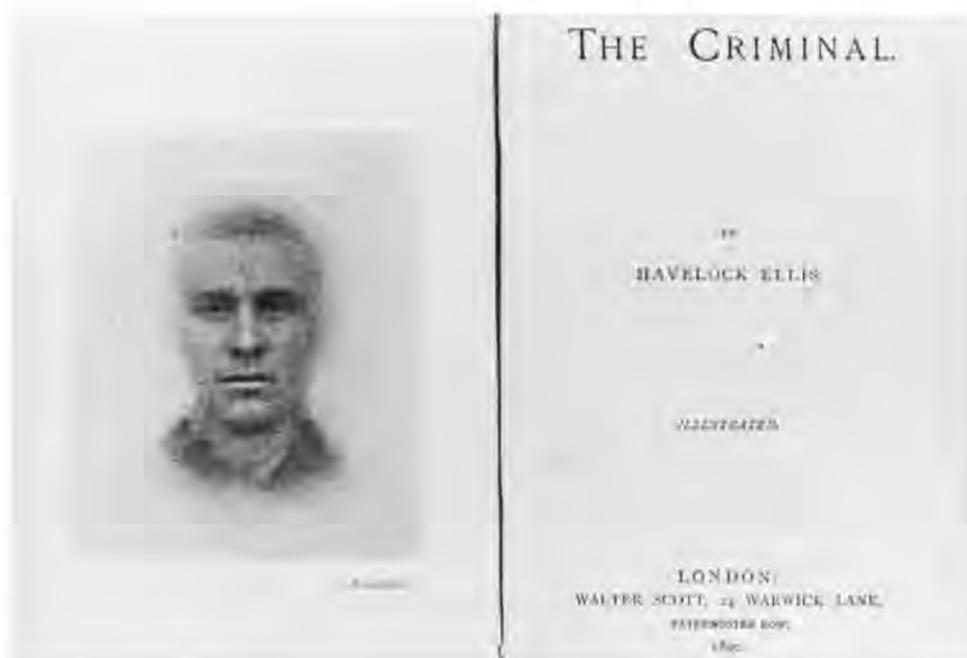
This brings us finally to Francis Galton, who attempted to overcome the limitations of this sort of inferential reading of individual case studies.

Where Bertillon was a compulsive systematizer, Galton was a compulsive quantifier. While Bertillon was concerned primarily with the triumph of social order over social disorder, Galton was concerned primarily with the triumph of established rank over the forces of social leveling and decline. Certainly these were not incompatible projects. On a theoretical plane, however, Galton can be linked more closely to the concerns of the Italian school of criminal anthropology and to biological determinism in general. Composite images based on Galton's procedure, first proposed in 1877, proliferated widely over the following three decades. A composite of criminal skulls appears in the albums of the

60. Charles Marie Debierre, *Le crâne des criminels*, Lyon and Paris, Storck and Masson, 1895, p. 274. The other important illustrated works are by members of the Italian school: Lombroso's revised French and Italian editions of his 1876 *L'uomo delinquente* included separate albums of illustrations (Paris, Alcan, 1895 and Turin, Fratelli Bocca, 1896-97). The plates of criminal types in these albums were taken from materials prepared for Enrico Ferri, *Atlante antropologico-statistico dell'omicidio*, Turin, Fratelli Bocca, 1895.



TATOUAGES DE CRIMINELS.



Galtonian composite.

1895 French edition and the 1896–97 Italian edition of Lombroso's *Criminal Man*. Likewise, Havelock Ellis's *The Criminal*, which adhered to the positions of the Italian school and marked the high tide of Lombrosoism in England, bore a Galtonian frontispiece in its first, 1890 edition.⁶¹

Both Galton and his quasi-official biographer, the statistician Karl Pearson, regarded the composite photograph as one of the central intellectual inventions of Galton's career. More recent studies of Galton have tended to neglect the importance attached to what now seems like an optical curiosity.⁶²

Galton is significant in the history of science for developing the first statistical methods for studying heredity.⁶³ His career was suspended between the triumph of his cousin Charles Darwin's evolutionary paradigm in the late 1860s and the belated discovery in 1899 of Gregor Mendel's work on the genetic ratio underlying inheritance. Politically, Galton sought to construct a program of social betterment through breeding. This program pivoted on a profoundly ideological *biologization* of existing class relations in England. Eugenicists justified their program in utilitarian terms: by seeking to reduce the numbers of the

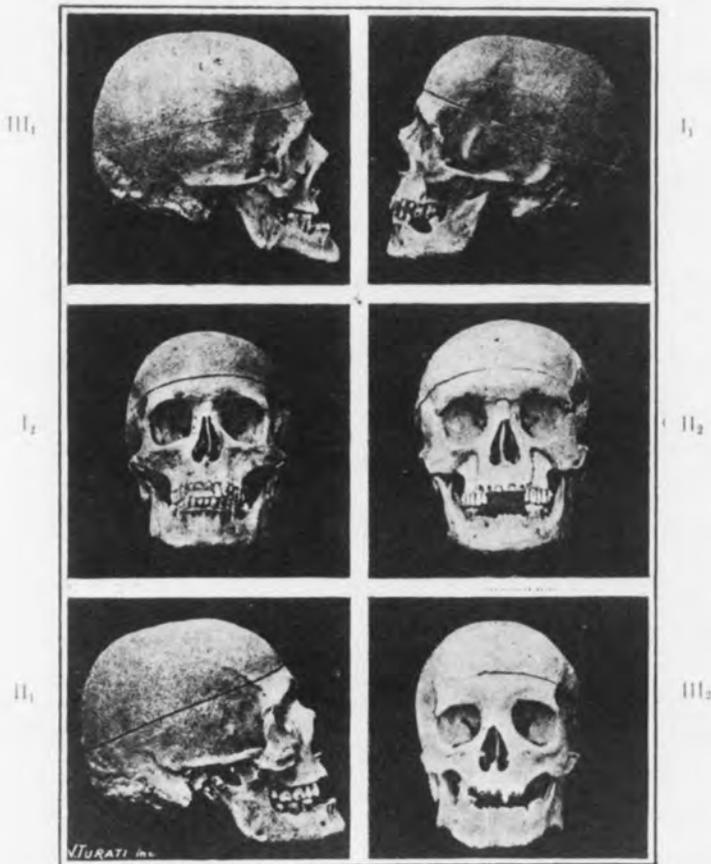
61. Havelock Ellis, *The Criminal*, London, Walter Scott, 1890.

62. The exception is David Green, "Veins of Resemblance: Photography and Eugenics," *The Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1984), pp. 3–16.

63. See Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *Sir Francis Galton and the Study of Heredity in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, Garland, 1985.



Fotografie composite Galtoniane di crani di delinquenti.



Anomalie in tre crani di delinquenti.

“unfit” they claimed to be reducing the numbers of those predestined to unhappiness. But the eugenics movement Galton founded flourished in a historical context—similar in this respect to Third Republic France—of declining middle-class birthrates coupled with middle-class fears of a burgeoning residuum of degenerate urban poor.⁶⁴

Galton’s early, 1869 work *Hereditary Genius* was an attempt to demonstrate the priority, in his words, of “nature” over “nurture” in determining the quality of human intelligence. In a rather tautological fashion, Galton set out to demonstrate that a reputation for intelligence amounted to intelligence, and that men with (reputations for) intelligence beget offspring with (reputations for) intelligence. He appropriated Quetelet’s binomial distribution, observing that the entrance examination scores of military cadets at Sandhurst fell into a bell-shaped pattern around a central mean. On the basis of this “naturalizing” evidence, he proposed a general quantitative hierarchy of intelligence, and applied it to racial groups. This hierarchy was characterized by a distinct classicist longing: “The average ability of the Athenian race is, on the lowest possible estimate, very nearly two grades higher than our own—that is, about as much as our race is above that of the African negro.”⁶⁵ Eugenics can be seen as an attempt to push the English social average toward an imaginary, lost Athens, and away from an equally imaginary, threatening Africa.

Galton’s passion for quantification and numerical ranking coexisted with a qualified faith in physiognomic description. His writings demonstrate a remarkable parallelism and tension between the desire to measure and the desire to look. His composites emerged from the attempt to merge optical and statistical procedures within a single “organic” operation. Galton’s *Inquiries into Human Faculty* of 1883 began by suggesting some of the limitations of prior—and subsequent—attempts at physiognomic typing:

The physiognomical difference between different men being so numerous and small, it is impossible to measure and compare them each to each, and to discover by ordinary statistical methods the true physiognomy of a race. The usual way is to select individuals who are judged to be representative of the prevalent type, and to photograph them; but this method is not trustworthy, because the judgment itself is fallacious. It is swayed by exceptional and grotesque features more than by ordinary ones, and the portraits supposed to be typical are likely to be caricatures.⁶⁶

64. See Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1971.

65. Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, London, Friedman, 1978, p. 342.

66. Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, London, Macmillan, 1883, pp. 5–6.

SPECIMENS OF COMPOSITE PORTRAITURE

PERSONAL AND FAMILY.



*Alexander the Great
From 6 Different
Medals.*



Two Sisters.



*From 6 Members
of same Family
Male & Female.*

HEALTH.



*23 Cases,
Royal Engineers,
12 Officers,
11 Privates*

DISEASE.



*6
Cases*



*9
Cases*

Tubercular Disease

CRIMINALITY.



*8
Cases*



*4
Cases*

*2 Of the many
Criminal Types*

CONSUMPTION AND OTHER MALADIES

I



*20
Cases*

II



*36
Cases*



56 Cases

Co-composite of I & II

Consumptive Cases.



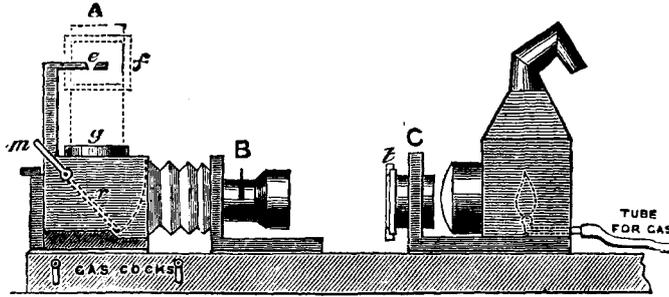
*100
Cases*



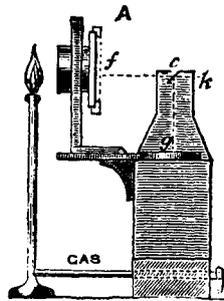
*50
Cases*

Not Consumptive.

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE ESSENTIAL PARTS.



Side View.



End View.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>A The body of the camera, which is fixed.</p> <p>B Lens on a carriage, which can be moved to and fro.</p> <p>C Frame for the transparency, on a carriage that also supports the lantern; the whole can be moved to and fro.</p> <p>r The reflector inside the camera.</p> <p>m The arm outside the camera attached to the axis of the reflector; by moving it, the reflector can be moved up or down.</p> <p>g A ground-glass screen on the roof, which receives the image when the reflector is turned down, as in the diagram.</p> | <p>e The eye-hole through which the image is viewed on <i>g</i>; a thin piece of glass immediately below <i>e</i>, reflects the illuminated fiducial lines in the transparency at <i>f</i>, and gives them the appearance of lying upon <i>g</i>,—the distances <i>f e</i> and <i>g e</i> being made equal, the angle <i>f e g</i> being made a right angle, and the plane of the thin piece of glass being made to bisect <i>f e g</i>.</p> <p>f Framework, adjustable, holding the transparency with the fiducial lines on it.</p> <p>t Framework, adjustable, holding the transparency of the portrait.</p> |
|---|--|

This book was a summary of Galton's researches over the preceding fifteen years. From this initial criticism of a more naive physiognomic stance, Galton moved directly to an outline of his composite method. The composite frontispiece and the recurrent references in various contexts throughout the book to lessons to be learned from the composites suggest that Galton believed that he had invented a prodigious epistemological tool. Accordingly, his interest in composite imagery should not be regarded as a transparent ideological stunt, but as an overdetermined instance of biopositivism.

How did Galton produce his blurred, fictitious apparitions? How did he understand them? He acknowledged at the outset of his experiments Herbert Spencer's prior proposal for a similar process of superimposition. Spencer's or-

ganismic conception of society can be seen as fertile soil for the notion of a generalized body, although in this case Spencer seems to have been drawn to the notion of a composite through a youthful fascination with phrenology.⁶⁷ But Galton was concerned also with the psychology of the visual imagination, with the capacity of the mind to construct generic images from sense data. Here he found his inspiration in Thomas Huxley. He claimed in fact that the composite photographic apparatus shared, and ultimately surpassed, the capacity of artistic intelligence to generalize. Here, as with Quetelet, one witnesses the statistician as artist manqué.

Galton fabricated his composites by a process of successive registration and exposure of portraits in front of a copy camera holding a single plate. Each successive image was given a fractional exposure based on the inverse of the total number of images in the sample. That is, if a composite were to be made from a dozen originals, each would receive one-twelfth of the required total exposure. Thus, individual distinctive features, features that were unshared and idiosyncratic, faded away into the night of underexposure. What remained was the blurred, nervous configuration of those features that were held in common throughout the sample. Galton claimed that these images constituted legitimate averages, and he claimed further that one could infer larger generalities from the small sample that made up the composites. He proposed that “statistical constancy” was attained after “thirty haphazard pictures of the same class [had] been combined.”⁶⁸

Galton made more expansive claims for his process, which he has described as a form of “pictorial statistics”:

Composite pictures are . . . much more than averages; they are rather the equivalents of those large statistical tables whose totals, divided by the number of cases and entered on the bottom line, are the averages. They are real generalizations, because they include the whole of the material under consideration. The blur of their outlines, which is never great in truly generic composites, except in unimpor-

67. Galton acknowledged Spencer in an 1878 paper read before the Anthropological Institute, extracted in *ibid.*, p. 340. Spencer's previously unpublished 1846 proposal for producing and superimposing phrenological diagrams of the head, “On a Proposed Cephalograph,” can be found as an appendix to his *An Autobiography*, vol. 1, New York, Appleton, 1904, pp. 634–638. Like Quetelet, Spencer appears not to have read Kant on the notion of an average type, or on any other topic for that matter (see David Wiltshire, *The Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 67). Spencer's organismic defense of a hierarchical social division of labor is articulated in a review of the collected works of Plato and Hobbes: “The Social Organism,” *The Westminster Review*, New Series, vol. 17, no. 1 (January 1860), pp. 90–121. This extended metaphor goes so far as to compare the circulation of blood with that of money (p. 111). On the connections between Spencerian social Darwinism and eugenics, see Greta Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, Sussex, Harvester, 1980.

68. Galton, *Inquiries*, p. 17.

tant details, measures the tendency of individuals to deviate from the central type.⁶⁹

In this passage the tension between claims for empirical specificity and claims for generality reaches the point of logical rupture: what are we to make of this glib slide from “they include the whole” to “except unimportant details”? In his search for a type, Galton did not believe that anything *significant* was lost in underexposure. This required an unacknowledged presupposition: only the gross features of the head mattered. Ears, for example, which were highly marked as signs in other physiognomic systems, both as individuating *and* as typical features, were not registered at all by the composite process. (Later Galton sought to “recapture” small differences or “unimportant details” by means of a technique he called “analytical photography,” which superimposed positive and negative images, thereby isolating their unshared elements.⁷⁰)

Just as he had acknowledged Quetelet as a source for his earlier ranking of intelligence, so Galton claimed that the composite photograph produced an improved impression of *l'homme moyen*:

The process . . . of pictorial statistics [is] suitable to give us generic pictures of man, such as Quetelet obtained in outline by the ordinary numerical methods of statistics, as described in his work on *Anthropométrie* By the process of composites we obtain a picture and not a mere outline.⁷¹

In effect Galton believed that he had translated the Gaussian error curve into pictorial form. The symmetrical bell curve now wore a human face. This was an extraordinary hypostatization. Consider the way in which Galton conveniently exiled blurring to the *edges* of the composite, when in fact blurring would occur over the entire surface of the image, although less perceptibly. Only an imagination that wanted to *see* a visual analogue of the binomial curve would make this mistake, finding the type at the center and the idiosyncratic and individual at the outer periphery.

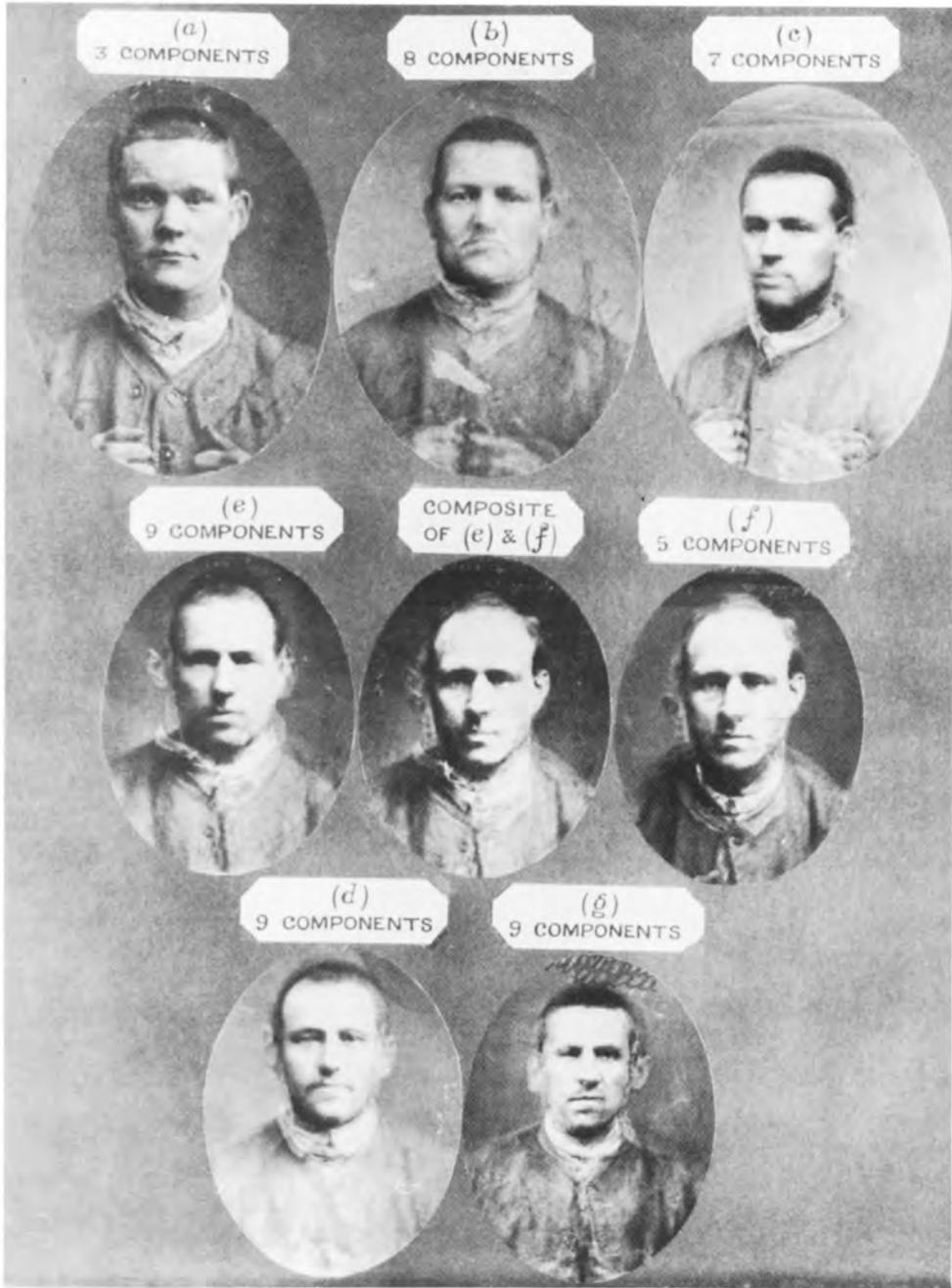
The frontispiece to *Inquiries into Human Faculty* consists of eight sets of composites. Galton describes these images as an integrated ensemble in his text, in what amounts to an illustrated lecture on eugenics. The first, upper left com-

69. Francis Galton, “On Generic Images,” *Proceedings of the Royal Institution*, vol. 9 (1879), p. 166.

70. Francis Galton, “Analytical Photography,” *Nature*, vol. 18 (August 2, 1890), p. 383.

71. Francis Galton, “Generic Images,” *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 6, no. 29 (July 1879), p. 162. In the related, previously cited paper “On Generic Images,” Galton stated that Quetelet was the first to give “the idea of type” a “rigorous interpretation” (p. 162). Ruth Schwartz Cowan has argued, following Karl Pearson, that Quetelet was of no particular import in Galton’s development as a statistician; but Cowan is interested in Galton’s position as a statistician in the lineage of hereditarian thought, and not in his attempt to negotiate the merger of optical and statistical methods. That is, Cowan prefers to define biostatistics as a science which began with Galton, a science having no prehereditarian precursor in Quetelet (see *Sir Francis Galton*, pp. 145–200).

Francis Galton. *Criminal Composites*. c. 1878.
Plate XXVII from Karl Pearson, *The Life, Letters
and Labours of Francis Galton*, vol. 2, 1924.



Composites made from Portraits of Criminals convicted of Murder, Manslaughter or Crimes of Violence.

posite of six portrait medallions of Alexander the Great serves Galton as an introductory, epistemological benchmark, not only to the series, but to the entire book. Oblivious to issues of style or artistic convention, Galton assumed that individual engravers had erred in various ways in their representations. The composite, according to a Gaussian logic of averaged measurements, would contain a "truer likeness." An unspoken desire, however, lurks, behind this construction. Galton made many composites of Greek and Roman portrait coins and medallions, seeking in the blurred "likenesses" the vanished physiognomy of a higher race.

Galton's next two sets of composites were made from members of the same family. With these he charged into the active terrain of eugenic research and manipulation. By exhibiting the blending of individual characteristics in a single composite image, Galton seems to have been searching for a ratio of hereditary influence. He extended these experiments to composites tracing the lineage of race horses.

The next composite was probably the most democratic construction of Galton's entire career: a combination of portraits of twelve officers and eleven enlisted men of the Royal Engineers. This was offered as a "clue to the direction in which the stock of the English race might most easily be improved."⁷² This utopian image was paired with its dystopian counterparts, generic images of disease and criminality.

While tuberculosis seemed to produce a vaguely wan physiognomy, crime was less easy to type. Galton had obtained identification photographs of convicts from the Director of Prisons, Edmund Du Cane, and these were the source of his first composites in 1878. Despite this early start in the search for the biological criminal type, Galton came to a position that was less enthusiastic than that of Lombroso: "The individual faces are villainous enough, but they are villainous in different ways, and when they are combined, the individual peculiarities disappear, and the common humanity of a low type is all that is left."⁷³ Thus Galton seems to have dissolved the boundary between the criminal and the working-class poor, the residuum that so haunted the political imagination of the late-Victorian bourgeoisie. Given Galton's eugenic stance, this meant that he merely included the criminal in the general pool of the "unfit."

Later, following Charles Booth's sociological stratification of the London population, Galton classified "criminals, semi-criminals, and loafers" as the worst of the eugenically unfit: the bottom one percent of the urban hierarchy. On this basis, he supported long sentences for "habitual criminals," in hopes of "restricting their opportunities for producing low-class offspring."⁷⁴

Galton concluded the introductory sample of composite portraits in his *In-*

72. Galton, *Inquiries*, p. 14.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

74. Francis Galton, *Essays in Eugenics*, London, Eugenics Education Society, 1909, pp. 8-9, 62.

quiries with contrasted sets of composites made from very large samples: representing “consumptive” and “not consumptive” cases. With these he underlined both the *statistical* and the *social hygienic* ambitions behind his optical process and his political program.

Galton harbored other *psychological* and *philosophical* ambitions. In his earlier essays on “generic images” he examined “analogies” between mental images, which he claimed consisted of “blended memories,” and the genera produced by his optical process. Citing the Weber-Fechner Law of psychophysics, which demonstrated that relative perceptual sensitivity decreased as the level of stimulus increased, Galton concluded that “the human mind is therefore a most imperfect apparatus for the elaboration of general ideas,” when compared with the relentless and untiring quantitative consistency of “pictorial statistics.”⁷⁵ In *Inquiries*, he returned to this theme: “The ideal faces obtained by the method of composite portraiture appear to have a great deal in common with . . . so-called abstract ideas.” He wondered whether abstract ideas might not be more correctly termed “cumulative ideas.”⁷⁶ Galton’s rather reified notions of what constituted thought is perhaps most clearly, if unwittingly, expressed in his off-hand definition of introspection: “taking stock of my own mental furniture.”⁷⁷

The composite apparatus provided Galton with a model of scientific intelligence, a mechanical model of intellectual labor. Furthermore, this intelligence answered to the logic of philosophical realism. Galton argued that his composites refuted nominalist approaches to the human sciences, demonstrating with certainty the reality of distinct racial types. This amounted to an essentialist physical anthropology of race.⁷⁸

It is not surprising, then, that Galton would come to regard his most successful composite as that depicting “the Jewish type.” In a historical context in which there was no clear anthropological consensus on the racial or ethnic character of modern Jews, Galton produced an image that was, according to Karl Pearson, “a landmark in composite photography”: “We all know the Jewish boy, and Galton’s portraiture brings him before us in a way that only a great work of art could equal—scarcely excel, for the artist would only idealise from *one* model.”⁷⁹ This applause, ominous enough as it is, takes on an even more sinister tone in retrospect when one considers the line of influence which led from Anglo-American eugenics to National Socialist *Rassentheorie*.⁸⁰

75. Galton, “Generic Images,” p. 169.

76. Galton, *Inquiries*, p. 183.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

78. Galton, “Generic Images,” pp. 163–164.

79. Karl Pearson, *The Life, Letters and Labours of Francis Galton*, vol. 2, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1924, p. 293.

80. On the role played by eugenics in Nazi racial policy, see Allan Chase, *The Legacy of Malthus: The Social Costs of the New Scientific Racism*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1980, pp. 342–360.

Galton was asked to make the composites in 1883 by Joseph Jacobs, who was attempting to



Francis Galton. *The Jewish Type*. 1883. Plate XXXV
from Pearson.

Galton's composite process enjoyed a wide prestige until about 1915. Despite its origins in a discourse of racial essentialism, the composite was used to make a variety of points, some of which favored "nurture" over "nature." For

demonstrate the existence of a relatively pure racial type of modern Jew, intact despite the Diaspora. For the portraits, Jacobs recruited boy students from the Jews' Free School and from the Jewish Working Men's Club in London. Galton and Jacobs both agreed that a racial type had been produced, but they disagreed profoundly on the *moral essence* of that type. Galton, the great quantifier, met his imaginary Other: "The feature that struck me most, as I drove through the . . . Jewish quarter, was the cold scanning gaze of man, woman, and child. . . . I felt, rightly or wrongly, that every one of them was coolly appraising me at market value, without the slightest interest of any other kind" ("Photographic Composites," *The Photographic News*, vol. 29, no. 1389 [April 17, 1885]). Jacobs responded to Galton's anti-Semitism with a more honorific reading of the composites, suggesting that "here we have something . . . more spiritual than a spirit. . . . The composite face must represent this Jewish forefather. In these Jewish composites we have the nearest representation we can hope to possess of the lad Samuel as he ministered before the Ark, or the youthful David when he tended his father's sheep" ("The Jewish Type, and Galton's Composite Photographs," *The Photographic News*, vol. 29, no. 1390 [April 24, 1885]). Thus Jacobs counters Galton's myth of the Jew as the embodiment of capital with a proto-Zionist myth of origins. (On the medical and racial stereotyping of Jews in the late nineteenth century, and the Jewish reaction, see Sander Gilman, "The Madness of the Jews," in *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985, pp. 150-162.)



Lewis Hine. Composite photograph of child laborers employed in cotton mill. 1913. (National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.)

example, Lewis Hine made a number of crude composite prints of girl mill-workers in 1913, in what was evidently an attempt to trace the general effects of factory working conditions on young bodies. And, in a curious twist, the book which provided the conclusive refutation from within criminology of Lombroso's theory of the innate criminal with the telltale skull, Henry Goring's *The English Convict*, opened its attack with a comparison between composites of free-hand drawings and composites of tracings from photographs of criminal heads. The former had been used by Havelock Ellis to make his physiognomic case in *The Criminal*. The discrepancy between these and the tracings revealed a great degree of caricature in Ellis's pictures.⁸¹ With both Hine and Goring, a faith in the objectivity of the camera persisted. However, with the general demise of an optical model of empiricism, Galton's hybridization of the camera and the statistical table approached extinction. Photography continued to serve the sci-

81. Henry Goring, *The English Convict: A Statistical Study*, London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1913. Lombroso's theoretical fixation with convict head size had already been undercut within physical anthropology by Franz Boas. See his 1910-1913 essay, "Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants," in *Race, Language and Culture*, New York, Macmillan, 1949, pp. 60-75.

ences, but in a less grandiose and exalted fashion, and consequently with more modest — and frequently more casual — truth claims, especially on the periphery of the social sciences.

In retrospect, the Galtonian composite can be seen as the collapsed version of the archive. In this blurred configuration, the archive attempts to exist as a potent single image, and the single image attempts to achieve the authority of the archive, of the general, abstract proposition. Galton was certainly a vociferous ideologue for the extension and elaboration of archival methods. He actively promoted familial self-surveillance for hereditarian purposes, calling for his readers to “obtain photographs and ordinary measurements periodically of themselves and their children, making it a family custom to do so.”⁸² His model here was the British Admiralty’s voluminous registry of sailors. Here again, eugenics modeled itself on the military. Galton founded an Anthropometrical Laboratory in 1884, situated first at the International Health Exposition, then moving to the Science Museum in South Kensington. Nine thousand visitors were measured, paying three or four pence each for the privilege of contributing to Galton’s eugenic research.⁸³

Although married for many years, Galton left no children. Instead, he left behind an immense archive of documents. One curious aspect of Karl Pearson’s massive pharaonic biography of Galton is its profusion of photographic illustrations, including not only Galton’s many photographic experiments, but also a kind of intermittent family album of more personal pictures.

Eugenics was a utopian ideology, but it was a utopianism inspired and haunted by a sense of social decline and exhaustion. Where Quetelet had approached the question of the average with optimism, finding in averages both a moral and an aesthetic ideal, Galton’s eugenicist hope for an improved racial stock was always limited by his early discovery that successive generations of eugenically bred stock tended to regress back toward the mean, and “mediocrity.”⁸⁴ Thus the fantasy of absolute racial betterment was haunted by what must have seemed a kind of biological entropy.⁸⁵ Later, in the twentieth century, eugenics would only operate with brutal certainty in its negative mode, through the sterilization and extermination of the Other.

What can we conclude, finally, about the photographic problems encountered and “solved” by Bertillon, the nominalist detective, and Galton, the essentialist biometrician? The American philosopher and semiotician Charles

82. Galton, *Inquiries*, p. 43.

83. Pearson, *Life, Letters and Labours*, vol. 2, p. 357.

84. Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, pp. xvii–xviii.

85. On the cultural resonance of the concept of entropy in the nineteenth century, see Anson Rabinbach, “The Body without Fatigue: A Nineteenth Century Utopia,” in Seymour Drescher et al., eds., *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of George Mosse*, New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1982, pp. 42–62.

Sanders Peirce, their contemporary, made a useful distinction between signs that referred to their objects indexically, and those that operated symbolically. To the extent that photographs are “effects of the radiations from the object,” they are indexical signs, as are all signs which register a physical trace. Symbols, on the other hand, signify by virtue of conventions or rules. Verbal language in general, and all conceptual thought, is symbolic in Peirce’s system.⁸⁶ Paradoxically, Bertillon, in taming the photograph by subordinating it to the verbal text of the *portrait parlé*, remained wedded to an *indexical* order of meaning. The photograph was nothing more than the physical *trace* of its contingent instance. Galton, in seeking the apotheosis of the optical, attempted to elevate the indexical photographic composite to the level of the *symbolic*, thus expressing a *general law* through the accretion of contingent instances. In so doing, Galton produced an unwitting caricature of inductive reason. The composites signified, not by embodying the law of error, but by being rhetorically annexed to that law. Galton’s ambition, although scientific, was not unlike that of those other elevators of photography, the neosymbolists of the Photo Secession. Both Galton and Stieglitz wanted something more than a mere trace, something that would match or surpass the abstract capabilities of the imaginative or generalizing intellect. In both cases, meaning that was fervently believed to emerge from the “organic” character of the sign was in fact certified by a hidden framing convention. Bertillon, on the other hand, kept his (or at least his underlings’) eye and nose to the ground. This made him, in the prejudiced and probably inconsequential opinion of one of his biographers, Henry Rhodes, “the most advanced photographer in Europe.”⁸⁷ Despite their differences, both Bertillon and Galton were caught up in the attempt to preserve the value of an older, optical model of truth in a historical context in which abstract, statistical procedures seemed to offer the high road to social truth and social control.

III.

The first rigorous system of archival cataloguing and retrieval of photographs was that invented by Bertillon. Bertillon’s nominalist system of identification and Galton’s essentialist system of typology constitute not only the two poles of positivist attempts to regulate social deviance by means of photography, but also the two poles of these attempts to regulate the semantic traffic in photographs. Bertillon sought to embed the photograph in the archive. Galton sought to embed the archive in the photograph. While their projects were specialized and idiosyncratic, these pioneers of scientific policing and

86. Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler, New York, Dover, 1955, pp. 99–119.

87. Rhodes, p. 191.

eugenics mapped out general parameters for the bureaucratic handling of visual documents. It is quite extraordinary that histories of photography have been written thus far with little more than passing reference to their work. I suspect that this has something to do with a certain bourgeois scholarly discretion concerning the dirty work of modernization, especially when the status of photography as a fine art is at stake.⁸⁸ It is even more extraordinary that histories of social documentary photography have been written without taking the police into account. Here the issue is the maintenance of a certain liberal humanist myth of the wholly benign origins of socially concerned photography.⁸⁹

Roughly between 1880 and 1910, the archive became the dominant institutional basis for photographic meaning. Increasingly, photographic archives were seen as central to a bewildering range of empirical disciplines, ranging from art history to military intelligence.⁹⁰ Bertillon had demonstrated the usefulness of his model for police purposes, but other disciplines faced significantly different problems of image cataloguing. An emergent *bibliographic science* provided the utopian model of classification for these expansive and unruly collections of photographs. Here again Bertillon was prescient in his effort to reduce the multiple signs of the criminal body to a textual shorthand and numerical series. At a variety of separate but related congresses on the internationalization and standardization of photographic and bibliographic methods, held between 1895 and 1910, it was recommended that photographs be catalogued topically according to the decimal system invented by the American librarian Melvil Dewey in 1876. The lingering prestige of optical empiricism was sufficiently strong to ensure that the terrain of the photographable was still regarded as roughly congruent with that of knowledge in general. The Institute for International Bibliography built on the universalist logic of the eighteenth-century encyclopedists. But appropriate to the triumphal years of an epoch of scientific

88. Compare Josef Maria Eder, *History of Photography*, trans. Edward Epstean, New York, Columbia University Press, 1945, with Beaumont Newhall, *Photography: A Short Critical History*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1938. Eder, very much part of the movement to rationalize photography during the first decade of this century, is quite willing to treat police photography as a proper object of his narrative. Eder in fact wrote an introduction to a German edition of Bertillon's manual (*Die gerichtliche Photographie*, Halle a. S., Knapp, 1895). Newhall, on the other hand, wrote a modernist history in 1938 that privileged technical photography, including First World War aerial reconnaissance work, without once mentioning the use of photography by the police. Clearly, Newhall found it easier to speak of the more glamorous, abstract, and chivalrous state violence of early air power than to dwell on the everyday state violence of the police.

89. An exception would be Sally Stein's revisionist account of Jacob Riis, "Making Connections with the Camera: Photography and Social Mobility in the Career of Jacob Riis," *Afterimage*, vol. 10, no. 10 (May 1983), pp. 9-16.

90. Compare Bernard Berenson, "Isochromatic Photography and Venetian Pictures," *The Nation*, vol. 57, no. 1480 (November 9, 1893), pp. 346-347, with Fred Jane, "Preface," *Fighting Ships*, London, Marsten, 1905-1906, p. 2. However different their objects, these texts share an enthusiasm for large quantities of well-defined photographs.

positivism and the early years of bureaucratic rationalization, a grandiose clerical mentality had now taken hold.⁹¹

The new scientific bibliographers articulated an operationalist model of knowledge, based on the “general equivalence” established by the numerical shorthand code. This was a system for regulating and accelerating the flow of texts, profoundly linked to the logic of Taylorism. Is it surprising that the main reading room of that American Beaux-Arts temple of democratic and imperial knowledge, the Library of Congress, built during this period of bibliographic rationalization, should so closely resemble the Panopticon, or that the outer perimeter of the building should bear thirty-three “ethnological heads” of various racial types?⁹² Or is it any more surprising that the same American manufacturing company produced Bertillon cabinets, business files, and library card catalogue cabinets?⁹³

Photography was to be both an *object* and *means* of bibliographic rationalization. The latter possibility emerged from the development of microfilm reproduction of documents. Just as photographs were to be incorporated into the realm of the text, so also the text could be incorporated into the realm of the photograph. If photography retained its prestige as a universal language, it increasingly did so in conjunction with a textual paradigm that was housed within the library.⁹⁴

The grand ambitions of the new encyclopedists of photography were eventually realized but not in the grand encyclopedic fashion one might have expected. With the increasing specialization of intellectual disciplines, archives tended to remain segregated. Nonetheless, the dominant culture of photography did rely heavily on the archival model for its legitimacy. The shadowy presence of the archive authenticated the truth claims made for individual pho-

91. The Institut International de Bibliographie, founded in 1895 with headquarters in Brussels, campaigned for the establishment of a *bibliographia universalis* registered on standardized filing cards. Following Dewey, the Institute recommended that literature on photography be assigned the seventh position within the graphic arts, which were in turn assigned the seventh position within the categories of human knowledge. The last subcategory within the classification of photography was to hold photographic prints. See the Institute's following publications: *Manuel pour l'usage du répertoire bibliographique de la photographie établi d'après la classification décimale*, Brussels (copublished with the Société Française de la Photographie), 1900; *Code pour l'organisation de la documentation photographique*, Brussels, 1910.

92. I am grateful to Daniel Bluestone for pointing out this latter architectural detail. For a contemporary description of the heads, see Herbert Small, *Handbook of the New Library of Congress*, Boston, Curtis and Cameron, 1901, pp. 13–16.

93. See the following catalogues published by the Yawman and Erbe Mfg. Co.: *Card Ledger System and Cabinets*, Rochester, N.Y., 1904; *Criminal Identification by “Y and E”: Bertillon and Finger Print Systems*, Rochester, 1913; and *“Y and E” Library Equipment*, Rochester, 192–?.

94. On early microfilm, see *Livre microphotographique: le bibliophoto ou livre à projection*, Brussels, Institut International de Bibliographie, 1911. On the more recent conversion of the photograph from library-document to museum-object, see Douglas Crimp, “The Museum's Old/The Library's New Subject,” *Parachute*, no. 22 (Spring 1981), pp. 32–37.

tographs, especially within the emerging mass media. The authority of any particular syntagmatic configuration was underwritten by the encyclopedic authority of the archive. One example will suffice. Companies like Keystone Views or Underwood and Underwood serially published short pictorial groupings of stereograph cards. Although individual sequences of pictures were often organized according to a narrative logic, one sees clearly that the overall structure was informed not by a narrative paradigm, but by the paradigm of the archive. After all, the sequence could be rearranged; its temporality was indeterminate, its narrativity relatively weak. The pleasures of this discourse were grounded not in narrative necessarily, but in archival play, in substitution, and in a voracious optical encyclopedism. There were always more images to be acquired, obtainable at a price, from a relentlessly expanding, globally dispersed picture-gathering agency.⁹⁵

Archival rationalization was most imperative for those modes of photographic realism that were instrumental, that were designed to contribute directly or indirectly to the practical transformation or manipulation of their referent. Can any connections be traced between the archival mode of photography and the emergence of photographic modernism? To what degree did self-conscious modernist practice accommodate itself to the model of the archive? To what degree did modernists consciously or unconsciously resist or subvert the model of the archive, which tended to relegate the individual photographer to the status of a detail worker, providing fragmentary images for an apparatus beyond his or her control? Detailed answers to this question are clearly beyond the scope of this essay. But a few provisional lines of investigation can be charted.

The protomodernism of the Photo Secession and its affiliated movements, extending roughly to 1916, can be seen as an attempt to resist the archival mode through a strategy of avoidance and denial based on craft production. The elegant *few* were opposed to the mechanized *many*, in terms both of images and authors. This strategy required the ostentatious display of the "honorific marks of hand labor," to borrow the phrase coined by the American sociologist Thorstein Veblen in 1899.⁹⁶ After 1916, however, aesthetically ambitious photographers abandoned the painterly and embraced pictorial rhetorics much closer to those already operative within the instrumental realist and archival paradigms. Understandably, a variety of contradictory attitudes to the archive emerge within photographic discourse in the 1920s. Some modernists em-

95. This suggests that the historiography of photography will have to approach the question of an "institutional mode" in different terms than those already developed for the historiography of cinema. See, for example, Noël Burch, "Film's Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response," *October*, no. 11 (Winter 1979), pp. 77-96.

96. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*, New York, Modern Library, 1934, pp. 163-164.

braced the archival paradigm: August Sander is a case in point. Others resisted through modernist reworkings of the antipositivism and antirationalism of the Photo Secession: the later Stieglitz and Edward Weston are obvious examples.

In many respects the most complicated and intellectually sophisticated response to the model of the archive was that of Walker Evans. Evans's book sequences, especially in his 1938 *American Photographs*, can be read as attempts to counterpose the "poetic" structure of the sequence to the model of the archive. Evans began the book with a prefatory note *reclaiming* his photographs from the various archival repositories which held copyright to or authority over his pictures.⁹⁷ Furthermore, the first photograph in the book describes a site of the archival and instrumental mode's proliferation into the spaces of metropolitan daily life in the 1930s: *License-Photo Studio, New York, 1943*. We now know that Evans was fascinated with police photographs during the period in which he made the photographs in this book. A terse topical list on "New York society in the 1930s" contains a central, telegraphic, underlined inscription: "*This project get police cards.*"⁹⁸ Certainly Evans's subway photographs of the late 1930s and early 1940s are evidence of a sophisticated dialogue with the empirical methods of the detective police. Evans styled himself as a flâneur, and late in life likened his sensibility to that of Baudelaire. Though Walter Benjamin had proposed that "no matter what trail the *flâneur* may follow, every one will lead him to a crime,"⁹⁹ Evans avoided his final rendezvous. This final detour was explicitly described in a 1971 interview in which he took care to distinguish between his own "documentary style" and a "literal document" such as "a police photograph of a murder scene."¹⁰⁰ He stressed the necessary element of poetic transcendence in any art photograph of consequence. The elderly Evans, transformed into the senior figure of modernist genius by a curatorial apparatus with its own archival imperative, could no longer recognize the combative and antiarchival stance of his earlier sequential work. Evans was forced to fall back on an organicist notion of style, searching for that refined surplus of stylistic meaning which would guarantee his authorship, and which in general served to distinguish the art photographer from a flunky in a hierarchy of flunkies.

With the advent of postmodernism, many photographers have abandoned any serious commitment to stylistic transcendence, but they fail to recognize the degree to which they share Evans's social fatalism, his sense of the immutability of the existing social order. Modernism offers other models, however, in-

97. Walker Evans, *American Photographs*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1938.

98. Reproduced in Jerry Thompson, ed., *Walker Evans at Work*, New York, Harper and Row, 1982, p. 107.

99. Walter Benjamin, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," in *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 41.

100. Leslie Katz, "Interview with Walker Evans," *Art in America*, vol. 59, no. 2 (March–April 1971), p. 87.



Walker Evans. License-Photo Studio, New York, 1934. Plate 1 from *American Photographs*, 1938.

cluding more militant and equally intelligent models of photographic practice. Consider Camille Recht's reading of the photographs of Eugène Atget, a photographer of acknowledged import in Evans's own development. Recht comments on interior views "which remind us of a police photograph of a crime scene" and then on "the photograph of a worker's dwelling which testifies to the housing problem." For Recht, the proximity of a "nuptial bed and an unavoidable chimney flue," provided grimly comic testimony of everyday life in an exploitative social formation.¹⁰¹ This emphasis on the telling detail, the metonymic fragment that points to the systemic crimes of the powerful, would be repeated and refined in the writings of Walter Benjamin.¹⁰² Our tendency to associate Benjamin with the theory and practice of montage tends to obscure the degree to which he built his modernism from an empiricist model, from a model of careful, idiosyncratic observation of detail. This model could argue both for the photographer as *monteur*, and for the photographer as revolutionary spy or detective, or, more "respectably," as critical journalist of the working class.

101. Camille Recht, introduction to Eugène Atget, *Lichtbilder*, Paris and Leipzig, Henri Jonquières, 1930, pp. 18–19 (my translation).

102. See Benjamin's 1931 essay "A Short History of Photography," trans. Stanley Mitchell, *Screen*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Spring 1972), p. 25.



Eugène Atget. Plate 12 from Lichtbilder, 1930.

Metrical photograph and planimetric sketch. From A. Bertillon and A. Chervin, Anthropologie métrique, 1909.



This essay could end with this sketch of modernist responses to the prior institutionalization of the instrumental realist archive. Social history would lead to art history, and we would arrive at a safe archival closure. Unfortunately, Bertillon and Galton are still with us. "Bertillon" survives in the operations of the national security state, in the condition of intensive and extensive surveillance that characterizes both everyday life and the geopolitical sphere. "Galton" lives in the renewed authority of biological determinism, founded in the increased hegemony of the political Right in the Western democracies. That is, Galton lives quite specifically in the neo-Spencerian pronouncements of Reaganism, Thatcherism, and the French National Front.¹⁰³ Galton's spirit also survives in the neoeugenicist implications of some of the new biotechnologies.

These are political issues. As such, their resonance can be heard in the aesthetic sphere. In the United States in the 1970s, a number of works, primarily in film and video, took an aggressive stance toward both biological determinism and the prerogatives of the police. Martha Rosler's video "opera" *The Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained* (1976) retains its force as an allegorical feminist attack on the normalizing legacy of Quetelet and Galton. Other, more nominalist works, took on the police at the level of counter-testimony and counter-surveillance. I am thinking here of a number of documentary films: Howard Gray's and Michael Alk's *The Murder of Fred Hampton* (1971), Cinda Firestone's *Attica* (1973), and the Pacific Street Film Collective's *Red Squad* (1972). These examples tend to be forgotten or overlooked in a contemporary art scene rife with a variety of what can be termed "neophysiognomic" concerns. The body has returned with a vengeance. The heavily expressionist character of this return makes the scientific and racist underpinnings of physiognomy seem rather remote. In photography, however, this lineage is harder to repress. In one particularly troubling instance, this returned body is specifically Galtonian in its configuration. I refer here to the computer generated composites of Nancy Burson, enveloped in a promotional discourse so appallingly stupid in its fetishistic belief in cybernetic truth and its desperate desire to remain grounded in the optical and organic that it would be dismissable were it not for its smug scientism. For an artist or critic to resurrect the methods of bio-social typology without once acknowledging the historical context and consequences of these procedures is naive at best and cynical at worst.¹⁰⁴

In the interests of a certain internationalism, however, I want to end with a story that takes us outside the contemporary art scene and away from the simultaneously inflated and deflated figure of the postmodernist author. This anecdote might suggest something of the hardships and dilemmas of a photo-

103. For an example of the high regard for Galton among contemporary hereditarians, see H. J. Eysenck's introduction to the 1978 edition of *Hereditary Genius* previously cited.

104. See Nancy Burson et al., *Composites: Computer Generated Portraits*, New York, William Morrow, 1986.

graphic practice engaged in from below, a photographic practice on ground patrolled by the police. In 1967, a young Black South African photographer named Ernest Cole published a book in the United States called *House of Bondage*. Cole's book and his story are remarkable. In order to photograph a broad range of South African society, Cole had first to change his racial classification from black to colored, no mean feat in a world of multiple bureaus of identity, staffed by officials who have mastered a subtle bureaucratic taxonomy of even the offhand gestures of the different racial and ethnic groups. He countered this apparatus, probably the last *physiognomic* system of domination in the world, with a descriptive strategy of his own, mapping out the various checkpoints in the multiple channels of apartheid.

Cole photographed during a period of relative political "calm" in South Africa, midway between the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 and the Soweto students' revolt of 1976. At a time when black resistance was fragmented and subterranean in the wake of the banning of the main opposition groups, he discovered a limited, and by his own account problematic, figure of resistance in young black toughs, or *tsotsis*, who lived lives of petty criminality. Cole photo-



From Ernest Cole, *House of Bondage*, 1967.

graphed *tsotsis* mugging a white worker for his pay envelope, as well as a scene of a white man slapping a black beggar child. And he regularly photographed the routine passbook arrests of blacks who were caught outside the zones in which they were permitted to travel. As might be expected, Cole's documentation of the everyday flows of power, survival, and criminal resistance got him into trouble with the law. He was questioned repeatedly by police, who assumed he was carrying stolen camera equipment. Finally he was stopped after photographing passbook arrests. Asked to explain himself, he claimed to be making a documentary on juvenile delinquency. Sensing his criminological promise, the police, who then as now operated through a pervasive system of informers, invited him to join the ranks. At that point, Cole decided to leave the country while he still could. *House of Bondage* was assembled from the negatives he smuggled out of South Africa. Since publishing his book in exile, Cole has disappeared from the world of professional photojournalism.¹⁰⁵

The example of Cole's work suggests that we would be wise to avoid an overly monolithic conception of realism. Not all realisms necessarily play into the hands of the police, despite Theodor Adorno's remark, designed to lampoon a Leninist epistemology once and for all, that "knowledge has not, like the state police, a rogues' gallery of its objects."¹⁰⁶ If we are to listen to, and act in solidarity with, the polyphonic testimony of the oppressed and exploited, we should recognize that some of this testimony, like Cole's, will take the ambiguous form of visual documents, documents of the "microphysics" of barbarism. These documents can easily fall into the hands of the police or their intellectual apologists. Our problem, as artists and intellectuals living near but not at the center of a global system of power, will be to help prevent the cancellation of that testimony by more authoritative and official texts.

105. Ernest Cole (with Thomas Flaherty), *House of Bondage*, New York, Random House, 1967. For the account of Cole's own struggle to produce the pictures in the book, I have relied upon Joseph Lelyveld's introduction, "One of the Least-Known Countries in the World," pp. 7-24.

106. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton, New York, Seabury, 1973, p. 206.



Dean. Top: Bubble House. 1999. Bottom: Rozel Point, Great Salt Lake, Utah. 1997. (Slide projection.)

photographs the concrete hulks resemble old earthworks, the now-stranded status of which also intrigues Dean: she has made two pieces based on works by Robert Smithson, *Partially Buried Woodshed* (1970) and *Spiral Jetty* (1970)—a fascination shared by Durant and others.)³² “I like these strange monoliths that sit in this no place,” Dean writes of the sound mirrors, aware that “no place” is the literal meaning of “utopia.” They exist in a “no time” for her too—though here “no place” and “no time” also mean a multiplicity of both: “The land around Dungeness always feels old to me: a feeling impossible to explain, other than it is just ‘unmodern’ . . . To me it feels 1970s and Dickensian, prehistoric and Elizabethan, Second World War and futuristic. It just doesn’t function in the now.”³³

In a sense all these archival objects—the *Teignmouth Electron*, the Bubble House, the sound mirrors (and there are more)—serve as found arks of lost moments in which the here-and-now of the work functions as a possible portal between an unfinished past and a reopened future.³⁴ The possibility of precise interventions in surpassed times

32. Renée Green has also produced a video on *Partially Buried Woodshed*; see “Partially Buried,” *October* 80 (Spring 1997). Like some of the figures commemorated by Hirschhorn, Smithson represents another unfulfilled beginning for these artists. “His work allows me a conceptual space where I can often reside,” Dean comments. “It’s like an incredible excitement and attraction across time; a personal repartee with another’s thinking and energy communicated through their work” (ibid., p. 61). She has also cited other artists from this same general archive: Marcel Broodthaers, Bas Jan Ader, Mario Merz.

33. Ibid., p. 54.

34. Perhaps they are arks in analogy with *The Russian Ark* (2002) of filmmaker Andrei Sokurov; yet Dean does not totalize her histories as Sokurov does Russian history with his Hermitage ark—quite the contrary. In a suggestive text Michael Newman discusses her work as an archive of various mediums and concomitant senses; see his “Medium and Event in the Work of Tacita Dean,” in *Tacita Dean* (London: Tate Britain, 2001). Also helpful are the texts included in *Tacita Dean: Seven Books* (Paris: Musée d’art moderne de la ville de Paris, 2003). “Failed futuristic visions” provide a principle of dis/connection in Hirschhorn too: “I opened possible doorways between them,” he remarks of the disparate subjects honored in *Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake*. “The links are the failures, the failures of

also captivated Walter Benjamin, yet Dean lacks his intimation of messianic redemption; although her outmoded objects can offer some “profane illumination” into historical change, they do not possess “the revolutionary energies” that he hoped to find there.³⁵ In this regard her work is affined less with Benjamin than with W. G. Sebald, about whom Dean has written incisively.³⁶ Sebald surveys a modern world so devastated by history as to appear “after nature”: many of its inhabitants are “ghosts of repetition” (including the author) who seem at once “utterly liberated and deeply despondent.”³⁷ These remnants are enigmatic, but they are enigmas without resolution, let alone redemption. Sebald even questions the humanist commonplace about the restorative power of memory; the ambiguous epigraph of the first section of *The Emigrants* reads: “and the last remnants memory destroys.”³⁸ Dean also looks out on a forlorn world (often literally so in her films, videos, and photographs), yet for the most part she avoids the melancholic fixation that is the price that Sebald pays for his courageous refusal of redemptive illusion. The risk in her work is different: a romantic fascination with “human failing.”³⁹ But, within the “failed futuristic visions” that she recovers archivally, there is also an intimation of the utopian—not as the other of reification (as in Hirschhorn) but as a concomitant of her archival presentation of the past as fundamentally heterogeneous and always incomplete.⁴⁰

utopias. . . . [A] utopía never works. It is not supposed to. When it works, it is a utopia no longer” (*Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake*, p. 35).

35. See Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (1940) and “Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia” (1928), in Hannah Arendt, ed., *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) and Peter Demetz, ed., *Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978). “Balzac was the first to speak of the ruins of the bourgeoisie,” Benjamin wrote in “Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century” (exposé of 1935). “But only Surrealism exposed them to view. The development of the forces of production reduced the wish symbols of the previous century to rubble even before the monuments representing them had crumbled” (*Reflections*, p. 161). The “wish symbols” in question here were the capitalist wonders of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie at the height of its confidence, such as “the arcades and interiors, the exhibitions and panoramas.” These structures fascinated the Surrealists nearly a century later—when further capitalist development had turned them into “residues of a dream world” or, again, “rubble even before the monuments which represented them had crumbled.” For the Surrealists to intervene in these outmoded spaces, according to Benjamin, was to tap “the revolutionary energies” trapped there. As noted above, the outmoded for archival artists today does not possess this same force; in fact some (like Durant) are conflicted about the pasts they unearth. The deployment of the outmoded might be a weak critique, but at least it can still query the totalistic assumptions of capitalist culture, never more grandiose than today; it can also remind this culture of its own wish symbols, its own forfeited dreams.

36. See Tacita Dean, “W. G. Sebald,” *October* 106 (Fall 2003).

37. W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1998), pp. 237, 187, 234. Dean seems closest to the Sebald of this book.

38. W. G. Sebald, *The Emigrants*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1996), p. 1. On this point see Mark M. Anderson, “The Edge of Darkness: On W. G. Sebald,” *October* 106 (Fall 2003).

39. *Tacita Dean: Location* (Basel: Museum für Gegenwartskunst, 2000), p. 25. Also romantic is the implication of a partial doubling of her failed figures with the figure of the artist.

40. At the very least her archival tales hold out the possibility of errance in an otherwise plotted world. Dean suggests one aspect of the temporality of her work in the subtitle of a 2001 “aside” concerning the old East Berlin Fernsehturm: “Backwards into the Future.” This movement suggests “the crabwalk” performed by Günter Grass in his 2002 novel of that title regarding the symptomatic persistence

Archive as Partially Buried Woodshed

Like Dean, Durant employs a great variety of means—drawings, photographs, Xerox collages, sculptures, installations, sound, video—but where Dean is precise about her mediums, Durant exploits the “theatrical” space between his forms. Moreover, where Dean is meticulous in her collection of sources, Durant is eclectic in his sampling of “rock-and-roll history, minimalist/postminimalist art, 1960s social activism, modern dance, Japanese garden design, mid-century modern design, self-help literature, and do-it-yourself home improvements.”⁴¹

Durant stages his archive as a spatial unconscious where repressed contents return disruptively and different practices mix entropically. Of course the return of the repressed is not easily reconciled with the slide into the entropic, but Durant intimates a third model that comprehends these other two: the framing of a historical period as a discursive episteme almost in the sense of Michel Foucault, with “interrelated elements [placed] together in a field.”⁴² Durant is drawn to two moments within the archive of postwar American culture in particular: late modernist design of the 1940s and ’50s (e.g., Charles and Ray Eames) and early postmodernist art of the 1960s and ’70s (e.g., Robert Rauschenberg). Today the first moment appears distant, but as such it has become subject to various recyclings, and Durant offers a critical perspective on both the original and its repetitions.⁴³ The second moment is far from closed: it includes “discourses that have just ceased to be ours,” and so might indicate “gaps” in contemporary practice—gaps that might be converted to beginnings (again, this is the attraction of this threshold for some young artists).⁴⁴ Like Hirschhorn and Dean, then, Durant presents his archival materials as active, even unstable—open to eruptive returns and entropic collapses, stylistic repackagings and critical revisions.

Durant evokes his first moment through signature specimens of midcentury design associated with southern California (he lives in Los Angeles), and acts out an aggressive response to the repressive formalism and functionalism that he sees there.⁴⁵ A onetime carpenter, Durant stages a class struggle between the refinements

of the Nazi past: “Do I have to sneak up on time in a crabwalk, seeming to go backward but actually scuttling sideways, and thereby working my way forward fairly rapidly?”

41. Michael Darling, “Sam Durant’s Riddling Zones,” in Darling, ed., *Sam Durant* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002), p. 11. Darling notes the adjacency of this universe to the sub-cultural worlds explored by Mike Kelley and John Miller.

42. Durant in Rita Gersting, “Interview with Sam Durant,” in *ibid.*, p. 62. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), esp. pp. 126–31. As with the models of repression and entropy, Durant borders on parody here; in any case his archives are hardly as systematic (or high-cultural) as the ones discussed by Foucault.

43. For example, rather than a suave melding of retro design and contemporary installation à la Jorge Pardo, Durant suggests a classed confrontation.

44. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 130–31. “So often I am attracted to things conceived in the decade of my own birth,” Dean (born in 1965) has commented; the same often holds for Durant and others of this generation.

45. This accusation has precedents (e.g., Tristan Tzara and Salvador Dalí), and its political valence is often problematic; here again Durant borders on parody.

of late modernist design (at the moment when it became corporate and suburban) and the resentments of the lumpen working class (whose exclusion from this period style was one of its preconditions). Thus he has produced color photographs that show such prized pieces as the Eames shell chair upset on the floor, “primed for humiliation,” in a literal turning of the tables.⁴⁶ He has also shown sculptures and collages that abuse effigies of the Case Study Houses designed by Richard Neutra, Pierre Koenig, Craig Ellwood, and others from 1945 to 1966. Rough models of the houses made of foam core, cardboard, plywood, and Plexiglas, the sculptures are burned, gouged, and graffitied (in a further outrage some are wired with miniature televisions tuned to trashy soap operas and talk shows).⁴⁷ The collages also picture nasty eruptions of class spite: in one image, two beer-guzzlers appear in a classic Julius Shulman photograph of the Koenig House in a way that ruins its transcendental effect of good taste; in another image, a party girl is exposed in a way that undoes any pretense of a world sublimated beyond sex as well as class.⁴⁸ In further pieces Durant has juxtaposed miniature toilets and plumbing diagrams with Eames chairs, IKEA shelves, and Minimalist boxes: again in near literal fashion, he plumbs “good design,” reconnects its clean

46. Darling in *Sam Durant*, p. 14.

47. Durant: “My models are poorly built, vandalized, and fucked up. This is meant as an allegory for the damage done to architecture simply by occupying it” (*ibid.*, p. 57).

48. These collages recall the early photomontages by Martha Rosler titled *Bringing the War Home* (1967–72).



Sam Durant. Left: Chair #4. 1995. Right: Abandoned House #3. 1995. Courtesy the artist, Blum and Poe, and Galleria Emi Fontana.

avatars with the unruly body as if to unplug its cultural blockages. The very aggression of his revisions also returns unconscious drives to our machines-for-living, both old and new.⁴⁹

His second archival moment, more expansive than his first, encompasses advanced art, rock culture, and civil-rights struggles of the late 1960s and early '70s, signs of which Durant combines in other works. In this archival probe Smithson becomes a privileged cipher: like Dean, Durant regards him as both an early exemplar of the artist-as-archivist and a key term in this particular archive. In several pieces Durant cites *Partially Buried Woodshed*, installed by Smithson at Kent State in January 1970: here a model of a radical art work mixes with a memory of an oppressive police force—the killing of four students by National Guardsmen on the same campus just a few months later. Allusions to “utopian” and “dystopian” events in rock culture also collide as recordings from Woodstock and Altamont play through speakers buried in dirt mounds.⁵⁰ These conflicting signs erupt together in this archival space, yet they also appear entropic there: different terms converge and opposite positions blur in a devolution of vanguard art, counter-cultural music, and state power. In this way Durant not only sketches a cultural-political archive of the Vietnam era, but also points to its entropic slide into semiotic *mélange*, into media myth.

Durant comes to entropy via Smithson, who offered this famous exposé of its basic principles in “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey” (1967):

Picture in your mind's eye [a] sand box [divided] in half with black sand on one side and white sand on the other. We take a child and have him run hundreds of times clockwise in the box until the sand gets mixed and begins to turn gray; after that we have him run anti-clockwise, but the result will not be a restoration of the original division but a greater degree of grayness and an increase of entropy.⁵¹

Among other roles, entropy served Smithson as a final rebuttal to formalist distinctions in art and metaphysical oppositions in philosophy. For his part Durant extends its erosive action to the historical field of cultural practices that includes Smithson. In a sense, what the sandbox was for Smithson, *Partially Buried Woodshed* becomes for Durant: it not only thematizes entropy but also instantiates it, and does so both in a micrological sense—partially buried in 1970, the woodshed was partially burned in 1975 and removed in 1984—and in a macrological sense—the woodshed becomes an allegorical archive of recent art and politics as precisely

49. This is a troubling of both modernist design and Minimalist logic on the model of Smithson and Matta-Clark as well as feminist artists from Eva Hesse to Cornelia Parker. Such a move of counter-repression, which is programmatic in such titles as *What's Underneath Must Be Released and Examined to Be Understood* (1998), is also indebted to Kelley.

50. See James Meyer, “Impure Thoughts: The Art of Sam Durant,” *Artforum* (April 2000). In related pieces Durant features the Rolling Stones, Neil Young, and Nirvana.

51. Robert Smithson, *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979), pp. 56–57.



Durant. Like, Man, I'm Tired of Waiting. 2002. Courtesy the artist, Blum and Poe, and Galleria Emi Fontana.

“partially buried.” “I read it as a grave site,” Durant says of *Partially Buried Woodshed*, but it is a fertile one for him.⁵²

Often in his work Durant “sets up a false dialectic [that] doesn’t work or [that] negates itself.”⁵³ In one piece, for example, he revises the structuralist map of “sculpture in the expanded field” proposed by Rosalind Krauss over twenty-five years ago, in which he substitutes, for her disciplinary categories like “landscape” and “architecture,” pop-cultural markers like “song lyric” and “pop star.”⁵⁴ The parody comes with a point: the gradual devolution of a structured space of post-modernist art. (His diagram might be called “installation in the imploded field” or “practice in the age of cultural studies.”) Perhaps Durant implies that the dialectic at large—not only in advanced art but in cultural history—has faltered since this moment of high postmodernism, and that today we are mired in a stalled relativism (perhaps he relishes this predicament). Yet this is not the only implication of his archival art: his “bad combinations” also serve “to offer space for associative interpretation,” and they suggest that, even in an apparent condition of entropic collapse, new connections can be made.⁵⁵

52. Durant in *Sam Durant*, p. 58. Smithson also alludes to his sandbox as a grave.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October* 8 (Spring 1979).

55. Durant in an unpublished statement of 1995, cited in *Sam Durant*, p. 14. The purpose of any “archaeology” is to ascertain what one can of the difference of the present and the potential of the past.

*

A final comment on the will “to connect what cannot be connected” in archival art.⁵⁶ Again, this is not a will to totalize so much as a will to relate—to probe a misplaced past, to collate its different signs (sometimes pragmatically, sometimes parodistically), to ascertain what might remain for the present. Yet this will to connect is enough alone to distinguish the archival impulse from the allegorical impulse attributed to postmodernist art by Craig Owens: for these artists a subversive allegorical fragmentation can no longer be confidently posed against an authoritative symbolic totality (whether associated with aesthetic autonomy, formalist hegemony, modernist canonicity, or masculinist domination). By the same token this impulse is not anomic in the manner disclosed in the work of Gerhard Richter and others by Benjamin Buchloh: the art at issue here does not project a lack of logic or affect.⁵⁷ On the contrary, it assumes anomic fragmentation as a condition not only to represent but to work through, and proposes new orders of affective association, however partial and provisional, to this end, even as it also registers the difficulty, at times the absurdity, of doing so.

This is why such work often appears tendentious, even preposterous. Indeed its will to connect can betray a hint of paranoia—for what is paranoia if not a practice of forced connections and bad combinations, of my own private archive, of my own notes from the underground, put on display?⁵⁸ On the one hand, these private archives do question public ones: they can be seen as perverse orders that aim to disturb the symbolic order at large. On the other hand, they might also point to a general crisis in this social law—or to an important change in its workings whereby the symbolic order no longer operates through apparent totalities. For Freud the paranoid projects meaning onto a world ominously drained of the same (systematic philosophers, he liked to imply, are closet paranoids).⁵⁹ Might archival art emerge out of a similar sense of a failure in cultural memory, of a

56. This will is active in my text too. In the test cases here it varies in subject and strategy: Hirschhorn and Durant stress crossings of avant-garde and kitsch, for example, while Dean tends to figures who fall outside these realms; the connections in Hirschhorn and Durant are tendentious, in Dean tentative; and so on.

57. See n. 1.

58. This work does invite psychoanalytical projections. It can also appear manic—not unlike much archival fiction today (e.g., David Foster Wallace, Dave Eggers)—as well as childish. Sometimes Hirschhorn and Durant evoke the figure of the adolescent as “dysfunctional adult” (I borrow the term from Mike Kelley), who, maimed by capitalist culture, strikes out against it. They entertain infantilist gestures too: with its nonhierarchical spatiality installation art often suggests a scatological universe, and sometimes they thematize it as such. For Freud the anal stage is one of symbolic slippage in which creative definitions and entropic indifferences struggle with one another. So it is sometimes in this art as well.

59. Here “anomie,” which stems from the Greek *anomia*, “without law,” is again apposite as a condition to react against. In *A Short Guide*, Curinger speaks of “an insane effort to put everything right” in Hirschhorn, who has indeed adopted a mad persona (“Cavemanman” in a 2002 show at Barbara Gladstone Gallery). On paranoia vis-à-vis the symbolic order, see Eric Santner, *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber’s Secret History of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) and my *Prosthetic Gods* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004).

default in productive traditions? For why else connect so feverishly if things did not appear so frightfully disconnected in the first place?⁶⁰

Perhaps the paranoid dimension of archival art is the other side of its utopian ambition—its desire to turn belatedness into becomingness, to recoup failed visions in art, literature, philosophy, and everyday life into possible scenarios of alternative kinds of social relations, to transform the no-place of the archive into the no-place of a utopia. This partial recovery of the utopian demand is unexpected: not so long ago this was the most despised aspect of the modern(ist) project, condemned as totalitarian gulag on the Right and capitalist *tabula rasa* on the Left. This move to turn “excavation sites” into “construction sites” is welcome in another way too: it suggests a shift away from a melancholic culture that views the historical as little more than the traumatic.⁶¹

60. Two further speculations: 1. Even as archival art cannot be separated from “the memory industry” that pervades contemporary culture (state funerals, memorials, monuments . . .), it suggests that this industry is amnesiac in its own way (“and the last remnants memory destroys”), and so calls out for a practice of counter-memory. 2. Archival art might also be bound up, ambiguously, even deconstructively, with an “archive reason” at large, that is, with a “society of control” in which our past actions are archived (medical records, border crossings, political involvement . . .) so that our present activities can be surveilled and our future behaviors predicted. This networked world does appear both disconnected and connected—a paradoxical appearance that archival art sometimes seems to mimic (Hirschhorn displays can resemble mock World Wide Webs of information), which might also bear on its paranoia vis-à-vis an order that seems both incoherent and systemic in its power. For different accounts of different stages of such “archive reason,” see Allan Sekula, “The Body as Archive,” *October* 39 (Winter 1986), and Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October* 59 (Winter 1992).

61. Hirschhorn in Obrist, *Interviews*, p. 394. Or, worse, a culture (to focus on the United States after 9/11) that tropes trauma as the grounds—the Ground Zero, as it were—for so much imperial triumphalism.

Archive Fever

Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art

Okwui Enwezor

International Center of Photography, New York

Steidl

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Archive Fever: Photography between History and the Monument

Okwui Enwezor

The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they 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, some that seem close to us shining brightly from far off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale.

—Michel Foucault¹

No single definition can convey the complexities of a concept like *the archive* such as are contained in Foucault's ruminations on the subject. The standard view of the archive oftentimes evokes a dim, musty place full of drawers, filing cabinets, and shelves laden with old documents, an inert repository of historical artifacts against the archive as an active, regulatory discursive system. It is this latter formulation of the archive that has engaged the attention of so many contemporary artists in recent years. *Archive Fever* explores the ways in which artists have appropriated, interpreted, reconfigured, and interrogated archival structures and archival materials. The principal vehicles of these artistic practices—photography and film—are also preeminent forms of archival material. The exhibition engages with various modes of artistic production in which the traffic in photographic and filmic documents is not simply emblematic of the development of a vast mass-media enterprise. Rather, it delves into critical transactions predicated on opening up new pictorial and historiographic experiences against the exactitude of the photographic trace.

Photography and the Archive

What are the aesthetic and historical issues that govern photography's relation to the archive? From its inception, the photographic record has manifested "the appearance of a statement as a unique event." Every photographic image has been endowed with this principle of uniqueness. Within that principle lies the kernel of the idea of the photograph as an archival record, as an analogue of a substantiated real or putative fact present in nature. The capacity for mechanical inscription and the order of direct reference that links the photograph with the indisputable fact of its subject's existence are the bedrock of photography and film. The capacity for accurate description, the ability to establish dis-

tinct relations of time and event, image and statement, have come to define the terms of archival production proper to the language of those mechanical mediums, each of which give new phenomenological account of the world as image. Photography is simultaneously the documentary evidence and the archival record of such transactions. Because the camera is literally an archiving machine, every photograph, every film is *a priori* an archival object. This is the fundamental reason why photography and film are often archival records, documents and pictorial testimonies of the existence of a recorded fact, an excess of the seen. The infinitely reproducible, duplicatable image, whether a still picture or a moving image, derived from a negative or digital camera, becomes, in the realm of its mechanical reproduction or digital distribution or multiple projection, a truly archival image. Accordingly, over time, the photographic image has become an object of complex fascination and thus appropriated for myriad institutional, industrial, and cultural purposes—governmental propaganda, advertising, fashion, entertainment, personal commemoration, art. These uses make photography and film critical instruments of archival modernity.

When Walter Benjamin published his essay on art² in the 1930s, photography had been in use for a century. His reflections took up more than the question of aura; he was concerned with how the shift from the hand-fashioned image to the mechanically produced and infinitely reproducible image manifests a wholly new mode of pictorial distribution, a shift not only indexical but temporal. Because eye/hand coordination organized by the camera gave reality a different look, the liberation of the hand from image making had a deep impact on questions of cognition and action. This change of artistic and pictorial parameters became a specific phenomenon of modernity. The advent of mechanical reproduction initiated an archival formation that would overtake all relations to the photographic record: the systems of production and distribution and, more recently, the processes of permanent digital archivization and inscription. Since Kodak's invention of commercial processing capacity at the end of the nineteenth century, the photographic analogue derived from the negative has not only generated an endless stream of faithful reproductions—calling into question the foundational claims of originality on which the pictorial aura of hand-fashioned images depended—it also set the entire world of users into a feverish pace of pictorial generation and accumulation. This archival madness, a “burning with desire” to transpose nature into a pictorial fact, and consequently into an archival system, is succinctly expressed in a letter written by Louis Daguerre to his business partner Nicéphore Niépce: “I am burning with desire to see your experiments from nature.”³ Many other desires soon followed, and would go beyond nature; they would encapsulate the entire mode of thinking the world framed within a picture. The desire to make a photograph, to document an event, to compose statements as unique events, is directly related to the aspiration to produce an archive. The character of this archive is captured in W. J. T. Mitchell's notion of “the surplus value of images,”⁴ in which the photograph also enters the world of the commodity. The traffic in the photographic archive rests on the assumption of the surplus value that an image can generate.

The proliferation of the snapshot, of domestic photographic production, clarifies this process. However, we know that in this guise of image production—its crudest, most sentimental form—the making of a photograph is part of a constant construction of *aide-mémoires*, a gigantic machine of time travel, as much teleological as technological. Stanley Cavell describes this in relation to automatism,⁵ a mechanism through which we return to the past, compiling indexes of comparisons and tables of facts that generate their own public and private meanings. The snapshot that documents scenes of life's many turns—birthdays, holidays, and events of all kinds—perhaps exemplifies the most prominent aspect of the private motivations for image making, for it not only records that burning desire for the archival, it also wields a formidable ethnographic meaning. The photographic image, then, can be likened to an anthropological space in which to observe and study the way members and institutions of a society reflect their relationship to it. From family albums to police files to the digital files on Google, Yahoo, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, mobile phones, digital cameras, computer hard drives, and assorted file-sharing programs, a vast, shapeless empire of images has accrued. Organizing and making sense of them in any kind of standard unity is today impossible. At the same time, we have witnessed the collapse of the wall between amateur and professional, private and public, as everyday users become distributors of archival content across an unregulated field of image sharing.⁶ In this prosaic form, the photograph becomes the sovereign analogue of identity, memory, and history, joining past and present, virtual and real, thus giving the photographic document the aura of an anthropological artifact and the authority of a social instrument.

Beyond the realm of the snapshot is another empire—an imperium, to be specific—connected to a more regulative, bureaucratic, institutional order that invigilates and exercises control over bodies and identities. It was this order whose repressive function in the nineteenth century would combine Auguste Comte's philosophical positivism and a hermeneutics of power, along with the system to territorialize and unify knowledge from diverse sources, imbuing the system with scientific authenticity, even if its unity was fictive. Positivism fueled the emergence of many quasi-scientific photographic endeavors, one such being Alphonse Bertillon's police archives in Paris, in which he elaborated a series of standardized tests and measurements to decipher the "criminal type." In his seminal essay "The Body and the Archive,"⁷ Allan Sekula reflects on the work of Bertillon, and of the English statistician and pioneer of eugenics Francis Galton, both of whom discovered in photography an instrument of social control and differentiation underwritten by dubious scientific principles. Their projects, Sekula writes, "constitute two methodological poles of the positivist attempts to define and regulate social deviance."⁸ The criminal (for Bertillon) and the racially inferior (for Galton) exist in the netherworld of the photographic archive, and when they do assume a prominent place in that archive, it is only to dissociate them, to insist on and illuminate their difference, their archival apartness from normal society.

Archive as Form

The photographic archive is one of the many ways in which archival production has been developed within the context of art. Marcel Duchamp's miniaturization of his entire corpus into a deluxe edition of reproductions, organized and codified in an archival system cum mobile museum titled *La boîte-en-valise* (1935–41),⁹ is certainly not the first of such programmatic engagements of the work of art as archive, but it remains one of the most rigorous. Ever since he fashioned this ur-museum in a suitcase, there has existed a fascination within art with the procedures of the museum as archive,¹⁰ as a site of reflection on the prodigious output of historical artifacts, images, and the various taxonomies that govern their relationship to one another. By faithfully creating reproductions of his works that approximate photographic facsimiles, and at the same time creating the conditions for their organization and reception as an oeuvre and an archive, Duchamp appeared to have been grappling with a dilemma, one which placed his works "between tradition and oblivion," to borrow an apt phrase from Foucault.¹¹ *La boîte-en-valise* is not only a sly critique of the museum as institution and the artwork as artifact, it is fundamentally also about form and concept, as "it reveals the rules of a practice that enable statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is *the general system of the formation and transformation of statements.*"¹² Decades later, such a system was amplified by Marcel Broodthaers in his *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (1968).¹³ If the framework for Duchamp's box is the myth of a coherent monographic artistic identity, Broodthaers's endless iteration of photographic copies of eagles and associated objects positioned his archive not in a logic of homogeneous unity but in a field of nonhierarchical heterogeneity. According to Rosalind Krauss, Broodthaers's gambit ushered in what she terms the *post-medium condition*.¹⁴

Writing about Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* (1964–present), an open-ended compendium of photographic panels and tableaux initiated by the artist as a reflection on the relationship between the photographic and historiographic, Benjamin Buchloh implicitly recognizes that the principle of collectivization—an important function of museums and archives—has been integral to photography's disciplinary method from its inception. Projects such as *Atlas*, he notes, have "taken as the principles of a given work's formal organization photography's innate structural order (its condition as archive) in conjunction with its seemingly infinite multiplicity, capacity for serialization, and aspiration toward comprehensive totality . . ." ¹⁵ Buchloh casts doubt, however, on the historical coherence of such practices, labeling them "unclassifiable within the typology and terminology of avant-garde art history,"¹⁶ and concluding that "the didactic and mnemonic tracing of historical processes, the establishment of typologies, chronologies, and temporal continuities . . . have always seemed to conflict with the avant-garde's self-perception as providing instantaneous presence, shock, and perceptual rupture."¹⁷ Buchloh argues that Richter's *Atlas* inherited the conditions of this archival impasse:

Marcel Duchamp, *La boîte-en-valise*, 1935–41
Leather valise containing miniature replicas, photographs, and color reproductions of works by Duchamp,
and one "original" (*Large Glass*, colotype on celluloid) (69 items)
Overall 16 x 15 x 4 in. (40.6 x 38.1 x 10.2 cm)
© 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp



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Yet, at the same time, the descriptive terms and genres from the more specialized history of photography—all of them operative in one way or another in Richter's *Atlas*—appear equally inadequate to classify these image accumulations. Despite the first impression that the *Atlas* might give, the discursive order of this photographic collection cannot be identified either with the private album of the amateur or with the cumulative projects of documentary photography.¹⁸

Inasmuch as any sensibility may wish to impose a restrictive order on the archive, then, the ability to do so is often superceded by concerns governing the disjunction between systems and methods. According to Lynne Cooke, the logic of *Atlas* is impeded by the impossibility of assigning a singular rationality to its existence as a unity: "*Atlas* hovers," she writes, "between the promise of taxonomic order as divulged in the archive and the total devastation of that promise . . ."¹⁹

From the above we can establish that the archive is a compensation (in the psychoanalytic sense) of the unwieldy, diachronic state of photography and, as such, exists as a representational form of the ungainly dispersion and pictorial multiplicity of the photograph. The archive as a representation of the taxonomy, classification, and annotation of knowledge and information could also be understood as a representative historical form, which Foucault designates as a historical *a priori*, defined as a field of archaeological inquiry, a journey through time and space; one whose methodological apparatus does not set "a condition of validity for judgements, but a condition of reality for statements."²⁰ Whatever the statements, however encompassing its accumulated, tabulated, indexed, and organized form of representation may appear, it is also true, as Foucault notes, that

the archive of a society, a culture, or a civilization cannot be described exhaustively: or even, no doubt, the archive of a whole period. On the other hand, it is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say—and to itself, the object of our discourse—its modes of appearance, its forms of existence and coexistence, its system of accumulation, historicity, disappearance. The archive cannot be described in its totality; and in its presence it is unavoidable. It emerges in fragments, regions, levels . . .²¹

How is the validity of statements posited in an archive to be judged? For Jacques Derrida, statements acquire legitimacy through "a science of the archive," which "must include the theory of . . . institutionalization, that is to say, the theory both of the law which begins by inscribing itself there and of the right which authorizes it."²² The archive achieves its authority and quality of veracity, its evidentiary function, and interpretive power—in short, its reality—through a series of designs that unite structure and function. The archival structure defines what Derrida calls the principle of "domiciliation," by

Gerhard Richter, *Atlas*, 1964–, installation views, Dia Center for the Arts, New York, 1995
Courtesy Dia Center for the Arts
Photo: Cathy Carver



which the institutional form is achieved, the archive as a physical entity is manifested in a concrete domain: "The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently . . ." ²³ He compares this condition of existence, the process of domiciliation, to a house arrest. ²⁴ The archival form is fundamental to the archive's ability to create the "condition of validity of judgements" (Foucault) to be undertaken. Derrida calls this function "consignation," the task through which the archive conducts "the functions of unification, of identification, of classification," ²⁵ and so on. However, consignation is to be understood in terms that "do not only mean, in the ordinary sense of the word, the act of assigning residence or of entrusting so as to put into reserve (to consign, to deposit), in a place and on a substrate, but here the act of *consigning* through *gathering together signs*." ²⁶ The very activity of consignation, therefore, "aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration." ²⁷

The terms of reference for Duchamp's *La boîte-en-valise*, Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, and Richter's *Atlas* correspond precisely to both Foucault's and Derrida's different takes on the archive. The portable box in which Duchamp organized his then-extant works as reproductions, or the heterogeneity of Broodthaers's curatorial arrangement, or Richter's perpetual commentary on photography as a mnemonic object, become and form a logic of domiciliation and consignation (gathering together signs that designate the artist's oeuvre), as well as a condition of reality of the statements of each of the individual works, the narrative it has to convey, the *a priori* archive of the artist's practice. Such methods conform to what Hal Foster identifies as the "archival impulse" ²⁸ that suffuses current artistic practice. Artists interrogate the self-evidentiary claims of the archive by reading it against the grain. This interrogation may take aim at the structural and functional principles underlying the use of the archival document, or it may result in the creation of another archival structure as a means of establishing an archaeological relationship to history, evidence, information, and data that will give rise to its own interpretive categories. ²⁹

Intelligence Failure / Archival Disappointment

Permit me to recall an important moment in recent history: the frantic search for evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) undertaken by a coterie of United Nations investigators in the months leading up to the Iraq War in 2003. The scramble to find the weapons included a search through the Iraqi archives for documents containing evidence of a weapons system's many components: designs, bills of procurement, building plans, site maps, photographs of laboratories. The Iraqi administration presented the inspectors with volumes of documentation, reams of paper, a mountain of information showing the initial attempts to constitute a weapons program and later efforts to dismantle the operational capacity to build an arsenal of future destruction. Meanwhile, the U.S. wanted

to retain exclusive hermeneutic authority over any “intelligence”: if the “intelligence” accorded with the U.S. view, then it fulfilled and consolidated the Bush administration’s claims; if it contradicted those claims, the burden of proving the negative rested on the other side. We witnessed this catch-22 in relation to both the United Nations inspectors led by Hans Blix and the International Atomic Energy Agency officials, who were all but accused of being agents of Iraqi disinformation.³⁰ As the Bush administration’s “slam dunk”³¹ theory of an *a priori* indisputable fact—the existence of WMD—unraveled, it attempted (without success) to bolster the moral imperative behind its threats to invade Iraq.

We now know the full extent of the fraudulence of U.S. and British intelligence (truth) claims.³² The calculated manufacture of “intelligence” to fit the policy of Iraq’s invasion disturbs the integrity of and confidence in the archive as a site of historical recall, as the organ through which we come to know what has been, that is to say, the raw material constituting knowledge and a reference in which to read, verify, and recognize the past.

The manipulation of evidence to justify war underscores the imperatives of modern intelligence gathering as a fundamental drive toward acquisition and control of information and comprehensive knowledge. Of course, the idea of an empire that sees “intelligence” as the total mastery and domination of an adversary through its superior power of clairvoyance is not new. Thomas Richards, author of *The Imperial Archive*, locates the origins of this archival impulse in nineteenth-century Victorian England, during the heyday of British imperialism. Induced into a fever of knowledge accumulation and intelligence gathering, the Victorian archival industry began a process whereby information concerning the known world was synchronized and unified.³³ With the establishment of institutions such as the Royal Geographical Society, the Royal Photographic Society, the British Museum, and the Colonial Office, Victorian Britain initiated one of the most prodigious archive-making periods in modern history. Although it was an empire of vast territories, patrolled by mighty naval fleets and army regiments, imperial Britain was above all founded on the production of paper, assorted documents, and images, all of which spawned other documents, along with the systems organizing them and the rules for distributing their content. The process of archival synchronization and unification was accomplished by reconciling specific forms of discrete, quantifiable, and tested knowledge (positive knowledge) into universal principles of aggregated data. As Richards points out, the objectives of such unification were attended by ideological manipulation: “Unawares, the archival gaze has combined the triple register of inquiry, measure and examination to prepare data to be acted upon by the variable modalities of power.”³⁴

Overseeing this immense accumulation of data—photographs, images, maps, surveys, intelligence, taxonomies, classifications: Derrida’s “science of the archive”—was the imperial periscopic eye. It was in this era that the impenetrable territory of Tibet—impenetrable, that is, to imperial ambition and the Western gaze—was mapped. In the absence of reliable maps of the Himalayan territory, and unable to send British surveyors into Tibet, the British India Survey resorted to an ingenious plan

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devised by one Major Thomas G. Montgomerie, a member of the Royal Engineers Corps: the survey and mapping of Tibet would be conducted with "native explorers,"³⁵ actually a network of Hindu pundit spies from the Indian Himalayas. Beginning around 1865, the pundits, disguised as Buddhist pilgrims traveling through Tibet, compiled detailed statistics and measurements of their journey. Peter Hopkirk traces this story of daring archival espionage that may equal Google Maps for its pinpoint precision:

Montgomerie first trained his men, through exhaustive practice, to take a pace of known length which would remain constant whether they walked uphill, downhill or on the level. Next he taught them ways of keeping a precise but discreet count of the number of such paces taken during a day's march. This enabled them to measure immense distances with remarkable accuracy and without arousing suspicion. Often they traveled as Buddhist pilgrims, many of whom regularly crossed the passes to visit the holy sites of the ancient Silk Road. Every Buddhist carried a rosary of 108 beads on which to count his prayers, and also a small wood and metal prayer-wheel which he spun as he walked. Both of these Montgomerie turned to his advantage. From the former he removed eight beads, not enough to be noticed, but leaving a mathematically convenient 100. At the hundredth pace the Pundit would automatically slip one bead. Each complete circuit of the rosary thus represented 10,000 paces.

The total for the day's march, together with any other discreet observations, had somehow to be logged somewhere safe from prying eyes. It was here that the prayer-wheel, with its copper cylinder, proved invaluable. For concealed in this, in place of the usual hand-written scroll of prayers, was a roll of blank paper. This served as a log-book, which could easily be got at by removing the top of the cylinder . . . Then there was the problem of a compass, for the Pundit was required to take regular bearings as he journeyed. Montgomerie decided to conceal this in the lid of the prayer-wheel. Thermometers, which were needed for calculating altitudes, were hidden in the tops of the pilgrims' staves. Mercury, essential for setting an artificial horizon when taking sextant readings, was hidden in cowrie shells . . ."³⁶

This arduous operation, in which archive making was subtended by the principles of espionage, was undertaken in service to the empire's insatiable appetite for knowledge of the unknown. Beyond that, such knowledge had to be compiled, "classified,"³⁷ unified, and submitted to tools of regulatory control. Constructing these "paradigms of knowledge . . . seemed to solve the problem of imperial control at a distance."³⁸ By the turn of the century, the details of the Tibet archive had been transformed into "classified" information "placed under the jurisdiction of the state."³⁹

Classifying information, data, or knowledge is today a pervasive method of regulatory control of the archive. And this control over the flow of information is strengthened by other networks of archival manipulation or data generation. Google Earth, for instance, allows some aspects of its spatial modeling to be public while others are suppressed in the interest of national security. Tibet is but one of many examples of the attempt to construct an empire of archival knowledge as part of the regime of national security. Richards cites Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim*—a book ordered around the pursuit of power and authority—as an example of the obsession with correlating classified knowledge and national security. Throughout the nineteenth century, the “great game” of imperial expansion was an acquisitive game of spatial dominance but one invested with the superior capacity to control the flow of information through the archive. Knowledge was equated with national security; accordingly the imperial archival system positioned “itself not as the supplement of power but as its replacement.”⁴⁰ The archival construction of Tibet, the intimate knowledge gained of this closed society, began as a work of map making and geography linked to espionage and intelligence gathering. From that, an information society was created. But it was the foundational principle of the state's power to monopolize knowledge, and to excise from public view archive material it deemed too sensitive, that became the paramount legacy of imperial archive making.

This is the proper context in which to read the battle over archival information between the U.S. and the Iraqi government arbitrated by the United Nations. Let us recall another episode in that spectacle of archival disinformation: when then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell announced that a document obtained by British intelligence and in the possession of American officials showed indisputably that the Iraqi regime was actively seeking to buy “yellow cake” uranium from the African nation of Niger. The document supporting Powell's claim was soon revealed to be a forgery, the “pure fantasy” of an intelligence agent. In this story of archives and counter-archives, are we not reminded of how deeply embedded the processes of archival production are in the modern state form? For the gathering and interpretation of intelligence—more accurately, data—are nothing more than the obsessive principle of archival formation.

Archive as Medium

The artworks that comprise this exhibition represent some of the most challenging interpretive, analytical, and probing examples of contemporary art's confrontation with and examination of the historical legacy of archival production. The artists presented here are not concerned simply with accumulation, sorting, interpreting, or describing images, though they surely do engage these practices. They are also motivated by a process described by Foucault as a “tracing-back to the original precursors, towards the search for a new type of rationality and its various effects.”⁴¹ Here we witness firsthand

how archival legacies become transformed into aesthetic principles, and artistic models become historicizing constructs, so that in the works, and the ways in which they are arrayed before us, we experience firsthand their effects. The variety and range of archival methods and artistic forms, the mediatory structures that underpin the artists' mnemonic strategies in their use of the archive, and the conceptual, curatorial, and temporal principles that each undertakes, point to the resilience of the archive as both form and medium in contemporary art. In the works, we are confronted with relationships between archive and memory, archive and public information, archive and trauma, archive and ethnography, archive and identity, archive and time.

These are some of the issues this exhibition seeks to illuminate. *Archive Fever* does not simply organize for the viewer the visual effects of the archival form or medium. Nor is its central preoccupation with assessing the cleverness of the critiques of archival truth inherent in some of the examples presented here. The aim is not to produce a theory of the archive but to show the ways in which archival documents, information gathering, data-driven visual analysis, the contradictions of master narratives, the invention of counter-archives and thus counter-narratives, the projection of the social imagination into sites of testimony, witnessing, and much more inform and infuse the practices of contemporary artists.

The "archival impulse" has animated modern art since the invention of photography. As many historians have argued, the principle of the archival was anticipated by the regulative order of the photographic dispersal through mass media. This dispersal had ideological implications, especially with regard to forms of propaganda. Mass media enabled the public manipulation of photography. And it came to determine the status of the documentary apparatus. In his essay "An Archival Impulse," Hal Foster elaborates on the long history of archivization as a structural mode of organizing the proliferating images of photographic media, particularly in some of the formats of the early avant-garde in Russia and Germany between the world wars, for instance, the photofiles of Rodchenko and photomontages of Heartfield. Taking us into the era of Richter's generation, Foster writes that the early modernist uses of the photographic index and the archival attributes they establish between public and private, between documentation and commentary, critique and analysis, power and subordination, were "even more variously active in the postwar period, especially as appropriated images and serial formats became common idioms (e.g., in the pinboard aesthetic of the Independent Group, remediated representations from Robert Rauschenberg through Richard Prince, and the informational structures of Conceptual art, institutional critique, and feminist art)."⁴²

These various modes of deploying appropriated images and using photographic documentation to inform the principle of the artwork were largely what gave rise to the conceptual system of archival photography, the mode by which many came to know, through documentation, varied actions or performances of contemporary art that relied on the archival reproductions of the artistic event or action, a world of practices staged as much for itself as for the camera.⁴³ Without the photographic or filmic

record of events or performances, the condition of reality on which their received effect as works of art depended would not have existed. Durational pieces that rely on recording or documentation, such as the work of Ana Mendieta, Hamish Fulton, Richard Long, and Gabriel Orozco, whose activities of inscription were only possible through the medium of photographic representation, are examples of this kind. In others, such as the emblematic work of Robert Smithson, the physical work and its citations stand as two separate systems. But this relationship between past event and its document, an action and its archival photographic trace, is not simply the act of citing a preexisting object or event; the photographic document is a replacement of the object or event, not merely a record of it. "The document . . . is no longer for history an inert material through which it tries to reconstitute what men have done or said, the events of which only the trace remains; history is now trying to define within the documentary material itself unities, totalities, series, relations."⁴⁴

Documents into Monuments: Archives as Meditations on Time⁴⁵

The enumeration of these various archival registers, in which the formats of contemporary art address the urgency of visual information in the age of mechanical reproduction, is one of *Archive Fever's* referential sources, but the exhibition also extends beyond it. The issue grappled with here is not so much the artist's employment of archival logic but, rather, the artist's relationship to images or instruments of mass culture or media in which the archival is sought out—especially in the digital arena—as part of a broad culture of sampling, sharing, and recombining of visual data in infinite calibrations of users and receivers. We are fundamentally concerned with the overlay of the iconographic, taxonomic, indexical, typological, and archaeological means by which artists derive and generate new historical as well as analytical readings of the archive. In an illuminating passage, Foucault captures the "burning desire" behind some of these types of archivization, in which artists undertake to "memorize" the *monuments* of the past, transform them into documents, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say . . ."⁴⁶ Here, a fundamental question persists: it concerns the relationship between temporality and the image, or, rather, the object and its past. According to Foucault, this relationship is a prevalent one, so much so, he claims, that "in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*."⁴⁷

Much of the photographic production of Craigie Horsfield exists in these splices of time and image, document and monument. In the late 1970s, Horsfield commenced one of the most sustained and unique artistic investigations around the governing relationship between photography and temporality. Working with a large-format camera, he traveled to pre-Solidarity Poland, specifically to the industrial city of Krakow, then in the throes of industrial decline and labor agitation. There he began shooting a series of ponderous and, in some cases, theatrically antiheroic black-and-white photographs

comprising portraits, deserted street scenes, and machinery. Printed in large-scale format with tonal shifts between sharp but cool whites and velvety blacks, these images underline the stark fact of the subject, whether of a lugubriously lit street corner or a solemn, empty factory floor, or portraits of young men and women, workers and lovers. The artist worked as if he were bearing witness to the slow declension of an era, along with a whole category of people soon to be swept away by the forces of change. *Magda Mierwa and Leszek Mierwa—ul. Nawojki, Krakow, July 1984* (1990) is a haunting double portrait of a couple, a bearded man and a woman, each staring so intently at the camera that it appears they were themselves witnesses to, rather than specimens of, a passing age. The scene is lit in such a way that the background literally dissolves around the sitters, enveloping them in inky blackness. The image emits an eerie silence, as if touching the sentient melancholy of the man and woman. With their stern, stubborn mien, they stand before us as the condemned.

E. Horsfield. Well Street, East London. August 1987 (1995) is, again, exemplary of Horsfield's careful, annotative as well as denotative employment of the photographic as the weight of time that presses upon the image. The principle of photographic portraiture, in this instance, the depiction of the body, defines the traditional imperative of Horsfield's approach to image making. The second aspect of his production takes it further: it sketches the subtle time lag between the creation of the image and its realization a few years later. In this rich black-and-white print of a reclining female nude, the surrounding field is rendered in sharp, tonal contrasts around the shadowed, slightly turned face. As with many of Horsfield's photographs, the caption indicates the exact date of its making, next to the year of its full realization as a work. In so doing, he calls our attention to the importance of archival time in the consideration of the image. Here, the time of making functions as a shadow archive next to the flat panel of the large-scale print.⁴⁸

Horsfield's work is engaged with a conscious temporal delay of the archive, illustrating both a slice of time and its slow immensity. Even if not quite a *longue durée*, the time lag between photographing and printing is often protracted—sometimes years elapse before an image is conjured, a fact made clear in the captioning. Horsfield insists on the viewer's ability to decipher the denotative aspect of the image as a literal archive of time, as if the exposure is drawn out over many years. His work is one of two examples—the other being Stan Douglas's *Overture*—presented here that captures the archival potential of photographic technology as fundamentally an archaeology of time. Horsfield's photographs—unique, uneditioned, unrepeatable—operate at the break between temporalities, between archival time and linear time. They are often active meditations on the very nature of time and how it acts on memory and experience, encompassing it and slowing it down. The disjunction between the instant in which the image is recorded and the moment it is finally printed produces two instances of the archive: first, the archival time of the image, and second, the archival register of its reproduction. The difference, manifest in the analogical conditions of the tactile, materialist photographic medium of film and the instantaneous quality of digital production, is impossible to parse in Horsfield's method.

At the same time, according to his mode of working, new technology does not permit us to do just what he has been so adept at accomplishing—a kind of old-fashioned, predigital photography of non-instantaneous reproduction that allows the image to gel in the artist's own consciousness long before it emerges from its glacial substrate.⁴⁹

Stan Douglas's *Overture* (1986) is similarly concerned with the relationship of archive and time, of time passing as a moving image, as a narration. *Overture* is a looped, 16mm film that stitches together two separate footages shot by the film division of the Edison Company in the Canadian Rockies: one shows Kicking Horse Canyon, shot in 1899, the other White Pass in British Columbia, shot in 1901. To explore the theme of temporality as it structures experience and consciousness, Douglas employs an audio track of recited passages from Marcel Proust's insomniac novel, *In Search of Lost Time*.⁵⁰ That Proust's book about time and its disappearance is contemporaneous with the Edison Company's film is not coincidental, since Douglas has carefully synchronized text and image as a meditation on the very logic of time as it bears on the question of history and identity, nature and culture, positivism and romanticism.

In contrast to Horsfield's photographic projects, which are constituted around perceptual breaks in linear time, Douglas's *Overture* emphasizes cyclical temporality. By deploying a looping mechanism, the filmic narrative appears seamless. Though the film is stitched together in three sections, and the passage from Proust is incorporated as six separate segments, through two rotations, the loop allows the experience of the film to occur as an endless revolution of image and time, suturing breaks in time and images, transforming the filmic space into a closed circuit.⁵¹ Scott Watson argues that this endless rotation is not merely a technical representation of time, a mode that Douglas has explored in other projects; rather, the looping device becomes the means by which a confluence occurs between "mechanical time, which proceeds through repetition, and human time, which is known through memory."⁵² The careful calibration of mechanical and mnemonic temporality begins at the first emergence of the film as a self-consciously driven operation through the camera's sweeping views of the landscape up to the point where the train carrying it plunges into the blankness of the tunnel, only to emerge on the other end where the manipulated editing posits a steady continuation. Through this continuation, the establishing shot of the first sequence becomes the anchor for the circularity of the loop to suggest nonlinear temporality. The break in linearity that is crucial to Douglas's proposal delinks the film from its narrative construction, showing instead "its rhythmic, hypnotic effects on the viewer, in an experience of time-depth and repetition."⁵³

Jef Geys's work *Day and Night and Day and . . .* (2002) belongs to this temporal category in which the archive is used to elicit the boundless procession of discrete levels of time, as a juncture between past and present. Geys's work provokes an interaction with the archive as a chronotope—that is, a coordination of space and time. It is both a personal and cultural meditation on time and the archive. Constituted out of more than forty years of photographic output comprising tens of thousands of

images taken by the artist from the late 1950s to 2002, the thirty-six-hour film is not only structurally about the flow of images from a time past into the present; by virtue of its languorous movement, unfolding one panel at a time, the form of its delivery is also intended to confound the ability to distill the film into an index of a life's work. Working with the basic format of an inventory, in almost chronological register, the photographs are activated as moving pictures by slow dissolves. Nothing much happens in the film apart from shifts in tone, gradations of muted gray and lightness, as the images unspool in a horizontal band. Unlike Richter's *Atlas*, Geys's work is not one of accumulation and collecting; rather, it is an inventory of ephemeral images, slowly and arduously exposed one frame followed by the next, and next, *day and night and day . . .* The temporal relationship between each image is established through sheer density. The basic means of this proto-cinematic work belie the conceptual nature of its endless pursuit—as in the monologue to Douglas's *Overture*—of history as the passage of time, as the relentless inscription of private memory onto the space of a collective public culture.

Archive and Public Memory

For nearly a century, artists have turned to the photographic archive in order to generate new ways of thinking through historical events and to transform the traditional ideas surrounding the status of the photographic document. In recent years, artists have interrogated the status of the photographic archive as a historical site that exists between evidence and document, public memory and private history. Few have matched Andy Warhol's profound reflections on photography's morbid hold on the modern imagination. Though seemingly interested in celebrity and media spectacle, Warhol grasped the potential of such images as a means of plumbing the psychic ruptures in the American collective imaginary, as a speculum for examining the violence, tragedies, and traumas of the American self.⁵⁴ Building on archival analyses of visual history, oftentimes generated in the media—as is the case with *Race Riot* (ca. 1963)—considerations of the relationship between documentary information converge with aspects of witnessing and collective memory. The uses to which Warhol subjected the archive of mass media have engendered and encoded some of the most sustained reflexive accounts on photographs as an incunabulum of public memory. Warhol's images culled from media reports of misfortune and privation (suicides, car crashes, electric chairs, racist police officers and vicious dogs), delineate a grid of social lives. Anne Wagner, in a masterful reading of Warhol's paintings and prints made from a photo-essay by Charles Moore initially published in *Life*, makes the case for Warhol as a history painter.⁵⁵

Warhol's *Race Riot* is emblematic of the connection between archive and trauma,⁵⁶ what Wagner calls the "registration of the glamour and redundancy and immanent violence of American life under late capitalism."⁵⁷ But the trauma explicated in *Race Riot* is of a different order than that found in the

Andy Warhol, *Mechanical* ("The Dogs' Attack is Negroes' Reward," from *Life* magazine, May 17, 1963), 1963
Newsprint clipping, graphite, tape, and gouache on heavyweight paper
20 x 22 1/2 in. (50.8 x 57.2 cm)

The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh. Founding Collection, Contribution The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.
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luridly sensationalist images of the *Saturday Disasters* series.⁵⁸ The latter embody a kind of popular grotesque, a fascination with a cartoonish kind of horror in which the victims—smashed against windshields, trapped in burning cars, impaled on electrical poles on dark American highways and suburban streets—become fodder for the entertainment industry. Revisiting traumatic violence in this way, the scenes of death and their various archival returns become part of everyday spectacle. “The result,” Wagner observes, “is images caught between modes of representation: stranded somewhere between allegory and history.”⁵⁹

If *Race Riot* allegorizes a peculiarly mid-century American crisis, such a crisis constitutes the sociological ground for the glossary of images in Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Untitled (Death by Gun)* (1990), an index of grainy black-and-white photographs of 464 people who died from gunshots during a one-week period, from May 1 to May 7, 1989, across the cities of America.⁶⁰ Like all of the artist's stacked offset pieces, *Untitled* consists of several hundred sheets of printed paper endlessly available for viewers to take away and endlessly replenished to maintain an ideal height. The work's somber content—images of the dead stare back at the viewer, with numbing silence—transforms its structure from archival printed sheet to sculptural monument. The allusive character of this extraordinary but deceptive work operates at the level of two kinds of archival practice. First, it embodies Foucault's idea of the document turned into a monument, here subtly transformed from mere representation to a kind of altarpiece. One can also argue that the second effect of the work, as a literal archive, is a reversal of the first, and therefore *Untitled* oscillates between document and monument, shifting from the archival to the monumental and from that to the documentary. In this collation of obituaries, a wound is exposed as the sign of a shocking collective trauma; the seeming randomness of relationships between victims coalesces into a unity through the time frame of their deaths. This running tally illuminates the images within the reportorial or documentary boundary specific to the account of each victim. The photographs are organized on the white sheet of paper in no apparent order or hierarchical arrangement, without regard for race, gender, class, age, or circumstance of death (suicides and homicides). The democracy of death is spotlighted here, irrespective of victim.

Like Warhol, Gonzalez-Torres addresses a peculiarly American issue. Yet this work differs from Warhol's in a crucial respect. If *Race Riot* represents the monumentalization of the document as *history painting*, Gonzalez-Torres's archive of random deaths memorializes the victims. It is a token of remembrance and a work of mourning.

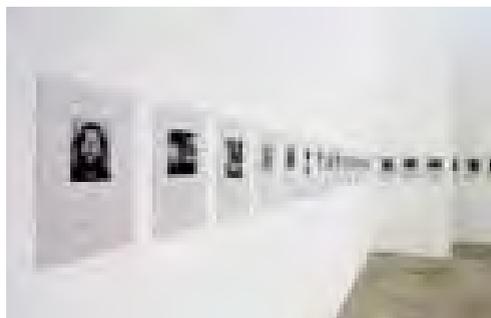
Ilán Lieberman also enlists the archive as a form of commemoration in *Niño Perdido* (2006–7), a series of drawings based on photographs of missing children whose disappearances were reported in local Mexican newspapers. Alternating between document and monument, information and photography, *Niño Perdido* functions as a kind of pre-obituary for the lost who may never be found. Lieberman's use of newspaper photographs of the missing children alerts us to the wide-ranging deployment of the photographic portrait as an index of memory, as an image of identification and

sometimes disidentification. In each carefully drawn image, he has painstakingly recreated the exact pictorial format of the original newspaper image, as if also creating a memorial to the lost child.

It is difficult to come to terms, artistically, with the events of September 11, 2001. The destruction of the World Trade Towers in Lower Manhattan instantly transformed the site into a memorial and monument; Ground Zero became a shrine and a sacred ground. To broach the event that spawned so many iconic images is to touch a living wound, to experience the vividness with which its memory still reverberates around the world. The breaching of the two towers by the force of the exploding planes created an indelible iconography of the massive structures burning and collapsing. The images were instantly broadcast across the world, with numbing repetition, on television and the Internet, in newspapers and magazines, and continue to be replayed every anniversary. The traumatic images became archival the instant the first footage surfaced and the need for documentary accounts grew. September 11 created a new *iconomy*,⁶¹ a vast economy of the iconic linking archive to traumatic public memory. As the circulation of these images continues unabated, it is fair to ask what their status is beyond their initial documentary purpose as evidence of two incomprehensible acts of violence. Have the images become emblematic more of the aftermath than of the event itself? How does one revisit, not the event itself, but its aftermath, its mediated manifestation? For many, to say more with images of September 11 is already to say too much, to lapse into cheap vulgarity.

These are questions we must grapple with in Hans-Peter Feldmann's new project, *9/12 Front Page* (2001), an installation (presented here for the first time) documenting the media response to September 11 through a collection (an archive) of some 100 front pages of European and other international newspapers published on September 12, 2001, a day after the horrors unfolded. Does seeing the events from distant shores change its fundamental impact or its political and collective meaning in America? And what about showing these front pages in the very city where the carnage happened, seven years after the fact? This is Feldmann's provocation.

Feldmann abandoned painting in the late 1960s to focus exclusively on the photographic medium. Since then, he has been concerned, first, with photography's social and political meaning in the context of public culture, and second, with the disjuncture between the ubiquity of the photographic image as it developed a private cult of commemoration, and the evacuation of meaning that ensued as photographic images became empty signs. Mixing the high and low, private and public, the artful and kitsch, Feldmann's seemingly offhanded, anti-aesthetic, "anti-photographic"⁶² approach is undermined by the gravity of the subjects he engages—such as in *Die Toten, 1967–1993* (1998), a work dealing with images of terrorism in Germany—and the systematic, regulated format in which he recalibrates his collected or produced photographic images into new structures of interpretation. *9/12 Front Page*, like *Die Toten*, compels a different register of ethical and political disclosures. Do the fluttering sheets of newspaper illuminate the dark events of September 11, or do they banalize and ultimately diminish their projected impact? Is September 11 principally a media event for the global pub-



Hans-Peter Feldmann, *Die Toten*, 1967–93, 1998
 90 works
 Dimensions variable
 Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York
 © 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York /
 VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

lic? With no accompanying commentary, this material collected from different media sources, in different nations, cities, and languages, implicitly asks the viewer whether it can be treated as a work of art or merely a kind of public testimony. As a work concerned with public memory and media imagination, *9/12 Front Page* addresses the intersection of iconographic shock and spectacle—such as Zapruder’s footage of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy; it also explores the terms around which photography mediates history and document, event and image. Or how media intervene into the archive and public memory. Buchloh’s formulation of the “anomic archive,” exemplified by Richter’s *Atlas*, versus the utopian project of photomontagists of the later

1920s is relevant here: “the organizational and distributional form will now become the archive . . .”⁶³ This aspect of Feldmann’s practice, in which images and their contexts are constantly shuffled and represented in new forms of reception—in book works, newsprint editions, bound photocopied files—is developed from the understanding that, far from the experience of anomie, “the photographic image in general was now defined as dynamic, contextual, and contingent, and the serial structuring of visual information implicit within it emphasized open form and a potential infinity, not only of photographic subjects eligible in a new social collective but, equally, of contingent, photographically recordable details and facets that would constitute each individual subject within perpetually changing altered activities, social relationships, and object relationships.”⁶⁴

Modes of artistic reception have engendered and mobilized discursive spaces in which spectators play a signal role in interpellating the work of the archive into highly structured forms of witnessing. One of *Archive Fever*’s premises is that, while the status of the archive today may not be ambiguous, its role in the historical determination of public memory remains unsettled by mnemonic ambivalence. The fascination with the archive as a facet of public memory has retained its power over a wide range of artists who continue to deploy archival images of media as reflexive and documentary responses to events. In Christian Boltanski’s meditation on mourning and loss, the powers of the archive as a fundamental site through which we remember remain undiminished, even if the images he deploys and the narratives that he constitutes are more allusive and evocative of an archive than that they represent an actual existing archive. For nearly forty years, Boltanski has posed conceptual and philosophical questions about the stability of the archive as a means by which we come to know and understand the past, not so much as a way to enter the logic of remembering but to explore and expose how photographic images trouble remembering, and in their inconsistency perforate the membrane of private

and public memory. In the diverse arrangements to which their assemblage is subjected, Boltanski often treats photographic documents in contradictory ways: sometimes they are collected in a linear structure forming a seemingly coherent narrative, or they may be transformed into fetishized, individuated units on which a dim spotlight is fixed, lending them an almost devotional character, in a panoply of sentimental configurations that, remarkably, are designed to evoke shrines.

Boltanski's work oscillates between inert collections and arrangements of conservation, sometimes pushing his concerns to perverse extremes, blurring the line between the fictive and the historical. In a series of works titled *Detective*, he draws from a popular French magazine of the same name that details a world of infamy in which crime is vicariously experienced through the spectacle of media



Christian Boltanski, *Archive Dead Swiss*, 1990
Photographs, lamps, white linen, wooden shelves
128 x 110 1/2 x 22 1/2 in. (325.1 x 280.7 x 57.2 cm)
Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York
© 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York /
ADAGP, Paris

excess. *Detective* appropriates the norms of the photographic montage, a mode in which devices such as juxtaposition and decontextualization interrupt the regularized flow of pictorial narrative but which also privilege a democracy of relationships over the specificity of the sign. Here, the collectivized arrangements take precedence over the singular and unique. The sequence of images, collated from a variety of sources (sometimes the same images are reused in other ways, thus calling attention to issues of their authenticity as historical documents), suggests such relationships, but while the “Spectators of the work know that these photographs are images of individuals involved in crime and murder, . . . [they] have no way of distinguishing between criminals and victims.”⁶⁵ In *Lessons of Darkness: Archives: Detective* (1987), dealing with crime, or *Archive Dead Swiss* (1990), which alludes to the Holocaust, the configuration of the images and their dilated, soft-focus pictorialism produce an unsettling ambiguity. Again, the general takes precedence over the specific.⁶⁶ The darkness of the Holocaust, for instance, is treated through the structural mechanism by which we come to experience the transformation of private images—snapshots of men, women, children hovering between disappearance and recall—into powerful, monumental, linear arrangements that become meditations on public memory. The collectivized archive becomes a mnemonic reflection on history, building on the anonymity of individual lives to illuminate a kind of generalized singularity, but one nonetheless subordinated to the discourse of a group, a community. Given Boltanski’s propensity to mix the fictional and the documentary, however, it is impossible to tell whether in this gallery of individual lives the images are genuine historical documents or merely images that stand in for such individuals. This



is the essence of Boltanski’s ambivalence, for one never knows what is properly historical or semantically archival.

Artistic assessments of photographic and media documents have contributed to reconsiderations of archival artifacts as evidence connected to broader inquiries into the theme of public memory. These inquiries have in turn inspired critical appraisals by contemporary artists of the genealogy and history of archival practices. As the fascination

Photographer unknown, [Corpse of mother at
Bergen-Belsen], April 17, 1945
IWM negative #BU 4027

Printed with the permission of the Trustees of the
Imperial War Museum, London

with the images of the Abu Ghraib scandal shows, there are philosophical and political interests at work. However, there is a more profound antagonism toward the status of such images in venues of art. While the Abu Ghraib images have served an instrumental purpose in a public controversy, as a counter-archive to bureaucratically generated amnesia about the Iraq War, torture, and abuse, artistic interventions can activate more complex reflections on the relationship between the photographic document and historical consciousness. Archives represent scenes of unbearable historical weight and therefore open up a productive space for artists in the form of aesthetic, ethical, political, social, and cultural speculation.

We need to reckon with, then, the difference between a purely semantic reading of the archive and its properly situated historical present.⁶⁷ Consider two photographic images, placed side by side. One is a documentary photograph shot on April 17, 1945, toward the end of World War II, in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp by a member of the British Army's Film and Photographic Unit. It shows the splayed, emaciated body of a young mother partially covered around the chest by a torn blanket, her eyes fixed in the contortions of death. This photograph and many other documentations of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen provide vivid accounts of unimaginable horror.⁶⁸ One reason these images have remained "the most influential of any record or artefact documenting the Nazi concentration camps," as Toby Haggith argues, is that they "are some of the most grotesque and disturbing."⁶⁹ Their wide public dissemination heightened their impact and no doubt contributed to the fascination with their iconography.

The image offered for comparison, *Untitled* (1987), a silkscreen version of the Bergen-Belsen photograph, is by Robert Morris.⁷⁰ Like Warhol's use of Charles Moore's photographs of the Civil Rights march in Birmingham, Alabama, Morris explicitly references a historical event. *Untitled* is part of a body of work in which he reconsiders images associated with World War II, such as the Holocaust or the firebombing of German cities like Dresden, a subject recorded by photographers and writers.⁷¹ Morris (again like Warhol) made some alterations to the original Bergen-Belsen image: it has been cropped, so as to fill the frame in a looming, projective fashion; treated with encaustic; and splashed—with almost expressionistic verve—with a blue-purple selenium tint that gives it the jarring, discordant appearance of an Old Master print. Further interventions include an elaborately carved frame, fabricated from a material called Hydrocal used by Morris in the 1980s in a "'baroque' phase of firestorm and holocaust paintings."⁷² Close inspection of the carved frame reveals fragments of human body parts and objects, suggesting a reliquary.

What was Morris attempting to convey through the juxtaposition of the transformed photograph and the sculpturelike frame? Does this decontextualization forty years after the event enhance our understanding of that event? Or does it rupture linear mnemonic continuity, a straight line to that site in which the body of the young mother was photographed? Projected back into historical consciousness through the daring reconstitution of a documentary photograph, Morris's work derives its power



Eyal Sivan, *The Specialist: Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 1999
Video, color, in English, Hebrew, German, and French with
English subtitles, 128 min.
Courtesy the artist

not merely from its subject—Nazi barbarity—but in the way it establishes a heightened sense of ambivalence in an image that is an almost sacred manifestation of archival specificity. What frustrates the reading of Morris's work is not its deliberate aesthetic recomposition and decontextualization but the insistent location of the image within its historically troubled context. Morris does not directly engage Bergen-Belsen but, rather, its archive. Does his engagement with this image owe to a broader enchantment with atrocity, or to the disputed claim made by Norman Finkelstein that images of the atrocity have been manipulated as part of a process he calls the Holocaust industry?⁷³ W. J. T. Mitchell's illuminating reading

moves Morris's meditation on atrocity far from Finkelstein's critique by spelling out the temporal relationship between frame and image: the "hydrocal frames with their imprinted body parts and post-holocaust detritus stand as the framing 'present' of the works, trophies or relics encrusted around the past event, the catastrophe that left the fossils as the imprints in which it is enframed. Frame is to image as body is to the destructive element, as present is to past."⁷⁴

Nazi atrocity is also the subject of Eyal Sivan's film *The Specialist: Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1999), comprised entirely of footage shot during the 1961 trial in Jerusalem of the notorious Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann, who coordinated the efficient deportation of Jews on a mass scale to various death camps during the war.⁷⁵ Sivan's film establishes a distance from the traumatic emotional responses that images of the Holocaust usually elicit, particularly among survivors. It focuses instead on the ordinariness of perpetrators like Eichmann, whose very innocuousness would lead the philosopher Hannah Arendt to coin the memorable phrase "the banality of evil."⁷⁶ In a review of the film, Gal Raz notes that "Sivan uses cinematic-linguistic tactics of deconstruction and reconstruction to give Arendt's claims a filmic articulation."⁷⁷ Wielding the sharp knife of deconstruction, Sivan restructures the chronology of the trial, presenting it out of sequence and thus denying the logic of archival linearity and narrative continuity. The filmmaker's reshaping of the event through a series of editing choices lends drama to the otherwise laborious process of a judicial proceeding. According to Raz, *The Specialist* is an intervention not only into the archive itself but also into the historical process of the trial, such that the "distorted chronology occurs not only at the level of entire scenes but also on the editorial scale within the scene[s]."⁷⁸ The struggle between prosecutor and defendant—the court, survivors, and the State of Israel pitted against Eichmann and the entire Nazi death apparatus—viti-

ates any insight into the horror of the camps. In fact, in the dramatic turns of the trial, the horror becomes muted, even secondary, as all attention is fixed on Eichmann the beast, the war criminal and Jew hater. Viewers become immersed in the sparring, punctuated by gripping climaxes, between accused and accusers as they confront each other with accusations and denials of responsibility. The footage of the trial conveys the obverse of evil incarnate, posing instead the question of whether the Holocaust is representable without humanizing the perpetrators. On this question, Sivan, like Arendt, who concluded that Eichmann was a common criminal rather than an antisemite, has been condemned for minimizing the testimony of witnesses through his editorial decontextualization.⁷⁹

At issue here is how the works of Sivan and Morris offend the categorical power of the archive as the principal insight into a truth. To refute the singular authority of the archive is also ostensibly to diminish the trauma that it represents. Morris deploys an image that for many shocks and wounds memory; Sivan interrogates the moral certainty of a judicial trial that connects the defendant to the atrocities from which Morris's image stems. Morris's decontextualization of the Bergen-Belsen image and Sivan's out-of-sequence chronology of the Eichmann trial fracture the concordance of archival truth to historical event and the sensational account which documentary photography gives it in relationship to memory. Morris's modified image, drawn from the archival index of horror, suggests a self-conscious ambiguity, if only to expose the archive's muteness, its social incommunicability as the rational voice of truth. Showing the prostrate figure of the woman lying in a field of what appears to be an aqueous liquid, as if recently exhumed or in the process of submersion, seems also to be a critical device for challenging contemporary culture's attentiveness to historical events; or, rather, contemporary art's active interpellation of history and document as a way of working through the difficult zone between trauma and memory. Morris and Sivan's separate interventions are jarring because they seek to examine this troubled zone, along with the power that archives exert on public memory.

Both projects draw from that vast *iconomy* of images to which the archive belongs. So thoroughly has the archive been domesticated that it has come to serve as a shorthand for memory; whether its images are lifted from newspapers and magazines or downloaded from digital cameras, it presses upon its users and viewers new kinds of ethical, social, political, and cultural relationships to information, history, and memory. Memories of the Holocaust have been passed down to us in a steady stream of testimonies, rituals of witnessing, narratives, films, museums, etc., but the principal knowledge of it, at least for the general public, has been largely visual. Here photographs serve as more than *representations* of the catastrophe; they have come to be seen as unmediated *evidence* of it.⁸⁰ All these considerations are part of the activity of artists insofar as the archival impulse has become a commonplace in contemporary art. The fascination with the archive, the inimitable madness of the archive, the constant return to it for verification, inspiration, and source, suggest not only a profound interest in the nature of the archival form found in photography and film but art's relationship to historical reflections on the past.

This exhibition is manifestly a conversation about such reflections. But it also articulates a kind of *punctum* in that reflection, between generations and genealogies of images, between modes of address and methods. It shows the diverse approaches, the traversed historical grounds, in which to reconsider the status of the archive. Fazal Sheikh's photographs from the series *The Victor Weeps: Afghanistan* (1998) push the archive toward an incommensurable zone of unbearable loss. Yet it remains a site of vigilance, and of defiance of the events that threaten to swallow up the individual's memories of loved ones, who seem to have been irretrievably lost but must be constantly remembered as emblems of injustice, nobility, and martyrdom. Against the edicts of forgetting, Sheikh's photographs of hands holding tiny passport images of lost or dead family members hover in the gray zone between remembrance and commemoration. The hands extend to the viewer images of sons and brothers, those who—the captions tell us, based on the testimony of their beloved—have been martyred. The hands reach out, as if to touch us with a searing memory, in gestures of affection that are nonetheless marked by the daunting affliction of death.⁸¹

Pushed in other directions, the archival form can become a temporal mechanism for enacting historical events, even—as this exhibition demonstrates—a vehicle for reconstituting history as self-conscious fiction. Such is the case of Walid Raad and The Atlas Group, whose ongoing inquiry into Lebanon's civil war of the 1970s to 1990s is a work of deep perplexity, wounding humor, and fantastic invention. While the Lebanese civil war may have been real, its history is a minefield of interpretation, subjected to constant manipulation by ideological and sectarian forces. Rather than draw us into an official documentary account, whose ultimate hermeneutic value will in any case be disputed by different factions, Raad / The Atlas Group direct us to the contradictions in the historical record and the methods that serve its varied accounts. Borrowing the conventions of the historical novel, the Atlas Group Archive deploys fictional characters—historians, interpreters, witnesses, and archivists—whose investigations and commentary illuminate the disputed terrain of the war's recollections. The *Fadl Fakhouri File*,⁸² for instance, consists of 225 notebooks and other “evidence” compiled by the wholly imaginary Lebanese historian Dr. Fakhouri of the thousands of car bombs detonated in Beirut during the war; Fakhouri's notebooks were “donated” to the Atlas Group Archive upon his death in 1993. *We can make rain, but no one came to ask* (2008), included in this exhibition, represents a turn toward abstraction as a strategy. Here the nearly illegible written “evidence” culled from a fictive car-bombing investigation floats in a sea of white topped by horizontal bands of enigmatic image fragments.

Lamia Joreige explores the impact of the same war on Lebanese memories in her video *Objects of War* (1999–2006). Rather than focus on images from photo albums, Joreige instead asked each of her subjects to select an object that represents for him or her a memory of the war and to speak about its importance. For one subject, the representative object is an old group photograph, for another a drawing of a house plan, for yet another a large blue plastic vessel. The objects trigger a deep archival

retrieval. Joreige's method elicits very personal testimonies that operate at the level of object relations and, while manifestly political, reveal a layer of lived experience that confounds official accounts of the war's history.

Homo Sovieticus: Postcommunist Archives

Archival returns are often conjoined with the struggle against amnesia and anomie. A heightened sense of urgency surrounds the demand to remember and commemorate in societies where social codes of communication have been historically unstable or preempted by state repression. Such conditions can produce tendencies to the excessive collectivization of memory, exercises in mass melancholy, and, when liberated from these conditions, attempts to recapture orders of normality that predate the shock of historical rupture and the loss of access to the archive. Diaries are published, formerly prohibited images emerge from the cellar, dissident films surface, testimonies of victims are heroically recast, attics are rummaged, boxes unburied. All these rituals of archival retrieval and performance have been a prominent feature of Eastern European societies since the fall of communism. In the former East Germany, for instance, the opening of the vast archives of the Stasi, the state secret police, precipitated a prolonged period of melancholic reflection and bitter controversy. In Poland, the right-wing government led by the Kaczyński brothers has taken a sinister, pseudo-legal approach to the past through the so-called law of lustration, an attempt to purge Poland's historical memory and political landscape of the taint of communist collaboration as well as undermine the moral position of the Kaczyńskis' political adversaries. Even Lech Walesa, former president of Poland and leader of Solidarity during the dissident rebellions of the late 1970s, has come under suspicion as a collaborator. These official attacks, in which the archive is perversely activated as a tool of *disremembering* in the service of official paranoia, constitute archival fascism. This is the exact opposite of the projects of Anri Sala, Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujica, and Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas, all of which deal with the collapse of the communist imperium and the archival legacy of that seismic break with the past.

Anri Sala's video *Intervista* (1998) begins like a detective story. Several years after the end of communism, Sala, a young Albanian art student studying in Paris, returns to Tirana to visit his parents. In their home, he finds an unprocessed 16mm film in plastic wrapping. The film dates to the communist era but neither of his parents can recall its contents or the circumstances of its making. With no access to a film projector, Sala examines the negative by hand and discovers images of his mother at about the age of thirty. His curiosity piqued, he takes the film back to Paris and proceeds to restore it. To his surprise, he discovers footage of his mother meeting Enver Hoxa, Albania's communist leader whose distrust of the West led him to literally seal the country off from the rest of the world. Even more startling is a scene of his mother delivering a speech to a Communist Party congress held in Albania in the

1970s. The speech, and the audience applause, are inaudible, as the film's sound reel is missing.

Will this fortuitous discovery unlock the secret of Albania's communist past for the artist? Determined to reconnect the visual archive to its proper temporal context, Sala employs lip readers from an Albanian school for the deaf to decipher his mother's speech and therefore provide the film with a more complete narrative, and implicitly its testimony. Once this is accomplished, he splices together the multiple frames of the original footage with subtitles. The reconstituted footage is then supplemented with videotaped conversations between Sala and his mother. This recursive interaction stages *Intervista* as an archive existing alongside a running commentary on its status as a historical object. The resulting video alternates between the black-and-white archival footage and the color video interviews, a shifting of temporal and historical positions between the communist past and the politically ambiguous present, between self and other, artist and mother, filmic image and its historical meaning. On another level, the back-and-forth also occurs between conditions of archival production and historical reception, between muteness and language, between image and memory. These relays and contextual changes impose a heavy burden on Sala's task as a filmmaker, who is now compelled to shift from the private world of familial affection to the arena of public confession. Is the mother to be judged as a collaborationist or a patriot? Can an intervention into the historical past such as Sala's video adequately convey the complexity of the political, social, and ideological pressures that young men and women of his mother's generation endured in a closed system?

These questions give the archive a new kind of interpretive structure, as the place to examine accounts of collective memory, one taken up in a more archaeological fashion by the Lithuanian artists Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas. In their multipart work *Transaction* (2002), the film archive frames an interrogation of the very conditions inherent in the reception of Soviet ideology and the subordination of what was deemed "Lithuanianess." The project began with an examination of more than fifty Lithuanian films made between 1947 and 1997, during the period of Soviet control of the cinematic apparatus. The artists explain:

Most of these films were produced in the ideological currents belonging to the Soviet period. Lenin's slogan on cinema as "of utmost importance of all the arts" was furthered by Stalin's statement: "cinema is illusion, although it dictates the life of its own laws." Having lived in a single-ideology-based mass culture that scripted the space of the *homo Sovieticus*, there is the question today as to what could have been "authentic," from product to state-of-being.⁸³

To read this transaction, as it were, a number of interlocutors—in this case, Lithuanian feminist intellectuals—were employed by the artists to, on the one hand, deconstruct the patriarchal structure of communist society and, on the other, explore the purported "authenticity" of the Lithuanian feminine

voice. Moving back and forth between the old film archives and their translation into the present, the artists point to a conundrum of the Soviet legacy and contemporary Lithuanian ambivalence that must remain a vital aspect of the assessment of the films, both as a means of excavating the communist past and of building a post-Soviet, postcommunist national allegory. This dialectic directs our attention to the fact that, although communism has disappeared from the political culture of Lithuania, its social and cultural repercussions remain.

In a 1970 recording, avant-garde African American musician and poet Gil Scott-Heron proclaimed: "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised."⁸⁴ Released at the height of the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, and the radical political projects of American countercultures, the recording represented one of the most astute critiques and dissections of the media spectacle in relation to radical expressions of political subjectivity. Twenty years later, the filmmakers Harun Farocki and Andrea Ujica stood that formulation on its head. *Videograms of a Revolution* (1993) not only refutes conventional models of media critique and theories of spectacle, it exploits the techniques of spectacle as a tool with which to construct and view history.

Videograms is a montage drawn from 125 hours of amateur and professional archival video footage shot during the ten days of the Romanian Revolution. At a pivotal moment in the uprising, captured on camera and included in *Videograms*, the gathered revolutionaries declared: "We are victorious! The TV is with us." And so it was. As the film oscillates between television anchors reporting the shifting and indeterminate events, and sweeping views of crowds marching through the streets and battling security forces, it appears that the revolution is literally broadcast live, with every Romanian a participant in the spectacle. The result is a film that harks back to Sergei Eisenstein's *October* (1927). *Videograms* is structured with the same methods of editing and montage used by Eisenstein to transform the events of the 1917 Russian Revolution into a film that expresses the subjectivity of popular sentiment. Intercutting professional footage, television studio broadcasts, and raw data recorded by amateurs camped out on the streets, Farocki and Ujica use the archive to rework the relationship between power and popular forms of representation in a mode that moves beyond spectacle and instead utilizes the expressive instruments of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque,⁸⁵ elaborating forms of theatrical heteroglossia, the grotesque, critical dialogism. Fusing all of these modes of multiple voicing and subject position, Farocki and Ujica offer a penetrating insight into the televised revolution as an example of intertextual filmmaking.

The Ethnographic Conditions of the Archive

The assumption that archival forms have specific mnemonic functions and hold a key to the door of historical experience also pertains to what may be designated as the archive's ethnographic condi-

tion. Be it the scripted spaces of *homo Sovieticus* or the drive toward the amassment of snapshots, domestic photography allows us to see the archive as a site where society and its habits are given shape. Archives constitute an economy of production, exchange, and transmission of images. Or, as Terry Smith's neologism describes it, an *iconomy*. This economy of icons, images, and signs exists in a murky sensorium, blanketing the social and cultural landscape. The archive today rests in a state of historical incarceration, played out in media experiences, museums of art, natural history, and ethnography, in old libraries,⁸⁶ in memorabilia concessions, as popular entertainment, in historical reenactments, as monuments and memorials, in private albums, on computer hard drives. This field of production might be described, in the manner of Pierre Bourdieu, as a cultural habitus,⁸⁷ an ethnographic condition. Under this condition, artists enact the archival fantasy as well as the archontic⁸⁸ function of the historian, translator, curator, pedagogue. These functions also include the compulsive hoardings and accumulations that defy the temporal legibility around which certain archival projects, such as that of Jef Geys, are organized. Derrida's designation for this ethnographic condition is *archive fever*. It is from this sense of the feverish, maddening attention to the archive that this exhibition derives its operating set of idioms.

The projects of Zoe Leonard, Lorna Simpson, Sherrie Levine, Vivan Sundaram, Glenn Ligon, Thomas Ruff, and Tacita Dean operate around the conditions of visual ethnography, especially as each of the works formulates a temporal and iconographic assessment of the archival past. Each of these projects is concerned with the status of images as materials of cultural transaction and exchange. Tacita Dean's *Floh* (2000)⁸⁹ lends ethnographic insight into the production of domestic photography. Accumulated over a period of seven years from secondhand bins in flea markets across Europe and the United States, the 163 images that comprise *Floh* can be generally categorized as amateur rather than professional photography. They are consistent with types of images common to most domestic photographic production: portraits of individuals and groups (some quasi-institutional), pictures of objects, vacation shots, snapshots of pets or family. They are what Mark Godfrey calls "species of found photography."⁹⁰ However, though "found" in the conventional sense, these images were carefully selected and resourced for the specificity of their cultural meanings, as much as for their typological differentiations between image species. Though the line between amateur and "fine art" photography is indeed blurred, the so-called de-skilling of the photographic in contemporary art is not at issue here;⁹¹ the concerns of this accumulated cache are fundamentally cultural, and specifically ethnographic in nature. Wielding a sophisticated curatorial acumen, Dean uses *Floh* to demonstrate the logic of the "artist as ethnographer."⁹²

Thomas Ruff belongs to that small group of German artists whose systematic rethinking of the photographic image emerged from the master classes of Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Düsseldorf Academy beginning in the late 1970s; the other members of this group are Candida Höfer, Andreas Gursky, and Thomas Struth. Since the mid-1980s, these artists have devoted their practice to explor-

ing new formats for conceptual approaches to image making, in a kind of renewal of the Neue Sachlichkeit principles of objective observation developed in Germany in the 1920s by photographers ranging from August Sander to Albert Renger-Patzsch. The idea of direct, unmediated recording of objects was given a serial, conceptual rigor in the Bechers' photographs of flat, unmodulated images of industrial structures on the verge of obsolescence. To this aesthetic Ruff's generation responded with images that, despite their variety, combine a dry, reductive documentary sensibility and ethnographic subject matter. Of the Bechers' former students, all of whom have developed their own critical language, Ruff's approach to photography is the most heterogeneous. Recently, his concerns have shifted to photography's socially embedded contexts, in other words, to the archival aggregates in which formats of photography have been organized, such as picture files drawn from Internet pornographic sites from which Ruff produced his *Nudes* series.

Machines (2003) continues Ruff's interest in investigating the cultural values, and the corresponding aesthetic and social meanings, embedded in the archive. Like Dean's *Floh*, gathered from the detritus of the photographic economy, Ruff's *Machines* are "found" images, obtained by acquiring the photographic archives of Rohde und Dörrenberg, a defunct machine and tool company that operated in Düsseldorf-Oberkassel.⁹³ While Dean leaves her images largely in the state in which they are found, Ruff intervenes in the archive, making clear its status as an object of ethnographic and anthropological interest, as well as endowing it with epistemological and aesthetic functions. By scanning, cropping, coloring, enlarging, and generating significantly larger prints than were initially produced for the brochure of the company's product line, Ruff invests the machines with a totemic presence. Writing about this body of work, Caroline Flosdorff observes that "the context in which Ruff's photographs are now shown is no longer bound to a particular objective (product photography, advertising photography) . . ." ⁹⁴ This shift in context, from product brochure to art photography, is rife with ambivalence: having turned the machines into decontextualized pictorial objects, Ruff enhances their photographic presence. The machines lose all specificity as objects of ethnographic fascination. They have become iconic markers of industrial fetishization. Although his reading of the images deviates from the dry, direct, and seemingly unmediated subjectivity of the Bechers' work, it is in this juncture between decontextualization and fetishization that Ruff's *Machines* most resemble his teachers' blast furnaces, grain silos, and mine shafts, as they provide a glimpse into a distant industrial past.

Lorna Simpson's layered works encompass the archaeological, the archival, and the forensic. The language of her pictorial analysis always seems to play out in the interstices of the historical and psychic constitution of the black subject. As such, the theoretical and conceptual horizon of her complex examination of race and identity takes on two concomitant structures of archivization: on the one hand, the manner in which the body of the black subject is culturally marked through the process of what Frantz Fanon terms epidermalization,⁹⁵ the idea that race is literally inscribed on the skin; and, on the other hand, the way such marking is reproduced and documented in social and cultural practices

such as the cinema, art, and literature. Moreover, Simpson's practice often rigorously specifies the importance of a Foucauldian archaeology of knowledge as a means through which the archival relationship between the black subject and American culture is shorn of sentimentality, and instead revealed as a source for understanding the codes of the racialized image in popular culture. Working sometimes under the auspices of the artist as ethnographer, her concerns are informed by an analysis of the archival remains of what Toni Morrison describes as American Africanism,⁹⁶ that is, the relationship between race and identity in historical representations of blackness in American high art and popular entertainment.⁹⁷

The photographic works included here—*Untitled (guess who's coming to dinner)* (2001) and *Study* (2002)—are embedded in this landscape generated from popular depictions and, as Simpson would insist, the misperceptions proper to the discourse of misrepresentations that produce stereotypes of black subjects. In both works, Simpson adopts the photographic studio as the place to construct what will turn out to be an archival realignment, one describing the gulf between the portrayed black subjects—a woman in *Untitled* and a man in *Study*, each photographed in a profile style reminiscent of nineteenth-century portraits—and the scenes of representation found in American films and art. *Untitled* undertakes this structural repositioning by way of aligning the forty-three oval portraits in vertical rows underneath semitransparent Plexiglas. Incised on the left and right sides of the Plexiglas surface are titles of American films produced from the turn of the twentieth century to the late 1960s. The same strategy obtains in *Study*, but here the titles are taken from paintings in which the black male figures as subject or object—underscored by such titles as *Study of a Black Man*, *A Negro Prince*, *African Youth*. Each of the documented paintings is to be found in the collection of an American museum. In this body of work, Simpson takes a counter-ethnographic approach as a way of entering the archive of the American imagination. Similarly, she has recently turned to the thriving online economy of ebay auctions, where she has been researching and acquiring institutional films produced during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In *Jackie* (2007), she uses footage from one such film—a three-minute interval in which a teacher instructs a young white boy to draw on a piece of paper—to address the invisible ways in which mental health institutions retrain certain segments of the American population.

The ethnographic conditions of the archive, especially one dependent on the language of appropriation, have consistently animated the critical paradigm of a range of postconceptual photographic practices. Appropriation was at the forefront of the postmodernist dialectic in contemporary art that sought to obliterate the space between an original and its copy. In so doing, it called into question the relevance of the modernist category of the author, the author being, in its etymological sense, the source of authority, of certainty. Archives, as I have indicated, are likewise dependent on the function of their manifest authority as the principal source of historical truth. Glenn Ligon's biting critique of Robert Mapplethorpe's homoerotic photographs of black men in *The Black Book* resides in this gap

between authorship and authority, original and copy. In *Notes on the Margin of the Black Book* (1991–93), Ligon engages in a concerted deconstruction of Mapplethorpe's objectification of the black male body as a signal source of sexual stereotyping by using a series of textual commentaries drawn from theorists and commentators such as James Baldwin, Isaac Julien, Kobena Mercer, Richard Dyer, Essex Hemphill, and Frantz Fanon. Positioned in double rows beneath the images, the text panels describe the contested ground of this complex issue. Originally, the relationship of white enjoyment to debasement of black male sexuality was not Ligon's only concern in this work. He was equally interested in tackling the homophobic invective spewed by right-wing politicians and fundamentalist Christians, and its circumscription of gay male sexual agency.⁹⁸ However, over time, the troubled relationship between race and sexuality, the black male as a popular ethnographic object in American discourse, became the centerpiece of his analysis. At the same time, the problem of authorship shadows the license taken by Ligon in using Mapplethorpe's images, drawn directly from the pages of *The Black Book*. Here, conventional issues of authorship must be weighed against the archival methodologies of cultural analysis. In testing the assumption of the putative aura of Mapplethorpe's conservative brand of studio photography, the postmodern work of appropriation echoes Benjamin's explicit point to suggest that what withers is the aura of Mapplethorpe's iconography of black male sexuality.⁹⁹ Ligon's reading of Mapplethorpe is against the grain, setting it off-kilter, placing *The Black Book* in archival remand.

The issues surrounding postmodernist appropriation, and critiques of authorship and aura,¹⁰⁰ are central to Sherrie Levine's daring, seminal deconstructions of the modernist myths of originality¹⁰¹ in many of her refabrications of well-known works by a gallery of male artistic eminences. Levine's *After Walker Evans* (1981) is a controversial work because its principal conceptual strategy goes beyond simple appropriation, bluntly challenging the authenticity of a work of art, the nature of authorship itself, and the sanctity of copyrighted material. It must be acknowledged that Levine's rephotographing of Walker Evans's Farm Security Administration (FSA) images was a deliberate provocation, both in its straightforward archival referencing, confounding likeness and resemblance,¹⁰² and, more profoundly, in the silent power of its analysis of the somber fetishization of impoverishment. In a single cut, one is able to go from Evans's work as a set of documentary photographs, with implications¹⁰³ of their ethnographic content writ large, to the very nature of their treatment by Levine as so much archival artifact.

In other words, Evans may be the photographer of these works but not the singular author of the social and cultural phenomenon that engendered them. Looming over the field of representation in which the images of the tenant farmers and their families are contained is a cultural *Weltanschauung*, one which belongs to the archival memory of the American Depression of the 1930s. Given this tension between authorship and aura, and the explicit deconstruction of both in Levine's work, it is striking that Howard Singerman would make an argument for the explicit authorial and auratic character of

After Walker Evans as a singular work, an object to be seen, an object that can be detached from its framing referent—the work of Walker Evans. Singerman writes that Levine's work challenges the notion of it being mere appropriation or a ghost object by maintaining a distinction: "Against what I perceived as the reduction of the work to its strategy, I wanted to insist that there was something to look at, an object, and more than that, an image that must be taken into account."¹⁰⁴ This claim for Levine's archival project is at odds with dominant theories that reference Benjamin, and, in my view, a unique way of reading Levine's *After Walker Evans* under the explicit manufacture of an archival artifact.

Appropriation and parody are key devices in many uses of the archive. Here, it is important to foreground the operative logic of these projects and the ethnographic methods underlying them. Zoe Leonard's *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* (1993–96) draws from a radically different methodological process, namely through the combination of object, story, and parodic invocation of the archive as the space of lost or forgotten stories. *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* imagines the existence of such an archive of lost stories moldering in trunk boxes in damp basements. Leonard, in collaboration with filmmaker Cheryl Dunye, stages an archival ruse through scripting, casting, staging, and performing the life of an imaginary black Hollywood actress Fae Richards (née Richardson), whose accomplishments have disappeared into the pit of American cultural amnesia, no doubt because of her blackness. In the seventy-eight images that comprise this work, we follow Richards's carefully annotated story from the earliest images of her as a teenager in Philadelphia in the early 1920s, to her heyday as a screen ingenue in the 1930s and '40s, to the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, to the final image of her as an older woman in 1973.

Richards is accompanied by a range of other people: siblings, lovers, friends. Costume, styling, lighting, photographic mood, and the studios where the images were supposedly photographed are designed to correspond to the period being referenced, that is to say, to the archive's specific ethnographic climate. Each image is coupled with a caption typed on a vintage typewriter; misspellings are periodically noted in the typed scripts to indicate where, for example, the typewriter skipped a line or dropped a letter. Handwritten notations add another layer of authenticity to this exacting commentary on lost history and memory. A typical caption includes a detailed annotation fleshing out the characters in the photograph. For example, in a sequence of photographs identified as 4, 42, and 43, the caption reads: "Fae Richards as photographed by Max Hetzl (Monsieur Max). 1938. Max was the in-house photographer for Silverstar Studio and also a good friend of Fae's. Fae posed for these photographs privately, in an attempt to show H. R. Ransin, the studio head, that she could play a leading lady. The studio never allowed these photographs to be released, claiming they 'clashed' with the 'Watermelon Woman' image. Ransin offered x Miss Richards more money and a new contract to appear as a mammy in another Southern melodrama, but she refused." The caption for images 39 and 40 reads: "Fae Richards (center), as she appeared in a screentest for the film 'Merry-Go-Round,' which was never completed. Under pressure from both Fae Richards and Martha Page to give

Vivan Sundaram, "Red" Indians, 2002

Gelatin silver print

15 x 20 in. (38.1 x 50.8 cm)

Courtesy SEPIA and the artist

Richards a 'leading lady' role, the character of a young vaudeville dancer was written into the screenplay. Willa Clarke (on Fae's right) was cast as Fae's dance partner and sidekick. The script went through numerous revisions and the title was changed to 'That Voodoo Magic.' Fae's part was cut back to little more than a cameo, with her dancing in several different 'jungle' costumes while Cassandra Brooke sang the title song, originally written for Fae. Fae left Silverstar Studio during filming, breaking her contract and severing all ties with Hollywood, including her relationship with Martha Page. (1938)." Period authenticity is further augmented by giving the resulting photographs a treatment of patina—intentionally aged, ripped and serrated at the corners, cracked, or sepia-toned with a hint of solarization. These strategies are intended to enhance the believability of the overall work but, contradictorily, they highlight its produced nature, not least because Leonard shows viewers the casting list of the characters.

Whereas the archive is turned into a parody of historical unity and an instrument of social identification in Leonard's work, it is leveraged elsewhere as a form of melancholic return. This is certainly the impression one derives from viewing Vivan Sundaram's images in *The Sher-Gil Archive* (1995–97),¹⁰⁵



a work that simultaneously evokes the family album and scraps of found photographs. *The Sher-Gil Archive* details the story of Sundaram's family in turn-of-the-twentieth-century India and Europe, tracing an arc from colonialism to postcolonialism. It is both a public commemoration and an inquiry into identity and the meaning of bonds that tie family to race and nationality. The images are drawn from the rich photographic archive of the family patriarch, Umrao Singh Sher-Gil, the artist's grandfather, a Sanskrit scholar who over many years took turns at the camera photographing himself and his family. To construct this archival meditation, as well as mnemonic mediation, all the images are printed from the patriarch's negatives and photographs. Sundaram uses well-worn devices of presentation: boxes, a line of closely arranged photographs, and four lightboxes each bearing an image of a member of the Sher-Gil family, with their names etched onto the glass cover of the box. The images consist of the patriarch; the matriarch, his Hungarian wife, Marie Antoinette; and two daughters, Amrita Sher-Gil, who will become a modernist artist in Paris, and Indira Sundaram, Vivan's mother. Through these links, the archive unfolds a narrative journey of loss and desire, of the twists and turns of wandering between India and Europe, its evocation of cosmopolitan pleasure laced with ambivalence. Sundaram's work of memory is also a sly peek into the circumstances of a hybrid Indian family that allows the archive to question the issue of authenticity, especially in the manner in which the archive often serves to classify and unify concerns of disparate provenance, be it of race, ethnicity, or nationality.

Throughout this essay, we have been exploring the various conditions of the archive, particularly as it pertains to photography. Despite the degeneration of the photograph under the rapacious machines of mass media, its banalization in popular culture, and its cult of sentimentality, taken together these works probe the complex interests artists have developed, the conceptual strategies used to transform the evidentiary and documentary modes of archival materials into profound reflections on the historical condition. In his incisive reading of Richter's *Atlas*, Buchloh noted the "post-humanist and post-bourgeois subjectivity" informing the work.¹⁰⁶ This observation can be applied to the works organized under the auspices of *Archive Fever* as well. On a different level, a noticeable humanist concern drives the analyses found in individual projects. This dialectic structured by humanist and posthumanist traditions casts the whole range of archival production within an epistemological context that far exceeds the issues of taxonomies, typologies, and inventories generated by the artists. Here, "the telling of history as a sequence of events acted out by individual agents is displaced by a focus on the simultaneity of separate but contingent social frameworks and an infinity of participating agents, and the process of history is reconceived as a structural system of perpetually changing interactions and permutations between economic and ecological givens, class formations and their ideologies, and the resulting types of social and cultural interactions specific to each particular moment."¹⁰⁷ Within *Archive Fever*, the artist serves as the historic agent of memory, while the archive emerges as a place in which concerns with the past are touched by the astringent vapors of death,

destruction, and degeneration. Yet, against the tendency of contemporary forms of amnesia whereby the archive becomes a site of lost origins and memory is dispossessed, it is also within the archive that acts of remembering and regeneration occur, where a suture between the past and present is performed, in the indeterminate zone between event and image, document and monument.

December 5, 2007

¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 129.

² Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).

³ Quoted in Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), p. viii.

⁴ See the chapter, "The Surplus Value of Images," in W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 76–106.

⁵ See Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enl. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).

⁶ Increasingly, digital archives, especially from mobile phones, have become the new technology of candid camera transmission. In cases of serious events, such as the suicide terror attack in the London Underground in 2005, the first images of trapped passengers were obtained from a passenger who recorded them on his mobile phone camera. This development contains the implication of displacing the roving documentary photographer, as users respond to situations where professional journalists may not be present.

⁷ For a critical and extensive discussion of the photographic archive, see Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, edited by Richard Bolton (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 343–89.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

⁹ For an excellent study of the history of Duchamp's *La boîte-en-valise* as an occasion to think simultaneously on the legacy of the archival form in artistic practice, its relationship to the ordering of knowledge, and the practice of self-curation, taxonomy, and the dispersal of the archival form, see T. J. Demos, *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007).

¹⁰ For a fascinating exploration of the relationship between the museum and the archive, see Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).

¹¹ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 130.

¹² *Ibid.* (emphasis in original).

¹³ For discussions on the impact of Broodthaers's practice, see Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, ed., *Marcel Broodthaers* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988).

¹⁴ See Rosalind Krauss, "A Voyage on the North Sea": *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000).

- ¹⁵ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*: The Anomic Archive," *October* 88 (Spring 1999), p. 118.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- ¹⁹ Lynne Cooke, *Gerhard Richter: Atlas*, exh. brochure, Dia Center for the Arts, New York, 1995, unpag.
- ²⁰ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 127.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.
- ²² Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 5.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.* (emphasis in original).
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (Fall 2004), pp. 3–22.
- ²⁹ See the catalogue to the remarkable exhibition *Deep Storage*, a project which traces the complex methodological processes of archiving in contemporary art: Ingrid Schaffner and Matthias Winzen, eds., *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing, and Archiving in Art* (Munich: Prestel, 1998). This collection of essays provides insight into the multiplicity of epistemological, historiographical, archaeological, curatorial, and even ethnographic strategies often deployed by artists using the form of the archive to coax a miscellany of objects and images into an overarching view of cultural history. The antecedent of this form of collecting and archiving is the fifteenth-century *Wunderkammer*, a structure of archive making often credited as the origin of the museum function of collecting and display. For a penetrating theoretical and historical reflection on the questions and problems of the archive, see the essay in *Deep Storage* by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Warburg's Paragon? The End of Collage and Photomontage in Postwar Europe," pp. 50–60.
- ³⁰ Today a veritable industry of publications has sprouted to analyze the intelligence, to analyze the analysis, to study the "intelligence" infrastructure. For an insider's view and a discussion of the battle between the U.N. inspectors and the U.S. administration on the case for war, see Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), a book published by the U.N. chief weapons investigator a year after the war began.
- ³¹ At the peak of the planning for the war, when President Bush needed confirmation that the evidence supporting the U.S. administration's contention that Iraq was not in compliance with a United Nations resolution prohibiting it from conducting or producing a weapons program, the director of the CIA, George Tenet, supposedly declared that the existence of evidence of Iraq's noncompliance was a "slam dunk." See Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004). In his recent memoir, Tenet refutes the allegation that he made such a categorical statement concerning the Iraqi weapons program, contending that his statement was manipulated to mean something he did not actually say. See George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).
- ³² See, for example, Mark Danner, "The Secret Way to War," *New York Review of Books*, June 9, 2005, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/18034>, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/18131>, and <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/18180>.
- ³³ See Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993). This is one of the most fascinating and ingenious interpretations of Victorian literature as it is preoccupied with the archival production (what Richards calls "paper shuffling") of empire in works such as Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, H. G. Wells's *Tono-Bungay*, and Erskine Childer's *The Riddle of the Sands*.
- ³⁴ Richards, *The Imperial Archive*, p. 116.
- ³⁵ See Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha, 1994), pp. 329–32.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 330–31. For an official report of the intelligence work of the pundits which created the data on which the map of Tibet was subsequently put together by the British, see T. G. Montgomerie, "Report of the Trans-Himalayan Explorations Made during 1868," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 14, no. 3 (1869–70), pp. 207–14; for the most famous literary treatment of imperial information society and the archive systems it supported, see Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*.
- ³⁷ Here it is important to note the turn taken from *classification*, as a method of organizing according to a system, to *classified*, as a method of wielding proprietary control over knowledge and information.
- ³⁸ Richards, *The Imperial Archive*, p. 6.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ⁴¹ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 4.
- ⁴² Foster, "An Archival Impulse," p. 3.
- ⁴³ See, for example, the catalogue of the exhibition *Out of Actions: Paul Schimmel, Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1998).
- ⁴⁴ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 7.
- ⁴⁵ For a discussion of the relation of the art object or image and historical time, see George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).
- ⁴⁶ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 7 (emphasis in original).
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ For a fuller consideration of Horsfield's method, see Carol Armstrong, "The Dilation of Attention: On the Work of Craigie Horsfield," *Artforum* (January 2004), pp. 116–21, and "The Art of Sensuous Apprehension," in *Craigie Horsfield: Relation*, edited by Catherine de Zegher (Paris: Jeu de Paume; Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian; Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2006).
- ⁴⁹ In a recent essay, the critic Nancy Princenthal makes a similar observation of the way Horsfield's work functions within what she characterizes as "Slow Time." See Nancy Princenthal, "Slow Time," *Art in America* 95 (May 2007), pp. 164–69.

- ⁵⁰ See Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, translated by C. K. Scott-Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, revised by D. J. Enright (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992).
- ⁵¹ Scott Watson, "Against the Habitual," in Scott Watson, Diana Thater, and Carol J. Clover, *Stan Douglas* (London: Phaidon Press, 1998), p. 46.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- ⁵³ Jean-Christophe Royoux, "The Conflict of Communications," in *Stan Douglas*, edited by Christine van Assche (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1993), p. 57.
- ⁵⁴ For an analysis connected to the Lacanian idea of trauma as the underpinning theory that prepares a critical reading of Warhol's so-called *Death in America* series, see Hal Foster, "Death in America," *October* 75 (Winter 1996), pp. 37–59. See also Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).
- ⁵⁵ See Anne Wagner, "Warhol Paints History, or Race in America," *Representations* 55 (Summer 1996), pp. 98–119.
- ⁵⁶ Foster characterizes Warhol's work as "traumatic realism." See "Return of the Real," in Hal Foster, *Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 127–68.
- ⁵⁷ Wagner, "Warhol Paints History," p. 103.
- ⁵⁸ See Thomas Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," *Art in America* 75 (May 1987), pp. 128–36; updated version in *Reconstructing Modernism*, edited by Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 31–32.
- ⁵⁹ Wagner, "Warhol Paints History," p. 113.
- ⁶⁰ The source image for *Untitled (Death by Gun)* came from a searing dramatization of the carnage exacted by gunshots in a single week reported in the pages of *Time*, July 17, 1989. Beginning with the black-and-white photograph of Evelyn Wiggins, forty-four, a mother of four killed by her husband with a shotgun after an argument in Birmingham, Alabama, ending with Steve Toomer, twenty-five, shot to death in his truck by an unknown killer, the roll call of each death was memorialized and given a rare national focus, thereby detaching these specific victims from the anonymity of daily traumatic events.
- ⁶¹ The term was coined by Terry Smith in *The Architecture of Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). According to Smith, the iconomy "underline[s] the central importance to human affairs of the image economy, that is, the symbolic exchanges between people, things, ideas, interest groups, and cultures that take predominantly visual form" (pp. 1–2). He goes on to construe such image economy as "more than the dense image manipulation that prevails in cultures predicated on conspicuous and incessant consumption" (p. 2).
- ⁶² Feldmann's work has been framed as issuing from an "anti-aesthetic" context based on the low character of the images he employs and the lack of fetishistic regard he accords them. Yet it is possible to observe that works like *Die Toten*—a reflection on media images, especially in newspapers and magazines, documenting the terror, murders, assassinations, and suicides in Germany initiated by radical leftist groups such as the Baader-Meinhof in the 1970s and early '80s—in its detailed collection of the documentation reported in the media, does not take a neutral, disinterested stance. The charged context of the events lends the images the quality of political commentary, even if Feldmann deliberately sought not to distinguish between victims and perpetrators in his arrangement of the images. The oft-stated claim that photography has lost its special character of appeal because we have become inured to the bombardment of images in the media is an oversimplification of the power of images as signs of collective public discourse. Though Feldmann's work operates within this field of skepticism, it is important to note that his interests extend from the banal and kitsch to the profoundly ethical. This is certainly the issue that must be confronted in *9/12 Front Page*.
- ⁶³ Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*," p. 133.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- ⁶⁵ Richard Hobbs, "Boltanski's Visual Archives," *History of the Human Sciences* 11, no. 4 (1998), p. 127.
- ⁶⁶ For a detailed treatment of Boltanski's oeuvre, see Lynn Gumpert, *Christian Boltanski* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994).
- ⁶⁷ One book that I have found especially cogent in recent discussions of the archive is a work by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, whose philosophical analysis of the Holocaust and the memories that bear on its reflection is part of an extended interpretation of the question of "Bare Life." See Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).
- ⁶⁸ For an extensive discussion of the influence of the documentary footage and photographs of Bergen-Belsen taken by the British Army's Film and Photographic Unit, see Suzanne Bardgett and David Cesarani, eds., *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives* (London and Portland, Ore.: Valentine Mitchell, 2006).
- ⁶⁹ Toby Haggith, "The Filming of the Liberation of Bergen-Belsen and Its Impact on the Understanding of the Holocaust," in Bardgett and Cesarani, eds., *Belsen 1945*, p. 89.
- ⁷⁰ My attention was drawn to this image and the work of Robert Morris by Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), although her treatment of Morris's complex interpretation of the photograph of the dead mother found in the camp proves ultimately generic.
- ⁷¹ For a thorough critical assessment of the psychic impact of the firebombing of German cities by Allied air forces, see W. G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* (New York: Random House, 2003).
- ⁷² W. J. T. Mitchell, "Word, Image, and Object: Wall Labels for Robert Morris," in *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 251.
- ⁷³ See Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflection on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000). Finkelstein's study met with hostile reception from both liberals and conservatives.
- ⁷⁴ Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, p. 251.
- ⁷⁵ Eichmann was captured in Argentina by Israeli agents. His trial in

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Jerusalem ended with a sentence of death, making him the only Nazi war criminal to be executed in Israel, which had outlawed the death penalty.

⁷⁶ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963). Arendt covered the trial in Jerusalem for *The New Yorker*, subsequently extending the reportage as a meditation on what we mean by evil and the aporia that the Holocaust represents as the unrepresentable, as that which cannot be fully encapsulated.

⁷⁷ Gal Raz, "Actuality of Banality: Eyal Sivan's *The Specialist* in Context," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24, no. 1 (Fall 2005), p. 9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷⁹ Raz points out that some critics of *The Specialist* have accused the filmmaker of literal "fraud, forgery and falsification." On this issue she cites Hillel Tryster, the director of Steven Spielberg's Jewish Film Archive, for whom "the original footage of the trial was manipulatively edited by Sivan in a way that insults the witnesses and is unfaithful to the testimonies." *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ See Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004).

⁸¹ My thanks to Eduardo Cadava, whose brilliant lecture "Palm Reading: Fazal Sheikh's Handbook of Death," at San Francisco Art Institute, alerted me to the implications of this aspect of Sheikh's work, and ultimately led to the inclusion of these photographs in the exhibition.

⁸² See this and other documents in the Atlas Group Archive at <http://www.theatlasgroup.org/aga.html>.

⁸³ Nomedá and Gediminas Urbonas, artist statement.

⁸⁴ The entire poem reads:

You will not be able to stay home, brother.
You will not be able to plug in, turn on and cop out.
You will not be able to lose yourself on skag and skip,
Skip out for beer during commercials,
Because the revolution will not be televised.

The revolution will not be televised.
The revolution will not be brought to you by Xerox
In 4 parts without commercial interruptions.
The revolution will not show you pictures of Nixon
blowing a bugle and leading a charge by John
Mitchell, General Abrams and Spiro Agnew to eat
hog maws confiscated from a Harlem sanctuary.
The revolution will not be televised.

The revolution will not be brought to you by the
Schaefer Award Theatre and will not star Natalie
Woods and Steve McQueen or Bullwinkle and Julia.
The revolution will not give your mouth sex appeal.
The revolution will not get rid of the nubs.
The revolution will not make you look five pounds
thinner, because the revolution will not be televised, Brother.

There will be no pictures of you and Willie May
pushing that shopping cart down the block on the dead run,
or trying to slide that color television into a stolen ambulance.
NBC will not be able to predict the winner at 8:32
or report from 29 districts.
The revolution will not be televised.

There will be no pictures of pigs shooting down
brothers in the instant replay.
There will be no pictures of pigs shooting down
brothers in the instant replay.
There will be no pictures of Whitney Young being
run out of Harlem on a rail with a brand new process.
There will be no slow motion or still life of Roy
Wilkins strolling through Watts in a Red, Black and
Green liberation jumpsuit that he had been saving
For just the proper occasion.

Green Acres, The Beverly Hillbillies, and Hooterville
Junction will no longer be so damned relevant, and
women will not care if Dick finally gets down with
Jane on Search for Tomorrow because Black people
will be in the street looking for a brighter day.
The revolution will not be televised.

There will be no highlights on the eleven o'clock
news and no pictures of hairy armed women
liberationists and Jackie Onassis blowing her nose.
The theme song will not be written by Jim Webb,
Francis Scott Key, nor sung by Glen Campbell, Tom
Jones, Johnny Cash, Engelbert Humperdinck, or the Rare Earth.
The revolution will not be televised.

The revolution will not be right back after a message
about a white tornado, white lightning, or white people.
You will not have to worry about a dove in your
bedroom, a tiger in your tank, or the giant in your toilet bowl.
The revolution will not go better with Coke.
The revolution will not fight the germs that may cause bad breath.
The revolution *will* put you in the driver's seat.

The revolution will not be televised, will not be televised,
will not be televised, will not be televised.
The revolution will be no re-run brothers;
The revolution will be LIVE.

Gil Scott-Heron, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," in *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*, Flying Dutchman Productions, 1970.

⁸⁵ See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

⁸⁶ See, for example, Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998).

- ⁸⁷ See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
- ⁸⁸ Derrida describes the function of the archon as that of the work of the keeper, the trustee, and the authority who presides over the archival field: "archontic power . . . gathers the functions of unification, of identification, of classification, must be paired with . . . the power of *consignation*." Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 3.
- ⁸⁹ See Tacita Dean, *Floh* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2001). *Floh* is the German term for flea market, suggesting that the initial site for the accumulation of the 163 images was Germany, a likely supposition since Dean lives and works in Berlin.
- ⁹⁰ See Mark Godfrey, "Photography Found and Lost: On Tacita Dean's *Floh*," *October* 114 (Fall 2005), pp. 90–119.
- ⁹¹ Godfrey (ibid.) devotes a lengthy part of his otherwise fine essay to this issue of "de-skilling," a term with a great deal of ambiguity, and to wit, inappropriate given the lengthy interventions into the photographic medium since its inception.
- ⁹² See Hal Foster's influential essay, "The Artist as Ethnographer," in *Return of the Real*, pp. 171–203.
- ⁹³ Caroline Flosdorff, "Time Machines: Concepts of Reality in Thomas Ruff's Cycle *Machines*," in *Thomas Ruff: Machines*, edited by Caroline Flosdorff and Veit Görner (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2003), pp. 7–18.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 12.
- ⁹⁵ The importance of this concept, first introduced by Fanon in 1952, continues to reverberate and has been a theoretical influence in the work of artists such as Lorna Simpson and Glenn Ligon. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).
- ⁹⁶ See Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).
- ⁹⁷ For further discussion of these issues in Simpson's work, see Okwui Enwezor, "Repetition and Differentiation: Lorna Simpson's Iconography of the Racial Sublime," in *Lorna Simpson* (New York: Abrams, 2006), pp. 102–31.
- ⁹⁸ See also the discussion of the homoerotic implications of this work in Richard Meyer, "Borrowed Voices: Glenn Ligon and the Force of Language," in *Glenn Ligon: Un/becoming*, edited by Judith Tannenbaum (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1997), pp. 13–35.
- ⁹⁹ Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," p. 221.
- ¹⁰⁰ Benjamin (ibid.) discusses the implications of aura and indirectly authorship whereby, by freeing the hand from constituting a work directly, the mechanical apparatus engenders new modes of receivership for considerations of what a work of art is. Prior to this, Benjamin says, "The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity" (p. 220). The archival appropriation of existing images, through the act of rephotographing, evinces another layer in the course of diminishing aura.
- ¹⁰¹ Rosalind Krauss's important book, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), is one of the many forms of criticism developed along the lines of Benjamin's thought. In her powerful writings, Krauss has given this line of thinking a deeply reflexive reading in relation to contemporary art.
- ¹⁰² On this level, the recourse is to think of these images as "inauthentic," as "fake" Walker Evanses, thereby amplifying and glorifying the superiority of the putative original as a work of unique artistic vision.
- ¹⁰³ According to Howard Singerman, these implications have been all but repressed by certain types of writing around the work, namely in essays by Lincoln Kirstein, Lloyd Fonvielle, and Beaumont Newhall. See Howard Singerman, "Seeing Sherrie Levine," *October* 67 (Winter 1994), pp. 78–107.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 80.
- ¹⁰⁵ For further discussions of this work, see Vivan Sundaram, *Re-take of 'Amrita': Digital Photomontages* (New Delhi: Tulika Booksra, 2001); Peter Nagy, "The Sher-Gil Archive," *Grand Street* 62 (Fall 1997), p. 73; Katalin Keseru, *The Sher-Gil Archive* (Bombay: Gallery Chemould; New Delhi: Hungarian Information & Cultural Centre, 1996).
- ¹⁰⁶ Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*," p. 129.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Matthew Reason

Archive or Memory? The Detritus of Live Performance

The positive valuation of theatre as live performance, and therefore also its transience, is frequently accompanied by the urgent expression of the need to counter that transience by means of documentation. This desire to 'save' theatre reaches its most fervent expression (and hope of authority and permanence) with the live performance archive. Archive theory, however, now insists on the instability and uncertainty of the archive, which not only documents but also constructs its subject. In this article, Matthew Reason argues that, by tracing comparisons between archives and human memory, it is possible to establish a new formulation of the archive – as detritus, not completeness – that puts a value on mutability as a reflection of theatre's liveness. Matthew Reason is currently completing a PhD on representations of live performance at the University of Edinburgh. He has edited a special edition of the *Edinburgh Review* (ER 106) on Theatre in Scotland, and has previously worked at the Edinburgh International Festival, where his responsibilities included maintaining the archive.

EUGENIO BARBA suggests in a 1992 article, 'Efermaele', that theatre is the 'art of the present', and describes directors and performers as creators of 'ephemeral works'.¹ This primary valuation of live performance as *live* has often been repeated by those, like Barba, who have celebrated the transitory nature of their work. George Balanchine, for example, was, according to Bonnie Brooks, described as 'a man who didn't give a damn about the past and cared even less about the future'.²

However, while Balanchine may not have been interested in the future life of his work, Brooks observes with evident relief that others certainly were. Making a comment that could be extended across the performing arts, Brooks suggests that 'an examination of practices in the dance field shows that the work of saving dances often appears to fall not to the artists themselves, but to the people who surround them'.³ The work of 'saving' dances is, of course, one of saving them from ephemerality, and is already a long ideological step away from Barba's declaration that performance is the art of the present.

The desire to document performance is a strong though contradictory thread running

through the live arts. It is a desire motivated by an awareness of the inevitable disappearance of live performance, and witnessed in the comments of one Edinburgh Festival Fringe theatre director: 'In five weeks what will be left of [my play]? A script, a press release, a couple of photos and the reviews.'⁴ What is worrying this director is the imminent disappearance of his or her production: the passing of an ephemeral event and the fear that the record of that event will be mere residue, inadequate remembrance of the original live performance. Fears such as these have sparked an academic and social urge to 'save' theatre and live performance in general.

Oddly, the idea that live performance must be saved from disappearance is not held as a position incompatible with the valuation of performance as ephemeral. In a single article, published in *New Theatre Quarterly* in 1994, Gay McAuley manages not only to echo Brooks's sentiments about the need to save live performances, but also describes artists as always more interested in the present than the past or future; details the need to persuade sometimes sceptical practitioners to take responsibility for their 'legacy'; and borrows some of Barba's

language of the value of transience. 'Theatre, by its nature', writes McAuley:

is an art of the present moment, and the theatre artists focus their energies on the present of the lived experience. Performance is unrepeatable and it is fascinating because it is unique and ephemeral. . . . While individuals may feel anguish at the lack of more durable traces of these experiences, most theatre artists are more interested in their next show than documenting the one that has just closed.⁵

The shift that McAuley operates here – from the positive valuation of disappearance as central to performance to the subject of documentation – is fascinating, and a movement that quickly becomes familiar when reading around the subject of live performance transience. Disappearance and documentation seem to go hand in hand.

It is possible that the positive valuation, and practical acceptance, of live performance's disappearance continues to be upheld by artists creating performances, although, as demonstrated by the anonymous Fringe director, this is not universal. While audiences, too, are perhaps used to the fact, as Rodrigues Villeneuve asserts, 'the same is not true for journalists, scholars, or historians, who must speak about the performance. They all want to retain something of it. Something material, some tangible trace.'⁶ It is certainly here that the urge to document performance is strongest. In the discourses surrounding live performance, ideas of disappearance and transience mark one set of recurring imagery, but they are accompanied by a mirroring, complementary yet contradictory, discourse of documentation.

The 'Authoritative' Archive

Nowhere in the arts can the desire to simply stop things disappearing, and the feeling that one is able to access the past, be stronger than in the live performance archive. The performing arts archive represents the officially sanctioned collecting, cataloguing, preserving, and consecrating of traces of past performances. These performance archives, huge numbers of which exist in companies and institutions around the world, can con-

sist of almost anything – theatre programmes, brochures, leaflets, photographs, video and sound recordings, press releases and cuttings of reviews, details of marketing strategies, figures for tickets sales, contracts with performers and confidential budgets, correspondence, details of sponsorship arrangements, venue plans, set and costume designs, stage and lighting plans, production notes, annotated scripts, interviews with directors or actors, actual costumes and examples of stage properties, and so on, and so on.

Anything that is remotely associated with the performance can belong in an archive. The archive can include material detailing the processes of creation, of production, and of reception. Clearly, each of these archival traces of performance warrants consideration in its own right. Here, however, the concept of the archive itself will be considered, examining the theory and ideology of the archive, and the promise made in many archive manifestos that they allow access to an authentic memory of past performances.

The identity of the archive as repository of accuracy and objectivity is one deeply rooted in the heart of our understanding of the archive, and of the usefulness of collecting and examining historical documents and objects. This basic perception and expectation of the archive is demonstrated in the mission statements of live performance archives. Arts Archive, for example, is 'dedicated to documenting the processes at work within contemporary performing arts practice'; the Live Arts Archive 'continues to document current events as they occur and seeks to make its historical record as complete as possible'; the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library describes itself as 'the largest and most comprehensive archive in the world devoted to the documentation of dance'.⁷

Indeed, as the Jerome Robbins Dance Division also observes, the fear of the disappearance of live performance is particularly strongly felt by dance, an art form that has traditionally been very difficult to document. As Michelle Potter writes in an article on archiving dance, the desire to document

live performance is grounded in the fear that, 'without efforts to preserve the history and heritage of the art form it will forever languish as trivial and not worthy of serious research'.⁸

As a result, many organizations have been established directly to counter the problem of the disappearance of dance. The National Initiative to Preserve America's Dance (NIPAD) was set up in 1993, along with the Dance Heritage Coalition, *SAVE AS: DANCE*, and Preserve, Inc., whose slogan is 'assuring dance a life beyond performance'.⁹ These are institutions established with the primary aim not of facilitating the creation of new art, but of ensuring the documentation of existing art: looking to the past and the future rather than the present. The importance placed on documentation by these institutions is clearly defined in the NIPAD mission statement with its goal to 'foster America's dance legacy by supporting dance documentation and preservation as an integral and ongoing part of the creation, transmission, and performance of dance'.¹⁰

Archival documentation, the message is clear, must be conducted at the centre of creation itself. As you perform you must record, and as you create you must document. Here it is possible to see the transformation of a valuation of live performance's ephemerality into a fear of ephemerality and a subsequent valuation of documentation and the document.

There is a clear moral dimension to this ambition, evident in the language emerging in this discussion: performance must be 'saved' or 'rescued', it is part of our 'heritage', our 'legacy', and must not be 'lost'. As a moral endeavour, the documentary ambition needs no justification beyond these aspirations themselves. The value of the archive is in the action of archiving, in halting disappearance and preserving for the future.

Questioning the Archive

While archival institutions only implicitly suggest the value of the archive as repository of a true record of the past, this promise is explored explicitly by many archival theor-

ists. Irving Velody, for example, opens an article on the theory of the archive by stating:

As the backdrop to all scholarly research stands the archive. Appeals to ultimate truth, adequacy, and plausibility in the work of the humanities and social sciences rest on archival presuppositions.¹¹

Such a basic starting point holds true for the performing arts archive as much as for any other kind, where research holds out the promise of reaching back to origins, and literally to original documents. This ability to touch items and objects from the past is, in itself, one of the key attractions of the archive: Harriet Bradley, among others, stresses the 'pleasures, seductions, and illusions of archival work' and the 'intoxication of the archive'.¹² Helen Freshwater also acknowledges the attraction of the archive, drawing on her experience working in theatre archives to describe the 'allure of the archive' as in part voyeuristic pleasure and in part the sense of accessing authentic material:

The archive grounds claims of truth, plausibility, authenticity. For the researcher utilizing archived material, the temptation of making a claim to the academic authority conferred by undertaking 'proper research' may prove irresistible.¹³

This seductive identity of the archive continues to enchant even while most contemporary theorists, including Velody, Bradley, and Freshwater themselves, have interrogated our understanding of archival documents and historical truth. Contemporary theory examines the constructive and constituting role the historical document performs in creating our understanding of the past. The powerful imagery that declares that the archive reveals the past to us is complemented by claims of archival limitation and fabrication. The archive's claim to neutral access is based, it is now stressed, on compromised positions of selection, omission, and manipulation. Carolyn Steedman, for example, describes this constructed nature of the archive:

The Archive is made from the selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past *and* from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there. . . . In

the Archive, you cannot be shocked at its exclusions, its emptinesses, at what *is not* catalogued.¹⁴

Far from being complete, or authentic, or neutral or objective, the archive is the reverse. Steedman is surely correct to describe the archive as empty, the researcher actively creating meaning, rather than simply finding it in the archive: the researcher is also constructing, selecting, editing, and speaking for the archive.

Archive and Memory

In the performing arts, the exploration of the archive by the academic is perceived as an opportunity for 'proper research': that is, proper research in being both true and official, and authentic and authorized. The archive provides an opportunity to claim a validity beyond the anecdotal or speculative, as an aid to and justification of the researcher's own memory and interpretation. This is the attraction of the archive for the performing arts researcher, where as each performance disappears the archive offers the possibility of supplementing and perhaps supplanting doubtful memory as the site of performance record.

This parallel of the archive and memory is a popular motif in contemporary archive theory. Carolyn Steedman notes a common desire to use the archive as a metaphor for memory, an observation also witnessed when Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown¹⁵ explore the role the archive plays in defining national memory and consciousness, and again when Irving Velody examines the idea that the 'modern memory is above all archival'.

Such parallels are particularly relevant to the performing arts archive, especially when examined alongside radical declarations that the only trace of the live performance event can and should be the audience's memory. Peter Brook powerfully suggests this, declaring that a live performance is:

an event for that moment in time, for that [audience] in that place – and its gone. Gone without a trace. There was no journalist; there was no photographer; the only witnesses were the people

present; the only record is what they retained, which is how it should be in theatre.¹⁶

These are ideas echoed by Patrice Pavis, who writes that: 'The only memory which one can preserve [of live performance] is that of the spectator's more or less distracted perception.'¹⁷ The idea that the archive may be a kind of shared memory, suddenly becomes very pertinent and challenging to this positive valuation of audience memory.

The possibility of enabling a more accurate, objective, and accessible memory of live performance is the primary promise of the performing arts archive. This is clear from Mindy Aloff's description of dance archives in an article entitled, revealingly, 'It's Not Ephemera After All':

Although it is customary to speak about dancing as an ephemeral art that leaves nothing behind except the memory of its performance, in fact it leaves much more than you might guess: costumes and sets, musical scores, perhaps notation of the choreography, programmes and reviews, photographs, letters, films, and, nowadays, hours and hours of video-cassette recordings. While such leavings constitute a husk of dancing, they are also the kernels of dance history. . . . The art of choreography at this moment is an art of history as well, and support for historical archives has become indirectly support for dancing, too.¹⁸

The archive, in other words, is our memory, our heritage, our live performance of the past: although, in his description of 'kernels' and 'husks', Aloff also recognizes the incompleteness of such leavings. As Aloff's article makes clear, however, the idea that the archive preserves 'our theatre history' or 'dance heritage' runs through the manifestos of archival institution. The result is simple and inevitable: our performing arts history is what exists in the archive, and only what exists in the archive. The archive does not aid memory, but replaces it. The original experience, that which for Brook and Pavis exists in the audience's memory, becomes devalued as subjective, inaccessible, unauthoritative, and unempirical.

This opposition between archive and memory comes to the fore in a *New Theatre Quarterly* article by Denise Varney and Rachel Fensham proclaiming the need to video-record

live performance. In their support of recording live theatre performances, Varney and Fensham echo the urgent appeals of those seeking to archive dance, the ambition of video-recording being essentially the archival objective of 'saving' live performance. They also formulate such archival endeavour as a site of proper documentation in active competition with the positive valuation of audience memory of performance described by Brook and Pavis. Varney and Fensham declare: 'Surely the very ephemerality of individual memories should make it suspect as a reliable record of a performance.'¹⁹

It is possible to see the archive, therefore, as our 'proper' memory of performance, one that is superior to actual memory in terms of its accessibility, its durability, its scope, and its promise of objectivity and stability. In contrast, audience memory becomes devalued as subjective, inaccessible, and disappearing.

However, a distinction needs to be made between performances of which there can be no living memory and recent performances where physical archives might be regarded as 'in competition' with surviving audience memories. With such living memories, 'proper' archival documentation fails to supplant memory as a valuable site of post-performance afterlife. The attempt to replace memory with proper documentations, and the belief in the archive as repository of live performance memory, fails to acknowledge the full extent of the memorial representation. For the depiction of memory as the sole trace of live performance is more than simply a description – it is not perceived by commentators such as Brook and Pavis as a problem to be overcome by employment of a better memory such as the archive: instead it is a statement that also contains a positive valuation. Eugenio Barba illustrates this:

The spectator does not consume these performances. Often s/he does not understand them or does not know how to evaluate them. But s/he continues to have a dialogue with the memories which these performances have sown deep in his/her spirit.²⁰

This is what Barba means when he writes that 'theatrical performance resists time not

by being frozen in a recording but by transforming itself': that transformation, Barba insists, is found in the individual memories of individual spectators. Put very simply: if you value live performance because of its liveness, then memory must be a more appropriate site for any trace or afterlife than the frozen and unchanging archive. Barba's valuation of the audience memory of live performance is not held despite the transformations enacted by memory, but because of them: the memory, says Barba, is in this transformative, multiple, mobile nature closer to the essential identity of the live performance after, not before, it has undergone such transformations.

Memory of Metamorphosis

The archive or video-recording may *claim* to show the live performance as it really was; but Barba declares that the performance wasn't really what *was* happening on stage, but what *is* happening in the minds and subsequently the memories of the audience. What Barba writes elsewhere of technological recordings is also relevant to the claims of the archive:

In the age of electronic memory, of films, and of reproducibility, theatre performance also defines itself through the work of living memory, which is not museum but metamorphosis.²¹

Those who object to the positive valuation of the memory as a legitimate trace of live performance, do so because of the subjective, inaccessible, and transformative nature of memory which Barba describes. Marvin Carlson, for example, writes that:

Even those fortunate enough to witness the original are unable to return to it to check the accuracy of their memory or to test subsequent hypotheses against it, and for others there remains only the thinner substance of an experience filtered through the selective consciousness and reportage of intermediaries.²²

Varney and Fensham echo these sentiments when they cite Keir Elam's observation in *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* that live performance has resisted serious study as

we have no reliable memory of it. They also express vehement distrust of Barba's positive valuation of subjective memory, condemning it on several counts including elitism, unacknowledged selection, and lack of detail or accountability. 'We oppose a hierarchy of performance reception where memory is the only fit place for performance to be stored', they declare, and ask, 'Whose memories are privileged?'

Later Varney and Fensham recognize why Barba places a positive valuation on transformative memory, but reject it none the less: memory, they state, does not 'produce a purer form of truth'.²³ This, however, depends on what kind of truth about live performance one is attempting to reach, and what it is about live performance that one is attempting to 'save'.

Additionally, many of their objections can be similarly directed at the archive, at documentation in general, or indeed (Varney and Fensham's particular concern) at video. While promising the authoritative archival ideal such documentations must fail to deliver, as archive theory makes clear, on any count of completeness, neutrality, and accuracy. Academic documentations can also take on an arrogant egotism – theatre history constructed as that which is studied and written about – that surely transcends any elitism that can be levelled at memory.

Indeed Varney and Fensham illustrate such academic instincts, as their understanding of audience memory is in the end textual: for them the question 'Whose memories are privileged?' has an answer, 'Those that are written down' – a failure to step away from the valuation of the text over the non-textual. Nor do Varney and Fensham examine how the impossibility of documenting all performances means that the question 'What performances are recorded?' is just as problematic. Finally, while memory is upfront about its transformations, no documentation fails radically to transform its subject, but often neglects to acknowledge the importance of such mutations.

Intriguingly, the metaphorical relationship that some writers perceive between archive and memory is perhaps *more* appro-

priate as a result of the contemporary understanding of archives as unstable, as read into rather than read, than it is for the hypothetical ideal of the archive as complete and neutral. If memory is recreated each time we revisit it, if memory is inherently transformative, then so is the archive's construction of the past recreated each time it is accessed. Is it possible, therefore, to take contemporary archive theory, and the positive valuation of memory, and develop a concept of the live performance archive that embraces the transformative conditions of both memory and archive?

In other words, instead of the archive's instability and compromised authority being an inevitable accident, can it be transformed into the central motif of a live performance archive celebrating transformation and fluidity? The ambition of such a project would be to reject the claimed authority of archives, look beyond the surface authenticity of video-recordings, and accept the positive valuation of memory's transformative power as a positive characteristic of a mutable live performance archive.

Imaginative Reworking of Documentation

One example of an imaginative reworking of archival documentation comes from Forced Entertainment, in Tim Etchells and Richard Lowdon's 'Notes and Documents of *Emanuelle Enchanted*'.²⁴ Published in an edition of *Contemporary Theatre Review*, these 'Notes and Documents' do not present any clear, neutral, or scientific documentation of the performance: it would be impossible to recreate *Emanuelle Enchanted* from this documentation. Nor do they attempt to interpret, evaluate, or describe the performance. Instead Etchells and Lowdon accept the inevitable transformative effect of documentation, and attempt to create a record that recreates not the appearance of the performance, but the experience of the performance. As Nick Kaye comments on the documentation:

Tim Etchells and Richard Lowdon . . . use material derived from the performance to re-address concerns for excess information and incompleteness.

Rather than speculating upon the 'meaning' of *Emanuelle Enchanted* or recounting the mechanisms by which it operated, this presentation offers an experience analogous to that of a meeting with the event which preceded it. Calling on the 'fragmented/atomized' nature of the performance . . . this 're-presentation' resists being read as a transparent record, but furthers the work's dissemination through a variety of forms.²⁵

In his preface to *The New Theatre*, Michael Kirby suggests that the responsibility of documentation is to be objective. He writes that, 'If it is a clear, accurate, objective recreation of the performance, the reader will respond to the documentation in much the same way as he would have responded to the performance.'²⁶

Overthrowing this reliance on surface and neutrality, Etchells and Lowdon reject many of these impulses of documentation, including the underlying instinct to 'save' the performance. Instead, they present a documentation that is far from clear, accurate, or objective, which does not seek to recreate the performance, but does perhaps manage to achieve the result of replicating in the reader some of the experiences of the audience. The 'Notes and Documents' are an archive constructed not by recording the performance, but by attempting to echo the memory of the performance.

This is a fluid and transformative documentation, and an archive that highlights its own incompleteness, selectiveness, uneven qualities, and fabricated nature in its surface appearance. This surely is an archive appropriate for the documentation of the valued liveness of live performance.

An Archive of Detritus?

I would also like to propose, speculatively, another possible alternative archive: namely, a theoretical archive of detritus. An archive of detritus would seek to mimic many of the positively valued characteristics of both the audience's memory of the performance and the liveness of live performance.

To illustrate this, I again turn to the work of Forced Entertainment and the manner in which it often highlights performance pro-

cess through the accumulation of detritus on the stage. Many theatre productions clear up as they go along, making tidy transitions from one act to another: the props from Scene One, for example, quickly removed before the start of Scene Two. In contrast, the stage at the end of a Forced Entertainment production is often littered with traces of what has gone before, traces of the performance which was present but now has gone.

Once noticed, this accumulation of performance detritus can be seen in many live performance productions – in, for example, Carles Santos's Latin opera *Ricardo i Elena*, where the performers take their bows on a stage littered with pianos, picture frames, books, and gigantic remote-control furniture, traces of the previous hour's events.²⁷ For me the memory of the performance is contained in this final tableau, represented by remains, with all the fragmented traces prompting fragmented memories.

This is also experienced in Meg Stuart's dance work *appetite*, which uses a slowly hardening clay floor physically to mark the passing of time on stage as the clay crumbles and becomes damaged as the dancers perform.²⁸ And once more in Wim Vandekeybus's *Scratching the Inner Fields*, where the debris that remains on the stage – right down to a side-winder trail of sweat tracing the final movement of a dancer through scattered earth, sticks, and discarded clothing – are physical reminders of the moments that have passed before the audience.²⁹

Stage detritus presents an 'archive' able to create and recreate the multiple appearance of the performance. In the accumulation of these traces it is as if an immediate archive of the production is established: here is the shaky and incomplete evidence of what happened; these are archives which display their own randomness and selectiveness, and that mirror the nature of the audience's memory of the production. These are also archives that, uniquely, need archiving if they are not to disappear.

The image of stage detritus as archive is particularly suited for unstable and multiple Forced Entertainment productions, but also appropriate for the disappearing state of all

live performance and of memory. The idea of detritus as archive is also not so far from the state of all archives: but the archive as detritus turns around the presumptions of neutral detachment, objectivity, fidelity, consistency, and authenticity – instead claiming partiality, fluidity, randomness, and memory. And having abandoned claims to accuracy and completeness, such an archive is able to present archival interpretations, proclamations, and demonstrations, consciously and overtly performing what all archives are already enacting: dumb objects not allowed to speak for themselves, but spoken for.

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500 words

Xavier Le Roy

10.29.14

View of "[Xavier Le Roy: Retrospective](#)," 2014.

Xavier Le Roy has worked as a choreographer and dancer since 1991, and he is well known for pieces that highlight audience-performer relationships. In his debut US survey exhibition, on view at [MoMA PS1](#) as part of the French Institute Alliance Française's *Crossing the Line* festival, dancers perform excerpts from works Le Roy made between 1994 and 2010, all of which address the complicated negotiations performers engage in as both subjects and objects. The show is on view through December 1, 2014.

[LAURENCE RASSEL](#), from the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona, commissioned "Retrospective" in 2012. It was the first time a curator had proposed that I exhibit my work in a museum. Although I see the exhibition as a new work, I chose the genre of the retrospective because of its specificity to museums, and I also liked that an exhibition could hold the pieces in one space at the same time, producing new meanings. So, instead of presenting eight consecutive solos every night, the performers in this show choose excerpts from my solo works to perform while also telling stories from their pasts. The rule is basically that they use excerpts of my work and I have suggested that they choose to speak about something meaningful, for instance a memory that the work evokes. Not only do the dance excerpts vary according to the wishes of each dancer, but they also change in each country where the work is performed. The culture influences the work. You hear in their stories a combination of factors specific to that location and its politic—for example, in Singapore there are tales of censorship and how being an artist there is considered a hobby, not work.

The show addresses the notion of "looking backward" in that each experience in the present is also a condensation of the past. The performers are doing what we call "an individual retrospective of my work in and through their lives," and the point is not that they say something about themselves but that they use this moment to say something as artists. This format is based on a 1999 piece, *Product of Circumstances*, which marked the first time I used this structure of dancing and speech. It's always one and then the other: the gesture and the speech. It can be a comment, it can be complementing. Sometimes the movement can produce the end of a sentence. There are many ways to combine these juxtaposing things. The work also tries to do something other than just taking a dance and performing it endlessly—"museographing" is not interesting to

me.

“Retrospective” pushed me to think about what I can do in exhibition spaces that I cannot do in a theater. In a gallery, people can stay as long as they like and they can leave whenever they like, but in the theater they make an appointment and perhaps feel they must stay—the duration is decided for them. I am interested in how behaviors change in these two spaces: What does each allow for or prohibit? With this show, I knew I wasn’t going to start doing painting or video—I would continue to work with performers. This brought up the question: How can you work with dancers for a long duration without transforming them into objects? Where is the agency of the performer for this, and where is the agency of the viewer?

There is a constant tension that you have as a performer about being objectified. In the field of contemporary dance and choreography, it comes up often in stories about how much you are used by the person who authors the work. It’s a contract, but the contract is often full of questions and uncertainties. During the exhibition we try to approach, unfold, and transform that problem and make these negotiations visible.

— As told to [Samara Davis](#)

Dance

November 5th, 2014

BIRD OF A FEATHER

Jennifer Monson's *Live Dancing Archive*

by Cassie Peterson

Jennifer Monson's most recent iteration of her *Live Dancing Archive* project (which premiered at New York Live Arts, October 15 – 18) proposes just that: that we should re-imagine an archive as an alive and ever-changing process, rather than merely as a fixed place for the curation of historical objects.

Typically, an archive is understood as a space for collecting, preserving, and even codifying material to assemble some kind of historical narrative. Traditional archival practices achieve this through their selection and ultimate categorization of materials. In line with these traditional archival notions, Monson's dance does indeed work to reconstruct stories of the past by making environmental ephemera physically present and legible. However, Monson's movement archive produces meaning through its very resistance to categorization and finalization, its blurring of physical boundaries, and its commitment to aliveness.



Tatiana Tenenbaum, Jennifer Monson, Niall Jones. Photo: Steven Schreiber.

At first, the set is austere, even severe: a singular light, a soundboard, and one long strip of white paneling on wheels. The piece opens with a few minutes of total darkness and no sound but a low and gentle hum. Ghostly figures move around quietly, their exact coordinates unknown to us. It is like a precursory haunting. Maybe even a foreshadowing.

As the singular light fixture comes on, dancers Monson, Niall Jones, and Tatyana Tenenbaum are revealed, as well as sound designer Jeff Kola and lighting/creative advisor Valerie Oliveiro. The dancers' silhouettes are revealed against the backdrop of the white-paneled structure, rendering their human forms ambiguous, like giant shape-shifting shadow puppets. "Nature" is an unknown

shadowland: it is unclear where things begin and end.

Monson and collaborators have created and exist inside of an alternative archive—an organic accumulation of both individual and collective memories, sensations, and experiences. It exists as an excavation of the otherwise unknown—not a statement or an attempt to find truth, but a constant state of inquiry. What vast knowledge lives inside the body and how does it want to be expressed in this moment? This archive is an expression of things that arise in the present, all the while understanding the present's articulation of all that has come before it.

In these ways, *Live Dancing Archive* breaks all the categorical rules of the archive. It hangs on the stage as an improvisational remix that combines and juxtaposes different systems of movement patterns and migrations. Monson, Tenenbaum, and Jones move with bird-like qualities, extending, shaking off a winter, and landing for a rest. One by one, each dancer outstretches her arms, legs, and spine with highly executed micro-gestures, unleashing wings that we can nearly see. Always the intrepid improviser, Monson uses distinctive movement vocabularies that possess both a grace and a beastliness.

As they meticulously create relational patterns on stage, we are exposed to the complexity of wildness. Monson's smooth, rich movements, Tenenbaum's staccato gestures, and Jones's long, lumbering limbs all capture familiar, worldly forms. All three swan dive again and again into the sole light beam on stage, landing on their bellies and sliding forward. We see wings, beaks, feathers. The earth. The sky. We see ospreys landing on a pond, looking for temporary respite from their various migrations. We see our basic desire to move, to connect. Their kinetic movements appear to overcome natural forces like form and gravity, while their wildness is unleashed through the most delicate and expertly realized of choreographies. The dancers seem to vacillate between set scores and the improvisational freedoms that Monson has encouraged in this highly collaborative effort.

Collaboration itself is an archival practice—it breathes the archive into being. Last year, Monson performed an evening-length solo of the same title at the Kitchen, and the process continues, as does the archive, ever alive and changing depending on collaborators and contexts. In this way, Monson's movement practice does not consist of isolated events or "shows," but rather is a demonstration of ongoing, continuous research into what the dancing body has to communicate about time and place. These three dancers offer us something special and shared. A secret dialect. A very refined molecular exchange that speaks to all their time laboring together in the studio.

In one moment, Jones is dancing and Monson chases him with the long white structure on wheels. He barely escapes its impact multiple times over. He flutters out of its reach. Our compulsion towards industrialization is elicited in this moment. Perhaps it speaks to the way nature has to continuously escape from or accommodate our attempts to deny or control it. The portable white panel exerts itself on stage like industry and development. It takes up space like the monolith, the

civilization we have built. In these ways, nature is both established and destroyed within the piece, multiple times over.

Sometimes, one or more of the dancers will take a rest on the stage, sitting down and watching the movement of the others. It's the type of rest that usually takes place backstage, out of sight, as a means of preserving the boundaries and preciousness of the illusory "show." But Jones and Tenenbaum sit quietly, wiping their brows, adjusting their costumes, watching Monson. These moments propose rest as a natural event, an integral part of the process of making movement. Passively witnessing the archive is just as important as actively excavating it.

Monson's archival practice works tirelessly to preserve that which is often rendered invisible or forgotten by more dominant modes of production and representation. Body, Dance, Nature—are they all endangered species? Monson's work does not try to pin down or define ephemera, but rather functions as an exploratory force that aims to rewrite our histories through the moving body, while also working tirelessly to counteract the ongoing erasure of the elemental world.

Shifting landscapes. Osprey. Fight or flight. Low earthly vibrations and heaven-bound micro-gestures. Monson and her highly skilled collaborators have perfected an archive of presence. And it ends as it began, in darkness, with a haunting helicopter-like sound drowning out all that has come before.

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RECOMMENDED ARTICLES

INCONVERSATION



URGENT TOMORROWS

by Tara Aisha Willis

OCT 2015 | DANCE

Performer, choreographer, and scholar Thomas F. DeFrantz and dance artist niv Acosta have co-curated a weekend of performances, screenings, discussions, a dance party, and even a brunch, around the themes of "Afrofuturism and utopian/dystopian visions of a queer Black tomorrow" at JACK in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn. The series, titled "afroFUTUREqu##r" and produced by Shireen Dickson, includes performances by Grisha Coleman, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, Niall Jones, Eto Otitigbe, Brother(hood) Dance!, Christina Blue & Adam Boothman, and others—including the curators themselves.

Before the festival, Tara Aisha Willis spent some time chatting with DeFrantz and Acosta about their curatorial process, their take on queer Afrofuturism, and the potency of performance.

INCONVERSATION

Q&A: Sarah Michelson talks about her latest premiere

Sarah Michelson unveils a new dance at the Whitney Museum of American Art

By Gia Kourlas / Time Out NY / Thu Jan 16 2014



Sarah Michelson (b. 1964), *Devotion Study #1—The American Dancer*, February 2012, during the 2012 Whitney Biennial. *Photograph: Photograph © Paula Court*

To wrap up her acclaimed *Devotion* series, [Sarah Michelson](#) unveils *4* at the [Whitney Museum](#). The work is Michelson's third consecutive museum premiere: [Devotion Study #1—The American Dancer](#) also took place at the Whitney, as part of the 2012 Biennial; and *Study #3* premiered at the MoMA, as part of [Ralph Lemon's "Some sweet day"](#) series. More than five years into her exploration of devotion, Michelson talks about needing to "get out" of the series and the process that has kept her going.

Sarah Michelson's *4* is the final dance of the choreographer's much-revered *Devotion* series. Along the way, she has explored dance icons, the historic and visceral residue of circles and triplets, and the deep, symbiotic relationship between dancer and choreographer. Michelson, who won the 2012 Bucksbaum Award for her *Devotion Study #1—The American Dancer* at the Whitney Biennial, returns to the fourth floor with four performers to trace a dancer's devotion to its cellular level.

Could you talk about the progression of your *Devotion* series?

Devotion [2011, the Kitchen] happened and then *Study #1* happened because the Whitney invited me to do something, and I knew I didn't have enough time to start over and, also, I had so many questions about the show that I made. There was this prompt from the Whitney to [choreograph a dance for] the fourth floor. There were these questions that I had and then this prompt, and there it is. The same thing

kind of happened with Ralph [Lemon who curated Michelson as part of “Some sweet day” at the Museum of Modern Art], where the dance was in the atrium, but the original prompt had nothing to do with MoMA and the atrium. The prompt was Ralph Lemon and blues music. I don’t think I would have ever gone to that place of soul without that prompt. I mean, of course, I have in my life. That’s where it came from, but I wouldn’t have necessarily taken *Devotion* down that street. So it’s very confusing whether it is or it is not *pure*. But I, of course, am giving purity my best shot all the time.

With this piece, did you know what you were going to do and—?

No, I still don’t know what I’m going to do. [*Laughs*] I have no idea what I’m going to do.

But it’s called 4, and it is the last section of *Devotion*?

In my understanding today, it’s the last section.

What does that mean?

What it means is that I can’t do any more of this. I’ve gotta get out of this *Devotion* situation and, goddamn it, I seriously didn’t think in 2010 or whenever it was that I started on this that I would be still here in 2014. So yeah it’s time to get out. Not that I know where I’ll go. It’s gotta be the last one. Part of me has this feeling that the last one should be in the theater, so that’s why I’m struggling.

Why a theater?

Because I want to go back as I came out, and I’m ready to go back.

Do you just miss the theater or is there something more specific about the museum setting?

I think the theater is like home. It’s not that I won’t go away again, but it’s time to go home for a bit. And the museum is—everyone is really great, really cooperative, so helpful. I’m doing things in relationship to those structures that I couldn’t have done any other way, and I’m so grateful in it, but it’s so huge. The amount of people involved. What you have to do to build a floor, what you have to do to get wiring, what you have to do to get lighting rentals, what you have to do to get the power—there are so many discussions. If you’re me. It doesn’t have to be the way I do it, by the way. But the way I do it, which is sadly the way I do it, is that it’s really complicated and huge. I love that; I wouldn’t do it any other way, or I don’t know how to do it any other way, but it does feel like I’ve just been out there for so long. The theater seems comforting, honestly. It’s like, Oh, there are the lights that are on the grid, and there’s the floor—it’s already there—there’s the staff and they already know what to do. And the negotiation is only between me and the theater.

Is it helpful to have such a big staff around taking care of things?

Every one of them is incredible, but I really struggle with it. I’m like X said something to Y, but I wasn’t on that e-mail. I’m like, Oh my God—you said that to each other? Why would you say that without me knowing about it? You need to tell me, because that’s not the right answer! [*Laughs*] I get *tense*. I live in this state of tension, because in the end, of course, I’m just such a controlling anal bitch, but the problem is that all those timed decisions are what make the thing, and when you’re out there in the place that isn’t the theater, there are just so many more decisions. What’s the seating, for example? Are they going to stand up? Are they going to sit on the floor? Just that. So in the Kitchen, maybe you move to the other side. But there’s seating and then you make choices about the seating. The atrium is one thing, because it’s expected that people will mill around, and maybe they’ll sit down and maybe they’ll stand up, but if you’re making a show at a museum with a showtime and a ticket, then you have to make a decision about what the people do when they get there. There are those kinds of interfaces: “Well, at MoMA people just came in...” And I’m like, “Yeah, and it was in the atrium, and people were walking around the whole museum. There was no ticket, meaning the ticket was the ticket to

MoMA. It wasn't a ticket to a show. This is a ticket to a show. There's nothing really happening in the gallery at the time because it's pre-Biennial. My show is basically happening while they're starting to de-install and prepare for the Biennial.

Can you talk about what you're doing with the space?

It's on the fourth floor, where I was before, and it was very generously offered. I was like, What am I going to do? Go in a different room? No—I have to go back in that room. That's the only brave thing to do.

What are you working on in this piece?

You can just ask people that? And then they answer you, don't they? Fuck, I wish I was one of them.

How does this connect to the last piece?

I've been trying to understand it myself. You know very well how I went from *Devotion* to *Study #1*, and Cecilia [Bengolea] came in and we were working on circles; Nicole [Mannarino] came back in the room after I'd worked with Cecilia, and I realized I was already in a different place with these circles. That became *Study #1—The American Dancer*. When you're doing something, you don't have any perspective; you're just doing what you're doing. I was handling the subject of the minimalist period: of Cunningham leaving Martha Graham, of Lucinda Childs, of the complexity of Twyla that is in *In the Upper Room*. Or how I understand the complexity in that dance, of what is dancing? Of course, it's all dancing, but looking at the different versions of *In the Upper Room* with her original company and then the program for TV with Jodi Melnick, and then ABT. I'm so impressed by the ballerina, but the "stompers" are the parts that I understand in this way that's important. What was I doing? I was dealing with myself in relationship to these iconic movement strategies that those people developed and embodied in order to make a past for themselves. And then when we went to *Study #1*, it really felt like it had something to do with how only the dancer can do it. My daughter is in beginning modern fundamentals at the Mark Morris Dance Center, and on the first day I was, of course, watching like a hawk to see what it was like. They did triplets. There was some way [*Study #1*] was clearly the dancer and the American work and the triplet. Absolutely iconically. The quote [used with the title] is from Balanchine. ["Superficial Europeans are accustomed to say that American artists have no 'soul.' This is wrong. America has its own spirit—cold, crystalline, luminous, hard as light.... Good American dancers can express clean emotion in a manner that might almost be termed angelic. By angelic I mean the quality supposedly enjoyed by the angels, who, when they relate a tragic situation, do not themselves suffer."] It's the choreographer and the dancer. In *Study #3*, the MoMA dance, I was trying to take away the choreographer in a way. It's very hard to do.

But I felt that was so much about showing the connection between the dancer and choreographer. You were in the piece for me.

Totally. We would try to do that, but there was this very complicated almost engineering or metaphysics. There are these intense steps that are made up. It can't be improvisation. There are steps; the way they had to happen was by choice, but I had to be the viewer. It sounds really stupid: I'm not going to send Nicole out there on her own, meaning I'm not going to leave her out there—I'm going to be with her as she has to do this very difficult task of being totally fresh in each moment and making this choice. Because it's not like she could make any old choice: There's a labyrinth of stuff she had to do, but she had to be able to do it freely, and I didn't know what she was doing, so it had to be legible to me. And I'm, meanwhile, dealing with the music—I'm like accompanying her in some way.

Like a DJ?

Yeah. It was almost like the dancer and the choreographer: the dancer's intellectual ability or something, but now it's the dancer's devotion on a cellular level—just of the body. Just matter. It's the

attempt, I guess.

But I also saw that a lot in *Study #3*.

Totally, but this is more because there are fewer steps.

So now I'm going to have to watch the downtown dance world making nonsteps for the next two years?

I'm sorry. [*Laughs*] I know that's going to suck for you.

How many dancers are you using?

Four. Four for *Study #4* on the fourth floor: Nicole Mannarino, Rachel Berman, Madeline Wilcox and John Hoobyar.

They're all new to you except for Nicole. What were you looking for? How did you find them?

I auditioned Super Bowl Sunday, according to Madeline. There were about 20 people. I thought that *Study #3* was a work in progress, which is what I called it, and that we were going to make the real *Study #3*. I started working—for months. It was 20 and then it went down to ten, and I kind of let the big group go and there was a small group and the small group became six or seven. We worked for about six months. The attrition was at different places along the way.

So you worked with them for a long time! I didn't realize.

Oh yeah. But one day I just realized, I can't do this. I'm trying to make something I've already made. And the minute that happened, it was so disgusting: I was like, Oh my God. I basically said, "Bye, everybody." Some people had gone along the way anyway because I think I was so unclear and confused. This is what I realized: each of the *Devotion* shows—working on *Study #3* for all those months at Governors Island—a massive part of that project was the two of us in the void and not knowing what we were doing and then suddenly I was trying to teach them what she was doing, and it was so boring. They were good at it sometimes and sometimes not—it was so reductive—but a big problem was that the massive part was missing. There was no void. They were trying to learn something that already happened, and it was like, Oh, you can't teach that, because the void has to be part of it. If the void isn't part of it, they can't do it. I was like, Oh, right, duh. And then it became this thing also with Nicole, where I didn't want to see her come up against those movements anymore. She was kind of like a racehorse ready to go and I thought, God! I've got to *stop* this. She was improving herself and improving the movements—well, not improving them actually. I was like, I know this has to stop. We have to go to nothing. It was very hard for Nicole.

So people fell away?

People fell away. It was all super sweet and friendly with everybody. Everyone was totally awesome and then this happened and I had to go to the dancers and be like, everything we've been doing just went in the garbage. I told Nicole separately, and when I told the other three, it was cute: They were awesome. They loved it, but they wanted to be in the process. So that's what happened. The way it slipped away in the end—I really believe in fate or something. I really like the people in the room. They're great. They work so hard and are so dedicated and so smart and curious and humble and funny.

Why didn't you want to do the same thing you had done before? Why did you feel that so strongly?

I think that when you realize you are improving or repeating something that you have done before or felt before or seen before, in my cellular, personal experience of being in the studio, there's this overwhelming feeling of redundancy. I can't honorably put my time toward this, because this has

happened. We've seen that, we've felt that; no one needs to go to the theater and have that experience—I shouldn't say no one, but I don't need to have that experience with my time. I need to go to a place where I don't know what's happening, because that place is where the work is. If I am working in a place where I somehow do know where it is, and I'm trying to create that, then I'm matching a reality that already exists. It's like Lego: I'm building something that already exists. Here's the door, here's the window and ultimately that just doesn't feel honorable toward the quest of doing what I'm called to do. It seems like I have to do better than that. Who's to say what the block size is? It exists. It's prefabricated.

It's easy to fall back on what you can do well or what gets you noticed.

Yeah. I feel like I can't do that. I think it means that the show can be very, very bad. Of course it's going to suck when I get that horrible New York Times review that we know is coming to me, and I'm going to feel vulnerable and shitty when people can read that about me in England or something, but in terms of everything else, I don't care so much. I feel like the experiment I'm involved in is the right one. There's a deadline and I'm going to be where I am with the experiment at that deadline, and I'm going to do my best to honor it at that time and let's see what happens. I'm working, of course, like crazy, but I can't patch it up. I can't improve it. I've got to keep honing the experiment. I can't go, "Oh! Why don't you go to the corner and then do something?" I can't make a choreographic fix. I'm doing everything from this kind of engineering—the dancers have this stuff that they do. There are a lot of choices about how and when they do it, but those choices aren't free. [The choices] are through this electrical, ephemeral, engineering system, and what I have to do is keep on improving the system so that the thing can go as far as it needs to go. When it doesn't, it's horrible and some of that is execution on their part and some of that's my naïveté with what we're doing. I just keep trying to go at that, and it's so in no-man's-land that it's hard to know.

You've made a system for all these pieces, right?

I definitely had a system like that for *Study #3*. *Study #1* really was choreography. It was so organized.

But didn't the system have to do with how a dancer had to approach every movement as being new?

Yeah, totally. And what I realized about that recently is that actually this whole thing started with *Dover Beach*.

Absolutely. You started to take control, and you began to think in terms of these systems. I think it was to make yourself comfortable with being in charge.

Yeah, yeah. I'm like, How can we do what we've never done before?

You said that there are hardly any steps. Can you talk about a step?

Well, that's not quite true, but it really did start out with almost no steps. But now there are some steps, but it somehow appears more like base material for each person than steps. It's like actions, maybe. Very specific, of course.

Are the dancers connected to each other?

We talk about that all the time. So there are four of them and in that way, they are totally connected and they are totally connected to the room, what's happening in the room and me—they are definitely together, but they're also 100 percent autonomous. Or that's the goal; that's what we practice.

What is the difference between choreography and choreography as a practice?

It's probably a misuse of the word *choreography* on my part. The steps and the actions are

choreographed; they're not free-floating. They're deeply detailed. Their source is very detailed, like the source in the body, the source in me, the source in the history of any of the movements. It's extremely detailed. So in that way, each action has a simple and complex and irrevocable place in any discussion about choreography. But when I say we're going to the body and matter and not choreography, I'm talking about that I'm not allowing those steps or those actions to, on their own terms, add up to anything. They're not getting built into something that then adds up to something that then is like, Oh! And there it is! I don't allow them to add up.

What's wrong with that payoff?

Nothing—I love when choreography's good and structure is good and beautiful, but there's something that I need to understand about what *matters* when you're making something that's called a dance. What matters? Can I make a dance without that? Of course you can. I'm not going down that road; it's in a different way. It's not removal in that '60s way. And it's not the dancer's choice based on feeling good, or this is now the time to add in. It's based on a whole series of ephemeral stuff that's happening in the room, and based on those things they can act or not act to make an action or not make an action.

Do you have an example?

There's a system and the system has rules, but the rules are based on the ephemeral, physics—the frequency of the room and the frequency of themselves as they understand it and based on, for example, if that frequency matches, they can act. That's only one, but that's an example. And then it's like, what the fuck does that mean? So then there are months of discussion about what that is. When they act, it's very limited what they can do.

So you're making the layers more intricate?

Yeah, and I think the other thing is that I'm relinquishing some part of control. Like I said earlier, I can't patch it up. They're going to do what they're going to do. I could still patch up *Study #1* with choreography: We need to do another circle here, and you need to exit. I can't patch it up. I just can keep going at the system.

So really what changed is your approach to structure?

Oh, totally. And in the end, that's what I was really talking about in that FIAF thing [*Not a Lecture/Performance* from 2012]. It's like, yeah, I've been going on in that thing for a long time; like what's the structure? Construction, structure. Now I'm in words like mechanical engineering, physics, frequencies.

If you only have structure, as important as it is, a work can be flat. It's like Merce: There has to be some kind of—I hate to say it—spirituality. Do you think that has to somehow enter into a dance?

Yeah, totally. I feel so hokey. The things I say are so fucking hokey. This dance is a sleeper I think, potentially, very much so. Yep. I'm sorry. [*Laughs*]

Is Richard Maxwell involved? Did he write something?

Yeah. I felt like it was weird to not have his voice. I'm a bit more involved this time. It's very sweet now.

Are you working with a composer?

The music, I have no fucking idea what I'm doing. I basically play a different thing every day. It's very unclear to me what it's going to be soundwise.

I loved what Northern soul added to your work.

We've been working with that. I got rid of it when I threw everything away, but we've been working with that again. I don't know. It's been confusing and remains to be seen.

You want to be done with *Devotion*, but what is it like to still be inside of it?

Painful. I have a feeling that it's going to have been a very significant period for me later that I really understand and recognize, that I can look at from beginning to end and understand it. Inside it, it feels very driven, and I'm very tired now because I've been going, and it's like, Oh my God, it's not done.

It's been going on since before your daughter was born.

I know, and she's five now. I've been a mother this whole time, and I've been going—oh, okay, *Devotion*. It came up, it was imperfect, whatever. It came out. *Study #1*: I'm not done. It keeps going on like, Oh my God, I'm not fucking done? So I'm awake at night. It's painful. I also recognize that it's really lucky to be so driven, to have so many questions and to be able to go into the studio and to work on my art. I wish I had a little more time and I wish I didn't feel so shit about myself all the time, because those two things get in the way, but yeah—okay, the feeling is I want to understand and I still don't understand, but maybe I don't want to understand at all. Maybe I'm going to be in this forest forever.

Which is okay, right?

Yeah. Because probably I'm just going to find a new forest. I don't want to stay in the same forest forever.

What are the costumes?

They're hodgepodge. I'm kind of into it. I feel like haven't I proven that I can style something? [*Laughs*] I've proven that by now, right? So there is this hodgepodge: It's some of their own clothes. I'm going to get someone to help me with the hair, only because I did Nicole's 'fro all the time, but that's very hard for me when it's actually the show.

Nicole is not the primary dancer anymore. Are they all equal in a sense?

I'm trying for that. Nicole gets nervous. She's been really amazing and sort of the leader. She wasn't. She was out for a while and then she came back, and she kind of became the leader and I realized I was relying on her in a way. But as it gets closer to the thing, she gets nervous. Rachel is pretty great. I really like her. She's super smart. So right now, it's them—they're kind of the two, but the others... I'm working through some of my problems of working with men with John. I like him so much. He's so disarming all the time. He's so sweet. He did a really good job the other day. The last rehearsal was kind of good, so you're seeing me in a good mood; the day before that was absolutely abominable.

What went wrong?

That's what I mean, it's hard to say because all of this ephemera. There are a bunch of things. Some of it is execution and technical stuff, and that I can control. I know how to do that. Then there's decision-making. How much of it is decision-making, how much is the setup itself? It's fucking hard to read. It's hard to say what's what.

Are people going to be sitting in seats?

Nice question. Sort of.

Are you using the floor-plan floor?

I'm building a different floor. I wasn't going to build a floor when I was going to do *Study #3* and all of

a sudden when I threw the whole thing away, it became this emergency expense where I was going to have to build a floor. That, by the way, is called \$25,000. Even when I paint it myself with a curator and his assistant, it still costs \$25,000 to build a floor.

How influenced have you been by Jay Sanders, who is the Whitney's curator of performing arts?

I don't know if I've been influenced by him, but—well, it's kind of a twofold question. It's him personally and how much I love him; I ask him a lot of questions. With a lot of the choices that I've made, I've asked Jay about those choices in terms of what's actually going to be in the building, and he's been a big part of all of that decision-making with me. There's a real simpatico, I think, so they're just discussions in a way. But then he has this other role where he's a curator and that's how I know him and then there is, what are the needs of the museum? And of course those I'm completely influenced by, or the work is in relationship to the needs of the museum. The housing. And he's part of that too. And those two things aren't necessarily the same. He's a special person.

Are you thinking about where you're going to go next?

The Walker is a co-commissioner of this, so some version of this will be [there] in the fall of '15. But that's a long time away, so I can't imagine it's going to be anything remotely like what it's going to be here.

Did you learn anything from your last experience at the Whitney that you're carrying into this? What did you figure out?

I did. It's funny—there was a lot of tremulousness or hype about the Biennial and the fourth floor and all the discussion about fitting into that scenario and that room and trying to read the room and be in the room and make a work for that room. Of course, that's what I did and then realized that I'd made this thing that I loved—when I look at it, I love it, but I also am repulsed by it, because it's so sealed in. I mean this in a disgusting way, not in adulation of myself, but it's so, like, masterpiece. It's like, Oh, there it is. And then there was the show at MoMA where I learned about the power of the gaze and I learned at MoMA that any piece of shit—if you're in there, you're in the canon and the gaze. That doesn't happen in the theater. Not like that. You're like, Oh my God—our little experiment is now in the canon. It just happened like, This is art. It sounds so stupid and it's not necessarily true for everyone; you don't have to have that experience. I just felt like what happened to Nicole and me—how we got watched as the three days went by, it became not even between us anymore by the third day. Like we couldn't hold onto it, because it became part of MoMA. I was very grateful for that. I don't think I could have had that experience anywhere else. I'm not articulating it well, but I can feel it, and I will never, ever forget what that felt like. That it's not your own in that scenario. The Whitney scenario is very different because the Whitney is a very different institution, and you're somehow still allowed [for it] to be your own. Going back into the Whitney, I'm just aware of the art world in a different way. It's not my business. I'm in the museum, but it's not my business; I don't feel part of that discussion. Everybody that tries to talk to me about it, I'm like, I honestly don't know what you're talking about. I feel like everybody is so articulate about it and I feel completely inarticulate about it. I honestly feel like I'm making my work, but I'm learning these things about what it's like to be in an institution like that and the way that feels—it feels terrifying. It's out of your hands so quickly. In the MoMA it was. In the Whitney...Jay is so gentle. I'm allowed to make a theater. It's not that I prefer it. Honestly, that MoMA thing taught me so much. I have very fond memories of what I learned from that. From MoMA, I realized you can go further, you can see wider. But I think it's part of what makes me want to go back to the theater—with that understanding.

Sarah Michelson is at the [Whitney Museum of American Art](#) Jan 24–Feb 2.



CLIFFORD OWENS: ANTHOLOGY (KARA WALKER) (DETAIL). 2011.C-PRINT. COURTESY OF ON STELLAR RAYS

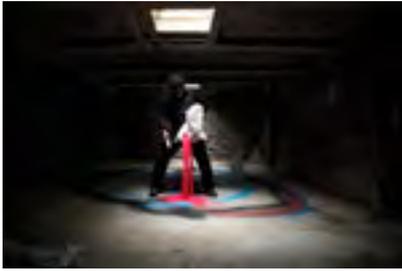
Trusting Clifford Owens: *Clifford Owens: Anthology* at MoMA PS1

Gillian Young | Columbia University

Clifford Owens: Anthology. MoMA PS1. Long Island City, New York. Organized by Assistant Curator Christopher Y. Lew. 13 November 2011-12 March 2012.

“Do you trust me?” Clifford Owens smiled at his question. After what he had done to his audiences at MoMA PS1 over the past year—kissed them, poured sand on their shoes, asked them to do something they would regret, dusted them with baby powder—it was anyone's guess how the present group, gathered in a small museum gallery, would respond. *Anthology*, Owens's first exhibition in a New York museum, depends on the cooperation of fellow artists rather than the display of an extant body of work. Empty galleries are the conceptual starting point for Owens's project on the unwritten history, or blank page, of African American performance art: his response to the under-acknowledged contributions of African American artists to performance art history is not to produce a supplemental account and insert it into the institutional timeline but, rather, to generate a living document that would inhabit the physical space of the museum.

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Clifford Owens: Anthology (Senga Nengudi). 2011. Performance still .

Courtesy of On Stellar Rays

The archival challenge of *Anthology* hinges on the medium of the performance score: written or graphic instructions for action. Derived from experiments in musical notation, text-based scores for events were pioneered by John Cage and the artists associated with Fluxus and minimalism in the 1960s—the title of Owens’s exhibition echoes *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, a collection of score-based work published by Jackson Mac Low and La Monte Young in 1963. Owens, who works across photography, video, and performance, began integrating scores into his practice in *Tell me what to do with myself*, a piece he contributed to the 2005 Greater New York exhibition, also at MoMA PS1. In this performance, Owens invited visitors to give him instructions for action; he was asked to run headfirst into a wall, drink his urine, and stand like his mother, among other things. The following year, Owens interpreted scores by Benjamin Patterson, an African American Fluxus artist, including Patterson’s provocative *Lick Piece*, which instructs the performer to lick whipped cream off a shapely female; “Topping of chopped nuts and cherries is optional.” For *Anthology*, Owens produces a living history by soliciting scores from a multigenerational group of African American artists, twenty-six of whom contributed scores; these range from Senga Nengudi’s detailed instructions to scatter and sweep colored sand (fig. 1) to William Pope.L’s more open-ended prompt: “Be African American. Be very African American.” As Pope.L’s score suggests, the trust and risk involved in the exhibition relate not only that of public display, but of the endeavor of representation itself. Owens interpreted and documented each of these scores in the rambling halls, galleries, and utility rooms of PS1—a building that formerly housed a public school—and continued to perform and develop the pieces over the course of the show.

“Do you trust me?” Owens’s question to his audience was scripted by Benjamin Patterson in a score titled *First Symphony*, initially performed in New York in 1964: “One at a time members of audience are questioned, ‘Do you trust me?’ and are divided left and right, yes and no. The room is darkened. Freshly ground coffee is scattered throughout the room.” Patterson’s score foregrounds the fact that, rather than being passively consumed

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by neutral viewers, the piece will be actively shaped by their prejudices and intuitions. This sense of unpredictability was enhanced by the context in which Owens performed *First Symphony*. For *Anthology*, Patterson's original set of instructions was quoted through another score by Glenn Ligon, which directed Owens to, "Annotate an existing performance/score. Perform that performance annotated." Ligon's score articulates a general contradiction that characterizes *Anthology*: instructions are informed but not governed by authorial intention; once issued, they become susceptible to wayward interpretation and unexpected reiteration.



Clifford Owens: Anthology (Kara Walker) (detail). 2011.C-print.

Courtesy of On Stellar Rays

Kara Walker's contribution to *Anthology* remains the most talked about piece in the exhibition: "French kiss an audience member. Force them against a wall and demand sex. Then turn tables and assume the role of victim. Accuse your attacker. Describe your ordeal. Repeat" (fig. 2). Owens only performed the first part of the score. At times, this felt like a wise exercise of restraint; however, at others, it appeared an excuse for contact with attractive women. Nevertheless, it was fascinating and embarrassing to watch the piece emerge from these seductions in an environment where watching means the risk of meeting the artist's gaze—that is, the risk of sharing the responsibility for what you are there to see. Toward the end of the exhibition's run, it was reported that Owens planned to force a sex act on a member of the audience in his final performance of Walker's score. In response, Walker first threatened to withdraw her score from *Anthology*, and ended up joining Owens in the performance: Walker shadowed Owens as he approached members of the audience, her presence hampering his sexual advances. Though Owens had taken other interpretative liberties over the course of the exhibition, Walker intervened at the very moment that Owens followed her instructions most closely. The complications of participation in the performance situation delineated by Walker's score were thus redoubled on the level of artistic collaboration.

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But the central tension both evoked and negotiated by *Anthology* is that between the archive as a repository of enduring materials, and the repertoire as ephemeral practice and embodied knowledge. Rather than pitting performance against the archival impulse, Owens, who always documents his work with a camera, provocatively demonstrates what Diana Taylor has identified as the constant state of interaction between archive and repertoire. Placed in opposition to the staying power of archives, performance is often understood as always on the verge of disappearance. In contrast to this quality of vanishing, the score suggests an iterable—that is, repeatable—paradigm of performance. *Anthology*—built on cooperation and confrontation with others and the unexpected possibilities of repetition—hinges on this notion of iterability. Owens’s exhibition is not an attempt to recover works by African American artists lost to history, but instead to generate performances that reinsert difference into the heart of representational and archival practices, which themselves violently divide and structure our world, in order to liberate unexpected outcomes. Trust him: this might hurt.

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Anthology

Clifford Owens

Roundtable

Derrick Adams, Terry Adkins, Sherman Fleming, Maren Hassinger, Steffani Jemison, Lorraine O'Grady, and Clifford Owens in conversation with Kellie Jones.

Clifford

I'd like to thank everyone for being part of this conversation. I'm so impressed and deeply moved by the presence of all of you and by your participation in the project.

Anthology is a kind of "gift economy." Writing the scores was a generous act, and I think that same spirit of generosity is what fueled the performance art that was happening in Los Angeles, when you, Maren, were working with David Hammons, Senga Nengudi, and others. Anyway, thank you. I'm also honored that Kellie Jones was generous enough to moderate this discussion.

Kellie

Thank you, Cliff. It's great to be a part of this project. I want to start by asking: What cultural work does performance do in your practice as an artist? What can you do through performance that other mediums don't allow?

Maren

What I've come to is that I'm doing my life. I'm having my experiences, and I'm doing my life. Sometimes it comes out in performance/video, and sometimes it comes out in installations, and sometimes it comes out in objects. But always, there's a sense of motion, there's a sense of a relationship to nature, and lately there's been this real interest in audience participation. It's the idea that there would no longer be a passive audience. Instead, the barriers between audience and artist/performer would dissolve and the whole *thing* would become participatory. Culturally, this becomes an ideal for life.

The thing about performance is: it's real, it's you. It's your body in front of people, or next to people, or wherever, in ways that you can't be in a photograph, installation, or object. You're there doing something, in front of, next to, behind other people in real space. I feel it is the most direct way of speaking to people. Once when we were out in LA and we were getting ready to do *Kiss*—inspired by Senga Nengudi's piece from the 1980s—my relatives came to the opening [of the 2011 exhibition *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles, 1960–1980*] and my cousin kept asking, "Well, it says you're going to do a performance. What kind of performance are you going to do? What is it? What is it going to be?" All I could say was, "Well it's gonna be very visual." The cousin who asked those questions didn't make the performance. Those that did attend were complimentary. But I'm not sure, when they got there and saw it, whether they knew anything about what they were looking at or not. Frankly, I was unsure myself. In any event, people sang along and accepted our gifts and may have felt a lift in spirit—which was our goal.

But here's the thing: because you're using your physicality as the medium, your peculiar presence becomes very important. Hopefully the audience can identify with

that presence. Generally I focus on the real. Issues like daily activities, self image, and our likeness as people, etc. So, performance can speak about unity and bringing everyone together.

Steffani

In terms of my own work and performance, I tend to advertise for performers. They tend to be amateur actors, people who aspire to careers as actors. Often they're young people of color, college age, usually men. And they have certainly absorbed ideas through popular media about what it means to perform, and who their audience might be, and how they might be perceived on camera or by an audience. Often I'm interested in engaging their ideas, and I do work a lot with improvisation. The fact that the performance doesn't happen in a specifically visual art context makes it possible to pursue the kinds of ideas that are interesting to me. In terms of how visual artists work differently with performance, my background is also in film. I was trained in narrative filmmaking and a lot of my working technique is informed by those kinds of approaches.

Lorraine

I've found that the least interesting part of performance for me right now is the use of my own body, my own presence. In fact, I actually stopped performing—not just to slow down the ideas, but to eliminate my body—because I found that since I had started performing so late in life—I mean, I entered art as a forty-five year old—I was using up the last of my youth in those early performances. Were I to have kept performing, using my own body, I would have inevitably raised issues of aging. And aging was not an interest of mine. It was not the subject matter that I was exploring. So it was an inadvertent conflict between the body that I was and the message I wanted to say in performance. But the performances that didn't necessarily involve my own body felt like a very satisfying way to create situations for others to enter into or to express themselves in, or to put other people in motion. So in effect, it's sort of like directing film, something in which you set up the situation, and others execute or elaborate the situation. That's the only way that I feel I could do performance now. I could not be the central performer ever again.

Sherman

It's interesting you're saying that. I like the body. I think that's what's always drawn me to performance. I went to a concert; I think it was when James Brown got out of jail the second time. It was at Constitution Hall [in Philadelphia], and by this time, I guess it was the early '90s, there was a lot of fanfare. He had dancers and the band was playing for like forty minutes. Everyone was asking, "Where the heck is James Brown?" Then finally James Brown comes out, and his first song is "Try Me." And he's singing and the energy was really low. He was clearly showing his age, and at a certain point he was using the old corded microphone on the stand even though this was a time when you could have a wireless microphone. I was thinking, "Man, what is this with these creaky old instruments anyway?" He comes to this crescendo, and he kicks the mic stand forward, and then he spins and he jerks it back, and he lands

on his knees, and the microphone perfectly lands in his hand. It changed the entire audience. It was this amazing, magical thing. It's that aspect of a guy who's done that all of his life, and even though he was, by this time, in his sixties, he could still recall that power and majesty with just a couple of moves. And that's what resonates with the type of work that I do, and the type of work I've always wanted to do. That the body still goes no matter what, whether in your twenties or your sixties or your seventies, like James Brown and blues and jazz musicians: they still go. They're still doing it. They're still recalling that magic.

Terry

I consider myself not to be a performance artist per se, but rather a recitalist, meaning one who attempts to create a synesthetic, installation-based experience built on various themes, where the spectacle of black music traditions are brought to bear. I'm influenced by the promotional photos and stage settings of early territory bands rethought as installations proper and the continuum of this tradition in the avant-garde as manifested by performing artists like Sun Ra and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. The Lone Wolf Recital Corps is a performance unit with revolving membership that is a laboratory for working out these ideas as they relate to installation settings and subjects.

The first performance that I saw in the true sense was by Sherman Fleming in 1980. We both were in a group show at DC Space curated by Keith Morrison called *Alternatives by Black Artists*. I came to the opening and saw this brother with bolted boots, hung upside-down from the ceiling with mirrors stuck to his body revolving like a disco ball to James Brown music, I said "WHOA! What is this?!" (*Laughs*).

Clifford

Strong image.

Terry

We started collaborating after that (*laughs*).

I'd just like to throw something out here. This is a beautiful gesture by Clifford to address our invisibility. He's taken this solo situation and made it a platform for making a statement about that. I want to quote the pianist VJ Ayer, who I think begins to address the nature of our absence from the contemporary canon. He says: "What I've found as an artist of color in America, is that we are most often called upon to represent yesterday's traditions; to be repositories of the ancient; to perform ethnicity in a way that poses no threat or challenge to modernity. It is shockingly rare that artists of color are invited to become full participants in the national conversation, to respond to today's world, and to offer a glimpse of tomorrow."

Derrick

I always consider making work to be like having a conversation with another artist of the past. One of the things I realized is this is the first time in history that a black artist of my generation can communicate with another black artist of a past generation. Artists of the previous generation may not have had an artist to refer to. They

might have been referring to Duchamp. I don't have to refer to Duchamp when I'm making work. I can think about David Hammons if I want to think about those ideas. I don't have to go that far back. Like a musician who is making hip hop, he can refer to R&B. He doesn't have to go back to jazz. Even though jazz is still attached to R&B, he doesn't have to go back that far.

Lorraine

Derrick, do you think that there is a lesser degree of self-censorship within, among black art-makers now than there was before? Do you think that's changed?

Derrick

Yes, less. If we have a lack of self-censorship, it'll help artists who are good or who are bad to distinguish themselves from other artists. The best way to know what you are is to know what you aren't. When you look at another artist's work that is not the thing that you would do, it helps to define your direction as an artist. I think this is the first time in history where there's so much out here, good and bad, that you're able to make that distinction easier.

Terry

I don't agree with your first statement at all. It's not the first time in history that transgenerational communication has ever been possible. There have always been black artists who came before any of us whose legacies have been available to converse with in any number of ways. Truly exercising the kind of freedom that you're talking about means also being free to refer to Duchamp if you want to, and to not arrest it at David Hammons, or any other artist. You have the freedom to do anything you want!

Lorraine

I brought up this issue of communal self-censorship for a reason, and that is because when I began my performance, it was with an act of criticism of the community. This was received as a reprehensible act because the community was not supposed—to use the old phrase, “not to wash your dirty linen in public”—to make criticisms public outside of the community. The first problem that I had was that we as a community learn about ourselves the same way everybody else learns about us, through white media. There really weren't many options for making effective critique within the community. I always believed that a community that cannot critique itself, even publicly, is a weak community. I certainly loved the black abstract artists, but I felt that this was 1980, this was a different moment than the one that they had been working in, and required new approaches.

Clifford

I don't think that black artists in the US enjoy that kind of freedom, especially in performance art. I think even when Sherman was hanging by his feet with mirrors attached to his body, that was radical. That was not the way black male bodies were supposed to be presented publicly in a work of art. Something I often come up

against in my own performances is: Why do so few black people attend my performances? Why are so many black people uncomfortable with my nudity or the ways in which I deal with my body? I often say, and this might be problematic, that there's no such thing as black art. I'm more interested in American art. Black art really is, in fact, a black middle-class position. Black art is driven by a black middle-class ideology and that ideology is such that the presentation of the body that might make a spectacle of the black body for white consumption is not appropriate. Some black audiences, and white audiences, are quite comfortable with a kind of, well, coonery buffoonery.

Terry

So you're talking about the performing of ethnicity as VJ Ayer stated.

Clifford

Exactly.

Terry

I think *Anthology* in every aspect displays that there is a performance to ethnicity in ways that are unfamiliar; one that is not stuck under the ceiling of possibility framed by a dominant culture for what has been branded "black entertainment" in America.

Sherman

There's an issue of commodification. Like the minstrel; minstrelsy is a commodified genre. And there are many people who do it, and there are some who do it incredibly well. For me, as much as I can determine that that's great and that's fine, I couldn't do that. I want to be able to look at something or see something or experience something that lacks a name. Like the first time I saw the Art Ensemble! Or the first music I heard by them. It's like, what is this? And spending years and years trying to figure out what that is, and by the time I figured it out, to paraphrase Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, the moment you figure out what black people are doing, they've gone on to do something else (*laughs*). Because that is what runs our culture! Whether it's R&B, whether it's dance, whether it's performance, whether it's poetry, whether it's spoken word, there's this noncommodifiable energy that runs through our society. It really can't be defined, and by the time it is defined, something else is happening that we haven't witnessed.

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Lorraine

Cliff, what made you think of *Anthology* as a score-based project? Had you been doing scores before?

Clifford

When I was artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2006 I

performed four scores by Ben Patterson, which I think was the first time the museum presented Patterson's work. So in a sense *Anthology* is greatly indebted to Ben Patterson.

Kellie

Maybe this is a way to expand upon these ideas: what are your thoughts on Cliff's performance of your score?

Clifford

Uh oh...*(laughs)*.

Sherman

Well, he didn't do it the way I would have done it *(laughs)*. But you did it and I thought, "Oh, that's great!" Your interpretation—I mean, there's a very serious work ethic. It's a lot of hard work doing that painting and all that, and I liked the way you documented it. When I first saw the show I had issues with how you installed the documentation, but I had to let that grow on me. I came back and looked at it and thought, "Oh yeah, okay that works." But I had to keep coming back to it to form a relationship to something that I thought was uniquely mine, but really was not. That was the process I had to go through. So for that, you get an A.

Clifford

Thank you.

Terry

I feel similar to Sherman. For me, there's a disconnect between the audio and the image. But the image so powerfully captures what I was thinking. It's evident in the photograph; it's just captured so well. There's a sweetness in the photograph that is Bud Powell. There is an angelic distance that is Bud Powell in that photograph, so much so that I almost don't even hear the audio part of it. But since I know that's what it brought you to, I dig the audio too.

Derrick

I was more interested in the idea of having you interpret the work in a way that I didn't think about and for me to learn a new way of seeing something, or communicating something. I was hoping that you would do something totally different than I would do.

Terry

I think there's a mutual exchange of surrender on the part of both artists. Our surrender and trust in Cliff to do it; and his surrender and distance, to surrender himself to what we wrote out for him. That's also a thing that's very beautiful about it.

Maren

Great collaboration. So you can distinctly hear the two voices.

Terry

I'm a little pissed off you didn't put that plant in, the fern—

Clifford

I know (*laughs*).

Sherman

I like the complexity of it. I read the score and tried to affix the score to the documentation. I'm doing that throughout the exhibit.

Clifford

It doesn't always match up.

Sherman

Which is great!

Maren

There are some people missing, right?

Clifford

Yes.

Terry

In the number of times that you have had public performances of the scores, how much variety has there been? What determined the frequency of performances?

Clifford

When we put the scores together—I call them performance medleys—it's important that they have some kind of connection to each other. There's a curatorial process that we go through when we decide what scores to do live. I've done some of the scores many times with different interpretations. Kara Walker's score I have probably done ten times now. Steffani's score maybe five times. Lorraine's four times. Terry's score I did three times in a single day. The audio-based performance scores, like Jennie C. Jones's score and Terry's, I needed to do them again and again. It's important that I do them multiple times, with multiple iterations and variations on the score. Sherman's score, I want to do that one again in a different context.

It took me a very long time to figure out Kara Walker's score. A very *long* time. And I'm still trying to figure it out. Even Maren's score took a long time to figure out. I've certainly absorbed everybody's score. It's in my body, and it's in my psyche. And my interpretation of Steffani's simple score, "Experience regret, do not apologize" is to have people experience regret with me and not apologize; I'm absorbing their decisions to humiliate me publicly in those performances. And some of you were there—you were there at that performance. It was quite intense.

Maren

It was quite crowded.

Clifford

Yeah! Or making my body, in your score, Maren, accessible to the audience.

Maren

These strangers' hands...

Clifford

Yes, strangers' hands all over me. Can I ask one question, before we move on? And we don't need to get into it too much, but with everybody's contribution to the project, and considering where performance art is now versus where it was thirty years ago, and thinking about the marketability of performance art, have any of you thought about or found it problematic that *Anthology* has a kind of market value placed on it? And what does that mean, say for Maren or Lorraine, who were making works since the '80s, without any consideration for where the work would end up, historically or in the marketplace?

Terry

It means you should give them a 50/50 split! (*Laughs*).

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Clifford

I'm asking the question because we started out talking about performance art, something that has historically existed outside the mainstream. And now that it has become kind of mainstream and because artists of color *rarely* enjoy commercial success—not that I'm enjoying tremendous commercial success—but that performance art is now enjoying some kind of market success, and that this project has a kind of historical dimension and meaning.

Sherman

When I got the full scope of what you were doing? It made me think about again those blues musicians whose work was ripped off, and they spent half their lifetime trying to grab some of the royalties, just saying "That is my piece," or "That's my song." The fact is that you're paying homage to the practice and to the practitioners.

Lorraine

I'm a little more cynical. I feel that, at one level, you could say that the show is mutually exploitative. Possibly you used us, and we used you, and why not? I think it benefited everybody, and the great thing about it was when I walked in and I felt, "My God, this show is so much bigger than Cliff, and each of us individually, and it's bigger in spite of us." Do you know what I mean? We gave our individual little scores to you, and you did your little performance, and you're taking your clothes off, and you're doing your little Cliff stuff! But the Cliff stuff that you did, and the stuff that we all did, somehow added up to something so much more than any of us.

Terry

I think it's important, too, to keep in mind that not only is he paying homage, he's also taking the risk of dealing with very young people. And that's also a great risk, very generous, and very strong.

Steffani

I might be the only person who had the privilege of studying with Cliff. He was a visiting professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago when I was in graduate school, and one of the things that he talked about, and that I think about a lot, was the importance of resolving the work for presentation. We thought about what it means to produce or develop or generate material for a work, and how it's presented to the public. It was something that was clearly preoccupying him as an artist, what it means to transform this practice that existed between performance and photography. The tension between performance and photography, and also the kind of question about the relationship between the production of the work and its documentation, is really present to me, even in the exhibition. What does it mean, as someone who attended many performances, that those performances can be considered "the work"? I felt as if I was in the presence of work happening, work being made. I was so surprised to see how the photographs turned out to be something completely different. That's just something that I've been thinking about in relation to this question, and in relation to how the show connects to the performances. I definitely didn't design my score for documentation. It was created as this very private, personal thing. It's not visual at all, actually.

Lorraine

You didn't think yours was visual?

Steffani

When I developed the score "Experience regret, do not apologize" I imagined Cliff taking a private moment, maybe in a room to himself, maybe in a bathroom, maybe while cooking, experiencing regret, and not even having an opportunity to apologize.

Kellie

Can we talk further about this idea of the dissonance between the actual physical performance and its documentation, whether in photographs or as a written score?

Terry

I think that the driving force behind all the pieces in the show is that dissonance and the varying degrees of it. I'm sure everybody here has different ideas about what it is that was written and how it ended up being. With every piece I feel there are varying degrees of dissonance that bring it to life!

Lorraine

For me, the score is research. I set up a situation because I want information; I want

information on how people conceive the other. And so any interpretation of it is a valid interpretation; as far as I'm concerned, it's all information about how the other is conceived.

Steffani

To clarify, the dissonance that I was talking about, it's not between the score that was written and the realization, but rather the performance as it's experienced, and the documentation as it's experienced and represented. I don't even know if it's accurate to use the word "documentation" as if it's secondary, as if those photos are secondary, because I don't think they are. They're two different things. And that's the kind of tension or relationship, that is really interesting to me.

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Kellie

Do you all think this project makes visible an African American performance history?

Lorraine

I think that the show reveals the presence of a history without being a history itself. It was not a historical show; it did not give the history of black performance art. It simply, in some ways, just revealed its existence. We hate to say that, but they didn't really know we were here, so it revealed the existence of a black performance history. We're still at this stage now, really, that all we're doing is presenting ourselves to art history for examination. We're at the debutante ball, presenting ourselves, right? Not for our potential suitors, but—yeah, okay, potential suitors! We're all here for the PhD candidates who want to come.

Derrick

As a contributor of a score, I wasn't necessarily aware of the fact that it was only African American or only black artists participating. To me it didn't make a difference. I was more interested in the conversation that was involved, and the work, and the show itself. If I had seen black-and-white Xeroxes from Kinko's on the wall, I would've been okay with that. I thought it was interesting because it was like a letter. It doesn't have to be grand or anything. That's one of the things I like a lot about looking at artists like Ben Patterson, and looking at some of the scores from the past: seeing the rawness of things and how that rawness is actually acceptable in our culture as mainstream objects.

Terry

In taking Kellie's question a little bit further, when you found out that it was an all-black show, did any of you feel uncomfortable with the prospect of a certain kind of racial cluster, ghettoization, another black show?

Maren

I knew from the beginning that's what he was doing, and I thought it was incredibly ambitious. All those voices...

Sherman

I understood from the beginning that it was going to be about black performance art; black visual artists who do performance. And I thought, "This is fantastic." So I didn't really see it as a sort of cubby hole, a categorical thing. I thought, "This was a long time coming. Maybe this is the beginning of something."

Lorraine

I was curious: were there any people that you asked who said no?

Clifford

Oh, many. And then there were some who agreed to contribute a score, and then they got busy and they couldn't do it, so there were quite a few. I reached out to a lot of people, but for whatever reason, some weren't interested—maybe for the very reasons that Terry just explained. I think that may have had something to do with it. I hate to use this word, because it's overused, and grossly misunderstood, but post-black. But I think US visual artists working in performance have always and only been post-black. In a way, to be a part of this show, it means you're functioning as an artist outside of a mainstream. It works against the grain of all those assumptions people might have. But then I think there may have been a lot of fear for some artists, to be a part of the exhibition. Which is fine too.

Lorraine

Why?

Clifford

I think that performance art is challenging. And I think the scores that you all contributed to the project are challenging. I think in some cases even more challenging to you as artists. It is also challenging to me as the interpreter, the conduit, and subsequently challenging to the public that consumes it.

Lorraine

You know it's interesting, just to unpack the phrase "post-black," slightly? I mean as you know, I always go around saying, I mean every time I give a lecture, I say, "Well I was post-black before I was black" (*Laughs*). I think there are people my age who know what I'm talking about! Any black person who grew up in the '50s in a certain social class and with a certain level of education—especially if they had achieved what was possible in the limited meritocracy that did exist in some parts of the country, particularly the Northeast—would understand. Many people of that class assumed that they had escaped from the limitations of blackness.

Kellie

As I see it, African American art history was post-black before it was black. In the

nineteenth century, black artists were not necessarily depicting the black body. They had only recently been able to work as fine artists. In the US they were still working out how to represent a black person. You think of people like Robert Scott Duncanson, who was largely a landscape painter. The one painting he does with a black figure [*Uncle Tom and Little Eva*, 1853—after Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 1852] gets horrible reviews. And that was it for Duncanson in terms of outlining a black image; he never took that further. How does a black person represent what he himself looks like, or what she herself looks like, in the face of overwhelming stereotypes or images of servility, and was there a market for anything outside that type of framing? So there was a caesura that they were working out how to fill in over the nineteenth century. African American artists of the nineteenth century didn’t show black people for the most part. If you look at the majority of their work, they’re showing landscapes, or they’re showing allegorical figures who are supposed to be black—but don’t “look black” in a phenotypical sense, as in the sculpture of Edmonia Lewis.

With the growth of a critical mass of artists and art, African Americans are able to deal with the idea of the black figure in the twentieth century. And then this ends up being something that becomes identified as “black art.” But that heavily freighted term is also very much part of the language of the 1960s and 1970s. “Post-black” pushes against such reductive thinking. However, it is a phrase that has its own limitations because I feel it doesn’t take into account the long history African American artists have in which the black figure was not a part of their production. So this is perhaps a roundabout way of saying that it makes perfect sense that Lorraine had a more expansive view of what blackness could mean creatively, in advance of these types of late-twentieth-century categories.

Terry

But it’s interesting that Duncanson, Tanner, and Bannister were also community photographers.¹ They were self-employed entrepreneurs. So, while they might not have been depicting blackness in painting, they most certainly were documenting it while providing a service to their community. It’s dicey to project from hindsight, but I wonder whether this activity also emerged out of their need to find alternatives to freely and creatively depict their people without the constraints of art-world prescriptions that Kellie has pointed out.

Steffani

Cliff, you mentioned at the beginning that you feel that many—you feel that your audiences aren’t necessarily mostly black, or that a lot of black people don’t come to see the work. And one of the things I really like about what white audiences see when they see your performances is that you refuse to suggest you’re a neutral vehicle for performance. Your performances never ignore the ways that you’re perceived socially and culturally. You also resist allowing anyone else to perceive themselves that way. When speaking about white female performance artists people never say, “This work is therefore about whiteness.” No, of course not. They never say that. But of course it is! Their work is often about whiteness. It just isn’t acknowledged.

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Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937), Edward Mitchell Bannister (1828–1901).

Derrick

The score I gave you was really based on something as simple as a TV commercial, which was Puff Daddy in a commercial for Proactiv, and he was talking about the product. He was speaking to the audience in a basic way that I like to hear. It was something that appeals to me in every way as a human, and the line he said to the audience was, "I just wanna be straight up with you: I just ain't want no bumps."

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Kellie

In critical and academic discussions of performance art there's a tension between the live act and the document, the latter being emblematic of a fixed history. In putting together *Anthology*, and having this roundtable, do you think there's danger in codifying the history of African American performance art, similar to the way "black art" seems to signal a narrow view of African American artistic practice? Is this project antithetical to preserving the freedom of the live act, as well as antithetical to preserving an uncoded blackness? Or is the need for histories of African American artists more pressing?

Sherman

I think that historically, when I think back to the '80s and the '90s and the culture wars—what did the culture wars result in? The culture wars were a win for institutions that no longer had to deal with individual artists. If performance art is an outsider practice, that meant all of a sudden that access to a venue was now stripped. You really had to have an institution to back you up to have something. And for those who do not have that, well then you're ass out. So I think it is important to be able to categorize or codify this particular type of practice. Not to mention the fact that, as far as in a Western tradition, performance is over one hundred years old. It's an old art form. It's even a tradition, but no one knows what it is. And that needs to be defined, and that needs to be shaped.

Clifford

I'm happy to run the risk of codifying history. I think it's necessary. I always wanted *Anthology* to be problematic and I think it is on a lot of levels. How is it possible that I've placed myself at the center of a broader conversation? I've placed myself at the center of this history. It's me all the time! Me me me me me. We know of course, as Lorraine mentioned, it's much bigger than me, or all of you. But it's my representation that in a sense drives the work, drives the project. So that, I think, is a problem! But I don't think it discredits or somehow devalues the individual artists who contributed to the exhibition.

Kellie

What are your thoughts in general about the concept of the score in performance? Had you ever produced one before this project?

Lorraine

I want to thank Cliff because actually I was moved to write a “score” for the first time, as opposed to a more directive “script,” the sort of thing I would do for my own work. But eliminating any and all directions that might limit interpretation was the answer to another set of questions that I had had about my own work. So in the end what I gave Cliff was not something just for Cliff. As soon as this show is down, I will put it on my website and offer it to the world! But it was Cliff’s invitation that enabled me to think about the “score” very self-consciously. So it was a first time for me, and I’m definitely very appreciative.

Maren

I’ve written scores, but I never called them scores. They were my scripts for action or interaction between people who were in the performances. So this is the first time it was “scored” and adapted. In the past, I’d given directions to people, but it was in a piece in which everybody was given directions to do things. It wasn’t like I gave a cast directions for broad interpretation. I held the reins. So this was the first time I just let the thing go. And it worked out great! What I was really shocked about was that some of the stuff that’s always going around in my head, I could see Clifford had done intuitively. In each person’s case, I saw him honoring that person. Even though his adaptations might not have seemed so, it was always very honorable, very sensitive.

Derrick

The thing I enjoyed about being asked to contribute a score is that it confirmed just the way that I think about making art. I’m excited to show in places and do projects, but I think art is just a basic practice in which I would feel just as happy if I had a piece and wanted to do it in the street. Or if I wanted to do it in an abandoned building. The communication of the art could be anywhere. And this is one thing that I talk about a lot with artists, younger artists. You don’t have to be in a fancy space or an institution to communicate an idea or do an exhibition.

I’m hoping this exhibition will influence a lot of younger artists about their ideas of the art world or the mainstream art world, and how to communicate their ideas from a very basic place. I don’t believe there’s an outside or an inside anymore.

Lorraine

Derrick, I can’t let you get away with this altogether (*laughs*). You’re dealing with a problem that we wish we could have dealt with. The thing that you’re describing is where we started. And then we got institutionalized! And now, it’s interesting that you are feeling like you have to struggle to get back to where we were before we got institutionalized. It’s great! I love it!

Terry

What I found interesting about the whole score idea—and in viewing the show—is the coexistence of a document in darkness that, if you will, is brought to light by Clifford’s interpretations. I sense a certain amount of withholding in the documents in *Anthology* and you, Cliff, act as the conduit for bringing them to light. To enable

the brilliance that exists in the luminosity of an idea as it appears on paper is the most interesting aspect about the score. It was something I'd been already thinking about. With my exposure to ideas about endurance that I've experienced through Sherman's work, I kind of had written it for him.

Sherman

Let me play my old man. Back in *my day* (*laughs*) we didn't have this. It was really about, "I'm gonna have to forge my own way. I'm going to have to build my own structure. I'm going to make my own environment, make the tickets, make the poster, get all of this together, then I have to do it all over again the next time." I understand and appreciate performance being this outsider practice. Clifford, I have to say, when I got the call from you, it had been a fantasy that if I keep doing this, somebody's going to call. There's going to be some black grad student that's going to say, "I saw your name on some little ticket there, and I just decided to hunt you down and go, 'Who are you?'" (*laughs*). I've held on to that for thirty years, and then you called. Going through this exhibit is fantastic. To see all of these people who were doing what I was doing, but we were just cut off from each other. We didn't know. I didn't know until now that it's here and it's great and it's fantastic. And now there are so many more opportunities and venues. Back there when I was your age, not having that was really, I don't know, it was kind of painful. It was kind of painful to get up and do the whole thing, get some appreciation, and then having to do it all over again, and convince people all over again that this is what I'm doing, and them believing in me enough to give me the spot to do it. And doing it again and again for thirty years. It can wear on you! I guess I'm happy that there are so many more people who think of themselves as being in this rich opportunity of creativity. But it really wasn't like that all the time, and it took a lot of work. It took a lot of hard work to do—and just sort of stick to it, believing in what you're doing is really important enough. So I thank you.

The Body as an Object of Interference: Q+A with Jeff Kolar

By [Maura Lucking](http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/feb/15/q-jeff-kolar/) / <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/feb/15/q-jeff-kolar/>



Dancers often describe the feeling of watching someone else's performance and actually feeling, in their own bodies, the form and movement of the other. This sensation of inhabiting another's body in a relative physical way is called proprioception and it does have a basis in neurological fact, which reports that some can access this bodily empathy innately while others, especially in kinesthetic disciplines like dancing or music, develop a sensitivity to it over time. But can a non-human entity like, say, an osprey or a radio frequency be considered proprioceptively knowable?

Jennifer Monson's upcoming performance at The Kitchen, *Live Dancing Archive*, plays with this idea, asking if dance can function as a continuously generating archive of bodily experience. The piece, her first in a theater setting in years and by far the longest of her choreographed works, revisits one of her own earlier projects as source material. A dance-based environmental research trip across Atlantic bird migration routes, *BIRD BRAIN Osprey Migration* (2002) aimed to collect environmental data through tracing the physical route of the birds from the North Atlantic to South America. This new work, in turn, uses video documentation of the dancers on that tour, Monson included, as the archival data to be embodied and brought to light in her performance.

While this might appear to point to a highly personal and, perhaps, political interpretation of the archival impulse – i.e. to advocate for a specific kind of environmental knowing through an artistic research practice – Monson's collaborative development of *Live Dancing Archive* points to an interest in a more open and fluid definition of the concept. The piece was developed collaboratively over the course of the last year and a half by Monson, video artist Robin Vachal (who recorded the initial

documentation of the 2002 project), lighting designer Joe Levasseur, and audio artist Jeff Kolar. In its final incarnation, the work exists as the simultaneous performance of Monson, Levasseur, and Kolar, all of whom will be physically present on stage, a video installation that will be on view on The Kitchen's stage during days of performance, and a [digital archive](#) of video footage and ephemera from the *BIRD BRAIN* project that will go live on the day of the performance's premier.

The project's composer, Jeff Kolar, agreed to answer a few questions about the audio component of the performance, an "indeterminate score... generated through live field experiments in the AM/FM, shortwave, Citizens, and unlicensed spectrum (27 MHz or 49 MHz band)." [\[1\]](#)



Can you explain a bit about your composition and performance process? Have you scored dance or performance in the past? I understand that you'll be onstage with Jennifer and that, like her dance practice, any number of environmental variables can impact the aural product of that particular performance.

In 2011, I produced a project called [Start Up / Shut Down](#), which focuses on Window and Macintosh operating system event sounds. I spent a great deal of time examining the strict durational formatting and other standards found in the one-to-four second event sound. The result was two five-minute tracks that act as a set of hand-made alternatives to proprietary operating system sounds.

Following that, I created [The Wilhelm Scream](#) (2012), a work that explores the iconic three-second cinematic sound effect "The Wilhelm Scream". The piece explored the scream's origins, usage, and cult status as well as the character conversations and ambient sounds that immediately precede and follow the sound effect. And my most recent release, [Ringtones](#) (2012) is a set of operative ring tones produced specifically for use by mobile devices. The ring tones, released for iPhone and Android, range from four-to-forty-seconds in duration. The work is situated as functional audio objects that can be installed on wireless cellular phones for everyday use.

The audio material in *Live Dancing Archive* is generated live through field experiments in the AM/FM, Shortwave, Citizens, and Unlicensed radio spectrums. The instrument arrangement of hand-built radio transmitters and receivers respond directly to external weather phenomena, wireless technology systems, and human activity. The radios were specifically designed as low-powered and battery-controlled to create a sensitive, interference-proned sonic landscape.

What about the project drew you to using exclusively analog technologies, in comparison to the rest of your practice, which is more cross-platform? Is there actually an anti-archival quality to

employing the sounds broadcast on radio frequencies that, at least in theory, aren't as easy to replicate or record?

For this particular project, the instrument arrangement is entirely analog; a chain of handmade radio transmitters and receivers that respond directly to the specific site of transmission. The work explores a diverse range of licensed and unlicensed electromagnetic frequencies that are affected by peripheral analog and digital wireless systems that surround the performance venue.

I view radio as an inherently ephemeral medium. A landscape that is operating in and experienced by the complexities of real-time. There is a long tradition of using radio as indeterminate musical instruments (i.e. musique concrète, John Cage, Luc Ferrari, etc.). Pre-dating the use of broadcast delays, radio's history is that of a "live" technological media. A sonic landscape that is always on and omnipresent.

This notion of radio as real-time experience was a large factor in my developing Radius, an experimental radio broadcast platform that focuses on supporting radio work via the event of live radio broadcast. Radius intentionally does not have a real-time internet stream. Instead, the platform exists to represent sound and radio art on the radio, in the spectrum, in real-time.

As a medium that is so specific to the time and place of the listener, it seemed like an appropriate choice to use analog radio in *Live Dancing Archive*. I've developed a score that is flexible enough to change based on time, place and external interferences, but specific enough to relate directly to the compositional elements found in the dance movement. I am constantly negotiating the desire for a fixed composition while also dealing with the indeterminate nature of live radio. I do record every performance of *Live Dancing Archive*, but have yet to reuse any of that material. I am much more interested in the real-time execution of the work than the documentation of it.

In Hal Foster's analysis of the archival impulse as it has appeared in contemporary practice, the tactile and personal figuration of the archive is directly at odds with the technological one from which it's language is drawn.^[2] He writes that they "are recalcitrantly material, fragmentary rather than fungible, and as such they call out for human interpretation, not machinic reprocessing."^[3] What's your take on this human-technological binary in the framework of a performance like this one? Could you talk a bit about the impact of physical human bodies and their movements as they are tracked through your own performance?

I view radio as a medium that is intensely linked to the human body. Radio is often considered a disembodied media that focuses entirely on the transmission of the human voice and refuses the bodies of senders and receivers. This notion of a uni- or mono-directional radio system references a very corporate use of the radio spectrum. A viewpoint that focuses on the desire for maximum signal strength to obtain more potential listeners, which equates to higher potential advertising revenue. This is often found specifically in FM music stations and AM talk radio.

I would argue that radio is inherently linked to the specific sites of transmission and reception, and the interaction of bodies to architecture, the environment, and other technological equipment. In that way, I view that the body as an object of interference; a physical thing that can alter electromagnetic waves. The archival implications found in the *Live Dancing Archive* project are as much about real-time as it is about the preserved or documented time. The audiences that experience the live performances become part of that archive.

My work with the electromagnetic spectrum acts as a physical environment for dance to live and be performed within; a systems of physical relations (waves) that alter and open the inaudible spaces that surround us. In that way, *Live Dancing Archive* documents indeterminate ecological systems, and reveals a deep relationship among technological, ecological, and human environments. The audience

in attendance, Jennifer's body, my proximity to the radio equipment quite literally affect the sonic output from the radios. The score is comprised of sensitive systems of social and tele-communication relations. In that way, every performance is a learning experience for me: a site-specific event filled with transmission accidents, wireless feedback, and physical interferences.

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[Live Dancing Archive](#)//Jennifer Monson/iLAND//The Kitchen//February 14-23

10 Theses on the Archive

https://pad.ma/texts/padma:10_Theses_on_the_Archive/100

April 2010, Beirut.

1. Don't Wait for the Archive

To not wait for the archive is often a practical response to the absence of archives or organized collections in many parts of the world. It also suggests that to wait for the state archive, or to otherwise wait to be archived, may not be a healthy option.

This need not imply that every collection or assembly be named an archive, or that all of art's mnemonic practices be, once again, cast into an archival mould. It suggests instead that the archive can be deployed: as a set of shared curiosities, a local politics, or epistemological adventure. Where the archival impulse could be recast, for example, as the possibility of creating alliances: between text and image, between major and minor institutions, between filmmakers, photographers, writers and computers, between online and offline practices, between the remnant and what lies in reserve, between time and the untimely. These are alliances against dissipation and loss, but also against the enclosure, privatization and thematisation of archives, which are issues of global, and immediate, concern.

The archive that results may not have common terms of measurement or value. It will include and reveal conflicts, and it will exacerbate the crises around property and authorship. It will remain radically incomplete, both in content and form. But it is nevertheless something that an interested observer will be able to traverse: riding on the linking ability of the sentence, the disruptive leaps of images, and the distributive capacity that is native to technology.

To not wait for the archive is to enter the river of time sideways, unannounced, just as the digital itself did, not so long ago.

2. Archives are not reducible to the particular Forms that they take

Archival initiatives are often a response to the monopolization of public memory by the state, and the political effects that flow from such mnemonic power. But attempts at creating an archive are not necessarily supplementing the memory machine of the state. The state archive is only one instance of the archive, they are not the definition of archives, but merely a form. As a particular form, state archives do not exhaust the concept of the archive. The task of creating an archive is neither to replicate nor to mimic state archives but to creatively produce a concept of the archive.

An archive actively creates new ways of thinking about how we access our individual and collective experiences. An archive does not just supplement what is missing in state archives, it also renders what is present unstable.

Nietzsche defined happiness as the capacity or power to live one's life actively – affirming the particularity or specificity of one's moment in time. In doing so he refused to subsume the conceptual possibility of what it means to be happy under a general form of happiness.

When we subsume the concept of archives to its known form we are exhausted by it and suffer from archive fevers and archive fatigue. Contemporary archival impulses attempt to realize the potential of the archive as virtuality, and it challenges us to think through the productive capacities of an archive beyond the blackmail of memory and amnesia.

The production of a concept is a provocation, a refusal to answer to the call of the known, and an opportunity to intensify our experiences. The archive is therefore not representational, it is creative, and the naming of something as an archive is not the end, but the beginning of a debate.

3. The Direction of Archiving will be Outward, not Inward

We tend to think of archiving as the inward movement of collecting things: finding bits and pieces, bringing them together, guarding them in a safe and stable place. The model of this type of archiving is the fortress, or the burning library. This model already provides a clear sense of the limits, or ends, of the archive: fire, flooding, data loss.

Can we think of the archive differently? When Henri Langlois, founder of the Cinémathèque Française, stated that "the best way to preserve film is to project it", he hinted at the very opposite philosophy of archiving: to actually use and consume things, to keep them in, or bring them into, circulation, and to literally throw them forth (Latin: *proicere*), into a shared and distributed process that operates based on diffusion, not consolidation, through imagination, not memory, and towards creation, not conservation.

Most of today's digital archives seem to still adhere to the model of the fortress, even though, by definition, they no longer preserve precious and unique originals, but provide cheap and reproducible copies. These copies can be "thrown forth" on a much larger scale, and with much greater efficiency, than Henri Langlois -- or Walter Benjamin, theorist of analog reproduction, advocate of its technological potential and critic of its practical political use -- would have ever imagined. To archive, and to be archived, can become massively popular.

The astonishingly resilient archiving practices around Napster or the Pirate Bay, and the even more virulent promise of actual or imaginary archives far beneath or beyond them -- if, for one moment, we could step outside the age of copyright we all inhabit, and fully embrace the means of digital reproduction most of us have at our disposal -- not just directly follow the trajectory traced by Benjamin and Langlois, but extend it to a point in the not-so-distant future where we will think of archiving primarily as the outward movement of distributing things: to create ad-hoc networks with mobile cores and dense peripheries, to trade our master copies for a myriad of offsite backups, and to practically abandon the technically obsolete dichotomy of providers and consumers.

The model of this type of archive, its philosophical concept, would be the virus, or the parasite. And again, this model also allows us to make a tentative assessment of the risks and dangers of outward archiving: failure to infect (attention deficit), slowdown of mutation (institutionalization), spread of antibiotics (rights management), death of the host (collapse of capitalism).

4. The Archive is not a Scene of Redemption

Important as the political impulse of archives is, it is important to acknowledge that archives cannot be tied to a politics of redemption.

A large part of what may be thought of as progressive impulses in historiography is informed by a desire to redeem history through a logic of emancipation. The resurrection of the subaltern subject of history, the pitting of oral against written history and the hope that an engagement with the residual of the archive will lead to a transformative politics.

Benjamin's theses on the philosophy of history has served as an important intellectual reference point for such initiatives. Benjamin says that

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency,

Benjamin does not hide the redemptive messianic thrust in his thesis: According to him 'Our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption'. Hope, in this formulation is primarily messianic, 'For every second of time is the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter.' Elsewhere Derrida writes that "Spectral messianicity is at work in the concept of the archive and ties it, like religion, like history, like science itself, to a very singular experience of the promise".

Archival initiatives have unconsciously continued this theological impulse. Their desire to document that which is absent, missing or forgotten stages a domain of politics which often privileges the experience of violence and trauma in a manner in which the experience of violence is that which destroys the realm of the ordinary and the everyday.

Thus if you examine the way that histories of the oppressed are written about, it were as if life is always subsumed under the threat of death, and living is forever condemned to a shadowy existence under the idea of a 'bare life'. The subsumption of life into a condition of bareness is as illusory as aesthetic practices which attempt to redeem experience from the clutches of time and history.

If the archival imagination is to rescue itself from this politics of redemption, it will have to allow for a radical contingency of the ordinary. It will have to engage with 'forms of life' which exceed the totalizing gaze of the state as well its redemptive other. Radical contingency recognizes the possibilities of surprise in the archive and in the possibility that a descent into the ordinary suspends the urgent claims of emergencies.

5. The Archive deals not only with the Remnant but also with the Reserve

Capitalistic production proceeds by isolating the extract from raw materials, producing the remnant, that which is left behind. And the archive, resisting obsolescence, is constituted through these remnants. This is one common view. But there is another place in the contemporary where the role and responsibility of the archive may lie. That is, in addressing the reserve, that which is not yet deployed. And that which, like residue, is cast in shadow.

In surveillance systems for example, we are forced to rethink the idea of "waste". Those millions of hours a day of CCTV images, are not just the leftovers of the surveillance machine, they are its constitutive accumulation. They are the mass which waits for the event, and it is this mass that produces the threat.

Following Michel Serres we could describe this mass as having "abuse value", something that precedes use-value or exchange value. Ofcourse, abuse-value and exchange-value can change hands. The line between residue and reserve can be unstable. Suddenly, the nuclear arsenal is rendered waste, and is sold as junk. Our accumulated ideas expire. But to look to the reserve has a strategic value for the archive. It is a way of addressing capital not only as the production of profit from labour and commodities, but as the accumulation that can be used for speculation, and to extract rent.

The archive in this sense is sympathetic to those practices which sabotage capitalistic accumulation, and those which have an interest in the future, and in the "unrealised".

6. Historians have merely interpreted the Archive. The Point however is to Feel it.

Archives have traditionally been the dwelling places of historians, and the epistemic conceit of history has always been housed in the dust of the archives. But in the last decade we have also seen an explosion of interest in archives from software engineers, artists, philosophers, media practitioners, filmmakers and performers.

Historians have responded by resorting to a disciplinary defensiveness that relies on a language of 'the authority of knowledge' and 'rigor' while artists retreat to a zone of blissful aesthetic transcendence. There is something incredibly comfortable about this zone where history continues to produce 'social facts' and art produces 'affect'. Claims of incommensurability provide a 'euphoric security' and to think of the affective potential of the archive is to disturb the 'euphoric security' which denies conditions of knowing and possibilities of acting beyond that which is already known.

Rather than collapsing into a reinforcement of disciplinary fortresses that preclude outsiders and jealously guard the authenticity of knowledge and experience by historians, or resorting to a language of hostile takings by activists and artists, how do we think of the encroachments into the archives as an expansion of our sensibilities and the sensibilities of the archive. Archives are not threats, they are invitations.

Lakshmi Chand, a writer based in the media lab of the Cybermohalla in New Delhi asks "Kya kshamta ke distribution ko disturb karta hai

Media?" Does media disturb the distribution of 'capacity' or 'potential'.

The invitation to think of the ability to disturb the kshamta of the archive seems to be marked by a different relation to time. The idea of Capacity marks a time: This time is neither in the past nor in the future though they may be related, it is a marker of the present- or exactly where you are.

Anna Akhmatova writes in the Requiem

In the dreadful years of the Yezhov terror I spent seventeen months in prison queues in Leningrad. One day someone 'identified' me. Then a woman standing behind me, blue with cold, who of course had never heard my name, woke from that trance characteristic of us all and asked in my ear (there, everyone spoke in whispers):

- Ah, can you describe this?

And I said:

- I can.

Then something like a tormented smile passed over what had once been her face.

1st April 1957

The question 'Can you describe this' was not a question about the possession of a skill, or even the possibility of language to speak of certain things under certain conditions. It is about a moment or a context that arises in which anyone can be faced with the question of Can you. And they must either answer "I can" or "I Cant"

How do we think through the ways that archives challenge us to think about the experience of potentiality. To dwell in the affective potential of the archive is to think of how archives can animate intensities

Brian Massumi argues affect is critically related to intensity. We are always aware of the our potential to affect or to be affected, but this potential also seems just out of our reach. Perhaps because it isn't there actually- only virtually. Massumi suggest that

Maybe if we can take little, practical, experimental, strategic measures to expand our emotional register, or limber up our thinking, we can access more of our potential at each step, have more of it actually available. Having more potentials available intensifies our life. We're not enslaved by our situations. Our degree of freedom at any one time corresponds to how much of our experiential 'depth' we can access towards a next step – how intensely we are living and moving.

How do we imagine archival practices as the little practical, experimental and strategic measures that we pursue to expand our sensibilities. The affective potential of archives is a therefore both a political as well as an aesthetic question in its ability to activate ones capacity to act, and it is on the very faculty of imagination and possibility that this conflict is located.

7. The Image is not just the Visible, the Text is not just the Sayable

Serge Daney makes a famous distinction between the image and the visual. The image is what still holds out against an experience of vision and the visual. The visual is just the optical verification of what we may know already, or which may be read, or deciphered through reflexes of reading. The image, on the other hand, is alterity.

Ranciere, in the Future of the Image, will develop this by saying that images are not restricted to the visible. He will reject the subordination of

the image to the text, of material to history, and of affect to meaning. He suggests that the commonest regime of images is one that presents a relationship between the sayable and the visible, (between image and text, between presence and inscription) a relationship that plays on both the analogy AND dissemblance between them. But, ofcourse, "this relationship by no means requires the two terms to be materially present. The visible can be arranged in meaningful tropes, words deploy a visibility that can be blinding."

Ranciere thus invents the Sentence-Image. The sentence-image is a form that could appear in a novel, equally as it could appear in a cinematic montage. In it, the sentence-function provides continuity against chaos, while the image-function disrupts consensus.

The sentence-image provides a way to think across the modernist incommensurability of painting, literary works, and films, i.e. their autonomy. It allows us to acknowledge their appropriations, invasions and seductions of each other. The archive assembles another site where we can conceive, differently or similarly, of the connections and the distance between the functions of writing and of images. It suggests the possibility of art, if art is the alteration of resemblances between the two. With the introduction of software, we have yet another possibility for the disjunct: a third heterogeneity, another possible element of surprise. And perhaps to extend our thesis then: the software is not just the searchable, or the database.

8. The Past of the Exhibition Threatens the Future of the Archive

What is the relation between memory and its display? Between the archive, "the system that governs the appearances of statements" and a culture of appearances? In a 2002 essay for the journal *October*, Hal Foster develops three useful stages of the museum as the site of memory, in modern art.

In the first stage, in the mid-1800's, Baudelaire writes that "Art is the mnemotechny of the beautiful". Which with Manet for example, has become the art of outright citation. Here art is the art of memory, and the museum is its architecture.

The second moment occurs with Adorno's essay, the Valery Proust Museum, which marks a point of suspicion of the museum, as the "mausoleum" of art. The museum is where art goes to die. But, it is also the site for a redemptive project of "reanimation".

The third moment occurs when this reanimation is possible through other means, i.e. through Benjamin's mechanical reproduction. The key difference here is between Benjamin's reproduction, which threatens the museum, and Malraux's, which expands it infinitely. For Malraux, it is precisely the destruction of the aura which becomes a basis for the imagination of the museum without end.

But there are "problems of translation", gaps, between Malraux's *Musee Imaginaire*, its english name the Museum without Walls, and the concept of a Museum without End. Which on the one hand, have fed many a modernist museum architect's fantasy of endless circulation, and views through the glass, while on the other, continue to offer the promise that art's institutional structures can have a relationship with the world. Foster's account of modern western art's archive ends with a split in art itself, between its display function that appears in spectacular form in the exhibition, and its memory function, which retreats into the archive.

The challenge for the archive, which today threatens the exhibition with its own sensual ability to relink and rearticulate these two functions, is how not to end up as a spiral ramp, or as flea market. In other words, how to avoid the tyranny of the two historical "freedoms": one, the (modernist) formal strategies of audience participation in the spectacle, and two, the (postmodernist) eclecticism in which anything, included and curated, could be accorded "exhibition-value". Or we could put it this way: how does the archive avoid the confusion, that persists in the exhibition (as Irit Rogoff notes about the Tate), between accessibility as entertainment and marketing strategy, and access as something deeper, as something that is "closer to the question".

9. Archives are governed by the Laws of Intellectual Propriety as opposed to Property

As the monetary value of the global information economy gains more importance, the abstract value of images get articulated within the language of property and rights. The language of intellectual property normativizes our relationship to knowledge and culture by naturalizing and universalizing narrow ideas of authorship, ownership and property. This language has extended from the world of software databases to traditional archives where copyright serves as Kafka's gatekeeper and the use of the archive becomes a question of rights management.

Beyond the status of the archive as property lies the properties of the archive which can destabilize and complicate received notions of rights.

They establish their own code of conduct, frame their own rules of access, and develop an ethics of the archive which are beyond the scope of legal imagination. If the archive is a scene of invention then what norms do they develop for themselves which do not take for granted a pre determined language of rights. How do practices of archiving destabilize ideas of property while at the same time remaining stubbornly insistent on questions of 'propriety'.

Intellectual propriety does not establish any universal rule of how archives collect and make available their artifacts. It recognizes that the archivist play a dual role: They act as the trustees of the memories of other people, and as the transmitters of public knowledge. This schizophrenic impulse prevents any easy settling into a single norm.

Propriety does not name a set of legislated principles of proper etiquette, instead it builds on the care and responsibility that archivists display in their preservation of cultural and historical objects. The digital archive translates this ethic of care into an understanding of the ecology of knowledge, and the modes through which such an ecology is sustained through a logic of distribution, rather than mere accumulation.

It remembers the history of archivists being described as pirates, and scans its own records, files and database to produce an account of itself. In declaring its autonomy, archives seek to produce norms beyond normativity, and ethical claims beyond the law.

10. Time is not Outside of the Archive: It is in it

In his history of the book and print cultures, historian Adrian Johns argues against what has traditionally been seen as the 'typographical fixity' which was established by the print revolution. Earlier scholars had argued that scribal cultures were marked by all kinds of mistakes of the hand, and the book was therefore not a stable object of knowledge until the emergence of print technology.

Adrian Johns demonstrates the fallacy of this assumption by looking at the various conflicts that erupted with print technology, and far from ensuring fixity or authority, the early history of Printing was marked by uncertainty. For Johns, the authority of knowledge is not an inherent quality, but a transitive one. It is a question that cannot be divorced technologies that alter our senses, our perception and our experience of knowledge.

Rather than speaking about Authority as something that is intrinsic to either a particular mode of production of Knowledge or to any technological form, John's work demonstrates how it would be more useful to consider the range of knowledge apparatuses which come into play to establish authority.

The preconditions of knowledge cannot easily be made the object of knowledge. It is a matter of making evident or making known the structures of knowledge itself, which emerge in ways that provide definitive proof of the imperfectability of knowledge.

Archives are also apparatuses which engage our experience and perception of time. This is particularly true for archives of images, since photography and cinema are also apparatuses that alter our sense of time. The traditional understanding of an archive as a space that collects lost time sees the experience of time as somehow being external to the archive itself. It loses sight of the fact that the archive is also where objects acquire their historical value as a result of being placed within an apparatus of time. The imagination of a video archive then plays with multiple senses of the unfolding of time.

In her reflections on the relationship between photography, cinema and the archive, Mary Anne Doane states that photography and film have a fundamental archival instinct embedded in them. And yet this archival nature is also ridden with paradox, because of the relationship of the moving image to the contingent. The presence of the contingent, the ephemeral, and the unintended are all aspects of cinematic time, and the challenge of the moving image as archive is the recovery of lost time, but within the cinematic.

The recovery of the lost time of cinema and the contingent can be captured through an experience of cinephilia, for what cinephilia names is the moment when the contingent takes on meaning- perhaps a private and idiosyncratic meaning, but one in which the love for the image expresses itself through a grappling with the ephemeral.

The archive is therefore an apparatus of time, but its relation to time is not guaranteed or inherent, it is transitive and has to be grafted. The archive of the moving image grasps this problem in an erotic and sensuous fashion, grafting the experience of time as an act of love.

Negri speaks in *Insurgencies* about the love of time: These two registers, of love- of time, and of cinema allows us to think about the cinematic and archival apparatus of time, and the way they shape our relation to our time and the time of the image.

ann cvetkovich

THE QUEER ART OF THE COUNTERARCHIVE

Many of the LGBT archives currently at public libraries and universities, such as the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the University of Southern California, had their origin as grassroots archives collected not only by homophile and gay liberation organizations, but by individuals who insisted that their lives and the records they left behind were history even when the rest of the world, including public archives, didn't care or didn't want to know. The "archive fever" catalyzed by the silencing, neglect, and stigmatization of queer histories is a particularly powerful force, echoing the ferocity and perversity of queer sexual desire.¹ Queer archives are often "archives of feeling," not only motivated by strong feelings but seeking to preserve even ordinary feelings, the evidence of which is often ephemeral, or embodied in idiosyncratic collections and objects such as T-shirts, buttons, flyers, matchbook covers, and sex toys.²

The new partnership between ONE Archives and USC in 2010 was thus a notable development, as is the recent formalizing of the collaboration between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives and UCLA, which stemmed from an effort to digitize part of the Mazer's collection. Representing mainstream institutions' recognition that LGBTQ history is worthy of research and should be preserved, the new visibility and respectability of LGBTQ archives reflects the mainstreaming of LGBTQ culture more generally. And, like mainstream visibility, LGBTQ archival visibility produces familiar tensions about how to sustain queer sensibilities in the face of conflicting desires for normalization and assimilation. The fiercely separatist stance of Brooklyn's Lesbian Herstory Archives, for example, insists that a different kind of archive is necessary to accommodate queer culture and to preserve the messiness and outrageousness of sex, histories of pain and loss, and the lives of both ordinary and famous people.

Queer archives thus stand at the crossroads of critiques of the archive and passion for the radical potential of counterarchives. Although they often display an exuberant utopianism about preserving queer lives, they are also informed by the haunting archival absences that accompany the documentation of histories of violence such as slavery and genocide. The often ephemeral nature of queer life necessitates a creative approach to archiving, an openness to unusual objects and collections, and an acknowledgement of that which escapes the archive. It demands what Alex Juhasz has called, "queer archive activism," an activist relation to the archive that remains alert to its absences and that uses it to create new kinds of knowledge and new forms of collectivity.³ The partnerships between grassroots archives and more institutional ones, such as those between ONE and USC, and between the Mazer and UCLA, suggest potential counterarchival practices, including not only new kinds of collections but new forms of exhibition and public display.

"Queer archive activism" insists that the archive serve not just as a repository for safeguarding objects, but also as a resource that "comes out" into the world to perform public interventions. Some of the best archive activists have been artists, whose creative practices and avowedly personal investments lend themselves to innovative exhibitions that bring the archive to life. Onya Hogan-Finlay, who used the art collection at ONE Archives for her recent MFA thesis show at USC, is part of a generation of younger artists—many of them born in the years since some of the earliest collections were generated by the gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements—who are delving into the archives with a passion for activism and utopian dreams that predate them. Faced with the predominantly white male focus of much of ONE's art collection, Hogan-Finlay curated an exhibition that acknowledged the value of works that have rarely been displayed while also exploring

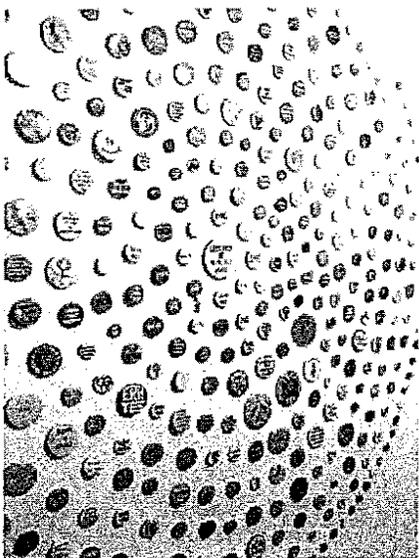
the absences in the collection, particularly in its representation of lesbians. She remedied some of those gaps by including vitrines with lesbian publications, wallpaper that honored the life history of FTM Reed Erickson, who was a major benefactor to ONE Inc., and an installation that featured an archival video interview with lesbian activists Donna Smith and Lisa Ben (editor of *Vice Versa: America's Gayest Magazine*). As the exhibition's title, "My Taste in Men," slyly announced, Hogan-Finlay's idiosyncratic and queer dykey affection for ONE's holdings allowed her to use both what is there and what is not there as a source of creative and libidinal pleasure.

For those looking for a more specifically lesbian archive, the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) in Brooklyn, with its commitment to lesbian separatist values and its independence from mainstream institutions, has been a magnet for a number of recent creative projects. When invited to display a retrospective of their work at LHA in 2009, fierce pussy, the



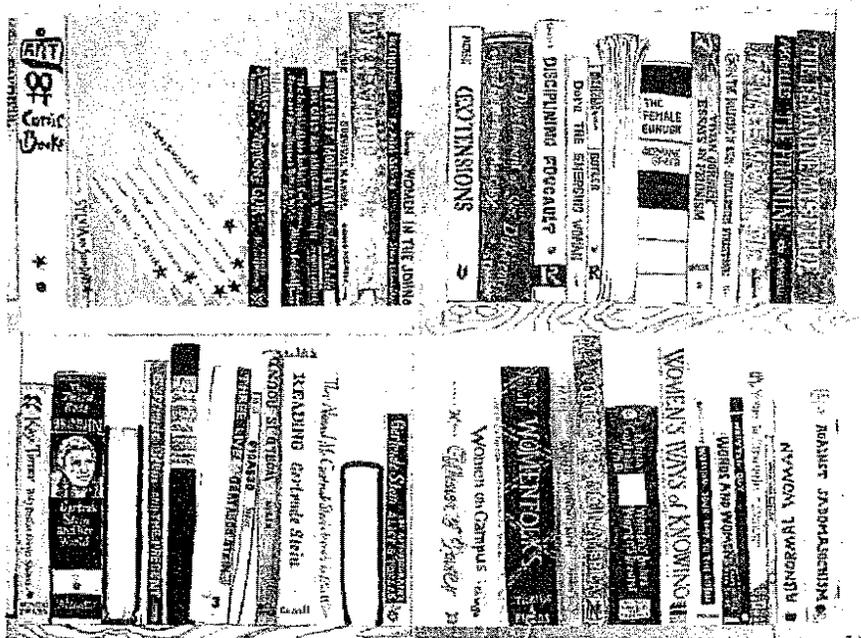
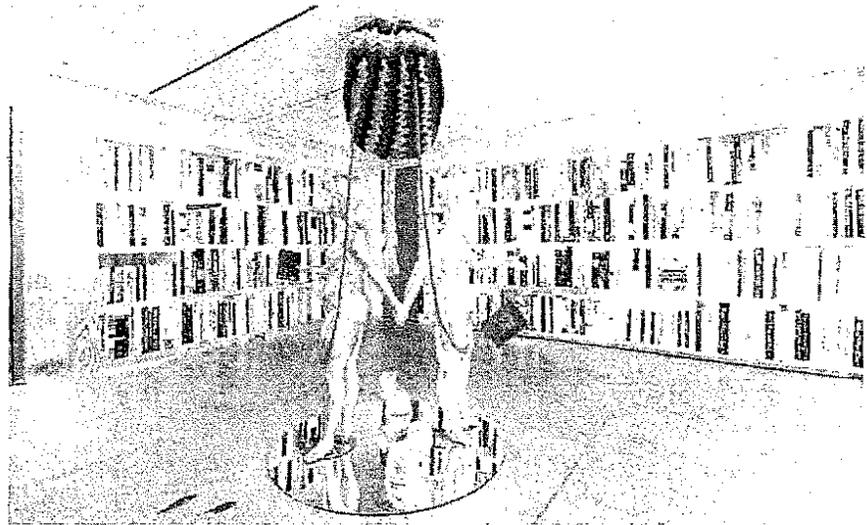
Above: Onya Hogan-Finlay Poster for *My Taste in Men*, 2011

dyke art collective formed in 1991 during the AIDS activist era in New York City, decided to curate materials from the archives to further underscore the vital connections between the present and a past that has ongoing relevance.⁴ The result was *Mining the Archive*, an exhibition of works that used buttons, T-shirts, and pulp novels from the LHA collections. The displays not only affirmed the archival value of LHA's rich store of material ephemera, but the creative installation manifested the quirky humor of the objects and the artist-curators' love for them. They arranged buttons from the collection in a gyrocentric spiral rather than in the more formal grid one might find in a museum display. The visual appeal of the installation added to the collective power of the buttons, which seemed to be calling out to each other from around the circle in a chorus of names - "Dyke," "Sister," "Lezzie," "Amazon," "I'm One Too," - beginning with the button that gave the piece its title: "Let's Face It We're All Queer." Eager to use the archives as a site of public culture, fierce pussy also organized two salons in 2009-10 that featured performers, writers, and artists in a combination performance event and intellectual discussion.⁵



Above: fierce pussy, *Let's Face It We're All Queer*, 2009. From *Mining the Archive* at the Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, NY

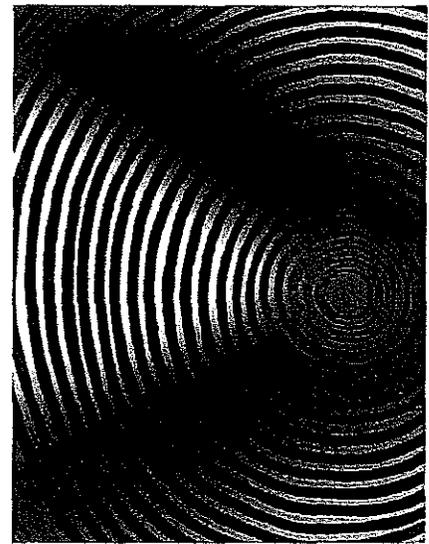
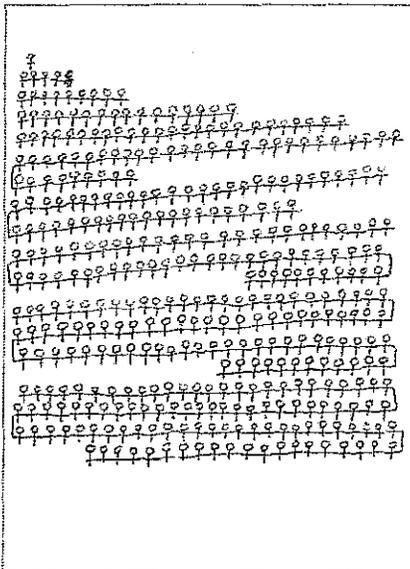
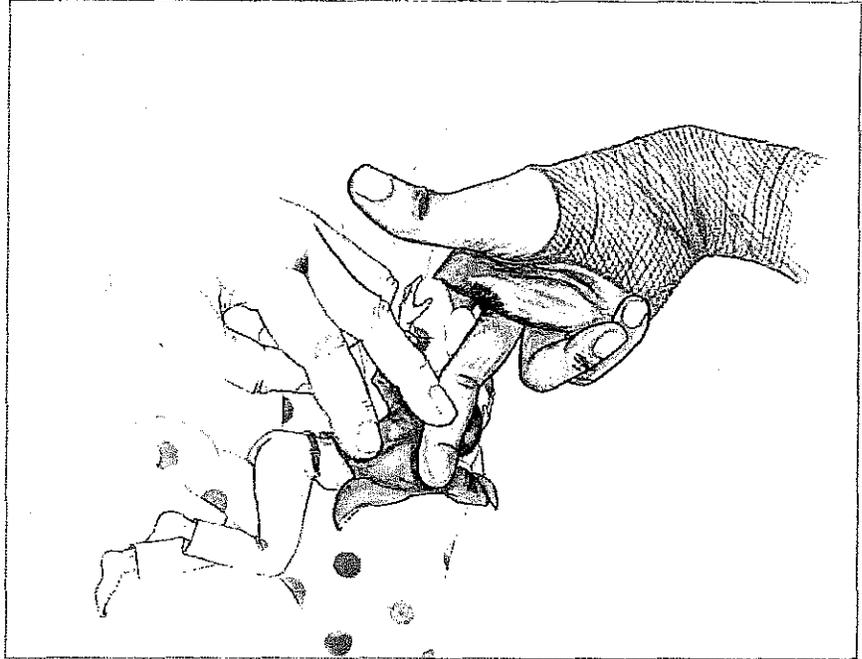
Toronto-based artist Allyson Mitchell also found inspiration in the Lesbian Herstory Archives for her 2010 installation at the Art Gallery of Ontario entitled, *A Girl's Journey Into the Well of Forbidden Knowledge*, for which she made wallpaper from drawings of the books on the shelves of the LHA reading room.⁶ The

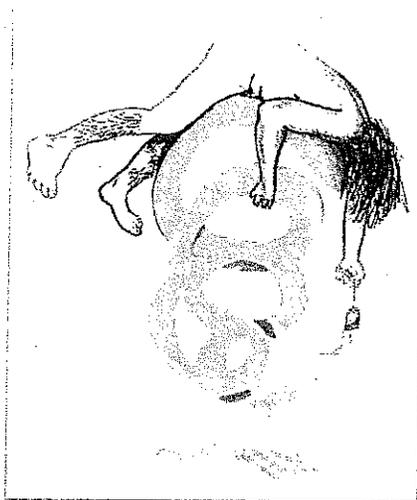


Above (both images): Allyson Mitchell, *A Girl's Journey Into the Well of Forbidden Knowledge*, 2010. Installation shot and detail from exhibition at Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada

spines of the books display the titles, authors, and presses that are part of the independent public print culture central to lesbian feminist culture. Through the labor of love of handcrafting drawings of the books from photographs and installing them in the public space of the art gallery, Mitchell brought an important archive to new publics.⁷

While fierce pussy curated materials from the LHA collections on-site, and while Allyson Mitchell's drawings transported them to another location, Ulrike Müller used the archives as a catalyst to create new works of art whose connections to the original collections are more oblique. Her *Herstory Inventory* began as a staged reading (which became an audio installation) of a list of descriptions of T-shirts in the LHA collections, a way of performing the archive that acknowledges the value of material artifacts such as T-shirts, as well as the archival practice of cataloguing that helps to preserve them. In a subsequent phase of the project, Müller has been commissioning other artists to make drawings based on the list of descriptions. Through Müller's curatorial work, *Herstory Inventory* establishes a network of participating artists, many of whom are friends and associates, which is itself an archive of contemporary queer art cultures. With the list, rather than the original T-shirts, as the project's genesis, the archive becomes a site of fantasy, an open point of departure for versions of lesbian representation that





are unpredictable and not tied to realist forms of documentation. *Herstory Inventory* establishes a connection between earlier decades and the present, reconfiguring its meanings for a new generation while also reminding us of the history that is embodied in the drawings and slogans found in everyday objects.

These Lesbian Herstory Archives projects not only preserve a lesbian feminist history, they also bring new communities into being by seizing on the affective connections that archiving can facilitate. Approaching the task of curation with a queer and creative sensibility, these artists highlight the archive's ephemeral cultures and contexts, and they offer sophisticated forms of lesbian representation that eschew conventional documentary strategies. Like *Cruising the Archive*, their projects suggest how a radical archival practice might sustain a queer future by reminding us of our queer pasts.

1. See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Although Derrida's text is frequently cited for its archive theory, it does not directly address the concrete specificity of LGBTQ archives and their contributions to archive theory.

2. See Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

3. See Alex Jubasz, "Video Remains: Nostalgia, Technology, and Queer Archive Activism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12:2 (2006), 319–28.

4. For more on fierce pussy, see Ann Cvetkovich, "Fierce Pussies and Lesbian Avengers: Dyke Activism Meets Celebrity Culture" in *Feminist Consequences: Theory for the New Century*, ed. Elisabeth Bronfen and Misha Kavka (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) 283–318, as well as the republications of their posters from the early 1990s, such as "I AM A lezzie butch pervert girlfriend bulldagger sister dyke AND PROUD!" and "Lesbian Chic My Ass," that accompanied their retrospective exhibition at Printed Matter in 2008. In its current revival, the members of fierce pussy are Nancy Brooks Brody, Joy Episalla, Zoe Leonard, and Carrie Yamaoka.

5. Salon participants included filmmaker Barbara Hammer, dance/acrobatic performer Sarah East Johnson (of LAVA), visual artists Ginger Brooks Takahashi, Emma Hedditch, and Linda Matalon, and archive scholar Kate Eichhorn.

6. For more on this project, see Ann Cvetkovich and Allyson Mitchell, "A Girl's Journey Into the Well of Forbidden Knowledge," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17:4 (2011), forthcoming.

7. For another example of an artist working with material ephemera, see Tammy Rae Carland's "An Archive of Feelings," which consists of photographs of ordinary but affectively charged objects, including the cassette tapes of Riot grrrl culture and the dedication pages of lesbian and queer books, that document subcultures not through portraits but through the objects that they leave behind. Through the archival practice of photographing objects, Carland insists that they are meaningful. See Ann Cvetkovich, "Photographing Objects as Queer Archival Practice," in *Feeling Photography*, ed. Elspeth Brown and Thy Phu. (Durham: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

8. For the audio installation version of *Herstory Inventory*, whose performers included fierce pussy members Zoe Leonard and Nancy Brooks Brody, see Ulrike Müller's website: <http://www.encore.at/um/works/herstory-inventory>.



Performance and/as History

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Performance and/as History



1. The seed mural is communally constructed during the annual fiesta in Tepoztlán, Morelos. (Courtesy of Diana Taylor)

Diana Taylor

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TDR, the journal dedicated to the study of performance and performance studies, has turned 50. One way of honoring the particular history of performance studies I glean through this journal is by returning to the perennial question of the relationship of performance and performance studies to history and historical studies. How does performance transmit knowledge about the past in ways that allow us to understand and use it? While I posed this problem in *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003), this essay pushes the problem further to explore how performed, embodied practices make the “past” available as a political resource in the present by simultaneously enabling several complicated, multilayered processes. By this I mean that a performance may be *about* something that helps us understand the past, and it may reactivate issues or scenarios from the past by staging them in the present.¹ But performance does more than that. The physical mechanics of staging can also keep alive an organizational infrastructure, a practice or know-how, an episteme, and a politics that goes beyond the explicit topic. To elaborate on this, I focus on a fiesta celebrated annually in Tepoztlán, Mexico, that repeatedly enacts a history—one that affirms a sense of identity and agency quite different from the one found in history books. However, the fiesta is illuminating for other reasons: the same organizational structures that allow for the massive performance-of-communal-self year after year have simultaneously sustained the sturdy, community-wide infrastructure and networks that date back to the pre-Conquest period. The continuity of these ancient networks grounded the town’s claims to communal land rights, made to the Mexican government in the mid-1990s. This astonishing act in which performed history trumps official written history, and communal organizations stymie governmental structures, suggests a reevaluation of old questions. How can “performance,” often thought of as ephemeral practice, as taking place only in the here and now, give evidence of past behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes? If archival evidence (documents, records, ruins) sustain historical inquiry, is the repertoire of performed acts by definition, *un-* or even *anti-*historical? Does it have explanatory potential? What standards of inquiry would have to be met if performed behaviors were to be recognized as socially legitimate ways of understanding the past? And insofar as the future is linked to the past, can the repertoire of embodied actions claim predictive power? The stakes are crucial. Few claims by individuals and communities for legal status, self-governance, and land rights, based on embodied action and customs rather than on documentary evidence, are currently accepted by government and official authorities (see Cruikshank 1992; Clifford 1988). Performances may be granted some degree of “truth”-telling validity in existential and epistemic questions, but these rarely hold up in court. Do we need to redefine or rethink performance if we want to understand the force of embodied practice in relation to historical claims, or do we have to redefine and rethink *history*, or more precisely *historical studies*, a discipline founded on assertions of archival stability? The “answer” I will rehearse in this essay is “both”: we need to reconsider how performance studies and historical studies construct and position themselves in relation to their objects of analysis—the activated *now* of performance, the performed *past* of history.

All disciplines construct and define themselves in relation to the status of their objects of analysis. Literary studies primarily examine literary texts, film studies looks at film and so forth. The “object” can be quite different; so too the methodologies that simultaneously come out of them, create them, and shape what we can learn from them. As a discipline, history looks at change over time by grounding claims in archival sources. Its object of analysis, supposedly, is out there in the world, waiting to be discovered, interpreted, and revealed by the investigator. As historian Hayden White puts it, “For historians the past pre-exists any representation of it. [...] That this target-object once existed is attested by the presence in the present of those artifacts—documents, monuments, implements, institutions, practices, customs, and so on” (White 1999). While I agree that it is politically urgent to defend the “the past” against forms of erasure that range from colonialist expansionism to

1. For an excellent example of this see Thiong'o (1998).

opportunistic revisionism, the “proof” of the past in the present poses problems for historians as well as performance studies scholars.

The problems, I believe, pertain to the diverse systems of transmission that are the archive and the repertoire.² History-as-discipline presents itself, in part, as an archival project; if the object of analysis is indeed out there, separate from the knower (a characteristic that I maintain defines the archive), then other historians might return to a past event or figure and offer a different interpretation or representation of it. The investigator, in this model, examines the data rather than produces it. A notion of archival stability legitimates this practice. And while archival sources may seem uncomplicated, scholars need to consider that the archival object may very well be the product, rather than source, of historical inquiry. In other words, the documents, remains, and artifacts that enter into the archive have undergone a process of identification, selection, classification, and so on that render them archival “sources.” This does not negate that they may be out-there-in-the-world, but it does remind us that they are, in fact, also the product of a system of selection.³

Things become more complicated when we turn to the repertoire. Historians, like performance studies scholars, are hard put to offer evidence of embodied practices (White’s practices and customs). Moreover, as White points out, history centers on *events*, “considered to be time and place specific, unique and unrepeatable, not reproducible under laboratory conditions, and only minimally describable in algorithms and statistical series” (1999). The object of analysis for historical studies is, then, the “live” embodied practice (taking place in the past but rendered in the present) that interests us in performance studies. The “event”—unique, verifiable, with protagonistic social actors—also poses problems of objectivity because what gets constituted and recognized as an “event,” what qualifies as verification, who emerges as the hero, and how that vision of the past gets archived is determined by the analyst. We might go so far as to say that events are not necessarily entered into history and archived because they are pivotal, but that they become pivotal by virtue of the fact that they are entered into history and archived.⁴ Other similarly “pivotal” events may pass without commentary. Thus, the status of the object in historical studies is far more complicated than it appears. Moreover, it is tempting to confuse the object of analysis (the historical event) with the source or methodology (archival artifacts and their investigation). The historian, like the performance studies scholar, needs to be mindful that the archival source bears a relationship to the event, but it is not the event, just as a description and analysis of a dance is not the dance itself. Historical studies cannot stabilize the “live” event any more than performance studies can.

The status of the object in performance studies is more transparently constructed. We can argue that scholars look at objects-in-the-world such as dances, rituals, and political rallies. These practices are not “texts” in the conventional literary sense, and thus lack textual stability, but they are more or less recognizable as discrete events (objects of analysis). Often, however, the object can also be constructed in a far more complicated fashion: if I focus on Argentina’s “dirty war” as a

2. In the *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003) I define the terms as follows: “Archival’ memory exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, cds, all those items supposedly resistant to change. [...] The repertoire, on the other hand, enacts embodied memory—performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge” (19–20).
3. Not all archival sources are out-there-in-the-world in the same way. Some forms of evidence have been created for the archive, as the manipulation of records and documents by Argentina’s military dictatorship made clear in the 1970s and ‘80s.
4. Jill Lepore (1999) recounts the rivalry between New England ministers to define the “war” between colonists and “Indians.” The Reverend Increase Mather, a Puritan from Boston, published *A Brief History of the War with the Indians in New-England* (1676). Rev. William Hubbard objected to this title in his 1677 book, *Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England*, writing in the Preface that he used “narrative” because “the Matter of Fact therein related (being rather Massacres, barbarous inhumane Outrages, than Acts of Hostility or valiant Atchievements) no more deserve the Name of a War than the Report of them the Title of an History” (xvii).

performance, I have clearly constructed my object in a way that will enable certain kinds of observations.⁵ The object is not out-there as a text, or even a dance, might be, but rather in the way I—as investigator—have chosen to formulate it. This molding of the object highlights the centrality of the investigator in oral and performed traditions who might be understood as creating the data rather than examining it.⁶ Another investigator cannot look at my data objectively and either affirm or challenge my findings. The facts may be verified (as in dates, numbers of the disappeared, and so forth) but my observations, based on my positionality and engagement, cannot be verified as true or false. In other words, the event cannot simply be turned into a source as a form of evidence. Yet if no source substantiates the event, how can communities ground assertions of cultural, intellectual, property, and human rights? Can the repertoire offer certain kinds of sources under certain conditions?

None of these questions are new, of course, yet they are vitally important.⁷ In the Americas, they date back at least to the Conquest when the European conquerors and colonizers used written documentation to dispossess native communities of their lands, belief systems, customs, and livelihoods. With the Conquest, (certain) forms of embodied practice were denied validity.⁸ Performance practices were forcibly expelled from colonial meaning-making systems when they threatened to transmit native history, values, and claims. If we take a historical look at the tension between performance and history, it becomes clearer that performance is not *un-* or *anti-*historical. On the contrary: it has been strategically positioned outside of history, rendered invalid as a form of cultural transmission, in short *made un-* and *anti-*historical by conquerors and colonists who wanted to monopolize power.

History-as-discipline has long served colonial masters throughout the Americas, trumping the historical memory of native and marginalized communities who relied primarily on former practices, genealogies, and stories to sustain their sense of self- and communal identity.⁹ The process of entering into history becomes the meaning-making act reserved for the literate. Only a few “lettered masters” (*lerrados* in Latin America) enjoyed what the 17th-century English scholar Samuel Purchas wrote of as the “literall advantage” (in Lepore 1999:xviii). It seems inevitable, then, that historians would have long maintained, as ethnohistorian Greg Dening puts it, “that ‘primitive’ societies have no history” (1996:40). Yet that statement says more about the disciplinary underpinnings and blind spots of history-as-discipline than it does about so-called “primitive” societies. As an epistemic lens focused on the past, history has constituted itself as a powerful ideological apparatus capable of illu-

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5. This distinction ties in with Richard Schechner’s *is/as* performance—a certain event might be a performance (i.e., a dance) while another might be studied (constructed) as a performance. See his *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (2002).
 6. I am indebted to a conversation with Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett for this insight.
 7. Theorists from performance studies, history, anthropology and other disciplines have struggled with this problem. In performance studies see Joseph Roach’s *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996) and Richard Schechner’s “Restoration of Behavior” in *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (1985). In anthropology see Jean Comaroff’s distinction between short time span/events vs. long run (history/deep structure) in *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* (1985) and Marshall Sahlins’s opposition between system (structure) vs. event (performance/history) in *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (1981). Historians such as Inga Clendinnen (1991) also focus, in *The Aztecs: An Interpretation*, on the ways the past is always reconstructed in the present through performance. As historian Greg Dening writes in *Performances*, “the past will not be replicated or repeated, but represented, shaped, staged, performed in some way other than it originally existed” (1996:xv). Paul Connerton suggests the need to differentiate “social memory” from “historical reconstruction” in *How Societies Remember* (1989:13).
 8. Other forms of embodied practice, such as Catholic festivals and dramas, were considered valuable pedagogical resources for instructing native communities about church history and doctrine.
 9. Aztecs also manipulated their history by creating and documenting grandiose versions of their past. The codices—parch (*amatl*) documents filled with highly complex pictograms, calendrical signs, and place icons—were also the property of the few (priests and leaders) and were used to sustain their authority over the population that could not decipher, and had no access to, these materials.

minating certain events and disappearing others. Denning, highly conscious of this disciplinary construction, amends the statement to read:

The statement should be: “primitive” societies do not have the systematic conventionalities—rules of inquiry and evidence—that allow them to historicise in ways recognisable and persuasive to us; nor do they have the infinitude of institutional support systems (from archives to *The Guinness Book of Records*) to persuade them that accuracy is the truth, that History is the past. (40)

So it's not, of course, that semiliterate or illiterate societies do not have pasts, or historical memory. It's not even that the past is unknowable. They simply do not work in the same ways with the discipline known as history. And all societies have archival materials, whether they are ornate temples or simple marks on a piece of wood. History-as-discipline, which relies on scripted archival sources, often has no way of dealing with these various pasts. What documents would ground their inquiry? If historical studies cannot legitimate the repertoire of embodied practices, how do historians approach the undocumented “event”? Perhaps this is where performance studies, as a post-disciplinary methodology, comes in—illuminating that disciplinary blind spot that history cannot reach on its own. But we would need to imagine performance studies being able to offer another aspect of history, one grounded in the repertoire as well as the archive, focused on embodied practices that distill meaning from past events, store them, and find embodied modalities to express them in the here-and-now, yet with an eye to the future.

These points suggest that, for all the differences, there may be more of a basis for trans- or postdisciplinary convergences between history and performance studies than has been immediately apparent.

II

I will address the problem by looking at one particular fiesta with 16th-century roots that continues to be performed annually in Tepoztlán, Morelos, Mexico—a small village about 45 miles southwest of Mexico City. Tepoztlán is dominated by two landmarks and two forces: the pre-Hispanic pyramid-temple to Tepoztecatl (god of wind and *pulque*, an inebriating drink made from maguey plants) situated in the mountains overlooking the town; and the Church of the Virgen de la Natividad, which dominates it. The town defines itself in relationship—physically and psychically—to these two structures. Aside from the compelling fact that I have visited and lived in Tepoztlán off and on since I was a high-school student in Mexico City, it has much to recommend it as a site for this analysis. It has long been the poster child of ethnographic study. In 1930, anthropologist Robert Redfield published *Tepoztlán: A Mexican Village*, the first of several important ethnographies that include those of Oscar Lewis (1959) and Claudio Lomnitz (1982).¹⁰ The invisibilities created by colonial archives and methodologies were clearly addressed by Redfield, who privileged “ethnology” because it revealed the “unwritten and unremarked [...] ways of the folk” (1930:1). He understood ethnology as a direct and unmediated form of knowing: “to learn and to set down the ways of the folk, one must encounter them directly and intimately; they are not otherwise to be found” (1). This approach sounds naïve and paternalistic, especially in its assumption that “we” (the “collector”) can somehow “directly and intimately” comprehend “them”—the “primitive tribes” and “simpler peasant people” (2), and that there is such a thing as unmediated knowledge.¹¹

But my aim here is not to further critique Redfield—he's been discussed amply—but to rethink a couple of points that he makes about historiography as related to print and embodied (performance) cultures. The archive is inadequate, Redfield and I agree, for transmitting some dynamic practices

10. Neither of these texts reflect on the meaning or even note the centrality of the fiesta.

11. Redfield also disparages traditional folk practices by labeling the indigenous population as “*tontos*” as opposed to “*los correctos*,” the higher-class, racially mixed population: “Los tontos preserve the old traditional practices; with them the magical and the practical are still an inseparable whole” ([1930] 1973:134).

and meaning-making systems. The archive transfers certain kinds of information and knowledge through books, maps, records, buildings, ruins, paintings, and other supposedly “permanent” traces. Clearly, not everyone has access to all of these. Institutional histories, he notes, contained in “contemporary documents, lie remote from the ways of the masses and record their history almost not at all” (1).

Redfield’s emphasis on the methodologies required for examining nonscripted sources of knowledge reveals an important aspect of the repertoire. There have always existed other forms of knowing, storing, and transmitting knowledge through embodied practices that require presence—Redfield has to be there, and interact with people and their “ways” directly: “they are not otherwise to be found.” Redfield is also correct in pointing out that the “unwritten” is often unremarked. Since the Conquest, colonial epistemology has privileged writing to the extent that nonscripted forms of knowing have been equated with disappearance (see Avila 1991; and Lepore 1999). The ethnographer’s aim, both in the 16th and early 20th centuries, was to make visible—through writing—the ways of life that had disappeared from view, went unremarked, where there was no writing.

But how does the repertoire transmit knowledge about the past? And what is the past? If we take the linear chronological view—past, present, future—the past is behind us, irrecoverable, receded from view. But what if we look at alternative sources for thinking about the past? In Tepoztlán, the mountains, the temple to Tepoztecatl, and the church continue the spatial arrangements of the 16th century, organized in relation to the four cardinal points pivotal to Mesoamerican cosmology—the temple marks the east-west axis; the Church the north-south. The route to the temple, now the main street called “5 de mayo,” commemorates 19th-century independence struggles. The historical past is layered, stone on top of stone, name on top of name. Townspeople continue to congregate daily in the central open-air market—one of the “vortices of behavior,” to use Joseph Roach’s term—that links current behaviors to ancient times (1996:26). Some precolonial native practices—linguistic, commercial, culinary, and performative—remain active. The town’s organizational layout, with its subdivisions, or *barrios* (neighborhoods), continues the pre-Conquest divisions, or *calpollis*. Each barrio, however, now has a church, a saint, a *mayordomo* (a rotating and honorary position of steward—the one who pays for the year’s fiesta, and so forth). The relationship of the tightly knit community to “others” is enacted twice a week in the larger market, in which merchants from other towns come to sell products—their strictly regulated positioning in the market sets them apart as “foreign.” These arrangements and relationships are embodied practices based on ancient ones, and they allow us to understand how people continue to use the “past” as a repository for strategies in carrying on their lives, confronting contemporary struggles, and envisioning futures. The repertoire, this often overlooked system of storage, makes these resources of the past available, useable over time, both through annual repetitions and in moments of crisis. Performances reactivate historical scenarios that provide contemporary solutions. They “quote” and reinsert fragments from the past (what Schechner calls “strips of behavior” [1985:35]) to supply historical antecedents for present claims or practices. They also *make history* by using lessons and attitudes derived from previous experience to produce change in the present. If performances can intervene in these ways, then we cannot understand history—past, present, or future—without understanding the workings of the repertoire as well as the archive.

Tepoztlán has long been interesting (and interested) in terms of archives, repertoires, and the many mixed modes in-between. Not only has the village been inhabited continuously for the past 2,000 years, but archival records exist at least back to the 15th century. Several native codices (Mendoza, Aubin-Goupil), tell its history before the arrival of the Spaniards (see Redfield [1930] 1973:24). Fray Diego Durán, in *The History of the Indies of New Spain* (1581), notes that Tepoztlán had long been settled by 900 c.e., when the Aztecs migrated from Aztlán to the Valley of Mexico and, under Moctezuma, conquered Mexico in 1487. The town of Tepoztlán is identified with the god Tepoztecatl,¹² who originated in the rugged mountains, el Tepozteco, and is credited with

12. Tepoztecatl, god of pulque, is a later version of Ome Tóchtli—the rabbit—one of 400 gods associated with pulque and the moon (see Brotherston 1999:33-35).

the torrential rains and furious windstorms that periodically sweep the town. The naming follows the ancient practice of identifying deities with “the rugged mountain where each was worshipped [...] or a place which gave birth to furious showers and thunderstorms” (Durán [1574–76] 1971:210). Tepoztecatl is also often called *el Tepozteco*, illustrating the common conflation of place and identity. Like other predominantly indigenous places in Mexico, inhabitants do not go by tribal names but by town affiliation—they, like their god, take their name from their place. They too are *Tepoztecos*. The rest of us, those of us who just live there full- or part-time, are as Carlos Monsivais puts it, *Tepoztizos* (Tepozfake-os). We will never be Tepoztecos, though Tepoztecos tolerate us if we accept our outsider status and contribute to the town and its fiestas.



2. Performance of the *Reto*, the 16th-century Nahuatl “drama” depicting the attack on Tepoztecatl by neighboring rulers as retaliation for his conversion to Christianity, 1920. (Courtesy of Centro de Documentación Histórica, Exconvento de Tepoztlán)

The temple of Tepoztecatl looks out over the town—physically and symbolically. A 16th-century drawing from the *Códice Magliabechiano*, or *The Book of Life* (Anders et al. 1996), shows Tepoztecatl in full regalia, brandishing his insignia and holding his signature copper ax ready to fight or defend. Tepoztecos, too, have stood their ground. Another 16th-century image shows them defending themselves against Hernán Cortés and his troops. We also have the *Códice de Tepoztlán*, described by Gordon Brotherston as a “census,” which lists inhabitants by various categories for tax (tribute) purposes. Additionally, and of most interest to me here, is the 16th-century Nahuatl “drama” known as *Ecaliztli*, or *Reto*, the “Challenge” to Tepoztecatl, the core of the fiesta that depicts the attack on him by neighboring rulers as retaliation for his conversion to Christianity in 1532.¹³

Interestingly, while Redfield says little about the *Reto*, he includes the Nahuatl and English versions of the text as “Appendix B” at the end of the study—considering it important, a “supplement” in the Derridian sense perhaps, but marginal to the life of Tezpotecos (Redfield [1930] 1973:26). In the parenthetical note that introduces the text, Redfield quotes the well-respected nahuatlist John H. Cornyn, who claims that this is a 16th-century text composed “on the model of the pre-Conquest Aztec metrical poetry (and) written in the trochaic meter” (227). This text, one of several versions,¹⁴ shows Tepoztecatl surrounded by the lords of neighboring villages, attacking him for converting to Christianity. In the fashion that typifies 16th-century Nahuatl drama, the speakers repeat and rephrase their statements, moving and dancing as they deliver their lines. At various points in the drama, Tepoztecatl complains that the angry lords have come to disturb him, “now that I am enjoying myself,” “now that I am sleeping,” “now when I am here celebrating my fiesta,” “right now when

13. The text of the *Reto* itself makes a metatheatrical reference to its own staging. Tepoztecatl asks one of his challengers, “Why dost thou come to seek me? Right now when I am here celebrating my fiesta” (in Redfield [1930] 1973:228).

14. Popular dance-dramas throughout the Americas usually have several versions. Often, the script was a document of a particular performance seen and recorded by someone who could write. This differs from most traditional theatre in which the performance represents a relatively stable script. For other versions of the script, see Robalo (1951) and Garcia (1933).

I am remembering her, the Virgin Holy Mary.” While his opponents are intruders in the physical sense as well, he emphasizes that he is firmly situated “here [in] my four mountains, the seven hills, the seven wells, and [the] seven stony hillside[s].” These, he says, “are my valor and my essential strength.” His strength also derives from his “aunt,” *Teci*, the pre-Conquest deity, “antecessor of Our Lady of Guadalupe” (Redfield [1930] 1973:230, fn. 3), associated with birth, fertility, and the moon: “Twelve stars she has [like] flowers placed on her head.” But this female birth-figure also has a Christian version in the text, for at another point he says he is “remembering my mother, the roseate Virgin.” The *Reto* closes with Tepoztecatl’s triumph as he asks his attendants to beat on the *teponaztli*, the sacred drum that he stole from his opponents, for “their shame [of having been conquered].”

Several themes appear in this script and in all the versions of the Tepoztecatl scenario, as well as in the fiesta: the centrality of place (Tepoztecatl and Tepoztecos clearly gain their strength through their proximity to their land and mountains), conquest, hybrid identity (pre-/post-conquest), religion (native religiosity/Christianity), race (indigenous/European), and gender. According to documents, the fiesta has been performed off and on for 400 years (see Betancourt 2003:71; Caraveo and Pérez y Zavala 1998). We have photographs of the fiesta dating back to the early 20th century, and documentary allusions to Tepoztecos as resistance figures can be found in the 18th century (see Gruzinski 1985). Surely here we have ample archival evidence to substantiate claims that today’s fiesta and the embodiment of resistance and conquest by the Tepoztecos have deep historical roots.¹⁵

Yet this specific archival dimension of the fiesta, though important, is not central to most Tepoztecos, even though they have a very strong investment in their history, which they see as tantamount to their identity, and which animates their contemporary feelings of independence. A large hand-written mural on 5 de Mayo reads: “The history of Tepoztlán, from the Tepozteco to the present, has to be taught down to the last detail, even if we don’t teach Western culture. Our culture is preferable to that which is not ours.” Their preoccupation, which animates the fiesta, is with reconciling the official submission/conversion of their native god to Christianity with his stature as their powerful and resistant defender. The *Reto*, or challenge, in fact, is not for Tepoztecatl but for Tepoztecos: How does this apparent defeat become the triumph of Tepoztecatl and, by extension, of Tepoztecos? Their history—the one they stage again and again through diverse scenarios—centers on the recurring pattern of conquest and resistance, refusing the construction of defeat. Unlike the official histories, in which Tepoztecatl and his followers submit to Christianity and the European forces, the popular version shows that Tepoztecatl was never conquered. His image asserts the continuity of past independence and strength as it moves into the future. Whatever the variations, the paradigmatic core of the scenario remains the same: Tepoztlán has faced conquest and maintains its independent character and spirit. The various versions of the life of Tepoztecatl tell parts of the history; the communal construction of the seed mural tells another; the enactments related to the fiesta offer a “live” dimension; and the months-long preparations for the fiesta give further insight into how the Tepoztecos’ active participation in the fiesta in fact creates the community of resistance the fiesta claims to merely depict. Fundamental to all, I believe, is not the historical “fact” of Tepoztecatl but the restaging, the remaking, the constant reactivation of the figure as present.

Let me give a brief description of the first two instances (the “new” mural and the ancient enactment of the *Reto*) in order to develop the third—the creation of a community of resistance that can make legal claims based on traditions of performed practice. As part of the staging of Tepoztlán’s living history, townspeople have embraced the recent tradition (now in its 12th year) of constructing a massive seed mural annually depicting the town’s two-pronged history and identity.¹⁶ Secured over

15. There is also a substantial archive of contemporary materials about Tepoztecatl—Gordon Brotherston’s “Las vidas del héroe Tepoztecatl,” in *El Codice de Tepoztlán: imagen de un pueblo resistente* (1999); Pablo González Casanova, “El ciclo legendario del Tepoztecatl,” in *Estudios de lingüística y filología nahuas* (1989); Pacho Lane’s video *El dueño de la montaña sagrada: La Leyenda del Tepozteco* (2005); the self-published monograph by Angel Zúñiga Navarrete, *Breve historia y narraciones Tepoztecas* (1998).

16. The Tepoztecan architect, Arturo Demaza, designs the mural, basing his drawings on perennial tensions as well as current issues. For content and design, he draws from ancient codices and other archival materials. After the outline



3. Designed by Tepoztecan architect Arturo Demaza, the seed mural draws its content and design from ancient codices and other archival materials. Tepoztlán, Morelos, 2003. (Courtesy of Diana Taylor)

the archway leading into the churchyard, the mural contrasts two scenarios—one on each side of the entry. Usually, the left side shows a pre-Conquest practice or scenario while the right shows how that changed after the Conquest. The overhead arch brings the pre-Conquest warriors and Christian friars together, though not exactly reconciled, under the loving gaze of the Virgin Mary and child. In 2003, the mural depicted one particular version of the story of Tepoztecatl, much as stained-glass windows in medieval Europe might feature the Stations of the Cross. In the case of the mural, however, the pictorial education takes place in the liminal space of the archway that separates the secular marketplace from the space and time of the Christian Church. Tepoztecatl, as the mural showed in 2003, was miraculously born in Axitla, the region's source of water, of a virgin impregnated when she swallowed a bird's feather carried by the wind. Ashamed of this birth, she throws the child away to die. First he is discarded on an anthill—but instead of devouring him, the ants feed him. Then he is left in a thorny maguey plant—which suckles him. After that, he is thrown into the river in a basket, where he is found and adopted by an old couple. He grows to be a strong child, an excellent hunter, and marksman. When messengers come from neighboring Xochicalco, home of the monster Xochicalcatl who demands tribute and human sacrifice, to claim his old adopted father, Tepoztecatl insists on going in his place. He comforts his parents by assuring them he will kill the monster, and advises them to look to the skies for a sign of his fate. If he succeeds, white smoke will appear. Black smoke would signal his death. On his way to Xochicalco, he picks up a sharp stone. Playing on Xochicalcatl's greed, Tepoztecatl asks to be eaten alive. Once inside the monster, he kills him with his sharp stone. The triumphant Tepoztecatl goes to Cuernavaca, and enters a banquet wearing his dirty clothes. He is denied entry. He returns in a glorious outfit and is received with

is drawn, he and a colleague choose the color scheme and the seeds needed to complete the massive structure. Townspeople wander in during the month of August, often in groups of friends and family, to glue the seeds into their demarcated space—a collective version of painting by numbers.

honor. He smears the food on the clothes, stating that the clothes, not he, were the honored guest. In anger, he creates a windstorm and steals the sacred *teponaztli* or sacred drum. He returns to Tepoztlán, where he becomes leader, Tlatoani. Tepoztecatl is converted to Christianity by the Dominican, Fray Domingo de la Asunción and the leaders of the surrounding cities (Cuernavaca, Tlayacapan, Huaxtepec, and Yuxtepec) challenge Tepoztecatl for betraying their gods and belief system. After defeating them in the *Reto*, Tepoztecatl convinces the angry rulers to accept Christianity.



This story—like the larger fiesta itself—combines diverse, incongruent, even contradictory elements—some biblical, some Aztec, some Mayan.¹⁷ The “origin” story is anything but foundational—it’s all about cultural adjustment and adaptation. The making, unmaking, and remaking of the mural every year, using the seeds that have been central for sustenance, and hence to ritual practice for thousands of years, highlights the constructedness of all versions—there is nothing static about the historical project. Even the representational mode involves a stylistic reworking: Tepoztecan architect Arturo Demaza reactivates the ancient pictograph form of the codices to communicate contemporary concerns. It’s all about the meaning-making, the process of reformulating the historical facets important to the townspeople *now*.



The mural, not surprisingly, offers yet another version of the history of conquest than the one sustained by historical records. In addition to the dominant culture’s definition of defeat—Tepoztecatl’s conversion—the mural enacts its own inclusive approach. For the many ethnic groups in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, conquest was a way of life. Groups invaded each other’s spaces, burned their temples, and extracted tribute from the vanquished. Yet they never demanded that the conquered give up their gods. They required only that the gods of the conquering group be added to the pantheon of the conquered. So rather than the either/or of Catholicism, we have the both/and of native religiosity—the Virgen and Tepoztecatl. The story offers a pragmatic pre-Conquest strategy for cultural survival. Tepoztecatl accepted Christianity; the story contains many Old Testament elements; the priests allow the fiesta to continue. Not only that, but Tepoztecanis adore their Virgen. Racial and religious polarity becomes harmonized in gendered complementarity: She comforts, He defends. The “white” Virgen blends with the native virgin/mothers of the indigenous cosmology—Teci, Tónantzin, and Tepoztecatl’s virgin mother from Axitla. She ushers in racial and cultural mestizaje, the embodied blending of the indigenous and the Spanish.¹⁸ The story also tells of pre-

17. Elements of the Tepoztecatl story are related to “Ome Tochtli” (Two Rabbit) from which the Tepoztecatl story is said to derive; other parts of the story are from the Mayan *Popol Vuh*; still others are related to Quetzalcoatl and to the birth of the Aztec god Huitzilopochtli (see Brotherston 1999; and Caraveo and Pérez y Zavala 1998).

18. For more on mestizaje, see “Memory As Cultural Practice: Mestizaje, Hybridity, and Transculturation” in Taylor (2003).



4–6. Multiple performances honoring the Virgen take place in the large atrio (churchyard), including a mock battle of the “Moors and Christians” which dates back to medieval Europe. Tepoztlán, Morelos, 2003. (Courtesy of Diana Taylor)

Hispanic rivalries with local neighboring communities. Most importantly, the scenario elucidates the power of negotiation necessary for survival. Tepoztecatl deserves reverence because he was masterful enough to negotiate a peace and save his people from destruction.

The Fiesta of Tepoztecatl (which takes place on 7–8 September) conveys the same multivalence. A townwide performance that lasts 24 hours, it is celebrated on the day of the Virgen de la Natividad. The fact that *His* fiesta is on *Her* day offers another example of how the either/or of Catholicism gives way to the both/and of syncretic native practice. The fiesta presents competing histories and performances, offering various scenes of self-knowing, though not in any holistic or “authentic” way. On the contrary: the pulls and tugs of the history of conquest destabilize its very structure. The two major ceremonies take place concurrently, but not simultaneously; the worship and affirmation of the grandeur of Tepoztecatl brackets the celebration and adoration of the Virgen. Indigenous elements coexist with European ones, ancient agricultural calendars mesh with the Christian, gods from Mesoamerican and Catholic pantheons oversee and legitimize the festivities. While the paradigmatic function of the scenario remains the same, certain parts of the fiesta change over time, or even from one year to the next, layering on the additional tension between permanence and change.

The typical fiesta works like this: At sunset on the evening of 7 September, devotees, performers, and government officials climb up to Tepoztecatl’s pyramid. They present their offerings of *copal* (incense), flowers, candles, music, food, and cut paper (for centuries a scarce and sacred commodity) that date from pre-Conquest times. The priest blesses the site; the President of the Municipality, as town leader, declares himself a direct descendant of Tepoztecatl and renews the commitment to fight for the good of his people. The man who will perform the role of Tepoztecatl then speaks, asking permission to incarnate the great god and asking for guidance. The priest blesses the garments and theatrical paraphernalia. Those gathered are conscious of the dual nature of the moment—part

historical event, part sacred regeneration—as they take photographs and burn incense. The ritual is not about belief in any strict way, and certainly not cult behavior—it's about tradition. Performing a series of observances on the night preceding an important festivity continues a pre-Hispanic tradition and, as with other indigenous-based ceremonies, one of the observances requires those present to eat the food they have brought for the god.¹⁹

These rituals on the mountain give way to the fiesta in town. During the late morning and early afternoon of the 8th, multiple performances honoring the Virgen take place in the large *atrio* (churchyard) of the Church, a staging tradition initiated in Mesoamerica in the 16th century to ensure ecclesiastical control of native festivities.²⁰ Some performances, such as the mock battle of the “Moors and Christians,” traditionally dedicated to the Virgen, date back to medieval Europe and migrated to the Americas in the 16th century (see Harris 1994, 2000). Others have been added little by little. In one corner of the atrio, we have the *concheros*, usually neo-Aztec groups of urban, working-class Mexicanos/as and Chicanos/as who have become “re-indigenized.”²¹ In another corner, the Ballet Folclórico of Morelos performs their state-sponsored version of “traditional” popular dances. Dominating the courtyard in terms of sound, a big band plays 1950s tunes à la Ray Coniff. Several historical periods with their predominant cultural attitudes seem to be onstage simultaneously: the memory and mythification of pre-Conquest times, the culturally embattled and hybrid colonial period, and the free-floating nostalgia of the globalized mass culture of the 20th and 21st centuries. And central to all these activities is the Virgen, who appears at the door of her church to watch the festivities. Instead of telling a coherent or linear series of events, however, the shows compete for the attention of the townspeople and the local tourists who wander around the open churchyard, buying food from vendors and talking to each other. Mexico City people and the wealthy weekenders who live in the valley tend to stay away, considering the fiesta not only totally unimportant, but noisy and unruly.

Around four o'clock in the afternoon, the performers enacting the Dominican friar and his attendants start the walk through town to the base of the mountain. Ringing bells, they call on the townspeople to follow them out of the churchyard through the arch that separates the Christianized space and time from the market, the zone of exchange and indigenous native practices that have long continued outside the purview of Catholicism. Everyone waits at Axitla, the sacred river at the base of the Tepozteco where Tepoztecatl was born, until the god descends from the pyramid, followed by his attendants, for his fateful meeting with Fray Domingo de la Asunción. People carrying cameras and videos vie for position. The actors talk. A director-type organizer tries to make sure that everything is in place. It's a friendly, informal audience. Finally, amid the sounds of the sacred teponaztli and the conch, Tepoztecatl approaches the Friar. The Friar reads from the Bible, and sprinkles water from Axitla on Tepoztecatl's slightly bent head. Is the water holy because the Friar blessed it? Or holy because Tepoztecatl was born in it? Or both? Once baptized, Tepoztecatl receives his plumed headdress from one of his native attendants, and the Friar and everyone else from the drama accompany him to town, joined by the hundreds of followers and festival participants. The *Reto* takes place

19. “Hasta hoy día las vísperas de una fiesta son de gran importancia ceremonial” (To this day, the eve of a fiesta is of great ceremonial importance). From the *Códice Borbónico. El Libro del Ciuacoatl: Homenaje para el año del Fuego Nuevo* (Anders, et al. 1991:191).

20. “[P]ara una sola festividad, once espectáculos bien precisados era muestra de cuán amantes de lo visual, de lo auditivo y de lo emotivo eran los antiguos mexicanos” (“A proof of how the ancient Mexicans loved visuality, aurality, and the emotive is that one single festivity contained eleven different, well-defined, spectacles”) (Garibay 1987:336).

21. Concheros, as Fernando Horcasitas notes in his posthumous papers (2004), derive their name from the stringed instrument built from a conch. Horcasitas doubts that the contemporary concheros dances—while ubiquitous in Mexico—have much relationship to the original pre-Conquest forms. In 1976, the dancers formed an Association of Concheros, and dancers from different parts of Mexico were welcome as long as they shared the sentiment behind the practice. Horcasitas defines this sentiment as “religious” and “independent.” It holds appeal, he writes, for urban individuals—from Mexico and Chicanos from the U.S.—who feel distanced from their indigenous roots. See also Pacho Lane's video on the concheros, *Los Hijos del Aguila* (1991).



7. *The concheros, usually neo-Aztec groups of urban, working-class Mexicanos/as and Chicanos/as, performing in the town fiesta. Tepoztlán, Morelos, 2003. (Courtesy of Diana Taylor)*

on top of a makeshift pyramid, a duplicate built and adorned for the occasion, in a corner of the central marketplace, just as it has for at least the past hundred years. The leaders from surrounding towns hurl accusations at Tepoztecatl in Nahuatl, and he in turn answers them, conquering his opponents not through force, but through reason. He convinces them to join him, to convert to Christianity. At the end, as in Western drama, however, all the actors appear together onstage. The fiesta, and the evening, end with a sense of negotiated peace.

Walking away from the event one night I asked an indigenous, Nahuatl-speaking neighbor of mine what she thought of the fiesta. “We’ll have to see if Tepoztecatl liked it,” she said. “If he doesn’t send the wind, he liked it.”

The spatial arrangements reflected in this staging reveal some of the core issues that underlie the scenario: pre- and post-Conquest elements stand eternally in opposition to each other, acknowledged, and brought into harmony, but never into sameness or unity. The makeshift pyramid faces the church. Tepoztecatl comes down from the mountain and the Virgen leaves the altar for the door—but neither leaves His or Her own (symbolic) space. The arch separates and links the two; the native elements will remain forever outside the church, yet loving and respectful of it. The conquest will never be complete. The layering of histories and practices makes it difficult to isolate any of the separate strands—the ways of knowing through the mesh of discursive and performatic systems make evident centuries of negotiation and accommodation.

While I have given a rather normative description of some of the events taking place during those 24 hours, it is important to think about the process, the months-long preparation, and all the



8. *The Reto takes place on top of a makeshift pyramid, a duplicate built and adorned for the occasion, in a corner of the central marketplace, just as it has for at least the past 100 years. Tepoztlán, Morelos, 2003. (Courtesy of Diana Taylor)*

mechanisms of transmission (short-term and long-term) that are the fiesta. Rather than ritual functionalism, however, I want to stress its power as performance. The fiesta requires participation but not belief for its effectiveness. Some forms of transmission are organizational—the division of labor, economic contributions, and patronage by all the barrios and sectors of the population that go on all year. The merchants who have stalls in the open-air market sponsor the seed mural. The man who sells vegetables keeps the financial records for the festival. The barrio Santa Clara protects the sacred drum from year to year and, because people there still speak Nahuatl, they coach most of the participants. An elder, or

“living memory,” is charged with keeping the words of the *Reto*, and later the text. He helps train the man who will enact *Tepoztecatl*. Everyone pays attention to historical discrepancies and, as in all historical inquiry, competing versions by rival elders complicate interpretation. People are still upset that during the 1920s the challengers to *Tepoztecatl* arrived on horseback, when everyone knows that indigenous leaders did not have horses in the early 16th century. The history of the fiesta, at times, becomes as pertinent as the history the fiesta portends to transmit. While everyone wants the costumes to be made by traditional means, and the Nahuatl to be correct, this historical accuracy is only important insofar as it strengthens the paradigmatic core of the scenario and distills the significance of historical events in ways that can be felt and experienced, rather than simply understood. The goal, then, is not merely to create an annual “live” event but an event that is alive for the people currently living in the town.

What is kept alive through the fiesta-as-process, in part, is the operational and decision-making structure of the town. It takes the whole town to have the fiesta—the barrios, groups of merchants, Town Hall (the municipality helps organize the festivities and contributes money and administrative resources), and all those willing to drop in for a few hours to paste the seeds into the design for the arch. Even people like me who are not “from” Tepoztlán take part by giving money. I am billed every year whether I am there or not. Everyone has her/his place. Children who play a part in the fiesta learn some Nahuatl and traditional skills through performance practices that are augmented by background instruction at school, where units on *Tepoztecatl* are added to the curriculum to stress the value of the town’s indigenous identity and history. Transmission, then, is assured through the archive and the repertoire on a generational level as well.

Yet it also takes the fiesta to have the town. This yearly event, which keeps *Tepoztecatl* alive, annually affirms the town’s identity as a *pueblo resistente*. If we do not pay attention to this repertoire, we will not understand why the town looks as it does or why people react as they do.

The lack of attention to performed practice may be one reason that no one in power predicted the outbreak of the “golf war” in 1995. The municipal president backed by the governor of the state of Morelos and the moneyed class undertook to construct an enormous golf club—with 700 houses, restaurants, a conference center, and tourist resort—on Tepoztlán’s ancestral communal lands. Performances of power unfolded as expected. Official banners, ads, and loudspeakers promised “pro-

gress.” *Campesinos* (peasants) pretending to be Tepoztecos staged their support of the project for the local and national media. Speeches outlined the benefits the golf club would bring the local population of Tepoztecos—more work, wealth, and government services to a village long deprived of all three. They failed to mention what all the townspeople knew already—that the golf club would deprive Tepoztecos of their precious land and, with that, their tenacious sense of identity. The project would also consume more than half of all the town’s water—a precious commodity during the dry season that spans from October to June. So Tepoztecos staged their own performance of resistance; they rose in rebellion. They marched on town hall and, finding their municipal president had fled, they strung up effigies of him and his coconspirators. Middle-aged market women



9. *Tepoztecatl and his attendants approaching the makeshift pyramid for the Reto. Tepoztlán, Morelos, 2003. (Courtesy of Diana Taylor)*

went after pro-club proponents with the large wooden spoons they sell for mixing the mole. Villagers blocked all entry points to the village and took turns staying up all night defending their borders. The entire community came together, cooking communal meals in the market square, dancing and singing as they kept watch.²² Some people compared the ever-expanding gatherings to Tepoztlán’s fiestas and carnival that annually attract people from far and wide to participate—though this time people gathered in a political face-off. Tepoztecatl, attired in warrior garb stood alone, defiant, at the top of the seed mural arch—this was a time for defense, not consolation. People from the neighboring towns of the valley promised their help. Zapatistas (EZLN) sent representatives to pledge support, and Tepoztecos played with the famous slogan “Todos Somos Marcos” (referring to the leader of the EZLN) to create their own motto: “Todos Somos tEpoZtLaN.” In the U.S., environmental groups such as the Sierra Club pressured foreign investors to withdraw from the project (Rosas 1997:48). Great historical and mythic heroes joined the protests and assemblies: Emiliano Zapata, the revolutionary leader born in Morelos in 1879, could be seen walking down the main street of the town. Tepoztecatl came down from his pyramid—clad in his robe of feathers, wearing his elaborate plumed headdress, sandals, and carrying his legendary copper ax—to address the crowd in Nahuatl, urging his people to defend themselves. Images of Tepoztecatl sprung up on walls and murals throughout the village. The townspeople took

22. For a fuller description of the uprising, see María Rosas, *Tepoztlán: crónica de desacatos y resistencia* (1997) and the documentary *La Batalla de Tepoztlán* directed by Oscar Menéndez (1995).



10. At the end of the Reto actors appear together onstage. Tepoztlán, Morelos, 2004. (Courtesy of the Ayuntamiento de Tepoztlán)

charge. They organized and carried out their own elections for municipal president. One report stated that Tepoztecos “returned to their communal forms of organization and to their *‘usos y costumbres’* (traditional customs and practices) to select local authorities, electing one representative from each barrio” (Caraveo and Pérez y Zavala 1998).

The battle played out not only in the village but in the national arena through local and national newspapers, as well as on *La Voz de Tepoztlán*, the radio station set up for the occasion. After a tense confrontation that lasted almost two years, the government decided to accept the town’s democratically elected municipal president. The townspeople retained the right to the use of their lands. The potential for catastrophe was averted. The following year, the Virgen assumed her traditional role at the top of the seed mural.

Where, then, do we look if we want “to learn and to set down the ways of the folk”? The overlooked and unremarked annual performances in Tepoztlán have created a community of practice through the expanded expression of everything that matters to it. This repertoire of embodied behaviors stores all these lived events and makes them available as a political resource in the present. The repertoire—as this study shows—not only has predictive value but it serves as a legitimate basis for legal claims. The Mexican government accepted the town’s argument that its claim to its land rested not on documents but on traditional “usos and costumbres.” These practices, now recognized as legal cultural patrimony, have been kept alive and active in part through the organizational demands of the annual fiesta. Clearly, there are other factors that went into the government’s decision.

In 1996, the sting of the Zapatista uprising was still fresh in its mind. The authorities certainly did not want popular uprisings to spread. One might argue that by allowing Tepoztlán's challenge to succeed, the government quarantined the behavior. Yet, based on this example, I would challenge Fanon and Boal's assertions that popular performances tend to be anti-revolutionary (see Fanon 1968:57, Boal 1978:32). While performances as such may not topple governments, this case shows how they strengthen the networks and communities that can bring about social change. These practices, handed down in part through the practical exigencies of the fiesta in Tepoztlán, were not lost and recovered; rather they were moved from one social sphere to another—just as Tepoztecatl comes to town and never leaves his pyramid.

Are these practices, then, historical? It depends on how we think about history and the past. If we accept that history is defined as the study of change over time, as an analysis based on a clearly demarcated past and present, based on documentary evidence, then Tepoztecos, Redfield's "folk," are as Eric Wolfe titled his critique, a "people without history" (Wolfe 1982). Colonial history—with its logic of linearity—privileges unique, remarkable events. It entails a cultural value judgment, and strives for a definitive account of people and places, although everyone accepts that it is always being revised. Through documents and documentation, this kind of history has not only foregrounded its own story, with its own protagonists, it has also dispossessed those who could not prove their claims to lands, discoveries, or protagonism through deeds and titles. Performances such as the one I describe tell a different history—one that is all about people and place, but not in any linear sense. Tepoztecatl lives, the forces of nature (wind, torrential rain) make themselves felt on a regular basis, the Church and State continue to pressure, but never monopolize. The past might be conceived not only as a timeline—accessed as a leap backwards, and forward to the present again—but also as a multilayered sedimentation, a form of vertical density rather than a horizontal sweep—not an either/or but a both/and.

So if we think about the past not only as chronological and as what is gone, but as also vertical, as a different form of storage of what's already here, then performance is deeply historical. Its iterative, recurrent quality functions through repeats, yet breaks out of them—it is always alive, now. The again-ness of performance offers a different modality for thinking of the again-ness of history—which is always also made present and alive in the here-and-now. History, like performance, is never for the first time, but it too is actualized in the present (see Schechner 1985:36). The bearers of performance, those who engage in it, are also the bearers of history who link the layers past-present-future through practice. Thus the performance event, like the historical event, both affirms and breaks with the cyclical, Hegelian pattern of again-ness. Therein lies its transformative power. One might go so far as to say that those who do not learn from performance are condemned to relive it, as the officials of Tepoztlán found out. The question then might shift from: *Is performance un- or anti-historical?* to: *What conditions in the present trigger performance practices to reactivate past behaviors and attitudes that will interrupt the status quo?* How and when does the always-thereness of the repertoire become mobilized to erupt in the here-and-now?

As I was doing my research for this paper, I followed traces of the fiesta to various people's houses—one man remembered the debates about the horses, someone else had photos, another had costumes. I asked the man in Town Hall who was helping me locate materials why they didn't keep a list of these sources and a copy of the materials in Town Hall. Why was it necessary for me to seek out every practitioner individually? His look reminded me that I wasn't from there: "Institutions come and go," he said, "people remain" (Cantor 2004).²³

23. Others who contributed to this essay through interviews and the sharing of resources are Marcela Tostado Gutierrez, Director of El Museo y Centro de Documentación Histórica, Exconvento de Tepoztlán, Don Pedro Bello, Doña Beatriz Martínez, Arq. Arturo Demaza, Pacho Lane, and the anthropologist from the National University of Mexico, Lourdes Arizpe.

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Hito Steyerl
**In Defense of
the Poor Image**

01/09

The poor image is a copy in motion. Its quality is bad, its resolution substandard. As it accelerates, it deteriorates. It is a ghost of an image, a preview, a thumbnail, an errant idea, an itinerant image distributed for free, squeezed through slow digital connections, compressed, reproduced, ripped, remixed, as well as copied and pasted into other channels of distribution.

The poor image is a rag or a rip; an AVI or a JPEG, a lumpen proletarian in the class society of appearances, ranked and valued according to its resolution. The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction. The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance. The poor image tends towards abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming.

The poor image is an illicit fifth-generation bastard of an original image. Its genealogy is dubious. Its filenames are deliberately misspelled. It often defies patrimony, national culture, or indeed copyright. It is passed on as a lure, a decoy, an index, or as a reminder of its former visual self. It mocks the promises of digital technology. Not only is it often degraded to the point of being just a hurried blur, one even doubts whether it could be called an image at all. Only digital technology could produce such a dilapidated image in the first place.

Poor images are the contemporary Wretched of the Screen, the debris of audiovisual production, the trash that washes up on the digital economies' shores. They testify to the violent dislocation, transferrals, and displacement of images – their acceleration and circulation within the vicious cycles of audiovisual capitalism. Poor images are dragged around the globe as commodities or their effigies, as gifts or as bounty. They spread pleasure or death threats, conspiracy theories or bootlegs, resistance or stultification. Poor images show the rare, the obvious, and the unbelievable – that is, if we can still manage to decipher it.

1. Low Resolutions

In one of Woody Allen's films the main character is out of focus.¹ It's not a technical problem but some sort of disease that has befallen him: his image is consistently blurred. Since Allen's character is an actor, this becomes a major problem: he is unable to find work. His lack of definition turns into a material problem. Focus is identified as a class position, a position of ease and privilege, while being out of focus lowers one's value as an image.

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Shoveling pirated DVDs in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, China, April 20, 2008.

The contemporary hierarchy of images, however, is not only based on sharpness, but also and primarily on resolution. Just look at any electronics store and this system, described by Harun Farocki in a notable 2007 interview, becomes immediately apparent.² In the class society of images, cinema takes on the role of a flagship store. In flagship stores high-end products are marketed in an upscale environment. More affordable derivatives of the same images circulate as DVDs, on broadcast television or online, as poor images.

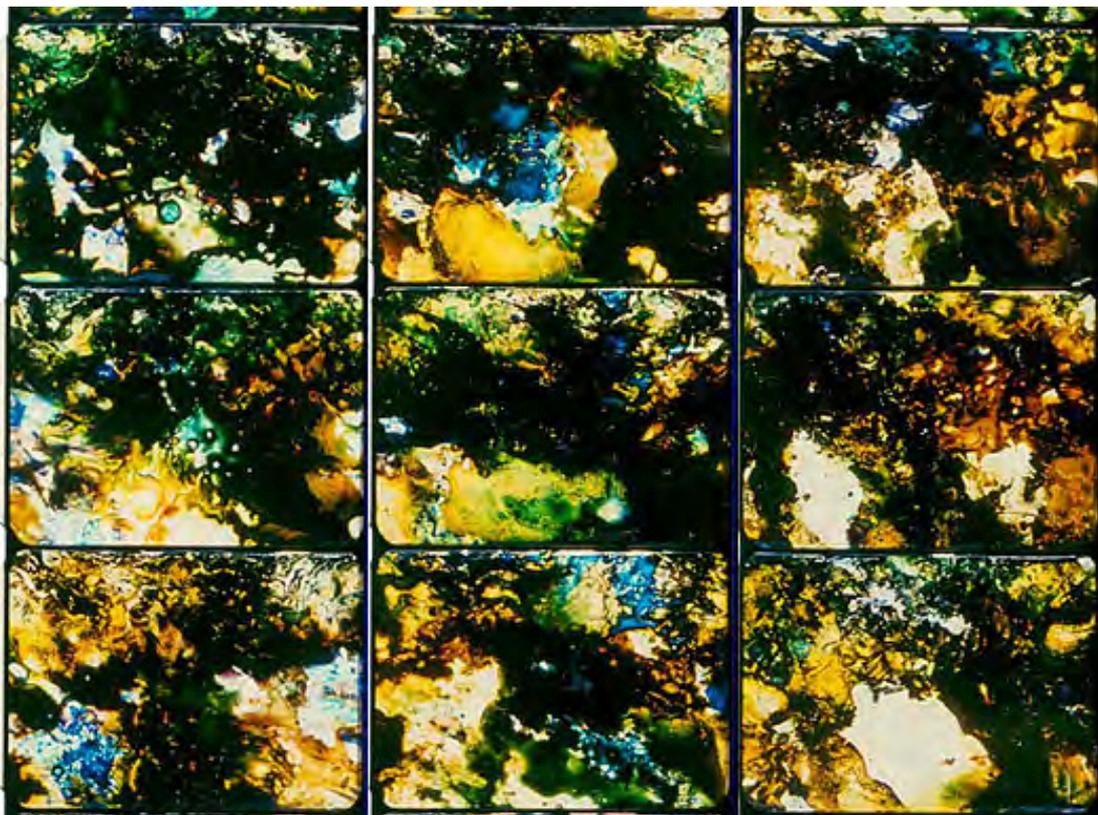
Obviously, a high-resolution image looks more brilliant and impressive, more mimetic and magic, more scary and seductive than a poor one. It is more rich, so to speak. Now, even consumer formats are increasingly adapting to the tastes of cineastes and esthetes, who insisted on 35 mm film as a guarantee of pristine visuality. The insistence upon analog film as the sole medium of visual importance resounded throughout discourses on cinema, almost regardless of their ideological inflection. It never mattered that these high-end economies of film production were (and still are) firmly anchored in systems of national culture, capitalist studio production, the cult of mostly male genius, and the original version, and thus are often

conservative in their very structure. Resolution was fetishized as if its lack amounted to castration of the author. The cult of film gauge dominated even independent film production. The rich image established its own set of hierarchies, with new technologies offering more and more possibilities to creatively degrade it.

2. Resurrection (as Poor Images)

But insisting on rich images also had more serious consequences. A speaker at a recent conference on the film essay refused to show clips from a piece by Humphrey Jennings because no proper film projection was available. Although there was at the speaker's disposal a perfectly standard DVD player and video projector, the audience was left to imagine what those images might have looked like.

In this case the invisibility of the image was more or less voluntary and based on aesthetic premises. But it has a much more general equivalent based on the consequences of neoliberal policies. Twenty or even thirty years ago, the neoliberal restructuring of media production began slowly obscuring non-commercial imagery, to the point where experimental and essayistic cinema became almost invisible. As it became prohibitively



Nine 35mm film frames from Stan Brakhage's *Existence is Song*, 1987.

expensive to keep these works circulating in cinemas, so were they also deemed too marginal to be broadcast on television. Thus they slowly disappeared not just from cinemas, but from the public sphere as well. Video essays and experimental films remained for the most part unseen save for some rare screenings in metropolitan film museums or film clubs, projected in their original resolution before disappearing again into the darkness of the archive.

This development was of course connected to the neoliberal radicalization of the concept of culture as commodity, to the commercialization of cinema, its dispersion into multiplexes, and the marginalization of independent filmmaking. It was also connected to the restructuring of global media industries and the establishment of monopolies over the audiovisual in certain countries or territories. In this way, resistant or non-conformist visual matter disappeared from the surface into an underground of alternative archives and collections, kept alive only by a network of committed organizations and individuals, who would circulate bootlegged VHS copies amongst themselves. Sources for these were extremely rare – tapes moved from hand to hand, depending on word of mouth, within circles

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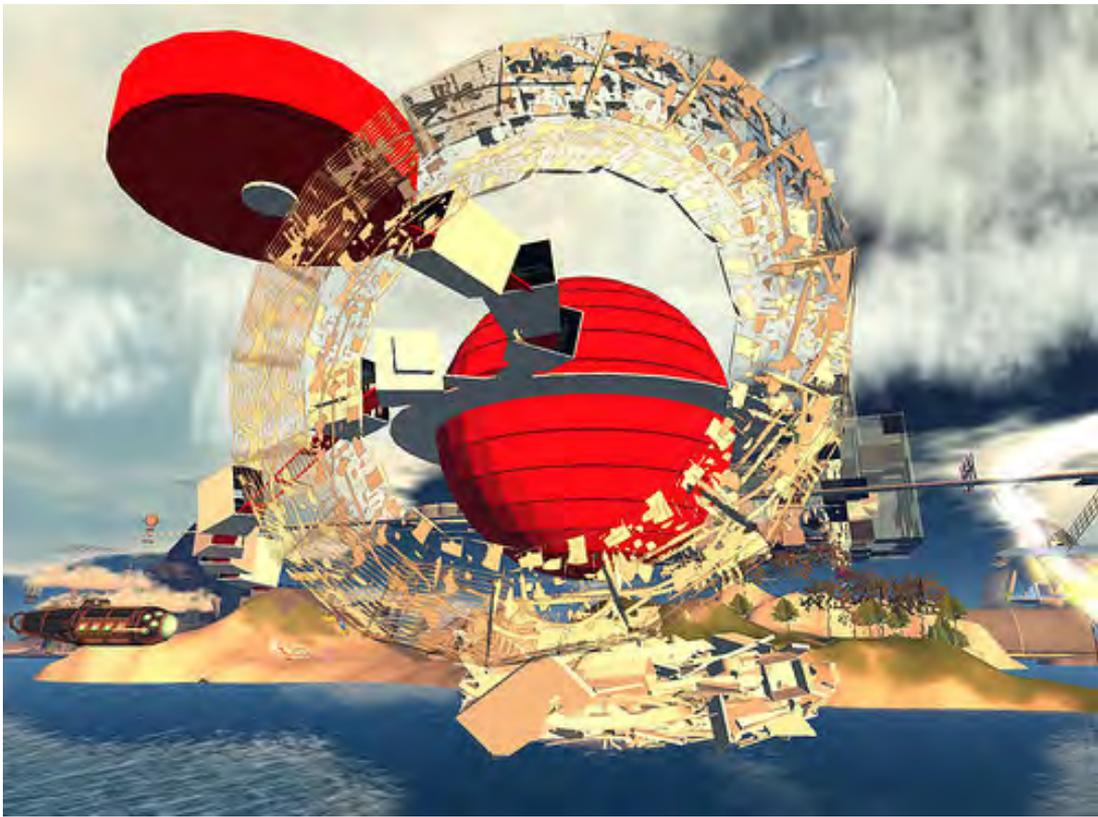
of friends and colleagues. With the possibility to stream video online, this condition started to dramatically change. An increasing number of rare materials reappeared on publicly accessible platforms, some of them carefully curated (Ubuweb) and some just a pile of stuff (YouTube).

At present, there are at least twenty torrents of Chris Marker's film essays available online. If you want a retrospective, you can have it. But the economy of poor images is about more than just downloads: you can keep the files, watch them again, even reedit or improve them if you think it necessary. And the results circulate. Blurred AVI files of half-forgotten masterpieces are exchanged on semi-secret P2P platforms. Clandestine cell-phone videos smuggled out of museums are broadcast on YouTube. DVDs of artists' viewing copies are bartered.³ Many works of avant-garde, essayistic, and non-commercial cinema have been resurrected as poor images. Whether they like it or not.

3. Privatization and Piracy

That rare prints of militant, experimental, and classical works of cinema as well as video art reappear as poor images is significant on another level. Their situation reveals much more than the content or appearance of the images





Chris Marker's virtual home on Second Life, May 29, 2009.

themselves: it also reveals the conditions of their marginalization, the constellation of social forces leading to their online circulation as poor images.⁴ Poor images are poor because they are not assigned any value within the class society of images – their status as illicit or degraded grants them exemption from its criteria. Their lack of resolution attests to their appropriation and displacement.⁵

Obviously, this condition is not only connected to the neoliberal restructuring of media production and digital technology; it also has to do with the post-socialist and postcolonial restructuring of nation states, their cultures, and their archives. While some nation states are dismantled or fall apart, new cultures and traditions are invented and new histories created. This obviously also affects film archives – in many cases, a whole heritage of film prints is left without its supporting framework of national culture. As I once observed in the case of a film museum in Sarajevo, the national archive can find its next life in the form of a video-rental store.⁶ Pirate copies seep out of such archives through disorganized privatization. On the other hand, even the British Library sells off its contents online at astronomical prices.

As Kodwo Eshun has noted, poor images circulate partly in the void left by state-cinema organizations who find it too difficult to operate as a 16/35-mm archive or to maintain any kind of distribution infrastructure in the contemporary era.⁷ From this perspective, the poor image reveals the decline and degradation of the film essay, or indeed any experimental and non-commercial cinema, which in many places was made possible because the production of culture was considered a task of the state. Privatization of media production gradually grew more important than state controlled/sponsored media production. But, on the other hand, the rampant privatization of intellectual content, along with online marketing and commodification, also enable piracy and appropriation; it gives rise to the circulation of poor images.

4. Imperfect Cinema

The emergence of poor images reminds one of a classic Third Cinema manifesto, *For an Imperfect Cinema*, by Juan García Espinosa, written in Cuba in the late 1960s.⁸ Espinosa argues for an imperfect cinema because, in his words, “perfect cinema – technically and artistically masterful – is almost always reactionary cinema.” The imperfect cinema is one that strives to overcome the divisions of labor within class society. It merges art with life and science, blurring the distinction between consumer and producer, audience and author. It insists upon its own

imperfection, is popular but not consumerist, committed without becoming bureaucratic.

In his manifesto, Espinosa also reflects on the promises of new media. He clearly predicts that the development of video technology will jeopardize the elitist position of traditional filmmakers and enable some sort of mass film production: an art of the people. Like the economy of poor images, imperfect cinema diminishes the distinctions between author and audience and merges life and art. Most of all, its visibility is resolutely compromised: blurred, amateurish, and full of artifacts.

In some way, the economy of poor images corresponds to the description of imperfect cinema, while the description of perfect cinema represents rather the concept of cinema as a flagship store. But the real and contemporary imperfect cinema is also much more ambivalent and affective than Espinosa had anticipated. On the one hand, the economy of poor images, with its immediate possibility of worldwide distribution and its ethics of remix and appropriation, enables the participation of a much larger group of producers than ever before. But this does not mean that these opportunities are only used for progressive ends. Hate speech, spam, and other rubbish make their way through digital connections as well. Digital communication has also become one of the most contested markets – a zone that has long been subjected to an ongoing original accumulation and to massive (and, to a certain extent, successful) attempts at privatization.

The networks in which poor images circulate thus constitute both a platform for a fragile new common interest and a battleground for commercial and national agendas. They contain experimental and artistic material, but also incredible amounts of porn and paranoia. While the territory of poor images allows access to excluded imagery, it is also permeated by the most advanced commodification techniques. While it enables the users’ active participation in the creation and distribution of content, it also drafts them into production. Users become the editors, critics, translators, and (co-)authors of poor images.

Poor images are thus popular images – images that can be made and seen by the many. They express all the contradictions of the contemporary crowd: its opportunism, narcissism, desire for autonomy and creation, its inability to focus or make up its mind, its constant readiness for transgression and simultaneous submission.⁹ Altogether, poor images present a snapshot of the affective condition of the crowd, its neurosis, paranoia, and fear, as well as its craving for intensity, fun, and distraction. The condition of the images

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speaks not only of countless transfers and reformattings, but also of the countless people who cared enough about them to convert them over and over again, to add subtitles, reedit, or upload them.

In this light, perhaps one has to redefine the value of the image, or, more precisely, to create a new perspective for it. Apart from resolution and exchange value, one might imagine another form of value defined by velocity, intensity, and spread. Poor images are poor because they are heavily compressed and travel quickly. They lose matter and gain speed. But they also express a condition of dematerialization, shared not only with the legacy of conceptual art but above all with contemporary modes of semiotic production.¹⁰ Capital's semiotic turn, as described by Felix Guattari,¹¹ plays in favor of the creation and dissemination of compressed and flexible data packages that can be integrated into ever-newer combinations and sequences.¹²

This flattening-out of visual content – the concept-in-becoming of the images – positions them within a general informational turn, within economies of knowledge that tear images and their captions out of context into the swirl of permanent capitalist deterritorialization.¹³ The history of conceptual art describes this

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dematerialization of the art object first as a resistant move against the fetish value of visibility. Then, however, the dematerialized art object turns out to be perfectly adapted to the semioticization of capital, and thus to the conceptual turn of capitalism.¹⁴ In a way, the poor image is subject to a similar tension. On the one hand, it operates against the fetish value of high resolution. On the other hand, this is precisely why it also ends up being perfectly integrated into an information capitalism thriving on compressed attention spans, on impression rather than immersion, on intensity rather than contemplation, on previews rather than screenings.

5. Comrade, what is your visual bond today?

But, simultaneously, a paradoxical reversal happens. The circulation of poor images creates a circuit, which fulfills the original ambitions of militant and (some) essayistic and experimental cinema – to create an alternative economy of images, an imperfect cinema existing inside as well as beyond and under commercial media streams. In the age of file-sharing, even marginalized content circulates again and reconnects dispersed worldwide audiences.



Thomas Ruff, *jpeg rl104*, 2007.

The poor image thus constructs anonymous global networks just as it creates a shared history. It builds alliances as it travels, provokes translation or mistranslation, and creates new publics and debates. By losing its visual substance it recovers some of its political punch and creates a new aura around it. This aura is no longer based on the permanence of the “original,” but on the transience of the copy. It is no longer anchored within a classical public sphere mediated and supported by the frame of the nation state or corporation, but floats on the surface of temporary and dubious data pools.¹⁵ By drifting away from the vaults of cinema, it is propelled onto new and ephemeral screens stitched together by the desires of dispersed spectators.

The circulation of poor images thus creates “visual bonds,” as Dziga Vertov once called them.¹⁶ This “visual bond” was, according to Vertov, supposed to link the workers of the world with each other.¹⁷ He imagined a sort of communist, visual, Adamic language that could not only inform or entertain, but also organize its viewers. In a sense, his dream has come true, if mostly under the rule of a global information capitalism whose audiences are linked almost in a physical sense by mutual excitement, affective attunement, and anxiety.

But there is also the circulation and production of poor images based on cell phone cameras, home computers, and unconventional forms of distribution. Its optical connections – collective editing, file sharing, or grassroots distribution circuits – reveal erratic and coincidental links between producers everywhere, which simultaneously constitute dispersed audiences.

The circulation of poor images feeds into both capitalist media assembly lines and alternative audiovisual economies. In addition to a lot of confusion and stupefaction, it also possibly creates disruptive movements of thought and affect. The circulation of poor images thus initiates another chapter in the historical genealogy of nonconformist information circuits: Vertov’s “visual bonds,” the internationalist workers pedagogies that Peter Weiss described in *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, the circuits of Third Cinema and Tricontinentalism, of non-aligned filmmaking and thinking. The poor image – ambivalent as its status may be – thus takes its place in the genealogy of carbon-copied pamphlets, cine-train agit-prop films, underground video magazines and other nonconformist materials, which aesthetically often used poor materials. Moreover, it reactualizes many of the historical ideas associated with these circuits, among others Vertov’s idea of the visual bond.

Imagine somebody from the past with a beret asking you, “Comrade, what is your visual bond today?”

You might answer: it is this link to the present.

6. Now!

The poor image embodies the afterlife of many former masterpieces of cinema and video art. It has been expelled from the sheltered paradise that cinema seems to have once been.¹⁸ After being kicked out of the protected and often protectionist arena of national culture, discarded from commercial circulation, these works have become travelers in a digital no-man’s land, constantly shifting their resolution and format, speed and media, sometimes even losing names and credits along the way.

Now many of these works are back – as poor images, I admit. One could of course argue that this is not the real thing, but then – please, anybody – show me this real thing.

The poor image is no longer about the real thing – the originary original. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities. It is about defiance and appropriation just as it is about conformism and exploitation.

In short: it is about reality.

×

An earlier version of this text was improvised in a response at the “Essayfilm – Ästhetik und Aktualität” conference in Lüneburg, Germany, organized by Thomas Tode and Sven Kramer in 2007. The text benefitted tremendously from the remarks and comments of *Third Text* guest editor Kodwo Eshun, who commissioned a longer version for an issue of *Third Text* on Chris Marker and Third Cinema to appear in 2010 (co-edited by Ros Grey). Another substantial inspiration for this text was the exhibition “Dispersion” at the ICA in London (curated by Polly Staple in 2008), which included a brilliant reader edited by Staple and Richard Birkett. The text also benefitted greatly from Brian Kuan Wood’s editorial work.

08/09

e-flux journal #10 — november 2009 [Hito Steyerl](#)
In Defense of the Poor Image

Hito Steyerl is a filmmaker and writer. She teaches New Media Art at University of Arts Berlin and has recently participated in Documenta 12, Shanghai Biennial, and Rotterdam Film Festival.

09/09

e-flux journal #10 — november 2009 Hito Steyerl
In Defense of the Poor Image

1
Deconstructing Harry, directed by Woody Allen (1997).

2
"Wer Gemälde wirklich sehen will, geht ja schließlich auch ins Museum," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 14, 2007. Conversation between Harun Farocki and Alexander Horwath.

3
Sven Lütticken's excellent text "Viewing Copies: On the Mobility of Moving Images," in *e-flux journal*, no. 8 (May 2009), drew my attention to this aspect of poor images. See <http://e-flux.com/journal/view/75>.

4
Thanks to Kodwo Eshun for pointing this out.

5
Of course in some cases images with low resolution also appear in mainstream media environments (mainly news), where they are associated with urgency, immediacy, and catastrophe – and are extremely valuable. See Hito Steyerl, "Documentary Uncertainty," *A Prior* 15 (2007), <http://magazines.documenta.de/frontend/article.php?idLanguague=1&NrArticle=584>.

6
Hito Steyerl, "Politics of the Archive: Translations in Film," *Transversal* (March 2008), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0608/steyerl/en>.

7
From correspondence with the author via e-mail.

8
Julio García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," □trans. Julianne Burton, *Jump Cut*, no. 20 (1979): 24–26.

9
See Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

10
See Alex Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

11
See Félix Guattari, "Capital as the Integral of Power Formations," in *Soft Subversions* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 202.

12
All these developments are discussed in detail in an excellent text by Simon Sheikh, "Objects of Study or Commodification of Knowledge? Remarks on Artistic Research," *Art & Research* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2009), <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/sheikh.html>.

13

See also Alan Sekula, "Reading an Archive: Photography between Labour and Capital," in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, ed. Stuart Hall and Jessica Evans (London/New York: Routledge 1999), 181–192.

14
See Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*.

15
The Pirate Bay even seems to have tried acquiring the extraterritorial oil platform of Sealand in order to install its servers there. See Jan Libbenga, "The Pirate Bay plans to buy Sealand," *The Register*, January 12, 2007, http://www.theregister.co.uk/2007/01/12/pirate_bay_buys_island.

16
Dziga Vertov, "Kinopravda and Radiopravda," in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 52.

17
Vertov, "Kinopravda and Radiopravda," 52.

18
At least from the perspective of nostalgic delusion.

03 2008

Politics of the archive Translations in film

Hito Steyerl*VHS to .flv*

A closeup of a woman at a blackboard. She turns around to speak. But her mouth is not visible on screen. Clearly, this picture has been cropped on both sides. But why? And by whom?

Translating images into words.

This text deals with some aspects of the afterlife of two films. Both were shot in Yugoslavia. Both are famous partisan movies, called "Valter brani Sarajevo" (1972) and "Bitka na Neretvi" (1969). The film studio where "Valter brani Sarajevo" was shot was destroyed in the recent Bosnian War. But this film and the even more legendary "Bitka na Neretvi" live on. Their existence in cinemas belongs to the past, just like the country they were produced in. But they travel around the world as home videos, as DVDs or online. The afterlife, as Walter Benjamin once famously mentioned, is the realm of translation. This also applies to the afterlife of films. In this sense, this text deals with translation: with the transformations of two films, whose original prints were caught up in warfare, transformations which include transfer, editing, translation, digital compression, recombination and appropriation.

Memory

I came across the incomplete picture of the woman teacher, when doing research for a film of mine. I saw it on a cinema screen in the Sarajevo film museum, where the print is screened once a year – in order to be ventilated

and thus preserved, as the projectionist explained. Because I wanted to use this picture in my film, I tried to find a more complete version of it. But during the research, it turned out that the image as such was no longer the point. It started to give answers to questions nobody had ever asked in the first place. Questions like: what is an archive? What is an original version of a film? What is the impact of digital technologies on translation? And what constituencies are created within the digital limbo of globalized media networks?

The further I got with my research, the clearer it became that the cropping of this image wasn't just a simple mistake or misfortune. It had been cropped because specific forces had been tearing at it and had pushed part of it into an hors-champ, which is defined by political and economic factors. Within the contradictory dynamics of globalization and postcommunism/postcolonialism, archives fragment and multiply, some become porous and leak, some bend and twist their contents. While some images are being destroyed for good, others can never be deleted again.

35mm, color positive.

The image in question is from a take in the film "The Battle of Neretva", a famous Yugoslav partisan movie made in 1969, starring Orson Welles, Yul Brynner, Franco Nero as well as many famous Yugoslav actors. It tells the story of a legendary battle on the river Neretva in Bosnia during WWII. Partisans fought against a combination of German, Italian and Croatian fascists as well as against Serbian nationalists. The female teacher appears near the beginning of the film, as part of a very short scene inside a school located in the liberated territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina. She turns around to her students to spell out the words she had written on the blackboard; the word "AVNOJ" (Antifašističko V(ij)eće Narodnog Oslobođenja Jugoslavije), meaning the antifascist people's liberation committees founded in the Yugoslavia of the early 40s. The intended meaning of this sequence might be: children are being educated in the spirit of socialism and antifascism. But then again, the scene also raises questions about teaching how to read and write as such. What does literacy mean? Does it mean to imprint meanings on other minds or to provide tools for the creation of new meanings?

National Culture

Obviously, many ideals of modernism are condensed within this short sequence: the hope for education, progress, equality, as well as its inherent authoritarianism, and its top-down idea of enlightenment. But most importantly, children are learning to read and to write within a specific framework whose acronym is AVNOJ. We are left in no doubt about the political framework of this education. To educate in common means building a common literacy and, more often than not, a common nation.

Classical cinema is a slightly different institution. It has been rooted within both the national framework of the Westphalian order and international Fordist cultural industries. It still is closely tied to notions of national culture, cultural memory, the construction of a collective imagination, of a patrimony and its preservation as well as to discussions around cultural imperialism and hegemony. The distribution of cinema prints is tightly controlled; it is expensive and prints require an extended institutional framework. Copyright is heavily enforced. Thus, transfer of a film into a different format might also mean transforming this underlying framework.

35mm to VHS.

So why are both sides of the image cut off? The answer is simple. The people working at the Sarajevo film museum made this VHS print on their own. They simply pointed a VHS camera in 3:4 format at a projection which

was in widescreen format. As a result, both sides of the screen were cropped. The reason is the rather dramatic lack of funds for this institution in a post-war situation of rampant privatization. Proper equipment for professional transfers is not available. The cropping of the image refers to this economical and political scarcity, to the situation of a state within so-called transition. The original state has been cropped just like the letters spelling its name on the blackboard. The original word *Jugoslavije*, written in chalk, has been reduced to ...*slavije*, the words liberation and antifascist are hardly legible. The cropping of the image thus refers to a political cropping that replaced the unfulfilled values of modernism with particularist practices.

Archive

The film museum as video rental store: this situation expresses the state of an institution that is supposed to preserve the cultural heritage of a nation, as well as the state of this nation itself. Usually, an archive, like a film museum, is supposed to create "faithful" reproductions of its material: that is, reproductions that are as identical as possible. Keeping the control over reproduction is the basis of the power condensed within archives. As Jacques Derrida has argued, the word "archive" is derived from the Greek *Arkheion*, a house, or the residence of the superior magistrates.^[1] Documents are kept in the houses of the powerful. The archive more often than not preserves the history of the victors, while presenting it as historical reality or scientific truth. The archive is a realist machine, a body of power and knowledge, and it sustains itself by repetition. More precisely, the authority of traditional archives controls and regulates the reproduction of their items. Of course, this means that there are criteria of how to reproduce those objects "faithfully", according to specific rules. In the audiovisual area especially, property rights are supposed to be reproduced as well. Repetition within the archive is controlled by different logics of power and of knowledge, most often enforced both by the nation-state and capital interests.

Repetition

But nowadays, the function of the archive has become more complicated, for the most diverse reasons, ranging from digital reproduction technologies to the mere fact that some nations simply cease to exist and their archives are destroyed and collapse. Temporarily, this was the case with the Sarajevo film museum, which was heavily damaged during the war of the 90s. On the other hand, new national archives appear on the scene. In addition to the film museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo, there is now also a Bosnian-Serbian film museum in Pale. Heritages are dispersed and recollected, though in different combinations. Not only are the archives themselves being transformed, but some of their content is being repeated differently as well. To put it more precisely: the repetition on which the archives' authority rests is being transformed. Cracks and fissures open up between the various types of control exercised by nation or capital, because nations and capital are themselves profoundly transformed by the forces of postcommunist and postcolonial situations as well as by deep neoliberalization. The repetition of the objects in the archive is no longer identical, it doesn't repeat the same under the same name or ownership. The repetition is no longer faithful, but treacherous, displaced, distorted, expropriated or plainly different. This reminds us of the different types of repetitions, which Gilles Deleuze described in his work *Difference and Repetition*^[2]. He argued that several types of repetition are possible. To summarize it very briefly: the repetition of the same, the repetition of the similar and the repetition of the new, which either mask or unmask difference within repetition. Now if, in the case of contemporary archives, we can talk about different types of repetition taking place, this is due to very specific political, technological and economical situations, which combine digital technologies of reproduction with processes of violent globalization.

VHS: NTSC

Let's come back to the picture of the teacher in "Battle of Neretva". Given the incomplete state of my VHS tape, I went on line to find another, more professional home-video version of the film. In recent years, DVDs and VHS home video copies can be easily bought from Amazon and other retailers. The precise point for the explosive proliferation of private prints is paradoxically the slow death of the VHS format. Because of the introduction of DVDs, lots of VHS rental stores simply sold their old stocks on line, which not only introduced a huge slump in prices, but in fact created a market in which more and more private copies began to be distributed. A few years ago, it would have been very difficult to track down a home-video copy of a film like "Battle of Neretva" in Berlin. But now it was very simple to get an American version of "Neretva" on VHS, which was sent to me within two weeks.

Cut

But the scene I was looking for wasn't in the video. I couldn't believe it and looked through it several times. Eventually, I realised it was not included in this version. Indeed this version is 70 minutes shorter than the 175-minute original. Even if it had been there, it would still have been in a 4:3 format. The teacher would still have said her lines off frame, but this time they would have been dubbed in English.

Video 2000

There was one other video tape on sale, which was a German Version and 145 minutes long. But this tape was very difficult to play back since its format is Video 2000, which only existed from 1979 to 1986. Thus, one could only view "Battle of Neretva" for seven years in this specific format, and one would probably have to go to a technical museum now if one wanted to play back this video. So I don't know whether it contains the complete picture of the teacher on the blackboard. I just know that she would have been speaking German.

Dubbing

In the meantime I got suspicious because it occurred to me that the German version might not correspond to the cinema print either, and I retrieved following details about the film's length from IMDb (internet movie database) and various online shops:

Original: 175 min / Serbia: 165 min / Croatia 145 min / Germany:142 min / Italy:134 and 147 min / Spain: 116 min / USA:127 and 102 min / Russia: 78 min

This means that, in all of these countries, different versions of the film are being distributed. The movie thus exploded into countless versions of itself, adapted to ever new national imaginations. A user even commented that one had to see all the different DVD versions and learn German, Italian and Spanish in order to get the most complete version of the film, which seemed to exist only in between its versions like a lost Adamic language. Even within the post-Yugoslav countries, several versions are in circulation. An online comment specified that the Serbian DVD version was ~160 minutes long and consisted of a significantly different cut from any other DVD or video releases.

The film had not only been shortened, but also radically transformed during its multiple dubs. It had not been repeated identically while being squeezed through global digital connections and the dubbing lines of international video industries. It has been remade, refashioned, re-edited so as to conform to specific national tastes or different consumer groups.

Repetition II

According to Deleuze, apart from the repetition of the same, which is based on habit, there is also another form of repetition that repeats not the same but the similar by repeating the things that have never been. This form of repetition displaces the original; it repeats but with a difference. It creates memory, which relates to a present that has never been present. In memory, events are repeated that never existed before like in national memory, which is always based on a fiction. If we apply these statements to the abrupt and violent political and economic effects of nation, capital and technology on "Battle of Neretva", it becomes obvious that the archive has lost its original power of identical preservation. Instead, the power of the new archives consists in twisting and modifying the film according to different interests, and in producing derivative versions for specific markets, thus formatting its audience and reinforcing or even creating different constituencies.

Subtitles

I finally found the picture of the female teacher. It was included in a very interesting post-Yugoslav DVD release, which contains four national versions of the movie: Serbian, Slovenian, Bosnian and Croatian. Although it features a slightly shortened version of the film, the image of the teacher was there – in all four versions, each of them marked with a small national flag. So I found her not only once but four times. Surprisingly, her scene turned out to be absolutely identical in three out of the four versions. Only the Slovenian version was subtitled, all other versions were the same – no subtitles, no difference in length or anything else. This means that when it came to this scene, three out of four different national versions were absolutely the same, except for the fact that only the Serbian and Slovenian version were licensed. The others were pirated. It wasn't the language that had been fragmented, but the markets for intellectual property.

Accordingly, all parts of the film, in which the local language was spoken, were identical in all three versions. Only the parts that featured other languages like German showed minimal differences within the subtitling. So when I finally found the complete image of the teacher, she had split into four different versions of herself – three of those were the same, except that one was licensed and two pirated.

One could say that the multiplication of the image of the teacher refers to the contemporary multiplication of educational systems in Bosnia, according to so-called ethnic and religious differences. Nowadays, segregated schools are very common in Bosnia. The European Union even encourages this type of education because it complies with its policies of diversity. The result is the creation of new divisions, which are presented as original traditions. The image of the teacher is no longer cropped but it is cloned to produce new national echoes of itself.

H.264

But the "Battle of Neretva" has also moved beyond home-video releases. Digital files of the film are expropriated, circulated in different formats like Flash or Quicktime and distributed for free. On You Tube, the further dismantling and remixing of the film takes place, most notably in the works of a certain Yugomix, who has in some parts made it black and white in order to match historical shots of partisans. In this case, the original material is distorted, rearranged; it is incomplete, it is neither reproduced nor repeated faithfully. Issues like copyright, intellectual property, national heritage, cultural memory are affected by this transformation, as well as traditional notions of patrimony, genealogy, ownership.

Retranslation

One example: Nowadays half of You Tube clips of another famous partisan film "Valter brani Sarajevo" (1972) are extracted from DVD releases dubbed in Chinese. Although the only video available in Europe is an old battered VHS in the original language, "Valter..." became a huge box office hit in China, when it was exported there in the 80s. Apparently it is still being screened every New Year's Eve on national television. It was so popular, that a special Chinese beer brand has been named after Valter. One can currently also download the whole film for free on a very popular torrent client. This version of the film is again strongly modified. An individual user has combined the image of a Chinese DVD with the sound of the old Yugoslav VHS. It is a retranslation into a language that now lacks a specific name. This person has simply assumed control over the different versions of the film and, by spreading it for free, has temporarily suspended its commodity status.

Copyright

One might be tempted to conclude with Deleuze that these online platforms are the place where the third form of repetition, the repetition of the new takes place. The films break free of the confines of nation and capital, which are trying to control the repetition and reproduction of these films. Their distribution negates ownership and copyright, since it apparently takes place, as Deleuze wrote in characterizing the nature of the repetition of the new, in the mode of theft and the gift.

But obviously, this would not only be naïve but simply wrong. On the new digital platforms, the forces of nation and capital are in full swing, as evidenced by the different lawsuits against You Tube, the different commercial operations around it, the struggle over copyright issues and so on. In the case of Piratebay, a torrent platform distributing all sorts of pirated material without any pretensions to censorship whatsoever, the issue is even more clearly outlined. Its servers were confiscated in May 2006, after strong pressure by the US government on the Swedish government. Absurd details of this raid include the broadcasting of the surveillance videotapes of the raid on You Tube, a hacker attack in retaliation on Swedish police servers and the surprising discovery that Piratebay had been technically and financially supported by a well-known Swedish rightwing populist.

So within these platforms, largely deregulated and quite disordered archives catering to volatile and heterogenous peer groups, the clash between different forces and interests is still going on but is simply displaced onto a new battlefield. Those archives are not based on exclusion and faithful repetition like the traditional ones, rather on inclusion and invisibility.

Ripping

These archives are closely connected to yet another form of repetition and reproduction, which is called "ripping". Repetition or reproduction is being shortened to ripping. To "rip off" means to tear, to steal, to cheat, but to "rip" is a technical term used for copying files into another file format, also often removing copy inhibition in the process. It means to copy more or less identical content while removing the ownership restrictions and references to the original source or genealogy of distribution. So while some archives are based on repetition and reproduction, those new archives are based on ripping, tearing, stealing, on the possibility both to recover every image and to delete it permanently.

Literacy

Recently Zhang Xian Min from the Beijing Film Academy, told me that a Chinese remake of "Valter defends Sarajevo" has already been underway for a long time. It had been delayed, first because of the Bosnian War, and then because the Chinese producers were unsatisfied with the way post-war Sarajevo looked. Now shooting is supposed to take place in the Ukraine, where the exterior settings of Sarajevo will be rebuilt.

In the Chinese posters of "Valter..." the city's name, written in Latin, has also been slightly altered to spell *Salarewo*. While this is the faithful transcription of the correct Chinese translation of Sarajevo, questions remain. According to Jon Solomon, it is highly unlikely that translators wouldn't have known the original Latin spelling of Sarajevo. For him, this creative spelling is rather reminiscent of the spelling on fake branded goods or pirated DVDs. Although it is a perfect clone of the original (except for dubbing in Mandarin Chinese), it transmits the message: Relax, it's just a fake.

Again, the politics of intellectual property intersect with national imaginaries, which appear differently depending on perspective. Seen from the devastated film studio in Sarajevo, where destroyed film rolls litter the landscape, it seems as if Valter, the fictitious character created there made a successful escape and even managed to increase his fame in exile. But one wonders whether Valter hasn't in fact become a mercenary, like so many ex-Yugoslav veterans, who have become much-valued experts within global theatres of war. Has he become a mercenary of the imagination, travelling around the world, intervening in less than stable nations, haunted by the prospect of partition and disintegration?

[1] Jacques Derrida, *Archive fever: A Freudian impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1996. S VIII.

[2] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, translated by Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press 1994.

Digital Publishing, Unzipped

[Paul Soulellis](#) | Wed Mar 18th, 2015 noon

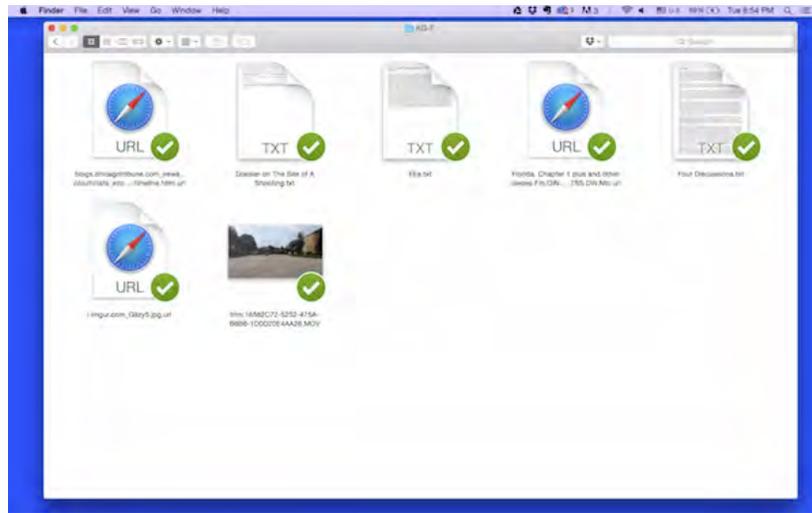


Kristen Gallagher's latest work has been published as a ZIP file.

This shouldn't surprise anyone familiar with [GaussPDF](#), the publisher who hosts her [Dossier on the Site of a Shooting \(GPDF154\)](#). The PDF in GaussPDF actually stands for Probability Distribution Function ("[masquerading as its Adobe-laced counterpart](#)"), and aside from the expected PDF "books" of experimental writing and poetry, the full catalog contains MP3s, Word docs, MOV files, ZIPs, and links to print-on-demand versions. All of the digital files are dispersed freely.

Still, in the context of artists publishing screen-based works, Gallagher's format seems radical. The title offers a clue of what's to come: a dossier is "[a collection of papers or other sources, containing detailed information about a particular person or subject](#)." In this case, Gallagher's subject is the site of the murder of Trayvon Martin in Central Florida and the trial of George Zimmerman, his killer, that followed. Gallagher visited the area on multiple occasions, wandering, encountering, engaging, collecting. She investigated the event through the place, gathering ephemera and stories along the way.

On its own, there's nothing surprising about a ZIP file. [The format was created in 1989](#) by Phil Katz to package files; now, it's standard on most operating systems. An image of a zipper usually appears on a ZIP's icon, signaling that there is stuff inside. The process of making a ZIP compresses multiple files into a single one, reduced in size, so that a large collection can be quickly contained and circulated ("zip!"). Naturally, it's a useful tool in digital publishing: epub, one of the standard publishing formats for ebooks, packages ZIPs that contain HTML files. In other words, ebooks are archives of archives, but these nested containers remain totally hidden from our view when we experience an ebook.

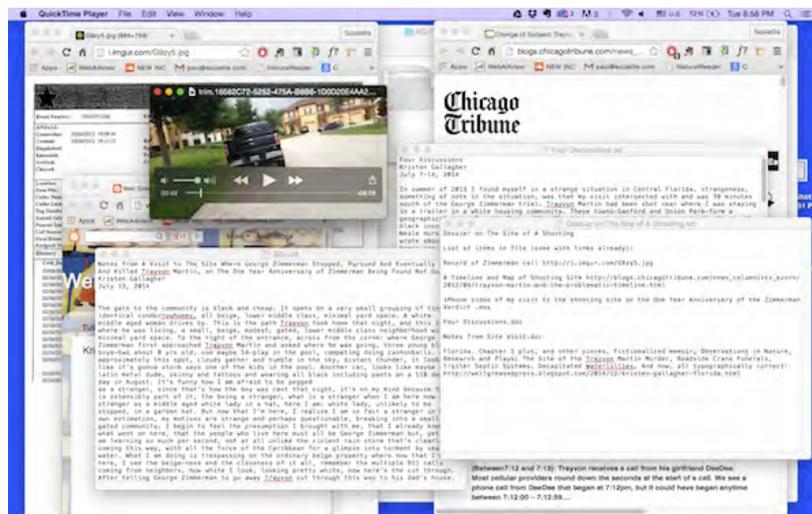


Gallagher's ZIP file

Not so with *Dossier on the Site of a Shooting*. Gallagher rejects this enveloping ebook container and publishes her work directly as a collection of individual files. Once downloaded, her ZIP expands into a folder that contains seven items: three .txt files, three .url files and a .mov. One of the .txt files is named "Dossier on The Site of A Shooting.txt" and it functions like a table of contents, or a title page, or a front cover or a back cover of a book. It's all of these but none of them, because the codex is barely present in Gallagher's work.

When I first encountered *Dossier*, I opened all of the files and spread them out evenly on my desktop. I read her stories, opened the web pages and played the iPhone movie. I wandered through her files, rearranged them, closed and then re-opened them. My desktop became an active, unique performance of her work, one that resembles a kind of research or browsing, or even Gallagher's own investigation; I shadowed her movements in some way, just as she traced a path through the other, more familiar events. I physically performed the dossier — moving, dragging, watching, engaging with Gallagher's material in a relational way. Reading.

Gallagher's piece "reads" like a *dérive* through a haunted crime scene, at times poignant, but my own interest is in its performative quality as a publishing event. In confronting her own understanding of the perplexing series of events, she challenges our own expectations—what to call it, what form to give it, how to disperse it. She turns the ebook inside out.

Kristen Gallagher, *Dossier on the Site of a Shooting* (GPDF154), 2015

"The hybrid space of the contemporary page"¹ is one way to characterize the state of digital publishing today. The phrase looks in two directions; first, it supports the idea of conditions in flux (hybridity). But it does so within a conventional context: "the page."

Artists who publish ebooks often rely uncritically on traditional notions of the codex when creating work. Two-sided pages bound along one edge and other conventions inherited from the printed book—absorbed and now standardized within the walled gardens of the eBooks and Kindle stores—have burdened artists with restrictions, design limitations and closed formats. So why would an artist choose to publish an ebook on a proprietary platform today? The only reason may be commercial; after all, "ebooks are just dumb webpages,"² but "websites are not perceived as products to buy," and

artists can get at least some money for their digital work through these platforms. And why bother, when ["there is already an entire industry—video games—devoted to innovating the interactive narrative."](#)

The closer we look, the more we might question what "book" even means in this context. Digital culture is made up of ["practices, not objects"](#); files have no meaning unless they can be "performed" in the appropriate computer system. The digital book is not an object, but a practice.

Gallagher points us in the right direction. Her *Dossier* suggests a more uncertain situation, flickering between book/folder and performance/object. It must be unzipped, performed, in order to be accessed. The ZIP marks a kind of join where the seam between two sets of practices was fixed in place—on one side, the author's research and gathering of material, and on the other, the reader's subsequent exploration of it. This hybrid space—where material/digital, open/proprietary, private/circulating and fixed/flowing conditions are in flux—is where we might tease open an expanded notion of digital publishing, one that moves far beyond the ebook.

Notes

[1] David Senior, MoMA Library, reading from *Full Color (Karel Martens)* at Printed Matter Digital Publishing panel, NYU, 2/6/15.

[2] Paul Chan, at Printed Matter panel, 2/6/15.

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Divining the Question: An Unscientific Methodology for the Collection of Warm Data

If tomorrow you found yourself with no passport and no birth certificate, and someone came up to you and said, "You no longer have the right to be an American," what story, object, image or document would you offer as your proof?

With this question begins the story of *Points of Proof*, a video, photography, postcard and public dialogue project originally commissioned for the inauguration of the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, Michigan (2005), later expanded online thanks to a Longwood Digital Matrix commission (2006), and finally re-produced in Buffalo during a two-year community-based residency facilitated by CEPA and funded by the Mid-Atlantic Foundation (2007-09). The following essay about the issues and ideas behind the project was written for Viralnet in 2006 and updated for this reader; the excerpts are from postcards filled out or mailed by viewers in Detroit, NYC, LA and Buffalo from 2005-09; and the photographs are from *Points of Proof: Buffalo* as exhibited in *Conversation Pieces*.

When the AANM invited me to make a community-based project in Dearborn in March of 2005, I was in the second year of an ongoing, open-ended, collaborative project about the human cost of immigration policy, which has grown in the form of several nested and linked collections of what I call "warm" data, known collectively as the *Disappeared* project. *Points of Proof* emerged both in response to the specific conditions of that place and moment, and as a special case among the warm databases of the *Disappeared* project.

I first began thinking about the idea of warm data at the end of 2001, when I started following the cases of the "special interest" detainees – 760 men who were picked up by the INS on immigration violations just after 9/11/01, identified by the FBI as being of "special interest" in relation to 9/11, and then disappeared into the secret files, courts, and cells erased from the public eye by a Department of Justice blanket gag order, which prevented anyone connected with their cases from even speaking their names for much of the next three years. When the Special Registration program was introduced in the following year, I watched as immigrant men from "terror watch list" countries came forward to wait in long, cold lines for days, only to be asked long lists of dehumanizing questions, then often remanded to custody overnight and asked those same questions again, and again, before being detained or deported away from their families. I read the 1996 immigration laws, the Patriot Act, reports and legal briefs, and discovered the traps built by the language of the law: reactions that become terms that become classifications that enclose and exclude. I found the post-9/11 documents full of absences -- redactions, erasures, censorship -- that were paralleled by the absences visible in every immigrant community in the city, as midnight raids spread from neighborhood to neighborhood. I visited detention centers and followed the news on immigrant rights listservs. Each time I read a new story of disappearance I thought: *This could have been us – my brother, my father, my mother, me. If I had been born earlier, in Afghanistan. If we had emigrated later, when political asylum became a decision hanging on the word of one airport customs officer.* And I wondered: would it be possible for someone who had never come so close to being in our precarious position to make the same empathetic leap?

In the fall of 2003, I moved my studio into the Woolworth Building, thanks to a Lower Manhattan Cultural Council residency to develop a project about the disappeared. From the window of my studio, which itself had been gutted and left vacant after 9/11, I could see Ground Zero and the de- and re-constructions that surrounded it. Most of Manhattan was taken up with the debate over what, exactly, could be built in the footprint of the towers. In my studio, I had pinned up on the wall a copy of the list of special interest detainees, which was for many months the only document of their existence. I was worrying over the question of how to fill in those blank black spaces where first their names, and then their real lives and family ties, had been erased. How could I “give a face” to this issue, as immigrant rights advocates were telling me was necessary, when I wasn’t allowed to see or speak to the people I wanted to portray? The impossible trick would have to be creating a portrait of someone that would restore their humanity while maintaining their all-important anonymity -- whether legally mandated, as in the case of the special interest detainees, or dictated by fear of social stigma or losing status, in the cases of many other former detainees and deportees.

The answer I arrived at was the idea of the warm data questionnaire: a series of questions designed so that each set of responses creates a unique and highly individual dataset – a data description of a person -- which at the same time lacks the identifying details that would usually link it to a real person. A warm data body is a portrait, not a profile; when a warm data body is erased, the real body remains intact. Warm data is easiest to define in opposition to what it is not: warm data is the opposite of cold, hard facts. Warm data is subjective; it cannot be proved or disproved, and it can never be held against you in a court of law. Warm data is specific and personal, never abstract. Warm databases are public, not secret. However, warm data can only be collected voluntarily, not by force; the respondent always has a choice – whether to answer at all, which questions to answer, on what terms she will answer, and what degree of anonymity she wishes to preserve. A warm database is distinguished from a corporate or government database not primarily by its interface or its underlying structure, but by the way its data is collected. There are two parts to the collection process: designing, or really divining, the right questions to ask; and creating the correct conditions for answering. The latter task usually entails creating a condition of trust between questioner and respondent, so that the question becomes an invitation rather than an invasion. I’ve found that the necessary trust can be created by working within a community, borrowing the bona fides of an institution, or using communication networks as anonymizers.

The process of designing a warm data question is somewhat more complex. For me, the process begins with research (into a community, issue, or idea), then a variable period of mulling over the materials unearthed by research, and finally some writing. During the writing phase, questions sometimes seem to emerge from thin air, but I suspect that they are really generated by a combination of intuition and that empathetic imagination I mentioned earlier. I also like to road-test questions on friends and/or community activists before I structure a project around those questions. For example, when I designed the warm data questionnaire for *How Do You See the Disappeared? A Warm Database*, a web project commissioned by Turbulence in 2004, I began by talking to a human rights lawyer who had debriefed some of the special interest detainees just before they were deported. He described for me some of the questions that they were asked repeatedly during their interrogations. I found a group at the Riverside Church that went on weekly visits to asylum seekers being held at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Queens, and I started riding along with them to find out what kind of

conversations people who had been isolated from their families and culture might be interested in having. Then I did some further research online and with immigrant rights activists in New York, which led me to develop a list of all the questions that were asked during Special Registration and read about some of the statistical outcomes for immigrants relative to the different responses they gave. I took a few weeks to think about those questions, and then I sat down one day, thought about the questions that I would want someone to ask me if I were in detention for two years, thought about what questions the government would never ask me in that situation, and wrote a list. Then I invited both people who had been affected by detention and deportation, and people who wanted to fill out the questionnaire in solidarity, to answer the questions.

A few of those first warm data questions:

Who was the first person you ever fell in love with?

What place do you see when you close your eyes at night?

Describe an offhand remark that someone once made to you that you've never been able to forget:

What piece of music is always running through your head?

What is the one birthday present you always wanted and never received?

In 2005, I took another question from the *Disappeared* warm data questionnaire, and adapted it to generate the project that became *Points of Proof*, repurposing it in response to that specific moment and place. That spring the REAL ID Act was being debated in Congress, the media, and the many other arenas of the immigrant rights struggle. As I drove between the museum's construction site in Dearborn, the most concentrated Arab community in the United States, and Detroit, still one of the most racially divided cities in the country, the bitter debate over this and other increasingly draconian pieces of immigration legislation rang in my ears. REAL ID, which strips illegal and temporarily legal immigrants of the right to a U.S. driver's license and sets new, near-impossible standards of proof and credibility for asylum claims, was passed just before the exhibition opened in May. The question posed by *Points of Proof* thus reflects the situation in which ever larger numbers of American immigrants find themselves by asking viewers and interviewees to reduce their American identities to a single point of proof – points being the system used by a number of state DMV bureaus to rate different documents for their effectiveness as proof of identity.

The question at the heart of *Points of Proof* is successful because it demands specific responses, but ensures that they will be subjective and variable; it engages both memory and imagination; it immediately provokes the questioned to either confrontation or consideration; and it sets no standards for wrong or right answers, implicitly questioning the whole notion of proof. The question can be asked and answered in a video, on a sound recording, in a captioned photograph, on a postcard, in person, or through the web (at kabul-reconstructions.net/proof). To make the first version of *Points of Proof*, I taped interviews with 30 new and longtime Americans in urban Detroit and suburban Dearborn. The resulting video interweaves the surprising and complicated conversations started by this single question, throwing into relief the subjective nature of identity and the difficulty of pinning the constantly shifting idea of America within strictly national borders. The question of proof quickly raises other questions -- Is geography destiny? Does culture extend beyond citizenship? Is proof finally a question of faith and belief or does it depend on the material evidence at hand? -- whose answers are equally contested and complex. The project was re-produced with a similar structure in Buffalo, where I recorded video interviews with several different groups of residents

between 2007 and 2009, including SEIU1199 union members and students and teachers in the ESL program at Grover Cleveland High School. Many of the Buffalo participants brought some (actual or symbolic) physical "proof" to the interviews; these are depicted and described in the accompanying series of photographs, formatted as mounted panels of captioned Polaroids.

Since the initial six-month run of the AANM show, the project has been further extended by a series of postcards filled or mailed to my home by *Proof* viewers, which have allowed the audience to add their answers to the warm database generated by *Points of Proof's* question. When and wherever the project is exhibited, more postcard responses accumulate, sometimes arriving in my mailbox months after a show ends. Given free (anonymous and unmoderated) rein, these postcard texts range from bitter to idealistic, pithy to verbose, serious to hilarious. The success of *Points of Proof* is that few of the 150-odd people who have answered to date have repeated each others' answers, and almost all have engaged with the hypothetical scenario posed by its question. So for a few moments, at least, you who have answered have imagined yourselves in our place.

Mariam Ghani // March 06 / November 09

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The Real ID Act

[http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d109:h.r.00418:](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d109:h.r.00418)

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Points of Proof: Detroit

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Points of Proof: excerpts from postcard responses 2005-07

I wouldn't need to give proof because I already know I am!

I am an American just because I happen to have lived here for 37 years.

I would say that I was born in America, so I am part American. Just a little.

I chose to be an American.

I am American because I left my country to improve my life and my kids' lives.

Both of my parents struggled in hope of a better life. Isn't that supposed to be the American Dream?

The Native Americans are the real Americans and *I* would say go back to *your* country.

I would give them my Osage Nation tribal membership card.

The vial of red dirt and rose rock I keep with me to remind me of my home in Oklahoma.

An impulsive tattoo I got at a biker rally.

My lawyer's business card.

A picture of a Red Indian.

My ancestors who fought in the Revolutionary War to create the United States.

The blood, sweat and tears of my African ancestors who were brought to this country on slave ships.

My slave heritage is proof that I am American, brought against my will but happy now.

95-101066... That's my inmate number, when I had to do time for this country.

My college tuition – the price I have to pay for my education, while my father is unemployed.

The heartache of my grandmother over watching me turn up my nose to Jamaican food.

My subscription to the American way of life ...

Sure, I can prove it. Here's how: (1) I eat junk food; (2) I'm addicted to bad TV; (3) I love SUVs. Hey ... and I'm proud of all this.

THE CUSTODIANS

How the Whitney is transforming the art of museum conservation.

BY BEN LERNER

Walk south on Manhattan's High Line toward the Whitney Museum of American Art: international tourists with their selfie sticks, sunbathers on the wooden benches in various stages of undress. The power of the High Line—abandoned railway tracks repurposed as a popular park—is that it feels at once triumphant and post-apocalyptic. Grass grows over the rails, trees among the trestles; it's almost as if nature had reclaimed the infrastructure of a civilization wiped out by an unspecified disaster. I feel as if I were wandering through a composite, the rails peeking through the C.G.I. And the elevation itself is eerie, an acknowledgment of rising seas.

The park now terminates in a great ship: Renzo Piano's nine-story Whitney building, one of many architectural nods to the largely vanished industries on which the surrounding neighborhood once depended. (Piano was born into a family of Genoan builders; his Astrup Fearnely Museum, on the water in Oslo, resembles a giant glass sail.) The Whitney was, in fact, erected with flooding in mind. Hurricane Sandy struck early in the construction process, leading Piano to adjust the museum's design; the steel frame is built to bend, not break, whenever the next storm arrives. I can't help thinking of it as the Noah's Ark of American Art. *You are to bring into the ark two of every kind of painting, two works of every school . . .*

I enter through the museum's glass façade—the lobby is crowded, but the lines move quickly—and take one of the elevators to the fifth floor. The walls of the elevator are panelled with mirrors; half of the occupants are filming their reflections as we ascend. I've come to see a sculpture entitled "Cost of Living (Aleyda)," by Josh Kline, one of a series, for which Kline, who is thirty-six, interviewed janitorial workers and then used 3-D-printing technology to create sculptural assemblages based on scans of their bodies. The physical work consists of a janitor's cart, to which L.E.D. lights have been taped, and on which are several objects, printed in plaster and cyanoacrylate: brushes, sponges, a bottle of cleaning fluid. Also on the cart are two 3-D prints of the digitally imaged head of "Aleyda," a housekeeper at

Josh Kline's 3-D-printed objects, such as "Cost of Living (Aleyda)," above, are not intended to last. The sculpture stages a confrontation between the culture of museum conservation and the culture of the disposable prototype.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC HELGAS FOR THE NEW YORKER

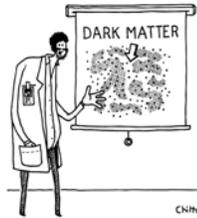


the Hotel on Rivington, along with a print of her hand, enclosed in a plastic glove, and of her foot, in a sock and shoe. The surface of one of the heads shows Aleyda's face; the other has been replaced by the label from a bottle of Stain-X. Her body is not only segmented; it is becoming another cleaning product.

Standing before the sculpture, I think of how it has long been fashionable in the art world to speak of "dematerialization": the dematerialization of labor in our so-called information-based economy, the dematerialization of the art object in conceptual practice. To confront the severed head and fragmented body of a janitor in a museum space is a discomfiting reminder of the undocumented (in more than one sense) material labor from which such discourses can help distract us. Somebody is still making the hardware from which you upload data to the cloud; somebody is still scrubbing the toilets at the museum that hosts your symposium on Internet art.

"We're quietly confident that it smells of cinnamon."

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More subtly, "Cost of Living" could be said to pun on the museum as "custodian" of art works. Kline's 3-D objects are not intended to last. There is what he calls a "resolution gap" between the digital files and current 3-D-printing technology, meaning that printers capable of matching the resolution of his scans don't yet exist. At a certain point—five years or fifty, it's hard to

say—technology will improve, enabling the scans to be realized in full detail. But part of the conceptual content of the work is, will have been, the process of switching out the objects over time. Kline is reversing the traditional temporality of the "original" art work: what comes first are copies; the real work will arrive in the future. None of this complexity is indicated in the placard beside Kline's sculpture in the current show; the museum doesn't know how to represent it yet.

How does the museum determine when to reprint the objects? And, once you start replicating parts, when is the work no longer the work? These and other questions are the domain of the Whitney's replication committee, a little-known but increasingly crucial body within the museum. The committee is, as far as I know, the only one of its kind. Founded in 2008, it is composed of fourteen people—conservators, curators, archivists, a lawyer, and a registrar. The committee convenes to determine when a work of art, or a part of a work of art, cannot be fixed or restored in the traditional ways—when and how it must, instead, be replicated. These discussions result in recommendations that affect the way art works are maintained, classified, and described in exhibitions.

As I leave the building, I find myself thinking of the ship of Theseus, king of Athens. According to Plutarch, the ship

Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same.

If it isn't the same ship—if restoration has crossed into replication—which piece of timber was decisive? And where does the identity of an art work reside if it will be fully realized only in the future, plank by printed plank?

At the head of the replication committee is Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, who also leads the Whitney's conservation department. (It had no conservation department before her—why, some wondered, would a museum of recent American art need such a thing?) In 1968, two years after the Arno flooded Florence, Mancusi-Ungaro was a first-year graduate student in art history at N.Y.U. When she saw a show at the Met featuring damaged Florentine frescoes, her interests turned from the study of periods and styles to the material fate of art objects in time.

Mancusi-Ungaro left N.Y.U. with a master's degree and moved with her then husband to New Haven, where he was a medical student. A former professor put her in touch with Andrew Petryn, the chief conservator at the Yale Art Gallery, who took her on as an apprentice. (She still has no official credential as a conservator.) For five years, she was in the workshop with Petryn almost every day. She supplemented her apprenticeship with a Yale course in organic chemistry to advance her understanding of paints and solvents.

Petryn, who died in 2013, remains a controversial figure in the field of conservation. In the nineteen-fifties and sixties, he undertook the restoration of Yale's collection of early Italian paintings. Or, rather, he undertook their de-restoration: advocating a purism then popular among some conservators, he decided to remove previous restoration, leaving, or aspiring to leave, only the hand of the artist. And the hand of time: what conservators call "losses"—lacunae, expanses of bare wood—overwhelmed the original images. By the time Petryn retired, in the mid-eighties, many considered the state of the Yale collection to be a scandal. (The current director of the Yale Art Gallery, Jock Reynolds, has described Petryn's tenure as a time of "aggressive over-cleaning.") Attitudes in the field had shifted toward a more aesthetically oriented approach, in which conservators disguise losses, with the goal of enabling the work to be experienced as a picture, not just as an archeological artifact. In the nineties, Yale sent some of its Italian collection to the Getty Museum to be re-restored, undoing what Petryn had undone.

I asked Mancusi-Ungaro about Petryn during one of my first visits to the Whitney

conservation studios. “I understand the opposition to his work, but I’m grateful for the rigor of his teaching,” she told me. He tasked her with making from scratch every black pigment listed in “Il Libro dell’Arte,” a Renaissance treatise. “To make ‘vine black,’ I had to use young tendrils from grapevines,” she recalled. “I got them from my Italian grandmother’s relatives. To make ‘ivory black,’ I gathered some discarded shards of ivory from a keyboard factory in Ivoryton, Connecticut.”

A stereomicroscope with a digital SLR camera; jars of dry pigments; and an Optivisor magnifier in the conservation department of the Whitney Museum.



The conservation department, on the sixth floor of the new Whitney, occupies more than three thousand square feet, about six times as much space as in the old building. In the department’s main studio, where Mancusi-Ungaro and I talked, a wall of windows faces north, offering stunning views and steady, diffuse light of the kind painters have coveted for centuries. The space is open and airy, despite giant fume extractors that snake down from the ceiling; they keep the air breathable when conservators are working with solvents. Mancusi-Ungaro showed me a Rothko painting that was, she said, “exhibiting some unexplained, inconsistent coloration.” Matt Skopek, a painting conservator, was examining the canvas with an infrared camera, looking for evidence of damage and traces of prior interventions. “It might be that Rothko himself restored this, and did a poor job,” Mancusi-Ungaro explained. In that case, conservators would improve on the artist’s attempt to play conservator, protecting the artist’s hand from the artist’s other hand, so to speak. But they were also studying other Rothkos to make sure they weren’t misinterpreting his intentions. If the inconsistent coloration was an aesthetic decision, their priority would be to preserve it, not undo it.

My attention was drawn away from the Rothko by a painting I found vaguely familiar. It was Barkley Hendricks’s “Steve,” a full-length portrait of a man wearing a white suit and mirrored sunglasses, in which the windows of Hendricks’s studio—and, if you look closely, part of Hendricks’s head—are reflected. Mancusi-Ungaro reminded me that it had been on a 2009 cover of *Artforum*, which is probably why I recognized it. But that cover had been cropped. In the painting, there are yellow patches on the glossy white suit, probably due, Skopek told me, to a previous restorer’s application of a glue that was originally clear but had yellowed with time. Skopek had been cleaning the surface with a scalpel—“I work with the scalpels used in eye surgery; they’re more precise”—and was preparing to reinforce an area of the back of the canvas with acupuncture needles, selected for their mixture of strength and flexibility.

Talking about undoing previous restoration led us back to Petryn. His approach was part of a long history of “cleaning controversies,” as conservators call them. (That Kline’s sculptures involve cleaning products helps position them, perhaps

unintentionally, in relation to the conservation practices that his work subverts.)
Such disputes are as old as Pliny, who claimed that a painting by Aristides of Thebes was ruined by whoever tried to clean it up for the Games of Apollo. These debates are fundamentally about temporality: should we celebrate the patina of time or what's beneath it?

"This is an opportunity to simplify your life—don't blow it."

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In "The Lamp of Memory," written in 1848, John Ruskin, a pioneer of what has been called the "anti-restoration movement," argued that buildings and objects must be left to decline, even die—that the "greatest glory of a building . . . is in its Age." He wrote that restoration "means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a

destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed." The French architect and theorist Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc—who, beginning in 1845, oversaw the restoration of Notre-Dame—represented the opposing view. He advocated reconstructing lost components of a building in order to "reestablish it in a finished state, which may in fact never have actually existed at any given time."

These days, conservators tend to seek a middle ground between Ruskin's position, which risks fetishizing damage, and Viollet-le-Duc's, which risks the Disneyfication of the historical record. In certain instances, the conservator will protect an image's over-all compositional effect while also seeking to acknowledge the newness, the falseness, of what she has done. Such strategies can be traced to Cesare Brandi, a twentieth-century Italian art historian and critic, who developed a method called *tratteggio*, in which the restorer fills in lacunae with a series of small lines. From a distance, the lacunae recede, allowing the viewer to experience a pictorial unity; upon closer inspection, the addition declares a loss. *Tratteggio* is just one such technique—alterations can also be signalled by a slightly recessed surface, a flatter color, or a subtle line drawn around a restored area. The guiding ethos of conservators is "reversibility"—making sure that the future has the right to a different vision of the past.

T*ratteggio* might work on a Renaissance fresco, but what is the equivalent for an abstract painting, let alone a work of conceptual art? How much time has to pass before its passage might be worth preserving? Medieval and Renaissance painters working within a guild system had firsthand knowledge of their pigments, what was likely to last and what wouldn't. By the nineteen-fifties, American artists often used cheap, mass-produced materials that weren't intended to endure—at least, not across centuries. Postwar artists didn't go to the art-supply store, Mancusi-Ungaro has said; they went to the hardware store.

For many modern and contemporary artists, ephemerality is part of the point. Dieter Roth, to take just one example, didn't cover his canvases with yogurt for the

sake of durability, they were built to biodegrade. Picasso and Braque told friends that they would rather let their canvases deteriorate than have them varnished, which they felt would ruin the subtle texturing of the surfaces. For a long time, their preference was disregarded. (According to the art historian John Richardson, a postwar public raised on glossy reproductions found the varnished look familiar; original paintings, he suggests, were being “restored” to resemble their color-plate copies.) Conceptual and performance artists—in part as a protest against the commodification of art objects—sought to dispense with material art works altogether (although such happenings were then preserved for the future through collectible documentation). “Art history only begins after the death of the work,” Duchamp once said; for him, to conserve was to embalm.

In 1976, Mancusi-Ungaro moved to Los Angeles, where she took a job at the Getty Museum. “I don’t know why they hired me, exactly,” she said. “This was when the Getty was still in a villa in Malibu and didn’t have the money it has now. But I loved California. I was eating avocados off the trees for lunch.” A year and a half later, she moved to Ohio and took a position at the Intermuseum Conservation Association, then situated at Oberlin. In 1982, she was recruited to be the chief conservator at the Menil collection, in Houston, where she stayed for nearly twenty years, undertaking major restorations of works by Cy Twombly, Barnett Newman, and Jackson Pollock, among others. “With the exception of one canvas by Joan Miró, I’d never conserved a work of modern art before I came to the Menil,” Mancusi-Ungaro told me. “I was excited by the immediacy of it—how I was often the first person restoring a canvas, as opposed to dealing with a century of past restorations. And I loved, whenever possible, consulting with the artists themselves.”

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro is the head of the replication committee. “We’re not trying to influence the work,” she said. “We want the artist to be heard.”

In 1964, Mark Rothko painted two black-form triptychs (black rectangles on a plum-colored ground) for the Menil Chapel. The paintings were finished in 1967 and installed in 1971. Shortly thereafter, the paint began to whiten, and a mysterious crystalline pattern spread across the surface. This wasn’t Rothko’s hand or the hand of time; it was the material’s instability in the chapel’s humid conditions. Removing the disturbance became one of Mancusi-Ungaro’s chief preoccupations during her time at the Menil.



She and her team could have simply remade the Rothko paintings—after all, assistants had helped to paint them in the first place—but Mancusi-Ungaro wasn’t

going to pursue replication. Although Rothko may not have physically painted every inch, he orchestrated the brushwork of his assistants in a way that asserted his authorship," she told me. Rothko committed suicide in 1970, but she tracked down one of the assistants, Ray Kelly, and asked how Rothko's colors had been prepared. The blacks, velvety and matte, were made fresh every morning by mixing (in unrecorded proportions) oil paint, turpentine, damar resin, and whole egg. Mancusi-Ungaro, working with scientists at Shell, painstakingly simulated this process and eventually determined that the egg was causing the white film on the paintings' surface. She and her collaborators developed a fast-evaporating solvent mixture that could remove the whitening. It was, deliberately, a superficial intervention. The discoloration has not recurred, but if it does the treatment can be repeated indefinitely without damaging the work.

Mancusi-Ungaro's frustration that she couldn't consult with Rothko during the restoration process led her, in 1991, to start the Artist Documentation Program, a series of interviews with artists about their "materials, working techniques, and intent for conservation of their works." The interviews are both illuminating and a little eerie, because they are essentially living wills. (She plans to conduct such an interview with Kline.)

In the absence of explicit and complete instructions—that is, most of the time—conservation is fundamentally an interpretive act. After Rothko's death, many critics described (or dismissed) his late, dark works as monochromatic dead ends, evidence of his despair. But Mancusi-Ungaro felt that the subtle contrasts between the plum-colored borders, which are painted with pigments dissolved in rabbit-skin glue, and the black expanses represented a more complex range of aesthetic and emotional concerns. "These paintings aren't about darkness," Mancusi-Ungaro told me. "They're about light—about reflectance." Her interpretation helped to change critical attitudes about Rothko's later work. A less exacting conservator ("ivory black"; "vine black"), or a conservator blinded by the common view (black works; bleak time), might have missed this element of the Rothkos, and likely destroyed it.

Talking about Rothko with Mancusi-Ungaro, I was struck, not for the first time, by how the work of a conservator can re-sacralize the original art object. Had Mancusi-Ungaro and her team replicated the Rothko murals, I'm not sure that I would have been able to tell. An awareness of her labor, however, invests those particular surfaces with a powerful charge. The care the paintings inspired feels like evidence of their importance, as if it were not just a cleaning but a veneration (an effect amplified by the fact that the surfaces are in a chapel, no matter how modern). Conservation can help produce—not just protect—the aura of the original.

In 2001, Mancusi-Ungaro was offered two jobs simultaneously: the Whitney wanted her to start a department of conservation, and Harvard wanted her to establish a center for the study of modern and contemporary artists' materials.

She felt that the Whitney had great art but limited research resources, and that Harvard had great research resources but a less expansive collection of modern art. So she took both positions at once, serving as a bridge between the two institutions.

"I suspect a challenger from the right. Let's slaughter everyone on the right."

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Mancusi-Ungaro's final project at Harvard—as of last year, she's been at the Whitney exclusively—also involved Rothko. In both its boldness and its cautiousness, it typifies Mancusi-Ungaro's voice as a conservator. In 1962, five large mural paintings by Rothko, ranging from light pink to deep purple, were displayed in Harvard's Holyoke Center. A decade of exposure to sunlight had destroyed the original coloration: some areas were washed out, others faded to blue. The compromised canvases were determined to be beyond repair and moved to storage.

In 2007, Mancusi-Ungaro helped form a team to study the murals. The team developed a series of colored-light projections that, when thrown against the canvases, would return the works to their original colors. It was a radical, digital *tratteggio*. Last year, the enhanced canvases were displayed publicly for the first time; the effect was of the miraculous and instantaneous resurrection of the paintings. (At least, according to those who saw the exhibit. It was closed by the time I learned about it—the light projections stored digitally, the canvases in a climate-controlled facility.) Yet the projections are a little larger than the canvases, and the projector makes noise, breaking the spell. Bold: we're no longer looking at paintings but at a multimedia installation. Cautious: this might be the most fully reversible restoration in history.

Does this light projection differ in kind, or only in degree, from a gallery controlling its lighting conditions? The Harvard team insists on the specificity of the interaction between the damaged canvases and the light display, but surely that's a technical "problem" that could eventually be overcome. What if the projections alone could produce the same optical effects? Then the "Harvard Murals" could be displayed anywhere in the world, or in multiple places at once, and the paintings themselves could be discarded. This is not replacing the wooden planks of Theseus' ship(s) with new wooden planks; it is changing media, pigment for projection. Mancusi-Ungaro's work at the Rothko Chapel is centripetal, focussing on the object; her experiment at Harvard is centrifugal, spinning away from the actual.

The room on the seventh floor of the Whitney where the replication committee interviewed Kline about "Cost of Living (Aleyda)"—the Frances Mulhall Achilles Library—has a huge bank of sloped windows facing the Hudson River. When I was told we'd be meeting in the

Achilles' Library, I remembered how the Greek hero would have been immortal, wouldn't have had a vulnerable heel, if his mother had fully varnished him in the River Styx. But when I arrived at the library I was put in mind of more recent mythology: the architecture recalled the observation deck of the U.S.S. Enterprise in "Star Trek: The Next Generation," a show that I watched late in the last millennium in my childhood home, in Topeka. On the Enterprise, you asked the computer's "replicator" when you wanted something to eat or drink and it materialized before you—no alien workers necessary.

As I sat watching a plane trailing a banner that read "Happy Birthday Dalai Lama" above the sparkling water, I thought about the Prime Directive, from "Star Trek": Starfleet officers may not interfere with the development of alien civilizations. This imperative has a kind of Petryn-like absolutism about it, and many "Star Trek" episodes revolve around the moral quandaries that arise as a result. Conservators also strive to avoid interference—conservation is not supposed to affect creation—and yet, as Mancusi-Ungaro and the other Whitney "officers" prepared to interview Kline, I was struck by how contact between the museum and the artist inevitably changes the art it would conserve. The questions, however neutrally posed, compel the artist to make decisions about what is permitted and what isn't, decisions that then become part of the work's conceptual content.

Kline arrived at the meeting flanked by two fabricators from N.Y.U.'s Advanced Media Studio, who oversee the printing of his sculptures. Mancusi-Ungaro introduced everyone and asked Kline if he'd like to say a few words about "Cost of Living." Kline said that the digital files contain the still unrealized, the still unrealizable, scans, and that "there is nothing precious about the current prints." Everyone nodded politely.

"Michael self-published his novel and then bought up his own film rights."

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There was a pause during which the only sound was a curatorial assistant taking notes by hand. (I thought it was strange that a meeting about archives and cutting-edge technologies was not itself digitally recorded.) Then came a barrage of questions:

"Can and should the Whitney retain old prints as part of the archive?" Farris

Wahbeh, an archivist, asked. "And what about old file formats of the scans as software changes?" Kline deferred to the museum to make a decision.

"Can individual components of the assemblage be reprinted?" Margo Delidow, a sculpture conservator, asked. Delidow was interested in immediate issues of material care. (I later heard her say, "If I can bump into it, I have to conserve it.") "Is the kind of tape holding the L.E.D. lights significant?" she asked Kline. If so, is it the color of the tape that matters, or the make, or the level of adhesiveness? Kline said that the color temperature of the lights was important, and that he preferred

Dana Miller, a curator and the director of the Whitney's permanent collection, had concerns that were both philosophical and practical. "If there's a show in, say, China, do we need to ship these objects, or can they just be reprinted there? If they can be reprinted and not shipped, could the same work be shown in two locations at once?"

Mancusi-Ungaro remained focussed on fundamental issues. "How much does the printing technology need to improve—or how much do these prints need to degrade—in order to trigger reprinting?" Kline said that he hadn't established clear thresholds, and that he would need to reassess over time. Nobody brought up the fact that these questions might outlive him.

Kline is a thoughtful artist, and he was frank about what he hadn't yet determined. The goal of the Whitney's staff was to honor his intentions with the greatest degree of exactitude possible. But, precisely because of the thoroughness and intelligence of their queries, I felt that I was watching conservation shade into collaboration. This didn't bother me at all, but Mancusi-Ungaro clearly didn't like the word "collaboration" when I brought it up in a later conversation. "We're not trying to influence the work," she said. "These decisions will have to be made at some point, and we want the artist to be heard."

But why not embrace conservation as collaboration? The Whitney was founded to focus on living artists, to experiment with new media—to be, as Mancusi-Ungaro put it in another conversation, "unencumbered by traditional structures." To boldly go where no conservator has gone before.

In an unpublished lecture that Mancusi-Ungaro gave at N.Y.U.'s Institute of Fine Arts, in 2011, she described how conservators of modern art are increasingly confronted with the problem of the "elusive original." "Traditionally, scientific analysis has been able to distinguish authenticity by the nature and age of materials," she said. But what is the status of the "original" when the artist's hand wasn't directly involved in the fabrication of the work?

The Whitney acquired Claes Oldenburg's "Ice Bag Scale C" in 1972. Many Oldenburg sculptures present everyday objects on a monumental scale, and "Ice Bag" is—well, an ice bag, the kind people once used for headaches. Oldenburg worked with a TV-production company to build the sculpture, which is eleven feet high and more than thirteen feet in diameter. Inside is a combination of custom-made and commercially available materials, including three motors and six fans designed to make the bag move more or less at random—to make it seem alive.

"Sorry. We don't need anyone at the It's hard not to joke about Oldenburg giving

MARCH 16, 2009

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the Whitney a headache. According to an academic paper detailing its exhibition history, “‘Ice Bag’ never functioned for longer than a few days at a time, and, even then, it performed only part of its intended motion. Throughout its exhibition history, ‘Ice Bag’ had broken gears, exuded noxious fumes, leaked oil, ripped its own fabric exterior, growled, squeaked, and set itself on fire.” It is described in museum archives in psychological terms: the sculpture is reported to be “moody” at one point, “suicidal” at another.

In 2009, the Whitney decided to restore “Ice Bag.” The conservator Eleonora Nagy, who oversaw the effort, had little information about the sculpture’s original construction; she told me that she “had to restore it in order to figure out what it was.” The acrylic lacquer on the cap of the ice bag was refinished by an autobody expert who works on vintage cars. The sculpture’s exterior fabric was discolored, brittle, permanently creased. The team searched everywhere for the same fabric (18404 Black Aluminum buff-free neoprene-coated nylon, for the record) and found a perfect match in every way but one: the color was close but not identical. The Whitney asked Oldenburg if he would approve the change in color, and he did.

But Nagy decided to repair the internal mechanisms whenever possible, rather than replace them. She and Mancusi-Ungaro hired experts of various sorts—a guitar maker, an electrician, a robotics engineer—to fix most of the original motors and wiring. The replication committee ultimately determined that “Ice Bag” had been conserved, not replicated—that the sculpture remained original—because, although the exterior was replaced or repainted, most of the internal parts were maintained. This allows the museum to continue to exhibit the work as “Ice Bag Scale C,” not as a version of “Ice Bag Scale C.”

Oldenburg made his name, in part, by mocking art-world pretension, and yet the Whitney treated his sculpture with an attention that would have been appropriate for a religious icon. It would have been easier to jettison the original motors and wiring and replace them with a new system. The bag would have moved as intended; the change would have been imperceptible. Why are the mechanical guts worth preserving? I don’t believe that they have a patina, or that they show the artist’s hand—they are invisible, after all, and Oldenburg outsourced most of that labor. Furthermore, if the eccentricity of the original machine was valuable, isn’t something lost when it actually works? The replication committee here approaches the contradictory logic of Viollet-le-Duc, attempting to “reestablish” that “which may in fact never have actually existed at any given time.”

The replication committee assumes that replication should be avoided whenever possible. But Josh Kline’s work makes it impractical to privilege

rehabilitation over replication. *Cost of Living (Aleyda)* stages a confrontation between the culture of museum conservation and the culture of the disposable prototype.

A few weeks after the session with Kline, I attended an official meeting of the replication committee. Mancusi-Ungaro opened the discussion about “Cost of Living (Aleyda)” by saying, “This work represents an emerging category of object.”

Dana Miller agreed. “Plenty of works in our collection involve a split between a file and an output”—any film or digital work does. And many works might require partial refabrication (re-creating, for example, the nylon exterior of “Ice Bag”). But with Kline’s sculpture, Miller said, “we have no ‘correct’ physical work to match new iterations against.”

“Fine. Sit there and check your messages. Perhaps it will give you something to contribute to the conversation.”



The discussion circled back repeatedly to a central question about Kline’s project: “What is the medium?” This is both a deep philosophical query and, for an archivist registering works or a lawyer defining them in contracts, an urgently practical one. The committee thinks of Kline as a maker of objects, but much of the making has been deferred into the future. Listening to the committee’s discussion, however, I increasingly felt that Kline’s medium, rather

than digital files or 3-D prints, is museum conservation itself. And it’s a rich medium. At a time when so many artists outsource fabrication, Mancusi-Ungaro and her peers are conservators of skill: they know a material’s chemical composition, its reflectance levels, its history of usage (and if they don’t know they’ll find out). In an era when many critics speak of the rise of curation as art—when artists arrange objects as often as they make them—conservation is deeply curatorial, as conservators choose which aspects of a work are presented and how. To treat conservation as it has traditionally been treated—as the behind-the-scenes work of minimally invasive technocrats, bursting onstage every few decades during a cleaning controversy and then receding into the shadows—is to exclude essential questions about culture and value from the domain of contemporary art.

What will be the new *tratteggio*? I don’t mean a technique for covering losses in new media. I mean a strategy for acknowledging the hand of the institution in the life of the work—a way of showing when and how and why the museum has altered what it displays. In the Whitney’s recently concluded inaugural exhibition, the museum label describing “Cost of Living (Aleyda)” was somewhere between insufficient and misleading. It said that the objects on the cart were made by 3-D printing, but it said nothing about the planned obsolescence of those particular objects; it did not indicate that the work remains unfinished, awaiting more

advanced printers. (Curators, as if granting Duchamp's pessimism about conservation, call museum labels "tombstones.") This placard is a placeholder until Kline and the Whitney can settle on a more accurate description of the work. What's clear is that the traditional data—measurements, materials, even dates—will be inadequate.

These omissions seem particularly significant given that the sculpture was displayed in a gallery whose wall text described "a revolution in digital technologies" that has altered the production and consumption of images. The exhibition in which "Cost of Living (Aleyda)" was included was called "America Is Hard to See." Kline's work is, indeed, hard to see—one could argue that, owing to the "resolution gap," you can't yet see it at all.

The vast conservation spaces in the new Whitney are visible from outside the building—from the High Line, from the street—as if to announce that the institution will no longer treat conservation as marginal. "Everybody who walks in here feels that this space is an endorsement of the importance of conservation," Mancusi-Ungaro told me during my last visit. To me, it feels like the bridge of the ship. And I admire the mixture of openness and expertise that I hear in the committee's conversations. No single professional vocabulary—conservatorial, curatorial, legal, archival—is more important than another; nobody pretends that the questions that are encountered can be answered impartially or finally.

We stood on her office's outdoor deck overlooking the Hudson. I could see happy-hour drinkers atop the Standard hotel; I watched a blue tugboat push something, probably a trash barge, slowly upriver. As we discussed the sweep of her career, from Renaissance pigments to disposable 3-D prints, I registered how the replication committee had dissolved much of my initial skepticism about the Whitney—how the tone of the place had changed for me. Instead of seeing the new building as pure triumphalism, another "capital project" in a sinking city, I'd grown aware of a genuine exploratory current—a mixture of boldness and caution, strength and flexibility.

"When I grow up, I want to go into medicine and help people who can pay out of pocket."

JANUARY 23, 2012

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Recently, I've been walking around listening to Nina Simone's version of "Who Knows Where the Time Goes." The recording sounds particularly beautiful, because my headphones are staticky, a false patina that interacts well with the lyrics and the grain of Simone's voice. ("I do not count the time / for who knows where the time goes?")

Everywhere I look, I see development that's hard to differentiate from destruction: the proliferation of Chase Bank branches; the speakeasy storefronts bearing the commodified image of the Brooklyn that preceded the Brooklyn they're replacing, as if gentrification were restoration. I have

little right to lament, Ruskin-like, the passing of the old New York — In part of the gentrification it's fashionable for gentrifiers to lament, and one New York is always passing into another anyway. Meanwhile, ISIS continues to make its horrifying video art; I watched that video of men in Mosul destroying statues with sledgehammers while my Q train idled on the Manhattan Bridge. Oxford and Harvard archeologists are distributing thousands of 3-D cameras in Middle Eastern conflict zones, hoping to capture images that will allow them to replicate crucial artifacts once they are destroyed. In Kline's work, I discover (or at least I project) vulnerability as well as technophilia: rather than producing works that can be shattered or lost, he is sending blueprints into the future.

I wander through the Met, which will soon take over the Whitney's old location on the Upper East Side. I walk among the ancient sculptures that we leave fragmented and paintless even though we could try to restore the vivid polychromy they originally possessed. We refuse to undertake such restoration, however, because it would devastate the image of antiquity we've inherited from the Renaissance. I find that inconsistency somehow touching; I don't want these statues to look like the loudly painted figures of the miniature-golf courses of my youth, even if they did.

In my favorite nineteenth- and twentieth-century European-painting galleries, I see van Goghs (many of his paintings ruined, say some conservators, by wax lining) and Braques (many destroyed, supposedly, by varnish), and I wonder what to make of the fact that several of the defining aesthetic experiences of my life took place in front of canvases that were merely a "false description of the thing destroyed." At the moment, I find it enlivening rather than depressing. Spending time among the replicators has helped me become aware of what it's easy to acknowledge intellectually but more difficult to feel: that a piece of art is mortal; that it is the work of many hands, only some of which are coeval with the artist; that time is the medium of media; that one person's damage is another's patina; that the present's notion of its past and future are changeable fictions; that a museum is at sea. ♦

Ben Lerner is a 2015 MacArthur Fellow. His monograph, "The Hatred of Poetry," will be out this summer.

(1) Extreme freedom of expression – almost weird [sic]. (2) Practicallity [sic]. (3) Tolerance. (4) Misspelling!

I can't spell, so someone else had to write this for me. That makes me American!

My proof would be my poor skills at foreign languages.

When I am here in the US, I always complain; when I am away, I always brag!

My irreverence is what makes me American.

I'd use sarcasm. That's American, right?

I'd probably laugh.

I'd question his/her right not to have me punch them in the nose.

If this person were European American I would question right back their own right of being an American.

If anyone questioned my identity, I would be ambivalent and wonder about it, and then I would remember that the US is full of marginalized and subordinated histories.

My right has already been questioned – as a lesbian, I can't get married or adopt an American child.

I have been questioned, in that I was told "Why did you people come here?" (post-9/11/01). I reminded this group, first I was born here. Second the Constitution gives me this right. And third we "Americans" and all "American" ancestors *stole* this country from the natives of the Americas.

I would ask them what makes anyone "American"? The great thing about this country is its diversity. Nobody is any "more American" than anyone else. All of us make this country what it is.

Once we begin to tell people where they should go or belong, then where do you put multi-racial people? No one is 100% anything.

Anyone who uses prejudice against any group doesn't understand that this country was built on immigrants.

My place of residence is in America even though my ancestors are from other countries. We should embrace difference of backgrounds and ideals and that embrace is American.

Being open to so many cultures makes me a great American. Land of the free!

I understand what “Old Glory” (the flag) means, because I defended that flag when I was younger in the Marines.

Loyalty to ideas – not to people, not to flags.

America is not a country we live in; it’s ideals, values and beliefs that live in us.

What makes me American is treating others right and in a fair way.

Being open to a diversity of ideas that become part of my identity.

The way I think – how open my mind is.

My desire to maintain the freedom of speech – and especially the right to express unpopular ideas. When we stop *changing* and *challenging* ideas, we will be un-American.

The desire to get away.

Being really angry about American policies.

What makes me want to be not-American is the conduct of the US towards the Arab world. Many times I am unsure whether to claim my citizenship.

I would not call myself an American anymore because President Bush’s policies have made me question the right to call our country a free democracy.

When I think of “America” I think of segregation, internment camps and racism. If that is “American,” I’m not!

Being American is just another title.

I’m just a citizen of the world...

I live here. I carry this passport. But I am *human* – part of all humanity.

I *know* all I’ve been taught in public schools in Detroit – but I *feel* invisible strings to patches of land all over our globe – and a bit beyond ...

I can call myself an American because I recognize all of the rights and liberties I have (especially as a woman) and I don’t take them for granted. We are a young and imperfect country, but there is no place like home.



Without the documents, how do you prove that you are who you think you are? All the pictures I have are just records of my life - they don't really prove anything. Take this photograph - you can see me at age 6, in the Brownies. But it still doesn't prove that I'm an American. : Connie



My social security card, my I-94 card, my resident card - I carry them all with me wherever I go. So if anyone says that I'm not an American, I'm ready to show them the documents to prove that I am - any time, any place. : Fato



I would start with my Board of Elections card. I'm very proud of having the right to vote, and also to question our politicians when there are issues that I disagree on. I'm kind of known for doing that - for speaking my mind and writing letters. Strongly worded letters. : April



Through the years, I've met many people who don't understand that Puerto Ricans are American citizens, or who just assume that because we all speak Spanish, we're all the same. I've had encounters where someone said, "I'm going to call immigration on you," and I had to say, "Go ahead. What are they going to do? They'll come in and tell me I can be right where I am." I would just sit there thinking, what do I have to prove? If I say I'm Puerto Rican, that should be enough. : Vivian



I'm a product of the American culture. And it is a culture. But it's not stagnant - it's an evolving culture. That's probably the result of the free flow of ideas here - the way that we're able to think whatever we want to think, go where we want to go, pursue whatever we want to do with our lives. And we're free to celebrate our individual religions and traditions and cultures within that larger culture. : Vince



I would say that I'm a teacher in a public school in NY State, and that's already proof of citizenship. But the way I see it, becoming an American citizen is an obligation - for example, to work for the state. Really being American - well, most of us originally came from other parts of the world, so being American shouldn't require forgetting those roots. : Patricia

Interviews

Photography as Apparatus

Akram Zaatari in
conversation with
Anthony Downey

Photographs are affected by their means of production, reproduction and distribution. The social and political economy in which they circulate, in turn, imbricates the very fabric and content of a photograph. In this extensive conversation with Akram Zataari, these implications are explored and the ramifications for photography as an archival form are questioned. A member and co-founder of the Arab Image Foundation (AIF), a non-profit organisation established in Beirut in 1997, Zataari discusses the idea that the archival impulse has decontextualized original images by taking them out of their social and political economy, viewing the layers added to images through wear and tear as additions of meaning in the life of a photograph. The conflicting views of preservation versus archaeological, artistic, or anthropological imperatives are also discussed, within a dialogue that considers the changing nature of photography as a practice across the region and beyond.

Anthony Downey: I'm going to start with a question about *On Photography, People and Modern Times* (2010).¹ In your practice there seems to be a degree of scepticism about photography, a sense that perhaps photography is an inherently conservative medium that needs to become more aware of how it is involved in an economy of distribution and exchange. *On Photography, People*

and Modern Times seems to be as much about exploring precisely that economy rather than the fact of the photograph itself – would you agree with that view?



Akram Zaatari, *28 Nights and a Poem* (detail), 2006.
Courtesy of the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery.

Akram Zaatari: *On Photography, People and Modern Times* was meant to juxtapose two lives and two worlds that photographs in the collection of the Arab Image Foundation experienced: once in the hands of their original owners and once in the custody of the AIF. This is where the idea of two screens comes from. On one of them, you see people talking about their pictures while holding them, touching them, and on the other screen you see them handled with gloves by a conservator. In this work I raise for the first time some kind of critique on the narrow understanding of photograph preservation, which considers photographs as objects isolated from social and emotional ties.

I am indeed interested in the economy of the practice of photography but this interest comes out in different forms in other works, mainly through my work on the archive of Studio Shehrazade.² I am interested in what a picture of a certain size used to cost, and how the photographer secured a living, and when and how he excelled and how he worked on maximising his income. Economy in a studio is absolutely necessary to understand how photographs came to be what they are and how they are. It's the spine and the driving force behind the practice. It's why some studios stay open for more than sixty years, and sometimes a hundred years across several generations. Its continuity is secured with peoples' need to have their pictures taken. Economy is what makes a studio and ensures its continuity and without understanding the economy of taking pictures one's understanding of the archive of a

photographic studio will be restricted to historical, social, cultural and aesthetic references and will therefore always be partial.

However, my ill-feelings with photography are tied to my experience with the 'institution' of photography. By this, I mean the common understanding of what a photograph is. We forget that photographs existed for so many reasons in the twentieth century. They are descriptive documents, or records, and in so many instances they are only intermediate steps in a work process. The camera acted for a long time like a photocopy machine reproducing all sorts of documents, deeds, architectural plans, identification, and so on. More and more, the institutional understanding of photography wants to make out of every picture an authored text, which is a falsification of photography's history. By institutional understanding, I mean a market-conscious understanding.

Anthony Downey: What about the fact of the photograph itself?

What is a photograph? This is an essential question that still seeks an answer. It cannot be reduced to paper, emulsion and silver particles. A photograph is the shortest statement that one can live with and can try to understand and reflect upon. It cannot only be made with emulsion and paper. The photography institutions have failed to seize that photography is about a type of recording that enables us to later reproduce a set of emotions in very unpredictable ways. A photograph is still enigmatic even when we know everything about it. It will still be able to surprise us, to make us cry, over generations. When we are able to consider every recording capable of reproducing emotions as photographs, then we should be able to consider film, performance and any act of leaving a trace as photography.

It's really the glorification of every picture as an object, as a sacred object that needs to be preserved in a specific and generic way in a clinical environment, almost for eternity, that I question. I think one of the major changes that happened in my experience with the AIF, is that today scanning technology allows us to reproduce images for the sake of studying them or circulating them and sharing them with others. I don't think we need the originals, frankly, to do that. I think originals mean something else once they are in the original set-up in which they existed: in a closet, in a bedroom in which they were born, or in which they were kept, near the persons that loved them and cared for them, near the persons that recognized in them the faces of beloved family or friends. The preservation of a photograph as an artwork is different from the preservation of a photograph of a child kept by a mother, for example. The world of preservation as a scientific endeavour suits more works that have been announced as authored work (artworks), made specifically to be preserved

because they contain a statement produced in a certain form for the public so as to be seen and consumed by a general public, which therefore expects that kind of scientific preservation.



Akram Zaatari, *Bodybuilders*, Printed From A Damaged Negative Showing
From Left To Right: Hassan El Aakkad, Munir El Dada And Mahmoud El
Dimassy In Saida, 1948, 2011. Inkjet print. 180 x 145 cm. 70 7/8 x 57 1/8 in.

Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery

I do not mind that people damage their pictures. By damaging a picture that might be preserving something else that is not photographic and maybe in the realm of emotions that necessitates destroying a picture. This is also something that changed a lot within me since 1997; I think my attitudes to photographic preservation changed, because today I do not see a danger in photographs staying with their owners, if they prefer that. If you spill a little bit of hot tea on a picture you might damage the print, but you give the picture another layer of life. I like it when I see pictures that have been through life. I like it when children sometimes play with pictures and make holes in the eyes of people they dislike in a picture, for example. Pictures are elements in our lives and there shall be no canon that imposes behaviour blindly over the handling of photography, especially at home. From a generic preservation perspective, this is damage caused to a picture, but from the point of view of an archaeologist, artist, or anthropologist interested in the *life* of pictures, I think the picture acquires different meanings once it has been handled by people who relate to it and leave their marks on it.

AD: This is interesting, because when I said photography was a conservative medium, I think I was aiming towards this notion of the fetishization of the

original as problematic, because it enters into an economy of value which is capital-based, as you point out. But there seems to be also a sense that the archival impulse has decontextualized a lot of the original images – taken them out of their social and political economy and moved them into perhaps more of an archival/market economy?

AZ: It depends on how you look at the archive. I always argue that if you want to call the AIF an archive, it's an archive of the collecting practices that happened in the foundation from 1997 until this day, rather than an archive of photographic practices that come from different parts of the Arab world.

I think the foundation owns an authored collection because it's a collection that was created by a few people – artists – with a lot of subjectivities, with desires, and I do not call it an archive. If you want to call it an archive I'm fine with that, but it's the archive of collecting practices that needed an organization to exist and that made the foundation, so the AIF is a record of how a few artists have developed a collecting practice because they needed a platform, and it's that collecting practice that was exercised and which evolved within the foundation that led to this collection. I'm talking here about terminology.

AD: I think that distinction is valid one, because this seems to be less about an Archive – with a capital A – and more an archive of practice and collecting.

AZ: It adds to the precision of distinguishing different types of organizations withholding collections. A newspaper is an archive of press photographic practices, the AIF is not! Terminology helps us to view AIF in a more precise way. You mentioned something else, which is also very important: about taking pictures into a different economy, which is of course very true. Once you make art you are displacing things from around you into an art economy. This is inevitable; when you study anything, even as a scientist, you are doing the same. When you take a drop of blood from a cist and put it under a microscope, you are already doing that displacement, because your purpose is different. As someone studying a photograph, whether researcher or researcher/artist, your purpose is different from that of the photographer who took the pictures.

As a documentary filmmaker, working sometimes on heated subjects, I've come to realize that it's only possible to talk about conflicts once they cool down, once conflicts aren't conflicts anymore. Economically it's only possible to displace an artefact from one economy into another once the first economy has died already. In other terms, taking Hashem El Madani as an example, had the studio been an active studio today, had the economy of photography still been active today, Madani would not let me take one negative out of his archive. I

can only lead my excavation or my study of his study because his economy has died. So the death of his economy made my project possible, and part of the project's mission is to show pictures and narrate his practice. But it is also about finding new ways for pictures to exist in this world outside the small circle of family and friends and find a new economy for a photographer to benefit from.

Now Madani can live by allowing the displacement of his pictures into an art project where he is the photographer, the subject of my study. He is the subject of the study of an artist, an artist who is building over his archive some kind of documentary project in the art world. I am the artist. He is the photographer. He is the subject of my work. I start my work at the same place where he stopped his. This complicates the perception and reception of the project a little bit because there are two authors: the original author of the photograph, and the author of the artwork. There are two dates; on the one hand, the date when the photograph was taken, and the date when the artwork that used the photographs was created. It has become a project that sits on an existing archive, which uses that archive in order to understand choices that were made by this photographer and the attitudes that people had in front of this photographer.

AD: Two key ideas seem to emerge in relation to your practice: it tends to look at the apparatus of photographic method while equally considering this idea of 'excavating'. Could you talk a little bit more about this idea of excavating in relation to Hashem El Madani's studio, how you came to find that studio and what that process involved?

AZ: The Madani project started in 1999, so now it's been 15 years – it's amazing! When I encountered Madani I was, let's say, still trying to understand the landscape of photography around me. My intention was to collect a few pictures from his studio for a project I was doing about the vehicle, and the images of vehicles in photographs from the 50s particularly. So I used to look at his negatives and if I liked a few pictures I would discuss it with him; either he'd give me all of the contents of a 35mm roll to take to the AIF, or sometimes I'd cut a few frames, so I'd cut the negative roll in half or sometimes in a third, and I would take a third of a roll, because that's the scope with which I worked. And then a few years later I realized I was actually doing damage! The idea is not to take a few pictures out of this archive, but to keep that archive intact, intact with all the ties that exist within it, and all the links that exist in it. Every photographer has devised ways of looking into his archive, and very often this depends on the year of production. It is also dependent on how important his client is, how often a client orders pictures.

I'm interested in how Madani took decisions and led his practice: how he led his economy, what did he do to maximize economy, what he did to develop a signature that is different from other photographers working in town. So I wanted to have all the information possible about the practice of the job of taking pictures – what you call the apparatus. I was interested to know everything about that apparatus, and how it mixed with people's attitudes facing the camera, because also I don't think there is such thing as Arab photography or Lebanese photography or Egyptian photography. There's an economy that produced photographers alike all over the world. But what sometimes changed are the economics. Photographers who work in highly touristic places tend to produce pictures that are alike, whether at the pyramids in Cairo or whether it's in Jerusalem. So there are no identity issues here at stake in the making of a picture. It's all economy, and it's all a mode of production. This is what I'd call apparatus. Part of my interest in studying photography is to understand how this apparatus functions.

There are social layers of course – attitudes change. There are social attitudes as well, the most common in a socially conservative society being the veil. Photography is there to describe, but what if people do not want to be described; do not want to go public? Is there a conflict there or not? There are a lot of interesting anecdotes of women coming to a photographer and refusing to remove their veil, for example. And the photographer would say: why do you want me to take a picture of you hiding? Of course that happened a lot in the early days of photography, it took people some time to understand that it's inevitable to face this descriptive apparatus that is imposed by the state. When you have an ID you have to have your face on that ID.

It's an important event when people submitted to the power of the state, by accepting that even if a woman is veiled, once she goes to the photographer it's like going to a medical doctor, you have to uncover yourself. Some people preferred going to women photographers to take pictures, but sometimes women didn't mind going to a male photographer, whether accompanied by a brother or husband or alone, and uncovering their face for the photographer. What this meant, was that sometimes the apparatus was twisted by social attitudes, by norms, by traditions, and this is why sometimes you find specificities produced in certain cities or in certain social conditions.

AD: This seems to recontextualise the idea of economy as a performative element, a sense that photography is a performance, with public and private demands made upon it.

Akram Zaatari: Photography is indeed performed – we are talking about vernacular photography, in other terms we are talking about an apparatus where people come to the photographer wanting him to help them make a picture of themselves. It's this apparatus mixed with all those social attitudes that produced something almost unique in every city, but there's a common denominator for all of them, which is photography, the way it was promoted by Kodak, and every brand, through brochures, through knowledge, through photographers teaching each other. They all taught each other the same poses, the same tricks, and this is why photography in the 50s everywhere in the world looks almost the same. The differences are slight specificities of attitudes and economics.

AD: You've alighted upon something I think we should engage with now –that there's no such thing as Egyptian photography or Lebanese photography, with which I agree, but there seems to have been a change in attitude towards the photograph across the Middle East. I was just wondering if you had any thoughts on that: on the changing nature of photography as a practice across the region, and if there's anything specific that you have seen change during that time?

AZ: Of course, but it is not only about the move from analogue to digital. I think the first change happened with colour photography. The invention of colour photography took away from photographers and local studios half of their economy, because the income of the photographer was made with the actual taking of the picture, and another fragment of his income came from developing and printing those pictures. So once he had to delegate half of his work to a lab because photographers did not have the necessary equipment to develop colour negatives and to print in colour, they had to delegate this, subcontract it, so the lab ate half of their income, because the lab also wanted to make money doing this job. What they were left with is only the fragment of income that's about taking the picture and acting like a mediator between the lab and the customer. So that already killed half of their economy. Most photographers get very angry when you ask them about black and white and colour, and they praise black and white only because – in their minds – colour processing took away half of their income.

The second invention of course is digital photography, but I think before digital photography the abundance with which cameras – personal cameras – were produced and distributed, and how cheap they became in the 80s and 90s, made people go to photographers less and less. In the 90s already, before the spreading of digital photography, every house had one, two or three small film cameras – not digital, but analogue. So that already contributed to the decline

of the job of the photographer. Now with digital photography, everything is transformed, because you don't need to even print anymore. You consume your pictures on your telephone, on your computer screen and in various forms that are not printed.

AD: That's interesting – just to comment upon that: the aesthetic development from black and white to colour having a direct economic impact is quite interesting in and of itself, because what we have here is a clear correlation between an aesthetic and an economic practice.



Akram Zaatari, *Damaged Negatives: Scratched Portrait of Mrs. Baqari*, 2012.
Inkjet print. Made from 35mm scratched negative from the Hashem el Madani
archive. 180 x 120 cm. 70 7/8 x 47 1/4 in. Edition of 5 + 2AP.
Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery.

AD: I'd like to move the discussion to another associated element in your work and discuss the role of narrative and temporality. There seems to be a narrative development, a process that seems to be built around exploring different levels of time. Could you talk a little bit about that in relation to *In This House* (2005)? This was a work which, to my mind, looked at the apparatus involved in producing knowledge, producing imagery, and I'm wondering if you've thought of that in terms of narrative, in terms of telling a story, or indeed in terms of problematizing a narrative?

Akram Zaatari: *In This House* is on one hand an excavation – a literal excavation. When I say I take the whole archive of Hashem El Madani as a site for an excavation, I talk about it metaphorically. But in this film, *In This House*, all of a sudden I found myself looking for a document, trying to get hold of it, and at the same time doing an excavation, literally, in someone's garden. I had to hire a gardener to dig up a big hole as if I were really doing an archaeological excavation. This is why this image of a man digging has become emblematic of an aspect in my work: the excavation.

Another layer, maybe in the same work and in every work, is performance, because *In This House* as an idea – looking for that document – is a performance in living. It's an intervention in the life of a family somewhere in South Lebanon: you have a house and a garden, and all of sudden someone comes to you, knocks on your door and tells you: 'I have a story to tell you. Here is a letter left for you in your own garden and excuse me, please allow me to dig and deliver the letter to you!' This is exactly what happened. For me, it's a performance as much as it is about looking for a document or about the writing of history. At the end of the performance, the garden has changed, the family has changed; the family knows something it didn't know before I came to knock at the door. The garden is left without a document that earth carried for 11 years. So many things changed in that house after I did my work. Whether it ends up in a film or not is beside the point. I happened to have a camera with me to record everything; what I produced wasn't a film, but a performance that was recorded and made as a film a few years later.

This is also an aspect of my work that I'm trying to develop but also that I'm trying to understand. All of a sudden I see my work with Madani as an ongoing performance. It's an intervention in this photographer's work and life: a re-animation of his economy and a displacement of his practice. In the film *In This House*, this becomes very clear. Someone else could have made this film. I could have brought with me a filmmaker and he could have made this film and signed it, but the work as a performance would still be my work. I am the one who is challenging a certain history, looking for stories and documents in the past. I am the one who is interested in narrating past events, excavating documents, trying to bring them to light. My research work at the Arab Image Foundation in the period 1997-2000 was also to do something similar...



Akram Zaatar, *On Photography People and Modern Times*. Installation shots.
Credit Thierry Bal. Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery.

AD: You were talking earlier about resituating photographs back into their socio-political contexts and there seems to be something similar happening here in as much as you attempt to resituate or reposition that original note that was buried back into a context where it could be understood.

AZ: *In This House* aimed to deliver a letter written in 1991 by a former member of the Lebanese resistance, addressed to people that he did not know, people who had fled their house. He happened to have occupied their house with his military group for six years. He didn't know who they were. He wanted to leave them a note before withdrawing from the area in 1991, so he wrote a letter and he buried it in their garden. And he never returned to meet them.

AD: And this was Ali Hashisho?

AZ: Yes, exactly. And I came in 2002 after I met him, and after he told me that story, and I asked him: 'Ok, and where is the letter today?' He said: 'The letter should still there. I never went back to find it.'

AD: How did you meet him?

AZ: I was interested in the documents that people in my generation could have kept from the time of the Israeli invasion of 1982, and someone told me that this photographer – today Ali Hashisho is a press photographer – used to be in the Lebanese resistance, and had actively engaged in fighting the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon in the late 80s. So I thought I should meet him. I was sure he'd have stories to tell me. He told me many stories and at the end he said, 'yes this thing that I did maybe could be of interest to you.' From there on I got in touch with the family, following a map he had drawn for me, and I went looking for this object.



Akram Zaatari, *On Photography People and Modern Times*. Installation shots.
Credit Thierry Bal. Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery.

I was not sure I was going to find it; there was a big chance someone else could have dug in the garden, found it, and thrown it away without knowing there was a letter in it. After all, it's a remnant of ammunition, and the area was full of them in the 90s. I started my research and with this work I delivered a letter first, and then I contributed to the writing of some kind of history. It's a history that had dropped out completely from historical narratives about that period. Anyway, the story is a detail in the writing of history, but I'm interested in the details frankly more than the headlines. From that perspective, what I did here is not far from what I did with some of Madani's pictures in the old city in Saida, There, I gave

people back their pictures taken 40 or 50 years earlier. I took all the pictures taken of shops in certain locations – within the souk, the old market – and I looked for their locations and tried to negotiate with whoever was in that location to hang the picture in his shop. It was often a difficult but a really interesting negotiation, just for the fact of bringing a picture back to its place.

We refer to photography as ‘taking’ pictures when you actually click the button, so I thought it’s interesting to inverse that gesture and say let’s bring pictures back somewhere, and see what that would mean. In the same logic, I asked myself what would it be to reverse the act of excavating Ali Hashisho’s letter? The answer would be something like the *Time Capsule* (2012)³ that I did for DOCUMENTA (13): another excavation that aims to bury an object as opposed to take an object out. I realized that very often, I like to go on the same path in reverse directions.

AD: With *In the House* there’s a literal excavation, with *Time Capsule* there’s something buried. In both works there is this anachronism – something that’s out of time, something that’s not quite right, or not quite in its time. I wonder if the word ‘anachronism’ means much to you in terms of your practice, thinking about how this excavation and exploration of something is out of time, and that has been resituated in time?

AZ: Much of my work is made with time. Negatives are subject to erosion, so they’re made with dust, local fungus, and, in the case of Madani’s studio images, humidity in Saida. That’s what changed the bodies of the negatives, changed the emulsion and with that the look of the pictures, in a very unpredictable way.

I’m interested in what time produces, and this is why you find the word ‘time’ appears very often in my work: the *Time Capsule*, *The End of Time* (2012). I like to play with the idea of time because it’s a medium with which to produce work. Frankly, in a very simplified way, exposure time is time as well; the time with which we expose a negative, the time with which we expose a print under an enlarger, and the time it takes you to produce films. Film is time-based work: it is produced with time.

I started to reflect on longer time to produce work, and the time capsule that I did was inspired by the time capsule Ali Hashisho made spontaneously without calling it a time capsule. Yet, he produced it for time and with time. So when I excavated it, it was authored by Ali Hashisho and time. Then there was the time we needed for the Israelis to withdraw from Lebanon completely in 2000. It was

buried at in different times: when the Israelis were still occupying and the Lebanese secular resistance was still active. Time is capable of changing so many things; it will also change our understanding of documents coming from different times. This is why I'm saying time is an active element in the making of work.



Akram Zaatari, *Two Boys posing with Gevaert Film Advertisement*, 2007. Series of 6 silver prints. 22 x 15 cm. 8 5/8 x 5 7/8 in. Edition of 5 + 2AP. Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery.

AD: I wanted to take everything we've been talking about – the notion of apparatus, excavation, economies of meaning, this sense of repositioning the photograph within socio-political contexts – and I wanted to talk a little bit about *Letter to a Refusing Pilot* (2013)⁴ which was premiered in Venice in 2013. It seems to me that it's a culmination of many different ways in which you work as an artist. I was hoping you could talk a little bit more about it – how it came into place, what interested you in the story – because I know it was a very personal story to begin with. I also wanted to ask how that particular project unfolded over time.

AZ: The project is rooted in a rumour that spread in Saida in 1982 and reached my family a few months after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The rumour said that there's an Israeli pilot who refused to bomb the school that my father had

headed for a long time, the public school near Ain al-Helweh. This story stayed in the family, cousins know it, many people in Saida know it, but we all considered it a rumour. We didn't have a name for the pilot, we didn't have clear reasons why he refused, but it was a rumour that circulated.

I told that story once in a conversation with an Israeli documentary filmmaker, Avi Mograbi. In that performance, I was trying to describe what Israel is for me and talk about my encounters with the idea of Israel from the perspective of a child who lived through the Israeli occupation and who was fond of photography and film. I was also talking about what you do with this conflict when you're a documentary filmmaker, how you approach it; trying to unmake the baggage that comes with national constructions and look at borders from a different perspective, liberating myself from borders. And I told this story of the refusing pilot. Sternberg Press published the transcript of that performance in book form and more than a year after it was published I received an email from Seth Anziska. He said he'd done a lot of research on the Israeli-Lebanon wars, particularly 1982, and he wanted to meet me. When we met we talked for an hour, and at the end he said: 'I've interviewed this man. His name is Hagai Tamir, I can put you in touch with him if you want.'

I was shocked, I was really shocked – it felt like meeting Ali Hashisho for the first time. I thought: I have to do something about it. A few months later when I was invited to Venice, I said that's the only place where I want this story to be told. I wanted to say it under a national umbrella. I wanted to be the spokesperson of the Lebanon pavilion and to tell a human story, to tell a story of an encounter between two people that normally would not meet: one of them is in a military jet in the sky bombing the earth, and the other is a person on earth. So, I pursued and pursued until I met Ali Hashisho, talked to him, convinced him to allow me to talk about his story and to describe his pictures.

The film singles out an individual facing a war machine, an individual active in a war and who, at some point, said no. He said no because he faced an ethical question; he was sure the orders he received were illegal as the target was clearly a school or a hospital, so he exercised his right to refuse orders and the target was bombed by someone else later. Hagai studied architecture after leaving the army in 1973. So he could recognize that the building was not a military building. The school sits in the middle of a large housing project designed by French architect Michel Ecochard called the *Taamir Project* near Ain el-Helweh.

It's not important who bombed the school later as it's someone who simply executed orders. It's not important whether there was gunfire coming from around the school or not. What counts for me today is how to narrate such a story. I decided to use Albert Camus in my story, especially his 'Letters to A German Friend' because Camus spoke about choosing justice as a way of being faithful to the world. For me, it's a story of a pilot who chose justice and that turned him human. In the Israeli military, this is really an insignificant detail. But in the writing of history, it's not. Stories like these are the only stories that give hope in a region that is facing a dark future today.

¹ In Akram Zaatari's *Letter to a Refusing Pilot* (2013) the artist narrates, through the often uncanny filter of half-remembered events that blur of fact and fiction, an incident that did *not* occur during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Inspired in part by Albert Camus' essay 'Letters to a German Friend', Zaatari's video relates the tale of Israeli pilot Hagai Tamir who, in June 1982, found himself in a plane above the city of Saida – 40 kilometres south of Beirut – with orders to bomb a building he knew to be a school. Tamir disobeyed the command to bomb the school and the story of this pilot who refused remained a mythological one for many years until Zaatari, whose father had been director of the same school for 20 years, found out that the apparent fiction was indeed real. Using family photographs, one of which shows the artist as a child in the gardens of the school, video stills, re-enactments of certain events (the flying of paper planes from rooftops), and aerial photographs, Zaatari recreates a tale that attempts to give substance to the narratives of civil conflict that would appear to actively resist historical representation.

² *Hashem El Madani: Studio Practices* is part of a project by Akram Zaatari in which he carefully examines the photos taken by Lebanese studio photographer Hashem El Madani. The portraits were shot by Madani in his studio Shehrazade and in the surrounding urban area of Saida between 1953 and the 1970s. The studio situation gave Madani more leeway to catch people off guard in staged 'intimate' moments, and to create something of a 'collective physiognomy' of the city of Saida.

³ *Time Capsule* was a project commissioned by dOCUMENTA (13). At the break of the civil war in Lebanon in 1975, the National Museum in Beirut sealed most of its collections of archaeological objects and artefacts inside huge concrete blocks that remained onsite in the museum's main hall until the end of the war in 1991.

Inspired by this move, the *Time Capsule* project imagines scripts/models for radical preservation designed for the Arab Image Foundation in Beirut; models that consider non-scientific paradigms to rethink photograph preservation while recognizing the necessity of timely withdrawal of documents and artefacts at times of great risks.

⁴ In Akram Zaatari's *Letter to a Refusing Pilot* (2013) the artist narrates, through the often uncanny filter of half-remembered events that blur of fact and fiction, an incident that did *not* occur during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Inspired in part by Albert Camus' essay 'Letters to a German Friend', Zaatari's video relates the tale of Israeli pilot Hagai Tamir who, in June 1982, found himself in a plane above the city of Saida – 40 kilometres south of Beirut – with orders to bomb a building he knew to be a school. Tamir disobeyed the command to bomb the school and the story of this pilot who refused remained a mythological one for many years until Zaatari, whose father had been director of the same school for 20 years, found out that the apparent fiction was indeed real. Using family photographs, one of which shows the artist as a child in the gardens of the school, video stills, re-enactments of certain events (the flying of paper planes from rooftops), and aerial photographs, Zaatari recreates a tale that attempts to give substance to the narratives of civil conflict that would appear to actively resist historical representation.

About the author

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EMISFÉRICA



Time magazine, 2006

Save As

Diana Taylor | New York University

Abstract: The new digital era is obsessed with archives—as metaphor, as place, as system, and as logic of knowledge production, transmission, and preservation. Digital technologies constitute yet another system of transmission that is rapidly complicating western systems of knowledge, raising new issues around presence, temporality, space, embodiment, sociability, and memory (usually associated with what Taylor denominates the repertoire of embodied knowledge) and those of copyright, authority, history, and preservation (linked to the archive). As paradigms and practices shift in the storing and transmission of knowledge, we are getting glimpses into the range of implications—from the most practical (how and where do we store our materials if we want to preserve them?) to the most existential (does the epistemic change radically alter our subjectivity?). Are the changes qualitative or quantitative, she asks in her essay. Does the current shift resemble past ones (for example, the transition from an oral culture to print) or does the move towards digital technologies enact its own specific social and ethical presuppositions?

The digital raises new issues about memory and knowledge production and transmission in the so-called “era of the archive.” Technologies offer new futures for our pasts; the past and present are increasingly thought through in terms of future access and preservation. This temporal dislocation perfectly captures the moment in which we currently find ourselves in

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relation to digital technologies: the feeling of not being coterminous with our time; the belatedness and not-there-yet quality of the now. As my colleague Clay Shirky puts it, it's as if we once again inhabited the uncertainty of the early 1500s. Looking back at the Gutenberg era now, it is easy to describe the world before the invention of the printing press in the early 1400s, or after the spread of print culture in the late 1500s. But what about that long transition period when people knew where they had been but had no idea where they were headed?¹ That's where we find ourselves now—academics, artists, scientists, publishers, computer whizzes, designers, and economic forecasters alike.

The anxiety, however, cannot be limited to technology—to whether this or that system or platform will predominate. Neither can we attribute it to competing economic models brought into conflict by shifting consumer habits or to the struggles for control played out in many arenas from national interest to global markets. Rather we know from that earlier shift from embodied, oral cultures to print culture that what we know is radically altered by how we know it. While embodied cultures relied on the “now” of physical presence and relations, “being there” together for transmission, print made it possible to separate knower from known and transmit knowledge through letters, books, and other documents over broad stretches of time and space. In an earlier work I described these epistemic systems as the “repertoire” of embodied knowledge—the doing, repeating, and mimetic practices that are performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing (in short: all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge transferred from body to body), and the “archive” of supposedly lasting, stable objects such as books, documents, bones, photographs, and so on that theoretically resist change over time. While the ‘live’ nature of the repertoire confined to the ever changing ‘now’ has long lived under the sign of erasure, the archive constructed and safeguarded a “knowable” past that could be accessed over time.

The different systems provoke different ways of knowing and being in the world—the repertoire supports “embodied cognition,” collective thinking, and knowing in place, whereas archival culture favors rational, linear, and so called objective and universal thought and individualism.² The rise of memory and history, as differentiated categories, seems to stem from the embodied/ documented divide. But these are not static binaries, or a sequential pre/post, but active processes—two of several interrelated and coterminous systems that continually participate in the creation, storage and transmission of knowledge.

Digital technologies constitute yet another system of transmission that is rapidly complicating western systems of knowledge, raising new issues around presence, temporality, space, embodiment, sociability, and memory (usually associated with the repertoire) and those of copyright, authority, history, and preservation (linked to the archive). Digital databases seemingly combine the access to vast reservoirs of materials we normally associate with archives with the ephemerality of the “live.” A website crash reminds us of the fragility of this technology. Although the digital will not replace print culture anymore than print replaced embodied practice, the ways in which it alters, expands, challenges, and otherwise affects our

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current ways of knowing and being have not completely come into focus. If the repertoire consists of embodied acts of transfer and the archive preserves and safeguards print and material culture—objects—what to make of the digital that displaces both bodies and objects as it transmits more information faster and more broadly than ever before? Here I will argue that the digital that enables almost limitless access to information yet shifts constantly, ushers in not the age of the archive nor simply a new dimension of interaction for the repertoire, but something quite different that draws on, and simultaneously alters both.

Again, I want to insist that the embodied, the archival, and the digital overlap and work together and mutually construct each other. We have always lived in a “mixed reality.”³ The Aztecs performed elaborate ceremonies in attempts to mirror and control the powerful cosmic forces that governed their lives; Sue-Ellen Case argues that the medieval cathedral staged the virtual, while 17th century theatre patented its ownership of virtual space.⁴ Clearly, the technologies of the virtual have changed more than the concept of living simultaneously in contiguous spaces. Losing oneself in a literary work of fiction, or getting caught up in the as if-ness of a performance, or entering a trance state in candomblé, have long preceded the experience of living an alternate reality provided by the virtual realm online.



Kodak Catalog, 1913

But the digital and the virtual are not interchangeable, even though they are often used as if they were; the change in technologies is profoundly significant. Since the late 19th century, for example, Kodak has socialized people into living with and using new technologies. This camera was light enough for women to handle as they enjoyed the increased independence, mobility,

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and leisure time of class privilege. The affluent could make memories now to use later. The capitalist joy of taking and possessing are clear, and so too the production of an emerging “you” whose every outing deserves to be recorded. The Youification of the social world so rampant now had been inaugurated. You's experience, moreover, organized what did and what did not matter—a precursor for the Do It Yourself (DIY) contemporary environments in which people surround themselves with worlds of their own making. In order to sell “memory” as a commodity, Kodak also actively promoted nostalgia as an epistemic lens—the urgency of the photo rests on our knowing that the photographed object/subject will be lost, that the present vanishes, and that these happy moments are bound to end. The nostalgia is built into the technology itself: a memento mori as were the first miniature paintings of loved ones. These early technologies stage the vanishing “now” to construct a past that can be accessed (and mourned) at some later time. The pace of the socialization into the digital has accelerated vertiginously.

As paradigms and practices shift in the storing and transmission of knowledge, we are getting glimpses into the range of implications—from the most practical (how and where do we store our materials if we want to preserve them?) to the most existential (does the epistemic change radically alter our subjectivity?). Are the changes qualitative or quantitative? Does the current shift resemble past ones (for example, the transition from an oral culture to print) or does the move towards digital technologies enact its own specific social and ethical presuppositions?

While the digital reconfigures both the “live” and the archival, I will start with the latter. The new digital era is obsessed with archives—as metaphor, as place, as system, and as logic of knowledge production, transmission, and preservation. Why?

The term “archive” has become increasingly capacious, interchangeable with “save,” “contain,” “record,” “upload,” “preserve,” and “share,” and with systems of organization such as a “collection,” “library,” “inventory,” and “museum.” “Archive” seems to magically transcend the contradictions between “open” and “closed,” democratic and elitist; a fetish, it covers over several contradictory and irreconcilable mechanisms of power.⁵ But without understanding the power and control that underwrite the archive it is difficult to assess the political and economic implications of what is saved and what is forgotten. Since the Archeon served as the place where official documents were filed and stored in ancient Greece, the archive has been synonymous with government and order. Before discussing what I feel is at stake in these changing definitions and distinctions, I will clarify how I understand “archive.”

An archive is simultaneously an authorized place (the physical or digital site housing collections),⁶ a thing/object (or collection of things—the historical records and unique or representative objects marked for inclusion), and a practice (the logic of selection, organization, access, and preservation over time that deems certain objects “archivable”). Place, thing, and practice function in a mutually sustaining way. The “thing” is nameable, ‘storable,’ and preserve-able, imbued with the power and authority—perhaps even aura—of both place and of

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selection. We know the thing is important because it has been selected to be preserved in the archive. It does not matter whether the thing was made to be saved—carbon copies of letters and even daily newspapers or handouts at a protest march take on a special status in the archive. In turn, notions of historical accuracy, of authenticity, authorship, property (including copyright), specialized knowledge, expertise, cultural relevance, even “truth” are underwritten by faith in the object found in the archive. This circular legitimating epistemic system again affirms the centrality of the place. The archive comes to function, Foucault noted, not simply as the space of enunciation, the place from which one speaks, but also (and primarily) “the law of what can be said.”⁷ Place/thing/practice exist in a tightly bound connection in which each relies on the other for its authority. Each has a different logic and politics of making visible.

But why has archive gained such enormous power or, better, become the site of such contestations of power as we move into the digital age?



Time Magazine, December 2006

On one hand, digital technologies offer the updated Marxist promise for the 21st century: that we—individual users—now control the means of production, distribution, and access to information, communities, and online worlds. While the capitalist grids and surveillance systems sustaining the digital remain, in fact, stronger than ever, the egalitarian and even revolutionary promise is compelling. In 2006, Time Magazine declared YOU “Person of the Year” because YOU control the information age. YouTube invites us to “broadcast” ourselves; Facebook allows us to share our daily lives with our community of friends; Twitter provides real time updates on where we are and what we’re doing; Second Life offers us a chance to design

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our own avatars and explore, shop, meet, and live online in ways that perhaps can't happen in "first" life. Philip Rosedale, the founder of Second Life, envisions life as a project rather than an existential condition—a "meta-verse," as opposed to a universe.⁸ There is no doubt about the potentially democratizing power of internet technologies particularly those that (as opposed to television) seem to offer as many points of entry and navigation as there are users. The role of Facebook in organizing rallies in Egypt, as well as recent texting and Twittering by protesters THROUGHOUT THE WORLD indicate a level of inclusivity and immediacy in the digital that would be unthinkable in archival practice.⁹ I take the contradictory, complicated, multivalent aspects of digital technologies as a given, a necessary starting point. What I am questioning, however, is whether digital technologies merely extend what we do in embodied and print/material cultures (the repertoire and the archive) into cyberspace, or whether they constitute their very own system of transmission that share some of the features we are used to while moving us into a very different system of knowledge and subjectivity.

What is at stake in this argument? In *The Archive and the Repertoire*, I asked what was gained (or lost) by extending "archive" to include the "live"? Embodied practices, measured by the knowledge regimes sustained by the archive, I argued, fail to provide hard "evidence" of the past. The impossibility of archiving the "live" came to equate absence and disappearance. Historical documents prove that the land belonged to the settlers, not to the Native populations, etc. The personal and political repercussions have been devastating. Here, I pose a similar question: what is gained (or lost) by using the word archive to describe the seemingly democratic, participatory, non-specialized, readily available uploading, publication, and access of materials in cyberspace?



The Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library

Some digital archives function much in the way brick and mortar archives do. The Hemispheric Institute's Digital Video Library, [Figure 5] which I helped create, is an online archive. HIDVL is a growing online repository of some 600 hours of non-downloadable streaming videos of performance from throughout the Americas that is free and accessible for viewing. HIDVL started in the early days of online video archiving (in 2000) as a special collection of New York

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University Libraries and will be maintained for a very long time, some 500 years. Each hour of video costs more than 1000 dollars to process, not counting the intellectual labor that has gone into curating the materials, developing a tri-lingual interface, creating artist profiles, indexes, search tools, and so on.

Different technologies spur different practices (and visa versa) and different things to collect and think about. Digital technologies far exceed print in offering scholars and artists a way to both document and consult “live” practices. Video captures a sense of the kinetic and aural dimensions of the event/work, the physical and facial expressions of participants, the choreographies of meaning. We knew that wonderful performance work in the Americas had either not been documented or, if it had been, videos were rapidly decomposing in boxes under artists’ beds and in their closets. Digitizing them would not only preserve them but also make them widely and easily accessible—a major issue in Latin America where universities have limited holdings and publications very limited circulation. We were also eager to explore the theoretical complexities of archiving performance and the complicated relationships between ‘live’ performance and its mediations.



Reverend Billy
Photo: Julio Pantoja

On one level, then, we were simply transferring video from one digital format to another. On another, we were commissioning and recording performances that we then transferred to HIDVL. So, while we were adding to the collection we also helped generate new work. Some performances stage the archive—revivals based in part on old scripts and videos. Other performances, such as work by Anna Deavere Smith, are better known as video than as live solo work. Some performances become themselves only through the process of documentation; for example, an Ana Mendieta piece staged for the camera and known only through photographs or video. We have born digital materials that never had an “original” in another medium and hybrid work in which archived videos of performances provoked new “live” and online performances. These materials give rise to new scholarly thinking about the many lives of performance (past and present), allow us access to work and traditions that we cannot see live,

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and encourage us to reflect on what happens to “live” events that rely so heavily on context and audience when shown to people from very different contexts. I would love to speculate what viewers in 500 years will make of Rev. Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping, but this is not the time.

This politics of the copy, rather than the “original,” helps us imagine HIDVL as a post-colonial archive. We return the materials and a digital copy to the creators, who maintain the rights. We capture or copy the original signal of the videos and store them in Iron Mountain (the archive of archives; the new “digital authority”) to be updated and copied into new formats as the technologies change. But “copy” as a form of transmission also differentiates the archival from the digital and, most profoundly, from the repertoire. People may copy the way that others dance or speak, but we usually call this mimesis or imitation—a form of learning through doing, mirroring, or parodying another’s actions in which each iteration differs from the next. Even with strenuous discipline, embodied practices will always show a slight degree of variation. A printed copy of a book, however, is virtually indistinguishable from others of the same run. The only differences stem from use; for example, an underlined word, a torn jacket. Nonetheless, the number of books in a run is finite. If I give away my last copy, it is gone. The function CTRL+C allows me to copy automatically, without a discernable limit. Unlike the archive, based on the logic and aura of the original or representative item, the digital relies on the logic and mechanism of the copy that enables the migration from one system or format to another that secures “preservation.” Save As. Interestingly, the aura that comes from the selection process can accrue to the digital copies archived in collections. “Aura,” therefore, may have as much to do with the nature of the selection process as with the status of the thing.

In other ways, however, HIDVL replicates the hierarchies and exclusions inherent in the archival project itself. The process of selection and valorization by experts maintains the logic of the archive intact. Dreams of unlimited access seduce users to participate in the colonialist fantasy that total access is not simply an ideal but a right. While performance scholarship worries more about context, audience, and reception than about the “original” or “authentic” (impossible, insofar as performance is never the same way twice), the human effort that goes into this project, the emphasis on training and expertise, the institutional auspice provided by the university, and the required levels of financial support makes us facetiously compare ourselves to medieval monks.

Nonetheless, most of what people call online “archives” are not archives though they may have some archival features. Skits posted on YouTube or other sites are not archived even though YouTube has been referred to as a “media archive.”¹⁰ This is actually not a technological issue, or even a preservation issue—storage is cheap. It is a commitment issue: the owners may or may not commit to preserving these materials long term. Further, there is no selection process for materials uploaded online. No one vouches as to its sources or veracity. Expertise is irrelevant. The materials seem free and available to anyone with Internet access, avoiding the rituals of participation governing traditional archives. Power and politics continue to underwrite

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access, though at first it is not clear how.

These so-called digital archives can be characterized as what N. Katherine Hayles calls a skeuomorph—“a design function that is no longer functional in itself but that refers back to a feature that was functional at an earlier time.”¹¹ The trashcan icon on our computers that makes a swishing emptying noise is a skeuomorph. So are digital documents and Stickies—all of these are references to past functions that help users adapt to new ways of organizing information. It is the familiarity with these past things and practices that facilitates the leap into a virtual place via technologies most people cannot really comprehend or control. But things and practices are not the same. Online items are composed of bits, not atoms. Digital technology demands that every-thing/practice be transformed into an object and tagged. Our relationship with the thing also changes—we can link to an image but we cannot hold, touch, taste, or smell a person or object. Memory of past usage, however, is programmed into the ways we approach the technologies of the future. But this memory—our individual and collective memory of embodied behaviors—is not to be confused with Kodak’s glossy print memories or with the memory on my computer or, increasingly, the move to huge online operating systems such as Web 2.0 with enough memory to support YouTube or Google.¹² Now we are entering Web 3.0 with interactive functions that move our memories of being able to annotate, chat, and work collaboratively online. My memory, invoked by my documents assures me I am still part of an uninterrupted system of knowledge production that has only been shifted to another, faster, more efficient platform.

This, however, is not the case: place/thing/practice change online. Again, the three are deeply inter-connected and altered in and through digital technologies. The spatiality of the archive as “public building” gives way to the paradoxical ubiquity and seeming no-where-ness of the digital archive.¹⁴ The site-specific character of performance repertoires, which unfold in the here-and-now, also give way to the multi-sited-ness of the web. We are all seemingly “here,” live, now, online, no matter where the “here” might be. The “here” of the repertoire is immediate, the “here” of the archive is distant, but locatable, the here of the web is immediate and (only apparently) unlocatable.

Some of the new digital variations severely challenge the dominance and logic of the archive. Many of the very large projects (such as Google Books) are commercial, though they claim to provide free access to incomplete versions of texts, assuring neither access nor preservation, though the order icon is ready at hand. Google claims sole ownership of “orphan” books—an end run around laws pertaining to content, authorship, and copyright. If print culture produced the concept of copyright, it is not clear yet what legal and legitimating mechanisms will control issues of access and transmission online.

As important as the pressure on the ‘thing’ or content, perhaps, is the invisible politics of place. Where do these collections and archives live? Google et al. own the operating systems and databases that enable access to their massive repositories. This poses other legal issues

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not covered in conventional copyright agreements. By owning the operating system, these commercial giants in fact become the ultimate guarantor of value and control. They can censor materials, cherry pick titles, and rescind licensing privileges for those of us who now lease rather than own copies of the book.¹⁵ These digital practices loop back into print culture as well. The most obvious repercussion is the question: who wants to pay for a book they can access “free” online? I am not against freely sharing materials; Latin American scholars and students survive on pirated books and articles. Nonetheless, it is important to note that what is online is not free. The economic models have long-term repercussions across the range of archival practices having to do with understandings of content, ownership, authority (peer review), copyright, and so on.¹⁶ Preservation of digital materials, thus, is not the happy by-product of digitizing or uploading. While it may be true that “data never dies” it is also true that it lives as bits of information that we might not be able to access. Changing technologies and platforms render our materials obsolete far more often than they archive or preserve them.¹⁷



Finally, I would like to take a quick look at the complicated and changing ways embodied, print,

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and digital cultures affect the what we know and how we know it by going back to Time Magazine's 2006 issue of Person of the Year. Here is an image of my copy. TIME. Person of the Year. 2006. Its cover features an image of a computer; a thin red line, reminiscent of YouTube's playback timer, cuts across the monitor running from 00:00 to 20:06. The screen is a reflective silver shiny Mylar mirror emblazoned with a single word: You. The headline beneath the computer screen, aligned to the left of the page, reads: "Yes, You. You control the Information Age. Welcome to your world." Nicely balanced on the cover, to the right of "You" is... well, "me"—sort of. The mailing sticker has my (misspelled) name and address on it. The cover proclaims the imperative to perform. You. Insert yourself here. Yes, You. Your face on the cover! There's a twist here too. While the magazine requires an embodied response from me—I need to hold it in my hands and up to my face to see myself—the design conceit of the video monitor with the timeline transports me to the digital. I try to align the discursive You with the embodied me. I hold the magazine close. Even so, I hardly recognize myself. This distorting mirror shows You (me) as not me, only the vaguest image, a concept more than a person. And who is the invisible "I" that names me You? Is it Uncle Sam's pointing finger from the WWII posters? Adam Smith's invisible hand of the market? Althusser's hailing, "You!" The unseen eye of surveillance that demands: "If You See Something, Say Something?" Or a combination—a parody of hailing and recognition, Martin Buber's I/Thou minus the I... Inside the cover, an ad for Chevrolet announces "THIS IS OUR PERSON OF THE YEAR"—and the "TRUCK OF THE YEAR" that dominates the environment. The contest, and contestation, of who really controls the world and its resources starts before I even get to the Table of Contents.



Time Magazine online, December 2006

Here is the issue in Time's online archive: the bold black You dominates the screen. The "Yes, You" is centered under the screen rather than to the left (who needs a mailing label online?)

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The reflective surface is gone. Time's Managing Editor acknowledges the challenges in reproducing the effect of the mirror, "when there's no one standing in front of it." So Time created an animated online version using photos apparently submitted by readers that appeared in the print version to keep something of the interactive quality of the original. This, clearly, is a different kind of performance where You/I is positioned as a spectator to other people's photographs rather than as the subject/protagonist. The online You becomes the object of my looking, one more commodity.

It does not take much to see that these photos could not have been generated by readers—they are all posed in identical, candy colored boxes—again, a photo simulated to look like YouTube. You also comes in all colors. With one odd exception, You is young, beautiful, under thirty, happy, self-satisfied, "cool," independent, on-the-go, not doing much of anything except listening to music or performing for the viewer. Only two of the men seem to have traditional professions—the doctor and the soldier. The "new" You is a global citizen. Mobile ethnicities transcend geographical divides. Race and gender are now a "style" or fashion statement. We're all post-racism and post-sexism, the images suggest. Space is produced [Figure 24], a studio backdrop. You is unlocatable in other ways as well. There are no hints as to where people are or where they've come from; no other people in the shots, no family photos. Two women photograph themselves—very You. The celebratory images affirm embodiment; the designer body seemingly provides an entry point to the world. But these are not the bodies of the repertoire. This You actually exists not in relationship to but as separate from. There is no outside, no exterior with which You might maintain a relationship in the interpenetration of self/interior that Merleau-Ponty elaborated. Inter-subjectivity is possible only through technology.¹⁸ You might chat and text but not talk or read. The new cogito: I Text therefore IM. This You is the product rather than producer of the Information Age. THEM.



Time Magazine, December 2006

There is much more to say about this construction of You, both as Person of the Year and in these images, which cannot be included here but it is important to note that the online You is an

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elusive object: when I tried to access the virtual gallery a year later, it was gone (links took me to Vladimir Putin). When I looked again after six months, some of the images from the gallery were online, but only as loose images and not as part of the magazine's layout or organizing concept. However, other images, not included in the original publication, had also been added as if they were part of the original, while others had been re-inscribed with logos of other websites. What kind of archive is this that erases rather than preserves the traces of its former incarnation?



Time Magazine, author's copy, december 2006

The Time archive, then, does not maintain the objects, or even digital renditions. My experience with the issue is different. I cannot hold it. I can't flip pages. There are no page numbers online. Reading has morphed into navigation (or surfing). Instead of linear and sequential, cause and effect, the digital is about simultaneity, interruption, and multi-tasking. Everything written for online media tends to be short; the digital has its own attention span. I engage in politics online even as I do something else. The essays, extracted from the issue, are searchable and clearly attributed to authors and identifiable as URLs. But I can't get a sense of connections between various social, economic, and political relations by examining the layouts and the physical placement of essays and ads. Where is the happy cowboy—the "real" person of the year according to Chevrolet? I cannot go back and examine the magazine issue as a (flimsily) bounded microcosm of cultural concerns, fears, and strategies made visible in the competing messages. Instead of an editor in charge of putting the materials together, the online curatorial process is driven by data-mining techniques and crawlers, which identify patterns of information in a database. I, too, am being constantly

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updated with today's ads, each programmed to pick up key words and customize the display to suit "my" tastes. This too is all about me/You but in a different way. It is my profile, not the editor's, which arranges the information for me. The web's interactivity filters my information and sends it to those who pay for access to me. As Wendy Chun notes: online, in order to use, one has to agree to be used.¹⁹

This digital "archival" practice, I believe, can prove profoundly anti-archival. The shift from the archive to the digital has moved us away from the institutional, the confined, the long term of Foucault's disciplinary society to the "control" society outlined by Deleuze—free-floating, short term, rapidly shifting. We move from the analog to the digital, from signature to password, from citizen to nomad, from typographic man to graphic man, as McLuhan put it.²⁰ For better and for worse, the politics of the archive are not the politics of the digital.

What counts as embodied knowledge has also morphed. Cyberspace has forced us to name and delimit the "real." "Real time" is not the same as the present. "Live" is not the same as alive. An online community is not the same as a group of people. The "flesh" body is not the same as the very powerful electronic body—the one whose credit ratings or medical history or suspicious activities can sink an application or have a person strip searched at the border.²¹

The digital has also provoked an upset in terms of expertise. Many major scholars feel totally incompetent with ever changing technologies; the young are the true masters of this field. But even the young know less than the younger. It's not just the ever-accelerating generational shifts that make people feel they are out of the meaning-making loop. The subject-as-consumer is tied into the rapid cycle of obsolescence necessary to sell. "Forgetting," as Paul Connerton notes, "is an essential ingredient in the operation of the market."²² The feeling of not being coterminous with our time, then, is built into the technologies themselves. The anxiety about loss and forgetting, I believe, might explain our current obsession with archives and the nostalgia both for embodiment and for the object. Technologies code the affect in the constant mandate to Save and Save As and we experience the symptom—the need to preserve not just things (documents, bones, fossils) but ways of thinking and knowing—memory, sociability, affect, emotions, gestures, etc, and processes—i.e., the ways in which we work, select, transmit, access, and preserve. But the digital, I suggested, will not replace archives or repertoires. If anything, earlier distinctions between online and offline have crumbled for the many of us across the social spectrum who are now never offline either because we have cell phones or because our money is kept in a bank account. Perhaps the current rush to "archive" has less to do with place/thing/practice and more with trying to save and preserve a sense of self as we face the uncertain future, emphasizing our agency in the selection and meaning making process that we fear threatens to outpace us.

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Mention in the Joe E. Callaway Prize for the Best Book on Drama, of *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's 'Dirty War'*, Duke U.P., 1997, and *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Duke U.P., 2003) which won the Outstanding Book award from the Association of Theatre in Higher Education, and the Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize from the Modern Language Association. She is co-editor of: PMLA's special issue on WAR, published October 2009, *Stages of Conflict: A Reader in Latin American Theatre and Performance* (Michigan U. P.), *Holy Terrors: Latin American Women Perform* (Duke U.P., 2004), *Defiant Acts/Actos Desafiantes: Four Plays by Diana Raznovich* (Bucknell U. P., 2002), *Negotiating Performance in Latin/o America: Gender, Sexuality and Theatricality* (Duke U.P., 1994), and *The Politics of Motherhood: Activists from Left to Right* (University Press of New England, 1997), and editor of five volumes of critical essays on Latin American, Latino, and Spanish playwrights. Her articles on Latin American and Latino performance have appeared in *The Drama Review*, *Theatre Journal*, *Performing Arts Journal*, *Latin American Theatre Review*, *Estreno*, *Gestos*, *Signs*, *MLQ* and other scholarly journals. She has also been invited to participate in discussions on the role of new technologies in the arts and humanities in important conferences and commissions in the Americas (i.e. ACLS Commission on Cyberinfrastructure). She is the recipient of numerous awards including the Guggenheim Fellowship in 2005-6. Diana Taylor is founding Director of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, funded by foundations such as Ford, Rockefeller, Mellon, the Henry Luce Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Notes

¹ Clay Shirky, "Newspapers and Thinking the Unthinkable." <http://www.shirky.com/weblog/2009/03/newspapers-and-thinking-the-unthinkable/> accessed July 14, 2009.

² See de Waal, Frans. 2009. *The Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society*. New York: Harmony Books.

³ Hansen, Mark B. N. 2006. *Bodies in Code: Interfaces with Digital Media*. New York: Routledge.

⁴ Sue-Ellen Case. 2007. *Performing Science and the Virtual*. New York: Routledge, pp. 9 and 51.

⁵ Anne McClintock referred to the archive as fetish in the Pct 2, 2009 meeting of the Engendering Archives working group, CDAD. Columbia University.

⁶ The archive means "there, where authority, social order are exercised" as Jacques Derrida puts it, "in that place." Derrida, Jacques. 1995. *Archive Fever*. Translated Eric

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Prenowitz, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 1

⁷ Michel Foucault. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. N.Y.: Pantheon Books, p. 129.

⁸ YouTube (November 22, 2006). "[The Origin of Second Life and its Relation to Real Life](#)". [YouTube](#).

⁹ In Istanbul, Facebook was used to organize a rally against the building of a nuclear plant: <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=8201902011&ref=nf>. See Moynihan, Colin. 2009. "Arrest Puts Focus on Protesters' Texting," *New York Times*, Oct 5, 2009, p. A19.

¹⁰ Jean Burgess and Joshua Green refer to YouTube as "a media archive" among other things in their book, Burgess, Jean and Joshua Green. 2009. *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, Cambridge UK: Polity Press, p.5.

¹¹ Hayles, N. Katherine. 1999. *How We Became Posthuman; Virtual bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 17.

¹² Ron Eglash, in *Computing Power*, cautions of shift of computer memory to large operating systems: "In terms of individual use this is a move toward democratization through lay access, but in terms of business ownership it is a move towards monopolization, as only large scale corporations such as Google can afford the economy of scale that such memory demands place on hardware" pg. 60. In Eglash, Ron. 2008. *Software Studies/a lexicon*, ed. Matthew Fuller. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press.

¹³ Critical Commons For Fair & Critical Participation in Media Culture has a community generated archive of lectures and media clips. The USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education at USC has an archive of approximately 52,000 videotaped testimonies from Holocaust survivors and other witnesses available at their center and online. The online description of the Internet Archive reads: "The Internet Archive, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, is building a digital library of Internet sites and other cultural artifacts in digital form. Like a paper library, we provide free access to researchers, historians, scholars, and the general public."

¹⁴ There is no need to burn books when they can simply disappear. "Takedown notices" often have more to do with business competition than with copyright infringement. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_Millennium_Copyright_Act, accessed Sept. 28, 2009.

¹⁵ The peer review process, vital in establishing the authority of print journals, is being undercut in print culture as well as online. In *A Second Opinion*, Arnold S. Relman, former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine* notes the widespread practice of authors evaluating the effectiveness of drugs that have economic ties to pharmaceutical companies. Their findings are suspect and the process is ineffective. An article in the *New York Times*, Singer, Natasha and Duff Wilson. 2009. "Unmasking the Ghosts: Medical Editors Take on Hidden Writers." *New York Times*, Sept. 18, 2009, p. B1, states: "In medical journal circles, the exorcism of industry financed editorial assistance even has its own name: ghostbusting."

¹⁶ Other organizations are currently dealing with similar issues—the financial and copyright implications of creating collections and even archives of copies. Every digital archive has to face these economic, technological, and legal challenges. What is the economic model? Many of the very large projects are commercial, though they claim to provide free access. Here again, content is secondary to the financial and technological models being tested, and the repercussions are severely testing the dominance and logic of the archive. Open access online increasingly devalues content in what Chris Anderson has called the "migration to Free" (140). He notes "the computer industry wants content to be free. Apple doesn't make its billions selling music files, it makes it selling iPods. Free content makes the devices it plays on more valuable" (142). A related question of 'free' content and costly devices is being argued in the courts now with respect to Amazon's Kindle. Google, also in court, now claims sole ownership of 'orphan' books—another end run around laws pertaining to content, authorship, and copyright that the archive made possible. If print culture produced the copyright, it's not clear yet what legal and legitimating mechanisms will control issues of access and transmission online.

¹⁷ Cool and color-saturated, posing for a camera, You is something-to-be-looked-at, the object of an unidentified gaze. You's body is a project, something it has rather than something it is. The image performs a possible future. With enough exercise or dieting or make-up, we too could be You. "Your best body ever! Get it Now! Keep it Forever!" It goes with everything. You represents not something/someone that is, but something/someone that could be. You invites identification with ideal otherness that, marketers try to convince us, is ours for the price of the product. But of course I will never be You. As eating disorders reach epidemic proportions, the fetishized You-as-product threatens to disappear the agent of the labor that went into creating it—the women and men who starve and binge themselves into shape. You exist only as representation.

¹⁸ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun. 2006. *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*. Cambridge: MIT Press, p. 130.

¹⁹ Giles Deleuze. 1994. "Postscript on Control Societies," in Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Ed. Lewis Lapham. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

²⁰ EDT's, *The Recombinant Theater and the Performative Matrix*

²¹ Connerton, Paul. 2008. "Seven Types of Forgetting." In *Memory Studies*, Vol 1, No. 1, January, p. 67.

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