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The Place of Consignation, or Memory and Writing in Derrida's Archive

Aakash M. Suchak

More than a theoretical account of the figure and concept of the archive in general, Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1995) closely reads Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's "Monologue with Freud" chapter in the scholar's *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (1991). To the unacquainted, this is the missing third term, between *Archive Fever* and the relevant texts of the Freudian corpus.¹ The triangulation rests on the Moses of Michelangelo, which in turn rests on the Moses of the Old Testament. The investigation of archive as a conceptual concern—Derrida's original title was "The Concept of the Archive: A Freudian Impression"—was delivered at the Freud Museum in London on the 5th of June 1994.² Yerushalmi's absence on this particular occasion seems to be all the more fortuitous, given Derrida's lengthy discussion of "Monologue with Freud" as an address to an absent listener, a ghost. Yet the title of the work changed, from presentation to publication, to "archive fever," or *mal d'archive*.

To what does this enigmatic heading refer? It enjoys multiple referents: in one sense, it refers to "death drive." Later it also comes to name the need for, desire for, and sickness of desire for the archive, that is, homesickness or nostalgia for the archive. It thus entails an always situated or embeddedness in a Janus-faced relation to time and space: both looking backward and toward the future, as well as with interior consignation depending on its exteriority to some other thing. To be *en mal de* signifies to be amidst an already temporalized relationship to the past and future, that is, to history and memory but also the future and the virtual. This retrospection and looking toward

the future links to the complicated temporality of the psychoanalytic concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (“afterwardness”) or *Nachträglichegeborsam* (“deferred obedience”), which conditions the form of the differing rhetorical manifestations of temporal structure in Derrida’s text, as demonstrated below. Yet there are two means by which death drive is implicated by the archive, the first of which is perhaps given or explicit. The second, however, relies on the account of writing and memory posited in Derrida’s early work, including “Plato’s Pharmacy,” “The Rhetoric of Drugs,” and “Signature Event Context,” and clarifies the connection between the death drive as/and *mal d’archive* in *Archive Fever*. The two means of relating death drive to the archive emerge as apparently contradictory: the death drive both *is* and *poisons* the archive, contaminates, pollutes, and sickens it. Death drive is at once the condition of possibility of the archive, but also external to it, on its surface, and intrinsic or *a priori* to it. The claims regarding writing and memory in *Archive Fever* are underwritten by the Platonic categories of *anamnesis* and *hypomnesis* explicated in *Dissemination*, which render coherent the opposition between the archive and death drive and its reversal in *Archive Fever*.

This essay begins by examining the archive’s orientation toward the future that stems from its determining organization of archival material. Subsequently, it explicates the temporal structure proposed by the form of *Archive Fever* and its meta-rhetorical diction, which reflects psychoanalysis’s challenge to teleological time; next, it considers the relation between the archive and death drive posited in the text, which hinges on speech and on memory; finally, it concludes by explaining the title *mal d’archive* and the relationship among Judaism and futurity.

In the untitled opening section, Derrida elucidates the split etymology of the Ancient Greek term ἀρχή, *Arche*, meaning both the beginning and the law, the “commencement” and the “commandment” (1). Both senses imply a location, as Derrida notes: either the place where things *begin*, or the place from which gods or men *command*. This meaning of a particular location informs the modern term for “archive,” which, as *Archeion* in Ancient Greek, meant the house or residence of the ruling officers, or *archons*. By dint of their authority, official documents were kept at their household. Thus the *archons* were effectively the documents’ guardians, and as such, assumed hermeneutical responsibility as well: they were both keepers and interpreters. And with this domiciliation of official documents came the “power of consignation,” that is, of grouping signs together, “coordinating” and “configuring” a particular body of materials. This gathering and interpreting has political and ethical consequences for the archive: those outside of it may call into question the

legitimacy of its organization and the law it commands or speaks. Its institutionalization has a history that can be deconstructed, Derrida maintains on page 4. The extended footnote corresponding to these claims considers the politicization of the archive, which Derrida deems to be beyond on the scope of his lecture. By way of introducing a reference to Sonia Combe’s *Forbidden Archives*, Derrida also postulates political power stems from control of the archive and of memory. The consequences persist for the archive of Freud’s *oeuvre* monumentalized on that day in June of 1994, as they do, for the synoptic proceedings of the event conserved in the Freud Museum’s Digital Archive. The organization, classification, and compression of the materials presented in the latter structure a particular form of meaning that are the result of hermeneutical decisions and interpretive transformations. This is at least one of the senses of the archive’s orientation toward futurity to which Derrida refers in his characterization of the archive.

Derrida’s text is one that becomes increasingly clear upon multiple readings. Its elliptical syntax and enigmatic prolepses require a return that effectively instantiates precisely the forms of non-teleological time that it ascribes to the archive. The form of the book itself resembles that of *Dissemination* yet expands its premise to an even greater degree. In that earlier text, the section entitled “*Hors livre* [‘Outside the book’] Outwork, *hors d’oeuvre* [‘outside the work’], extratext, foreplay, bookend, facing, prefacing,” foregrounds the complex dynamic of interiority and exteriority *and* the temporal performance of retrospective anticipation that characterizes prefaces in general. Barbara Johnson’s commentary in the introduction to the English translation of *Dissemination* is particularly elucidating on this aspect, specifically xxxii-xxxiii. In *Archive Fever*, as Mary Ann Doane has noted, there is a proliferation of beginnings within the argument, as well as in the book’s formal organization and structure. “Note,” “Exergue,” “Preamble,” “Foreword,” “Theses,” “Postscript”: these means of arranging the content function argumentatively as a deconstruction of the temporal and spatial parameters of the book form. In addition, they challenge the possibility of a stable beginning or origin, a target on which deconstruction set its sights from early on.³ The deconstructive logic functions no differently in *Archive Fever*, though in this later text, the goal is not to reshuffle the categories of Western metaphysics, but instead to portray the complex temporality of psychoanalysis in different manifestations, through the figure of the archive, the Freudian signature, and Yerushalmi’s address to Freud’s specter. If, in the earlier works, the aim was to subvert gestures of mastery, as Johnson puts it, *Archive Fever* strives to mirror psychoanalysis’s displacement of teleological time and undermine the archive’s untroubled functioning as a mere portal to the past.⁴

Indeed, the references to time, both playful and grave, permeate *Archive Fever*. “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” (5 my emphasis). This seemingly peripheral remark, a passing transition, a platitude perhaps, or apology, inwardly winks to itself, to the author and the knowing reader. The deictic “now” always differs depending on the context its uttered in, evoking the question of writing and temporality from the outset; two mentions of time, either having it or giving it, in this case not receiving it (they did give him three and a half hours) attain an almost poetic resonance given the reflections that ensue. Thus, time’s relation to writing is manifest in the form of the book, its disseminating beginnings, and in its suggestive intimations.

The opening discussion of the exergue discusses the exergue itself: originally the place for inserting the date on a coin, the textual exergue precedes the main text as the place for a citation or epigraph. Through his explication of the features of the exergue—that is “sets the stage”, “capitalizes on an ellipsis”, “lays down the law and *gives order*”—the resemblance to an archive becomes apparent. For Derrida, the exergue is “the first figure of an archive, because every archive is at once institutive and conservative” (7). Some irony inheres in referring to the archive as a *figure*, given the ambition of “White Mythology” to explore metaphor in the text of philosophy (as its subtitle indicates) through a reading of Anatole Frances’ *The Garden of Epicurus* (1895); moreover, the institutive and conservative functions stem from those qualities of both the epigraph and the archive to implement the law and house it, to set the tone and save its place. The last reference of this associative nexus is the Freud house museum itself, the next exergue/archive: it attains the power to set the law and contain it. The archive is “eco-nomic”, he claims, playing on the etymology of *economy* from ancient Greek: the word is comprised of *oikos*, as house or dwelling, and *nomos*, the law. *Eco-nomos* thus becomes the science of house-keeping. It is no coincidence that Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* begins with an invocation of an additional, ‘economic’ factor to the theory of psychoanalysis.⁵ For the latter, the economy is the ratio of pleasure to unpleasure and a vacillating increase and diminishment in excitation. Derrida retrieves the etymology to demonstrate the inseparability of the archive with the home and the law, but capitalizing, as it were, on Freud’s invocation to forge a larger synthesis. The other obvious allusion here is to Marx,⁶ which metonymically insinuates the rhetoric of wager and risk, which in turn, leads to death drive.⁷

The instinct toward destruction or death drive is “no longer a debatable hypothesis” for Freud, Derrida argues in his rhetorical interpretation of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (henceforth *CID*) (10). Rather it is a necessity,

and what Freud calls a “mute [*stumm*]” one at that. This adjective is crucial to understanding the means by which Derrida links the archive to the death drive in this first articulation. However, the causality he ascribes is suspect, which is at the heart of the project of *Archive Fever*: “since [the death drive] always operates in silence,” Derrida writes, “it never leaves any archives of its own” (10). The cause-and-effect relation this proposes depends on speech: without sound, there is no archive. The death drive, by virtue of its silence, has no record of having passed. “It destroys in advance its own archive,” Derrida claims, denoting a dialectical temporality between past and future; to destroy its own record *in advance* of having passed suggests a dynamic view of time that reverses the temporal structure of *Nachträglichkeit*. Rather than memory as rewritten according to a later development, here, memory is effaced after the passage of this drive. “It destroys in advance its own archive, *as if that were in truth the very motivation of its most proper movement*” (10). Derrida suggests, using the hypothetical *as if* to propose a thesis, that the death drive is not only bent on the reduction of excitation, but in fact, it operates toward the end of the effacement of memory; this is its very purpose. “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’” (ibid). Even the scare-quotes surrounding proper in this instance, which refers to the sense of *one’s own*, function in anticipation of the subsequent negation of its very usage, miming the temporal play at the micrological level of syntax. Yet the connection between death drive and the archive hinges on speech and on memory; in this, they are opposed, with the death drive characterized as *anarchivic* or *archivolithic*, that is, “archive-destroying”.

In order to explicate the important feature of exteriority, which emerges in this context, it is first necessary to examine the two types of memory that Derrida examines in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. Derrida’s corpus had been concerned with the issue of writing as a supplement to memory long before the publication of *Archive Fever*. In “Plato’s Pharmacy” from *Dissemination*, he examines the marginal myth at the conclusion of Plato’s *Phaedrus* regarding writing and memory. In that text, the demi-god Theuth brings the technology of writing to the god-king Thamus, who is to determine the value of writing, presented as a “recipe [*pharmakon*] for both memory and wisdom” (Leitch 1839). Indeed, the source of the opposition between *mneme* and *hypomnesis* is Plato. The first describes spontaneous, living memory, where as the latter refers to “monuments,” means for reminding. Writing is accorded with the latter. In the interview entitled “The Rhetoric of Drugs,” Derrida synthesizes his argument, framing the consideration in terms of repetition. When Theuth presents writing to Thamus, the former maintains that it will benefit memory,

and it will do so by offering a technique of repetition. By repeating, we will remember, says Theuth's argument, thus serving *anamnesis*, or the "recollection of spiritual truths through genuine, living wisdom, [for Plato,] through philosophy" (Leitch 36). Learning is remembering knowledge from previous lifetimes or before birth. Thamus disagrees, claiming that writing will induce forgetfulness when users rely upon it rather than their own memory. Thus, it is a technique "not for memory [*mneme*] but for reminding" or "recollection" [*hypomnesis*], the difference here being between memory itself and mere reminders. The latter becomes referred to as "bad memory;" the *pharmakon*, writing, as both poison to memory and its aid, threatens to undercut the human capacity of memory, *mneme* and *anamnesis*. As such, it leads to forgetting and also irresponsibility in moving away from philosophical truth. The added lay that fits over this schema: *anamnesis* is associated with living memory, thus truth and thereby philosophy, whereas *hypomnesis* is associated with writing, thus sophistry and thereby rhetoric. The *Pharmakon* thus functions as both poison and remedy to memory, and to choose one over the other is to close off the polyvalent play that takes place in the term itself and generates this problematic. For the purposes of *Archive Fever*, the crucial point will be that *hypomnesis* refers to the type of memory specifically designated by writing, that is, of reminders, monuments, and bad memory, that is associated with the archive, the site of repetition that will not serve *anamnesis* but destroy it.

Now given this distinction between *anamnesis* and *hypomnesis*, Derrida's remarks regarding the archive shift into focus. The archive, for Derrida, is "hypomnesic," that is, depends on writing and represents the bad kind of memory, not spontaneous, living memory. Like the *pharmakon* as poison to memory, the death drive "incites forgetfulness" but also demands the effacement of the mnemotechnical supplement, writing, the reminder and monument. The death drive requires its destruction. The archive, both *like* and *as* writing, supplements living, full, present memory. As such, the claim that "there is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority," seems to propose that the place of consignation is the capacity for repetition and reimpression inherent to the archive as *hypomnesis*. The archive is "*hypomnesic*," and its exteriority is its requisite condition. "Exterior to what?" Derrida asks. It seems the subject of psychoanalysis, host to the death drive, is diametrically opposed to the archive.

Death drive demands the destruction of the archive, Derrida argues on 11: "it not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory, as *meneme* or *anamnesis*, but also commands the radical effacement, in truth the eradication, of

that which can never be reduced to *mneme* or to *anamnesis*, that is, the archive, consignation, the documentary or monumental apparatus as *hypomnema*, mnemotechnical supplement or representative, auxiliary or memorandum. Because the archive...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. (11)

So the question is, what reason does Derrida provide for the death drive to command the radical effacement of the archive? The answer is its supplementarity, its status as a mere implement to aid spontaneous, living memory, but not to replace it. He specifies that the archive takes place where human memory breaks down, at its intrinsic limit. Human capacity for memory is finite, and the archive takes its charge at the end of its *capacity*, that is, its spatial maximum. Yet the archive itself is also finite, and its finitude forms the site where death drive picks up.

In Derrida's words, all italics in the original: "*There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of representation, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside*" (11). Now in this articulation, there is a mutual imbrication of the archive with the place of consignation, that is, of the assembly (*con-*) of signs (*-signation*). One would hope that this would imply that the archive *is* the place of consignation. Yet subsequent sentences complicate this simple reading. In what Derrida calls the "decisive paradox [that] undoubtedly conditions the whole of these remarks," the site of the archive and the place of consignation seem to fissure, not fuse:

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. (11)

This formulation suggests that the archive and place of consignation are distinct, as the place is "external" to the archive, but nonetheless makes repetition possible. Signs gather outside of the archive, not within it, as previously proposed. Unfortunately, running with this reading leads to a dead end. Instead, we must read it, as Derrida more explicitly states later, as an equation: the archive *is* the "accumulation and capitalization of memory on some substrate and in an exterior place" (12). Now in order to understand the consequence of this, one need first revisit the meaning of *consignation* which appeared innocently in Derrida's prefatory remarks, which now becomes essential. Once this all has been established, the present inquiry can return to the consequence and the means by which death drive turns the archive against itself.

In the untitled opening section, Derrida explicates two qualities of the archive: its topological principle, its quality of being a shape or place, and its nomological principle, the site of the law. The former he accords the status of place and also the designation “substrate”, whereas the latter is the law and authority. These constitute a scene of *domiciliation*, which combines both senses. The “archontic” dimension refers to the aforementioned *archons*, keepers, guardians, and interpreters of the archive. There is a “function” that “toponomology” and “domiciliation” achieve, and they are the condition of possibility of the archive. This function is that of concealment: the “patriarchic function” of the archive’s topo-nomology is “to shelter itself and, sheltered, to conceal itself” (3). The archive must be “posited somewhere, on a stable substrate”. This is the first condition, the archontic function of the archive: to give it a place, but also to identify and classify the contents of the archive.⁸ This power needs to be combined with—the exact word is “paired,”— what Derrida calls the power of *consignation*. Yet quickly this coupling becomes an identification, where “the archontic principle of the archive is also a principle of *consignation*, that is, of gather together” (3 my emphasis). So are they different? The principle of *consignation* denotes to consign in the sense of deposit, to which Derrida adds the gathering together of signs, *con-sign-ation*. The Latin *consignation* means “written proof”, and Derrida extends its meaning beyond this to its presupposition: specifically, that *consignation* names the quality of an archive or other system of information in which all elements refer to the larger unity of the parts. There ought not to be any absolute differences among contents of an archive, Derrida claims; rather they should all comply with a network of associations and interrelations.

Let us return to the passage that brought us here:

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. (11)

Consignation requires a *space* to take place, and that place becomes the *hypomnesic* archive. Indeed, the place must “assure the possibility of *memorization*,” the possibility of *anamnesis* apart from it. The space must also assure the possibility of repetition, reproduction and reimpression, all of which can be thought as functions of mnemotechnical supplements. Yet if we grant this, Derrida claims, we must also grant that mere repetition itself necessitates the death drive; repetition is *associated* with it. The relation between repetition and death drive is here articulated as one of *association*.⁹ Nevertheless, the possibility of repetition that the archive presents contains death drive within it, like an *a priori*, not just an external force that threatens it. These are the two forms in which death drive relates to the archive.

So what is the consequence, for Derrida?

Consequence: right on that which permits and conditions archivization, we will never find anything other than that which exposes to destruction, and in truth 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. (11-12)

From the outset of the excerpt, there persists syntactical difficulty, evasion: rather than beginning with a subject followed by a predicate, Derrida begins his consequence with the preposition “right on” [*à meme*], effectively suspending the equation that the colon implies: the consequence is *not* “right on.” Instead, the consequence is as follows. First, we require the condition of archivization, which, as we have established, is exteriority, the space of the archive as apart from, say, the psyche, which allows memorization, repetition, and so forth, that is, facilitates *anamnesis*. Specifically, the condition of the archive is its exteriority to *anamnesis*. Now *on* this condition, as in, on top of it, or on its surface, we will only find “that which exposes to destruction, and in truth, menaces with destruction.” What is remarkable about this formulation is there is no object of exposure or menace: we know that this entity will be *exposed to* and *menaced by* destruction, yet we have no sense of the particular thing that receives this aggression. It is tantamount to saying “that which holds hostage” without indicating who or what is being held hostage. The quandary can be resolved by agreeing that refers to the exposure to destruction *in general*, that is, everything is exposed to general destruction, though this is unsatisfying. Alternatively, the archive itself could be the object of this exposure and menace, which would then be paraphrased thusly: on the condition of archivization, namely, its exteriority *to something else*, we will only find that which exposes *it* to destruction. If this latter paraphrase proves more resonant, one wonders why Derrida did not include an object in the formulation. Yet our paraphrase is only partially complete.

“Introducing, *a priori*”: the reader will know what sort of temporal order this combination implies. An *a priori* is contained within the very property of the concept; to *introduce* something already suggests synthesis and the necessity of experience. Forgetfulness is introduced, along with the archiviolithic—archive-destroying—into the archive, its “heart.” The wordplay that follows riffs on the common expression for memory, *to learn by heart*: forgetfulness invades the “by heart” itself.” He continues: “The archive always works, and *a priori*, against itself”. A second deployment of the *a priori*. This dual emphasis proposes the anteriority of the death drive to the archive. So interior and anterior to the archive, its *a priori* conceptual containment, is repetition compulsion, the mechanical repetition of an earlier event, which reflects the subject’s death drive.

On the external space of the archive, there is death drive, introducing forgetfulness into the heart of this supplement. Why forgetfulness? Repetition compulsion is a manner of memory, but it indicates a desire for mastery and the return to an earlier, inanimate state of lessened excitement.

The connection between writing and memory in psychoanalysis begins in 1895 with the unpublished “A Project for a Scientific Psychology” and ends with Freud’s “Note on the Mystic Writing Pad” (GPT). In that text, Freud begins by describing the limitations of two different technical supplements to memory: the paper and the slate. While the former maintains a permanent trace, its capacity is overly brief; the latter wields infinite capacity, but the trace is ephemeral. In a graceful turn, Freud argues that the psychic apparatus overcomes these limitations: it can receive potentially infinite stimuli and produce permanent memory-traces. He then introduces the mystic writing pad (*Wunderblock*) as a device that mirrors these capacities of the psyche. This device is separated into three “adjoining systems,” which receive the impressions and leaves a trace—the celluloid paper and the wax slab beneath it—thereby corresponding to the conscious sense perception and unconscious memory vault systems of the psyche. Cathexes pass through the conscious perceptual system, intermittently falling inactive, which gives the subject a sense of time as punctuation or periodicity. Derrida’s seventh chapter from *Writing and Difference* [*L’écriture et la différence*, 1967], “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” observes the potential complication in the seemingly smooth functioning of the metaphor of the psyche as writing instrument. If writing is inseparable from consciousness, in Freud’s view, then how can psychic writing be conceived? Here, Derrida links *différance* with *Nachträglichkeit*, Freud’s model of temporal deferral, and refers to *Moses and Monotheism* as demonstrating “the efficacy of delay and of action subsequent to the event over large historical intervals” (203). It seems that Derrida’s reading of Freud was already in place before Yerushalmi’s text, which then served as the event or stimulus through which to posit the intervention that is *Archive Fever*. In this consideration of the temporality of writing, Derrida notes Freud’s Platonism in that the modern figure accords with his classical precursor on the subject of hyponemic writing (as mere reminder) as opposed to the live functioning of the psychic apparatus.

Derrida returns to this passage of *Writing and Difference* along with Freud’s “Notes on a Mystic Writing Pad”, where *der Wunderblock* represents an external memory aid in order to answer the question “exterior to what?” with respect to the archive’s *hypomnesic* character, of which exteriority is a requisite condition. Here Derrida charges Freud for not examining the status of the mnemotechnical supplement with respect to spontaneity. The writing pad necessarily supplements the spontaneity of living memory, but this does *not* mean, for Derrida, that the machine operates in a complete lack of spontaneity:

the machine bears a “resemblance to the psychological apparatus, its existence and its necessity bear witness to the finitude of the mnemonic spontaneity which is thus supplemented” (14). The resemblance of the machine—and here he begins to distinguish between the machine and the writing pad, referring to new technologies for memorization and archivization that developed between 1925-1966—to the psychological apparatus suggests that the spontaneity of living memory is limited. Thus, “the machine—and consequently, representation—is death and finitude *within* the psyche” (14). The machine, also referring to the archive, as a technique of supplementing memory, marks the site where *anamnesis* fails and *hypomnesis* begins. Derrida claims that the machine also gestures toward the future, namely in the relation between these new technological developments of archivization that can be brought to bear on psychoanalysis. So just as the death drive functions within the archive, the machine functions within the psyche—these are the characteristic reversals of oppositions that are *signature* Derrida.

But to what does the title *Archive Fever* refer? In one form, the death drive is the “fever” of the archive, that which threatens it.¹⁰ Toward the end of *Archive Fever*, Derrida refers to the two more problems that are named by the term *mal d’archive*: firstly, the problem of historiographical writing, with its revisions and rewritings of the past, and secondly, the need for archives, the passion and nostalgia for them as home and origin. The former is also a “disorder” as much as a fever. Derrida capitalizes on the untranslatability of the French word *trouble* in order to posit, at least, that the archive presents difficulties for translation, in the sense of the reiteration of the irreplaceable singularity of a unique archival document.¹¹ This *trouble de l’archive* stems from *mal d’archive*. As aforementioned, there is a determining quality to the structuring of the archive that has ramifications, political and epistemological. As Derrida claims, “the archivization *produces* as much as it records the event” (my emphasis 17). This possesses a polyvalent suggestion. It refers to the role that organization and classification play in the formation of the “event”, which is both retrospective and oriented toward the future. In the name *mal d’archive*, retrospection is complicated: the term designates “the mania for origins,” to use Adorno’s phrase, that characterizes Western metaphysics since Plato:

[*mal d’archive*] 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 anarchives 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. (91)

This is an arguably different account of the eponym than that offered earlier in the essay. It necessarily interpellates a subject—an agent, actor, consciousness, subjectivity, psyche—whose desire makes the archive its object. Rather than articulating the archive's status as fraught and unstable, the term *mal d'archive* instead refers to the way in which the subject interacts with it, thereby determining his/her relation to history and cultural memory. In this way, the archive becomes a figure for the lost past that the subject must reclaim. Yet this is only one side of the archival gaze, what we might call the nostalgic or retrospective side, which refers to a desire for origin or *arkh*.

Derrida also specifies the archive's orientation toward the future, which pertains to hermeneutics but also the Judaism/Jewishness distinction and the question of whether psychoanalysis is a "Jewish science". Interpretation constitutes the simpler side of the archive's relation to the future: the meaning of the archive (in a literal sense, its content, but also the figurative sense of its significance: both signification and significance) will be only uncovered in the future or perhaps will never be uncovered. The reader may be skeptical that Derrida's sophistication would allow such a simple claim. Nevertheless, the passages that reference futurity in *Archive Fever* also refer to the determinant quality of the organization of an archive. For example, Derrida refers to the structure of the archive as "codetermining" its meaning (18). There is also a more complicated sense of the archive's relation to futurity: this quality is precipitated by the archive's finitude or incompleteness. Derrida drew this implication from *der Wunderblock* in "Freud and the Scene of Writing", but also from Yerushalmi's *caveat* against the reconstruction of the history of psychoanalysis according to an incomplete archive. At once, the archive determines the future according to its structure of knowledge, *and*, it leaves open to the future the determinability of the archive according to what has yet to be revealed, uncovered, or brought to the surface. Thus finitude, determination, and the future go hand-in-hand, as does the issue of the virtual. The Jewishness/Judaism distinction enters at this intersection, by which Derrida makes sense of Yerushalmi's subtitle: *Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, a reference to Freud's article, "Analysis: Terminable or Interminable". He argues that the moment in the "Monologue with Freud" when Yerushalmi raises the question of whether psychoanalysis is a Jewish science, only to state that it may be unknowable, Yerushalmi "changes registers" and the "order of knowledge" that had hitherto governed his study is "suspended" (52). Yerushalmi raises the question hesitantly, as he is unsure whether psychoanalysis-as-Jewish-science is "at all knowable", and can only be discerned "after much future work has been done. Much will depend on how the very terms *Jewish* and *science* are to be defined" (Derrida 70-1). This

"conditional" knowledge opens to the future and to the virtual: the meaning of the two terms *Jewish* and *science* will come in the future, and the possibility of knowing is only surmised, hypothesized, speculated, wagered. The absolute determination of these unknowns can entirely remain unanswered, Derrida claims, indefinitely. Secondly, the solution "to this equation with two unknowns," that is, "Jewishness" and "science," remains in the future, and thus stipulates the condition that 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" (72). This is the messianistic element of the issue: it remains on a plane of knowledge that is contrary or external to the conventional domain of knowledge.¹²

The elaboration of the Jewishness/Judaism distinction (the terms of which are transparent: the first names a quality of a people, the latter a historical, religious doctrine) continues to clarify the relevance of the future. Yerushalmi sees Jewishness (interminable) as outliving Judaism (terminable). That is, he sees the quality of a people outliving a theological doctrine. Jewishness, in Derrida's extrapolation, "is already given and does not await the future" (72); yet the following paradoxical formulation emerges immediately afterward: "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" (ibid). One might paraphrase this as expressing that, by not waiting for the future, Jewishness awaits a relation to the future to appear or open up. That is, specifically the characteristic of *not awaiting the future* is in itself a way of relating to the future, a position with respect to the future in which it waits. The least *Jewish* thing, according to Derrida, would be "nonbelief in the future, that is to say, in what constitutes Jewishness *beyond all Judaism*" (Derrida's emphasis 74). So anticipation of the future is unique or proper to the identity of Jewishness. Yet there is also the apparently incompatible "injunction to remember" which is characteristic of Judaism for Yerushalmi; thus, Derrida reconciles these two in the concept of *justice*, both hope and remembering. Finally, psychoanalysis complicates the past future distinction through *Nachtbrägligkeit*, *afterwardness*, which "disrupt[s], disturb[s], entangle[s]" the past and future (80). This disorder is a condition of archive fever, the "desire and disorder" of the archive (81), its Janus-faced relation to time.

As the above aims to demonstrate, the archive is a site that looks in two directions, both spatially and temporally: it looks toward the past and future, but also in its inner consignation which depends on necessary exteriority. The theme of writing as a supplement to memory, as both aiding and replacing it, pervades Derrida's thought in its earliest articulations, as in *Writing and Difference* and *Dissemination*. Without acknowledging this substrate, the complications that confront the archive remain hidden, unexposed, silent, and secret. In

concrete terms, the exposition of *Archive Fever* allows for at least two differing connections among *mal d'archive* and death drive, which, though they are not mutually exclusive, come into dramatic tension with each other. While this essay has devoted a majority of its attention to the meaning of the book's title, the subtitle deserves equal attention, which relates to the citationality of all writing and the irreducible singularity of the signature in "Signature Event Context," which would come to explain the Freudian signature and its impression. Indeed, further analysis is needed to explication how the archival contents themselves function as writing.

Notes

¹ These include, in reverse chronological order, *Moses and Monotheism* (1937), *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), *Totem and Taboo* (1913), and the less widely known *Delusion and Dream in Jensen's Gradiva* (1907)

² The institution found itself in the midst of considering, self-reflexively, its role in the preservation of cultural memory. As the conference proceedings report, Derrida's lecture at this event lasted three and a half hours; and, Yerushalmi was unable to attend his delivery due to a case of bronchitis. This information can be found, appropriately, in the museum's own event archive, where a synopsis of the event is available.

³ In *Speech and Phenomena* (1967), *Of Grammatology* (1967), and *Writing and Difference* (1967).

⁴ As Derrida remarks in passing, "order is no longer assured" (5).

⁵ "In taking that course into account in our consideration of the mental processes which are the subject of our study, we are introducing an economic' point of view into our work; and if, in describing those processes, we try to estimate this 'economic' factor in addition to the 'topographical' and 'dynamic' ones, we shall, I think, be giving the most complete description of them of which we can at present conceive, and one which deserves to be distinguished by the term 'metapsychological'" (*BPP* 3). Also relevant is "The Economic Problem of Masochism."

⁶ "The exergue consists in capitalizing on an ellipsis. In accumulating capital in advance and in preparing the surplus value of an archive" (*Archive Fever* 7).

⁷ For instance, Derrida reads the *captatio benevolentiae*—the rhetorical attempt to capture the goodwill of his audience—that Freud presents in Ch 6 of *Civilization and Its Discontents* as a "useless expenditure," that aimed, in Freud's case, to submit the thesis of a drive of destruction and of loss.

⁸ "This archontic power, which also gathers the functions of unification, of identification, of classification, must be paired with that of consignment" (3).

⁹ In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud sees repetition compulsion as a curious behavior that indicates the existence of the death drive. The pleasure principle is overcome

by the compulsion to repeat traumatic events, which in turn signal a desire to return to an earlier state of things. The movement toward an earlier, inanimate state characterizes the death drive, for Freud. In this, way repetition compulsion is a symptom of the death drive.

¹⁰ "It threatens every principality, every archontic primacy, every archival desire" (12). The last of this catalogue is in some ways the most interesting: the desire *of* the archive or the desire *to* archive?

¹¹ This complex dynamic of singularity and repetition here refers to the archival document, but also to the signature as writing that need affirm its uniqueness and iteration of the same, which stems from, for Derrida in "Signature Event Context", the inherent citationality of all writing in the first instance.

¹² This helps to clarify the remark that appears earlier in *Archive Fever*, with respect to the future, conditional, virtual, messianic, religious, and scientific: "[the question of the archive] 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 that will have meant, we will only know in times to come. Perhaps. Not tomorrow but in 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 itself, to a very singular experience of a promise. And we are never far from Freud in saying this" (36).

University of Pennsylvania

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